



A. S. Hornby Educational Trust

REPORT ON HORNBY-FUNDED TEACHER ASSOCIATION PROJECT

Title: Developing a national curriculum and supporting context-relevant Teaching Materials for secondary school English teaching in Guinea Bissau

Country: Guinea Bissau

Dates: Nov 2018–June 2019

1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

There is an almost total lack of government support for and supervision of English teachers after they achieve their degree and start teaching. There was no national curriculum and there were no national tests, so ELTA-GB decided to take responsibility for creating a National Curriculum and national tests, and then supervising and providing in-service training for teachers to support and develop them. We have been trying to work with the Ministry of Education for several years. This was a very good opportunity for us to make key decisions about what curriculum goals would be feasible and what materials would be appropriate for our teaching context. We know the students and the schools, so we are the best people to make these decisions.

2. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Our main objectives were:

- to create a new National secondary English curriculum;
- to get all English teachers in Guinea Bissau to teach the same content;
- to motivate English teachers in Bissau and in the 8 regions;
- to involve teachers in creating their own simple teaching materials;
- to update teaching techniques; and
- to bring lesson ideas and texts about important social and local issues into class.

3. PROJECT MEMBERS AND THEIR ROLES

Overall responsible for liaising with others, managing WhatsApp group, orienting teams:

- Ali Djau (ELTA-GB Secretary General)

Group responsible for writing the curriculum:

- Lassana Baio (ELTA-GB President), Saido Ba Silla, Fernando Sa, Ali Djau, Edegal Gomes Correia, Mancama Nhasse naboma and Antonio Colonhane

4. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

First we planned the content of the new curriculum and had many discussions on our ELTA-GB WhatsApp group about what we should include. We liaised with Linda Ruas (IATEFL



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GISIG) to help us get some other samples of curriculums and adapt them to our teaching context in Guinea Bissau. The group responsible for writing the curriculum met on Saturday mornings and emailed their work to Linda for comment.



Meeting under trees in the park to discuss the curriculum with the responsible group, April 2019, Bissau.

We also discussed lots of topics we could have texts about for English classes and we decided that we would follow the ESA (Engage, Study, Activate) lesson plan format. We wrote short texts and lesson plans together in WhatsApp discussions and tried out the lessons in class.

When the curriculum was ready, we organized an introduction for 60 English teachers, mostly from Bissau, and some from the regions. Linda came to Bissau and we had several meetings to plan the introduction to teachers. Linda presented the overview and introduced the new curriculum. Then the team responsible for writing it led small groups to look at, discuss and ask questions about it in more detail. This was a whole day event and teachers were all very positive about the curriculum.



The Curriculum introduction, April 2019, The American Corner, Tchico Te, Bissau.

Some teachers then started to use the curriculum in class. Unfortunately, most teachers were on strike for months and could not start using it.

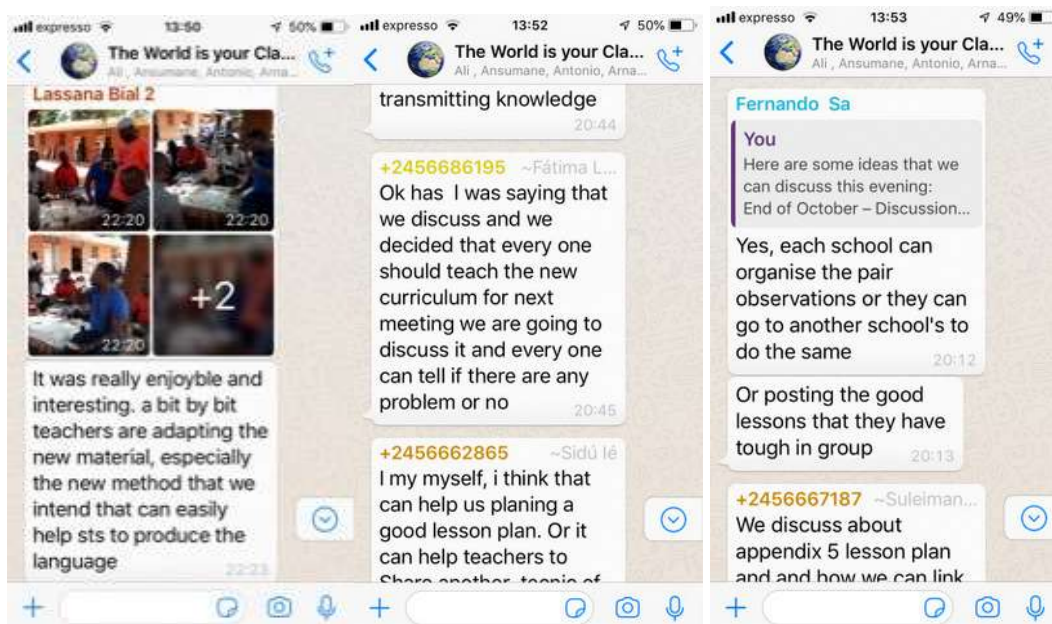
At the National Convention in July, we had an introduction session for 50 teachers who had not come to the other introduction. Bill Little, the RELO from Dakar, also came to this and was impressed with the new curriculum and the introduction.



The curriculum introduction at the National Convention, Bissau, July 2019.

When the new academic year started, teachers needed a lot of help and support to use the new curriculum. We first trained 10 group leaders, making sure they knew how to use the curriculum and the sample materials at a meeting in Bissau.

The WhatsApp group was very important in introducing the ideas to all the English teachers in Guinea Bissau. There are weekly discussions to support the group leaders and groups, and this is where each group would post their report of their monthly meetings.



Screen shots from WhatsApp discussions about the curriculum and the CoP groups.



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The curriculum has benefited mainly the students as they will now have English lessons that are more meaningful, including skills work and vocabulary and topics, not just grammar as before. All the teachers have also benefitted a lot because it is much more enjoyable and easier to teach with the new materials and curriculum and they are teaching real language use, not just grammar rules.

5. EVALUATION

- We sent the curriculum to curriculum expert Jenny Kinnear in South Africa for evaluation and she approved it and gave us some comments to improve.
- All teachers gave very positive feedback at the two sessions to introduce the new curriculum and they are all very happy to use it. Many more teachers have asked for copies of the curriculum.
- We have had many WhatsApp group discussions to evaluate and discuss the curriculum and provide opportunities for questions.
- The materials writing via WhatsApp group and emails has been very successful with several teachers producing their own materials. At the National Convention in July, Venancio Vaz presented his teaching materials and Braima Embalo presented his techniques for teaching vocabulary, both related to the new curriculum.
- ELTA-GB is taking the curriculum to the new government in December 2019 for approval.
- When we do the ELTA-GB observations in April 2020, we will see exactly how teachers are teaching with the new curriculum.

6. EXPENDITURE

Description	Breakdown	Total costs
November–June: planning and writing new National Curriculum and teaching materials	Weekly meetings to discuss, plan and write materials, with the support of Jenny Kinnear, Maria Brown and Linda Ruas who will check and comment on materials and curriculum	ELTA-GB contribution
May–one Saturday whole day to train teachers with new National Curriculum and teaching materials	Transport for 60 participants: £170 Lunch / juice / coffee for 100 people: £302	£472
Printing and distributing hard copies of the curriculum and materials for teachers as they cannot access them online	Producing materials for students with a view to creating a textbook – 4 (out of 6) levels x 60 schools – A5 96 pp booklets @ £6 each	£1,440
	Total	£1,912

Other: production of stationery, training manuals, and miscellaneous expenses: £150

Pens and notebooks for training session: £150



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7. DISSEMINATION TO A WIDER AUDIENCE

- a) Braima Embalo wrote a short article about the National Curriculum project for the IATEFL GISIG Joint Newsletter, September 2019 to show what ELTA-GB are working on.
- b) Ali Djau and Mariza Mendes Cabral shared about the projects at the British Council / Hornby Regional Training event for West African TAs in Dakar, November 2019 to help other TAs with ideas on how they can apply too.
- c) Ali Djau and Mariza Mendes Cabral submitted a proposal to present about the project at AfricaTESOL in Abidjan, August 2020 to share good practice and encourage other TAs to do similar projects. The proposal was accepted but the AfricaTESOL conference was postponed to August 2021. We need to look for funding to help us go to this conference, and we could travel overland to make it cheaper.

8. OVERALL REFLECTIONS

We have learned a lot about what has to go into a curriculum and how to balance teaching and not just teach grammar as we did before. We have learned to organize material and plan lessons that all teachers can teach. We have also learned to work together and take responsibility for explaining and helping other teachers with the curriculum.

We had to get help from some people with more experience in curriculum planning, and we have learned a lot from Linda Ruas and also from Jenny Kinnear, Maria Brown and Julia Stanton. Sometimes it is difficult to understand exactly what other people mean and we have improved our language skills interacting with these people who have supported us. We have also become more energetic and independent, not relying on outsiders but relying on ourselves to work out and discuss our teaching.

We are so grateful for this support because this project was exactly what our teachers needed to get motivated again and feel that they can affect their teaching. We have had a very difficult time in Guinea Bissau, with political instability and many months of strikes. Teachers lost motivation but now they are enthusiastic again about teaching. The teacher training is very basic in Guinea Bissau, but teachers are now developing a lot and even writing materials. Teachers now know that they don't need people from outside to train us, but we can do this ourselves, in groups. We still need people to correct our English often, but we can produce and discuss the ideas.

9. GOING FORWARD/ LOOKING AHEAD

In 2020 we will undertake another Hornby-funded TA project: 'Developing CoPs (communities of practice) to support secondary English teachers with the new curriculum'. The new secondary English curriculum will introduce many big changes in ELT in Guinea Bissau. Teachers were used to teaching only grammar, with very little vocabulary, skills work, functional language or topics. The curriculum, soon to be approved by the Ministry of Education, now includes all this, with materials to help teachers teach the new areas. This CoPs project will be a very big support to English teachers to help them teach with the new curriculum.