

Black and People of Colour History

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 15 Medi 2020
Petitions Committee | 15 September 2020

Reference: RS20/13471

Petition Number: P-05-1000

Petition title: Make it compulsory for Black and POC UK histories to be taught in the Welsh education curriculum

Text of petition: Britain -including Wales- benefited from colonialism and slavery for centuries. This needs to be represented in the curriculum.

The British Empire has often been glamorised and the global impact of Britain's colonialism downplayed. This has been reflected in the content taught. There needs to be real and significant change. The legacies of slavery and colonialism have very real impacts on BAME communities across Britain today, and the Welsh education system needs to recognise this.

1. Background

The killing of George Floyd, an African-American who died while being detained by police in Minneapolis, has prompted mass protests in the USA and the UK and calls for better education in black and people of colour history.

The new age 3-16 Curriculum for Wales will be introduced in all maintained schools and publicly funded nursery settings from September 2022 on a phased basis. The [Curriculum and Assessment](#)



(Wales) Bill was introduced to the Senedd on 6 July 2020. The Bill sets out the four purposes of the curriculum:

- To enable pupils and children to develop as ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives;
- To enable pupils and children to develop as enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work;
- To enable pupils and children to develop as ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world;
- To enable pupils and children to develop as healthy, confident individuals, ready to live fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

The Welsh Government has emphasised that the new Curriculum for Wales will be **purpose-driven rather than content-driven**. Specific learning content is not stipulated in the same way as under the current national curriculum.

The Bill sets out six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs) for the new curriculum and the mandatory elements within them. The AoLEs are:

- Expressive Arts
- Health and Well-being
- Humanities
- Languages, Literacy and Communication
- Mathematics and Numeracy
- Science and Technology.

The mandatory elements within the AoLEs will be English; Relationships and Sexuality Education; Religion, Values and Ethics and Welsh.

History will be taught within the **Humanities AoLE**. The Humanities AoLE also encompasses geography, religious education, business studies and social studies. The new curriculum is non-prescriptive and does not include a list of topics that all schools must teach.

The Bill provides for a 'What Matters Code' to set out key concepts of learning and experience in each AoLE (including Humanities) and that schools' curricula must encompass each of these concepts. The Welsh Government has published 'Statements of What Matters' in the **Curriculum**

for Wales documentation. This is intended to provide the ‘national approach’ which the Minister for Education says will ensure consistency for learners.

The provisional statutory guidance on the Humanities AoLE, was published in January 2020.

2. Welsh Government action

In her letter to the Committee, Kirsty Williams, Minister for Education outlines the actions the Welsh Government is taking following the calls for greater diversity in the teaching of history:

- On 21 July 2020, the Minister announced that Professor Charlotte Williams OBE, would chair a Communities, Contributions and Cynefin: BAME Experiences and the New Curriculum Working Group. The group will review existing resources available to teachers and good practice, and professional learning related to Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities. The Group should provide key recommendations by the end of December;
- A project has been established to consider under-representation from BAME communities in the teaching workforce.

3. Welsh Parliament action

During summer 2018, the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee ran a public poll inviting members of the public to select from a list of potential inquiry topics. Forty-four per cent of those who took part in the poll voted for ‘Teaching of Welsh history, culture and heritage in schools’. In light of the work being undertaken by the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee, the Petitions Committee closed the petition in November 2018.

The Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee’s report, Inquiry into the teaching of Welsh history, culture and heritage [PDF1.2KB] was published in November 2019 and was debated in Plenary on 15 January 2020. The Welsh Government published its response [PDF 235KB] on 8 January 2020.

As part of the inquiry, the Committee heard oral evidence from Race Council Cymru, the Ethnic Minorities & Youth Support Team Wales (EYST) and the Heritage and Cultural Exchange. The Committee made a number of recommendations in relation to diversity in history:

- The Curriculum for Wales 2022 should have diversity as a core element. There is a risk that the proposed flexibility for schools and teachers may not ensure that all pupils in Wales know the story of our diverse ethnic and religious communities.
- To ensure that history is representative of all of Wales’ communities and their international connections, the thematic review of history teaching by Estyn, recommended in the Committee’s report, should assess how diversity is currently taught in schools.
- The Welsh Government should consider how they can expand the work of EYST and the Race Council Cymru to all students and teachers in Wales. EYST and Race Council Cymru to investigate students’ perceptions of race and history and their efforts to widen the curriculum.

The Welsh Government accepted these recommendations.

The Committee also recommended:

- The Welsh Government should set out their efforts to increase the number of BAME teachers in Wales and how successful they have been.
- That histories of Wales' racial and religious diversity should be included in initial teacher education and reflected in teaching materials for the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience.

Both were accepted in principle. In her response, the Minister said that the Welsh Government do not prescribe the content of individual Initial Teacher Education programmes. She also said that officials are working with the Education Workforce Council to develop an action plan regarding the degree to which the teaching workforce in Wales is reflective of the communities it serves and the range and depth of diversity in the workforce.

4. Petitions in the UK Parliament

There have been a number of petitions to the UK Parliament on similar themes:

- [Add education on diversity and racism to all school curriculums](#) (Government response 30 July 2020);
- [Making the UK education curriculum more inclusive of BAME history](#) (Government response 30 July 2020);
- [Teach Britain's colonial past as part of the UK's compulsory curriculum](#) (Government response 30 July 2020).

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.