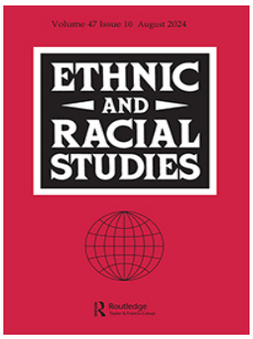

Article:
Lidher, S. orcid.org/0000-0002-4782-0781, Bibi, R. orcid.org/0000-0002-3795-7549 and Alexander, C. orcid.org/0000-0003-1669-0053 (2023) Reframing British history: teacher education after Black Lives Matter. Ethnic and Racial Studies, 47 (10). pp. 2196-2218. ISSN 0141-9870

https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2023.2271067



Ethnic and Racial Studies

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/rers20

Reframing British history: teacher education after Black Lives Matter

Sundeep Lidher, R. Bibi & C. Alexander

To cite this article: Sundeep Lidher, R. Bibi & C. Alexander (2024) Reframing British history: teacher education after Black Lives Matter, Ethnic and Racial Studies, 47:10, 2196-2218, DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2023.2271067

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2023.2271067

Published online: 31 Oct 2023.

ETHNIC AND RACIAL STUDIES
2024, VOL. 47, NO. 10, 2196–2218
https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2023.2271067

Reframing British history: teacher education after Black Lives Matter

Sundeep Lidher [a], R. Bibi [b] and C. Alexander [c]

[a]Department of History, King's College London, London, UK; [b]Department of Sociological Studies, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK; [c]School of Social Sciences, University of Manchester, Manchester, UK

ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic and Black Lives Matter protests have given renewed impetus to campaigns against racial inequality. In education, the issue of curriculum – and particularly the history curriculum – has been at the centre of campaigns to "decolonise the curriculum". While barriers to the teaching of "diverse" British histories in England's classrooms have long been recognised, relatively little research has been done on the crucial role of history teacher educators and teacher training in developing a diverse profession, practice, and curriculum. This paper seeks to address these gaps through analysis of interviews with history teacher educators, trainee history teachers and key stakeholders. In particular, it explores the responses of history teacher educators to recent calls for curriculum reform, charts how these demands for change have influenced thinking and practice in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in history and identifies ongoing challenges to the development of more inclusive curriculum and pedagogic practice.

ARTICLE HISTORY Received 15 May 2023; Accepted 19 September 2023

KEYWORDS Initial Teacher Education; history curriculum; teacher training; racial inequality; British history; "diverse" histories

Introduction

The events of 2020, with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the global Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests, have given renewed impetus to longstanding campaigns against racial inequality. In education, the issue of curriculum – and particularly the history curriculum – has been at the centre of calls to "decolonise the curriculum" (Charles 2019; Johnson and Mouthaan 2021). In England, demands for change, led overwhelmingly by young people, called

CONTACT Sundeep Lidher sundeep.lidher@kcl.ac.uk

This article has been corrected with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article.

for a collective reckoning with Britain's local and global multi-racial past. These demands added urgency to decades-long advocacy by academics, activists, students, and teachers to address the marginalisation, or erasure, of British histories of migration, empire, and race from England's school curricula.

While the focus of recent debate has been primarily on the "what" of the history curriculum, there has been less discussion of the "how", and particularly the ways in which a more inclusive curriculum is delivered in the classroom, and by whom. Much of the research on, and advocacy around, diversifying the history curriculum has centred on the structural constraints on history teachers, teachers' feelings of lack of expertise, and the development of teaching resources. Notably absent from these discussions has been the critical role that teacher educators can perform in influencing effective and sustainable change. At the forefront of shaping teaching practice and pedagogy, Initial Teacher Education (ITE) professionals based at universities and schools are powerful conduits for driving shifts in curriculum content and delivery. However, little research has been done to explore the views, practices, and experiences of these important interlocutors (Bhopal and Rhamie 2014; Lander 2014).

This article aims to address this gap by foregrounding the experiences of teacher educators in discussions around history curriculum reform in England's secondary schools. Drawing on interviews and focus groups with those at the frontline of educating secondary history teachers, we argue that, in the wake of BLM, teacher educators have expressed a strong commitment to developing a more inclusive curriculum and pedagogic practice to tackle entrenched racial inequity in schools.[1] Despite this, increasingly fragmented ITE provision, structural constraints in the teacher education space, and ongoing barriers in schools, including the training and support of mentors, present ongoing challenges.

Race inequality, teacher education, and curriculum reform

Existing research on race inequality in teacher education can be grouped into two areas: the lack of engagement in ITE programmes with issues of race and racism, and the difficulties experienced by racially minoritized teacher educators and trainees.

Several scholars have identified the need for improved provision for trainee teachers around understanding diversity and dealing with racism in the classroom (Bhopal 2015) and for a more robust anti-racism framework for ITE (Smith and Lander 2022). Research with student teachers and teacher educators found that discussions of race and race equality, where these appear at all, are often taught as "add-ons", one-offs, or discrete units rather than embedded across the ITE curriculum (Bhopal 2015; Hick et al. 2011; Smith and Lander 2022). The inclusion of this content in ITE courses also lacks uniformity, as it is often dependent on teacher educators' own awareness, knowledge, and confidence (Bhopal 2015; Hick et al. 2011; Smith and Lander 2022).

Researchers have linked these deficits in ITE with teachers' lack of preparedness to support pupils in England's increasingly diverse schools. Despite shifting demographics in English schools, with 33.9 per cent of primary and 32.1 per cent of secondary pupils recorded as being of Black or minority ethnic heritage (Smith and Lander 2022), the teaching profession remains "predominantly white, monolingual, female and middle class" (Hick et al. 2011, 3). Several studies have found that ITE programmes do not equip student teachers to teach a diverse cohort of pupils, develop racial literacy, confront their own biased perspectives, or deal adequately with issues of race and racism in schools (Bhopal and Rhamie 2014; Lander 2011). Indeed, Joseph-Salisbury (2020) has recently argued that the lack of racial literacy among England's teaching workforce perpetuates negative and stereotypical views among some teachers about racially minoritized students and contributes to the everyday racism that these pupils face in schools.

The second dominant area of research on race and initial teacher education focuses on the experiences of racially minoritized teacher educators and trainee teachers. This work reveals racism to be an ongoing issue. As with teaching, teacher education remains a majority white profession (DfE 2019). Lander and Santoro (2017) have argued that racially minoritized teacher educators in England face marginalisation, institutional racism, and "everyday racism" manifested as microaggressions, as well as slower career progression due to unconscious bias. Research into the experiences of racially minoritized trainees is no less dispiriting. Wilkins and Lall (2011), for example, found that racially minoritized student teachers on primary postgraduate programmes faced racism in both university-based elements of ITE programmes as well as on school placements (see also Bhopal 2015).

Existing scholarship on ITE provision as it relates to race and diversity in the context of history education is, arguably, less developed. This work has focused primarily on the challenges facing secondary history teacher trainees in addressing cultural and ethnic diversity within the history curriculum (Harris 2012; Harris and Clarke 2011; Woolley 2017). More recent research has focused on the role that teacher education can play in facilitating the inclusion of British histories of migration, empire, and race into the curriculum. Lidher, McIntosh, and Alexander (2021) have argued that history teachers require improved training opportunities, including better provision upon entry into the profession, to equip them with the tools to discuss what they may consider "sensitive" or controversial historical topics. According to McIntosh, Todd, and Das (2019), ITE courses do not adequately provide the space or skills to enable teachers to confidently teach pupils a broad spectrum of history that acknowledges the diverse racial and ethnic makeup of Britain, as well as Britain's role in colonialism and empire. These topics, the authors argue "are fraught with complexity and controversy" and as such "to teach them well requires a great deal of knowledge, skill and sensitivity" (2019, 5).

This article seeks to add to both sets of scholarly literature – on race inequality in ITE broadly and on the issues of race and "diversity" in history ITE specifically – by examining more closely the role of history teacher educators in supporting the delivery of British histories of migration, empire, and race in England's classrooms. By giving voice and visibility to the experiences of teacher educators who work within the discipline of history, this research seeks to highlight the crucial role these professionals, and teacher education more broadly, can play in developing a diverse profession, practice, and curriculum.

Methodology

This article is based on one strand in a broader programme of research into the impact of the Covid-19 and BLM movement on racial and ethnic inequality which ran from 2020 to 2021.[2] Building on previous work on the history curriculum, the research team explored how history teachers and other key education stakeholders had responded to the demands around history curriculum change, especially after BLM. Relatedly, it considered how teacher training worked to reinforce or challenge racial inequality in the profession, and how it might facilitate or hinder the introduction of a more diverse history curriculum. This paper is concerned with the findings of the second strand of enquiry, focusing on the important, but under-researched, role of teacher educators.

The research team interviewed twenty-five key education stakeholders including university and school-based teacher educators, trainee teachers, established teachers, exam board representatives, subject association leaders, and continuous professional development (CPD) providers. The research also facilitated six online focus groups with university- and school-based teacher educators, trainee history teachers, newly qualified history teachers, and established history teachers.[3] Participants represented a cross-section of training institutions and secondary schools across England, and different routes into the profession. While this research focused on history teacher education, our findings point to broader issues around the education system and the need for a more diverse and better-trained teaching profession.

Teacher education: the shifting landscape

Over the past twenty years, the landscape of teacher education has become increasingly diverse. Initial Teacher Education (ITE) refers to the period of training that student teachers are required to undertake to qualify to work in state-maintained schools in England. Traditionally, student teachers have an undergraduate degree before entering a training route for secondary

education. Successful completion of ITE leads to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). QTS is not, however, a requirement for teaching in independent, faith schools or academies.

Until recently, the university-led PGCE course was the primary route to qualifying as a teacher. PGCE courses prepare trainees through a combination of school-based placements, for classroom experience, and university-based academic study to develop subject knowledge and pedagogical thinking. PGCE tutors, based at universities, are subject specialists with a degree of flexibility to shape the content of the training courses they deliver and are influential in developing the subject knowledge of their student-teacher cohort, maintaining professional networks with placement schools, and coaching school-based mentors. In recent years, alternative pathways to qualifying with QTS have been created, shifting away from university-led PGCE courses towards more vocational "on the job" training. Since 2002, Teach First, for example, has offered prospective teachers the opportunity to embark on a five-week university-based summer training course before employing them as teachers in classrooms, where they "learn by doing" while working towards a Post-Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) as a course to QTS.

The period between 2010 and 2017 witnessed significant changes in ITE, with the introduction of other salaried and non-salaried school-based training routes. In 2010, School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) established a non-salaried, school-led, pathway into teaching whereby student teachers can be employed by their placement school after a period of training. SCITT training routes have no connection with universities. According to the DfE, the value of the SCITT pathway lies in giving schools greater autonomy to educate future teachers (DfE 2010) and privileges a school-based, "practice led" approach (DfE 2011). Following on from this, the employment-based School Direct programme was launched in 2012 to offer "high quality graduates" a salaried or tuition fee route to QTS. In the case of the former, trainees are employed as unqualified teachers and earn a salary while they train, with the cost of training covered by the school. For the fee-funded option, trainee teachers participate either in a course leading to QTS or a full PGCE programme delivered in partnership between the school and local HEI. Now Teach, a further school-based recruitment programme, was introduced in 2017 and aims to tackle the teacher shortage by supporting career change "professionals" to retrain as teachers. In the same year, the government launched yet another "earn while you learn" route into teaching, the twelve-month Post-Graduate Teaching Apprenticeship.

These salaried, work-based, programmes are becoming increasingly popular pathways to QTS. In the 2019/20 academic year, a total of 16,243 new entrants embarked on school-led teacher training routes, which made

up 55 per cent of all trainees (DfE 2019). In terms of Secondary History, according to the 2019/20 DfE's Initial Teacher Training (ITT) census, almost 588 new student teachers trained via SCITT (214), School Direct (fee-funded) (409), School Direct (Salaried) (65) and Teach First (113).

The increasing dominance of school-based ITE routes has raised concerns amongst education professionals. The shift away from theory, pedagogy, and subject knowledge, which lie at the heart of the university-led PGCE course, towards an emphasis on "teaching as a craft", which is best learned through in-school "observing" (Gove 2010) has been argued to leave little scope for developing specialist subject knowledge among trainee teachers (Evans 2011; George and Maguire 2019). This, in turn, makes it more difficult for beginner teachers to reflect critically on the wider societal role of learning institutions and produces "the teacher as technicist rather than an intellectual" (Furlong et al. 2000).

The increasing diversity of routes into teaching, combined with the very different expectations surrounding these routes of entry – especially around the profession/craft dichotomy – have led to a patchwork of training practices that offer particular challenges for much-needed reform across the sector, notably around issues of racial and ethnic inequality. As earlier research has shown, the proliferation of independent schools, faith schools, academies and trusts has made it increasingly difficult to assess what is taught in classrooms, and how (Alexander, Chatterji, and Weekes-Bernard 2012; Lidher, McIntosh, and Alexander 2021). At the same time, some teachers remain uncomfortable with, and unprepared for, the process and practice of delivering diverse or "difficult" histories on the ground, particularly in England's increasingly ethnically superdiverse schools, and in response to demands from pupils, parents, teachers, and scholars for curriculum change (Alexander, Weekes-Bernard, and Chatterji 2015; McIntosh, Todd, and Das 2019).

Thus far, Wales has stood alone in responding to these demands. As part of the new "Curriculum Framework for Wales", the Welsh government announced in 2021 that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic histories and experiences will be mandatory in the school curriculum. To better support the delivery of these "diverse" histories in Welsh schools, the Welsh government has pledged to improve workforce training and professional development for teachers and trainee teachers around issues of "Time, Resources, Competence, Knowledge and Confidence" (Williams 2021, 9). In England, on the other hand, subject-specific ITE provision remains under threat. The DfE's 2021 "market review" of ITE and associated reforms, including controversial demands for all training providers to undergo a re-accreditation process, have exacerbated concerns in the sector about teacher recruitment and the place of disciplinary knowledge in teacher education (Whittaker 2022). The Historical Association, for example, has argued that the approaches

suggested in the government's ITT review will "make it harder to develop best practice in subject-specific teacher education", "risk undermining networks of subject specific mentors" and "risk the loss of academic expertise and research" (Historical Association 2021).

BLM and the need for change: the views of teacher educators

Set against the backdrop of these shifts, our interviews and focus groups with history teacher educators sought to reflect on their practice after the BLM protests of the summer of 2020. Particularly apparent among their responses was a recognition of the need for change. One focus group participant described the BLM protests as "a moment of the curtain being torn away" (PGCE Tutor), while another reported:

> [BLM] has led me to go back and say, okay, so what have I done in my role, either as a history teacher or as a history teacher educator, that has alleviated these problems or contributed to these problems?

For some, the pandemic lockdown was an opportunity to reflect on their own practice and re-educate themselves. As one PGCE tutor told us:

> I felt like I had to go away and educate myself, first and foremost. It was an absolute priority […] There are all sorts of examples of things I've read that have really changed my way of thinking, which has then led to a shift in emphasis on what I do on the PGCE.

Individual efforts at upscaling subject knowledge have been supplemented by the increased availability of high-quality online resources and the active sharing of these by communities of history teaching and training professionals. One PGCE tutor pointed to the value of new online resources to recent cohorts of history teacher trainees:

> I think there is so much out there now. I mean, you could spend a year now watching and reading stuff on decolonising the history curriculum. So they [history teacher trainees] could definitely do that through, you know, resources that are already online […] There's a fantastic wealth of stuff out there.

The value of building networks as a means "to learn from each other" (CPD Provider) came up repeatedly. As one PGCE tutor commented:

> I would tell them [history teachers] to look for communities of practice that have principles at their heart that would enable those things to happen, and then work as communities because what will happen in that is they will have discussions, they will learn.

Several ITE professionals and history teachers reflected on how the BLM movement had instigated a drive for change that foregrounded more "accuracy" (Secondary History Teacher) in the narration of British history in the

school curriculum. One exam board representative responsible for developing and delivering GCSE and A-Level History assessments told us:

> It's not just about the issue of representation in history – and that's very important. The other part of it is just simply that providing more diverse histories is just simply better history, it's more accurate and it's more representative history as well and that's something that is of value to all students.

Making change

Our research found that, as a result of this period of reflection and education, several university-based history educators responsible for training PGCE, Teach First, and School Direct (fee-funded) trainees, reported having made changes to the content and structure of their courses. This included, among other things, engaging trainees with questions around curriculum construction and enhancing trainees' subject knowledge around British histories of migration, empire, and race.

Several PGCE tutors spoke of the importance of engaging student teachers with foundational questions about the discipline of history and methods of historical inquiry early on their training. According to one PGCE tutor "understanding of subject" has become more important than ever. Helping trainees to get to grips with what history is and how historical narratives are constructed emerged as a key facet of this work. One PGCE tutor told us:

> if we're going to teach [trainee teachers] how historical knowledge is constructed, if we want them to understand, you know, why is this knowledge trustworthy or why should we accept this account of the past, we've got to teach them about methods.

Encouraging trainees to think about how historical narratives are made enabled them to better understand the constructedness of the school history curriculum, and how they could shape it in their own practice. One PGCE tutor said:

> One of the things we've tried to do is really concentrate on the ideas of thinking critically about the curriculum, where the curriculum comes from, the powerful voices in that curriculum, who shapes it, what it looks like, and its manifestations in schools. And therefore, what's their agency, what is a PGCE student's agency?

Another told us:

> one of the things, you know, I'm always keen to sort of outline with trainees, at the outset, is that […] it is written nowhere that every school has to start at 1066 and end with World War Two. It does not have to be that way […] It's important for trainees to understand that they are, kind of, agents … and that they do have the power to build and create.

One PGCE tutor offered trainees a potted account of the evolution of the national curriculum for history, underscoring contestations around the

inclusion of histories of Britain's ethnic minorities and histories of the British empire. This tutor told us:

> we do a kind of history of history education […] I've put into that story now much more on people like Bernard Coard, we've talked about the Rampton and Swann Reports and we've looked at the way in which history education has been seen to be too narrow historically.

The deliberate choice to "elevate and make really important" (PGCE Tutor) this content early on in training emerged as a key message. As one PGCE History subject lead told us:

> In our induction week we had a session on better history and wider histories and what history is […] so we introduced the whole concept of curricula constructs.

A history subject tutor on the Teach First training programme also underscored the importance of early interventions to broaden trainees' substantive knowledge:

> from the very beginning of the Summer Institute when we talk about what a history lesson might look like, how to do a historical enquiry, how to do lesson planning, we could choose any examples but we really make sure that we're thinking about things like wider world histories and British imperial history and some of the histories that they may not have encountered as part of their degree.

Increasing subject knowledge around local and global British histories of migration, empire, and race was felt to be crucial. As one PGCE tutor told us, subject knowledge "underpins everything and it's very important". This is especially true in terms of building trainees' confidence in delivering marginalised histories in the classroom. Several PGCE tutors told us that they had begun to incorporate one-off subject-specific workshops into their courses on topics such as the British Empire, enslavement and resistance, Windrush, Black British civil rights, local Black history, and ancient African empires.

While even history graduates may not have studied British histories of migration and empire at university, lack of subject knowledge was even more pronounced where trainees came from a non-subject-specific training route. To strengthen trainees' knowledge and confidence, several PGCE tutors reported that they had begun to work more closely with external experts on content delivery. Partnerships with university-based historians, museum professionals, and archivists had become critical in their work to help develop students' subject knowledge around "diverse" British histories. One PGCE tutor told us:

> on our programme, for example, we bring in professional historians to speak to the students […] that's been really healthy and long may that continue.

Others talked about soliciting partnerships with archives and museums to provide their trainees with resources, which they can utilise in their own classroom teaching. One PGCE tutor said:

> We run a session with the British Library called "Windrush Voices" in which they outline their sound archives as a marvellous selection of oral testimonies from members of the Windrush generation and look at how they can be incorporated into our lesson planning and scheme of work building.

Other PGCE tutors underscored the value of partnering with local archives to help make marginalised histories more visible, and accessible to their cohorts of trainees. One said:

> [we] deliver a session early on in the programme about the potential for locating hidden or local histories within the [local] archive collection […] that is a really, really good way for trainees to physically visit the archives and find interesting primary source material to start an inquiry with.

Drawing on opportunities to engage with the local community, local history, and the immediate physical environment as a way to access, and make accessible, broader historical narratives was one approach. As one Teach First history subject tutor said:

> finding those local connections between Britain's colonial past, you know, on a global level, and then in their locality, is a really, really important thing to do.

Beyond encouraging critical engagement with curriculum design and building subject knowledge, teacher educators talked about the inclusion of more practical, pedagogically driven, workshops on diversity, decolonisation, and, in some cases, anti-racism. This activity was aimed at building trainees' confidence to take on potentially sensitive or controversial topics and to better understand, and deal with, issues around race and racism. Classroom teachers' lack of expertise around these issues remains a persistent problem (Alexander and Weekes-Bernard 2017; Bhopal and Rhamie 2014; Lander 2011; McIntosh, Todd, and Das 2019). One respondent, responsible for designing the history curriculum at a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) pointed out that, since BLM, their in-house ITT course has included "a diversity and inclusion workshop", although there was little further detail. A PGCE History subject lead told us that, since summer 2020:

> I'm very explicitly doing diversity and decolonisation as a set of sessions, two five-hour sessions, two weeks apart and bringing in more diverse voices into that.

Another PGCE tutor told us that the focus of this type of session on his course was framed primarily around established legal frameworks:

> My session broadly introduced issues around diversity in relation to public sector equality duties and Equality Act and then also offered these trainees ways of conceptualising diversity.

There are of course important critiques of "diversity training" as an effective tool for ensuring institutional change (Ahmed 2012), and it is unclear to what extent this has impacted practice in the classroom or institutional settings. Indeed, only one PGCE tutor moved beyond the preoccupation with "diversity" to flag the inclusion of sessions that deal directly with anti-racism and anti-racist pedagogy. They told us:

> we've opened up a chance near the beginning of course for [trainees] to think critically about race and anti-racist education and what that might mean and we've asked the trainees to reflect on their own background to give them that opportunity to discuss their own experiences.

Helping student teachers to think about what they teach and why was closely linked to encouraging them to consider the context in which they would be delivering their teaching. Training teachers to recognise and exercise their autonomy, be flexible in their approach to curriculum design, responsive to the needs of their audience, and sensitive to their locale was key here. As one PGCE tutor told us:

> Through the professional studies course at [redacted] we put a great emphasis on the idea of school at the heart of the community, and what that means. And therefore, you know, bringing it back to a subject basis, what does history mean within that community? What is history going to mean to those young people?

Enduring obstacles: challenges in initial teacher education

Despite these encouraging signs of positive engagement and reflection, our interviewees also identified significant barriers in making changes. These included institutional obstacles produced by externally generated changes to teacher training routes, as well as constraints within the teacher education space itself, such as a lack of time, "tick-box" approaches to "diversity" work, gaps in trainers' subject knowledge, and the ongoing lack of Black and minority ethnic representation among both teacher educators and trainee history teachers. We consider these in turn.

Institutional barriers

Teacher educators pointed to the shifting teacher training landscape and its impact on subject specialism in history. Lamenting the declining emphasis on subject knowledge in today's "mixed market" in teacher training, one PGCE tutor said of SCITT training routes:

> The only subject training they get is six twilight sessions after a busy school day in the whole year. And that's it.

A representative of a national subject association shared concerns about the impact of practice-oriented in-school training routes on the development of history trainees' subject knowledge:

> you're kind of thrown in at the deep end and there's less opportunity to develop your thinking about curricular issues. You may get quickly quite good at crowd management, but [not] developing some of the finer points of thinking as the subject specialist.

Another PGCE tutor voiced concerns over the marketisation of teacher training:

> the teacher training landscape is increasingly a sales pitch, to get people through the door, to get money through the door to keep things going, and by necessity for some places, but it's not helpful.

The resulting fracturing and marketisation – or "chaos" as one PGCE tutor called it – of the teacher training landscape has been exacerbated by the recent government review of ITE (DfE 2021). Conducted in July 2021, the review centred behaviour management, managing expectations, and classroom delivery as priorities for the new core content framework for teacher training, rather than subject knowledge or professional expertise (Historical Association 2021). PGCE tutors in particular expressed concerns about the implications of the review on their intellectual freedom. One told us that they were especially worried about the prospect of:

> very tight constraints and a curriculum being directed […] for teacher training in a very controlling and specific way.

Time constraints in ITE

Within the teacher education space, several constraints were identified. A key concern amongst PGCE tutors was the limited number of university-based contact hours available to them on the year-long PGCE, inhibiting opportunities for sustained subject knowledge enhancement or engagement with anti-racist pedagogical approaches. As one history PGCE tutor explained:

> our students are with us one day a week and are in school four days a week throughout the programme and actually at the end of the programme they're in school full time and, of those days, then that's going to be evenly split between professional learning or professional studies and subject specific (so history specific) sessions.

Another history PGCE tutor commented on the erosion of university-based time on PGCE training routes:

> We used to have 28 days of university based reflective time of which 25, 22 or somewhere in that range were subject based. And in that amount of time, you could properly step back and you could have some time to think about

> curriculum […] Once you get down to, sort of, you know, 15 days of contact time you're really going to struggle to have that kind of reflective time.

Several PGCE tutors pointed to the careful "balancing" they perform to cover necessary bases in the allotted teaching hours. On PGCE courses, university-based sessions on curriculum, subject knowledge enhancement, and pedagogy compete for space with skills-oriented content, for example, on classroom management and lesson planning.

One PGCE tutor called for greater guidance from the government:

> stipulating how much subject content they want trainees to have would be a helpful starting point. Is five days enough or is it not enough? Is 10 days enough or not enough? Is 15 days enough or not enough? We seem to be quite happy to stipulate many other things, but we never stipulate that and we don't do it because it runs counter to what the government have been pushing for a while now, which is smaller, school-centred, teacher training.

"Tick-boxing diversity"

Teacher educators expressed concern that, even where approaches to "diverse" histories have been integrated, the lack of time and expertise led to little more than "tick-box" approaches. One PGCE tutor told us that, without time and opportunities for teacher educators to help trainees think about "context", "interpretive frameworks", and how to "unravel preconceptions", the inclusion of sessions on migration, empire, and race, or on "diversity" and "decolonisation", remain surface level. The lack of time to dedicate to these topics was even more of a challenge on SCITT training routes. As one respondent, a school-based mentor, noted:

> one of the biggest barriers is time, particularly for school-based practitioners […] having the time to engage can sometimes be a challenge.

Other interviewees noted a lack of funds for SCITT providers to support anything other than "general principles" training (MAT History Subject Lead). For school-based training routes to deliver high-quality teacher training and to include valuable subject knowledge enhancement, better resourcing is required, although the fast-tracked, small-scale, schools-based approach made this difficult to implement. As one PGCE tutor, currently teaching PGCE and School Direct trainees, said of SCITT provision, "it's not funded to be high quality".

Lack of expertise amongst teacher educators

Beyond very practical constraints around time and funding, our research points to a lack of structured opportunities for subject knowledge advancement for ITE professionals. In other words, who trains the trainers?

Several PGCE tutors expressed self-consciousness about their own "blind spots" (PGCE tutor) on topics relating to British histories of migration, empire, and race. The same professionals also pointed to a lack of available CPD tailored towards their needs. One PGCE tutor told us that, in terms of relevant CPD for himself and his colleagues, "there's no kind of formal framework […] nothing formal through the university channels".

As discussed above, many teacher educators reported having to work hard to update their own subject knowledge. This "upskilling" is, in most cases, done in teacher educators' own time and at their own expense. A History Subject Lead at a large MAT, who develops history curricula in over 40 schools and feeds into school-based teacher training for new history teachers in these schools, told us:

> I do my own CPD because I do not see it as something separate, I see it as central to my role.

Several respondents noted that there is scope for university education departments to work more closely with university history departments, with relevant subject expertise, and for the latter to work directly with schools and CPD providers. This collaborative activity functions best when academic historians take time to understand the context and constraints of school history teaching, and when ITE providers and university history departments support, and incentivise, the input of academic historians in teacher training and CPD activity. As one PGCE History subject lead noted:

> What we know about from research about effective CPD is that it is collaborative, sustained over time (and that's really important), and has expert input. So, if you can get historians and teachers or teacher educators leading that, that's so much more effective.

Lack of diversity amongst ITE professionals and teacher trainees

Another barrier to effective change is the lack of diversity among ITE professionals. One PGCE tutor noted:

> it's interesting looking across the broad spectrum of PGCE tutors in that I think we're fairly white. There is a need for us to think about that as a community of practitioners, as an issue for us and sort of what that means.

While some teacher educators reported an uptick in applications from people of Black and Asian heritage in recent years, trainee history teachers also remain overwhelmingly white. One PGCE History subject lead commented:

> if I look at my trainees and applicants, in many ways, a diversity is present, but more would be desirable. The profile of cohorts change from year to year, but a more diverse cohort is always a good thing.

Seeking more applications from Black and minority ethnic history trainees is not, in and of itself, an answer. Teacher training providers must also pay closer attention to how these trainees experience their formal education as trainee teachers. Several recently qualified and established history teachers from racially minoritised backgrounds who participated in our focus groups reported difficult or negative experiences during their training period. Recounting her experience as a student on the Teach First training programme some years ago, one Black female history teacher told us:

> it was actually quite a triggering experience […] from the moment I started it was a space in which I just felt very hyper-aware. I was only one of two Black people on the course.

A Black male teacher, who started his history teacher training on a PGCE course "outside of London", also shared the difficulties he experienced:

> I think it was maybe one or two people of colour and every time that I felt I wanted to look at something a bit more diverse, the question was always "why would you do that?" and I ended up leaving the course.

Another Black male respondent who went on to qualify as a history teacher via Teach First, noted his experience was similarly negative:

> I am not a stupid person […] but for the longest time I had that sense of being inadequate, that sense of not feeling good enough, and I think a lot of that came from the teacher training that I had.

Challenges in schools

While there are ongoing issues around the ability of current ITE structures to address questions of racial and ethnic inequity, barriers continue beyond the training programme and into schools. Where teacher educators have begun to address these problems, enduring challenges within English secondary schools have contributed to a disconnect between ITE provision and the application of this material in the classroom. Our research shows that while some schools have risen to the calls for curriculum change, these developments are not universal. As one PGCE History subject lead told us:

> schools, you know vary quite a lot. I mean there are equally schools which have, in the last year, really, you know, embraced the concerns about what is being taught in the curriculum […] other schools are, you know, still trapped in "we're doing what we're doing".

For many schools, curriculum reform is simply not a priority. As one PGCE tutor told us:

> Head teachers have got more to worry about than whether or not they think their history curriculum is the right curriculum […] It's going to be more

> important they get the results, and the school today is good, and the school stays open.

PGCE tutors and trainee teachers also talked about the lack of "buy-in" from senior leadership. Little can change in schools, these respondents argued, without direct support for curriculum change from school management and department leads. One PGCE tutor said:

> We're continuing to ask questions of leadership in schools and about what they're doing, because without them actually pushing it, you know, you can have all of the aware teachers that you like, but it may not change anything.

In other cases, a barrier to change in schools has been history teachers' own disengagement with and, in some cases, active resistance to, the inclusion of "Black history" and wider British histories of migration, race, and empire in lessons. Our respondents attributed this stance to several factors. First, a lack of engagement can stem from a misconception that "diverse" British histories are not relevant to the pupils in their classrooms. As one PGCE tutor noted:

> there are pockets of resistance to curriculum change in schools because there will be schools in areas where they say, "well this isn't for our school is it, it's for, you know, that inner city school, it's for that", and you kind of [think], you're kind of missing the point here.

Second, respondents suggested that disengagement among some history teachers was linked to complacency. One History Subject Tutor on the Teach First programme told us:

> there's also a complacency among some history teachers who don't engage with what's going on and the CPD provided by different organisations, and with the latest thinking and won't be aware of most recent histories and changing interpretations.

Third, the same interviewee pointed to more structural constraints, including a lack of available time for curriculum innovation, noting:

> teachers are just working really hard and they don't have the energy.

Fourth, time constraints and the lack of space for CPD exacerbated existing worries about how to teach "difficult" or "sensitive" topics around, for example, racism. One PGCE tutor commented:

> if we're going to start having meaningful conversations with people to make change happen then actually we need to, as teachers as educators and universities, think more about how do we really enable people to see racism, as a systemic problem rather than just a few bad apples.

Our findings suggest that these conversations among ITE practitioners and history teachers are few and far between.

Fifth, this gap has been exacerbated by government interventions around whether and how British histories of migration, empire, and race should be addressed in the classroom.[4] One PGCE tutor commented:

> They don't necessarily want to support schools and teachers addressing the complexities and the difficulties of Britain's imperial past. They want, they're quite happy for, schools to be teaching a much more comfortable version of it […] it's a very reductive idea of what history is.

The impact of the government's statements on history teaching has been significant. One history PGCE tutor told us:

> I think it will be a lot of teachers, particularly new teachers to the profession, who, because of the way that the government is now charging this as a culture war and making this much more divisive, that creates some ambivalence and anxieties.

Among established history teachers, improved CPD opportunities to help develop their subject knowledge around British histories of migration, empire, and race, were felt to be necessary. One respondent, a representative from a national teacher union, warned that any CPD developed in this space must be high-quality and evidence-based, accredited even, if it is to hold long-term value:

> I'm always bit worried about saying we just need more training because it doesn't always lead to the best outcomes. It perhaps leads to more tick boxes being ticked and saying we've done this module, we've done that module, but it may not result in any changing practice.

In addition, a subject association representative suggested that this CPD needs better resourcing from the state:

> there's something missing in the system in terms of supporting teachers as a continuous experience, so they continually get to reflect on new research, on new thinking […] One of the really big concerns that we have, year after year, is from teachers saying that they haven't time to take out to do CPD or they can't find access to good subject CPD, or their budgets won't cover CPD.

Bridging the gap: the role of school-based mentors

As the comments above illustrate, there is a continuing disconnect between taught components of teacher training courses and trainees' practical experience in schools. Several respondents noted that, despite any "critically reflective" (PGCE Tutor) work student teachers may do as part of the university-based portion of a PGCE course, they can become constrained by "a rigid structure" (Trainee History Teacher) in the schools where they complete their required PGCE placements. As one established secondary school history teacher told us:

> when you get into schools […] you end up basically having to unlearn a lot of the good stuff you did in training, and I think that's the problem.

Teacher educators also noted that unequal power dynamics in placement schools make it difficult for trainees to challenge established approaches. One PGCE subject lead told us:

> trainees operate in such a liminal space so, you know, they have no power anywhere really do they […] They're often just pushed around by whatever happens around them.

The need for closer alignment between ITE providers and schools in the delivery of teacher training emerged as a notable ongoing challenge. Developing the role of school-based mentors might offer one effective solution. The DfE defines a school-based mentor as a "suitably-experienced teacher who has formal responsibility to work collaboratively within the ITT partnership to help ensure the trainee receives the highest-quality training" (DfE 2016). Commenting on the role of the mentor in bridging the gap between university-based ITE and in-school experience, one PGCE tutor told us:

> The crucial thing is seeing it [training] as a three-way relationship between us [PGCE tutors], their mentors in schools and the trainees themselves […] When mentors and schools are aligned with our vision, then it can be incredibly powerful.

School-based mentors occupy a critical role in the development of student teachers. Their work includes regular meetings with trainees to set targets, discuss what is going well and what needs improvement, lesson observation and feedback, and reporting on trainees' adherence to professional teachers' standards (DfE 2011a). One mentor said of their role:

> it's a way of supporting teachers, because I think we have such terrible recruitment and retention […] By nurturing student teachers in their first two years of entry to the profession, hopefully it will encourage more to stay.

According to teacher educators, school-based mentors play an important role in shaping the thinking and practice of trainee teachers. Indeed, one PGCE tutor said:

> The mentors in schools and the school cultures, and the host teachers who they're working with, can have a far greater influence in many ways than I do.

Building closer links between ITE providers and schools is beneficial not just for trainees, but also for history departments. Trainees, when properly supported in their school placements, can serve as "productive resources" (PGCE Tutor) and "agents of change" (PGCE Tutor) in schools. Several respondents noted that trainee teachers, with their "fingers on the pulse" (PGCE Tutor) of new scholarship, "creative zeal" (PGCE Tutor), and enthusiasm to

make change, can bring new ideas into the classroom. As one PGCE tutor argued:

> I think we need to be talking about beginning teachers as people who already are creating their own professional profile and bringing new and interesting knowledge into the profession. So, while they've got a lot to learn they have a lot to give as well.

An established history teacher shared similar thoughts:

> trainee teachers are so enthusiastic and up for trying new things so schools can really benefit from that and if you've got mentors that are open to that and open to the new ideas that they're bringing with them from their institutions and then I think the curriculum could look very, very different.

When ITE providers and mentors are aligned, there is potential for trainees to apply university-based subject knowledge development in lessons in placement schools. However, in instances where mentors are unwilling or unable to facilitate continuities between university-based teacher training and the classroom, the role of the mentor can be obstructive. As one PGCE tutor told us:

> you will have trainees who really come up and clash against what they've been taught university because they will find in their school context they don't think it works and their mentor doesn't think it works either and therefore they won't try something, and you don't get to that point of experimentation. And equally the other way around, they can sometimes clash really heavily with mentors who they think aren't doing the things that the university thinks they should be doing. And so I think this is where that relationship with mentors becomes so important in teacher training.

In some cases, mentors' own subject knowledge is the barrier. Our study suggests that mentors often lack the necessary subject expertise to support trainee teachers. In response to a question about what more could be done to help trainee history teachers engage with "difficult" historical topics like migration, empire, and race one mentor said:

> Train mentors on how to deal with that so they are the first port of call. They see them [trainees] every day, I think they are the best people to train up and upskill on how to deal with things like that.

Several mentors noted a lack of tailored support available to them, in particular around subject knowledge development. Mentors who have been working to address gaps in their own subject knowledge have often done so at their own initiative and in their own time. In relation to British histories of migration, empire, and race, one said:

> none of this was on my PGCE whatsoever, so I often feel like I'm having to relearn everything so that I can support my mentees in the way that their training wants them to go through and be successful.

Another mentor stressed the need for mentor-specific CPD. They said:

> I think CPD is a big challenge. We have no time given to us, you know, this is something that has to happen at weekends and evenings and updating, the reading, the studying, the conversations.

A key problem noted by several school-based mentors was their own lack of direct access to high-quality historical scholarship. One mentor told us:

> I think the challenges are sourcing the scholarship and sourcing the resources to make the changes because they're only out there when you look for them.

ITE providers are well-placed to contribute to the upskilling of school-based mentors. As one PGCE tutor commented:

> we also now, in the last three or four years, are really working hard at building a community of subject specific mentors who want to keep working with us and that's beginning to take shape now[…] and now we get more stability in terms of the people we have mentoring with us.

While properly trained mentors can play a crucial role in mediating between teacher training and classroom practice, there are some structural obstacles. School-based mentors should, according to some interviewees, be better incentivised for the work they do with trainee teachers. As one PGCE subject lead noted:

> Some schools provide money for their mentors and time, and others just asked them to do it as an extra and so there's a real diversity of landscape there which is not helpful.

In addition, mentors, like their teacher educator counterparts, have a diversity problem. In the medium to long term, then, there is a need for schools and ITE providers to work together to address the lack of Black and minority ethnic representation among mentors. As one PGCE tutor commented:

> we've had historically a problem with diversity in our mentoring community.

Conclusion

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the BLM protests of 2020, our research examined the response of teacher educators to calls for history curriculum reform and documented recent shifts in teacher education in support of the delivery of British histories of migration, empire, and race in England's secondary schools. By giving voice and visibility to history teacher educators, this work sought to address a gap in the scholarly literature on race inequality in ITE and, in doing so, to underscore the critical role that teacher educators can perform in influencing effective and sustainable change.

Our findings reveal that, in the wake of BLM, teacher educators have expressed a strong commitment to developing a more "diverse" curriculum and inclusive pedagogic practice. Despite this, ongoing challenges persist. Within the "chaos" of increasingly fragmented and marketised ITE provision, teacher educators identified key concerns around the deprioritisation of subject knowledge, lack of monitoring, quality of in-school training, and erosion of intellectual freedom. Within schools, interviewees identified significant constraints including the prioritisation of other issues, teacher apathy or resistance, limited time for innovation, lack of training in teaching "difficult" or "sensitive" subjects, the impact of government messaging, and the need for high-quality CPD for all teachers. A key finding is that school-based mentors are critical to supporting the transition from ITE to qualified teacher status. However, this requires a commitment to partnership working, to the training and support of mentors that are recognised and remunerated, and the development of a more diverse mentoring cohort.

While teacher educators remain powerful conduits for driving shifts in curriculum content and delivery, the barriers identified above, coupled with the DfE's recent "market review" of ITT and associated reforms, present ITE providers with significant challenges in supporting the next generation of history teachers to deliver more "diverse" British histories.

Notes

1. Interview and focus group materials in this paper draw on a wider set of perspectives that have been published as part of a policy briefing for practitioners. See Lidher, Alexander, and Bibi (2023).
2. We are grateful to the ESRC for funding this work as part of The Centre for Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE) research grant "Racial Inequality in a Time of Crisis" (ES/V013475/1).
3. Ethical clearance was received prior to fieldwork commencement from the University Research Ethics Committee of the School of Social Sciences at the University of Manchester. Informed consent for the research was obtained both verbally and through signed consent forms.
4. For example in March 2022, Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi was widely quoted as stating that the history curriculum should reflect the "benefits" of empire, and warned that teachers should "leave their political views outside the classroom", *Daily Mail Online*, 28th March 2022, "Nadhim Zahawi says children SHOULD be taught about the benefits of the British Empire" (https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10660019/Nadhim-Zahawi-says-children-taught-benefits-British-Empire.html).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council [grant number ES/V013475/1].

ORCID

Sundeep Lidher http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4782-0781
R. Bibi http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3795-7549
C. Alexander http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1669-0053

References

Ahmed, S. 2012. *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Alexander, C., J. Chatterji, and D. Weekes-Bernard. 2012. *Making British Histories: Diversity and the National Curriculum*. London: Runnymede Trust.

Alexander, C., and D. Weekes-Bernard. 2017. "History Lessons: Inequality, Diversity and the National Curriculum." *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 20 (4): 478–494.

Alexander, C., D. Weekes-Bernard, and J. Chatterji. 2015. *History Lessons: Teaching Diversity in and Through the History National Curriculum*. London: Runnymede Trust.

Bhopal, K. 2015. "Race, Identity and Support in Initial Teacher Training." *British Journal of Educational Studies* 63 (2): 197–211.

Bhopal, K., and J. Rhamie. 2014. "Initial Teacher Training: Understanding 'Race,' Diversity and Inclusion." *Race Ethnicity and Education* 17 (3): 304–325.

Charles, M. 2019. "Effective Teaching and Learning: Decolonizing the Curriculum." *Journal of Black Studies* 50 (8): 731–766.

Department for Education. 2010. "The Importance of Teaching: The Schools White Paper 2010."

Department for Education. 2011. "Training Our Next Generation of Outstanding Teachers – An Improvement Strategy for Discussion."

Department for Education. 2011a. "Teachers' Standards: Guidance for School Leaders, School Staff and Governing Bodies."

Department for Education. 2016. "National Standards for School-Based Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Mentors." July.

Department for Education. 2019. "Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Census for 2019 to 2020, England." November.

Department for Education. 2021. "Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Market Review Report." July.

Evans, L. 2011. "The 'Shape' of Teacher Professionalism in England: Professional Standards, Performance Management, Professional Development and the Changes Proposed in the 2010 White Paper." *British Educational Research Journal* 37 (5): 851–870.

Furlong, J., L. Barton, S. Miles, C. Whiting, and G. Whitty. 2000. *Teacher Education in Transition: Reforming Professionalism?* Buckingham: Open University Press.

George, R., and M. Maguire. 2019. "Choice and Diversity in English Initial Teacher Education (ITE): Trainees' Perspectives." *European Journal of Teacher Education* 42 (1): 19–35.

Gove, M. 2010. "Michael Gove to the National College Annual Conference, Birmingham."

Harris, R. 2012. "'Purpose' as a Way of Helping White Trainee History Teachers Engage with Diversity Issues." *Education Sciences* 2 (4): 218–241.
Harris, R., and G. Clarke. 2011. "Embracing Diversity in the History Curriculum: A Study of the Challenges Facing Trainee Teachers." *Cambridge Journal of Education* 41 (2): 159–175.
Hick, P., R. Arshad, D. Watt, and L. Mitchell. 2011. *Promoting Cohesion, Challenging Expectations: Educating the Teachers of Tomorrow for Race Equality and Diversity in 21st Century Schools*. Bristol: ESCalate.
Historical Association. 2021. "The Historical Association Response to the Initial Teacher Training Market Review Consultation."
Johnson, M., and M. Mouthaan. 2021. "Decolonising the Curriculum: The Importance of Teacher Training and Development." Runnymede Trust Blog.
Joseph-Salisbury, R. 2020. *Race and Racism in English Secondary Schools*. London: Runnymede Trust.
Lander, V. 2011. "Race, Culture and All That: An Exploration of the Perspectives of White Secondary Student Teachers About Race Equality Issues in Their Initial Teacher Education." *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 14 (3): 351–364.
Lander, V. 2014. "Initial Teacher Education: The Practice of Whiteness." In *Advancing Race and Ethnicity in Education*, edited by R. Race and V. Lander, 93–110. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
Lander, V., and N. Santoro. 2017. "Invisible and Hypervisible Academics: The Experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic Teacher Educators." *Teaching in Higher Education* 22 (8): 1008–1021.
Lidher, S., C. Alexander, and R. Bibi. 2023. *Making History Teachers: The Role of Teacher Training and Teacher Education*. London: Runnymede Trust and Centre on the Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE).
Lidher, S., M. McIntosh, and C. Alexander. 2021. "Our Migration Story: History, the National Curriculum, and Re-Narrating the British Nation." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 47 (18): 4221–4237.
McIntosh, K., J. Todd, and N. Das. 2019. *Teaching Migration, Belonging, and Empire in Secondary Schools*. London: Runnymede Trust.
Smith, H., and V. Lander. 2022. "Finding 'Pockets of Possibility' for Anti-Racism in a Curriculum for Student Teachers: From Absence to Action." *The Curriculum Journal* 34 (1): 22–42.
Whittaker, F. 2022. "Just 1 in 3 Teacher Trainers Re-Accredited After First Review Round." *Schools Week*.
Wilkins, C., and R. Lall. 2011. "'You've Got to Be Tough and I'm Trying': Black and Minority Ethnic Student Teachers' Experiences of Initial Teacher Education." *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 14 (3): 365–386.
Williams, C. 2021. "Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities, Contributions and Cynefin in the New Curriculum Working Group: Final Report."
Woolley, M. C. 2017. "The Attitudes and Perceptions of Beginning Teachers in Relation to Teaching Controversial and Sensitive Issues in the History Classroom." *Interuniversity Electronic Journal of Teacher Formation* 20 (2): 1–16.