

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in

Journal of Education for Teaching: International research and pedagogy on

25.05.2016, available online:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02607476.2016.1184462>

Abstract

What is meant by fundamental British values? How are they constructed and can they be taught in schools? In trying to address these questions this paper revisits a small-scale research study commissioned by the previous New Labour government. The research was concerned to understand the extent to which schools delivered a diverse curriculum (reflecting the composition of Britain as an ethnically diverse society) as well as teacher and student conceptions of British values and contentions of shared British identities which could be explored in schools as part of the citizenship curriculum.

Drawing on interviews with teachers and headteachers in six case study schools across England, this paper examines school and government conceptions of shared 'British' values. It explores how current government promotion of British values are embedded in socio-political historical contexts in Britain. Using social construction theory the paper aims to challenge conceptions of British values being shared by teachers. The paper examines the implications of this for initial teacher education given that qualifying teachers standards (DfE 2012) require teachers not to undermine British values, yet some teachers do not buy into contentions of British values, and consequently worry about how to teach them. The teacher discourses highlighted also present challenges for teacher education in developing teacher understanding and practice, especially where student teachers bring uninformed views about particular ethnic groups to the classroom.

Key words: British values, value construction, value commitment, teachers' standards

Introduction

In 2012 the then Coalition government emphasised its interest in teachers playing a role in promoting British values in English schools through publication of the revised Teachers Standards (DfE 2012). A key aspect of the revised Teachers Standards that student teachers are expected to comply with in order to achieve qualified teacher status (QTS) is that they are expected to show tolerance of other cultures, respect for the rights of others and not undermine ‘fundamental British values’ in their teaching (DfE 2012). This paper is concerned to understand what is meant by ‘fundamental British values’ and whether or not they can be taught in schools? In the Teachers Standards British values are defined as ‘democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs’ (DfE 2012,6). While this definition of British values coincides with findings by the former Commission for Racial Equality (see e.g., Ethnos [2005]), there is a question as to whether democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, fairness/equality, respect and tolerance are actually values distinctive to Britain? Indeed this very point was made by David Cameron (then leader of the Opposition) in 2007 when he criticised the New Labour Prime Minister Gordon Brown for reducing ‘Britishness’ to ‘virtues which could be as easily associated with Denmark or Holland’ (Cruse 2008, para. 2.7). A similar sentiment was echoed by a parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, who pointed out that previous government attempts to define shared British values had resulted in “lists of values which are unexceptional [and] not distinctively British” (Cruse 2008, para 5.3). Despite such criticisms (including his own) as Prime Minister of the Coalition government, David Cameron himself returned to such values in 2011 and thus they are reflected in the Teachers Standards. Notwithstanding, questions remain

as to the distinctive nature of British values, especially as many western democracies have similar values and freedoms enshrined in their constitution (Kymlicka 2010), and internationalisation has contributed to the universality of cultural value systems which inform many mainstream moral, legal and political norms (Parsons 1951, cited by Joas 2010,59).

In order to understand the values that the British government promotes as being British it is salient to understand how they arrived at such values. The next section provides an overview of government formulations and discussions with regard to defining British values. This is followed by exploring how values are constructed and value commitments secured. The theoretical framework used in the data analysis is followed by a presentation of the main findings and discussion of the implications for initial teacher education.

Britishness and British values

A report commissioned by the New Labour government on the future of multi-ethnic Britain following riots in the North of England in 2001 (Cantle 2001) had argued that ‘Britain needs common values to hold it together and give it a sense of cohesion’ (Parekh 2001:,53). The creation of a set of values for British society therefore emerged out of a New Labour government concern to define a British identity representative of ‘a multicultural state composed of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and also a multicultural society... made up of a diverse range of cultures and identities’ (Crick 2004). For the then government a British identity

(determined by place of birth, geography and citizenship – Crick 2009) also required commitment to British values. It was argued that:

To be British means that we respect the laws, the parliamentary and democratic political structures, traditional values of mutual tolerance, respect for equal rights (Crick 2004)

In April 2005 on the creation of an ‘inclusive British identity’ in the Prospect Magazine, Gordon Brown, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer emphasised tolerance, liberty, fairness and shared values; these are shared values which were deemed to ‘unite us’ (i.e. English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish and minority ethnic communities) and they were values which were considered to ‘have influenced our traditions and institutions’ (including the national health service and the British monarchy) and ‘multinational society over centuries’ and as such were considered to have the ability to move British patriotism ‘beyond, ethnicity, race and institutions’ (Cruse 2008, para 2.2).

Equally concerned at the need for an all-encompassing British identity, David Cameron, then the Leader of the opposition Conservative party, in December 2007 however, appeared more concerned about the “ugly stain of separatism seeping through the Union flag” (Cruse, Home Office 2008, para 2.7) (with countries such as Scotland advocating for independence) rather than minority ethnic communities not adopting a British identity. Therefore he promoted a British identity which was ‘not just English; not just Scottish; not just Welsh; not just any regional or religious identity’ and which was underpinned by ‘common shared values’ across the four

nations. As Prime Minister in 2007 Gordon Brown re-emphasised ‘the common values we share across the United Kingdom: values we have developed together over the years that are rooted in liberty, in fairness and tolerance, in enterprise, in civic initiative and internationalism’ (Cruse 2008, para 2.9). Spelling out the precise nature of the values which were deemed to be shared by British people was considered necessary given that Britain has long struggled with the notion of a common British identity (Commission for Racial Equality 2007) as evidenced for example by the British Nationality Act 1948 and British attitude surveys between 1974-2005 which showed for example, that Welsh and Scottish respondents were more likely to choose their Welsh and Scottish identities over an inclusive British identity (Heath et al., 2007). Continued government concern over a lack of understanding and commitment to a shared British identity and British values, contributed to a debate in the House of Lords (June 19th 2008) on the nature of Britishness and British values¹.

In 2011 concern about a lack of a shared British identity across the four nations appeared to be replaced by concern about minority ethnic communities purportedly not integrating and having a sense of belonging to British society, when as Prime Minister of the Coalition (conservative and liberal) government David Cameron, argued at a European security conference in Munich that:

¹ The debate in the House of Lords, 19th June 2008 was entitled: “To call attention to the concept of Britishness in the context of the cultural, historical, constitutional and ethical tradition of the peoples of these islands”. To inform the debate a series of House of Lords library notes (authored by Cruse 2008) were compiled. The contents list of these notes reveal that the debate covered a number of issues including: The Backdrop to Debates on Britishness, National Identity and Citizenship, Recent debates on the future of Britishness, Polling data on Britishness and British values, Government policy (on e.g. citizenship, a Bill of rights and responsibilities and a statement of British values) and a reaction to government policy and proposals.

... In the UK, some young men find it hard to identify with the traditional Islam practiced at home by their parents, whose customs can seem staid when transplanted to modern Western countries. But these young men also find it hard to identify with Britain too, because we have allowed the weakening of our collective identity. Under the doctrine of state multiculturalism, we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the mainstream. We've failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong. We've even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run completely counter to our values (Cameron 2011, online)

Clearly targeting his remarks at Muslim youth, Cameron nevertheless did not articulate how 'different cultures' who live in 'segregated communities' behave 'in ways that run completely counter to our values' or indeed what he regarded as 'our values'. Cameron's contention of minority ethnic groups – and their cultures – living apart from 'the mainstream' infers a racist discourse about how people naturally prefer to 'be with their own kind' (Wade 2015, 1293), which interestingly he does not associate with 'White flight' (Cantle 2001) from multi-ethnic areas or in other words White British people who move to live in geographical areas recorded as White as for example, in the 2011 census (ONS 2012). Blaming culture for minority ethnic communities opting to live in segregated communities with 'others who share their language, practices, values, beliefs, and so on' (Wade 2015, 1293) misses the racism underpinning White residents who move to predominantly White areas under the pretext that they are 'just 'doing the best for their families', when they avoid certain schools and areas, or when they just prefer to 'stick to their own' (Wade 2015, 1293;

see similar contentions in [Keddie 2014]). Also absent from such a discourse is first, an understanding that bringing together four separate nations under the umbrella of the United Kingdom has meant that in Britain ‘dual identities have been common, even before large scale [minority ethnic] immigration’ in the 1960s; secondly, that ‘Britishness does not mean a single culture’, and thirdly, that ‘integration is the co-existence of communities ... it is not assimilation’ (Crick, 2004). Therefore within the construction of Britishness cultural and ethnic diversity (including White diversity) is central. The absence of such recognition however, leads to a singular conception of Britishness.

Just as a singular conception of Britishness is problematic, there is a danger in advocating British values as it suggests that only British - and here we might replace British with White - values are acceptable. The association of British with White values is evident in Cameron’s speech in Munich at the European security conference, where in essentialising Muslims as different and against British values, he posed the following questions about the commitment of Muslim communities to British values:

Do they [Muslims] believe in universal human rights - including for women and people of other faiths? Do they believe in equality of all before the law? Do they believe in democracy and the right of people to elect their own government? Do they encourage integration or separation? These are the sorts of questions we need to ask (Cameron 2011, online).

If British values are set up in opposition to minority ethnic cultures this inevitably leads to a backlash against minority ethnic cultures (Phillips 2010). Furthermore, does a diverse British society not require diverse values to reflect the actual societal

composition? Importantly, the emphasis on British values assumes that minority ethnic communities do not share liberal democratic values, and as such what is required is forced assimilation in adopting British values, however they are defined. By doing so this negates an aim of democracy which is to allow choice and with choice comes dissent. Moreover, adoption of shared British values is perceived by the government as crucial to eliminating the threats of multiculturalism to British democracy as posed for example, by British Muslims in 7/7 during the London bombings in July 2005 (Thomas 2011) and by the murder of the British soldier Lee Rigby in 2014. Events in the international arena such as the bombings in France in November 2015 and in Brussels in March 2016 have led to the re-emphasis of British values and further questions about the commitment of Muslims to living in a cohesive British society. However, as Kymlicka (2010, 86) notes terrorism is not caused by multiculturalism:

If you look across the western democracies, we have cases of ‘home-grown terrorism’; this has emerged in countries that have multiculturalism policies like Britain and Canada, but also in countries that don’t, like Spain or Germany. All of these countries have arrested groups who were planning various acts of violence. So multiculturalism clearly is not the cause of radicalism: the problem is found whether or not there are such policies.

Interestingly, the Brussels bombings have thrown the spotlight again on British government contentions of democracy and liberty being solely British values, when the day after the Brussels attacks during Prime Minister's Question-time in the House of Commons, Conservative Prime Minister Cameron stated ‘Britain and Belgium share the same values of liberty and democracy’ (BBC News 2016 online). Moreover,

in aligning Britain with other Western democracies with shared philosophies/ideals Cameron commented, ‘the terrorists behind today’s atrocities attack our way of life and they attack us because of who we are. We will never let them win’ (CBS News 2016 online). Cameron’s comments echoed similar sentiments to those he expressed in Munich in 2011, and though he was not explicit by what he meant by ‘our way of life’ or who the ‘they’ were in ‘they attack us because of who we are’, it can be surmised that in this regard the terrorists (who were reported to be Muslims) were viewed as attacking not just the British way of life, but Western societies because they are democratic. But what is missing from such comments is that Muslims were also attacked in the Brussels bombings. Government contentions of shared British values also negate British attitude surveys such as the findings in 2013, where only 50% of those surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that British people share customs/traditions which was the same figure reported in 1995 (NatCen 2013) which suggests that over an 18 year period, unlike the government, the population surveyed (i.e. not just Muslims) were not convinced that British people share British values.

How are values constructed and value commitments secured?

British values as outlined above suggest that national values are politically constructed, but the extent to which individuals/groups or society buy into prescribed national values is also informed by ‘biological conditions [owing to family born into], processes of institutionalization [physical and institutional environments – e.g. home, school, work, religious or political institution] and personal experiences’ (Joas 2010, 58) which suggests that political values on the one hand are reinforced through co-articulation of political discourse in the home, education and religious institutions and

on the other hand, have the potential to be undermined/challenged by such mechanisms. According to Chapman (in Yongjune 2010, 67) a country's values 'are so deeply embedded in who we are, in our language, in our culture', which further suggests if national political values are believed in they are less likely to be undermined.

Parsons (1951 cited by Joas 2010, 58) however views 'values' as 'analytic constructs abstracted from a culture as a whole and then designated as responsible for concrete actions'. Thus values at the macro societal level can be seen as informing a country's codes and laws of governance, the way society operates and at the same time as informing, governing and constraining human behaviour. Importantly, Parsons viewed values as 'a preference which is felt and/or considered to be justified' (ibid). Viewing this from the British government's perspective it might be argued that an emphasis on fundamental British values in teaching and teacher education is therefore justified as they are considered central to the moulding of a British identity and governing of a cohesive British society.

Following Parsons we might also expect that the inclusion of the expectation that teachers will respect and tolerate different faiths and beliefs as part of fundamental British values is good for all teachers to do as it demonstrates the government's commitment to and support of Britain as a multi-ethnic/cultural society. However, the way in which the Teachers Standards frame the government's expectation suggests that British values are viewed by the government as much more than ideologies that guide human behaviour. Instead they are considered central to maintaining community cohesion and preventing the seeds of radicalisation and terrorism being

sown in the minds of pupils; hence why aspects of the British values definition can be found in policy documents advocating a cohesive society and community cohesion (DCLG 2009) and in the Prevent Strategy first introduced in 2011.

Taking this argument further it is not that the British government is concerned that teachers in English schools are equipped to value diverse ethnic cultures, but that they want to ensure that British values are not weakened or undermined through what is taught in the classroom and/or through the attitudes displayed by teachers, because any questioning or rejection of British values could lead to a loss of and/or lack of commitment to British values; especially as we know that the school is the place where the understanding and attitudes of pupils are honed for seven hours a day. It would seem that what the government fears most is that minority ethnic communities' insistence on following their own values as evidenced for example by Muslim women wearing the Hijab will lead to a weakening or loss of British values which could in turn result in societal crisis and acts of violence. Fears influenced to a large degree by periods of societal crisis such as the summer riots in 2011 in England (though evidence of similar riots can be found in the 1950s, 1980s and 2001 – see discussions in Cante [2001, 2011]).

As observed by Joas where a 'loss of [societal] values results in acts of violence' this is usually explained by 'the loss of both role models and the courage to demand discipline' (Joas 2010: 48). Following on from this we could view the new Teachers Standards focus on British values as representative of a fear among the government of British values being lost and as a consequence the government's attempt to engender and some might argue indoctrinate (minority ethnic) commitment to British values,

and maintaining control of minority ethnic communities by ensuring that teachers demand commitment to British values through the curriculum and their teaching/approach to minority ethnic communities, and the ways in which they maintain discipline in the classroom, and/or discipline or exclude particular groups. Though not stated, the instruction teachers will be bound by, that is not to undermine British values, suggests that teachers instead will through their teaching impose British values on students and by doing this downplay the value of minority ethnic cultures and the values that inform minority ethnic cultures. Arguably, teacher tendency to downplay/marginalise minority ethnic cultures/values is likely to occur where there is a lack of emphasis in the curriculum on including and recognising diverse cultures/values, and can result in what Banks (2015) refers to as ‘failed citizenship’ whereby minority ethnic communities despite being citizens feel excluded from the nation state through the school curriculum experienced. To avoid failed citizenship Banks (2015,154) calls for schools to allow minority ethnic students ‘to maintain essential aspects of their ethnic and cultural identities’, and for ‘the national culture to change so that it can incorporate and accommodate the cultures of diverse groups’. This would suggest that both the national culture and British values would need to be experienced as inclusive.

Saliently, Joas asked ‘What exactly is a value and what is the relationship between values and value commitments?’ One way of gaining value commitment is through education. Indeed education has long been conceived as a political instrument (Gramsci 1971; hooks 1994) and schools as ‘sites for disseminating or reproducing the correct ideology’ (Blacker 2007,85). In the context of the UK the correct political ideology with regard to minority ethnic pupils for example, has moved from one of

the school curriculum being used to first assimilate and integrate minority ethnic pupils into British society, and then to foster multicultural learning/understanding and tolerance reflective of living in a multi-ethnic society (DES 1977, 1981). Education can be viewed as a political instrument that is used to advance, support and/or reinforce a national British perspective/identity as can be seen through for example, implementation of the national and citizenship curricula (DES 1988; Ajegbo, Kiwan and Sharma 2007). It is also evidenced through the implementation of the Teachers Standards (DfE 2012) whereby in order to gain qualified teacher status student teachers are required to demonstrate their ability not to undermine British values in their teaching. If teachers are not to undermine British values this suggests they need to have an understanding of British values, and if not, this presumes such values have to be taught.

This paper is concerned to understand teacher perspectives about shared British values, whether it is possible to educate students in English schools about British values and the implications for teacher educators in preparing student teachers to follow the government's directive not to undermine British values through their teaching.

The study

The research discussed here was part of a small-scale study (Maylor et al., 2007) funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) which sought to understand: a) the extent to which teachers in primary and secondary English schools delivered a diverse curriculum which incorporated the cultures of minority ethnic as

well as majority ethnic students in their teaching, and b) school/teacher and student perceptions of British identities and shared British values which could be explored in schools as part of the citizenship education curriculum with a potential focus on modern British cultural and social history as a fourth pillar in the secondary citizenship curriculum. Shared British values were defined by the funders as:

British values - things that you may feel people who are 'British' share, or have in common, that may be different from people who are not 'British'. This might be shared attitudes or values, shared interests or experiences - anything you think people who are 'British' tend to/may have in common.

It is this conception of shared British values which was explored within the study.

The commissioning of this research occurred at a time when there was widespread debate about British values, British national identity, its meaning and significance for the diverse ethnic groups living in Britain (Ajegbo et al., 2007; Ethnos 2005, 2006) and how such understanding influenced community cohesion (or not). One of the difficulties Ethnos (2005, 2006) in surveys of the British population encountered in furthering such understanding is that they found it difficult to get respondents to engage with the notion of 'Britishness' and to see this concept as applying to multi-ethnic communities in Britain (see also Cohen 1994; Parekh 2000). Nonetheless, the New Labour government considered it important that students in English schools learn about Britishness, British values and Britain as an ethnically diverse society 'which is constantly evolving' when studying citizenship education. It was expected that such understanding would:

- lead to a view of British citizenship founded on the values of responsibility, liberty and fairness for all. [The government] saw these civic values as the ‘ties that bind’ diverse cultures together, and give British people ‘patriotic purpose as a nation and sense of direction and destiny’.
- encourage students to ‘take citizenship seriously, rebuild civic society’, ‘serve their communities’ [and] work for [the] integration of minorities into a modern Britain’.
- an understanding of British citizenship and shared British values would lead to a shared sense of belonging and a celebration of British identity ‘which is bigger than the sum of its parts’ (Former Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, 2006 - www.fabian-society.org.uk).

For the funders a diverse curriculum played an important role in British identity formation as such a curriculum provided students with ‘opportunities ... to explore their own identity in relation to the local community’, ‘reflect on their own cultural traditions and those of others’ and as a consequence enable students ‘to locate themselves in wider British society and to understand British values in a global context’. Having a common understanding of Britain’s multi-ethnic composition together with a common vision of Britishness and a sense of belonging to Britain was also considered salient in schools promoting community cohesion (DCSF 2007).

Method

The study was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved a systematic literature review designed to identify the range of potentially relevant literature available with regard to curriculum diversity, citizenship and British identity. The second stage adopted a qualitative case study approach and comprised six (three primary and three secondary) case study schools located in rural and urban areas across England with high, medium and low ethnic diversity (based on national population data). A purposive sampling frame (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011) partly informed by the literature review was used to select schools known to exemplify good multicultural practice, and those likely to provide data on the diversity of the curriculum and school approaches to developing awareness of British identity and citizenship. Therefore the schools (three predominantly White and three multi-ethnic) were selected according to school type, location, ethnic composition and practice. The multi-ethnic schools comprised students from White British, Black Caribbean, Black African, Indian, Pakistani, Chinese, Mixed Asian and White, Mixed Black Caribbean and White, Turkish, White European and refugee backgrounds. More information about the literature review and case study schools can be found in Maylor et al. (2007).

Across the six schools data was collected via semi-structured interviews (lasting 45-60 minutes) with the headteacher of each school, nine teachers (responsible for PSHE/citizenship education, history and/or the humanities curriculum), and focus groups (lasting 45 minutes) conducted with 95 pupils (48 aged 11-16; 47 aged 8-11) covering Key Stages 2-4. Pupils were selected for participation in the focus groups by teachers on the basis of their articulateness and ability to discuss the issues explored.

The teacher and head teacher interviews were informed by research questions which concentrated on head/teacher perceptions of 'Britishness', British identities, how English schools are addressing British identities and shared values in the curriculum, constraints on developing modern British identities and the consequences of racial and religious intolerance and discrimination. The interviews also sought to understand the extent to which the case study schools were delivering a curriculum which reflected students' diverse backgrounds, and factors inhibiting such delivery. The focus groups provided an opportunity for students to reflect on their experience of diversity and inclusion in the curriculum, and their perceptions and understandings of the concepts of Britishness, British identities and citizenship, and whether or not such aspects are explored through the curriculum. Students' views were probed as to how they perceived their own individual identities, and the factors influencing such identities.

Classroom observations were conducted in five of the six schools. In each school two lessons were observed. These included observations of geography, literacy, music, numeracy, citizenship, history and science lessons, and a foundation class. These lessons were selected by the schools concerned as a way of highlighting examples of good practice in the areas under review. As well as the topics covered, the observations sought to record teacher/pupil interaction and the ways in which diversity and inclusion, identities (individual and British) and citizenship values were promoted in the classroom, school assemblies and how pupils' and teachers' responded to diversity and citizenship issues.

Student perceptions of Britishness, multiculturalism and inclusiveness of the curriculum were enhanced by a sixth form debate on ‘integration vs. multiculturalism’ in one school, which involved two multiethnic (7 Asian and 4 White British) groups of five and six students respectively.

Policies, schemes of work and other curriculum strategies pertaining to diversity and citizenship in the curriculum were also collected from five of the six case study schools.

The interview and focus group verbatim data was analysed using the NVivo qualitative data software package which helped to identify recurrent themes and patterns, as well as differences within and across different groups (Miles and Huberman, 2002).

The paper employs social construction theory in analysing the data. Social constructionism starts from the premise that meanings are constructed and individuals and groups taken for granted understandings of the social world are constructed (Denscombe 2013; Cresswell 2013). The meanings people generate are based on a range of things, including for example individual experiences/perspectives, interaction with others and are in turn informed by the media, political, cultural, economic, faith, social and situations that individuals encounter (Denzin and Lincoln 2003). As such, ‘truth or meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world. There is no meaning without a mind. Meaning is not discovered but is constructed’ (Crotty 1998, 8). Understanding individual/group socially constructed realities and what informs their meaning constructions is therefore important in any

data analysis. Indeed Blumer warns against researchers ignoring the meanings that certain things generate amongst individuals/groups:

To ignore the meaning of the things towards which people act is seen as falsifying the behaviour under study. To bypass the meaning in favour of factors alleged to produce the behaviour is seen as a grievous neglect of the role of meaning in the formation of behaviour (Blumer 1986,3).

Findings

The findings below concentrate on teacher perceptions of shared British values derived from the case study research.

Teachers' understanding of shared British values

Joas (2010) views 'values' as an important philosophical concept in the social sciences but he questions whether it is still relevant today especially as it is difficult to operationalise in empirical research. This difficulty led him to further question:

Would it be better simply to replace it with other concepts which better correspond to the methods of various branches of research concepts such as 'attitude', 'practice' or 'culture'? What actually is the relationship between 'values' and 'norms', categories which are frequently used as if they were interchangeable? (Joas 2010:,45).

As part of developing a wider understanding of teacher practice in relation to promoting shared British values through citizenship education teachers and headteachers were asked about their understanding of shared British values. Joas's arguments were reflected in the headteachers perspectives as they questioned both the nature of British values and the extent to which they are shared. This scepticism led one headteacher to state: '*You start worrying me when you say shared*' (*Primary Head teacher – School D*).

As well as questioning that British values are shared, some respondents queried whether British values are distinctive and unique to Britain or whether they are similar to the values (e.g. honesty, fairness, justice, democracy, freedom of speech) supported by other countries.

Expanding on his concern that British values are shared by members of British society, a secondary headteacher of a London school alluded to British values being centred on concepts of 'tolerance' (of others or those different to one's self) and 'inclusion' of minority ethnic groups. He argued that such tolerance and inclusion only had 'real value' and meaning in London, which as a city is 'very ethnically diverse', and that 'the further you move away from London the less those values have any impact on the way people interrelate' and integrate with each other, because of the local and national British identities and people's diverse experiences prevalent across the UK.

I don't think that the issue of British identity is the same here as it is in Watford, as it is in Manchester, as it is in Glasgow, as it is in Belfast, I think

they are very different issues. If I were to go with my basic British values of inclusion and tolerance, tolerance in a side street in Belfast or in Glasgow is going to be a very different animal from you know sitting in school here or a school you know in [South London], or in a school in [East London]. They are going to be different issues because people will be coming from such different starting points. (Headteacher –School E)

This perception is supported by the 2011 UK census (ONS 2012) and by a teacher in another multi-ethnic secondary school, who argued that a notion of shared British values that included ‘an acceptance of others’, and ‘the right to follow your customs, traditions, culture in whichever way you want to’ is something that Britain is still aspiring to do.

Instead of the government asking teachers about their understandings of shared British values and requiring them to teach pupils with a view to comprehend that British values are shared by the British population, as argued by Ajejbo, Kiwan and Sharma 2007 in *Citizenship education: Identity and Diversity: Living together in the UK*:

We believe that, in order for young people to explore how we live together in the UK today and to debate the values we share, it is important they consider issues that have shaped the development of UK society.

the headteachers maintained that there was a danger in trying to ‘over-analyse/discuss’ British values (and ‘Britishness’) especially if such analysis resulted

in teachers trying to discover *'how close they [pupils] are to that [British] value and how far away they are'*. Therefore these teachers intimated that what was required in citizenship education are honest debates about British values and whether they are shared or not (see also Osler 2005).

Aman (2015,523) observes that *'difference refers to the way in which one category (same) is distinguished from another (other)'*. Similarly through the construction of binary opposites we can see those who are in favour of British values are considered British (and the same) and those against British values are considered different (and other). Arguably, from the government's perspective students in school who are deemed as different/other and against British values need to be brought in line through teachers setting out British values through the citizenship curriculum. A real difficulty these teachers envisioned in teaching about shared British values is that they opined that cultural values regardless of ethnicity when internalised are durable and become difficult to change. Given this, they were concerned that where minority ethnic pupils or indeed teachers disagreed with the contention that British values are shared, that such disagreements would *'be used'* by the government and school governing bodies, as one head teacher said, *'as a stick to beat some groups of people over the head with'*, and by *'people'* he meant both teachers and pupils.

'You're not sharing our values, come on share our values, for God's sake, otherwise we'll do this or the other thing to you'. (Headteacher – School D)

Joas (2010,51) makes clear that governments need to consider whether values are *'consensually shared and internalized as value(s)'* and he also contends that *'any*

attempt to make a certain value system obligatory would be more likely to provoke counter movements than achieve its goal without entering resistance'. This view was shared by the teachers interviewed with all expressing resistance to educating about British values particularly where they had concerns that minority ethnic cultural values were respected in the wider society (and not just in respective schools) and included within the umbrella of British values. Such fears led one head teacher to openly state that she would 'worry about how to teach it' as she did not believe that values in Britain are shared, and that more than likely a focus in citizenship education teaching on shared British values would lead to minority ethnic cultures and values being 'ignored or dismissed', and those designated as 'British' imposed where they were believed to not be shared. This was the fear of the head teacher respondents to the study, who also saw this as a dangerous strategy and one doomed to failure. Pupil experience also supported teacher comments as few pupils said they had experienced lessons where they talked about things that people in Britain share, emphasis was placed instead on ethnic and cultural differences (discussed in Maylor et al., 2007; Maylor 2010).

Constraints on teachers developing understanding of shared British values

As well as believing that understandings of British values were not shared, the study found that some teachers brought uninformed views about particular ethnic groups to the classroom; views which could be regarded as racist and demonstrating a lack of understanding and tolerance of minority ethnic groups. A teacher in one of the predominantly White schools highlighted difficulty in challenging the racist attitudes

of pupils and parents they encountered with regard to particular minority ethnic groups:

It's a risky business in this school. You're fighting against the ignorance of kids and their parents. For example, Travellers sites – kids have such blinkered attitudes. For example, in Year 11 when we're talking about race related crimes, some kids pick up stuff straight from their parents. There've been a couple of racially related incidents. It's out of ignorance, not understanding the words they use. There just isn't the [ethnic] diversity here. (Secondary PSHE teacher – School A)

While such views are not confined to this school (see e.g. Rhamie et al., 2012), it is interesting that the teacher above blamed the lack of ethnic diversity in the student population and parental/pupil ignorance about different ethnic groups for the school's inability to challenge the racist views of some parents and pupils, rather than the teacher's own lack of confidence and commitment to challenging racism. This was further illustrated by a headteacher who pointed to some teachers lack of experience in effectively managing identity and diversity discussions in classrooms which he described as 'accommodating' and willing to contribute to such discussions:

If you have someone who perhaps isn't on top of the issue themselves then you have potential difficulties even in a very accommodating and contributing group. (Headteacher – School F)

The study also found that exploring British values requires sensitivity as any definition of 'Britishness' could potentially exclude as well as include (both White and minority ethnic) students and most teachers did not have an in-depth understanding of the backgrounds of students in their class, or appreciate the complexity of students British identities (Rhamie et al., 2012). Many minority ethnic students were assumed to be immigrants rather than British born, whilst the ethnically diverse backgrounds of White majority and White minority students was unknown, which further led to students from these groups feeling excluded rather than included in lessons (Maylor 2010).

Not undermining British values: Implications for ITE

Clearly, the current government does not want British values to be undermined by teachers. However, there is an assumption that there is a shared understanding of 'Britishness' and also British values. Despite this being a small study, in revisiting the findings I am reminded how critical the teacher respondents were of the New Labour government's then intention of including within the citizenship curriculum teaching about 'Britishness' and shared British values, which they vehemently contested (see also Jerome and Clemitshaw 2012; Rhamie et al., 2012). Given that New Labour decided not to follow this intention through, I was extremely surprised that the Coalition government in revising the Teachers Standards made it a requirement that one of the standards includes the expectation that teachers' will not undermine 'British values', and even more so when there is no consensus on what British values constitute (Parekh 2000), and even more so that they are shared.

Based on the findings of this study, if teacher educators are to effectively prepare student teachers not to undermine ‘British’ values in their teaching, they will need to help student teachers to develop an understanding of Britain as a multi-ethnic population with diverse cultural values which will need to be sensitively explored within the context of the government’s definition of ‘British values’, and illustrate the ways in which minority and majority ethnic groups also fit within notions of ‘Britishness’ because as argued within this study, very often schools ‘*get NQTs who haven’t really got very much idea at all*’ (PSHE Cordinator- School D) about Britain’s ethnically diverse population. Teacher educators will also need to assist student teachers to reflect on and/or challenge the stereotyped views about different ethnic groups they and/or pupils might hold, and the labels they might apply to them. As articulated by the following deputy head, some teachers (based on the ethnic composition of their school) questioned the concept of an inclusive British identity because they maintained that:

‘Britishness’ isn’t necessarily informative. ‘Asian British’ isn’t always very helpful in this school. We had a questionnaire from the DfES (Department for Education and Skills) and they [the pupils] were required to denote their ethnicity, and all it said was ‘Asian’. Well for our pupils if you’re a Pakistani or an Indian it makes a big difference or if you’re a Kashmiri Pakistani that will make a difference as well. ... These big terms on the whole aren’t terribly useful and what we tend to do is accept that diversity can be a very miniscule difference in the way that you see yourself as related to other people. ... It’s not just the ethnic grouping of our children, their home backgrounds within that are so diverse and we find that is just such a huge influence on everything

... And the other thing is that a lot of teachers tend to assume that Caribbean pupils in this school are actually from Jamaica, and they're not. These are broad suppositions made and it is very different and there are so many different elements within that. (Deputy Head – School C)

Added to minority ethnic diversity, one headteacher felt it salient to acknowledge (as he had experienced) that there was a larger 'cultural diversity between the Irish, the Scots, the Welsh and the English' in Britain. He also claimed that being Welsh, Scottish or Irish might 'colour' one's view of 'English values, English citizens, the English political system and all of that'. Thus for this headteacher, such conceptualisations further undermined the government's contention of the existence of shared British values.

However, the ability of teachers/teacher educators to educate student teachers on initial teacher education courses (and within placement experiences) about the extent of diversity within the label British will in part be affected by teachers/teacher educators own conceptions of Britishness and who the label applies to (Keddie 2014). This would also depend on teachers/teacher educators' ability to develop critical consciousness (Freire 2008, 2010; hooks 1994) with regard to understanding the historical make-up of Britain and challenging their own misunderstandings, as well as those of student teachers and/or other practitioners.

Furthermore, heads and teachers alike were wary of any attempts by the government to explicitly define 'Britishness', especially where they saw their own identities being much broader and encompassing areas outside England and the UK. For example, one teacher declared 'I'm a very European, British, English person'. Student teachers will

therefore need opportunities to recognise that identities are multiple, fluid and will continue to change (Hall 1993), and that individuals move between identities in different contexts and times, and this may affect their perceptions of shared British values. Moreover, without an agreement as to what 'Britishness' and 'British values' are, teacher efforts not to undermine British values might actually serve to accentuate 'differences' and create racial tensions because as one pupil argued even if everyone is 'the same on the outside' it does not mean they feel 'the same on the inside' (Maylor 2010). It was also evident in Maylor et al. (2007) that some pupils defining themselves as White British placed as much value on the Welsh, Scottish or Northern Irish parts of their identity as the English aspects. Thus for both majority and minority ethnic students there needs to be recognition that Britishness cannot be narrowly conceived.

Finally, teacher educators in developing teacher understandings as to how to 'respect' and 'tolerate' people of different faiths and beliefs, will need to recognise and appreciate how perceptions of 'race' and notions of 'belonging' are narrowly constructed, and in turn how these concepts, along with racism structure some teachers and trainee teachers' understanding of 'Britishness' and notions of 'Otherness' (Osler 2011; Keddie 2014), and fuel some students experience of in/tolerance (Maylor 2010; Rhamie et al., 2012). Through ITE student teachers will also need to develop anti-racist practice and confidence in challenging pupil racism and how to deal with comments that might be inappropriate.

In discussing teachers' perceptions about British values, the paper has drawn attention to the role of teacher education in preparing student teachers' not to undermine British

values when teachers in school (and who provide mentoring during student teacher placement) do not necessarily buy into contentions of 'British' values, and consequently worry about how to teach them. The teacher discourses highlighted also present challenges for teacher education in developing student teacher understanding and practice about 'British' values and citizenship, especially where student teachers themselves bring uninformed views about particular ethnic groups to the classroom (Maylor 2014), and at a time when there is a heightened focus on those following/not following British values.

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