


THE BLACK CURRICULUM

BLACK BRITISH HISTORY
IN THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM
REPORT 2021



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CONTENTS

Foreword	03
About Us	03
Executive Summary	04
Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations	05
Introduction: Reflecting on Black History within the National Curriculum	06
Understanding the current curricula and the omission of Black British History	08
Broadening the National Curriculum to incorporate Black British History	09
The impact of Diversifying Pedagogy on delivering Black History within Schools	12
Understanding the ever-changing super-diverse Classroom	14
The Importance of mandatory and continuous Black History as History in Schools	16
Conclusions and Recommendations: Considering possible ways forward	19
Further Recommendations: Quick Wins in the Classroom	21
References	22



FOREWORD

LAVINYA STENNETT

Throughout centuries to present day, Black British history has been made, and unfolded in front of our very eyes in different spheres. Yet with no mandatory place on a highly Eurocentric national curriculum, Black British history continues to be viewed as insignificant. We have seen the effects of this omission, which pose a number of serious and dangerous political consequences. It has seen the arbitrary deportation of UK nationals, and not least the preservation of racism in British society.

Despite the findings of the Macpherson report, produced nearly 21 years ago which highlighted the importance of a diverse curriculum, no significant advancements have been made around the national curriculum or the teaching of Black history

in schools on a nationwide level. We have a long way to go to achieve the mandatory teaching of Black British history, and it is my hope that this report and the work of The Black Curriculum can contribute positively to such a change.

But first, there must be an acceptance of everyone's humanity in society and the restoration of systemic injustices - many of which have led us to this point. Such a symbolic move would require a serious consideration of racism as fact, and not merely incidental. The change that must occur in schools and on the curriculum must also be engaged with by a variety of stakeholders seeking a better world, in the aim of creating and shaping an equitable future the next generation will experience. ■

ABOUT US

Our vision is of...

An end to racial inequality in the classroom and a society where every young person is equipped with a full sense of identity and belonging regardless of their ethnicity.

Our Mission is...

To ensure that Black British history is taught all year round in schools across the UK and to support its delivery. We believe doing this will:

- **Prepare students to become fully rounded citizens, ready for an increasingly globalised world.**
- **Create a sense of identity and belonging among young people.**
- **Reduce the attainment gap.**

- **Improve social cohesion and accelerate systemic change.**

Our work...

We have developed, and currently deliver a series of programmes aimed at:

- **Equipping teachers with skills and resources to teach Black British history all year round.**
- **Making Black British history accessible to all ages.**
- **Equipping students with the skills and resources they need to succeed in the classroom and beyond.**
- **Making it easier for parents to talk about topics they may not feel comfortable with and helping them make the transition. ■**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explores how the current History National Curriculum systematically omits the contribution of Black British history in favour of a dominant White, Eurocentric curriculum, one that fails to reflect our multi-ethnic and broadly diverse society. During this particularly factious time within our societal history, there is an integral need for a curriculum that redefines conceptions of 'Britishness'. This redefined curriculum must align with our values and identities, and be integral when developing an inclusive classroom that establishes belonging and connectedness in its broadest sense. The History National Curriculum, in its current guise, continues to disassociate Britain from a legacy that has oppressed Black people historically in favour of a more romanticised, filtered legacy that positions Britannia as all-conquering and eternally embracive of ethnic and cultural difference.

This report stands on the shoulders of seminal research and contributions to the zeitgeist such as: *History Lessons: Teaching Diversity In and Through the History National Curriculum* by Claire Alexander, Debbie Weekes-Bernard and Joya Chatterji (Runnymede Perspectives Collection,

2015); *Race, Ethnicity and Equality in United Kingdom (UK) History: A Report and Resource for Change* by Hannah Atkinson, Suzanne Bardgett, Adam Budd, Margot Finn, Christopher Kissane, Sadiah Qureshi, Jonathan Saha, John Siblun and Sujit Sivasundaram (Royal Historical Society, 2017); and 'I FELT DEAD': *applying a racial microaggressions framework to Black students' experiences of Black History Month and Black History* by Nadena Doharty (Race, Ethnicity and Education Journal: Taylor and Francis, 2019).

Evaluating our current History National Curriculum provides opportunities to address issues of equality and diversity from a content and pedagogical perspective. Incorporating Black History in our classroom spaces, provides the catalyst for engaging in a truly diverse curricula. This redefined history curriculum, not only provides opportunities for pupils to be equipped with a diverse range of knowledge bases, but also teachers in widening their professional capabilities to engage all types of learners from a range of ethnically diverse backgrounds. This report reinforces the ideal that a diverse history curriculum is an essential vehicle for creating greater social cohesion and acceptance of racial and ethnic difference, and preparing young people to enter a diverse, multi-ethnic society. ■



SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report identifies a number of recommendations required within the education sector regarding the current History National Curriculum. These recommendations require policy, pedagogical and research intervention in attempting to broaden the current curricula available:

- 1) Developing a multi-cultural diverse History National Curriculum: Moving away from a very prescriptive curriculum requires teachers to re-imagine the History Curriculum within the UK, and consider how to develop a discourse that interweaves the contribution of Black History into the canon, as a body of legitimate knowledge.
- 2) Britain is multi-cultural and our past and present History National Curriculum must reflect this: Understanding that within an ever-changing multi-diverse society, conventions of Britishness will always require reconceptualising to incorporate all of our histories and stories. Our curriculum requires an acknowledgement of

the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity that comprises the tapestry of the British landscape and the varying identities associated within this.

- 3) Diversifying History teaching workforces: The dearth of Black History teachers within the teaching profession is problematic. When their shortage is aligned to discriminatory practices that exclude Black and ethnic minority teachers, this remains a significant factor in how the narrative of British history is purported within our classrooms.
- 4) Teaching Black history not only benefits Black students, but is beneficial to British society as a whole: Widening the scope of Black History in the curriculum can also support our society towards unlearning negative tropes and relearning more accurate discourses situated around race and racism ■

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all educators that truly believe in the ideal of a curriculum that reflects all sections of society. I would also like to extend my thanks to the tireless work of educators, activists, campaigners, historians, senior leaders and academics in their continued endeavour to address this plight in endorsing a curricula that must be reflective of our ever-increasingly diverse society. I would like to extend my gratitude to my close friend and colleague Dr Geeta Ludhra for reading through this report and supporting with the proof-reading and editing. Finally, I would like to extend the biggest thanks to The Black Curriculum for this amazing opportunity and privilege to work with them and pay tribute to their exceptional endeavour and much needed work. The education sector is eternally grateful to you all for your amazing leadership and inspiration. ■

THE BLACK CURRICULUM REPORT

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INTRODUCTION: REFLECTING ON BLACK HISTORY WITHIN THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Since the implementation of the Education Reform Act of 1988, history, along with the other foundation subjects, has been compulsory for all pupils aged 5 to 14 in maintained schools. Subsequent years have seen an increased focus on English, Science and Mathematics within schools, with an increased focus on aligning subjects to Fundamental British Values. Under a New Labour government, a decision was made to temporarily suspend the requirement to teach the full National Curriculum in foundation subjects (Ofsted, 2011). This suspension would be removed and since 2000, all state funded and maintained schools at primary and secondary level, have been required to deliver the full National Curriculum in all subjects, including history, albeit to varying levels of prescription and implementation since the 2014 National Curriculum (Department for Education, 2013).

Within the United Kingdom (UK), the education system has always been centred on a dominant White Eurocentric curriculum, which has often omitted the contribution of Black and ethnic minorities historically (Alexander et al., 2015; Mirza, 2015). As a consequence, racial and ethnic inequality continue to be a pressing issue facing history as a subject discipline. Bias and inequality are interwoven within multi-dimensional problems which have consequently contributed to the low uptake of History as a subject by Black and Minority Ethnic (BME)¹ pupils and low-levels of undergraduate admission to History as an academic discipline more generally (Atkinson et al., 2018).

This report explores the importance of delivering a broad and diverse curriculum within Britain, by illuminating issues of racial and ethnic equality

and diversity within the British education system. This report proffers that historically Black History has resided on the periphery and continues to remain a glaring omission from the British Education system.

Since the early 1990s, the National Curriculum has undergone several revisions and amendments, notably in 1995, 2000 and 2007, which impacted the teaching of history in primary and secondary schools in a number of ways. These changes affected a large portion of statutory content. Consequently, the interpretation of these revisions and amendments facilitated an ambiguity which lent itself to providing a 'dominant' canon of knowledge that centres and defines Britishness within a historical context, as specifically being a White phenomenon and not a multi-cultural one (Parekh et al., 2000). The shift away from being tethered to prescribed content in the revised 2014 National Curriculum, arguably should have provided an opportunity to build on diversifying the canons of knowledge provided within the History curriculum within a British context (Mirza, 2015). The subjective interpretation of this pedagogical freedom was a missed opportunity to diversify and strengthen the structure of the curriculum, by implementing the principles of integration, belonging and representation and appreciating the impact of multiculturalism on British History

The 2007 revision to the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3, reiterated the requirements that pupils were to be taught a substantial amount of British history, and that history was to be taught through a combination of overview, thematic and depth studies. What remains problematic is the definition of 'British history' and the 'key concepts' around Fundamental British Values which align

1. Commentators suggest the use of precise descriptions regarding the ethnic background when describing research findings (Bradby 2003; McKenzie and Crowcroft 1996). For the purposes of this paper, the term Black and Minority Ethnic and the abbreviation BME will be used to refer to people who are from ethnic backgrounds other than white British (including black African, African Caribbean, Asian, Latin-American, and other minority ethnic communities) with more precise descriptions used where appropriate.

exclusively to a celebration of the British Empire, and its oppressive and colonial past (Harris, 2013). The side-lining of political discussions about what ‘British values’ should encompass and represent has contributed to calls for a redefinition of Britishness that recognises and encompasses ethnically diverse identities within British culture. The need for pedagogically reimagining and repositioning British history to reflect these identities is essential, particularly with regards to what is being taught in the classroom, and pupils being able to see themselves and their histories reflected in the curriculum.

Within this report, the methodology employed involved engaging in content analysis of various literature on discourse around Black History within the National Curriculum, which included reports, policy documents, blogs, newspaper articles, podcasts, videos (vlogs) and academic papers. Engaging through these varying types of literature and commentaries, provided not only a navigational focus for this report, and illuminated some of the limitations within this area. Some of these limitations include the paucity of specific data that highlights some of the trends and patterns regarding Black History being taught in primary and secondary schools. While modest data was available regarding the patterns and trajectories for Black and Minority Ethnic undergraduate History students within higher education, recent data in the last 3-4 years was particularly harder to source for other tiers of education, with specific regards to the primary and secondary school sectors (Doharty, 2019). There were however more qualitative narratives which are equally as pertinent, and this report very much leans on those rich narratives to construct a discourse for why the History National Curriculum requires a wholesale transformation. This transformation

needs to embrace inclusivity (to include Black teachers), whilst centring and including Black History within the subject discipline, and also the wider curriculum. ■



UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT CURRICULA AND THE OMISSION OF BLACK BRITISH HISTORY

Attempts to modernise the History National Curriculum, in particular, have provoked widespread controversy which has challenged the idea of what British history should entail, and which narratives should comprise this history in considering how best to engage young people in increasingly (super)diverse classrooms regarding the subject area (Alexander et al., 2015; Atkinson et al., 2018). The need to reimagine a new curriculum provides both opportunities for, and constraints on, addressing issues of equality and diversity. The implementation of these concepts within British history curricula with regards to pedagogical practice and intervention in an increasingly fragmented school system, remains less clear. This requires critical platforms for discussion, which must acknowledge the omission of Black History within the UK education system (Alexander et al., 2015). Mobilising a curriculum that embraces Britain's diverse and multi-cultural history does not only hinge upon the content taught to pupils, but perhaps of equal importance, is how teachers are supported pedagogically and professionally to teach diverse curricula effectively, accurately and confidently (Alexander and Arday, 2015; D'Avray et al., 2013). The teaching and learning of diverse histories serves a dual purpose; it facilitates a sense of belonging and reflection. In addition, it can engage those disengaged minority ethnic students, in preparing them through adolescence to adulthood, in taking their place within a multicultural British society.

In facilitating a reimagined, multi-cultural version of British History, it is perhaps pertinent to draw on the aims of the most recent revision of the National Curriculum in 2014 which placed its focus on:

- **Promoting 'the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils' and 'of society';**

- **Preparing pupils 'for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life'**

(Department for Education, 2013).

The application of these aims, while situated within an inclusive discourse, clearly do not reflect the experiences of all students. In particular, the experiences of ethnic minority pupils who continually observe their histories omitted from British history, in favour of a polished and unstained history that is not accurate or reflective of multi-cultural Britain. Given that British history operates from a normative, utilitarian, 'top-down' agenda, it is perhaps inevitable that both the composition and ethical vision for the History National Curriculum, and its content, constitutes a narrow and filtered canon of 'essential knowledge' which centres White endeavour at the historical heart of human creativity, mobilization and achievement (Andrews, 2015; Cannadine et al., 2011). The rejection of Black History in favour of a narrow conception of Britishness, which dismisses the influence of Black people on this construct, has been publically contested by commentators, activists and educators alike. This has coincided with controversial revisions to the English Literature and History curricula, which have been heavily criticised for being insular and narrowly nationalistic (D'Avray et al., 2013; Harris and Reynolds, 2014). ■

BROADENING THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM TO INCORPORATE BLACK BRITISH HISTORY

The proposals for a revised history curriculum, in particular, have continued to garner critique and counter-critique from across the political and intellectual spectrum, and from academics, institutions, community groups and individuals, who have condemned and championed aspects of the current History Curriculum within the UK. Politically, much of this narrative has been steered by the government's vision of what should constitute British History in the 21st century (Atkinson et al., 2018). The prioritisation and conception of Britishness has very much been aligned to identity politics. This has recently been sustained by a nationalist and populist rhetoric that portrays White British history as somehow now being diluted and suppressed within an ever-increasing diverse classroom space (Mirza and Meetoo, 2012).

Former Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove's² 2014 History curriculum was focused on the celebration of British history and 'the distinctive role of these islands in the history of the world', as a means of 'ensuring today's young people are prepared for their duties as citizens'. Essentially, this viewpoint represented a retreat to a more conservative and traditionalist view of history within the British context as a unilinear narrative of national destiny and progress that was rather selective in nature (Alexander et al., 2015; Mandler, 2014). The proposed reforms by Gove encompassed both content and method, while focusing on political institutions, grand events and powerful individuals considered to have influenced British history.

Education remains a central microcosm of society, and when thought of in this way, the onus to reflect the hybridity of historical identities and diversities is paramount. The idea of British History

is interspersed with several tensions, one being Britain's historical inability to accept its multi-ethnic, diverse population. This has resulted in an exclusion and lack of recognition regarding more ethnically and socially diverse conversations, which centre the positive impact of migrants, Black and minority ethnic individuals, and religious communities who largely continue to remain on the margins of the nation, rather than an integral part of British history.

The momentum gathered by historians, activists, academics and educators to move beyond confining Black British History to one month of the year, has been essential in shifting the balance between 'British' and 'world' history, with the central premise for this knowledge being that 'students should learn about British history, while engaging in the knowledge of other histories and cultures that comprise this legacy (Arday, 2019; D'Avray et al., 2013). The importance attributed to engaging with other histories, particularly those that comprise other cultures within Britain, that move beyond just encounters and interactions with the British Isles, is as vital as knowledge of foreign languages to enable British citizens to understand the full variety and diversity of human life (D'Avray et al., 2013). It is also important for historical discourses concerning Black people to move beyond a knowledge base that purely focuses on slavery. While this is a central tenet in the history of the Black diaspora, the contribution of Black people should not only be confined to this narrative, as the contribution of this diaspora is far wider in its reaching that this specific narrative alone.

2. Michael Gove was the Former Secretary of State for Education. He is a Conservative politician, and was part of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government in 2010.

BROADENING THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM TO INCORPORATE BLACK BRITISH HISTORY

Moreover, geo-political shifts in globalization and migration require British citizens to understand the full variety and diversity of British life and history, which moves beyond the traditional focus of The Tudors, and The First and Second World War - the latter historically omitting the contribution of people of colour to the British Army (Mandler, 2014).

Indeed, current concerns regarding the existing curriculum's lack of diversity, and particularly the place of 'Black History' can perhaps best be conceptualised in the success of campaigns

such as Operation Black Vote's campaign to retain key black British figures such as Mary Seacole and Olaudah Equiano in the current version of curriculum, and provide a space that acknowledges the contribution of these influential individuals within British History.

Recognising the diversity of Britain's national past becomes increasingly more important in a super-diverse population attempting to discern its past, present and future. The most recent Census data shows that 20 per cent of people in England and Wales identified with a group other than



White British, with over 8 million people (around 14 per cent) categorising themselves as Black or minority ethnic (ONS, 2011). This category itself is characterized by increased internal diversity, with a significant increase in African, Arab and ‘other Asian’ communities and those identifying as of mixed race (Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity, 2012a). The relatively younger demographic of this community is reflected in the education system, and in particular the state funded sector at which the National Curriculum is targeted. BME children and young people constitute nearly 17 per cent of the 0–15 age range of England and Wales, making up 23.2 per cent of state funded secondary and 27.6 per cent of state-funded primary schools—a proportion which is considerably higher in urban areas throughout the UK, where most BME communities reside (Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity, 2012b; ONS, 2011).

The demographic of BME children heavily situated within urban areas raise concerns around a curriculum that should be inspiring a broader worldview, while developing a sense of citizenship and belonging that are aligned to a strong sense of national identity, cultural integration and interconnectedness in a super-diverse United Kingdom (Harris, 2013). There has been a tension which situates diversity and equality alongside civic conformity and social cohesion. This tension has provided a site for Black History within schools to be situated and interwoven into subjects such as Drama, Citizenship, Personal and Social Development, which may reside within ‘the hidden curriculum’. Subjects within these holistic disciplines place a particular emphasis on pastoral and personal development. In this capacity, these subjects often adopt a second or third tier status in comparison to core subjects such as English, Maths and Science. The importance associated with featuring Black History in all facets of the

curriculum, positions the Black and ethnic minority contribution to British society as impactful and significant in shaping the dialogue for diversification and cultural integration. This should arguably extend beyond the subject discipline of just history (Mendler, 2014). Space continues to be fought for, in attempting to include key black historical figures into the British History curriculum, such as Olaudah Equiano, Fanny Eaton, Evelyn Dove, Lilian Bader, Olive Morris, Mary Seacole and American civil rights campaigner Rosa Parks. The need for a more critical engagement with issues around Empire and slavery is essential in understanding Britain’s troubled and oppressive history, in its absolute unfiltered entirety.

The balancing of British histories and world histories is central to this position, and more specifically Britain’s unfiltered impact on those global histories. While aspects of the curriculum within primary and secondary curricula engage with other canons of historical knowledge which have typically addressed aspects of Ancient Egypt to Greek and Roman mythology, explorations of other historical phenomena remain understudied or acknowledged - for example, Islamic, Indigenous populations, Pacific Islanders, Chinese, Mayan and African civilisations, and Mughal, Russian and Chinese Empires at Key Stages 2 and 3 (Alexander et al., 2015; Atkinson et al., 2018). In reflecting cultural hybridity, these subject canons would also need to reside alongside historical integrations of British Imperialism. ■

THE IMPACT OF DIVERSIFYING PEDAGOGY ON DELIVERING BLACK HISTORY WITHIN SCHOOLS

The infusing of these bodies of knowledge does require a contextualisation of concepts that draw links between local, national and global histories, that are able to reflect the varying diasporas' that encompass the diverse classroom. The unpacking of various civilizations and histories that moves beyond surface engagement is integral with regards to proving a broad, worldview that will help individuals to circumnavigate a multi-cultural society. A fundamental aspect to progressing this endeavour and pedagogy regarding teachers' capability and capacity to competently teach different histories, particularly that of Black History, is a requirement for targeted training as an integral part of their professional development. Historically, this has not been provided during Initial Teacher Education programmes.

Briefing teachers and educators on the nuances associated within ethnic and racial diversity, is absolutely central to mobilising confidence, and to address and unpack issues in relation to Black History teaching from a critical perspective (Weekes-Bernard, 2014). Instilling this type of capital requires targeted funding streams that recognise the importance of teachers being able to understand and deliver a diverse curriculum that acknowledges the varying and complex histories that comprise Britain. The downplaying of internal histories coincides with the unpreparedness pedagogues encounter when engaging with the subject area. While headteachers' funding streams are very much dictated by government and Local Authority's, funding needs to be ring-fenced to prioritise this issue in attempting to ensure that pupils are exposed to the full range of diverse histories, particularly those that transpire internally within Britain (Harris and Reynolds, 2014). This engagement could also be facilitated by engaging with unconventional modes of teaching

delivery which may involve wider engagement with individuals from various ethnic backgrounds within the local community that may be able to provide some support to teachers in developing this type of pedagogy. When diversifying pedagogy, there is an onus for external quality assurers such as Ofsted, to address individual teacher and school's preferences for selecting preferred module content that normally ascribes to White European history. The legacy of this selective process has meant that rather than an insistence on incorporating world and diverse histories at the core of the discipline, schools have tended to select courses that are not inclusive, nor reflective of the ever-increasing diverse student body (Mirza, 2015).

Centring an historical guise on local and national history provides opportunities to explore multiculturalism and migration in depth. A notable tension and hesitation that emerges when considering this discourse resides in constrained and teleological rhetoric concerning social change, particularly when Black and ethnic minority groups are positioned as 'space invaders' or 'outsiders' (Alexander et al., 2015; Harris, 2013; Puwar, 2004). When this discourse occupies the centre, it becomes hard to move beyond a migrant history, rather than positioning migrants as having made a significant contribution to British society historically (Harris, 2013). Aspects of this inevitably arc back to the autonomy of individual teachers, and schools subjectively select components of their history curricula that speak to dominant, filtered canons of knowledge (Doharty, 2019). The willingness of teachers to be able to teach and deliver aspects of curricula that engage specifically with diversification is problematic. There has been a continuous deficit regarding the mobilisation of Black History in schools which has seen access and availability to appropriate resources, either

limited or non-existent (Atkinson et al., 2018). This significantly impacts learning experiences, and stunts the growth and development of teachers' professional practice. Similarly, this raises issues

around the extent to which teachers are willing and able to teach the diverse options available, and access appropriate resources to support less mainstream modules (Historical Association, 2011). ■



UNDERSTANDING THE EVER-CHANGING SUPER-DIVERSE CLASSROOM

Understandably, there has always been a nervousness amongst many teachers that accompanies discussions or facilitations of race history or politics in educational spaces. Research continues to show that often teachers are uncomfortable and ill-equipped to deal with contexts concerning race and racism; ethnic difference and use of correct terms or language (Arday, 2019; Cannadine et al., 2011; Harris and Clarke, 2011; Mirza 2015). Recent shifts in attitudes towards addressing aspects of race and racism within British society have seen Initial

Teacher Education programmes attempting to acknowledge the importance of this issue, as campaigns around 'Decolonising the Curriculum' continue to gain more momentum (Alexander and Arday, 2015; Mirza, 2015). This has coincided with a new generation of educators feeling more confident to challenge, address and offer Black History as a legitimate body of knowledge within the curriculum. Despite these modest advancements pedagogically, it is perhaps important to make the distinction between preparedness to teach a diverse range of pupils from ethnic groups, and



being competently able to teach about cultural diversity or diverse histories to a high standard (Mendler, 2014). Other factors that will permeate this context will be situated around gaining institutional resources and support in developing these pedagogical components. This becomes further compounded in observing the dearth of textbooks and online resources provided by Exam Boards in the United Kingdom when trying to mobilise Black History in the National Curriculum (Cannadine et al., 2011; Doharty, 2019).

Furthermore, when considering how current school resources impact this dialogue, it is important to note that the current composition of Exam Board materials and assessments are also complicit in undermining the presence of Black History, and ensuring it remains on the periphery of our knowledge canons. In attempting to shape a body of knowledge that does not have its longevity compromised within the National Curriculum, a regulatory body is required to ensure that schools adhere to this particular endeavour. The general autonomy of our education system in the UK, while advantageous, can be exploited in favour of a more reductionist and centralised curriculum that omits other disciplines and knowledges, since not all schools within the UK are required to follow the National Curriculum in its absolute entirety. The implementation of a regulatory body that quality assures the types of histories being delivered, would significantly advance this plight by ensuring school accountability and professional development content, in teaching Black History within the curriculum.

There is an emotional baggage that is probably embodied and carried by Black and ethnic minority teachers attempting to present and deliver Black History, within the confines of a very Eurocentric curriculum. Articulating discourses

around diverse histories can cause trepidation for teachers able to engage in this dialogue, and for those teachers unable to engage in this, because of a lack of knowledge and confidence. Subject knowledge is tethered to confidence, and the absence of this pedagogical capital has significant implications for teachers opting not to engage in providing a diverse curriculum that recognises the impact of pupils being able to see their lived experiences and histories reflected within the curriculum. There is also an aspect of Black History that becomes a vehicle for promoting greater social cohesion, however such expectations must also be managed against the new iterations of the National Curriculum which can range from being broad to narrow in focus, restricting teachers pedagogically (Atkinson et al., 2018). Many aspects of the curriculum do continue to eulogise Middle-class White men and women, while intersectional aspects such as race, faith, gender, class and religion continue to reside on the periphery. Diversifying the History National Curriculum also provides an opportunity for pupils and teachers to become more knowledgeable about structural and institutional racism in all of its insidious forms. This could also become a preventative measure by equipping individuals with the knowledge to understand how racial inequality has pervaded historically within British society. The rationale provided attempts to place an increased emphasis on encouraging teachers to engage in pedagogies that facilitate Britain's increasingly diverse classrooms (Alexander et al., 2015; Harris and Reynolds, 2014). ■

THE IMPORTANCE OF MANDATORY AND CONTINUOUS BLACK HISTORY AS HISTORY IN SCHOOLS

Understanding the importance of Black History within the British curricula moves beyond condensing the history of Black people to just one month (October every year) in the UK. The mandatory aspect of Black History should be positioned as essential knowledge that provides the contextual and historical backdrop to how generations of Black people, as far back as the 1700s, have shaped constructions of 'Britishness' that moves beyond eulogising white endeavour as the only significant contribution to British history (Atkinson et al., 2018; Mirza, 2015).

The implications from a pedagogical perspective require teachers and school leaders to also take initiative, and this requires an ownership and responsibility of one's professional development, and planning a curriculum that is flexible to meet different needs and approaches. The diverse classroom requires teachers to consider how they as professionals can connect to pupils, and reflect curricula that maps the learners' histories, by attempting to create a sense of identity and belonging for those individuals within British society.

The problem that persists has been reflected in calls to diversify the history curriculum, against opposition to unpacking the contribution of Black people in regards to British History. The rejection of this history amounts to a clamour in some parts, to maintain a whitewashed history of Britain. Engaging in a curriculum that systematically removes positive reference to the contributions of Black and Asian people to British history, is a disservice to learners, particularly as one of the primary purposes of education is to prepare individuals to take their place within society (Alexander et al., 2015; Atkinson et al., 2018). By side-lining such narratives, the current History National Curriculum also belittles the revolutionary

movements of the working classes, as well as denigrating the achievements of women in history (particularly Black women), in favour of celebrating predominantly white middle-class men. The re-telling of British History has been romanticised, and educators can often be guilty of suppressing race and racism, by presenting a discourse that situates Britain as ending the Slave trade, while omitting the fact that Britain was a major slaving power that grew significant, generational wealth from the profits of trading in human lives (Andrews, 2015; Mirza, 2015). This often filtered history, facilitated by the National Curriculum, positions Britain as having created medicine and technology, while granting independence to commonwealth countries, without highlighting the brutal subjugation techniques deployed in acquiring those territories in the first instance.

The current Government, or indeed any government that precedes the current incumbents, must seek to build a curriculum that portrays a rich, detailed, chronological history of the world, one that brings into focus, the ongoing interactivity of diasporas that contributed to the Britain we reside in today (Atkinson et al., 2018; Mender, 2014). A central tenet of an inclusive curriculum, is one that fosters belonging, while forging connectivity, rather than making Black and Asian pupils feel like internal immigrants within the British Isles. While narratives of Britishness are espoused through valour and trial, there also needs to be a recognition and acknowledgment within the current curriculum, that before we became British, we were Africans and Asians, with vibrant stories, traditions and cultures. These dimensions deserve a prominent place within our curriculum, one that moves away from denigration, belittlement and relegation to the footnotes (Alexander et al., 2015).

In considering aspects of Black underachievement

in schools within England, a key tenet in this phenomena concerns building a curriculum that reflects and addresses the needs of Black pupils. The continual absence of Black History within the National Curriculum reproduces dominant knowledge that becomes exclusionary, while subliminally facilitating low expectations by some teachers, which subsequently damage pupils' motivation and confidence. This plants the seeds for under-achievement throughout the school journey (Weekes-Bernard, 2014).

The focus on learners understanding of history is important, particularly in light of the differences between professional, societal and public discourses (Harris 2013, Osler 2009); the professional discourse of history educators often focuses on developing students' understanding of history as a discipline, whereas the public discourse often focuses on the unifying capacity of history to foster a sense of national identity. This component is particularly significant in mobilising ethnic minority learners to challenge (and disrupt) how their histories are represented and delivered within subject disciplines.

Fundamentally, these debates assist in situating the nature and purpose of Black History within the school curricula, while endorsing an impassioned argument to extend the narratives of influential Black people beyond the month of October (Black History Month in the UK). At the heart of the debate, thoughts must lean towards what it means to think about our society historically. This thinking must move away from normative, historical thinking that has been based upon a detailed mastery of White history (Hirsch, 1987). For others, it is about understanding the potency of an inclusive history as a construct for the way in which the past comes together (Lee, 1992). It is however, important to note the success of Black History

Month since its inception in July 1987 by Akyaaba Addai-Sebo within the UK (initially beginning in London, and then throughout the UK) in positively centring and reflecting on the diverse histories of those from African and Caribbean descent, and perhaps more pertinently heralding the achievements and contributions of Black people to the social, political, economic and cultural development of the UK. Other successes include an annual acknowledgement of the importance of Black culture and its impact on Britishness, and a celebration of the arts and the Black contribution to this phenomena.

While this report does advocate a boarding of the History Curriculum to engage with Black History as a vehicle for creating social cohesion in these politically fractious times, caution must also be applied (Harris, 2013). There is a potential danger



THE IMPORTANCE OF MANDATORY AND CONTINUOUS BLACK HISTORY AS HISTORY IN SCHOOLS

of utilising Black History as a means of inculcating a sense of social cohesion that may result in an exploitative and simplistic version of the past, which in turn can present an exclusive view of the past, rather than acting as a potential unifying focus. This could potentially result in further cultural alienation for ethnic minority individuals and groups. From a theoretical and pedagogical perspective, this notion is best articulated through the framework identity theory. Tajfel and Turner's (1979) theory about social identity for example, would suggest that the way students self-identify and relate to the past could create in- and out-groups, depending upon whether students feel the history that is taught includes them. Harris (2013) explains that this aspect of identity is central in raising under-achievement, particularly for Black learners who have historically had to reside within an education system in the UK that systematically disadvantages them. Additionally, this is important because society is inherently diverse, and there is a danger that simple assumptions about history and what should be studied, and what it will achieve, are often untested and unquestioned. This leads to an elevation of 'dominant' knowledge that occupies the canon as the only form of legitimate knowledge (Harris, 2013).

Research undertaken in an American study by Epstein (2009), highlighted some of the tensions and concerns illuminated within this report, in relation to the delivery of Black History in schools. This study explored history teaching, and specifically how pupils from different ethnic backgrounds responded to the history curriculum content. The findings indicated a stark racial divide between 'white' and 'black' students in their response to the history curriculum. 'White' students perhaps unsurprisingly felt comfortable with the content of the curriculum, as it reflected

a narrative which aligned with their own received histories from dominant discourses, such as the media, family and other sources which serve to reinforce their perceived sense of themselves within the society they live in (Epstein, 2009; Harris and Reynolds, 2014; Harris, 2013).

In contrast, 'black' students felt alienated by the curriculum as it presented a narrative which did not align with their experiences and received histories within their families and community. There was a notable absence of their history which resembled a story of struggle and inequality, often at the hands of White oppressors, which in many cases persisted into the present, through intergenerational historical trauma which is still present today. This sense that the specific content of a curriculum can alienate groups has been shown in other studies (for example, Nieto 2004), and it has been argued that the curriculum presents powerful messages to young people which can reinforce particular types of knowledge taught in schools. Essentially, this does become a form of cultural capital, particularly in the forming of social constructions that reflect the values, perspectives, and experiences of the dominant ethnic group. The research undertaken, concluded that this transpires by systematically ignoring or diminishing the validity and significance of life experiences and contributions of ethnic and cultural groups that historically have been vanquished, marginalised, and silenced. ■

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: CONSIDERING POSSIBLE WAYS FORWARD

Black History is integral to the construction of British societal history; as much of the British context is built upon the labour of Black people and their contribution in this regard is immeasurable. There is a connection between the comparative lack of diversification within the teaching profession and the narrow, White Eurocentric curriculum on offer. The lack of diversity in teaching spaces very much controls the narrative and knowledge that is legitimised, proffered and prioritised. History teacher education continues to experience issues concerning diversity, and generally there remains a large under-representation of ethnic minority trainee teachers in this area. According to the Runnymede Trust, only 11 trainees from 543 teacher trainees in 2013 came from Black African, South Asian (Bangladeshi and Pakistani descent) and mixed raced backgrounds (Graduate Teacher Training Registry, 2014). While there has been a marginal increase in Black and ethnic minority teacher trainees since 2013, this still remains disparagingly low within the sector. The paucity of diversity among teachers also points to the relatively small numbers of BME students undertaking History at university undergraduate level, with only 8.7 per cent making up this figure within the UK (Alexander et al., 2015).

Moving forward, it is imperative for educational institutions to examine and consider issues of representation and diversification particularly in relation to the continued dearth of ethnic minority teaching staff. This is significant in framing the dialogue of Black History, with regards to bringing these perspectives from the margins to the centre. Where possible institutions must actively work harder to ensure where possible that 'Black actors' proffer this narrative, and take ownership of this change in reclaiming how the story of 'Black History' is told. In terms of developing

confidence in White colleagues to engage in fruitful experiences of teaching and delivering Black History within schools, the sharing of good practice and engaging in unpacking White privilege and exploring positionality, are absolutely integral to this experience. The need to develop a history curriculum that moves beyond surface approaches to explore Black History, in favour of generating cultures and curricula that is cognizant of increasingly diverse classroom spaces, is pivotal in re-imagining a more inclusive history curriculum.

While there will always continue to be significant obstacles to implementing a historical curriculum that is reflective of our multi-cultural British populace, there are a variance of histories and stories that require telling in attempting to foster a sense of belonging and cultural integration. The final part of this report outlines some suggestions for consideration, as a point of reference to facilitate practical and pedagogical interventions, in relation to the teaching and delivery of Black History within UK schools. In moving this discourse forward, it is important to note that these recommendations are by no means exhaustive, but rather a point of reference for educators, school leaders and policy-makers:

- Developing a multi-cultural diverse National Curriculum: Moving away from a highly prescriptive curriculum requires teachers to re-imagine the History Curriculum within the UK current context, and consider how to develop a discourse that interweaves the contribution of Black History to the canon, as a body of legitimate knowledge. A significant aspect to this is the professional development of teachers to become proficient, knowledgeable and confident in delivering all aspects of Black History, particularly within a British context. This requires Initial Teacher Education

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: CONSIDERING POSSIBLE WAYS FORWARD

programmes having this as a quintessential component of their programmes. This also requires teachers to take an interest in engaging with inclusive and diverse dialogues that comprise our British history.

- Britain is multi-cultural and our past and present History National Curriculum must reflect this: Understanding that within an ever-changing multi-diverse society, conventions of Britishness will always require reconceptualising to incorporate all of our histories and stories. Our curriculum requires an acknowledgement of the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity that comprises the tapestry of the British landscape and the varying identities associated within this. Embracing diversity as a concept that moves beyond surface level engagement is crucial because it requires educators to have difficult and uncomfortable discussions about Britain's traumatic and oppressive past as a significant factor in its history, particularly at the expense of Black and ethnic minority communities. These discussions allow our history to be considered from an unfiltered perspective, rather than the current romanticised notion of the all-encompassing, all-conquering notion of the British Empire.
- Diversifying History teaching workforces: The dearth of Black History teachers within the teaching profession is problematic. When this is aligned to discriminatory practices that exclude Black and ethnic minority teachers, this remains a significant factor in the narrative of British history that gets purported within our classrooms. The education sector must focus on how to attract the next generation of Black historians to the teaching profession, by ensuring that they are professionally

supported through Initial Teacher Education programmes, and beyond, to develop pedagogically. Black educators have historically been overburdened with excessive workloads and emotional 'baggage', and experienced restricted opportunities for career progression. Therefore, school leaders must provide Black educators with the necessary resources to broaden aspects of the existing history curriculum, in collaboration with their White colleagues, in relation to integrating Black History into the History National Curriculum, and across subjects.

- Teaching Black History not only benefits Black and minority ethnic students, but it is also beneficial to British society as a whole. The cognition which ensues, allows us as a nation to collectively pause and critically reflect on race relations. Widening the scope of Black History study can also help society to unravel and unlearn many of the racial stereotypes (and intergenerational trauma) that linger into the present. Attempts to advance Black British History have been routinely omitted from our existing history textbooks. In broadening the scope for a more inclusive curriculum that encompasses all our histories as British citizens, textbooks must move beyond anecdotal and factually altered accounts of Black History within the British context, one that traditionally centres a dominant Eurocentric canon. ■

FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS: QUICK WINS IN THE CLASSROOM

- 1) Infuse Black History into the curriculum all year-round: Students should learn throughout the year and throughout all disciplines about the accomplishments, experiences, and perspectives of Black people.
- 2) English: Provide students with texts (poetry, fiction, and non-fiction) written by Black people.
- 3) Mathematics and Science: Refer learners to famous Black scientists and mathematicians throughout teaching episodes. For example, teachers can explore with pupils the contributions of Black people in agricultural science and throughout the last 100 years globally. The rich history of math in sub-Saharan Africa in the areas of geometry, graphs, and numerical systems are also areas for exploration by teachers with pupils.
- 4) Use texts by Black authors, in every discipline: Educators should avoid confining History to textbooks written by just White scholars. The works of Mark Twain, Charles Dickens, and William Shakespeare in English class, while important, must also be read beside the seminal works of Langston Hughes, Malorie Blackman, Candice Carty-Williams, Maya Angelou, or Toni Morrison. Students should be introduced to texts by Black authors that speak to Black experiences, Black perspectives, and Black accomplishments. These authors remind learners and teachers that Black excellence is not confined to just sports and entertainment. ■

BIOGRAPHY

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