

Diversity and the history curriculum: An action research approach to help trainee history teachers embrace cultural and ethnic diversity in the curriculum

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Abstract

This paper explores the issues that secondary history teachers on an Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme in England encounter in attempting to incorporate more cultural and ethnic diversity into the history curriculum. It also assesses the impact that changes in their training course had on their views and pedagogical practice. Using questionnaires and scenario based interviews with three cohorts of trainee teachers, key challenges were identified, which were related to the purposes of teaching history and diversity, appropriate pedagogy and content, dealing with pupils, and teachers' personal concerns. A framework for analysing trainees' stances towards cultural and ethnic diversity based upon a confident-uncertain-uncomfortable continuum was developed. This operated within a socio-cultural framework that was identified and helps to explain the extent to which trainee history teachers were willing and able to embrace diversity within their teaching. The research revealed that the course had had an impact, although this was in subtle rather than marked ways, which raises further questions about what is possible within the confines of an ITE training programme and the need for additional support beyond the course.

Keywords: history education; diversity; initial teacher education

Context

This paper explores the challenges facing trainee secondary history teachers on an Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme in England in their attempts to embrace diversity in their teaching. Diversity is a key area in the recently revised history National Curriculum (NC) in England, which states that:

Pupils should explore cultural, ethnic and religious diversity and racial equality. Diversity exists within and between groups due to cultural, ethnic, regional, linguistic, social, economic, technological, political and religious differences. Cultural understanding should be developed through the range of groups and individuals investigated, for example minorities and majorities, European and non-European. People and societies involved in the same historical event may have different experiences and views and may develop a variety of stories, versions, opinions and interpretations of that event. (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority [QCA] 2007, 3)

Though implicit in previous versions of the curriculum, the emphasis on diversity is now much greater. As can be seen diversity in the NC is conceptualised as multifaceted, but for the purposes of our study the focus was primarily upon how trainee history teachers address cultural and ethnic diversity within the history curriculum. The emphasis was on being able to teach about other cultures, the interactions between cultures and the experience of minority groups within society. This was due to the perception that these areas were both poorly represented and taught within the existing curriculum. This can be seen in Slater's (1989) lampooning of the English history

curriculum as:

largely British, or rather Southern English; Celts looked in to starve, emigrate or rebel, the North to invent looms or work in mills; abroad was of interest once it was part of the Empire; foreigners were either, sensibly, allies, or rightly, defeated. Skills – did we even use the word? – were mainly those of recalling accepted facts about famous dead Englishmen, and communicated in a very eccentric literary form, the examination-length essay (cited in Haydn *et al.* 1997, 14).

Little seems to have changed since the 1980s, as evidenced by a recent report from the government's inspection agency, Ofsted (2007), which criticises the history curriculum for its limited coverage of multiethnic history.

The construction of the curriculum and what it includes (and just as importantly what it *excludes*) has long been recognised as a political act (Bernstein, 1971). According to Gay (2004, 41) the curriculum is too frequently 'loaded' against pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds:

Knowledge taught in schools is a form of cultural capital and is a social construction that reflects the values, perspectives, and experiences of the dominant ethnic group. It systematically ignores or diminishes the validity and significance of the life experiences and contributions of ethnic and cultural groups that historically have been vanquished, marginalized, and silenced.

The danger is, as Grosvenor (2000) and Gundara (2000) argue, that exclusion of ethnic groups from the curriculum leads to a sense of exclusion and marginalisation more generally from education, as there is a mismatch between what pupils are taught and their lived experience. In addition, it is highly likely that pupils from majority backgrounds will emerge with a limited perspective of the past that downplays the role of other groups. Using Critical Race Theory, Ladson-Billings (2004) and Gillborn (2008) demonstrate how the default position in society reflects the dominant culture, and helps to perpetuate inequalities. Further, there is empirical evidence to suggest that the content choices in a school curriculum do have an impact on how students perceive themselves and 'others'. Zec (1993, 257) for example undertook a comparative case study of two schools in the UK and was convinced 'that the high level of positive social interaction at the school between pupils of differing backgrounds was reinforced by some of the work being done in the curriculum', and which was absent in the comparison school. In a study of schools with high numbers of minority ethnic students who were performing better than the national average, Her Majesty's Inspectorate [HMI] (2002) also identified the curriculum as one factor which had a positive effect. In the USA, Nieto's (2004) case study research identified the difficulties that pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds face when confronted with an ethnocentric curriculum.

Additionally there are concerns worldwide about a growing disparity between an increasingly ethnically diverse pupil population and a teaching profession, which is overwhelmingly white, and middle class (see Santoro and Allard 2005; Milner 2005). The issue is the extent to which teachers possess the cultural awareness to teach pupils from a range of backgrounds effectively. The research evidence, from different areas of the globe (see Causey *et al.*, 2000; Mahon, 2006; Pearce, 2003; Sleeter, 2001), suggests that this is not easy, especially for teachers from essentially monocultural backgrounds.

It is within this context that history teaching needs to be considered. Developing a history

curriculum is inherently political and potentially divisive. History can shape national sentiment and be used to promote particular views of the past. Consequently history has the further potential to exclude and alienate individuals or groups; indeed signs of this are apparent in the research evidence both in Europe and the USA, as shown below.

The Department for Education and Skills' (2006) report *Ethnicity and Education* asked pupils in England and Wales to identify their favourite and least favourite three subjects (see Figure 1). History did not feature in any pupils' list of favourites but was cited quite frequently as a least favourite subject amongst those from minority ethnic backgrounds. Although the report did not explore why this was the case, other studies provide possible answers. Grever, Haydn and Ribbens' (2006, 2008) comparison of Dutch and English students, shows there is a difference in the type of history indigenous and minority ethnic pupils wish to study; most strikingly national history is favoured by indigenous pupils but does not feature highly for pupils from other backgrounds. Traill's (2006) research, carried out in London schools, revealed the hurt and alienation black students felt when studying a unit on 'Black Peoples of the Americas' due to the negative images and lack of positive role models presented. Most recently, Epstein's (2009) study in the USA shows very starkly how pupils from different backgrounds respond to and interpret the history that they are taught, with black pupils responding more negatively to the view of the past with which they are presented. Collectively, this evidence raises important questions not only about the history curriculum, but also the ability of more experienced and beginning history teachers, particularly from white backgrounds, to teach a more diverse and inclusive history curriculum.

Figure 1. Least favourite subjects reported by ethnic background

	1	2	3
White British	Maths (19%)	Modern Languages (18%)	Religious Studies (11%)
Mixed Heritage	Maths (18%)	Modern Languages (17%)	Science (8%)
Indian	Maths (14%)	History (13%)	Modern Languages (12%)
Pakistani	Maths (17%)	History (13%)	Modern Languages (11%)
Bangladeshi	Maths (17%)	Modern Languages (14%)	Science (10%)
Black Caribbean	Maths (20%)	Modern Languages (14%)	English (9%)
Black African	Maths (16%)	History (13%)	Modern Languages (12%)

Taken from the Department for Education and Skills' (2006) report *Ethnicity and Education*

It has long been recognised that the ideas, attitudes and beliefs of teachers are important factors in shaping how teachers teach and informing the decisions they take (see Milner 2005). It is therefore highly pertinent to identify the factors that influence a teacher's willingness and ability to incorporate effectively aspects of cultural and ethnic diversity within their teaching. Hence with this in mind the research sought to identify:

0. What issues trainee history teachers face which may impact on their ability and willingness to incorporate diversity in their teaching;
0. How far teacher educators, are able to address these concerns.

Research approach

The study adopted an action research approach. This involves a cyclical approach to research, starting with a reconnaissance stage to identify an area of practice that needs improvement, an action plan of interventions, the collection of data during the process of implementation and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the intervention (see Carr and Kemmis, 1986; McNiff, 2002). Depending on the outcomes, another cycle of intervention, data collection and evaluation can be carried out. This study entailed two complete cycles of interventions. Such an approach is located within a critical theoretical paradigm, as it aims to change a situation. The research had two main foci. One examined my practice, as a white middle class initial teacher educator from a monocultural background, with limited personal experience of teaching diversity, and therefore what needed to change in my practice to support trainees more effectively in this area. However this paper focuses on the insights gained into the issues that trainee teachers encounter when having to address cultural and ethnic diversity in the curriculum, and the extent to which course interventions and experiences enable trainees' thinking to develop. Data was gathered using a combination of questionnaires and interviews (see Figure 2 for data set). The data collected was essentially qualitative. Seventeen trainee history teachers (from three cohorts) have been involved in this study, twelve of whom were subject to interventions. All the trainees involved were white, the vast majority came from monocultural backgrounds and most were in their twenties (see Figure 3 for details of those involved in the interventions 2007-8 and 2008-9).

Figure 2. Data collected during this research

Action research stage	Data gathered
Reconnaissance stage (2006-2007)	Questionnaires and issues based scenario interviews with five trainee history teachers (three female, two male). All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Each lasted 40-60 minutes.
1st action cycle (2007-2008)	Modified questionnaires and issues based scenario interviews with seven trainee history teachers at the start of the course (five female, two male). All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Each lasted 40-60 minutes. Same questionnaires and issues based scenario interviews with six trainee history teachers (four female, two male) at the end of the course. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Each lasted 40-60 minutes.
2nd action cycle (2008-2009)	As for 1st action cycle, but with six trainee history teachers (five female, one male). Second questionnaire and issues based scenario interviews carried out at mid-point in the course. Final questionnaire and issues based scenario interviews carried out at the end of the course. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Each lasted 40-60 minutes.

Figure 3. Brief biographical information on trainee teachers who participated in the research

Trainee	Gender	Age	Degree and employment/school experience
2007-2008			history
Sharon	F	27	2:1 in Ancient History and Archaeology, 5 years' work in financial services industry
Dominic	M	23	2:2 in History, worked in a Pupil Referral Unit
Jess	F	21	2:1 in History and Politics, voluntary experience as a student, taking younger pupils on camps
Louise*	F	48	2:1 in History, career in tax sector
Carol	F	25	2:1 in History, no school experience
James	M	50	History degree from Princeton, career in financial sector, some experience as a cover supervisor
Lesley	F	23	2:1 in History, worked as an Learning Support Assistant (LSA) in a secondary school
Trainee			
2008-2009			
Lily	F	25	2:1 in History and Politics, worked as an LSA in a secondary school, travel and teaching in Ghana
Kate	F	21	2:2 in History, work experience in secondary school settings
Jake	M	24	2:2 in Modern History, worked as a cover supervisor at a secondary school
Grace	F	22	2:1 in History and Drama, young leader for Brownies/Guides and work experience in a Pupil Referral Unit
Ally	F	24	2:2 in History and Education Studies, worked as an LSA in a secondary school
Cary	F	21	2:1 in History, worked as an activity leader on a youth camp

The questionnaire and interviews were piloted with five trainee teachers towards the end of their ITE course in 2006-7. This served the dual purpose of identifying their concerns and testing the research tools. Modified versions of these were subsequently used with seven (later six, as one withdrew from the course) trainee history teachers in 2007-2008, who were interviewed at the start and end of the course and with a further six trainees in 2008-2009, who have been interviewed three times in the course (at the start, mid-point and end of the course).

During the course trainees had sessions on the purposes of history teaching and how this relates to diversity, including a formal assignment on this. They had specific taught sessions on teaching diversity, whilst the remainder of the course has been infused with a range of exemplar teaching materials which have covered a range of diverse topics (e.g. the contribution of the Empire in World War I, the range of experiences of minority groups in the UK, interactions between the Christian West and the Arab Muslim world). In addition trainees have looked at appropriate pedagogy, how to deal with potentially sensitive topics, the potential impact of these on pupils and in so doing have had to broaden their subject knowledge.

The questionnaires gathered background information on the trainees in terms of their subject

expertise, their prior experiences of diverse settings and what they saw as the value of diversity. The interviews with the trainees lasted 40-60 minutes, were recorded with permission and fully transcribed. Each interview was based around five scenarios, which provided a stimulus for discussion and were seen as offering greater opportunities to gain access to attitudes and beliefs; as Joram (2007, 126) explains:

The rationale underlying this methodology is that when commenting on a dilemma, participants' beliefs and attitudes will be reflected in their responses, and the researcher can then cull the transcripts of their verbal responses to identify patterns. Thus, the methodology is designed to indirectly tap into participants' beliefs ... and attitudes.

The issues based scenarios explored aspects of diversity and history, and variously focused on teaching 'traditional' British history, the British Empire, the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, the so-called 'War on Terror' and exploring the balance between 'British history' and 'other' histories. For each scenario trainees had to explain what their stance was towards the particular issue; for example whether, in a department meeting they would argue for the inclusion of a particular unit of work, along with their reasons and/or concerns.

Open coding was used to analyse the data allowing themes and issues to emerge. The process of coding was abductive (as described by Kelle 2005) where a prior ideas were modified in the light of the data analysis. These ideas included Cockrell *et al.*'s (1999) categorisation of teachers as transmitters, mediators and transformers, and Kitson and McCully's (2005) identification of avoiders, containers and risk-takers. However, as we will show, neither was found to be fit for purpose and as a consequence a new and nuanced framework for analysing teachers' position towards diversity was developed, which we outline below.

Findings

Opportunities to teach more diverse topics

The questionnaires from all three cohorts of trainee teachers showed there were few chances to teach more diverse topics. Only two trainees needed to teach any aspect of Islamic history (and this was in the context of the Crusades). Four taught African history but only within the context of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. The Native Americans[?] topic was the most commonly taught unit by trainees. Trainees did not report teaching culturally and ethnically diverse topics beyond these. In some ways this is unsurprising. The trainees carry out their teaching in local schools, but the region within which this occurs, in the south of England, is essentially monocultural. The trainees are reliant upon the departmental schemes of work and curricula settings for their experiences, and so it is plausible to argue that schools may fail to see diversity as an issue for them. In addition there appears to be considerable inertia within curriculum arrangements; for although history pedagogy has changed dramatically over the past 30 years content selection has not, and many history departments still follow versions of the National Curriculum that have altered little since its first inception in the early 1990s (see Husbands, Kitson and Pendry 2003).

Prior experience of diverse settings

The majority of trainees had had little prior experience of diverse settings; their schooling, university study and employment opportunities were overwhelmingly confined to white, monocultural settings. Although the trainees, in their questionnaire responses, were able to

articulate reasons for including diversity in the history curriculum, very few saw this as a high priority during the course. This presents a conundrum for teacher trainers, as trainees' limited prior experience of diversity are coupled with limited opportunities to explore diversity within their school settings.

Identified trainee concerns

From the coding of the interview data five key challenges emerged: purpose, pedagogy, pupils, content and teacher. 'Purpose' relates to the reasons for teaching history and the place of diversity within this. The reasons for teaching history are complex and contested (e.g. Barton and Levstik 2004), but there appears to be a strong connection between what is seen as the purpose of studying the past and the strength of diversity's place in that study. For example an emphasis on the 'national' past and creating a sense of identity based around the 'national story' has potentially little room for a more diverse view of history, whereas an emphasis on using history to promote particular moral values, such as tolerance, would allow greater scope for a more diverse history curriculum. 'Pedagogy' refers to the teaching approaches that could be adopted. Both 'purpose' and 'pedagogy' are linked to 'content', because a decision to adopt a 'balanced', even-handed approach to teaching say the British Empire, sets the parameters for content selection and implies a particular view of the past. The use of 'pupils' as a code covers concerns about pupil behaviour and their responses to topics (e.g. the extent to which they would find a topic relevant or engaging), as well as the need to know classes in order to decide appropriate ways to teach them. The category 'teacher' centres much more on personal concerns expressed by trainees about (lack of) subject knowledge, their experiences of diversity and working with young people.

Unsurprisingly the views of the trainees varied. In some instances this was by category, for example some felt more confident about subject knowledge. It also varied considerably according to the scenario under discussion; the majority of trainees for example felt more comfortable teaching topics like the British Empire but were less keen on teaching about the 'War on Terror'. Further, it became apparent that the point in the year at which they were asked to discuss their views impacted on their responses.

Identifying the challenges that trainees (and teachers) encounter is relatively straightforward; many of those raised here are reflected in other studies, though often in different contexts. For example, Cotton (2006) explores the pedagogical challenges geography teachers in the UK face in adopting 'balanced' approaches, whilst in the USA Banks (2006) points out the difficulties for social studies teachers of claiming any balanced approach, either pedagogically or focusing on content, as the identification of a balanced position is itself political and is not neutral, and Grosvenor and Myers (2001) underscore the importance of subject knowledge in a UK history teaching context.

Understanding trainees' concerns – the development of a new framework

Having identified the five challenges facing trainees, using them to categorise teachers' attitudes and dispositions proved more complex. Yet this process of categorisation is important because it provides a useful conceptual tool and a more theoretical stance from which to analyse teachers' positions and therefore explore ways to support their development. Initially we hoped to use the models developed by Cockrell *et al.* (1999) and Kitson and McCully (2005). This was because Cockrell *et al.* (1999) used a model based upon purposes of schooling, which resonated with

helping trainees understand the purpose of history teaching, whilst Kitson and McCully's (2005) model was specifically based around the experiences of history teachers. However I found these existing models largely unhelpful. Cockrell *et al.* (1999) had previously categorised teachers' views as transmitters, mediators and transformers. Transmitters essentially adopt an assimilationist stance whereby young people outside the majority ethnic group need to learn about and accept the dominant culture. Mediators similarly are seen as promoting the importance of a common culture based upon the majority culture but see multiculturalism as a worthy educational goal, unlike transformers who focus on preparing pupils to live in a culturally diverse world and an educational system geared towards social equity for all. Yet the trainees did not easily fall into these categories. For example several trainees from all three cohorts challenged what is meant by British history; to many the history of Britain and its people (as opposed to British history) was inherently diverse, and so how trainees conceived British history showed that there was not a consensus to support a monocultural view of the past. This view did not sit neatly into any of the categories used by Cockrell *et al.* (1999). If anything it placed many within the transformer grouping, a stance which Cockrell *et al.* (1999) had found to be adopted by a minority of their sample, and would suggest that no further intervention was needed. It was clear though that the trainees were still facing difficulties that needed to be resolved if diversity was to become a part of their practice.

Kitson and McCully's (2005) work, using the idea of avoiders, containers and risk takers, also presented a potential framework with which to work. However, using this framework also posed difficulties as trainees did not fit easily into any particular category. For example, Gwen, who was part of the pilot study, was clear that the 'War on Terror' should be avoided because 'I'm not sure that in schools we should necessarily be dealing with them straightaway because lots of people have emotive issues, so they might not look at it objectively', but in other respects her views were categorised as 'containing'. Joanne, also in the pilot study, came across as a risk taker, for example when discussing teaching about slavery she said 'when there was all that stuff on the news about should we apologise for the Slave Trade and stuff like that, I think if we do ... look at current affairs and stuff and link it into that then that's always quite a nice way to make it significant'. Yet some of Joanne's comments appeared rather naïve in her enthusiasm to tackle potentially emotive topics. This may be a harsh judgement on her responses, many of which were astute, but some did reveal cultural insensitivities, for example wishing to draw upon black children's family experiences when studying the issue of slavery. Being a risk taker, may actually be a negative rather than a positive role. The container category proved problematic. Many of the trainees spoke about the need to maintain a balance when looking at events in the past or to offer multiple perspectives of an event. Yet providing a balance or multiple perspectives means different things; it could be looking at a range of alternative views, emphasising positive views to counteract negative assumptions or referring to historiographical interpretation. Thus including potentially inflammatory views to provide a 'balance' could be construed as risk taking, whereas an emphasis on even-handedness and ignoring any contemporary relevance might be seen as containing pupils' reactions.

The terminology is also problematic. Risk taker has positive overtones but this may actually mask problems, if the teacher is naïvely confident. The term avoider could be construed as pejorative, implying an unwillingness or inability to engage with particular issues, which may not necessarily be the case. It also implies that teachers are one or the other, whereas teachers may be more

willing to take risks with certain topics but not with others.

Given the shortcomings of these analytical frameworks, I revisited the interview data to see if an alternative, emergent framework would appear. Examining how the trainees often expressed views with confidence or uncertainty initially led to the adoption of a simple continuum covering ‘confident’ to ‘uncertain’ to ‘uncomfortable’. As further data was collected and analysed, this continuum seemed viable but needed to be modified to incorporate subtle nuances that emerged (see Figure 4 for the final version). For example, confidence could be based on experience, as opposed to assumption, whilst it may be based on considered insight or naïve reflection. Thus confidence is not necessarily a positive position. The advantage of the continuum is that it offers a model that accommodates a range of positions, for example a trainee may feel comfortable in their understanding as to why a particular topic ought to be taught, but lack confidence in their levels of subject knowledge to teach it, or feel uncomfortable with how to handle potential pupil responses. Not only does it enable trainees’ positions to be identified, it offers insights into the specific concerns trainees have and therefore what needs to be addressed.

This framework proved useful for identifying trainees’ starting points and exploring how their views changed during the year, following a range of interventions. As is to be expected trainees were situated at different points within the framework, but this varied by scenarios discussed in the interview and by the nature of the concerns. Space does not permit a detailed discussion of all the trainees involved in the study, but the following four examples (two from the 2007-2008 cohort and two from 2008-2009) are indicative of the range of positions adopted.

Trainees’ shifting position towards diversity, 2007-2008

While it is difficult to generalise about trainees’ positions, those involved in the course in 2007-2008 showed a general shift from naïve confidence to greater levels of uncertainty. Though Jess was positive about diversity, she lacked personal experience and did not regard it as a high priority for the course. She started the year confident in her subject knowledge and clear about what content pupils ought to be taught; to her British history was important and although she could see the purpose of a more diverse curriculum this should not be at the expense of British history. Jess

Figure 4. The ‘confidence continuum’

Informed confidence		Sensitised discomfort	
[views are realistic,		[willing to have a go,	
having been tested in		shows appreciation of	
the classroom, purpose		problems]	
is strongly supportive			
of diversity, shows			
clear commitment]			
Informed, untested	Uncertain	Uncomfortable but open	
confidence	[yet to make up their	to persuasion	
[ideas based on	mind, e.g. I don’t	[but not at the moment,	
assumption but show	know, I would like to	not willing to challenge	
nuanced understanding,	think]	dept approach, not a	
appreciates link		priority at this point]	

between purpose and diversity]			
Naïve confidence		Uncomfortable and	
[ideas based on		resistant	
assumption but		[unwilling to change,	
unsophisticated and		characterised by	
untested, purpose not		certainty]	
strongly related to			
diversity]			

commented, ‘I think multi-cultural history is very important especially in the society we live in today ... however, having it at the expense of the British history, I would struggle with, somewhat.’ Her main uncertainties focused on how pupils would respond to topics, and she was distinctly uncomfortable with topics, like the ‘War on Terror’ that could be controversial. Whilst generally comfortable with teaching approaches, Jess was again unclear about suitable pedagogic approaches to controversial topics. By the end of the year her position had changed in subtle ways. She was still confident about what content she felt ought to be taught, but this confidence was more nuanced; she still felt that British history was important but ‘not to the extent that currently is being taught’ and she talked about a more integrated approach to history arguing that ‘we don’t say at the moment we’re teaching white history’, thus suggesting a position whereby she saw history as the history of Britain rather than British history. Jess was also much more certain about the reasons behind teaching different aspects of history. In terms of pedagogy she remained uncertain but this was as a result of reflection upon her practice; as she admitted ‘I thought I’d get clearer but, I’m not completely confused but I, I don’t know, in a way, it’s a case of the more you know, the more you think about it.’ She had taught lessons on whether Britain ought to apologise for its role in the slave trade (which at the time, 2007, was in the news) but in two different school contexts; in a white monocultural setting the pupils she taught engaged in a good, strong academic debate, but in a multi-ethnic setting the same lesson had resulted in, what Jess called a far more ‘heated’ debate. As she explained, the pupils were ‘quite sensitive about it, ... they want to express their views and, I mean, occasionally it got, it almost got a little bit too, not out of hand but, they knew what they wanted to say and you did have to bring them back in occasionally’. Although Jess found the latter debate more difficult to manage, she felt that it engaged the pupils more because of its perceived relevance, which she enjoyed. Her views on this were still in a state of flux by the time she left the course. She remained uncomfortable with the idea of teaching about the ‘War on Terror’ but this was based on a much clearer understanding of the issues she might encounter. Jess did though reveal that she would teach the topic if she had to but would look to her head of department for a lead in terms of purpose and teaching approaches.

Cate’s position showed an interesting pattern of change during the year. At the outset it was clear that diversity was not an issue she had previously considered would be relevant to her and her teaching. Her personal experience of diversity was very limited. She was able to articulate ways in which diversity could be taught but she lacked any real sense of its purpose or the appropriateness of any content. Her limited experience also meant she was unable to appreciate the ways in which pupils might respond to a more diverse curriculum.

Lesley's position showed a very positive change during the year. Though well disposed towards diversity from the outset, like Jess, her personal experience was limited and she felt that diversity was a medium priority. She expressed much uncertainty about her subject knowledge, which at times meant she would feel uncomfortable teaching some topics. She was quite clear that different strands of history ought to be interwoven and integrated, but she (naïvely) felt that all topics should be of interest to all pupils, regardless of their ethnic background. Lesley was aware that some topics may be more sensitive than others but was unsure how to deal with this, beyond simplistic assumptions that she would adopt a balanced approach. She was deeply uncomfortable with the idea of teaching about the 'War on Terror'. By the end of the course her position had shifted quite markedly. She admitted that she had gone through a period of confusion, brought about by the university sessions which had raised issues she had previously not considered, but reflecting on these meant 'I think it then makes it easier to find out what your view is.' Similarly she said 'I just feel more decided', as she spoke with greater confidence about the purposes of history (and diversity related issues) and what she would teach and how she might approach these topics. Although she had not taught topics like the British Empire or the 'War on Terror' she was very positive about these, and had realistic ideas about how to teach them and why they ought to be taught. She saw subject knowledge as a potential source of discomfort, but this was not presented as an excuse not to teach something. Lesley was uncertain about the value of teaching about the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, owing to a negative reaction to what she had had to teach on school placement; she felt the departmental scheme of work focused too heavily on black people as victims and therefore created negative stereotypes. Thus she was still exploring what she thought would be a more appropriate approach. The change in Lesley's position was all the more remarkable because her confidence had been badly shaken during her second placement and she had to move schools part way through the course. As part of the course though she had undertaken an investigation into her own practice which compelled her to adopt 'risky' teaching strategies using, for example, role play, with which she was deeply uncomfortable. As a result, she realised: 'I can change things about my teaching and, you know ... things did go wrong and some lessons were awful but ... I just feel a lot more okay with things going wrong now.' This breakthrough in her thinking and attitude towards 'risky' teaching enhanced her confidence in other areas of her professional thinking and practice. By the end of the course, Cate's position had changed quite considerably in some ways. When discussing whether a traditional British history programme was appropriate, she was more assured in her view that it ought to be 'more mixed'. She noted that what was taught was essentially English history rather than British; she believed that pupils did not really take much notice of what history they were taught, but she felt there was a need to diversify the curriculum. Her views were based upon her school experience, but both her placements were in predominantly white monocultural settings; she had therefore been able to observe the limitations of teaching a traditional curriculum, but had not had the experience of teaching a more diverse one. Her views were shaped by her experience on the course and her self-reflection and as she explained in relation to national history:

I think it should be definitely more mixed. There's no reason why it just has to be British history. I was doing some reading about it and talking about its culture, it's not a nation anymore, we can't just define it as one nation.

This reflects some current thinking about the issue of nation states (see Grever and Stuurman, 2007), which are necessarily political constructs and therefore not necessarily the most

appropriate focus for defining a curriculum, especially as nation states are not static and are open to redefinition or boundary changes. Carol was also certain that she would teach topics like the slave trade and be happy to do so, although she was aware that her opportunities to teach such topics, and therefore her experience, was limited. Apart from the reasons for teaching about the 'War on Terror', her views showed little understanding of the purpose of teaching different topics, hence she expressed much uncertainty, so when asked why the Transatlantic Slave Trade ought to be taught she replied:

Um, I don't know. [PAUSE]. I suppose, links to the Empire to, er, the country did bad things, it happened ... um, I don't know what I'd want, I don't know really.

Carol was happier talking about pedagogical approaches to teaching these topics, though again she stressed she had not had the experience of doing this so was unsure how successful her ideas would be. Similarly her lack of experience meant she had had few opportunities to teach pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and so she was unsure how this would affect the way she taught.

What was evident throughout the interview was Carol's clear understanding of her current stage of development. She described herself as 'na?vely confident'. She was prepared to tackle diversity in the curriculum, but was aware her subject knowledge had not developed enough because there had been no need to because of what she had taught, plus she still needed to understand why many of these topics ought to be taught. She was much more aware of the issues associated with diversity, but as yet they were unresolved. In some ways this was due to the pressures of the course:

you do your university sessions, then we go to school and we just forget about everything you did at university, do it at school. Sometimes it's hard to relate, see how the two are related because you're just trying to get through each day.... And that's what I think will be a problem for me in the first year of teaching is that you'll just get through the lesson, just to get through the lesson and it's not for another year or so when you can really reflect on the actual lessons and what your aim, real aims are in the lesson and have you, are you actually achieving them.

In both cases the trainees had moved, although in subtle rather than stark ways. By the end of the course their positions were still developing. Both Jess and Cate had been made to rethink their positions as the result of different elements of the course, but were still trying to move their thinking forward. Thus the emphasis during the second action research cycle was to see how much further forward it was possible to move trainees' thinking.

Trainees' shifting position towards diversity, 2008-2009

As with the previous cohort it was difficult to identify any specific trends, but it was clear that the course had made them think more deeply about the issues associated with teaching a more diverse history curriculum.

Emma's prior experience of diversity was limited and she did not appreciate it would form part of history teaching. During the interview at the start of the course it was clear she was uncertain about the purposes of teaching particular topics and suitable pedagogical approaches to these. She

was uncomfortable with her subject knowledge and teaching more diverse topics to classes she did not know. Nonetheless, Emma did make insightful comments in the interview about what content might be appropriate and the general need to make the curriculum more diverse. Collectively, her position revealed a mix of naïve confidence and uncertainty. By the half way point in the course she had become more confident in a number of areas, even though she had not had opportunities to try these out in the classroom. Emma spoke more confidently about what content she felt was appropriate and her appreciation of the reasons topics might be taught was more developed. However, her lack of subject knowledge hindered this; for instance when discussing the Trans-Atlantic slave trade she was unable to articulate why it ought to be taught, admitting: 'I wouldn't get rid of it...why I would choose to teach it, I'm less sure of ... I don't think it should be avoided but it's sort of, I don't really know why I feel it shouldn't be avoided.'

Interviewing trainees at this point in the course generated helpful new insights. Most striking was the sense of powerlessness trainees felt. Though seemingly positive about diversity in history teaching, there was a strong sense in which they felt unable to put anything into practice; Emma described a conversation where the group had discussed this spontaneously over coffee: 'we were like, yeah, can't really do that until we're head of department ... and there's lots of things where you're sort of like, I need to take this on board but right now it's not necessarily completely relevant.'

By the end of the course, Emma was clear that identifying the purpose for teaching a topic was crucial to her thinking, and she was accordingly more committed to the need to embrace diversity within the curriculum. This had become more apparent to her with the teaching of the Holocaust:

I know it's towards to the end that I started to get it but it's almost through, I can see it through the Holocaust and I think almost doing that topic has made me realise with other topics what their purposes are ... it's almost like the penny's dropped and I look at things slightly differently to how I did before

She was therefore clearer why she was teaching topics such as the Native Americans, which had previously puzzled her.

Anna, by way of contrast, through her degree studies had a much stronger insight into diversity and for her it was a high priority that needed to be addressed as part of the course. She was well informed and clearly confident about appropriate content, the underlying purposes of history teaching and her subject knowledge. She was less certain about dealing with pupils and how they might respond to topics and also less confident about suitable pedagogical approaches. The course served to reinforce, rather than change Anna's position. She acknowledged: 'I thought it [diversity] was a good idea and I think I'm clear about why it's a good idea now.' During the course she struggled to identify the best teaching strategies to use, although she was aware of the possibilities and potential problems. By the end of the course she had developed several sequences of lessons focused on diversity issues, in particular she had created an interesting scheme of work on the British in India, where she adopted the use of multiple perspectives, and her positive experience reinforced her growing understanding of appropriate pedagogy.

One of the most interesting aspect of Anna's progress was her ability to take opportunities; while other trainees had said their host departments had given them the freedom to experiment with content and teaching ideas, most followed unquestioningly what was being taught and focused on finding different ways to teach the material, whereas Anna seized any chance to bring more diverse content into her lessons. She admitted: 'it's not as easy as maybe I thought it was, as straightforward to, to teach. ... it's more like ... getting it in the schemes of work and stuff and not being tokenistic' and 'a lot of the stuff, it really is really hard for us to implement now.' What set Anna apart from the other trainees was a sense of commitment; whereas all the other trainee teachers had shown a willingness to embrace ideas about diversity, Anna was unusual in taking it a step further and actually doing something about the situation.

Jake was a lot more confident in his understanding of the purposes of history and the position of diversity. This was mainly centred round the need to understand others to promote social cohesion:

you don't want children to come out of school that are completely blind to the fact that different cultures are now completely influxed with Britain and you don't want them to be blind and have no understanding because if they have no understanding, they can't possibly even begin to associate what's happening with what they read or what they hear.

Jake's views were not strongly linked to content, though he wanted a better balance between British history and non-British history; he did comment that he would be unwilling at this stage to argue against history colleagues 'who have got more of a grasp of the curriculum than I've got at the moment'. Additionally he was concerned about his subject knowledge and admitted that he would not be comfortable teaching some topics, e.g. the 'War on Terror' or aspects of Islamic history until this was firmly in place, particularly as he would be concerned about being misconstrued or offending someone. Jake was very positive about the need

By the midpoint of the course, Jake had had some experience of how pupils respond to more diverse content and so he was better able to discuss this aspect of his practice. In particular he was aware that pupils' responses to topics may well reflect parental attitudes, and so he was concerned that challenging pupils' views may provoke a response from parents. He was also concerned about his subject knowledge and the pedagogical approaches he might adopt. This reflected a more sophisticated understanding compared to his initial position, though this was not reflected in his comments about the rationale for teaching some topics. For example, when discussing the British Empire and the slave trade, Jake argued they were important topics, but when asked why, he was unable to articulate a further response. The other main development in Jake's position was to do with commitment. His first interview showed that he was positive about diversity, and though this was still undiminished, he was reluctant to develop this aspect of his teaching, commenting: 'it would be something that I would do if time allowed it ... at PGCE stage, I'd be more likely just to follow the department's set plan mainly due to time constraints.'

This highlighted issues about time and his unwillingness to challenge a department; at one point in his interview he explained the shortcomings in a department's scheme of work but said he would work with it. Fitting in and passing the course were his priorities: 'at the moment it's more of a focus on getting everything done, getting the basics done right'.

By the end of the course, Jake's position had developed in some ways but had also got 'stuck' in others. In terms of pedagogy he was more comfortable with this and advocated the use of 'little' stories. His earlier concerns about teaching potentially sensitive topics to minority ethnic pupils had been overcome and he found that pupils were more engaged by such topics. Previously when asked about the purpose of teaching the topics discussed in the scenarios, Jake had struggled to answer this; this time when asked he focused mainly on the need to include content that offered different perspectives although he did not articulate why this was important, and when asked further was only able to produce a vague answer. Although he expressed his ideas confidently, many were untried and occasionally came across as naïve, for example he spoke about the need for diversity but also adopted what could be construed as an assimilationist stance towards minority ethnic pupils:

if you're integrating into a British society and Britain, British students know their background, their culture, that kind of thing, and it is worthwhile that they [minority ethnic groups] do know British culture, the British background, British history.

He had also taken a backwards step in response to the scenario about the 'War on Terror'. Although he had previously expressed concerns about this topic he had been willing to teach it, but now he was more firmly against teaching the topic as he was unclear about the purposes, content and his subject knowledge. In one sense these are genuine issues and perhaps his move towards this position is sensible but overall it seemed to support the idea that he had not moved as far forward as other trainees.

His position becomes understandable given his school context. Jake had always been confident about his teaching but in his second placement his mentor became frustrated with Jake's inability to develop a broader range of teaching approaches to engage the pupils. Jake's development had 'plateaued' early and his attention focused on 'getting through'. Further, the department did not value diversity highly. Given this situation Jake did not give due reflection to diversity issues, and so although he still spoke confidently about many things his ideas were often undeveloped.

Although not all the trainees developed as much as Emma and Anna, as can be seen in the case of Jake, their cases show how changes in the course had helped trainees move closer to a position with which they felt confident and informed enough to positively embrace a more diverse curriculum.

Socio-cultural theory provides insights into the dynamics that underpin the extent of change that was observed (see Figure 5). Trainees operate in a social context that presents them with a number of dilemmas or tensions. One tension is related to the issue of priority. The extent to which the trainee and/or the host department where s/he is training see diversity as an important aspect of the curriculum is one element which influences the extent to which trainees are able to engage with this area. Related to this is the willingness and/or opportunity for trainees to experiment with different content. Trainees may well have the opportunity to teach diverse topics but may not

seize this, whereas others may well be willing and seize any opportunities that arise, whether or not the department is supportive. In addition, trainees need to have the time and space to reflect upon their practice so that they are able to examine their views on diversity and the extent to which they see the need and look to exploit any opportunities that emerge. These factors interact with the five areas identified as being necessary to support trainees' ability to teach a more diverse curriculum. This interaction helps to explain the extent of the trainees' confidence.



Figure 5 – Tensions model

Discussion and Conclusion

This ongoing study has a number of significant implications for those involved in history teaching and ITE as well. At one level, history can be used to promote a more diverse and inclusive view of the past that has repercussions for how we view the society in which we live today; in particular it allows the past to be viewed from a range of perspectives and not just those of the majority groups in society. However it is clear from the experience of these trainees that many history departments in England do not address cultural and ethnic diversity within the history curriculum sufficiently to challenge stereotypical beliefs. There is a danger that this could become a self-perpetuating cycle. Husbands, Kitson and Pendry's (2003) study of history teachers showed that teachers were aware of the need for a more inclusive curriculum, and though reluctant to argue that specific events or topics ought to be studied, when pushed, tended to identify 'traditional' landmark events and topics in English history. In this situation trainee history teachers are unlikely to encounter effective role models within history departments. This suggests that considerably more time and resources need to be directed towards schools to promote this aspect of the curriculum. At the same time this raises questions about the experiences of trainee teachers and what can be done to support their understanding of diversity. There have been numerous programmes developed to help trainee teachers understand issues relating to diversity (see Causey, Thomas and Armento 2000), but these have been largely unsuccessful for 'although some studies suggest a positive impact of teacher preparation approaches, the findings about preparing teachers for diversity are generally inconsistent and inconclusive' (Hollins and Guzman 2005, 479). Hence it is imperative to focus on understanding the ideas and attitudes of trainee teachers towards diversity as a means of identifying mis/preconceptions and prejudices (see Garcia and Lopez 2005). As Korthagen *et al.* (2001) argue, it is only possible to work with trainees' ideas and realistically move them forward, once they are known. This is why the identification of trainees' concerns and categorising their positions is helpful, as this provides a more meaningful way of analysing trainees' positions and the shifts within these.

Consequently the role of ITE is pivotal. This places particular demands on the role of the university tutor and the content of the ITE programme. Indeed, Ambe (2006, 691) highlights the central role of the university tutor and the need to 'possess both the knowledge and the skills required to effectively teach diverse learners in pluralistic classrooms.' Part of this study has focused specifically on my personal development as I come to grips with diversity so as to better support trainees. This has led to changes in the university programme. However, we recognise like Sleeter (2000) that there is little evidence to support the idea that explicit units on diversity within an ITE programme are more effective than a programme infused with diversity and vice versa.

The work of Garcia and Lopez (2005), Grosvenor and Myers (2001) and Milner (2005) has been helpful insofar as they all suggest that diversity needs to be a strong element of *subject specific* ITE courses and not just a generic course. This is particularly important as secondary school teachers often have a strong subject identity; as such this needs to be taken into consideration when addressing diversity, as teachers need to understand how it fits into their subject identity. Nelson (2008) has argued persuasively that a focus on aims and purposes in education can help trainees explore diversity more effectively, as have Barton and Levstik (2004). Indeed. Although the areas of concern that trainees identified, e.g. subject knowledge and knowledge of pedagogical, are reminiscent of the notion of pedagogical content knowledge

(PCK), I concur with Barton and Levstik's (2004) claim that a focus on purpose is more likely to have a greater impact on trainees' development than a focus on PCK. Trainees need to examine fundamental questions about the purpose and nature of the subject, if they are to see the centrality of diversity in their work. What the confidence continuum shows is, not that trainees do not care about diversity, but that they do not fully understand its place and value within the subject they are training to teach, and consequently how to address it.

The interventions carried out during this history ITE course have to an extent adopted an infusion model, with more explicit attention to diversity at key points and a focus on the purposes of history education at an early stage in the course. The consequence of this can be seen in subtle, yet important, shifts within the trainees' positions. Although it cannot be claimed that the course has brought about wholesale change in the trainees' attitudes and beliefs about diversity, it has raised their awareness; even if the move has been from one of naïve confidence to greater uncertainty. This is a positive move as it shows that trainees are considering the issues more deeply and thoughtfully. In turn this raises questions about what more could be achieved within an ITE programme, and particularly what steps could be taken to work more effectively with schools to promote a more proactive stance towards cultural and ethnic diversity. It also emphasises the need to look at the longer term support offered to newly qualified teachers; a point supported by Sleeter (2001) who has shown that there is little evidence of any long term impact of ITE courses upon teachers. This is a concern because this study shows trainees are able to engage with diversity issues and are actively looking for future direction and advice once they move beyond their training course. There is a need therefore for a twin track approach which seeks to continue to develop awareness and understanding of diversity within ITE programmes, while also supporting development within schools so that beginning and newly qualified teachers can see examples of good practice and be supported in their early career development.

Notes

[?] At the time of the research, the National Curriculum for history identified different areas that needed to be taught, thus students were to learn about a non-European society, for example 'Black Peoples of the Americas' and 'Native Americans' (also known as 'Indigenous Peoples of the Americas') were common topics. What would be taught or how much time would be devoted to the topic was down to the discretion of the individual teacher.

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Priority is defined as the extent to which diversity is seen as a priority by the trainee in the context of the training year and/or the priority within the host history department

Degree of confidence, uncertainty and discomfort

Willingness and opportunity to experiment implies a desire on the trainee to incorporate diversity into their teaching (potentially requiring t&œ?«-ñ % & ' ()
1 2 3 r ¢ - Ë Ó %myhe host department's stance to
be challenged) and the freedom within the department to teach a range of diverse topics

Degree of reflection refers to the amount of time that trainees are able to find in the training year to assimilate ideas about diversity or whether the 'busyness' of the course interferes with this process

Degree of reflection

Willingness/opportunity to experiment

Pupils

Pedagogy

Content

Purpose

Teacher

Priority