

EDUCATION FOR RECONCILIATION:
CREATING A HISTORY CURRICULUM AFTER GENOCIDE

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On this site, you can download both the English and French versions of the resource book developed by the Human Rights Center with its Rwandan partners, the National University of Rwanda and the National Curriculum Development Center of the Rwandan Ministry of Education. These materials also benefited from our collaboration with “Facing History and Ourselves” and their representative, Karen Murphy.

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“The Teaching of History of Rwanda: A Participatory Approach” is a first attempt to develop a model for the teaching of history after genocide that involves a participatory process. Participants included teachers, students, parents, administrators, government officials and non-government organizations. A complete description of the three year process is obtainable from the principal investigators (Professors Freedman, Weinstein, and Longman) through the Human Rights Center at the University of California, Berkeley.

Background

The work of this project built upon the findings from two prior grants to the Human Rights Center. The first, “Communities in Crisis: Justice and Social Reconstruction in Rwanda and Former Yugoslavia,” funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation was a project to examine the processes of social reconstruction and reconciliation in countries that had experienced ethnic cleansing and genocide. The principal focus of the project was to look at the role of retributive justice in the rebuilding of societies. During the course of this three-year study, we increasingly became aware of the importance of the schools, both in the events leading up to the violence and the possibilities inherent in education as one pathway to rebuilding communities that practice tolerance, respect human rights, and contribute to the development of a social identity that transcends ethnic group affiliations. This led to our second grant, funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, “Intrastate Conflict and Social Reconstruction: Education for Reconciliation” that focused specifically on how community stakeholders in the same countries – students, parents, teachers, school administrators – viewed the role of schools and the teaching of history. This work is described in detail in our book, “My Neighbor, My Enemy: Justice and Community in the Aftermath of Mass Atrocity”, published by Cambridge University Press in February 2005. In 2003, we applied to the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) to address the challenge of teaching history in Rwanda, a country that had placed a moratorium on teaching its youth about the past. As we indicated in our proposal, “Countries recovering from violence are often unable to reach consensus on how to interpret the catastrophic events that have befallen them. The teaching of history can become a focal point of political

conflict and manipulation, as contending groups seek to promote their political agendas through the school curriculum.”

The overall goal of this proposal was to initiate a process of restoring the teaching of history to Rwanda’s schools by bringing the voices of the communities to the table with historians, government bureaucrats, international curriculum experts, and civil society. The principal objectives were:

1. to determine what was most needed for developing an effective history curriculum and for assisting teachers to deliver such a curriculum;
2. to form working groups to gather resource materials and make recommendations for their use in a history curriculum;
3. to write recommendations for the Ministry of Education and suggest structures for assisting teachers and schools as well as to create curricular guidelines and materials.

Project Partners

We had two project partners in Rwanda - the Faculty of Education at the National University of Rwanda (NUR), principally Innocent Mugisha, a lecturer with whom we had worked on the Hewlett grant and Deogratias Byanafashe, Professor and Chair of the Department of History, Dean of Humanities, and a senior historian in the country; the second partnership was with the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), part of the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) whose director was John Rutayisire. Mugisha and Rutayisire became the in-country project coordinators.

We invited as collaborators, the organization “Facing History and Ourselves” (FHAO), the Cambridge-based nonprofit group that has been teaching teachers how to incorporate the lessons of the Holocaust and other difficult histories into the teaching of history. Initially focused on US schools, FHAO has expanded its international focus to consider how to teach about contemporary genocides and ethnic cleansing. Currently, in their international programs they work in such countries as South Africa, Rwanda, Northern Ireland, and Colombia. In this project, we worked with Dr. Karen Murphy who directs the international programs. FHAO has obtained a follow-up grant from the USIP to train Rwandan teachers to use these materials in combination with materials from Facing History.

US Participants

In addition to working with our Rwandan collaborators and with Facing History, we sought to bring into the process the expertise of additional specialists in Rwandan history and politics as well as in curriculum development and democratic teaching methods. The following American scholars were able to travel to Rwanda to share their expertise:

David Newbury, Professor, African Studies, Smith College

Catherine Newbury, Professor of Government, Smith College

Jonathan Zimmerman, Professor of Humanities and Social Sciences, Director, History of Education Program, New York University

Daniel Perlstein, Professor, Graduate School of Education, UC Berkeley

Project Development

We employed five strategies to reach our objectives. First, we focused on paying attention to and building support in the political arena; second, educating our Rwandan collaborators in the methods of FHAO; third, selecting participants who were broadly representative of the constituencies that we hoped to reach and also, who might serve as disseminators of the model; fourth, focusing on the need for critical thinking of the known facts about historical events that would allow for contested interpretations to emerge and finally, modeling classroom **teaching** strategies that encouraged dialogue and debate.

Project Results as of June 2006

Education for Reconciliation successfully reached the objectives outlined in the initial proposal to USIP: 1) clarifying what was needed for an effective history curriculum and assisting teachers to deliver it; 2) forming working groups to develop the model; and 3) writing recommendations for MINEDUC and creating curricular guidelines and materials.

The results include:

- Opening up the process for writing and teaching the history of Rwanda in the country – a process stalled for over a decade.
- Capacity building for teachers, and Kigali Institute of Education (KIE), NUR and MINEDUC staff in
 - new methods for researching and writing history materials preparatory to curriculum writing

- new teaching methods
 - building a network of teachers, scholars, and other stakeholders for future work in Rwanda
 - building a strong network connecting Rwanda scholars and other specialists with international counterparts
 - contributed to the interest of participants to go on for higher degrees and further scholarly pursuits
- Materials development – the first step in modeling a curriculum development process
 - Drafted case materials for four periods of Rwandan history
 - Obtained primary and secondary source documents
 - Developed a model of collaboration among students, teachers, parents and scholars
- Pretesting of sample lessons for each case
- List of additional lessons for each case
- List of suggestions for further curriculum development
- Teaching strategies for each case, with an emphasis on critical thinking and debate
- Offered additional training through FHAO
- Plans for ongoing support for teacher training through FHAO

A copy of the resource book containing these materials was submitted to USIP in February 2006.

Future Development

Two distinct but related projects demand further development: 1) creation of additional history materials to develop a full history curriculum and 2) **ongoing** teacher training, with new history resources using methods that emphasize a student-centered, interactive approach. These methods will be applicable in other subject areas.

Recommendations to MINEDUC

We made the following recommendations to the Ministry:

1. Apply for grants to support future curriculum development using the model designed by this project, including additional lessons for the materials we developed and for the development of future cases that would add coverage of each era;
2. Apply for grants to fund materials development, especially for creation of background materials for students to read;
3. Hire writers to continue the curriculum development work and form a panel of advisors from our participants and the MINEDUC textbook committee;
4. Collaborate with KIE/NUR to pilot a teacher training course based on methods and resources from the project and to assist with additional lesson development;
5. Maintain the community formed by the project by supporting on-going activities. In addition, individuals should be drawn on for their individual

expertise in their subject areas and their role in the project. They can be used as mentors.

6. Develop teacher training in other subject areas so that all teachers benefit from the new methods and are in conversation with each other;

7. Develop resource centers to support curriculum development and to provide ongoing in-service support.