Chapter 11
Curriculum Diversity and Social Justice Education: From New Labour to Conservative Government Control of Education in England

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Abstract A retrospective lens is applied in this chapter to understand former New Labour government's reasoning for advocating an ethnically diverse curriculum to be delivered in English schools; the role it saw the National Curriculum as playing in British society and in raising the attainment of ethnically diverse groups; together with how such expectations led to the commissioning of two National Curriculum diversity reports. Drawing on social justice perspectives, the chapter discusses how New Labour's emphasis on recognising ethnically diverse students and British identities in the curriculum was rejected by subsequent Coalition and Conservative governments in favour of the negative positioning of student diversity through the Prevent agenda under the guise of threats to national security. The chapter concludes with discussion of the 'public good' and how an ethnically diverse curriculum can enhance the equality both of opportunity and of outcomes.

Introduction

In 2005, London was brought to a standstill by the bombing of the London underground train system carried out by a group of young British Muslim men. This occurred at a time when the New Labour government, who were in power at the time, were already concerned about community cohesion between the majority White British population and Bangladeshi and Pakistani Muslim communities in three northern English towns (Oldham, Burnley, Bradford) where riots had occurred between these communities in 2001. Commissioned by the British government to investigate the cause of the northern town riots, Ted Cantle (2001) found that White British and Muslim communities were living polarised lives and using different

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services, including those for education. This led Cantle (2001, p. 11) to argue that local community cohesion plans should be developed, which 'foster understanding and respect, and break down barriers'. He went on, 'the opportunity should be taken to develop a programme of "myth busting"'. Given this recommendation, it is unsurprising that after the London bombings the New Labour government saw a greater urgency in schools in England developing their understanding of the factors undermining community cohesion, particularly amongst school students.[1] As such, New Labour wanted schools to develop aspects of the curriculum in English schools which promoted an understanding of ethnic and cultural diversity, and of inclusive British identities that encompassed both majority and minority ethnic communities. The government saw such knowledge as both necessary and essential to 'serving the public good', and in the best interest of society. In other words, the survival of a cohesive society depended on the development of such knowledge, but for this to be accepted by educationalists across the country an educational research study (outlined below) was needed to inform the government's approach.

In examining curriculum diversity, this chapter focuses on the English education system, primarily because England is the most ethnically diverse of the constituent UK countries (i.e. Scotland, Wales, England, Northern Ireland), with over 20% of the population from a minority ethnic background (ONS 2012), and it has the largest numbers of school students from minority ethnic communities attending primary (33.5%) and secondary (31.3%) schools (DfE 2019f), as outlined in Table 11.1.

Equally important, after Asian[2] students, Table 11.1 shows that the next largest minority ethnic group studying in English schools are 'White non-British pupils'

Table 11.1 Percentage of pupils by ethnic origin in state-funded schools in England

Ethnicity	Primary	Secondary
White British	65.5	67.0
White non-British	8.1	6.2
Asian	11.2	11.3
Black	5.5	6.0
Mixed	6.3	5.5
Chinese	0.5	0.4
Any other	2.0	1.9
Unclassified	1.0	1.7

Source: DfE (2019f)

[1] The UK government only has responsibility for education in England (powers are devolved to the governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), but assumes a responsibility for 'British Identity'.

[2] 'Asian' in Britain usually refers specifically to people of South Asian heritage (Pakistanis, Indians, Bangladeshis and Sri Lankans). Government surveys (e.g. DfE 2020) that collect ethnicity data from those willing to give it currently obtain data according to the primary group 'Asian or Asian British', and then the secondary groups 'Indian', 'Pakistani', 'Bangladeshi', and 'Any other Asian background'. 'Chinese' is a separate category, not included in Asian. This is different from usages in other countries; for example, in the USA, 'Asian' is used to refer to people of East Asian heritage.

which emphasises that diversity is not just related to skin colour. Alongside ethnic diversity, over 300 languages other than English are spoken by minority ethnic students in English schools (DfE 2018e). Such ethnic and linguistic diversity is not, however, evenly spread across all English schools: depending on geographical location, some English schools can be described as predominantly White and monolingual, some have a more even ethnic mix, whilst others are largely minority ethnic (ONS 2012). One of the challenges presented in educating ethnically diverse students is that the teaching profession in many parts of England is predominantly White[3] (NASUWT 2017; DfE 2020), and while some may have experience/understanding of ethnic and cultural diversity present in England, this is not true of all teachers (Maylor et al. 2003; Maylor et al. 2006; Lander, 2014), and some parents are wary of the school community becoming any less White (Maylor 2019).

The New Labour government's concern about teachers' and school students' understanding of cultural diversity and community cohesion, discussed in more detail in the following section, led to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) commissioning two studies: Keith Ajegbo et al. (2007) and Uvanney Maylor et al. (2007). Maylor's team were appointed to provide a literature review and case study research to support the work of Ajegbo et al.*'s* Diversity and Citizenship Curriculum Review Group. The research brief covered:

- curriculum diversity, identity construction and conceptions of British identities in published literature;
- where and how the National Curriculum provided insights into ethnic and cultural diversity and British identities (local and national);
- how teachers used the National Curriculum to promote school students' understanding about the UK as an ethnically and culturally diverse society and its longstanding[4] nature; and
- how the citizenship education curriculum (predominantly taught in secondary schools) facilitated students' understanding of British identities as comprising both majority White and people from Black and Minority Ethnic[5] (BME)

[3] Workforce data collected by the Department for Education (2020) in England show that in 2018, 85.1% of classroom teachers identified as White British and 5.6% as White Irish/Other: 90.7% White in total.

[4] Black people are not recent arrivals to the UK as it is often assumed. Black Africans first arrived in England as soldiers in the Roman army in the third century, 350 years before the English are known to have been in England. Black Africans have been recorded in England in greater numbers since the Elizabethan times – and not all were in subservient positions or enslaved, often they were skilled and highly regarded craftspeople; an example of which is the King's trumpeter, John Blanke in the early sixteenth century (of whom there are two portraits). There is historical evidence of Black Africans having married English natives, which means that many 'White' Britons today will have at least one of them as a (distant) ancestor of Black Africans. A detailed analysis of the history of Black people in the UK can be found in Fryer (2018).

[5] Black and Minority Ethnic refers to people who would describe themselves as Black African, African–Caribbean, Mixed White and Black, Black Other; Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Mixed White and Asian (ONS 2012).

backgrounds, and the contributions of BME communities to the development of the UK (economically and culturally).

Preoccupied with engendering a British identity through the school curriculum, the New Labour government sought through this study to understand teachers' and senior management's perceptions of the viability of adding a 'British identities and [common] British values' strand to the secondary citizenship curriculum, and what that content might entail. At that time the government had not defined British values, though a speech by Tony Blair in 1997 offers some indications of their thinking: he said his party had the values of 'compassion; of social justice; of the struggle against poverty and inequality; of liberty; of basic human solidarity; and … these are indeed the best of British values too' (Blair 1997).

Maylor et al.'s (2007) study comprised six school case studies (three primary, three secondary) conducted in regions that were both predominantly White (e.g. the North East, South West) and ethnically diverse (e.g. East and West Midlands, the South East) – locations based on census data current at the time. This range of ethnic diversity allowed for student and teacher experience of multi-ethnic Britain and British identities to be examined alongside their experience of an ethnically diverse curriculum. A qualitative interpretive approach (Cresswell 2013) was adopted with in-depth interviews conducted with 15 teachers and focus group discussions with 95 students (of whom 51 defined themselves as White British and the rest variously identified as White European and BME).

This chapter sets out New Labour's policies at the time of the research, Maylor et al.'s findings and how these resulted in policy changes. It explores the benefits of a social justice approach in implementing an ethnically diverse school curriculum to enhance BME student attainment. The change in policy relating to diversity following the election of a Coalition government in 2010 is discussed. The chapter concludes with a review of the ways in which curriculum diversity should be perceived as a 'public good'.

New Labour and curriculum diversity and Maylor et al.'s findings

Following the findings of Cantle (2001), the New Labour government was aware that the National Curriculum was ethnocentric, and encouraged schools to cover culture and ethnic diversity within the core curriculum subjects (English, mathematics and science) as well as in history, citizenship education and religious education. New Labour's emphasis was then on recognising the identities of both ethnically diverse and British students in the curriculum (Maylor et al. 2009). To foster knowledge in this area amongst teachers, continuing professional development sessions were funded by Local Education Authorities. For trainee teachers and teacher educators New Labour funded the development of culturally diverse teaching resources (creating culturally relevant knowledge and skills concerning race and ethnicity,

social class, bi/multilingual learners, religious diversity, Refugees and Asylum seekers, Travellers and Gypsy Roma, and challenging racism) and exemplar scenarios through the Multiverse initiative,[6] a professional resource network for initial teacher education delivered by eight higher education institutions across England. Thus there were already attempts to ensure a culturally diverse curriculum was provided.

However, while Maylor et al. (2007) found that some schools did deliver a diverse curriculum especially through the subjects of English, history, geography, art, music and citizenship education, this was not the norm. This was in spite of the fact that some 20 years earlier the Department for Education and Science, through the Swann report (1985), had recommended implementation of a culturally diverse National Curriculum across England with a key aim to foster the attainment of African-Caribbean students, who were at the time drastically underachieving compared with White British students. Crucially, some teachers were not aware that the National Curriculum could be disapplied, so as to deliver a diverse curriculum. In some cases a diverse curriculum was not delivered because some schools did not think students in predominantly White areas needed to experience a culturally diverse curriculum, or increase their knowledge about the length of time BME communities had lived in the UK, or about the contribution such groups had made to the economic and social development of the UK. Implementing a diverse curriculum was also thought to detract from time schools felt could be better spent on enabling students to achieve higher grades in standard assessment tests in primary and general certificate in secondary education (GCSE)[7] examinations in secondary schools.

A key finding by Maylor et al. (2007) came from the classroom observations in case study schools, which suggested that some White teachers were more interested in BME students' 'unique' origins such as being from Southeast Asia or the Caribbean. For example, in one lesson observation the teacher made 21 references to 'the Caribbean' and wanted the students in the class to find the Caribbean island, 'St Lucia' on the world map, which the teacher referred to as a 'little dot'. In another lesson, a student who had been to the Caribbean '11 times' was called on to share his experiences of his Caribbean holiday visits, which he said that he was 'tired' of talking about. Although it might be argued that the teachers in the lessons observed were valuing student ethnic diversity through showcasing BME student experiences, their actions not only excluded White British and other identities, but suggested that the teachers were more reliant on the BME students present in the lessons rather than on researching and sharing information about the Caribbean and other countries which all students could benefit from.

Another key finding related to White British students, in both ethnically diverse and predominantly White schools, who felt that their British identities (i.e. Scottish, Welsh, English and Northern Irish) and experiences of cultural diversity in their

[6] Multiverse was government funded from 2003 to 2010. Funding ended when the new Conservative-led Coalition government was formed in England.

[7] GCSE examinations are taken at age 16.

locality, across England and in other countries, were either ignored or not sought by schools. This led them to feel that schools were only interested in BME students with different cultures to White British people, as two students explained:

> There's lots of different White people, there's Scottish, British, English … but like when they [teachers] say, 'What are your backgrounds?' we say, 'We're from England, we're White'. We don't say: 'Oh I'm half Scottish, I'm half Irish' because they're [teachers] not interested. It's not different … we don't learn about White people and their backgrounds, so we do feel a bit left out. (White female, aged 13/14)

> Being Welsh isn't anything that makes you different. (White male, aged 10/11)

Maylor et al. (2007) reported that some schools did not implement a diverse curriculum because they did not think students in predominantly White areas needed to experience a culturally diverse curriculum. Such an argument ignored both the importance of all students, wherever they live, learning about the cultural diversity within England, and the experience many White students in these schools had of diversity (for example, through travel in non-White countries for holidays, or having previously lived in ethnically diverse areas in England). A teaching opportunity was missed because the teachers concerned associated teaching about cultural diversity as only necessary for non-White groups.

The fact that British identities were ignored by some teachers was also noted by BME students. For example:

> We don't really talk about Scotland and that. We talk about other countries abroad. (Asian male, aged 8/9)

Advocates of a culturally diverse curriculum (e.g. Gay 2010; Banks 2016) have highlighted the importance of the diversity in White ethnicities being explored.

Maylor et al.'s (2007) findings contributed to recommendations by Ajegbo et al. (2007) for a whole school strategy to implement a diverse curriculum in both predominantly White and multi-ethnic schools. They also led to the recommendation of student knowledge being developed as to how ethnically diverse communities co-exist together, as there was a realisation through the case study schools that though White and BME students shared a school space, they often lived in segregated communities (Cantle 2001). Ajegbo stated:

> I believe issues around 'race', identity, citizenship and living together in the UK today are serious matters … I believe that schools, through their ethos, through their curriculum and through their work with their communities, can make a difference to those perceptions … We passionately believe that it is the duty of all schools to address issues of 'how we live together' and 'dealing with difference'. (Ajegbo, in Ajegbo et al. 2007, pp. 4–5)

Ajegbo's reference to 'dealing with difference' relates to ethnic, cultural and religious diversity being explored through the school curriculum. However, Ajegbo et al.*'s* recommendations were concentrated within the revised secondary citizenship curriculum, whereby emphasis was placed on 'Identities and Diversity: Living together in the UK', and teachers were encouraged to recognise diverse cultures and identities and promoting the interconnections between the UK, the rest of Europe and the wider world. Schools it was argued should 'establish what they currently

teach that is meaningful for all pupils in relation to diversity and multiple identities … and ensure that coverage is coherent' (Ajegbo et al. 2007, p. 9). In other words, the New Labour government associated exploration of 'diversity' and 'difference' with community cohesion rather than valuing diversity for its benefits to individual student learning. Arguably, Ajegbo et al. were building on recommendations by the Swann Report (Swann 1985) which had suggested 'inclusive multiculturalism' be experienced by majority and minority ethnic students so as to enable them to 'participate fully in shaping society …whilst also allowing, and where necessary assisting ethnic minority communities in maintaining their distinct ethnic identities' (Swann 1985, p. 5). More significantly, it was drawing strongly on the findings of Maylor et al. (2007): 'the curriculum needs to allow pupils to understand and appreciate diversity and its values, and that they have their own identities within this diversity. This is a sensitive and controversial area, in which teachers need to be given firm support to develop' (p. 9).

New Labour's policy changes following Ajegbo et al.*'s* report

Ajegbo et al.*'s* Review findings were accepted by the Secretary of State for Education, and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) revised the National Curriculum for Citizenship education. The new 2007 programme of study included a new element, 'Identities and Diversity: Living together in the UK', in which citizenship was to support community cohesion. Key concepts closely reflect the conclusions of Maylor et al.:

- Appreciating that identities are complex, can change over time and are informed by different understandings of what it means to be a citizen in the UK.
- Exploring the diverse national, regional, ethnic and religious cultures, groups and communities in the UK and the connections between them.
- Considering the interconnections between the UK, the rest of Europe and the wider world.
- Exploring community cohesion and the forces that change in communities over time.

(QCA 2007, p. 7)

As David Kerr et al. (2008) state, the last strand 'considerably alters the focus of the citizenship curriculum, and makes explicit its role in educating for community cohesion' (p. 255). But the connection between the reports of Ajegbo et al. and Maylor et al. was not always evident: Audrey Osler (2008) complained of 'a lack of transparency in identifying the evidence base of the [Ajegbo et al.] review. Although Maylor and her colleagues explain their methods and the processes of data collection (2007, pp. 64–68), the Ajegbo et al. report does not make it explicit when it is drawing on Maylor's work' (Osler 2008, p. 18).

The revised National Curriculum took effect from the autumn of 2007, and was used for six years, to the summer of 2013. The QCA also produced cross-curricular guidance in 2009, in which 'identity and diversity' featured as one of seven dimensions to be considered by schools when designing and planning their whole curriculum.

Maylor et al. identified 'a lack of knowledge and understanding of diversity in initial teacher education and in continuing professional development … leading to teachers having a lack of confidence and a fear of getting things wrong' (2007, p. 26), and Ajegbo et al. repeated this as one of the report's key findings: 'there is insufficient effective teacher training – in Initial Teacher Training … [and] Continuing Professional Development' (2007, p. 7, Key finding 10). Consequently, when the Professional Standards for Teachers were revised by the Training and Development Agency for Schools[8] in 2007, 'tak[ing] practical account of diversity and promot[ing] equality and inclusion in their teaching' became one of the core standards (2007, p. 9).

The Maylor et al. review identified teacher concerns about the 'lack of books and resources that pertain to the particular ethnic make-up of the pupil population … teachers required books and other resources that "reflect society today" and not just White society' (2007, p. 79), and argued that this was 'not an area that can be developed simply by providing more information or more resources: teachers and schools need to understand the purposes of this approach' (p. 110). Ajegbo et al. duly recommended that 'subject associations… should compile databases of the best resources and develop new resources' (2007, p. 9), and the Department for Education and Skills subsequently commissioned the Association for Citizenship Teaching to produce *Identity, Diversity and Citizenship: A critical review of education resources* (2008).

Another aim of New Labour's education policy at this time was to raise attainment. Towards the end of 2007, the New Labour government introduced *The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures* (DCSF 2007) which included goals for what every child should be achieving by 2020:

- every child ready for success in school, with at least 90% developing well across all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile by age 5;
- every child ready for secondary school, with at least 90% achieving at or above the expected level in both English and mathematics by age 11; [and]
- every young person having the skills for adult life and further study, with at least 90% achieving the equivalent of five higher level GCSEs by age 19 and at least 70% achieving the equivalent of two A levels by age 19.

(DCSF 2007, p. 14).

The QCA, responsible for the National Curriculum, built on these goals: they described their implementation plans to the House of Commons Education Committee in a memorandum in March 2008. This envisaged the future role of the

[8] The Training and Development Agency for Schools was at that time the body then responsible for the initial and in-service training of teachers in England.

National Curriculum in creating 'successful learners' (House of Commons Education Committee 2009, p. 3, para 1.3) with the programmes of study containing attainment targets for each subject (*ibid.*, p. 4, para 1.10). A key goal is to 'secure improved attainment, further involvement in education, employment or training' (*ibid.*, p 3, para. 1.4). To achieve this, a 'good personal knowledge of the learner is essential in setting challenging and realistic goals for progress and achievement' and is considered 'vital in driving up standards of achievement' (*ibid.,* p. 9, para. 4.2).

However, teachers' developing understanding of ethnic and cultural diversity were not prioritised as part of increasing standards of attainment. *The Children's Plan* noted that while some minority ethnic groups had low attainment, others did better than White British children, and the gaps between the low-attaining groups and White British children were narrowing. There was a commitment to monitor this closely, but there was no emphasis on the importance of a diverse and culturally relevant curriculum and what it offers.

The next sections discuss the arguments for a diverse curriculum and the potential benefits it offers; and set out the social justice framework that underpins the chapter. Following this, the changes of policy following the election of a Conservative-led coalition government in 2010 are outlined.

Curriculum diversity

A diverse and meaningful curriculum has been shown to be critical in engaging students and enhancing their attainment.

A culturally diverse curriculum should invariably provide students with dialogic opportunities to discuss cultural similarities and differences within and across ethnic groups and which 'lead to the creation of new meanings' (Messiou 2019, p. 311; see also Banks 2016; Race 2016). American educationalists take a culturally diverse curriculum one step further and associate it with teacher commitment to culturally relevant/responsive teaching, which Geneva Gay defines as:

> using cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students. Culturally responsive teaching is the behavioural expression of knowledge, beliefs, and values that recognize the importance of racial and cultural diversity in learning. It is contingent on a set of racial and cultural competencies [which include] seeing cultural differences as assets; creating caring learning communities where culturally different individuals and heritages are valued; using cultural knowledge of ethnically diverse cultures, families, and communities to guide curriculum development, classroom climates, instructional strategies, and relationships with students; challenging racial and cultural stereotypes, prejudices, racism, and other forms of intolerance, injustice, and oppression; being change agents for social justice and academic equity; mediating power imbalances in classrooms based on race, culture, ethnicity, and class; and accepting cultural responsiveness as endemic to educational effectiveness in all areas of learning for students from all ethnic groups. (Gay 2010, p. 31).

A diverse curriculum is conducive to students understanding how racialised identities are constructed, how individuals/groups develop a sense of belonging to the society they live in through the positive diverse images they encounter and experiences they have in common or different to majority and minority ethnic communities (Thomas 2015; Banks 2016). It is also conducive to enhancing student attainment, which is discussed later in this chapter.

The delivery of a truly culturally diverse/culturally responsive or recognitive (Fraser 2003) curriculum is, however, dependent on teacher knowledge of ethnically diverse communities; how diversity (including resources) can be applied in their subject area; and teacher confidence in responding to student queries and challenging/neutralising racist attitudes about particular ethnic groups (Macpherson 1999; Race 2018). Yet it is evident that not all teachers feel confident to teach ethnically diverse students (Pye et al. 2016) whilst some are fearful of talking about issues to do with 'race' (Leonardo 2009; Lander 2014).

Enhanced attainment can be achieved through making the curriculum academically demanding; utilising global teaching and learning materials because 'knowledge is not just a western construct'; and ensuring that students are provided with 'positive role models from different cultures' (Rashid and Tikly 2010, p. 30). Culturally relevant teaching and learning requires that teachers recognise individual student differences – social, cultural, ethnic, linguistic – and provide personally relevant learning experiences for the student population (Ladson-Billings 1995; Gay 2010; Nelson Laird 2011; Lee et al. 2012). Essentially, teachers adopting culturally relevant teaching and pedagogy need to make sure that 'the strengths students bring to school are identified, nurtured, and utilized to promote student achievement' (Richards et al. 2004, p. 3; see also Ladson-Billings 1995). High achievement is further facilitated by educators having high expectations of all students and challenging them 'to strive for excellence'. Richards et al. argue that 'teachers need to continually "raise the bar," giving students just the right amount of assistance to take them one step higher, thereby helping students to strive for their potential' (2004, p. 7).

Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) contends that a key aim of a culturally relevant pedagogy is that students should ultimately experience academic success, which is facilitated by the cultural competence (i.e. knowledge of their own culture and that of others) they acquire. Essential to considering oneself as culturally competent is that students should not abandon their own culture in favour of adopting another's in order to secure academic success. This is contrary to expectations of an ethnocentric curriculum, which, in ignoring or not recognising the cultures of ethnically diverse students, suggests that educational success is best achieved through minority ethnic communities assimilating or absorbing or integrating into British society and an English curriculum. This also suggests that academic success is only associated with Whiteness, though such a contention is disavowed by the high achievement of students from Chinese and Indian communities in English schools (DfE 2019f). Chinese and Indian high achievement in English schools may in part reflect the higher expectations that teachers may have for these students compared with Black African-Caribbean students who persistently underachieve (Gillborn 2008;

Strand 2012; Gillborn et al. 2017) even where they have middle-class backgrounds (Rollock et al. 2014). Ladson-Billings (1995) contends that school support of minority ethnic cultures can support BME students' learning and does not conflict with high achievement. Being academically successful is also reliant on students who experience a culturally relevant curriculum developing critical consciousness; Ladson-Billings argues: 'Not only must teachers encourage academic success and cultural competence, they must help students to recognize, understand, and critique current social inequities' (Ladson-Billings 1995, p. 476; see also Maylor 2019).

Teachers are often fearful of introducing cultural diversity into an ethnocentric curriculum, especially where they do not think it can positively influence student attainment. However, Thomas Nelson Laird (2005) found that students who have positive education experiences of diversity in teaching and learning 'are more likely to score higher on academic self-confidence, social agency, and critical thinking disposition … [and] that diversity experiences may work together to foster development of certain aspects of self' (Nelson Laird 2005, pp. 384–385). Thus, a culturally diverse curriculum can underpin 'students' self-confidence in their academic abilities … [and] whether they view themselves as critical thinkers' (p. 382).

Implementing a diverse and culturally responsive curriculum is therefore an important step in working towards social justice in schools.

Social justice: Challenging educational inequality

According to John Rawls, social justice is a function of:

> the basic structure of society, or more exactly, the way in which the major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation. (Rawls 1971, p. 7).

Essentially, social justice is informed by the way that society and institutions are structured and organised and the ways in which individual liberties, equality of opportunity, rights, well-being, inclusion, access to resources and outcomes are emphasised (Lucca-Silveira 2016; Hibbert 2017). This is explained in more detail by Sally Hage et al. (2011, p. 2794):

> Social justice is generally defined as the fair and equitable distribution of power, resources, and obligations in society to all people, regardless of race or ethnicity, age, gender, ability status, sexual orientation, and religious or spiritual background. … Fundamental principles underlying this definition include values of inclusion, collaboration, cooperation, equal access, and equal opportunity. Such values are also the foundation of a democratic and egalitarian society. … In addition, a crucial link exists between social justice and overall health and well-being. For individuals, the absence of justice often represents increased physical and emotional suffering as well as greater vulnerability to illness. Furthermore, social justice issues and access to resources are also inexorably tied to collective well-being (e.g. relationships and political welfare) of families, communities, and society.

In trying to achieve social justice it is important to understand how society is structured and attempts to provide equal freedoms. For Rawls, the 'basic structure

of society is arranged so that it maximises the primary goods available to the least advantaged to make use of the central aims of … social justice' (2005, p. 326). He further contends that citizens have a collective responsibility to maintain 'the equal basic liberties and fair equality of opportunity and for providing a fair share of the primary goods for all within this framework' (*ibid.*, p. 189).

If, in Rawls' words, social justice should benefit the 'least advantaged', then, when applied to education, one would expect better outcomes for students who have experienced lower teacher expectations and/or who previously underachieved compared with the national average (Hytten and Bettez 2011; Woods et al. 2014). Education is a universal human right, and students have a right to be treated equally and fairly (Osler 2015) and to have equality of opportunity (Rawls 2005). Egalitarian principles seek to ensure that students have equal access to a good education and opportunities for advancement within the institution. Following Nancy Fraser (2003) and Annette Woods et al. (2014), educational social justice must be comprehended as both recognitive (recognition of diverse groups in education) and redistributive (of teaching and learning resources). 'Balancing a focus on the equitable redistribution of resources and ensuring there is recognition of the lifeworlds, experiences, values and beliefs of all children and their communities, is the way to progress toward the goal of a high quality, high equity education system' (Woods et al. 2014, pp. 511–12). Social justice applied in education in this way seeks to redress negative educational experiences and unequal educational outcomes (Kymlicka 2002; Blacker 2007); provides culturally responsive teaching (see Gay 2010, 2013); and calls for teachers to challenge educational inequalities, which include low teacher expectations and the disproportionate exclusion from school of Black students, especially in the UK and the USA (Gillborn 2008; Gay 2010; US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights 2014; Gillborn et al. 2017; Race Disparity Unit 2019).

Social justice, which seeks to challenge, reduce and ultimately eliminate societal injustices (Sen 2009), also underpins Amartya Sen's (1993) capabilities approach, which emphasises human well-being from the perspective of individual freedom of choice, and the freedom to achieve what individuals value. Studying how people function and the activities they perform, Sen (1992) considers individual well-being to include their ability to be highly educated and to autonomously function as well-educated individuals in employment. Sen (1993, 2009) views the actions undertaken by individuals as integral to achieving social justice, but he also recognises that actions are performed within institutional contexts. Therefore, an individual's autonomous choices in education would need to be made in the context of institutional-based equal opportunities (Robeyns 2016).

The concept of social justice is not without criticism (Hytten and Bettez 2011; Lucca-Silveira 2016) because inequality is an expected outcome of neoliberalism and the operation of market forces in capitalist societies (Hayek 1976). Moreover, as the government expects school and higher education to produce a skilled workforce to occupy various employment roles, it is inevitable that some students complete their post/compulsory education with more qualifications and skills than others, especially where they have the benefit of additional economic, social and

cultural capital resources (Bourdieu 1984 [1979]; Lareau 2003; Xu and Hampden-Thompson 2012; Sy et al. 2013). Inevitably some students, through their advanced studies in college or university, the employment they undertake and the social class positions they occupy, will go on to reproduce further societal and educational inequality, mainly where they have the wherewithal to access schools with a proven track record to produce higher educational outcomes, regardless of whether this is their intention or not. The intersection of ethnicity and social class is of significance, given the propensity of middle-class parents – predominantly White – to disproportionally access schools with higher examination and test outcomes (Chapter 7, Hutchings 2021b). While inequality and unequal relations may be a permanent feature of capitalism, this does not however mean that we cannot strive for more equal educational outcomes for all students. It is notable that BME parents have invested considerable resources in private tuition and supplementary[9] schools for their children: this has undoubtably contributed to the rising success of BME students in national testing and examinations (Maylor et al. 2009, 2013; Rollock et al. 2014). This is the value of a social justice perspective, as it advocates introspection and reform, suggests intervention strategies, facilitates consciousness raising and provides tools to challenge the status quo (Goodman et al. 2004; see also Hage et al. 2011; Hytten and Bettez 2011).

Education informed by a social justice/equity perspective requires teachers in White-dominated societies to develop an understanding of educational inequality and the factors including societal histories, power systems and pedagogical practices that contribute to unequal educational outcomes, especially for African-Caribbean students compared with majority White students. As Suanne Gibson observes:

> schools, colleges, universities, managerial procedures, practitioners, students, and general pedagogic practices stem from a hegemony which sees the world in one specific way – from the gaze and mind of a modernist, male, heterosexual, white, middle-class being. (Gibson 2015, p. 881)

Taking Gibson's comments about educators and education systems into account means that, if BME students are to get the most out of their education attendance, it is incumbent on teachers to comprehend the salience of equity-based pedagogy and consider how to include this in their teaching, and at the same time strive to ensure that all students (regardless of ethnicity or cultural background) have an equal

[9] Supplementary schools are community-organised and community-led independent ventures, that operate outside of normal school hours for 2–3 h during the evening, and/or at the weekend usually on a Saturday. These schools prioritise extending BME students learning in the curriculum areas of mathematics, English and science, whilst reinforcing their cultural identities through cultural enrichment activities not offered in mainstream education and developing strategies to resist racism encountered in schools. Students are taught in small groups, pairs and one-to-one. Supplementary schools provide tuition via a mixture of no charge, parental donations and a small fee, which allows low-income parents to access these schools. For a detailed discussion and understanding of the impact of supplementary schools on the educational outcomes of BME students see Maylor et al. (2013).

opportunity to achieve to the best of their ability. Clearly, a national curriculum in any society is never delivered in a political vacuum as it will inevitably speak to the expectations of the government in power.[10] Notwithstanding this, Richards et al. point out that 'if instruction reflects the cultural and linguistic practices and values of only one group of students, then the other students are denied an equal opportunity to learn', whereas 'instruction that is culturally responsive addresses the needs of all learners' (Richards et al. 2004, p. 8). They make clear that teachers have 'a unique opportunity to either further the status quo or make a difference that will impact not only the achievement but also the lives of their students' (*ibid.*). For such impact to transpire in education Goodman et al. state that educators should 'prioritise social justice work, making it integral to the curriculum and not just an appendage to traditional academic programs' (Goodman et al. 2004, p. 829). Moreover, a social justice perspective believes that to be transformative teachers should be prepared to challenge:

> Where the curriculum falls short in addressing the needs of all students, teachers must provide a bridge; where the system reflects cultural and linguistic insensitivity, teachers must demonstrate understanding and support. In short, teachers must be culturally responsive, utilizing materials and examples, engaging in practices, and demonstrating values that include rather than exclude students from different backgrounds. (Richards et al. 2004, p. 8)

Gay (2013) identified two further challenges in delivering a culturally diverse/responsive curriculum and which support a social justice perspective. Firstly, teachers would have to 'replac[e] pathological and deficient perceptions of students and communities of color with more positive ones' (Gay 2013, p. 54). Secondly, in misunderstanding the purpose of a diverse curriculum:

> teachers may concentrate on only 'safe' topics about cultural diversity such as cross-group similarities and intergroup harmony, and ethnic customs, cuisines, costumes, and celebrations while neglecting more troubling issues like inequities, injustices, oppressions, and major contributions of ethnic groups to societal and human life. (Gay 2013, p. 57)

This suggests that delivery of an effective culturally diverse but socially just curriculum is dependent on teachers having in-depth knowledge of a range of issues experienced by ethnically diverse communities and a willingness and ability to effectively challenge inequities (Luke et al. 2011).

This chapter will go on to demonstrate that in 2020, the National Curriculum delivered in English schools remains ethnocentric and is not representative of all the different student ethnic groups attending schools in England. With a third and sometimes fourth (UK-born) generation of BME communities attending English schools, one has to ask why? Moreover, without experience of a diverse curriculum how can the persistent underachievement of African-Caribbean students (Gillborn et al. 2017) be effectively removed and their talent developed for future employment

[10] In the UK, only schools that are funded through a Local Authority have to follow the National Curriculum. Other schools (academies and free schools) can 'follow a different curriculum' (https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school). However, most schools follow the National Curriculum because it is closely linked to the syllabuses for national tests and exams.

(McGregor-Smith 2017)? The next section will address these questions by exploring British government educational provision and priorities since 2010.

Coalition and Conservative education policy and National Curriculum, 2010–2019

The New Labour government was replaced in 2010 by David Cameron's Coalition government (Conservative and Liberal Democrat), which returned to implementing an ethnocentric National Curriculum favouring White British students (the majority ethnic community). Cameron argued that 'multiculturalism' had failed in England and wider Europe. In his speech at the Munich security conference, he said, 'Under the doctrine of state multiculturalism, we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the mainstream. We've failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong'. He concluded 'instead of encouraging people to live apart, we need a clear sense of shared national identity that is open to everyone' (Cameron 2011). The failure of multiculturalism, he said, was evidenced by bombings across Europe – although he did not distinguish far-right terrorism (experienced in the UK and continental Europe[11]) as being underpinned by an ethnocentric way of being or White supremacist ideals, which reject recognition of and educating about ethnically diverse cultures.

Such criticisms are not confined to the UK: Magdelena Lesińska (2014, p.37) argues that European leaders 'describe "multiculturalism" – portrayed as uncritical acceptance of cultural diversity – as a failure, and suggest more "realistic" (read: less tolerant, more assimilationist) policy strategies'.

To this end Cameron sought to implement education policies that promoted integration and asserted a more unitary sense of Britishness. His Munich speech was widely interpreted as meaning that he regarded an ethnically diverse curriculum as encouraging BME communities to maintain their 'minority' home, culture and identity to the exclusion or ignoring of White British culture and identity (Race 2016, p. 12, pp. 211–12). The ONS (2012) records several areas in the UK as being 'White' and there is evidence of 'White flight' when BME groups move into an area (Maylor 2019). Yet remarkably Coalition and Conservative politicians never question White identities or describe White individuals and families who opt to live and maintain lives separate from BME communities as being segregationist.

In 2014 the National Curriculum was revised by the Coalition government (DfE 2014b); these changes were maintained when the Conservative government took over in 2015, and this version is currently used in English schools. These changes were implemented in the face of the desire of most teachers to retain certain aspects

[11] In 2011, Cameron would have been familiar with for example, the bombing carried out by Anders Breivik a far-right Norwegian terrorist, who in July 2011, killed 77 people many of whom were aged 16–22.

of the previous National Curriculum. In a consultation exercise on the proposed changes, 61% of those expressing an opinion on Citizenship wanted it to be retained: they 'believed that pupils should learn about … the challenges of living in a diverse society [and] that it was essential to retain a statutory Programme of Study to ensure that issues such as racism, discrimination, diversity and inclusion were covered by all schools, in all year groups' (DFE 2013c, pp. 29–30). The changes that were implemented reflect an assimilationist curriculum, which dates back to the 1960s when migrant children from the Caribbean and the Indian subcontinent were being educated in English schools and there was an expectation that this would be done without reference to students' culture (Race 2018).

Only two subjects make explicit reference to diversity: history and citizenship education. Citizenship education allows for developing insights into:

> diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding, the different ways in which a citizen can contribute to the improvement of his or her community. (DfE 2013d, p. 3)

The history curriculum promotes an understanding of different societies through students studying the 'diversity of societies and relationships between different groups, as well as their own identity and the challenges of their time', and 'how Britain has influenced and been influenced by the wider world; know and understand significant aspects of the history of the wider world: the nature of ancient civilisations' (DfE 2014b, p. 82). However, the history curriculum is considered problematic (e.g. Olusoga 2020). First, for secondary aged students it becomes an optional subject from age 14, so there is no guarantee that students will maintain an interest. Second, positive contributions of Black communities to the development of British society (e.g. Olusoga 2017; Fryer 2018) tend to be restricted to one month of the academic year – 'Black history month' (October) – and for the rest of the time emphasis is placed on Black experiences of slavery. This restricted pattern had been the subject of a prominent complaint by students in the study by Maylor et al. (2007), and had not changed. Additionally, teachers are required as part of the Equality Act (2010) and schools' equality duty to 'take account of their duties under equal opportunities legislation that covers race … religion or belief' (DfE 2014b, para. 4.2) but it is not evident how this should materialise within the National Curriculum and the pedagogical content to be taught. More explicit is the secondary National Curriculum's requirement for students aged 11–14 to develop:

> understanding of democracy, government and the rights and responsibilities of citizens', … the precious liberties enjoyed by the citizens of the United Kingdom, the nature of rules and laws and the justice system, including the role of the police and the operation of courts and tribunals, the roles played by public institutions and voluntary groups in society, and the ways in which citizens work together to improve their communities. (DfE 2014b, p. 71)

This underpins the government's desires for common British values and identities to be followed, and for these to be regulated by a National Curriculum that denies, subjugates and ignores the knowledge, cultures and values of minority ethnic communities (Osler 2015). As noted by Richard Seltzer et al. conservative educationalists view a culturally diverse curriculum as 'creat[ing] unhealthy divisions

between groups [and] betray[ing] the true purpose of education' (Seltzer et al. 1995, p. 124), which is to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in employment.

Rather than providing opportunities to explore diverse cultures present in the UK, the Coalition government advocated a National Curriculum which emphasised (through the subject of citizenship education) teaching about inclusive British identities (encompassing White British, Black and minority ethnic communities) and British values, defined as democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs (DfE 2014c). 'Britishness' continues to be associated by many in BME and White communities as 'White' (e.g. Gilroy 1987; Maylor 2010). Schools are required to promote British identities (but not how, for example, Black and Asian people come to be defined as British, or even how long Black people have had a presence in England), and 'fundamental British values' as part of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (DfE 2014c). Arguably, the British government conflated British identity with British values, and this possibly accounts for diversity not permeating the whole curriculum as advocated by James Banks (2016).

Similarly committed to the promotion of British values and engendering commitment to British identities, the current Conservative government (from 2015) applies sanctions to schools through the Prevent Strategy (UK Home Office 2011; DfE 2015c), a counter-terrorism measure which is designed to promote community cohesion. Compliance with this is secured through the schools inspectorate (Ofsted). Schools are downgraded as a sanction measure when they are deemed to have transgressed in this area (Maylor 2019). Ultimately, the British government expects that, through engendering belief in British values and British identities, minority ethnic groups will regard themselves as British and an integral part of British society, and that this will eliminate any threats to community cohesion. However, research suggests that students' experience of education and sense of belonging in educational institutions is informed by their culture and ethnicity (Ireland et al. 2018) and where recognition of their culture and ethnicity is absent this is likely to negatively impact on their sense of belonging/inclusion and attainment outcomes (Read et al. 2003; Johnson et al. 2007; Thomas 2015). In following an integrationist discourse in which the emphasis is on integrating BME students into the British population (Cantle 2012; Race 2016, 2018), and an assimilationist National Curriculum (Arora 2005) in which cultural differences are not recognised and minority ethnic groups are expected to assimilate/absorb the majority White British culture (Arora 2005), both the Coalition and Conservative governments failed to understand that a culturally diverse curriculum is necessary if xenophobia, racism and hostility towards minority ethnic communities are to be challenged (Banks 2016). A diverse curriculum is also crucial to raising student attainment.

Conclusions: Education for the 'public good'

Gay (2013) argues that educational underachievement will not be addressed if the difficulties encountered are merely restated: constructive strategies have to be employed. Therefore, a culturally diverse/relevant teaching approach, as advanced here, is necessary to reverse the lower attainment of all ethnic groups where this occurs. The significance of such an approach cannot be underestimated. The extent to which ethnically diverse students connect with the school curriculum requires an understanding of the number of different ethnicities (even amongst White students) present in school classrooms, and of the ways in which they connect (or not) with various aspects of the curriculum, and the type of support or interventions required to help them to fulfil their academic potential. This requires further research and evaluation of successful interventions.

The political context and fears which underpin the British government's maintenance of an ethnocentric National Curriculum, and its continued emphasis on British identities and British values, has not lessened as terrorist attacks (such as those at the Manchester Arena in 2017, and London Bridge in 2017, 2019) have continued in England. These attacks, together with racial incidents in schools (Youth Select Committee 2016; Busby 2017) reinforce perceptions of ethnic divisions rather than of community cohesion in England, and it is likely that the UK exit (31 December 2020) from the European Union will further exacerbate such tensions. Clearly, terrorism is a real and actual threat in England, and is carried out as much by far-right racist nationalists as it is by Islamist extremists, and arguably, is used by the British government to justify an ethnocentric National Curriculum, in the same way that it emphasises British values being taught in English schools (Maylor 2016). Notwithstanding, without a genuine understanding of the different cultural groups in English schools and wider UK, facilitated through a culturally diverse National Curriculum, it is not just minority ethnic attainment gaps which will be difficult to close but generating meaningful cultural insights and knowledge will remain challenging, if not impossible. This assertion is supported by my experience at a conference in 2020 where I was invited to speak on the topic of 'supporting Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students'. I discussed the need for teachers to have a better understanding of BAME backgrounds and cultures to effectively teach and meet their attainment needs. Afterwards a White British headteacher of a school in London asked me, 'where can teachers learn about student ethnic diversity?' If a headteacher of a school in an ethnically diverse area of the UK does not have such knowledge, it is less likely that teachers in predominantly White areas will have such insights. It is also unlikely that there will be greater community cohesion, especially as minority and majority ethnic communities in many parts of England still live in segregated areas (ONS 2012), and as found in Maylor et al. (2007), student and staff experience of ethnic diversity can be limited to a narrow radius of one or two miles. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that implementing a diverse curriculum, whilst also maintaining intellectually rigorous standards, can be difficult even where teachers seek to recognise ethnically diverse students in

the curriculum. A longitudinal study by Woods et al. (2014) illustrates that delivering such a curriculum and seeing achievement gains may take between three and five years, but this should not mean that efforts should not be made to revise the curriculum. What is needed is actual political will and deep commitment as well as 'whole school' approaches.

To return to the concept of the 'public good'. Governments worldwide spend much of their time making pronouncements on measures they will implement as part of the 'public good'. In the context of the focus of this chapter, it might be assumed that a culturally diverse/relevant curriculum will only benefit BME student communities and therefore is a waste of government resources, and as such is not for the 'public good'. Such a view is however undermined by the responses of White British people in Maylor et al. (2007), which poignantly illuminated how White British students craved for recognition of their own ethnic identities and backgrounds, and for this to be explored within the school curriculum, so that they too would feel included and valued. Everyone belongs to at least one ethnic group; where heritages are mixed the number of ethnic groups may vary. Social justice in multi-ethnic societies demands that all ethnic groups are represented within the National Curriculum and that such inclusion is deemed essential for the 'public good'. For knowledge to be enhanced to benefit the 'public good', it is necessary that everyone is included within the pedagogy applied and experiences shared. Moreover, what is determined to be for the 'public good' should be agreed by all, not one group (such as the government) alone, as this will mean that the group with the greater voice will have power over the other, and this cannot be for the 'public good' in any society. That said, the American Educational Research Association entitled its 2020 annual conference: 'Power and possibilities for the public good'. Significant in this title is the word 'power' and what power enables for the 'public good'. There is an assumption here that without power, change is impossible. Yet supplementary schools - which are accessed outside of compulsory schooling (see footnote 9) - demonstrate that the power to reduce educational inequity experienced by some BME communities is not confined to policymakers, and that educational change does not only occur in mainstream school contexts. Saliently underpinned by philosophies similar to those held by historically Black colleges and universities in America, Black supplementary schools in England create learning environments that affirm human capacities and encourage high academic achievement which serve to challenge contentions of Black educational inferiority (Hotchkins and Dancy 2015; Mwangi 2016; Tafari et al. 2016). As a Black parental educational strategy, Black supplementary schools are integral to Black students' ability to not only achieve highly, but to resist institutional racism and potential school exclusion (Maylor et al. 2013; Andrews 2013; Musoke 2016). Supplementary schools have been shown to be transformative and instrumental to the educational re-engagement especially of young Black men who have been excluded from mainstream schools, and enabling them to survive and succeed in school and higher education (Wright et al. 2021).

Before concluding this chapter it is useful to consider how best educational research serves to justify, challenge, or change existing teaching/curriculum

practices, and the extent to which the Maylor et al. 2007 study changed or refined the starting points of researcher concern for 'the public good'? One of the best ways in which educational research seeks to challenge existing classroom practices outside of being adopted by policymakers is through widespread dissemination. Findings from Maylor et al. (2007) have been widely shared in the UK and internationally with academics in higher education through conferences and seminar presentations, and individual and group discussions as the findings and the need for social justice in English education are still relevant today.

Has the Maylor et al. (2007) study changed or refined my starting points of concern for education as the 'public good'? My conceptualisation has been refined to a degree as the finding that White British students felt excluded from the school curriculum/classroom was surprising and has stayed with me. Therefore, when I raise issues about the absence of a culturally diverse curriculum or the need to decolonise the curriculum and generate understanding of student identities in English schools, and I am challenged by educators for opposing a Eurocentric national curriculum which they argue would benefit the White majority student population, I highlight this finding of how a Eurocentric curriculum can also exclude White students, just as much as it does BME students. This finding also reinforces my expectation that education for the 'public good' should include all, and not exclude any student. Reflecting further on the diversity and citizenship project, while it emphasised the salience of understanding student identities and a culturally relevant curriculum to aid teaching and learning and a sense of belonging in the classroom and wider British society, it did not resolve the continued lower attainment of Black students, which has been a longstanding concern since the 1960s (Swann 1985). Addressing social justice issues of inequitable educational outcomes particularly experienced by Black students demonstrates that there is no quick fix to educational under-attainment without the political will and a desire - supported by policy and funding – to change the status quo. Given that the Conservative government will probably be in power for another four years, this means educational change will not happen anytime soon. Ultimately, this suggests an inherent weakness in my conceptualisation of education for the 'public good' as educational inequalities are widening not reducing (DfE 2019f). Notwithstanding this, the desire to embed social justice in providing educational opportunity and positive educational outcomes means I will continue to use every opportunity that I can to highlight the salience of supplementary school education in helping to redress the inequitable educational outcomes many Black students encounter in mainstream education (Rollock et al. 2014; Wright et al. 2021).

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