

Warner, Diane (2012) Building on experience in a white-majority ITE institution.
In: English as an additional language: exploring development and cultural awareness, 22 March 2012, University of Cumbria, Lancaster, UK. (Unpublished)

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Building on experience in a White-majority ITE institution

Diane Warner
University of Cumbria

Focus

An engagement with student teachers' attitudes towards teaching with cultural awareness.

Two examples

Cumbria students

- Our situation at Cumbria:
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/interactive/2011/jun/22/english-school-system-interactive-map>

(Accessed March 2012)

A current context

Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2011) & cultural diversity

Part 1 ...have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils, including those with ... English as an additional language; ... and be able to use and evaluate distinctive teaching approaches to engage and support them (p.7).

Part 2 ... not undermine fundamental British values, including ...tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs (p.9).

Student teachers and 'race'

Perspectives from national and international sources

- White STs engage in ITE from a 'culturally-disaware' perspective – unconscious adoption of white, dominant outlook emerging from their own schooling, community, values (Warner, 2010);
- They did not feel they had adequate input in dealing with cultural & ethnic diversity issues, which many found 'scary' (Lander, 2008).

But...!

UoC NQT survey – 57% felt unprepared to teach learners from minority ethnic backgrounds and 61% unprepared to teach learners with EAL.

Slow take-up of an EAL elective module.

- Moore (2004) & Baszile (2008) challenge the notion of the 'good teacher' - a neutralised being, performing 'competencies' but disengaged from critique and evaluation of the 'theories' informing their practice.
- All teachers, whatever the ethnic mix of a school, need training in: social cohesion & engagement; a challenge to their colour-blindness, white privilege & cultures of dominance; developing a positive mind-set and awareness of hidden values in school & society (Warner & Elton-Chalcraft, 2011).

Example 1

‘Developing as a Culturally-aware teacher’ – 2 extracts from student work, this year.

What problems, challenges and opportunities are beginning to arise in these students’ thinking in relation to ethnic and cultural diversity?

- Discuss and discern any differences in their understandings and awareness within their responses

Student understanding

tentative findings from (Elton-Chalcraft, Roberts, Warner, Hopwood, 2011-12)

- More commentary indicating limited understandings of difference and diversity– ‘all children are the same’ (echoing Gaine 2005); ‘tips for teachers’ required, e.g. ‘what to give *them* when *they* are unable to do reading and writing’
- Less commentary indicating more developed understandings - ‘realise the rapid progress chn. can make when learning a new language’; ‘shouldn’t all the other children be learning a 2nd language’; ‘having a good knowledge of [children’s] cultural background is essential’; ‘see culture as a strength not a weakness, which includes respect for beliefs and values’.

Example 2

NQT website to support and develop practice.

<https://portfolio.pebblepad.co.uk/cumbria/viewasset.aspx?oid=486262&type=webfolio&pageoid=525235>

ITE institutions should question whether they enable students to...

- ...understand the perversity of a dominant, hegemonic stance, deconstruct invisibility of 'whiteness' and racialize their thinking or "read[ing] the codes of our cultural constructs" (Aveling, 2006);
- ...know the 'ethnic self' and the 'ethnic other'... an understanding of identity as a post-structuralist entity comprising multiple, negotiated and complex factors and marked by such factors as gender, ethnicity and social class; (Santoro, 2009)
- "...engage in a Freirian, critical conscientization which enables them to examine self, dialogue with others and...engage in meaningful learning." (Sleeter et al, 2004)

Making steps...?

Fourth Year UG student (March 2012)

***I am applying to do a masters in social work ...
In my personal statement I am going to highlight how,
through your modules, I have an increased
awareness of how diverse our society is and the
importance of celebrating individual differences;
including how groups who may consider themselves
as outsiders, within the UK, can be made to feel
included within the education system.***

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