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CHAMPIONING A HOLOCAUST, GENOCIDE AND HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAMME THROUGH PE AND SPORT

Charlie I'Anson and David Woodward

PURPOSE OF A PHYSICAL EDUCATION, SCHOOL SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY CURRICULUM

There are huge historic and ongoing discussions about what a physical education, school sport and physical activity (PESSPA) curriculum or school programme should be, contain and teach, from hitting an Ofsted-specific criterion to teaching specific sports and activities to a concept-driven curriculum. My colleagues and I at Royal Wootton Bassett Academy (RWBA) aspire to deliver a broad and rich curriculum that centres on pupils learning through physical performance, knowledge, understanding and mindset. In the 20 years I have been teaching, I believe the shift in what physical educators are looking to achieve has changed. Are we not ultimately ensuring an interest,

independence and understanding of the importance and life enjoyment of physical activity as part of a healthy, active lifestyle?

The importance and need of appropriate PESSPA provision on any school curriculum is justified, clear and evidenced. When delivered appropriately, it is a unique, powerful and enjoyed subject. But is its power underestimated? The power of sport in society is well documented and taught as part of syllabuses in examination and degree level PE and sport. Away from the curriculum goals of good PESSPA provision, there is a plethora of life learning to be harnessed. At RWBA we explore and champion the school's Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights (HGHR) Programme through PE and sport.



Bernie Graham speaking to pupils.

Like most schools, our ethos is driven by a set of whole school values. As a department, we have adapted these to produce our own PESSPA values, which underpin all that we ask of our pupils. Additionally, in conjunction with the school's University College London (UCL) Holocaust Beacon School status, we have used these values to develop pupils' learning on Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights through the use of physical activity and sport.

This interest has been developed through the department's continuing professional development (CPD) programme and opportunities for staff to complete the four-day Holocaust Education Trust's *Lessons from Auschwitz* training. Irrespective of your subject background, if you get the opportunity to attend it, do so; this is one of the greatest CPD courses I have had the privilege of attending, for so many reasons. As a starting point, I would also recommend the UCL Centre for Holocaust short, online, self-guided six things course. This self-paced course is research-informed and reveals six prevailing myths and misconceptions in Holocaust education. It reveals a host of learning opportunities that schools, including PE, can contribute to in addressing and shifting thinking.

HOLOCAUST, GENOCIDE AND HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAMME AND UCL BEACON STATUS

At RWBA, there is a commitment to ensuring that all learners have access to quality provision and experience of Holocaust education. In part, this is a cognitive and equity curriculum point, but it is also a civic and moral one: ultimately, our aim is to empower young people to safeguard themselves and their future by learning about the past. The UCL Holocaust Beacon Programme has played a central role within this. Following the inaugural Year 9 collapsed timetable Holocaust Day, including the opportunity to hear survivor testimony, and the pupil-led Awareness and Memorial Evening, the programme has grown into an initiative committed to exposing the evil of prejudice, injustice and hatred in all its forms whilst celebrating civic values from Years 7–13. RWBA is one of the few schools to be accredited with the UCL Beacon status for a second time running.

The programme champions the human spirit and all the good that humans can achieve, whilst respectfully recognising the past and exploring the current horrors that mankind is capable of. The opportunity for pupils to hear

Eric Murangwa speaking to pupils.

survivor testimony direct from visiting speakers has proved inspirational. We use the power of PE and sport within this to support pupil learning. Sport is awash with powerful stories that champion the human spirit and all of the good that humans can achieve. We can use these stories to honour and engage pupils in HGHR learning, both by drawing on well-known case studies (Olympian Jessie Owen, boxer Mohammed Ali, the weightlifting achievements of Holocaust survivor Sir Ben Helfgott MBE, racism in sport, gamesmanship and drug cheats), or by simply reflecting on how pupils from different backgrounds compete as one team towards a common goal in lessons and after-school sport.

We also give pupils time to reflect on the role that PE, sport and fitness have in reconciliation efforts and how they play a part in building community cohesion, common interests and school values and ethos. In some cases, sport is used to support efforts in addressing and living with post-genocidal physical and mental health injuries and trauma. At its least, it provides a sense of normality, control, fun and an excuse to get up, get out and enjoy the outdoors! Our RWBA experiences, case studies and examples can be used to challenge pupils to be responsible, informed, empathetic and engaged global citizens.

IN PRACTICE: THREE EXAMPLES

Holocaust learning: play to remember – Bernie's journey

In a recent play-to-remember session, we gave Year 9 pupils the opportunity to explore the school's Holocaust education programme through Bernie's journey as part of *The Holocaust, Their Family, Me and Us* project. It consisted of two one-hour sessions where pupils learnt about the journey of Bernie Graham through the BBC's *My Family, the Holocaust and Me*.

Session 1 was based in a classroom where pupils worked through Bernie's story, learning about the different stages of his journey to find out about his family. Pupils linked key emotions and aspects of his story to sport and the feelings, memories and impact that playing together can have on individuals and groups. We spent time reading about and discussing Herman Federman, Bernie's uncle, who was a



boxer and footballer. He put his survival of the Holocaust down to a conversation with a German soldier about playing for FSV Frankfurt as a young man. We were also lucky to be visited by Bernie who answered questions and discussed some of their learning with pupils.

Session 2 involved playing to remember and reflection through participation in sport, namely football. We started with a recap of the classroom learning before playing two games of football. Bernie watched the matches. At half time, we reflected on emotions, memories and impact, linked to the previous classroom session, before holding a moment's silence to honour Bernie and his family. After concluding the games, pupils had the opportunity to take part in a question-and-answer session with Bernie. Once again, these sessions were a fantastic opportunity for pupils. They reiterated the power of sport by enabling values, learning and understanding through reflection on the past.

As an extension to our live learning events, we developed practical, graphic challenge cards that can easily slot into lessons. These are used in PE, personal, social, emotional and health education (PSHE) and skills-for-life sessions and provide a learning resource that links PE and sport to Holocaust education. Each card focuses on someone whose life revolved around sport and who was entangled in the Holocaust. Their stories are truly inspirational



and include Sir Ben Helfgott (weightlifting), Agnes Keleti (gymnastics), Gretel (Margareta) Bergmann (athletics), Gino Bartali (cycling), Bela Guttmann (football) and Henri Levee and Logie Bruce-Lockhart (rugby).

Rwanda learning – sixth form workshops – Eric Murangwa's story

Eric Murangwa MBE played for Kigali's top football team, Rayon. His story is that, during the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, his fellow players protected him from the killing. While players at many other football clubs throughout Rwanda were killing each other, those at Rayon Sports remained united throughout the genocide. Today Eric runs an organisation that uses football to promote tolerance, unity and reconciliation among Rwandan youth. Eric's story is a truly powerful one and we at RWBA are lucky enough to have a close relationship with him. This has allowed us to welcome him to the school to work with our Key Stage 5 sports course pupils.

During his visit to the school, both our A-level and BTEC PE cohorts received a lecture from Eric in which he shared his story and the amazing survival journey he undertook during the Rwanda genocides. Following the talk, pupils were given opportunities to take part in a question-and-answer session before completing personal review and reflection tasks that focused on the learning that can be taken from Eric's experience. With both exam courses including elements on global sport and the historical exploitation of its power, this session extended pupils' curriculum learning. Ultimately, though, it also empowered these young people to safeguard themselves and their future by learning about the past.

Srebrenica learning – Working out and walking for Srebrenica – A pledge from my learning

In line with words taken from the Bosnian Genocide Education Trust website, "We encourage, support and promote the annual *Srebrenica Memorial Day* which takes place in July, and is observed in the UK and across the world. Every year, thousands of people across the UK come together to learn about the Bosnian genocide and reflect on how we can make our own society and communities better and safer places to live in".¹

At RWBA, pupils across year groups come together to learn about the Srebrenica atrocities and complete one of two physical challenges. Both of these relate to the 8,372 lives lost on 11th July 1995. They take the form of a team walk and mindfulness activity where we ask pupils to complete 8,372 steps using pedometers and/or a circuit designed around 11 repetitions at 7 stations for 14 minutes (approx. 837.2 seconds). As a concluding contemplation task, pupils create individual pledges in memory of victims and surviving family members. These reflect on things we may take for granted, such as family, friends, school, home, food, security and peace. These pledges are then used to recreate the symbol of a white flower. This is the symbol most associated with remembering the Srebrenica genocide. Designed by the Mothers of Srebrenica, the eleven petals symbolise the day the genocide began, the white represents the innocence of the victims, and the green symbolises hope for justice and recognition.

¹ <https://www.bget-uk.org/>

A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN RWBA AND THE UNIVERSITY OF WORCESTER

David Woodward

There are currently extensive discussions about what an initial teacher training and education (ITTE) curriculum should be, contain and teach. Themes from the *Core Content Framework*, to teaching an ambitious curriculum to the impact of market review have created uncertainty and opportunities in equal measure. My colleagues and I at the University of Worcester maintain values and aspirations to train future secondary PE teachers who have the drive to make a positive impact in PE and across education. It is also important for us to teach teachers to go beyond the curriculum, both within ITTE and beyond.

I intentionally followed Charlie's words at the start of this article to highlight that ITTE and secondary PE curriculums are more similar than people may think. Planning an ITTE curriculum, especially for PE, is always a challenge. What you start with, include and leave out provide rich discussion and debate. Focusing on the broader curriculum strand of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), we strive to make our curriculum relevant to the context of our environment, using what we have and when we can use it. We do not want merely to scratch the surface of EDI and PE by having specific sessions on LGBTQ+, colour blindness, etc. This is where our partnership with Charlie comes in. Several years ago, I met him at the Association for Physical Education (afPE) national conference and attended his presentation on the power of PE and sport. I knew immediately that I had to get him to talk with our trainees. His messages align perfectly with our course values and it is crucial for them to be spread.

We were lucky to have Dr Mindu Hornick speak with the trainees during the week of the Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD); typically, this is a privilege reserved for the Humanities trainees. Dr Hornick was sent at the age of 12 to Auschwitz with her family and never saw her mother or two brothers again. Understandably, she could not talk about her experience until relatively recently and now spends time talking to pupils in schools. I spoke to the visit's organiser and she was delighted to include the 36 trainee PE teachers in the audience. To say that it was an honour to hear her would be a disservice. She spoke softly, yet you could hear the pain that remained in her voice. However, even with that emotional lecture, many trainees might have wondered how it affected them as a trainee PE teacher. Charlie had the challenging task of following Dr Hornick. The trainees were captivated and empowered by Charlie's examples, and a sense of 'we can do it' and 'we can make a difference' spread around the room.

In the following days, I heard from many trainees who participated in HMD school activities through assemblies and form-time activities. They had the confidence to link Charlie's scenarios to their placement school contexts. From working with 36 trainees across 65 partnership schools and PE departments, the ripple effect is working as teachers on visits ask me about the session, and trainees still reflect on the experience as being incredibly positive for them. I am passionate about the need to educate high-quality physical educators. At their core, they want to drive change from small actions and make a positive difference to all pupils. Sometimes this means being pushed out of their comfort zone for the greater good. Linking PE with HGHR education is a powerful example of this.

FINALLY

As practitioners, we should never doubt that the learning and actions of a small group of thoughtful and committed pupils and teachers can change the world. We just need to persist. PESSPA learning can give young people opportunities to become the best citizens for our communities, leaving school as proud, committed, supportive role models with high levels of acceptance and resilience. Extending learning away from the main aim of our subject can be endless and powerful. ■

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

UCL Centre for Holocaust Education (free CPD and Beacon School programme):

<https://holocausteducation.org.uk/>

Holocaust Educational Trust (course information):

<https://www.het.org.uk/lessons-from-auschwitz-online/what-is-lfa/how-it-works-lfaonline>

Holocaust Educational Trust (lessons from Auschwitz programme and opportunities to engage with survivors): <https://www.het.org.uk/>

The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust:

<https://www.hmd.org.uk/>

Bernie's Journey The Holocaust, Their Family, Me and Us:

<https://www.htfmeus.co.uk/>

Eric Murangwa and resources from the Ishami Foundation: <https://ishamifoundation.org/>

The Bosnian Genocide Education Trust (Bosnia and Srebrenica education resources):

<https://www.bget-uk.org/bosnian-genocide>

Holocaust Memorial Day task cards for use in lessons:

Resource PDFs

Please contact the authors for more resources, ideas and discussions on this topic.

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