

Dissolving Boundaries through education in conflict situations

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Context for programme

- Started in 1999, building on Good Friday Peace Agreement
- Political will in Dublin and Belfast to address north-south issues, as well as those within Northern Ireland
- Funding for DB from both Departments of Education on renewable annual basis



Key ideas in Dissolving Boundaries

- Use contact hypothesis to shape design of programme...ie long-term, cooperative links between children as equals
- Use ICT and face to face contact for sustained and cost-effective links
- Match schools and train teachers together



Making the work sustainable

- All work embedded in curriculum of each school..
- Teachers' conference pivotal in terms of trust-building , taking ownership of the work to be done and drawing up learning agreement
- Locate programme in University Teacher education for rapid dissemination and research



Using affordable technology; video-conferencing and wikis



The programme in action

- Started with 30 schools, primary, secondary and special on each side of the border
- Pupils in each school worked in mixed teams, studying topics in history, English, geography, business



JOINT CURRICULAR WORK - WIKIS

Life of a displaced Irish person during Ulster Plantation

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Since the rebellion has ended, our county of Donegal has been over run with English and Scottish. All of us have been forced off our land. The language of our country has changed from Irish Gaelic to English. We are poor and cold and not happy with this situation. We will not give up until it is resolved!



Many of my friends, who had survived the war were rounded up and sent to Sweden. We will never see them again, and knowing the English, they probably have them locked up. Many of these have left their families in ruins. Many of us have been forced to live in bogs, hills and forests. Some lucky ones became tenants on the planters land and can at least try to make a living. However, the poor have no support since the monasteries have closed down. Some traitors have

Food from our area

R.O.I.

mostly everyone in 3rd class likes fish fingers



yr sauce is produced in co. Donegal. We like it with our dinner

YR Original Sauce with its thick tangy flavour is a firm Irish favourite in the table sauce market.

One of the market leaders in the brown sauce category, YR Original Sauce has been spicing up meals and snacks for over five generations.

Available in both a 495g squeeze bottle and a more traditional 250g glass bottle, YR sauce is an ideal accompaniment to steaks, fish, chops and roasts.

Alternatively YR can be enjoyed with hot and



cookstown sausages!



Busy bee buns and cakes are popular!!!!!!

The owner of Busy Bee sent her children to Ballytrea School.

N.I.



tayto crisps are very popular in N.I. 😊

We really enjoyed our trip to see how they are made.

The favourite flavour is cheese and onion.

A deaf school links to a mainstream school

“... we had our first conferencing session with our partner school ... It worked first time and both schools found it very interesting. It was good to see the girls we are currently working with and especially to understand and communicate with them. My students and I had learnt our names using the iris mantel alphabet and the Dublin girls were able to make them out, it was great. We are currently negotiating a face to face meeting and have agreed in principle that we will do one, probably in Dublin in February.”

Developing the programme

- Experienced schools asked to continue after year 1 with less funding
- Programme team monitored flow of work between partners
- Support materials developed to maximise use of both video-conferencing and the shared online environment
- Evaluation built in from the start



Impact 1999-2014; pupils

- 50,000 children aged 8-18 involved, in 570 schools and 2600 teachers
- Showed that sustained, blended contact made a difference in terms of pupil attitudes, skills and knowledge, even a year after the end of the contact (Ricard et al 2015)



Impact; cost, practice and policy

- Average cost £75 per pupil per annum
- The DB model adapted in Israel to link Orthodox Jewish, secular Jewish and Arab-Israeli schools
- Research on impact of DB rated best in the UK's 2015 REF
- Use of ICT now key advice in 'Shared Education' for schools within NI



Limitations and opportunities

- Without funding for programme management, inter-school links stopped
- But key ideas fed into 'E-partners' programme, 2015-present, linking schools within NI and using students as extra support



Relevance for Africa?

- DB assumed adequate access to ICT infrastructure..some initial input from private sector
- DB relied on teachers becoming extended professionals, using constructivist model and ready to assess ICT skills



A model that can work elsewhere?

- Use of ICT was key selling point for those wary of ‘political’ interference
- ICT has capacity to reach **every** school in Northern Ireland..and therefore a potential game-changer/tipping point



References

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- www.dissolvingboundaries.org
- The Dissolving Boundaries Programme was submitted as one of the two case studies to show the impact of research in the last Research Excellence Framework (2014)
- Case study material will be provided at the seminar
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