ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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An exploration into the nature and extent of diversity within history classrooms in Kent

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Abstract
Ever since the 1970s, politicised debates have raged over the teaching of history, dubbed the 'history wars'. These debates continue to impact primary and secondary teachers' choices of history curriculum foci to this day. This research aimed to discover history teachers' understanding of how to develop diversity within their history curricula and to discuss the possible pitfalls of their decision making. We set out to answer the following questions: (1) How do history teachers and subject leads understand the concept of diversification within the history curriculum? (2) How are schools approaching the diversification of their history curriculum? We carried out this project collaboratively with 10 history teachers and subject leads from four primary and three secondary schools in Kent, South-East England. As a result, we have developed a model of 'school diversification' and make several recommendations to support the development and teaching of increasingly diverse history lessons, within the confines of the current National Curriculum. This project adds to the literature by privileging the voice of teachers within classrooms and including collaboration between teachers of all phases within history education in English schools to support the development of diversity within their practice.

KEYWORDS
curriculum, diversity, history teachers

Key insights

What is the main issue that the paper addresses?

This paper addresses the opportunities and challenges of diversifying the National Curriculum for History within primary and secondary schools. It considers teachers' concerns when tasked with developing new curriculum and policy, inclusive of multiple perspectives.

What are the main insights that the paper provides?

We have developed a model to support the process of diversification through positive collaboration and the development of disciplinary knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research was to explore the current nature and extent of curriculum diversity within primary and secondary history classrooms. It was undertaken in response to numerous calls to diversify the history curriculum during 2020, partly triggered by events in America and Bristol and in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement. Responses to which included a petition to the UK government to make teaching Britain's colonial past compulsory, which received 268,772 signatures (Parallel Parliament, 2020) and led to a joint parliamentary session being held with the Women and Equalities Committee and the Education Committee. These discussions led to government announcements for plans to create a new, non-statutory model curriculum for history in England, of which diversity would be an 'important aspect' (Whittaker, 2021). However, this desire to offer a broader range of lived human experiences from the past has its basis in an underlying assumption that, because the current National Curriculum for History in England (Department for Education, 2013) does not specify the diverse teaching of specific histories, teaching in primary and secondary history classrooms was therefore not diverse *by default*. This appeared indicative of the politicised nature of history education, which can be dated back to the start of the 'history wars' in the 1970s (Watson, 2020) and the idea that history teachers and academics took an 'unpatriotic view' of the teaching of British history as they pushed back against Gove's 2013 vision for a national story (Watson, 2020). There appeared to be an absence of research into what was actually taking place within the history classroom in terms of teachers' approaches to diverse histories.

From our perspective as researchers, Initial Teacher Education (ITE) lecturers and primary and secondary school history specialists, we wanted to know what types of practice were taking place in local schools within Kent, South-East England, which related to diversity within history teaching, as ignoring current practice could potentially risk ignoring good work already taking place in the classroom (Harris, 2021).

We set out to answer two questions:

- How do history teachers and subject leads understand the concept of diversification within the history curriculum?
- How are schools approaching the diversification of their history curriculum?

To begin to answer these questions a collaborative enquiry was developed, to seek the views of several primary and secondary history leads and teachers within Kent, South-East England, where we are based within ITE and work in partnership with schools. It was considered vital to incorporate colleagues from both the primary and secondary phases of education as the aim was to develop a broader understanding amongst all participants of the issues being faced within English history education as a whole and to offer the opportunity for the sharing and developing of ideas cross-phase, regarding what constituted good practice in diversifying history teaching.

CONTEXT

We set out to research the extent of diversity included within the schools' history curriculum and the extent to which diverse content was taught. First, however, it was important to understand the development of the concept of diversity within the school curriculum.

In 2006, the Department for Education and Skills established a Diversity and Citizenship Curriculum Review Group (DCCRG) to ascertain whether the curriculum met the needs of pupils from diverse backgrounds. The focus here lay in whether the curriculum should reflect ethnic, cultural and religious diversity and, in turn, whether this could develop greater social cohesion (Maylor, 2010).

The impact of the resulting 'Ajegbo' report and its recommendations laid out a clear expectation that the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) should work alongside subject associations to develop databases of available resources to support teachers who reported being 'hampered' by a lack of such resources (Department for Education and Skills, 2007, p. 6). They also recommended the QCA embed diversity within curriculum subjects, possibly because many teachers reported difficulty in making links between their subject and education for diversity (p. 6).

The impact of these recommendations can be seen within the KS3 history curriculum (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2007) which followed, as it was stated as important to consider the purpose of history education, alongside the perceived nature of diversity (Harris, 2013). The inclusion of 'cultural, ethnic and religious diversity' (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2007, p. 112) along with the development of the teaching of British Values was, in the view of Brown (2006), a 'golden thread' to be developed through the teaching of history.

The purpose of study within the current National Curriculum for History in England (Department for Education, 2013), within both primary and secondary schools, maintains the expectation that pupils explore diversity. However, there was a shift to a focus on relationships and identity.

> History helps pupils to understand … the diversity of societies and relationships between different groups, as well as their own identity and the challenges of their time. (Department for Education, 2013, p. 188/p. 94)

This appears to leave schools to interpret what is expected for themselves, depending on their own definition of diversity. According to the two most recent Historical Association (HA) surveys, secondary history teachers (Burn & Harris, 2019, 2021) had begun to engage with the expectations, as in 2019 around a third of schools were beginning to develop a more diverse history curriculum. Significantly, this increased to 83% in 2021.

Likewise, within the 2019 HA survey of primary schools, responses indicated that the teachers surveyed had a broad understanding of diversity (Historical Association, 2019). However, the most recent survey (Historical Association, 2022) revealed there was a

perception that including diverse examples in time periods pre-1066 (the majority of the KS2 curriculum content) was difficult. In the younger age range (KS1) teachers had become 'more adventurous', including more diverse examples outside the non-statutory guidance (Historical Association, 2019, p. 17).

Recently there have been proposals for the development of a new model history curriculum in England, focused on providing a

> framework in which teachers can then use their expertise to ensure that pupils gain an understanding and the knowledge that they need to take the study of history forward. (Hansard, 2022, col. 240)

This is not set to change the content of the current National Curriculum, but to act as a framework to provide further support and guidance on the teaching of 'a high-quality and diverse history curriculum' (Whittaker, 2021). The lack of this being a mandatory requirement may serve to be a placatory surface measure for those calling for diversification.

It could be viewed as a step to fulfilling one of the recommendations of the report by the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (2021).

Recommendation 20: Making of modern Britain: teaching an inclusive curriculum.

Respondents to the call for evidence by the Commission advocated for the need to ensure all pupils have a wider understanding of the contributions made by different cultures, groups and regions to the United Kingdom. Although in the report this was only considered in relation to secondary education, it was explicitly linked to the notion of powerful knowledge (Young, 2021) and the use of such knowledge to create a unifying sense of Britishness, alongside the value and importance of the use of multiple and nuanced stories to explore the full range of

> famous and important people … from every race, religion, class and creed. (CRED, 2021, p. 91)

This would therefore also apply to the primary curriculum.

The authors of the CRED report (2021) saw the inclusion of multiple perspectives as vital for developing pupils' understanding of the contributions of ethnic minorities to UK history and society. Explicit links were also made to pupil progress and attainment throughout the report with the explicit intention to close the attainment gap by considering the reduction of ethnic disparities.

Therefore, we were interested to research the notions of diversity utilised when teaching history in both secondary and primary schools within our ITE partnership in Kent, South-East England. We set out to discuss with the schools' history leads how much of a consideration was given to diversity within their curriculum planning and what they meant when they were discussing this term. In this way we intended to ascertain the situation within our local context and enable the opportunity for an open and supportive discussion of any associated issues.

LITERATURE REVIEW

When considering ways in which schools within our partnership may have approached diversity within their history curriculum, a review of the literature suggested there were several factors which may have had an impact on teachers' curriculum choices and their willingness to take risks. We focused on the purpose of diversifying the history curriculum, ways in which this could be achieved and some of the reported barriers to making such a change.

What is the purpose of diversifying a curriculum?

The policy of multiculturalism had a clear legacy in the suggestion that diversifying the history curriculum could promote social cohesion (Matthieu, 2018; Maylor, 2010). In this sense, a focus on diversity exposed

> deeper issues about how individuals and groups within society are perceived, and how interactions between individuals and groups, and within groups, are conceptualised. (Harris, 2013, p. 402)

It is this interaction between individuals and society which exposes multiple narratives, rather than a single, fixed account of the past. However, in practice, this focus on multiculturalism to promote social cohesion meant that diversity teaching all too often included content to engage a single student of an ethnic minority (Alexander et al., 2015), as opposed to diversified teaching for homogenous, or indeed privileged, groups (Reay, 2018). Instead of social cohesion as its sole aim, 'the mainstreaming of diversity' in the classroom, despite very often using a range of personal and emotional stories to provide the range of human experience, necessarily must be guided far more by the interrogation of the nature of history and purpose of why we study history at all (Alexander et al., 2015, p. 4; Harris, 2013).

By its very nature, history as a discipline necessarily utilises diversity as a concept, to accomplish effective, counter-interpretative historical work (Bracey et al., 2011). The concept of powerful knowledge (Young, 2021) and becoming literate in history links to, and is extended within, Harris's notion that diversity is an absolute part of the historical discipline because all historians, even those of school age, do the same basic work. This includes identifying, analysing and responding to the past (Harris, 2013). In a similar way, the inclusion by Bracey et al. (2011) of a set of principles for diversity provided a compelling explanation of their disciplinary benefits. This framework emphasised the authenticity to be gained from studying a range of different perspectives from the past as well as through identifying the 'gaps and silences in the record' (Bracey et al., 2011, p. 209) through interpretation, and that in so doing students would be enabled to further develop their hinterland of knowledge. Above all, the impact of a greater focus on how we represent our own past would enable students to develop their historical consciousness (Taylor, 2004). However, powerful knowledge in and of itself is not empowering as it is only through connecting directly to pupils' own lives and identities that this knowledge becomes accessible, thus holding any power (Sleeter & Grant, 1991).

Within the literature, discussions related to the nature of *what* should be included in a diversified history curriculum were of great interest in that both academic and subject associations had similar aims, in terms of pedagogy and curriculum content. Within the primary phase, authors such as Claire (1996) and Levstik and Barton (2010) provided a specific primary-focused pedagogical discussion of diversity. Likewise, a huge range of articles and resources have been collated via the HA's website. Under the heading of 'diversity', the range of resources and articles included: ethnicity and race in European teaching areas, migration and refugees, minorities, gender, women's history, religion, disability, class, LGBTQIA+ and age, which indicated comprehensive support for primary practitioners. Within the secondary section of the HA website, excellent, practical pedagogical guidance had been shared by several authors, all of whom offered conceptual, as well as practical, explanations of how to plan long-term, impactful secondary curricula.

More recent methodological ideas, which were focused on curriculum choice, advocated for the inclusion of people and social groups students may be less familiar with to support their understanding of the commonalities of human experience (Harris, 2013). It was suggested that this could be achieved through looking at normative historical spaces such

as museums, monasteries and palaces with a complementary focus on the more ordinary places where people live, work, pray and socialise (Alexander et al., 2015). Texts such as *Doing justice to history* (Mohamud & Whitburn, 2016) had chapters arranged around complex themes of diversity and pedagogy, as well as content chapters from the teaching of the North-Atlantic slave trade to Timbuktu. Such a re-appraisal mirrored wider historical work being carried out via *Our migration story* (Alexander et al., 2018) and *Legacies of British slavery* (UCL Department of History, 2023), as well as the National Trust's recent focus on telling the diverse stories of those associated with their properties via the Colonial Countryside Project (Huxtable et al., 2020).

Dennis (2021) has advised caution in accepting this vast body of work at face value as it could be viewed as exclusionary, thereby lacking the sophistication of decolonisation. However, we would argue that this was not the intention of these resources. Here the focus has been on diversification, rather than decolonisation, as the full implications of colonialism on the current curriculum would involve a complete overhaul of what is currently taught. Nevertheless, there are clearly potential pitfalls in creating a diversified curriculum as there are inherent disciplinary challenges in diversifying history in schools. A significant pitfall is the overt focus within the current National Curriculum of teaching British history as 'our island story' (Gove, 2012), which risks forcing children to accept a homogenous history as their own. This is exacerbated where Black history is only taught discreetly within Black History Month, which can be viewed as taking a 'contributions approach' (Banks, 2019b) to integrating ethnic and multicultural content into the curriculum. Or through adopting an 'additive approach' (Banks, 2019b), where the only place Black history is encountered is within a focused unit on the transatlantic slave trade. This could be seen to reinforce a homogenous, 'collective memory' (Seixas, 2000, p. 25) approach to history teaching. Here, history is viewed as a fixed grand narrative to be passed down and learnt, rather than an approach which embraces 'multi-directional memory' (Dennis, 2016, p. 40). This could be seen as disengaging for pupils as it prevents them from connecting their own experiences to those in the past through wider representation within the curriculum. To support this more authentic approach, viable resourcing needs to be further developed through the historical research community.

Other factors which may affect curriculum decisions

There are many other reported factors which have an impact on teachers' curriculum decisions; those perceived as significant to diversifying the history curriculum are included here.

Individual teachers are involved in self-surveillance as well as the surveillance of each other (Page, 2018) by becoming willing participants in self-promotion and self-surveillance in a bid to avoid any negativity or rejection. This can result in forms of conspicuous practice to ensure their own practice is visible to others through platforms such as Twitter, TikTok and Pinterest, where some teachers work hard to signify who they are as teachers through regularly posting examples of their work.

The result may be that teachers work hard to avoid negativity and rejection and in turn this motivation impacts their curriculum decisions. In an atmosphere of surveillance, teachers seek to manage any perceived risks to maintain the positive judgement of stakeholders—whether from above (in terms of the school's senior leadership team) or below (from pupils). Within history teaching this could be seen to influence the choice of perspectives, people and stories chosen as a focus. Teachers would be more liable to avoid topics perceived by them as controversial or sensitive, to avoid difficult conversations or the negative judgement of others.

Much has been said previously in the literature regarding performativity within education (e.g. Ball, 2003, 2016; Hall & McGinty, 2015; Harris, 2021). As Harris (2021) concludes, it is the current emphasis on performativity that often dictates teachers' decisions. This can clearly be seen in the case of secondary education where high-stakes examinations, such as GCSEs, influence teacher performativity due to their impact on schools' data and external judgements. Schools adopt a low-risk strategy to ensure the best GCSE grades possible, especially considering the increased content within the history curriculum at KS4 (14–16 years old) (Harris, 2021). Possibly due to this, there have been significant changes to the teaching of diverse topics within the history curriculum at KS3 (Burn & Harris, 2021) whereby the inclusion of diversity, as defined in its widest sense encompassing LGBTQIA+, social-economic status, women, disability, Black and Asian British history, has seen an increase, possibly as a response to issues of social justice (Burn & Harris, 2021) along with a perception that KS3 is the place where the curriculum is less prone to performativity.

Many teachers have reported feeling uncomfortable or lacking in confidence teaching sensitive topics within their history lessons, or those dealing with difference (Cannadine et al., 2011; Harris & Clarke, 2011; Historical Association, 2011). A factor here may be the lack of diversity within the teaching profession itself (Royal Historical Society, 2018), which could result in a fear of being seen as taking a tokenistic approach (Dennis, 2016).

When determining their curriculum choices, teachers consider the accessibility of high-quality sources as essential to the teaching of history, as it is through the interpretation of such sources that pupils are able to construct an account of the past, if adopting a disciplinary approach to their teaching (Seixas, 2000). The time to develop such resources and plans, as well as the in-depth subject knowledge required to support the students' development of such disciplinary concepts, are a further barrier to developing more diverse approaches (Alexander & Weekes-Bernard, 2017). These aspects of history teaching are especially challenging within primary schools, where teachers are rarely subject specialists.

This is significant, as primary subject leaders are often required to generate written schemes of work for colleagues as well as overview curriculum design, whether they have a degree in history or abandoned formal history education in Year 9 (Historical Association, 2022). Considering that curriculum design is so important and can be seen as a key factor in developing pupils' knowledge and experiences beyond their own lives (Young, 2013), it is surprising that this responsibility would be given to teachers without subject-specific knowledge and understanding. The teaching of history through disciplinary concepts would be especially challenging, as this aspect of history teaching implies a depth of subject-specific knowledge which is required to structure knowledge to enable pupils to develop their understanding of history and its construction (Harris & Reynolds, 2018). Within primary and secondary settings, teachers have also reported a decrease in curriculum time for the teaching of history since 2014, as well as continued under-resourcing, with little to no budget for new topics (Historical Association, 2019).

We were keen to discover if any, or all, of these factors were to be part of our focus group discussions or whether the participants would report a differing view of their experiences in school, as well as the extent to which they viewed their teaching of history as diverse. The intention was to understand the reality of what was happening in schools through privileging the voices of teachers currently engaged in classroom practice. The education literature reviewed regarding diversity appeared to become static up to and following the COVID-19 pandemic, although there was anecdotal evidence that some teachers were developing their own practice to fill this gap. Therefore, the reality as perceived by practitioners of the diversity of the history curriculum being taught in schools was the main focus of this study.

METHODOLOGY

To investigate our research questions, we set up a collaborative enquiry to work alongside history colleagues from both primary and secondary schools who had a responsibility for developing history within their settings, to discover more about their perspectives and their understanding of the notion of diversity. We selected 10 participants from four primary and three secondary schools throughout Kent, South-East England, all of whom had responsibility for the history curriculum, either as a teacher, subject lead, head of department or headteacher. They were contacted via an email invitation from the researchers, who had previously worked with either the primary or secondary participants within their roles as senior lecturers. Therefore, all participants were known to one of the researchers from working in partnership with the researchers' university through their ITE programmes. Out of six primary schools invited, four participated and out of eight secondary schools, three participated.

We believed it was important not to approach the focus group discussions from a position of academic superiority, whereby teachers may see discussions as irrelevant at best, patronising at worst, especially whilst taking time out of their busy workloads (Taylor, 2004). All participants had worked with the researchers previously within their roles as senior lecturers; therefore, a clear statement was made at the start of the initial focus group which clarified the researchers' role as being that of collaborators and that the focus group was intended as a safe space in which to anonymously share views and examples of current practice. As a result, following the initial focus group discussion, the focus of the second group meeting was decided upon and led by the participants. This ensured the collaboration was authentic and purposeful.

It was recognised that using a focus group methodology had specific ethical challenges due to issues of consent, confidentiality and anonymity, as well as risk of harm due to the potential for the sensitive issues being discussed (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). These were carefully considered and mitigated for as much as possible during the ethics process and through pre and post briefings of participants, using procedures in line with current BERA guidelines (BERA, 2018; Sim & Waterfield, 2019).

We sought to explore the relativist ontology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Guba & Lincoln, 2005) relating to differing views of diversity and how these then related to the teachers' approaches to their teaching of history. The project was therefore within a social constructionist approach (Berger & Luckman, 1966).

The initial questions posed within the first focus group discussion were:

1. How is diversity understood within the history teaching within your setting?
2. How is diversity incorporated into the history teaching within your setting?

The intention was to compare themes and issues raised by the participants through this initial group discussion, rather than necessarily reach a consensus or report a 'group-view' (Barbour, 2018). Participants were included from both primary and secondary history leads and teachers, with the intention of providing an opportunity for cross-phase discussions and collaboration. This was also to enable discussions of the notion of diversity across the teaching of history from the Early Years Foundation Stage through to GCSE and A-Level (4–18 years old).

The participants were:

Anna—Secondary history teacher in Mid Kent, 4 years' experience.

Beth—History ECT teacher in Mid Kent secondary school, 1 year's experience.

Carla—Primary diversity lead in East Kent, not a history specialist, 12 years' experience.

Dean—KS3 history lead in a West Kent secondary school, 6 years' experience.

Emma—Secondary history teacher in West Kent, 4 years' experience.

Freya—Primary history lead in East Kent, not a history specialist, 5 years' experience.

Gina—Primary history lead in Mid Kent, not a history specialist, 8 years' experience.

Heather—Headteacher at a large primary school in East Kent, over 20 years' experience.

Ian—History Head of Department in a West Kent secondary school, 10 years' experience.

Jane—History Head of Department in an East Kent secondary school, 10 years' experience.

All names have been replaced and represent the gender of the participants. As can be seen from this summary of the participants' roles and levels of experience, there was a wide range of both. However, it was interesting to note that none of the primary school participants were history specialists, in other words none held a history degree. It is also worth noting, as it is relevant to our discussions, that all participants were White and English.

The first focus group discussion was audio-visually recorded to support analysis, as the researchers were integral to the discussions and therefore unable to carry out other forms of recording. The second focus group took place via an online virtual learning environment (VLE) due to COVID-19 restrictions and was therefore recorded through the platform for later data analysis.

Recordings of both focus groups were analysed following Braun and Clarke's (2022) six phases of analysis. Reflexive thematic analysis of the data was viewed by the researchers as most useful in developing an in-depth understanding of the qualitative data by developing patterns of meaning which could discern views of diversity within the participant group. Reflexive thematic analysis was used as a rigorous form of analysis which does not adopt the positivist approach of codebook approaches, but instead views coding as a flexible and organic process whereby meaning is not fixed within the data. All audio-video data was fully transcribed before being coded using a provisional coding frame to enable broad themes to be identified as well as interconnected sub-themes (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Further analysis of the data was then carried out using a comparison with Banks' (2019b) 'Levels of Integration of Ethnic Content'. This was chosen as a tool to identify the approaches taken by the participants' settings to integrate a range of diverse content, from Level 1: The Contributions Approach, through Level 2: The Additive Approach, Level 3: The Transformative Approach to Level 4: The Social Action Approach. This was a useful tool as the earlier two stages had been identified by Banks as those most likely to be used within settings beginning to develop the integration of multicultural content into their curriculum, whereas the final two stages require fundamental, wholesale changes to the setting's curriculum. This is especially true of the Social Action Approach, which would require pupils being educated with the aim of becoming 'reflective social critics' (Banks, 2019b, p. 236). Therefore, this model appeared to provide a range of scenarios similar to some discussed by our participants within the initial focus group, which enabled us to begin to analyse their responses in light of their levels of integration of diverse content within their school's curriculum.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The initial focus group

Prior to the initial focus group discussion, participants wrote an anonymised, free-text response to explain what they were hoping to gain from participating in this research. A total of eight participants attended this first session. The range of responses reflected an overall professional desire to grapple with diversifying the curriculum and the role of history. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the current focus on diversifying the history curriculum (Department for Education, 2022), many participants also vocalised the apparent good timing of our offer

to attend the research focus group, as their own schools or departments were focused on curriculum rewrites or strengthening the curriculum at the time. Provisional coding of both discussions, as well as the initial free-text responses, led to the identification of four over-arching themes which are further analysed below. The themes show the conceptual frameworks utilised by our participants and were the key drivers of diversification approaches in participant schools.

Multiple perspectives are a key motivator

All participants placed great importance on diversity as a concept and recognised the need for schools to consider diversifying the curriculum to be deemed as inclusive. For one participant, primary headteacher Heather, to do this effectively meant considering the '*make up of schools*' in terms of student cohorts, as this would automatically have a direct impact on her school's curriculum choices. The diverse content of the school's curriculum was therefore dependent on the makeup of the cohort. This was echoed by secondary school department lead Ian when he explained that historical narratives broached in the classroom needed to suit the learning context for '*this particular group*'. Diversification of history content was therefore characterised as positive as it catered for the needs of specific pupils.

Intense participant interest in the voices of peoples from the past (in terms of who has traditionally been included and excluded in teaching topics) meant uncovering '*voices that have previously been hidden*' according to Emma. All participants agreed this was a vital aspect of diversification. For Heather, the overall concept of inclusive teaching meant considering the voices of her school's pupil cohort, whilst the sense that '*diversity was a word that schools were being battered by*' seemed to suggest this was an aspect of curriculum design those teachers found worrisome. For whilst Anna agreed that '*there needs to be broader perspectives*', there was also an understanding that these perspectives needed to be viewed as acceptable by outside stakeholders, which could be seen as problematic and had an impact on their curriculum content.

One example of this issue came from secondary school department leader Ian, who questioned whether a scheme of work focused on change over time in North America, frequently presented in schools, was a story that his pupils wanted to hear, or whether it was more for '*parents to hear at home*'. Referring to this example, Anna also asked '*Is it our responsibility to champion?*' Beth had similar concerns, with a '*fear of treading into areas we shouldn't*' when including historical narratives considered to be less popular or more controversial.

These reflections were repeated throughout the first meeting. It became clear that participant conceptions of diversity meant they felt that whilst it was necessary for more inclusive teaching and learning practice in schools, there were multiple ways of getting it wrong, which could have negative professional repercussions.

Diversity as an addition to British history

A significant barrier to providing a more diverse curriculum appeared to be based on a misconception, held by some of the participants, that British history is not diverse in its origin. This was seen in a discussion between Beth, Jane and Anna, all secondary practitioners, when considering the challenge of deciding what to include and exclude in schemes of work. Beth asked '*Is it easier to just stick to British History?*' Jane agreed, stating '*there is an element of guilt*' in focusing on some things and not others. Anna explained further that diversified perspectives would come by offering broader international perspectives *on*

British history rather than examples directly *from* Britain's past, implying British history is not diverse. This seemed to miss the point that diverse stories of gender, class, disability, religion and ethnicity, as examples, are already present and not an addition to Britain's past historical record or a manipulation of historical reality.

A legacy of a lack of research impacting school resource creation, as well as participants' own subject knowledge on the more hidden histories of the British Isles, particularly prior to the nineteenth-century modern period, goes some way to explain this conception. In particular (certainly in terms of ethnicity), the narrative that the Windrush generation is the start of the timeline of Black British history is culturally pervasive, although inaccurate (Adi, 2022, p. xi). The impact of further research carried out in academic history communities on wider understanding of British history will surely be felt.

The first two themes identified above focused on our participants' broader understanding of diversity in a school history context, however, the remaining two were focused much more directly on the analysis of the construction of the curriculum in schools, as well as the resources shared by the participants during the second meeting. At this stage our analysis benefitted from the comparative use of Banks' (2019b) 'Levels of Integration of Ethnic Content' model as a key analytical frame of reference, owing to the seriousness with which the participants were approaching the development of their curriculum and their pedagogical considerations on how to '*incorporate diversity in a thorough way*' and '*potential pitfalls and areas for development*'.

Banks' (2019b) model argues that teacher pedagogy falls into one of four categories of approach when reviewing and creating multicultural curriculum content. For example, Level 1: The Contributions Approach focuses on standalone celebrations of specific cultural commemorations without further focus on the ethnic group. Level 2: The Additive Approach builds on the first level by aiming to transform the curriculum with additional ethnic content, yet framed from a historical mainstream perspective which simply adds to the master narrative. The final two levels, Level 3: The Transformative Approach and Level 4: The Social Action Approach, both aim to put the student at the heart of the learning, by allowing students in the third level to view alternative concepts, themes, issues and events from the perspective of diverse ethnic and cultural groups, and in the fourth level to make and take decisive actions on important social issues themselves. Use of this model allowed us to identify thematic threads across both meetings and consider them in terms of these levels, with some success.

Mismatch between changing conceptions of diversity with a static curriculum

During the first meeting, it was evident that participants held strong conceptions of what could or should go into a diverse curriculum in *generalised* terms. Discussion was wide-ranging and all participants made it clear that they felt a strong sense of responsibility for providing diverse content in curricula, based on providing multiple narratives and history second-order concepts. This discussion related to diversity of gender, social-economic status, disability and sexuality, therefore a wide conception of diversity from all participants.

Dean, KS3 history lead, also explained the benefits of planning secondary curricula thematically, which he viewed as having been pedagogically effective in his school context. Ian, head of history department, articulated a highly developed sense of diverse planning when he commented that he '*feels happy if students have knowledge and a conceptual framework*' because from his viewpoint history as a discipline, if taught well, would automatically contain diverse voices.

On the surface, this approach resembled a contributions approach (Banks, 2019b) yet in fact, Ian had developed his own robust framework of how to create diverse curricula, which was at least Level 2 if not Level 3 on the 'Levels of Integration of Ethnic Content' model. For example, his school schemes of work were based on identifying '*where they* [pupils] *are, and to teach them a sense of place, how that place has developed, the local community they are part of and how that has grown … how culture has developed around them … wider stories … and what led people there*'. Anna, also a secondary practitioner, highlighted that '*a diverse curriculum today will not be what a diverse curriculum will be like tomorrow*'. The context of a changing local community being an important part of any curriculum design. Here, Anna also appeared to be referring to conceptions of diversity changing over time, as can be seen through changes from a focus on multicultural education to diversity as a wider concept.

Overall, the discussion on curriculum planning yielded many clues as to our participants' conceptual frameworks for planning diverse curricula. There was a sense that planning the curriculum, though time-consuming, was essential. Through the recorded discussions we were able to identify the elements below, which the participants considered to be vital components of a diverse history curriculum. This demonstrated their conceptual understanding of how to develop a diverse curriculum.

- School context.
- Knowledge of pupils.
- Offer multiple perspectives.
- Discrete studies of international history.
- Not box ticking.
- Be changeable.
- Not dictated by exam board qualifications.
- What students want to know about (within reason).
- Use academic/up-to-date historical research.
- Interdisciplinary/work with other curriculum subjects to reinforce learning.

However, all participants argued that whilst such a checklist was a useful tool for planning a diverse curriculum and represented good teaching practice, cross-referencing these general curriculum planning ideas with specific content referenced in the National Curriculum demands of exam board specifications and existing schemes of work often caused great difficulty, due to an apparent mismatch. This struggle was supported by the views of Steinberg (2020), who viewed knowledge in this form as colonised, because knowledge itself cannot be fixed in this way if it is to represent a diverse population.

Is something worse than nothing?

The biggest fear, reported by all eight participants, was that their current approach was too tokenistic. For example, Gina, a primary history lead, characterised the inclusion of significant individuals in the KS1 national curriculum as '*a bit trite*' if this was treated with a '*shopping list*'-type approach to shoehorn in minoritised individuals. Carla, also a primary practitioner, voiced similar discomfort that weaving the stories of individuals chosen as representative of particular groups was '*just a bit too token*'. These types of practice clearly have similarities to a Level 2 approach (Banks, 2019b), which highlighted the challenges of not restructuring the curriculum in its entirety. However, Heather, a primary headteacher, believed that schools could '*spin the National Curriculum in any way you like*', which meant an additive approach allowed schools more freedom to apply their own diverse context to curriculum choices.

From the secondary school participants' perspective, however, all of whom were subject specialists, the discussion appeared much starker. When Beth raised the question '*is tokenistic* [content] *better than nothing at all?*' in reflection on her own school's work on diversifying the curriculum, Ian very quickly replied '*I think it's worse than nothing*', with the rationale that taught effectively, history was a naturally diverse subject when focused on the full range of human experience. Including only limited tokenistic diverse content would distort a sense of historical period and severely impact pupils' learning and disciplinary understanding.

Overall, the concern that some teaching practice was not effective enough to achieve a strongly inclusive curriculum implied an implicit knowledge of Level 1 (Banks, 2019b). Although the 'Levels of Integration of Ethnic Content' model (Banks, 2019b) was not known directly to the participants as far as we were aware, the desire for stronger diverse teaching echoed the wider public discourse on the inclusion (and exclusion) of diverse topics within the history curriculum. This was coupled with a fear of performativity regarding the consequences of getting it wrong (Ball, 2003). The focus of this discussion had a big impact on the overall conclusions of the initial meeting, which led to the participants' decision to focus the second meeting on the theme of tokenism and to critique each other's diverse teaching resources.

Practitioner-led meeting

The focus of the second meeting was discussed and decided upon by the participants as a result of the initial meeting and held via a VLE. Participants from two extra primary schools, who had been unable to attend the initial meeting, also attended. All participants independently chose and shared something they considered to be:

a. a good resource for developing diversity in the curriculum;
b. an approach or resource they thought could be considered as more problematic or tokenistic.

The resulting discussions revealed further insights into the wider conceptual frameworks of our participants, which in turn allowed us to apply the 'Levels of Integration of Ethnic Content' model (Banks, 2019b) as a method of assessing the fears of the participants that some of their curriculum work was too tokenistic. This analysis was applied on a school-by-school basis, which allowed us to view the alignment of each school to the levels within the model. Interestingly, all but one of the examples provided for discussion related to diversity of ethnicity only, apart from a single mention of women in World War I (WWI). Therefore, this indicated a focus on ethnicity within diversity, despite the previous discussion being focused on a wider definition which encompassed gender, disability and sexuality.

We found that four schools (based on their contributions to both meetings, their resources and the reception of those resources by other participants) corresponded clearly to the differentiated levels of the model (Banks, 2019b). The approach of two primary schools appeared to adhere to a Level 1 approach to curriculum design. Gina, a primary history lead, working at a diverse, town-based school, was keen to point out that she was a non-specialist in history who had been tasked with writing a new whole-school curriculum. Gina explained that Black History Month had always been celebrated at the school and that the general school mindset was that the '*diversity box was ticked*' with such practice. Similarly, Heather, a primary headteacher, felt that her school celebrated diversity by aiming to represent the range of students from different backgrounds within the curriculum content in practical ways. Whilst Gina was beginning to question the element of diversity being a box-ticking exercise, Heather appeared to embrace the Level 1 approach, in that the curriculum allowed flexibility

to include content chosen by specific teachers, where time and a lack of subject specialism was a constraint to deeper planning.

Whilst no secondary school participants described practice from Level 1, contrasting additive and transformative approaches (Levels 2 and 3) were identified. Jane, as a new head of department supporting much less experienced colleagues, was able to articulate her engagement with the concept of wanting to add diverse content into existing curricula as a method of short-term expediency. She was confident that the addition of lessons such as 'women in WWI' or 'WWI soldiers of the Empire' into a pre-existing scheme would allow the department more time to rethink their curriculum goals in the longer term.

However, in a much more established history department Anna, Dean and Ian, who had worked with each other for several years, had successfully transformed large areas of their curriculum content. An example being a wide-ranging scheme of work they had developed for Year 8 inspired by *Guns, germs and steel* (Diamond, 1997). In the book the author takes a global causal approach to explaining global interconnectivity from its beginnings of exploration and industrialisation. This had allowed Dean and Emma (along with the rest of their department) to develop their own subject knowledge on a topic they thought they knew well, or certainly well from a western historical perspective. However, using the book, they had gone further by creating a scheme which was thematic and allowed new content from areas of the world not previously studied, which fundamentally '*debunked the myth of race*'. The scheme even touched upon the Neolithic Period (which is contained only within the current Primary History National Curriculum for England) as a '*natural*' part of the bigger long-term thematic study. There was no doubt that their approach changed the basic assumptions of their old curriculum and as such matched up positively to Level 3 (Banks, 2019b) as it introduced multicultural content.

However, other examples of shared curriculum content from the schools were very difficult to attribute to one level. Indeed, some schools provided multiple curriculum and resource examples, which sat across a spectrum of levels. Therefore, it proved problematic to assess the approach of any one particular school towards curriculum development, as the model did not recognise the existence of multiple timelines of change to different curricula within different key stages. One clear example of this dissonance arose in the lengthy discussion all participants engaged in regarding Anna and Beth's classroom practice. They firstly shared a Year 8 scheme of work on slavery which they had identified as a good example of their approach to diversifying the school history curriculum. The scheme had been adapted to include relevant lessons on the legacy of the Black Lives Matter movement and links to the past. This was followed by a homework piece focused on John Blanke, a black trumpeter in the court of Henry VIII referred to within *Black Tudors: The untold story* (Kauffman, 2017). This drew most professional discussion and critique of possible tokenism in resource selection. Both examples initially seemed to suggest Anna and Beth's confident utilisation of the additive approach to curriculum construction. However, the picture was complicated when both questioned whether the homework had much place in teaching focused on Tudor dynastic themes rather than wider Tudor society. Therefore, they demonstrated an awareness of the flaws highlighted by a content-based, box-ticking approach, yet lacked confidence in knowing how to fully translate their conception of diversity into their history curriculum effectively. They clearly held a deeper disciplinary understanding than simply the content integration aspect of the Banks (2019a) model, which suggested they were aware of the importance of developing an understanding of knowledge construction amongst their students, but possibly lacked the confidence to do so. A sense that their approach was also anchored in promoting social action was further supported by Anna and Beth's achievement in establishing a pupil-led after-school history club. This had been positively evaluated by pupils who were able to choose interesting, socially significant issues to investigate via historical parallels. Therefore, this was indicative of a wider approach to diversification, although it appeared to

have stalled at this point, again possibly due to a lack of knowledge or confidence of how to take it further, or due to lack of support from a school-wide culture of diversification.

During our reflective discussions with participants regarding the pedagogical and disciplinary knowledge required to affect change, the issues raised were not reflected in the level descriptors of Banks (2019b). It was evident that participants were mindful of the need to transform their curriculum and were engaged in a process of questioning which demonstrated they were unwilling to simply accept the status quo. Freya, a primary history lead, emphasised this desire when she shared a feeling of overwhelming nervousness towards the '*cramming in topics*' process, expressing that '*we try and shoe-horn characters and figures from history without having the expertise that our secondary colleagues very clearly have*'. She even went so far as to question the position of the primary sector, asking '*Have we got it right in primary?*'

Carla, a primary diversity lead, advocated for curriculum content which would '*celebrate people with diverse stories, abilities and skin colours*'. Yet, again, her approach was more complex because she shared many thematic examples of how diverse content was disseminated through multiple learning strategies. This included a focus on selecting books for the school library (as one part of the development of a wide-ranging school diversity policy) which offered diverse stories, but also stories which did not describe skin colour as '*coffee-coloured or cinnamon-coloured skin*'.

Despite the possible existence of the fear of performativity (Ball, 2003, 2012; Hall & McGinty, 2015; Harris, 2021) there was the overwhelming desire to share practice, possibly due to a need for engagement through conspicuous practice (Page, 2018). This opportunity also facilitated valued critique from other professionals engaged in similar school discussions on curriculum reform, as well as valuable insight into new resources and methods for planning the curriculum. By comparing the broader aspects of school-focused diversification strategies, the rich discussion highlighted the ability and willingness of the teachers and schools to engage collaboratively with their teaching peers. On reflection we could have included opportunities for the participants to make individual contributions via semi-structured interviews or questionnaires. However, we did utilise individual written free-text responses at the beginning and as a follow-up to the initial discussion.

Clearly, it could be the case that participants were influenced by the collaborative nature of our discussion and our participation as researchers and ITE specialists. This led to questions around the sense of performance for both participants and researchers as colleagues, peers across educational settings and subject specialists. Initially, as discussion focused on disciplinary issues, primary participants voiced their concerns around having less subject-specialist knowledge. However, it became apparent that primary participants had a complex and holistic knowledge of whole-school approaches to diversity. Therefore, this balance of expertise enabled an honest and open dialogue, with critical discussions of the challenges and innovations connected to diversifying the history curricula.

DISCUSSION

Returning to our first research question:

> How do history teachers and subject leads understand the concept of diversification within the history curriculum?

It seemed apparent from the initial discussion that participants conceived diversity as encompassing ethnicity, culture, gender, social-economic status and disability. However, it was interesting to note that examples almost exclusively referred to ethnicity within the second

focus group when participants shared a chosen resource to discuss. This indicated that the participants had a wide conception of diversity, however this did not translate into their practice and curriculum planning due to factors such as subject knowledge, National Curriculum constraints and concerns of tokenism. This was also possibly because their focus on content integration had led to a view that diversity had been accomplished. Therefore, there had been less focus on knowledge construction, which Banks (2019a) argues as essential to the process of developing multicultural educational. However, to fully develop an understanding of the knowledge construction process, teachers would need to make this explicit to their students, in terms of the influence of historical factors and cultural assumptions within any sources or accounts of historical events. This would be problematic where teachers lacked confidence or disciplinary knowledge and may be why this was not seen within our discussions.

In relation to our second question:

How are schools approaching the diversification of their history curriculum?

There were several key factors which appeared to have an impact on the schools' approaches to diversification of their history curriculum. The main factor was the context of the school within which the participants were based. For example, if diversification was a key priority for the senior management team there was a focus on policy, which therefore had an impact on the history curriculum. It was also the case that the availability of history subject specialists within the staff team had a profound impact on the development of the curriculum, as there was more disciplinary knowledge which enabled the development of historical enquiry offering multiple perspectives.

Therefore, whilst the 'Levels of Integration of Ethnic Content' model (Banks, 2019b) was useful to measure specific approaches to curriculum content and resource design and allowed for the implementation of wider social change within specific schools generally, through developing an empowering school culture (Banks, 2019a), it did not reflect the range of disparate teaching approaches seen within the participants' school settings. In particular, it had limited use to assess diverse content within primary school settings where senior leaders were more involved in subject-specific curriculum choices than in secondary history departments. It was also the case that knowledge construction would only be possible where teachers had sufficient subject and disciplinary knowledge in history to support students to achieve such a sophisticated level of understanding. Therefore, we identified a need to develop a way of supporting schools' own attempts to diversify teaching and learning more specifically in terms of policy creation, knowledge construction in history and diversity more generally across the curriculum which went further, in terms of collaboration with peers across phase and setting, as well as with subject associations, than Banks' (2019a) theoretical notion of an empowering school culture. As, whilst school-wide explorations of the 'interaction of staff and students across racial lines' (Banks, 2019a, p. 19) was a vital step, with regards to the schools involved in our research, if the current level of subject and disciplinary knowledge was not already present within the school it would be vital to collaborate beyond the single setting. As such, we developed the Schools Diversification Model as a tool to enable schools to identify their current position and offer a pathway to develop their diverse practice further, which we envisage will encompass practical, cross-phase working parties and the development of networks. We constructed this model as a result of the developing current practice identified within both the primary and secondary schools involved in this research. It considers ways in which what was already happening can be categorised in terms of levels, as well as how this can be developed further, considering the current curriculum and issues which relate to practitioners working in schools seen throughout our discussions.

The Schools Diversification Model

Our model of school diversification development (Figure 1) enabled the categorisation of participants' schools into four stages.

Stage One: Pragmatic engagement

In this approach, teachers and leaders voice a positive attitude towards diversifying teaching and learning in schools, however, there is also a call for curriculum guidance as well as practical and logistical support to achieve diversification in general terms. Curricula tend to be generalist cross-curricular schemes of work, or where history-specific schemes of work exist, these do not critically engage with diversity in subject-specific ways.

Stage Two: Collaborative professional community

This approach is above all reflective on the strengths and weaknesses of a stage one approach, which in turns prompts a desire for wider peer-to-peer collaboration through connections to other schools, other organisations and more subject-specific knowledge bases. Focused commitment to furthering own understanding and policy, or history-specific disciplinary knowledge within the primary or secondary contexts, is apparent.

Stage Three: Criticality and innovation

This stage yields the results of stage two collaborative practice. Schools are able to create innovative curricula or policies based on their own critical engagement with school
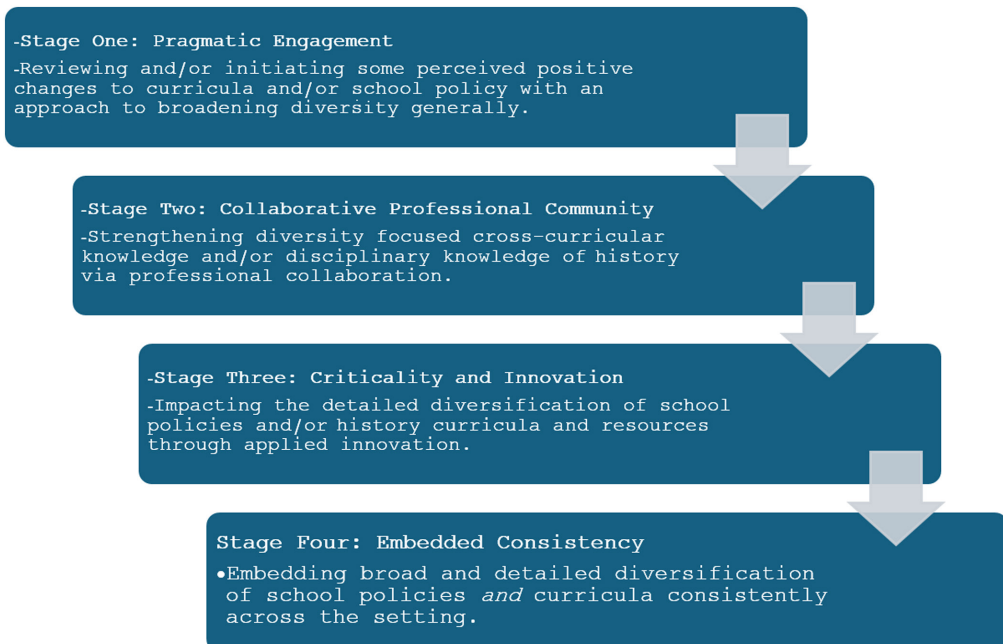

F I G U R E 1 Diagram showing the stages identified in our Schools Diversification Model.

peers, historical organisations, academic research and other areas where good practice in diversifying teaching and learning can be accessed. In primary schools, the creation of rigorous school teaching and learning policies tends to positively impact school curricula, often resulting in stronger interdisciplinary approaches. In secondary schools, departmental practice impacts the development of diverse history curricula driven by teachers who have formed their own pedagogy of diversity in teaching the subject.

Stage Four: Embedded consistency

In this final stage, schools achieve an embedded and consistent approach to diversification of the curriculum, supported and promoted by innovative and consistent school policies. This means the teaching and learning is highly effective in promoting diversity in context and is able to utilise student voice and wider parental and community voices in a continual process of school diversification.

CONCLUSION

Our discussions revealed that all participant schools were at varied stages of diversification (Figure 1). This was clearly a *process* through which they were moving. A key factor to moving through this process was collaboration (stage two), followed by innovation and critical engagement (stage three). Within our participant schools there was evidence of stages one to three, although only two schools demonstrated elements of stage three. This appeared to be due to those schools starting this process much earlier and engaging with multiple examples of collaborative practice. This was indicative of school cultures being empowered, as stated by Banks (2019a), however in the case of our participants' schools this was specifically through collaborative and reflective processes which took place during the focus group discussions, rather than in isolation. We would hope that schools currently at stage three would continue through the process to develop an embedded and consistent approach (stage four).

Our model (Figure 1) offers continuing teacher and school-focused practical support, in terms of content integration, encouraging a move away from box ticking towards phase-specific content choices based on disciplinary knowledge. Our discussions revealed that there was professional anxiety around the need for wholesale change and rapid curriculum review to ensure diversification was central to school practice. Therefore, our model is supportive of the professional dialogue, reflection and collaboration needed to support and identify a school's current stage and continue through the process of diversification. It also mitigates for feelings of anxiety amongst practitioners, as it is a clear, mapped process of whole-school change which takes time. This could facilitate easier collaboration between both teachers, senior leadership teams and peers, as well as between secondary and primary colleagues (a model becoming increasingly common within many trusts). The strength of the collaborative aspect of this model was exemplified by participants continuing to work together through peer networks, following the conclusion of this project.

Further research now needs to be developed to apply this model (Figure 1) to a wider range of school contexts to find out if this model is applicable across a wider field, as clearly this was a very limited sample. It would be supportive of the process of diversification to also develop a form of auditing tool using this model, as well as detailed level descriptors which could be utilised more readily by schools. Collaboration should be at the heart of school development to embed diversification within policy and curriculum.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

There was no conflict of interest in undertaking this research.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available owing to privacy or ethical restrictions.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Ethical approval was sought and gained via the ethics panel at Canterbury Christ Church University prior to any research being carried out.

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