

What Educators Need?

Discussion of current practice, barriers, effective approaches, gaps in materials.

Notes from the World Café discussion, BRIDGE workshop, 25 September 2026

During the BRIDGE Educators' workshop "*Colonial histories, migration and belonging in learning spaces*", educators took part in a World Café discussion on teaching colonialism and its connections to the world today. Participants rotated between four tables, each exploring a different question.

This handout brings together the key points raised in each round.

1. What makes it difficult to teach colonialism and related histories?

- Developing a framework that includes multiple perspectives.
- Teaching the topic in a multicultural setting may put some students at risk.
- Making people care about the subject.
- Fear of reactions from colleagues who do not want to be seen as innovative.
- Framing the topic appropriately for the audience.
- Teachers' fear of being unable to contain the views and expressions of radicalised youth.
- Fear of reactions from parents.
- Teaching the topic without raising a bad conscience or feelings of guilt.
- A sense among some 'white' people that they are not allowed to talk about colonialism.
- Collective and national trauma that is still present.
- A significant amount of misinformation on the topic.
- Limited awareness that colonialism affects everyone, not only certain groups.
- Lack of time, as the topic is not part of exams.
- Lack of teaching materials in national languages.
- Colonialism is not properly addressed in school curricula, and where it is, it is often presented from a Western point of view.
- Fear of being targeted by one's own community, because of one's identity or the content of the class.
- The complexity of the topic, which can leave teachers feeling unprepared.



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2. What would make it easier to teach colonialism well?

- A chance to reflect on one's own positionality.
- Role play as a teaching method.
- Connecting the topic to everyday products.
- Step-by-step lesson plans.
- Support in using unconventional methods, such as the arts.
- More time.
- Creative freedom in how the topic is taught.
- Preparation for sensitive topics, including how to navigate conflict.
- NGOs available to support teachers during implementation.
- Concrete, practitioner-friendly resources rather than large handbooks.
- Teaching students how to engage in dialogue.
- Teaching soft skills to students.
- Interactive approaches rather than 'preaching'.
- A space or support group for sharing topics and difficulties.
- Establishing a safe space for discussion.
- Peer or self-help groups among teachers.
- A framework for bringing in multiple perspectives.
- Connecting the topic to everyday habits.
- Treating it as a cross-cutting topic that students encounter across subjects, for example through a question like 'What did you eat for breakfast?'
- Building background knowledge among teachers.

3. How do you currently teach colonialism and its connections to today's world?

- Through the lens of global security and global change.
- Games such as 'Create your own colony'.
- Gamification, to practise asking questions, critical discussion and soft skills.
- Role-play games: forming a tribe, making up rules, then mixing groups and discussing where the rules came from.
- Exploring what matters in one's own culture, for example through food, symbols or objects brought from home.
- Opening up the topic through a less threatening entry point.
- Music, including song lyrics that address social issues.
- Sport, for example football.
- Food and drink as a starting point for discussion.



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- Naming the 'elephant in the room' directly.
- Storytelling.
- Discussing the concept of 'othering'.
- Film and the arts.
- Inviting outside experts.
- Using existing resources, such as the work of Raj Patel.
- Some teachers still avoid the topic altogether.
- Offering it as an elective subject, or only touching on it briefly.
- Setting clear rules for a safe space.
- Assessing students' existing level of understanding before teaching.
- Using concrete examples and group reflection.
- First-hand experience, such as walking through the city and standing by a monument to discuss why it is there.
- Discussing shifts in power.

4. What helps students engage meaningfully with colonialism and other difficult historical topics?

- Making clear that opinions are valid, without correcting them outright.
- Changing the physical space for the discussion.
- An artistic approach to the topic.
- Helping students understand that colonialism can take new forms today, such as digital colonialism.
- Using everyday examples.
- Teaching students how to change perspective.
- Building a culture of trust in the classroom.
- Building bridges between past and present.
- Agreeing on common ground rules.
- Encouraging students to do their own research.
- Personal stories, for example from a person with a migrant background, shared directly in the classroom.
- A safe environment for discussion.
- Linking the topic to digital colonialism and to AI as a new form of colonialism.
- Finding points of connection, including through language.
- Breaking the topic down into smaller, manageable parts.



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- Showing that the world is not simply black and white, good or bad.
- Role play and debate, including arguing both for and against a position.
- Having realistic expectations.
- Remembering that a topic being difficult is not a reason to avoid it.
- Showing students why the topic matters.
- Encouraging personal involvement.
- Simulation exercises, for example inspired by Jane Austen.
- Communicating with students at their own level.
- Finding the right context for the discussion.
- Working in small groups.

Across the four discussions, a shared picture emerged. Teaching colonialism is difficult not because educators lack the will, but because the topic touches collective trauma, political sensitivities and real fears of saying the wrong thing, of losing control of the classroom, or of upsetting colleagues, parents or communities.

What consistently helps is not more theory but practical, creative tools: role play, storytelling, everyday entry points like food or music, and above all a safe space built on trust, dialogue and realistic expectations.

Participants also pointed to a broader shift in how the topic is understood. Colonialism is increasingly recognised not only as history, but as something that continues today in new forms, including through digital technology and AI.

The discussion suggests that teachers need less pressure to have all the answers, and more support from each other, from NGOs, and from clear, concrete resources, to open a genuinely difficult conversation well.



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