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'I wonder where I will be tomorrow'. Developing historical knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust. A case study working with hard to reach pupils in Essex, England.

Abstract

Based on initial piloting and early feedback we suggested that IWWIWBT 'met the key principles and agendas' discussed in an earlier paper[1]. This pilot with learners from the CSS reaffirmed our confidence in the scheme. The learners were engaged with the material and activities when exploring diversity issues in inter-war Belgium and 'what it means to be a citizen'. They learnt new information while developing arguments and interpretations that combined originality and 'absolute faithfulness' to the evidence. The learners worked through evidence that was both complex and emotionally challenging. They resolved contradictions and tensions from assumedly reliable sources. IWWIWBT enabled these teenagers to do real history and they loved it!

Keywords

Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND), Hard to reach learners, Holocaust education, Historical enquiry, Historical understanding.

Introduction

The Centre for Holocaust Education at University College London (UCL) is a research-led Holocaust education organisation jointly funded by the Department for Education and the Pears Foundation. It has three primary goals: first to conduct research into Holocaust education[2]; second to create a programme of research informed Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for teachers in the English state education sector; and third to contribute to the field of Holocaust education both nationally and internationally. The Centre runs a Beacon School Project where selected schools work as dynamic hubs co-ordinating a network of schools, helping them to develop Holocaust teaching and learning. In July 2016, the Centre successfully launched its Beacon School Quality Mark to highlight best practice from within the Beacon School program. CSS South, Basildon was the second school to receive the quality mark and this case study is of a project that grew out of the relationship between them and the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education.

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[1] Cole T., Jackson D, «'I wonder where I will be tomorrow'. Using Filmed Testimony to Develop Historical Knowledge and Understanding of the Holocaust with British Primary School Children and Students with Special Educational Needs (SEND)» in Dreier W., Laumer A., Wein M. (eds.), *Education with Testimonies, Vol.4: Interactions: Explorations of Good Practice in Educational Work with Video testimonies of Victims of National Socialism*, Berlin: Stiftung Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft (EVZ), 2018, p. 229-239.

[2] Pettigrew A., Foster S., Howson J., Salmons P., Lenga R., Andrews K., *Teaching about the Holocaust in English Secondary Schools. An empirical study of national trends, perspectives and practice,* London: Institute of Education University of London, 2009, and Foster S., Pettigrew A., Pearce A., Hale R., Burgess A., Salmons P., Lenga R., *What do students know and understand about the Holocaust?* London: UCL Institute of Education, 2016.

'Cold spots'

Holocaust education has had a high profile in England recently with a number of reports published on it by Parliament and the Prime Minister's Commission. One of the main conclusions from the Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission Report Britain's Promise to Remember[3] was that: « *Effective Holocaust education fails to reach significant numbers of young people.* » Whilst the Prime Minister's Commission identifies geographical 'cold spots', it is systemic that within our education system there are other metaphoric 'cold spots'. The SEND sector has traditionally posed as one of these 'cold spots' for the delivery of Holocaust education and many other educational initiatives.

The Department for Education in the UK defines a child with SEND as having « a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her »[4]. A little over 28 % of state financed schools in England are for students with a specific SEND, yet there is little research into Holocaust education within SEND, and as yet there appears to be little emphasis on creating quality Holocaust education material designed for SEND pupils.

It is recognised that the term SEND applies to an almost infinite continuum of need and diversity and that closer scrutiny will inevitably give rise to numerous sub-groups. The authors of *I Wonder Where I Will Be Tomorrow* (henceforth IWWIWBT) have paid particular attention to the cohort often described as 'hard to reach'. A literature review highlights much of the discussion around this term and for the purpose of this paper it is defined as those who are 'hard to teach' learners who are « *inaccessible to most traditional and conventional methods* [of teaching /education] *for any reason.* »

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[3] Her Majesty's Government, *Britain's Promise to Remember. The Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission Report*, London: The Cabinet Office., 2015. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prime-ministers-holocaust-commission-report, accessed 20.07.2018.

[4] Department for Education, *Special Education Needs and Disability: Code of Practice 0 to 25 Years,* London 2015. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25, accessed 20.07.2018.

Macro and Micro agendas

Schools in England are accountable to the government (via the school inspection system) for including a range of directed national agendas within their curricula; we refer to these as « Macro Agendas », specifically:

- Citizenship - provides the knowledge, skills and understanding to prepare students to play a full and active part in society.
- British Values - schools are required to promote fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- Global Learning - the inclusion of this agenda should help pupils make sense of the world in which they live and understand their role within a global society.
- Diversity - all schools should enable young people to develop an understanding that each individual is unique, moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual.
- Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural education (SMSC). This agenda over arches the others in that, whilst enhancing students' ability to reflect upon their cultural influences, experiences and belief systems, this should be done with due regard to the other existing macro agendas.

We define a school micro agenda as one which pertains to the teaching, learning and attainment of individual learners. When faced with learners who find it difficult to access most traditional and conventional methods, it follows that pedagogical change will be necessary to fulfil this micro agenda. Traditionally, when meeting the needs of these students, emphasis is placed on the differentiation of existing pedagogy and resources. In most cases, this manifests in the teacher asking easier questions or using easier resources for learners who are struggling.

Creating the Resource

IWWIWBT has at its core the principle that ALL learners are entitled to quality Holocaust education. In particular, those with SEND, lower attaining and/or described as being 'hard to reach', or
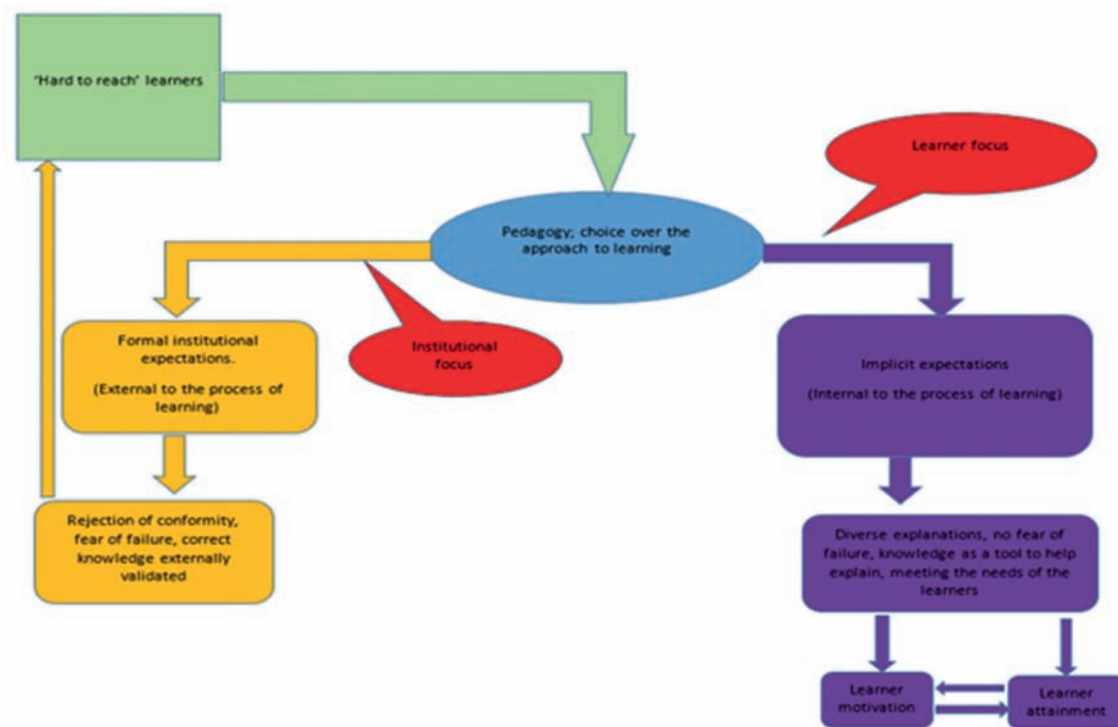
Figure 1. The authors developed this diagram during the pilot phase of the project. It illustrates the tensions between individual and institutional imperatives when teaching 'hard to reach' children. When this cohort are expected to conform to institutional expectations it reinforces their fear of failure whereas a pedagogy that focuses on their needs will remove this.

indeed learners for whom Holocaust education was not previously deemed appropriate. In addition, the scheme has considered and incorporated both the macro and micro curricula expected to be delivered in any school, hence making it attractive to educational leaders when allocating curriculum time and staff development.

IWWIWBT provides educators with a means to introduce the study of the Holocaust to a wide range of students. In so doing, it enables young people to become independent learners and thinkers whilst developing their substantive historical knowledge and understanding of the complex history of the Holocaust.

As with all schemes of work/resources, we faced a key decision over our pedagogical direction. Traditionally, we would design a scheme that reflects the institutional expectations of the school in which it would be used. Given our target cohorts are unable, or indeed refuse, to engage in traditional pedagogy, it did not make any sense to place the learners in yet another situation where they would experience failure etc. In other words, the scheme did not want

to create a situation where the learner remains 'hard to reach'. Our chosen approach was to make the scheme learner focussed with expectations based on the discipline and that are an integral part of learning. Thus, the learner directs his/her own learning and constructs his/her interpretation of the events. This acquired knowledge enables the learners to make relevant explanations and to test their own hypotheses. The scheme provides opportunities to differentiate by outcome. Its activities were chosen because they are intrinsically motivating and intellectually challenging. The activities position learners in their 'zones of proximal development' (ZPD), where they develop their understanding of complex issues and become increasingly adept at using particular concepts.

Differentiation and the Zone of Proximal Development

Within history teaching in England, the word 'differentiation' first appeared with the introduction of the General Certificate of Secondary Education

examination in 1986[5]. This examination asked questions that could be answered with varying levels of intellectual sophistication[6]. Since then, the term has come to mean setting work at an appropriate level of complexity to meet the needs of the learners; in other words, work that the learners can already do. This leads to whole cohorts of learners experiencing simpler and less inspiring activities in school. IWWIWBT rejects this approach to differentiation and instead emphasises the need for teachers to support learners as they work in their Zone(s) of Proximal Development. Vygotsky[7] defined the Zone of Proximal Development as an

> « […] *actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers* […]. »

This formulation highlights that learning takes place in the area beyond which learners can already do and, more importantly, it is dependent on the support of others; learning is a social activity. This is where teachers support learners in this unit. It is not about giving learners with SEND easier tasks or simpler sources, it is about supporting them as they work through the challenges.

The activities in this scheme are intrinsically motivating and the learners gain a sense of achievement as they work on challenging but ultimately manageable tasks. The teachers will also focus on questions about the process of 'doing history', as it is important to support and encourage learners to express their own ideas and to formulate their own interpretations. In this way, the fear of failure is removed, the learners take intellectual risks and make evaluations.

Our approach has implications for assessment. As the students will respond to the work in different ways, any model of convergent assessment is unworkable; we cannot expect students who are encouraged to be innovative in their work to home in on a set point. For this reason, IWWIWBT presumes a divergent assessment model that enables the students to be rewarded for developing ideas and exploring the themes that interest them. In short, we are providing the students with the opportunity to show what they can do, rather than reinforce what they might not be able to do. IWWIWBT provides learners with the opportunity to work as 'real' historians. They experience the complexity of the material and the inconsistencies that cropped up as we researched the life of Miriam Kleinman; the students will be « doing real history ». They will learn to develop hypotheses, test them against the evidence and then amend or reject them accordingly. The scheme's pedagogy instils an ethos where the students are not afraid of « *getting it wrong* ».

The Nature of History's Truth Claims

There is a continuous conversation in history education about the relationship between the events of the past, the evidence left by the past and our interpretation of the past. This relationship was at the heart of EH Carr's book '*What is History?*' where he states that a fact is important only if it is used in a « *dialogue between the present and the past* »[8]. Recently, in England, there has been a revival of emphasising the knowledge base of history. This revival has been spearheaded by the later works of Michael Young[9] and by the historians associated with the University of Cambridge History Initial Teacher Education courses.

The leading advocates of the 'return to knowledge' are Christine Counsell and her colleague Michael Fordham. Both were inspired by reading

[5] Although, the first GCSE examinations were sat in 1988 teaching on the courses began in 1986.
[6] Cannadine D., Keating J., Sheldon N., *The Right kind of History: Teaching about the past in Twentieth-Century England,* London: Basingstoke Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
[7] Vygotsky in Daniels H., *Vygotsky and Pedagogy,* London: Routledge Farmer, 2001, p. 57.

[8] Carr E. H., *What is History?* London: Harmondsworth Penguin Books, 1964, p. 30.
[9] Young M. F. D., *Bringing Knowledge Back In,* London: Abingdon Routledge Farmer, 2008. Young M. F. D., Lambert D., Roberts C., Roberts M., *Knowledge and the Future School: Curriculum and Social Justice,* London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014. Young M. F. D., Muller J., *Curriculum and the Specialisation of Knowledge: Studies in the Sociology of knowledge,* London: Abingdon Routledge Farmer, 2016.

Figure 2. This photograph is of Miriam being held aloft by her mother, it seems a jubilant moment. However there is clearly a soldier in the background as well as a man wearing a military cap in the foreground. Early in the research Miriam was certain that her family had arrived by boat at Greenwich in May 1940. Greenwich is on the south bank of the River Thames a few miles downstream of central London but is not a significant port.

After exhaustive searches the authors found no record of a refugee ship arriving there in May 1940. When this was explained to Miriam she produced another box of documents one of which was her father's Belgian identity card. The card was stamped on 18th May 1940 with an entry visa from Folkestone. Folkestone is a port in south Kent within easy reach of Ostend. Amidst the chaos of the impending evacuation of British and French troops from the beaches of Dunkerque, it was here that Miriam and her family arrived in England.

We left Miriam's original account in the resource to enable students to experience the complexities of historical research.

Hirsh's[10] argument that knowledge is an issue of social justice in that poor students know less than their wealthier peers and this needs to be remedied by more and better teaching of subject knowledge. She assumes that from detailed knowledge understanding will grow[11]. Counsell argues that a good history education should focus learners on canonical knowledge. « *Students stayed 'lower attaining' chiefly for want of sufficient content security* […] *terms such as 'political power' or 'civilisation' remained thin and meaningless rather than thick with meaning that accrues from having stories attached to* *them in one's head* »[12]. Her error is to assume that children's understanding of the past comes from exposure to a wealth of factually true statements about the past.

Fordham takes this further by stating: « *It's about time we stripped away all of these confusions* [concepts, skills, analytical frameworks, skills etc.] *and got back to the thing at the heart of teaching: knowledge* »[13]. By denying that there is any such

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[10] Hirsch E. D., *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know,* New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1988.

[11] Counsell C., « The fertility of substantive knowledge: In search of its hidden, generative power. » in Davies I. (ed.), *Debates in History Teaching,* London: Routledge, 2017, p. 80-98.

[12] Counsell C., « History Teacher Publication and the Curricular 'What?': Mobilizing Subject-Specific Professional Knowledge in a Culture of Genericism », in Counsell C., Burn K., and Chapman A. (eds.), *Master Class in History Education: Transforming Teaching and Learning,* London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016, p. 247.

[13] Fordham M., quoted in Smith J. and Jackson D., « A Cuckoo in the Nest? Powerful Knowledge in English History Education Discourse », *European Journal of Curriculum Studies* 2017,

thing as understanding, Fordham has collapsed everything into knowledge.

The authors of IWWIWBT reject the idea that learners only need knowledge. Instead, we aim to introduce 'proper history' and we need to be explicit about what this means. The first point may seem slightly obvious, but it needs to be stated. The events in this series of lessons happened in the past and our knowledge of them does nothing to change what happened. Doing history is not repeating canonical knowledge (consensual truth). Nor is it about making individual simple discrete statements that come from processing evidence, for example « *her father was born in Bedzin, because it says so on his Residence card* ». History is a process of describing and explaining the past. IWWIWBT enables learners to produce tentative explanations and accounts of the society into which Miriam was born. Although these accounts will be based on historical evidence, the learners are expected to go beyond simple statements. In this way, the learners generate alethic truth claims about Miriam's family's life in pre-World War Two Belgium. As Porpora[14] argues, alethic truth « […] *detaches truth from both certainty and methodology* ». These alethic truth claims are not tested by comparing them with particular pieces of evidence, but by expressing something of the reality of Miriam's life. Consequently, better truth claims will be plausible, compatible with the range of evidence and will explain why Belgium was so appealing to Miriam's parents, as well as why they had to leave in such a hurry.

Case study

As part of an extensive pilot and evaluation program, IWWIWBT was delivered to a cohort of 'hard to reach' learners attending the Children's Support Services (CSS) based in Basildon. The learners in this cohort all exhibited characteristics consistent with the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). ASD is defined as a developmental disorder characterised by difficulties with social interaction and communication, and by restricted or repetitive patterns of thought and behaviour. The word 'spectrum' in ASD recognises that every child is unique and has its own combination of characteristics. These combine to give them a distinct social communicative and behavioural profile. In addition to this, every learner had been excluded from mainstream education as a result of this behavioural profile being adverse to the 'institutional expectations' of the excluding school. Many learners on the ASD struggle to meet institutional expectations because of their short attention spans. They are easily distracted and find it difficult to listen to or carry out instructions. Often this will manifest in the learner having difficulty organising themselves to complete a task, and so frustration will lead to them constantly wishing to change the activity or task. Collaborative learning can be a real problem for this cohort which again can manifest in behaviour that is outside institutional expectations. Learners who constantly fail to meet success criteria will inevitably develop low self-esteem and become 'hard to reach', as they put up barriers against learning rather than face the humiliation of failure.

By removing institutional expectations and placing learners in their ZPD, the scheme successfully engaged this cohort. It did so because their learning was directed at their own initiative and in an environment where they were not required to conform to a learning pathway derived from institutional expectations. To further support the learner, IWWIWBT is designed so that learners are not placed in a right/wrong situation. For example, in one of the activities, learners are asked to place a set of cards 'In the order you think they should go' rather than 'in the correct order'. As learners develop a more complex narrative, they are able to reflect on their initial deductions and amend the cards accordingly. Similarly, learners are given opportunities to formulate hypotheses and these are verified or rejected as and when they can be tested. The important issue here is that the cohort does not feel a sense of rejection by being told that they have failed to meet institutional expectations. The activity is learner focussed.

IWWIWBT was delivered to this cohort for two lessons per week for seven weeks. The centre's average attendance at the time was 82 %. Attendance for the

IWWIWBT lessons was 100 % and there were no recorded incidents of poor behaviour throughout. Every learner chose to work collaboratively on at least one occasion. The learners were never told to do this; instead, they were able to decide themselves where and when this approach to learning was appropriate. Importantly, the learners were able to explore complex issues and concepts through their own developing ideas and processes rather than via prescriptive pedagogy. IWWIWBT minimises the need for 'chalk and talk' teaching. Instead, the learners are able to select activities that best meet their learning styles and, crucially, leads them through the process of doing real history. This adds to their feeling of worth as they are not only free from the fear of failure, but also from coming into conflict with the institutional expectations in terms of learning behaviour. One learner stated « *It was really fun doing the research. We had to do our own thinking about how we could find things out.* » One notable outcome was how all of the learners developed empathy for the family in the scheme. Given that learners on the ASD will struggle to develop a sense of understanding of abstract concepts and events, this can be considered a major factor when looking at meeting the needs of this or similar cohorts. One of the educators involved with the project said:

« *It gave us a very valuable experience in terms of approaching history from a different perspective. Personal testimony was a very useful approach. The class developed a strong empathy with Miriam and her family*[15]. *This gave them a deeper understanding. It made the story personal to them rather than it being an abstract event.* »

Finally, the pilot illustrated how the learners were able to construct alethic truth from their learning. One learner was able to make a parallel with current global issues and said;

« *Most people don't want refugees to come here (England). I would say to them 'Think about it'. The lessons helped me understand that they have a reason to come. I now understand why refugees have to leave their homes.* »

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[15] Data were collected during the pilot stage in several ways; lessons were observed, children's work was collected, learners were interviewed, and verbal and written feedback was received from both parents and teachers. Throughout there were comments on how the learners looked upon the family as real people, in real situations and making real choices.

The authors

Tony Cole currently works for the Children's Support Services in Basildon, UK. In a career spanning over 30 years, Tony has focused his work on educational provision for young people described as 'Hard to Reach' and who have special educational needs. In this current role, he has worked in partnership with the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education to develop resources and pedagogy to provide these learners with the opportunity to access quality Holocaust education. His work has received national and international acclaim.

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