

TEAN Conference 2024

Selected Abstracts



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A conference theme focused on anti-racist teacher education and de-colonising the teacher education curriculum.

It is the ambition of TEAN that anti-racist teacher education and decolonising the curriculum will be an ongoing theme for conference and collaboration across the network.

A key conference workshop:

The Anti-Racism Framework for Initial Teacher Education (or Training)

Vini Lander¹, Heather Smith² ¹Leeds Beckett University, UK. ²Newcastle University, UK.

The neoliberal post-racial turn and socio-political climate in Britain following the vote to leave the EU has seen the rise of racist nativism and the development of culture wars. Initial Teacher Education / Training (ITE/T) policy has fallen victim to such forces. It has been deracialised devoid of any reference to race, racism, anti-racism or indeed cultural diversity. Set against the regulatory constraints of the Core Content Framework (CCF) we examine how pockets of possibility can be explored and exploited to enhance pre-service teacher education to better prepare new teachers for the ethnic and cultural diversity in schools and how to engage constructively to dismantle structural racism.

This workshop will examine the rationale and research underpinning the creation of the anti-racism framework for ITE/T. The research encompassing a global literature review, a national survey of providers of ITE/T in England and interviews with teacher educators indicates support and willingness to exploit “pockets of possibility” to embed anti-racist curricula and pedagogy to counter the de-racialisation of ITE/T and better meet the needs of student teachers, pupils, and schools. We will share the anti-racism framework, its key features and use. Workshop participants will be invited to discuss the complexities, obstacles and effective anti-racist practices they have established in the pursuit for racial equality within their ITE/T programmes.

Key References

Anti-Racist Framework for Initial Teacher Education / Training. Available at: <https://www.ucet.ac.uk/downloads/14636-Anti-Racism-ITET-framework.pdf>

On anti-racist teacher education:

Diwali is not Indian Christmas - Cultural Capital through the Lens of Racial Literacy

Anjali Shah University of Chester, Chester, United Kingdom

As a child when my teachers were explaining about Diwali they told the class it was like Indian Christmas. In that sentence the teachers were not looking to include me, the minoritised pupil in the classroom with diverse culture and experiences but on providing an explanation, albeit one rife with misconceptions, to the other majority pupils in the room.

If schools function as sites of knowledge reproduction, is the current policy and political lens of cultural capital limiting the breadth of knowledge that pupils are taught and future student teachers have? Students within ITE have felt under-prepared to serve the needs of pupils from diverse ethnic backgrounds, with race and ethnicity issues traditionally not a focus within teacher training courses. (Bhopal and Rhamie, 2014; Dunne *et al.*, 2018)

An element of this must be to prepare those within initial teacher education, both teacher educators and students, to be able to confidently acknowledge and address their own biases, shifting lenses and gaps in subject knowledge. Fundamental to this is an open discussion about how the current context appears to work against this aim. By compelling schools to focus on a broader curriculum through the adoption of Bourdieu's terminology but a wilful misunderstanding of his conclusions, cultural capital as a driver of curriculum choice only serves to bolster schools' role in reproducing power relations, foregrounding "some groups vision of selective knowledge" (Apple, 1993, p222) and entrenching inequality.

Through the ITE curriculum teacher educators support the development of the understanding of curricula creation amongst beginning teachers. In secondary PGCE we recruit subject specialists as a foundation to then build pedagogical expertise. We make the explicit link between excellent subject knowledge and potential for effective teaching. However, this notion of specialist subject knowledge when examined through the lens of racial literacy and diversity may reveal gaps in teacher knowledge.

I will suggest practical steps by which teacher educators can best prepare new teachers to be confident to deliver a culturally relevant, racially literate curriculum and pedagogy to their pupils. And offer some proposals on how new teachers might navigate the demand from pupils, parents and wider society for more inclusive, critical and racially literate curricula reflective of lived experience within an education policy climate in some national settings that seems counter to this aim?

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Presentation 105: Reflections by a black educational researcher investigating the absence of black teachers from leadership positions

Lorraine Anim-Addo University of Sussex, Brighton, UK.

This paper draws on research that explores the life histories of Black teachers as a means of understanding their relative absence from positions of leadership in London schools. The research utilises Life History narratives as a method of capturing the stories of 18 teachers (men and women), across London schools to understand the relative absence of Black teachers in Leadership/management roles. This method helps us interrogate the epistemological value and relevance of narratives within educational research as a valuable way of knowing. The research purposively captured the experiences of: potential leaders, those who have become leaders (varying levels of responsibility/leadership roles), identifying as Black. Each participant was interviewed three times. The Black in this research includes: all Black African, Caribbean and or Black mixed. This is a deliberate attempt to demonstrate how complex the 'black' identity is, highlighting the dangers of merging such diverse minority groups under one collective umbrella. Terms such as BAME adds to the construction of an inaccurate and incomplete picture of what is happening in society; therefore a disaggregation of these collective umbrella terms (and statistics) might be more useful in addressing certain disparities, especially those less obvious ones.

This presentation is a deep honest reflection of my research journey: from the early planning, my insecurities and doubts, to finding my participants, the interview process (where I share some of my own life before asking them to share their personal stories), to the analysis process that has steered my writing. I focus in particular on the impact of my own position as a Black woman, a Black researcher (Maylor, 2009) a mother, and a (ex) teacher from London. I reflect on how I grappled with and reconciled my own judgments, my ignorance and biases, my anger and my frustrations. I argue that research of this kind opens up insights into the complexities of the Black identity (which is not a monolith (Richardson, 2022)) in London and the UK more broadly. The research additionally suggests how the collection of these lived experiences might be used as a form of knowledge exchange to shape and re-imagine the understandings of Black lived experiences in education. I conclude with some reflections on the important role of Life History Narratives in research (Anim-Addo, 2024) and how the adoption of a Critical Race Theory as a philosophical and methodological approach aids in challenging essentialising discourses that focus on narrow stereotypes and assumed deficits in the aspiration for Black teacher leaders (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023).

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Solidarity, criticality, and social in/justice in teacher education

Ian Cushing Manchester Metropolitan University

University-based teacher educators in England face existential threats to their autonomy, their identities, and their careers. An intense period of recent policy reform has disrupted and fractured the teacher education architecture, and plunged it into a crisis (Ellis 2023). In this mini keynote I reflect on the hostile nature of these reforms, drawing primarily on my own and others' critiques of teacher education policy (Cushing 2023; Horden and Brooks 2023; Steadman 2023), and a British Academy/Leverhulme funded study which explored the material and psychosocial effects of policy reforms on the lives of teacher educators. This work has shown how reforms are built on a narrative which presents only certain types of educational practices as legitimate, and thus is curtailing the work of teacher educators – especially those whose work is committed to critical, anti-racist, and socially just efforts. I argue that whilst many teacher education providers claim to be engaging in social justice efforts, these will always be constrained when providers are coerced into showing fidelity with external curricula, reading lists, measurements, and norms which are underpinned by deficit perspectives of marginalised children and which pay scant attention to structural inequalities in schools (Lander 2014; Lyiscott et al 2018; Picower & Kholi 2017). Whilst it is a time of crisis for teacher education in England, I also touch upon data which shows how teacher educators are positioning themselves in opposition to policy reforms, and are doing what they can to locate and widen cracks in the system (Weber 1997). Giving examples of focus group discussion, I show the power in critically minded teacher educators coming together to foster a sense of group solidarity and resistance. I argue that teacher education providers have a pivotal role to play in sustaining these feelings of resistance whilst simultaneously pushing back against a state-crafted narrative that university teacher education programmes are purportedly sub-standard.

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The First Steps Towards Creating an Anti-Racist Education Department: Curriculum, Pedagogy and Organisational Structures.

Alison Morgan, Emily Davies University of Warwick, Coventry, UK.

This presentation considers the current educational context in relation to anti-racist practices. Since the murder of George Floyd in 2020 and the subsequent rapid growth of the Black Lives Matter movement, attention is being paid to understanding the experiences of Black, Asian and Global Majority (BAGM) student teachers both in higher education and school settings in order to create more inclusive programmes of study. Using the invaluable *Anti-Racism Framework for Initial Teacher Education/Training* produced by Newcastle University, Leeds Beckett University and the National Education Union in 2022, this presentation shares the initial stages of a project in an education department at a higher education institute, outlining the scope and aims of creating an anti-racist department.

According to recent data from the Department for Education (2023a), 36.91% of primary and 35.4% of secondary pupils are from BAGM backgrounds, yet the most recent data on the racial profile of the teaching profession in England shows that in 2022 89.7% of teachers were white (DfE, 2023b). Furthermore, in a survey conducted for the 2021 *Lit in Colour* Report, only 12% of secondary teacher survey respondents and 13% of primary teacher survey respondents reported having received training on how to talk about race as part of their initial teacher training (Elliott *et al*, 2021 p. 7). There is a clear need for Initial Teacher Education providers to ensure their programmes develop a teacher workforce skilled in anti-racist pedagogies and practice.

Underpinned by a departmental teacher value of social justice together with an institutional focus on tackling the awarding gap and marginalisation experienced by BAGM students, the project aims are wide ranging. Adopting Kishimoto's (2018) three foci: curriculum, pedagogy and organisational structures, this project began in 2023 with a departmental audit of data on admissions and attainment, as well as staff development on anti-racist practices before introducing more authentic and inclusive forms of assessment on the Postgraduate Certificate in Education programmes for the 2023/24 academic year. Using quantitative data to explore outcomes for BAGM students, it is hoped that the awarding gap begins to close.

Whilst the project is only in its early stages, this presentation provides the opportunity to share initial data and ideas with teacher educators in order to further progress this vital area of work.

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Teacher educators moving from ‘not racist’ towards antiracist: an autoethnographic study of aiming to ‘do’ rather than ‘document’

Heather Earnshaw Edinburgh Napier University, UK.

As a team of educators, we wanted to move in a real and meaningful way from ‘not racist’ towards ‘antiracist’. One of us had been tasked with developing our institutional action plan following the publication of the National Anti-racism Framework for Initial Teacher Education (ITE) by the Scottish Council of Deans of Education (SCDE, 2023). We started to write, to create ‘steps’ to be ticked off, but kept coming across the pitfalls that other writers have described of ‘doing’ diversity and inclusion by document; of “doing the document rather than doing the doing” Ahmed (2012). We were concerned to avoid the performative and to write something that led to sustained and sustainable shifts in individual practice and to the student experience.

We started to reimagine our action-plan writing model from one where an individual undertook a paper exercise, to be presented and signed off, a ‘fetish’ (Ahmed, 2012), to something more collective, more organic, and more deeply personal. We each needed to engage with “unlearning” and “unpacking” our “embedded thinking” (Arshad, 2019). And, as a fairly homogenous group, we needed to be mindful too of Arshad’s (2019) warning that it is easy, without the corresponding lived experiences, to fall into the trap of discussing diversity and inclusion issues in an “intellectual sense” only. DiAngelo (2010) describes setting out to help her students to understand multicultural education as “a complex, life-long process rather than as an event”. We wanted to engage with the process then, rather than staging an event. And we wanted to ‘do’ the process together but allow for individual meaning-making.

Here we offer an autoethnographic exploration of our experiences, as a small team who work with pre-service teachers in Scotland, as we tentatively embarked on this journey. Our action plan became reconceptualised from artefact to vehicle: shifted to a messy document - never intended to become tidily complete – but rather something to prompt, provide some structure, track where we’d been and record where we might go next. It was the vehicle to the ‘doing’. We will describe the activity, the conversations, an indication of our shared and individual learnings, and tentative thoughts about the micro- and macro-impacts on our individual and collective practices as teacher educators.

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"Because We Exist" - The Impact of Using Diverse Children's Literature on Student Teachers' Knowledge and Confidence

Kalsoom Akhtar, Beth Marley, Catherine O'Leary University of Birmingham, UK.

To share with Initial Teacher Education (ITE) colleagues findings from our mixed methods research project, exploring how student teachers' subject knowledge and self-reflective practice can be supported by raising the profile of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) representation in diverse children's literature. The project is a result of feedback from the Primary ITE BAME focus group of students, who found a limited selection of picture books with diverse central characters available in their placement schools.

Research has highlighted a lack of representation within children's literature, (e.g.; Crisp et al, 2016; National Literacy Trust, 2020; Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE), 2022). The CLPE (2020) claims it is important for children to experience different realities in books, as well as making connections with protagonists, offering opportunities for readers to challenge prejudice and broaden understanding. Responding to this, our project focused on developing independent critical thinkers by expanding the selection of diverse children's literature available to ITE students. Preparing students for diversity and equity in society has been identified as crucial, particularly within teacher education (Cochran-Smith and Villegas, 2015; Hartsfield, 2021).

The intervention involved 73 primary school student teachers studying for a Post-Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDipEd). The study adopted a mixed methods approach, employing pre- and post-intervention surveys, focus group interviews and analysis of students' written reflections.

The findings demonstrated a significant impact on student teachers' subject knowledge and confidence in using the literature, highlighting how we as Teacher Educators can contribute towards an experience that educates the whole student. The presentation will explore recommendations from the study and there will be an opportunity to discuss the book titles used as part of this project.

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Using Life History Narratives to analyse the relative absence of Black teachers in positions of leadership in schools in London.

Lorraine Anim-Addo University of Sussex, Brighton, United Kingdom

Many teachers are leaving the profession due to work-related pressures. In addition to work pressures, research shows Black teachers claim they regularly experience racial discrimination. They feel a sense of isolation, lack support and career progression (Tereshchenko et al, 2021). 96 percent of school leaders are white (British/other). This is concerning because there are arguably not enough Black teachers in the profession and the few who stay, [fail] often do not progress to become formal leaders/managers in schools in England. This is problematic, particularly in areas of London where Black students make up 35 percent of the secondary school population. Schools are becoming more diverse, yet the teacher workforce and leadership of schools have not changed to reflect that.

I purposively sought to capture the experiences of teachers as potential leaders and current school leaders, who identify as Black, to try to understand the relative absence of Black leaders. I generate and analyse Life History Narratives as a method of capturing and understanding the stories of 18 participants (men and women – exploring intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991)) to answer my main research question: How do Black teacher narratives contribute to nuanced understanding the relative absence of Black teachers in positions of leadership in London schools?

Using Critical Race Theory (CRT) as my theoretical lens to illuminate and critique racism, and other forms of oppression. CRT is a critical theoretical approach that acknowledges systemic racism, offering a lens “through which to make sense of, deconstruct and challenge racial inequality in society” (Rollock and Gillborn, 2011). The findings provide insight into how the lack of representation of Black leaders creates an absence in schools for *all* students and teachers, thus wider society, and it matters. It partly matters because young people do not see examples of Black people having the skills and the right to lead. Perhaps even more importantly it means that Black teachers continue to feel isolated, lacking the networks, offered roles that limit their decision-making power, perpetuating stereotypes that continue to marginalise, and further inequalities both in England schools and wider society.

In this presentation, I will evaluate the contribution of Life History Narratives in research of this nature (Anim-Addo, L, 2024) and discuss how we might use these narratives as an effective method of recognising our ever-present interconnected histories and cultures and a tool that challenges/questions how we see ‘leadership’, helping to re-shape and influence education in our schools to meet the needs of all.

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On decolonising the teacher education curriculum:

Decolonising the Teacher Education Curriculum

Yonah Matemba University of the West of Scotland, Ayr, UK.

In academic and policy discourse, calls to decolonise the teacher education curriculum are growing louder (e.g., Martin and Pirbhai-Illich, 2016; Le Grange, 2023). This comes against the backdrop of a colonial habitus in education that continues to sustain (overtly and surreptitiously) structures that perpetuate the colonial-matrix of power, epistemological hegemony, and cultural subjugation. In a racialised world, anti-racist plans (and other decolonial practices) fail to produce desired results because often these well-meaning programmes exist in a curriculum space that has not been decolonised (Le Grange, 2023). It is prudent for teacher education first to decolonise its curriculum before diversifying it, to ensure that such decolonial strategies are successful in a culturally immersive decolonised curriculum. The centrality of teacher education as a ‘trusted mechanism’ in shaping professionally work-ready teachers should provide the impetus ensuring that its curriculum is aligned with decolonial thought-patterns, culturally responsive pedagogies, diverse ways of knowing and does not shy away from epistemological critique of hegemonic Eurocentric paradigms and other equally dominant discourses (Ramón, 2011). In this workshop teacher education colleagues will consider four pertinent issues. First, acknowledging one’s structural location because no one engages with the curriculum as *tabula rasa*, (Ramón, 2011). Secondly, decentring epistemological hegemony, whiteness, and dealing with white fragility (Hess, 2017). Next, democratising knowledge-making, including ontological pluralism (Le Grange, 2023). Finally, altering assessment for and of/as learning, including using non-traditional assessment methods (Winter, Webb, and Turner, 2022).

Keywords: Teacher Education, Curriculum, Colonial Matrix of power, Decolonisation

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Decolonising Initial Teacher Education and anti-racist education in ‘white spaces’: feelings of uncertainty and optimism

Sophie Vauzour & Laura London University of East Anglia, Norwich, United Kingdom

The report *Race and Racism in Secondary Schools* highlights that by ‘their own admission, many teachers are ill-prepared to teach in ways that promote anti-racism’ (Joseph-Salisbury, 2020, p. 2). Whilst the issue is complex and decolonising teacher education will not on its own offer a comprehensive solution to tackle the problem of racism in education (Keval, 2019; Panford, 2021), it is essential to develop student teachers’ awareness of systemic racism, racial literacy, and confidence in their ability to teach in a way that promotes anti-racist education (Lander, 2014).

Our region does not have high levels of ethnic diversity. In this context, schools, and indeed the programme itself, are predominantly ‘white spaces’. The project to decolonise our post graduate teacher education programme aimed to cultivate the racial literacy of tutors and student teachers. The research explores the impact and challenges of the project from the perspectives of the student teachers and tutors involved, and establishes the next steps to decolonise the programme.

A self-study approach was adopted, as the tutors’ and student teachers’ perceptions were recorded in diaries. Reflexive Thematic Analysis was selected due to its flexibility and the fact that the researchers’ position and subjectivity are recognised as an integral and necessary part of the process. Reflexive Thematic Analysis involves the researchers drawing upon their experiences, knowledge and positionality and ‘critically interrogating’ how this influences their interpretation of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2021, p. 4).

The research highlighted that the project had a positive impact on the participants’ racial literacy and allowed them to look critically at resources and curriculum. The research also identified many challenges in decolonising subjects in secondary schools; for instance, the considerable variation in approaches taken by different departments and the underrepresentation of individuals from ethnically diverse communities on the course, but also in the wider teaching and teacher educator workforce. Finally, the research revealed areas where more progress was needed, for example supporting student teachers further in recognising microaggressions and dealing with racist incidents.

Decolonisation ‘is an on-going, and an unending process; it is a collective journey and one that has not yet arrived’ (Dei, 2016, p 37). In this workshop, we are hoping to support colleagues in similar contexts, by sharing our (and our student teachers’) experience, ideas and resources, and discuss the next steps planned for this journey.

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