

AN EDUCATIONAL TOUR OF THE HECTOR PIETERSON MUSEUM* FOR HIGH SCHOOLS DEVELOPED BY LEARNERS AND TEACHERS USING OBE PRINCIPLES

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Abstract

As South African history is being rewritten, contested and revealed, so museums are being opened, revamped and developed. The classroom must follow suit. This paper documents the integration of the Hector Pieterse Memorial and Museum in Soweto and the teaching of History using OBE principles of the RNCS. The project was developed as a practical solution to a frustration experienced by both the Museum and visiting school groups. In the first instance, it provided the opportunity for grade 10 learners from Roedean School to practise investigative and analytical skills and to extend their historical knowledge and critical thinking skills. Secondly, the tools created, namely a teacher's newsletter, detailing the museum tour; a publicity pamphlet for the museum's scholastic groups, and a tour booklet specifically designed for learners, were created. Thirdly, the project was learner-centered and activity based, with a practical application to the working world: the learners had to work with a variety of professionals other than their teachers and make their products educationally viable.

Introduction

The Hector Pieterse Museum newsletter provides teachers with information about the Learning Outcomes and suggests pre and post-tour activities. The pamphlet provides practical information regarding opening times and directions to the Museum. The tour booklet acts as reinforcement and extension of the Curriculum 2005 syllabus for Human and Social Sciences for Grade 9 History: Apartheid in South Africa. A dedicated web page was also developed by the learners for consideration

* The spelling of Pieterse/Peterse varies from publication to publication

by the Museum. The project was also intended as a Community Development initiative, aiming to instill the Developmental Outcomes enabling learners to “participate as responsible citizens in the life of the local community”. The concept of these types of partnerships needs to be brought to the attention of schools nationwide. All are invited to utilize this project as a model to develop other initiatives. Certain museum outings can be a “hit or miss” affair. Teachers dream of the “hit” and dread the “miss”. A museum outing should result in a memorable and educationally valuable day.

Constraints and perceptions

At a Human and Social Sciences conference early in 2005, Ali Khangela Hlongwane, Chief Curator of the Hector Pieterse Museum, lamented the fact that too often the museum experienced a “go see” attitude by schools. Most of the time, he said, teachers brought large groups or learners of all age groups to the venue, and without prior notice. The already understaffed museum guides had to do their utmost to accommodate everyone. Furthermore, he said, teachers and learners lacked direction in viewing the exhibits and their aim seemed to entail a quick walk through the building to then head for a more “entertaining” venue like Gold Reef City. More crucially, he added, not all museum staff were educators, nor were they not always aware of the demands of the Curriculum.

The Museum - School Project launched

The Curator’s comments inspired a joint project between The Hector Pieterse Museum and Roedean School. A plan was submitted to the School Principal and the Museum Curator. It contained the aim of the project, its time frame and other practicalities: small groups of learners to work on four specific themes: History, Memory, Architecture and Bias.

It was agreed to allow Grade 10 learners to really drive the process under the guidance of their teachers and the Museum personnel. The project would be learner-centered and activity based, with a practical application to the working world. Furthermore, it would form part of the School’s Community Development Program. It would aim specifically to instill the Developmental Outcome enabling learners to “participate as responsible citizens in the life of the local community”, and the Learning Outcomes

and Critical Outcomes would focus on the Curriculum 2005 syllabus of Human and Social Sciences for grade 9 History: Apartheid in South Africa.

The process started by inviting all the grade 10 learners to an introductory talk. The outcomes, the proposed themes, working methods and time frame for the project were put forward. Four days were to be set aside in the holidays for work on site and a series of afternoons were to be made available during term to complete the project.

If parental approval was given, volunteers had to motivate their interest. Thereafter, participants had to sign a contract binding them to the project.

Twenty eight girls signed up. They divided themselves into five groups and brainstormed ideas regarding their theme of choice. They attended a series of talks: their art teacher provided input on graphics and pamphlet presentation; the Curator, his Education Officer and guides provided input on the needs and focus of the Museum; the architect who designed the building provided information regarding its conception and intention. The girls watched videos on “The History of Soweto” and “Where is Mbuyswa?” to gain more knowledge on the history they were investigating. At the Museum, they were given a tour by Hector Pieterse’s sister, Antoinette Sithole, who also provided her first hand accounts of the events of June 16 1976. Antoinette also accompanied the girls and teachers on the same route she and fellow students had taken from the schools which had participated in the march.

Thereafter, learners, teachers and museum personnel spent three days at the Museum in the school holidays working on the tour material.

The tour criteria were clearly specified:

- material had to be suitable for grade 9 to grade 12 learners.
- the entire tour was to be no longer than two hours, including twenty minutes for reflection and feedback.
- each theme had to include the following:
 - a skill: observation, investigation, critical thinking which could occur by means of an activity.
 - knowledge: as a skill in this case, Apartheid in South Africa.

- a value: focus to build citizenship and foster empathy.
- the themes' contents had to be presented within a maximum of five points.
- a photograph was essential for each exhibit.

The fourth day was spent at Roedean School putting the tour content, layout and photographs into a cohesive package on computer. Wording and images were debated by all. Thereafter, the tour was submitted to the Museum for comment, together with quotes for its final production by graphic design companies. The most telling criticism by the Curator was the absolute need to avoid any political slant in the word choice of the texts. The adults work shopped the final copy for submission to the printers.

The fifth group of girls produced a dedicated web page for educational school tours. (It is not operational as yet as the Museum is in charge of editing it to its requirements.) They also compiled the teacher brochure. Their aim was to publicize the Museum and to facilitate teacher co-ordination with the RNCS and to develop a "museum-going culture" in schools.

At the launch of the products, the tour was tested on learners from a variety of schools.

10 000 copies of each product were printed. A few months later, The Museum requested the booklet be translated into Afrikaans, IsiZulu and Sesotho by the Roedean staff. This has been done.

The result of the exercise was an affirmation that OBE really did work, if carefully planned with an applicable focus in mind. Not only did the girls develop various academic and interpersonal skills, but their teachers for whom group teaching is not the norm, grew through the process as well.

The concept of these types of partnerships needs to be brought to the attention of schools nationwide. All are invited to utilize this project as a model or as an inspiration to develop other initiatives.