



# Making History Teachers

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# MAKING HISTORY TEACHERS

The Role of Teacher Training  
and Teacher Education

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## KEY FINDINGS

- In the wake of Black Lives Matter and the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers and teacher trainers have expressed a strong commitment to developing a more inclusive curriculum and changing pedagogic practice to tackle entrenched racial inequity in schools.
- While barriers for teachers have long been recognised, there has been little focus on the crucial role of teacher educators and teacher training in developing a diverse profession, practice and curriculum.
- Initial Teacher Education (ITE) provision is increasingly fragmented and marketised. Within this 'chaos', the key concerns of teacher educators included: subject knowledge being deprioritised, a lack of monitoring, the quality of in-school training, and intellectual freedom being eroded.
- There are a number of constraints in the teacher education space, including lack of time, 'tick-box' approaches to 'diversity' work, gaps in trainers' subject knowledge, and lack of Black and minority ethnic representation among teacher educators/trainee teachers.
- In schools, significant constraints were identified, including other issues being prioritised, teacher apathy or resistance, limited time for innovation, lack of training and guidance in teaching 'difficult' or 'sensitive' subjects, and the need for accredited, high-quality continuous professional development (CPD) for all teachers.
- School-based mentors are key to supporting the transition from ITE to in-school teaching. However, this requires a commitment to partnership working, to training and support from mentors who are suitably recognised and remunerated, and to developing a more diverse mentoring cohort.

## INTRODUCTION

Recent years have seen increasing debate around issues of ongoing and entrenched racial and ethnic inequality in England's schools (Alexander, Weekes-Bernard and Arday, 2015; Alexander and Shankley, 2020). England's school system is increasingly diverse, with over a third of state secondary school pupils (34 per cent) and state primary school pupils (35 per cent) of Black and minority ethnic heritage, and systemic change cannot continue to be put on the back burner. Focal points of concern for Black and minority ethnic communities include educational underachievement and exclusion, low numbers of Black and minority ethnic teachers, particularly at senior levels, and tensions around policing in schools, heightened by the recent scandal over strip-searching in London's schools (Joseph-Salisbury, 2020). 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 the curriculum – and particularly the history curriculum – has been at the centre of campaigns, marked by calls to 'decolonise

the curriculum' (Charles, 2019; Moncrieffe, 2020; Hazell, 2021; Johnson and Mouthaan, 2021). Even the report from the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (2021) stated that 'A well sequenced, knowledge-rich curriculum ... can help students to acquire a sense of place and a framework for understanding cultural diversity' (2021: 92). The Commission called for resources to be developed that would embed 'the multiple, nuanced stories that have shaped the country we live in today ... within subjects in the statutory curriculum' (2021: 93).

While the debate has mainly focused on the 'what' of the history curriculum, there has been less discussion of the 'how' – particularly how a more inclusive curriculum can be delivered in the classroom, and by whom. For the past decade, the Runnymede Trust and colleagues from the Our Migration Story and TiDE (Travel, Transculturality and Identity in England) projects have been working to model what a diverse curriculum looks like (Alexander, Chatterji and Weekes-Bernard, 2012) and how this might be embedded in the classroom through the use of family and community history methods.<sup>1</sup> We have also explored the barriers to teaching a diverse curriculum, focusing particularly on challenges for

1. See [www.banglastories.org](http://www.banglastories.org), [www.makinghistories.org.uk](http://www.makinghistories.org.uk).

teachers (Alexander, Weekes-Bernard and Chatterji, 2015; McIntosh, Todd and Das, 2019), and developed a resource for teachers to support new initiatives around teaching British histories of migration, empire and race (Lidher, McIntosh and Alexander 2021).<sup>2</sup>

But the critical role that teacher educators can play in influencing effective and sustainable change has been notably absent from recent discussions. Initial Teacher Education (ITE)<sup>3</sup> professionals based at universities and schools are at the forefront of shaping teaching practice and pedagogy and are powerful conduits for shifts in curriculum content and delivery. They serve as an important interface connecting the development of inclusive curricula with anti-racist pedagogy and classroom practice, ensuring that current teachers – and the next generation of teachers – are equipped for England’s diverse schools. To date, however, little research has been done to explore their views, practices and experiences (Bhopal and Rhamie, 2014; Lander, 2014; Moncrieffe, 2020).

## Racial and ethnic inequality in a time of crisis: curriculum and teacher education

In 2020–21, the Centre on the Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE) at the University of Manchester conducted empirical research on the impact of the pandemic and the BLM movement on the experience of racial and ethnic inequality in Britain. One part of the work focused on the impact of COVID and BLM on calls to ‘decolonise the curriculum’ in secondary schools. This project had two key strands: first, exploring how teachers and other key education stakeholders had responded to demands for history curriculum change, especially after BLM; second, considering how teacher training worked to either reinforce or challenge racial inequality in the profession, and how it might facilitate the introduction of a more diverse curriculum.

This briefing is concerned with the second strand of enquiry: the important, but under-researched, role of teacher educators. The research team interviewed 25 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. We also held six online focus

groups with university- and school-based teacher educators, trainee history teachers, newly qualified history teachers and established history teachers. Participants represented a cross-section of training institutions and secondary schools across England, and of different routes into the profession.

## Training to teach: the shifting landscape

The landscape of teacher education has become increasingly diverse over the past 20 years. ITE refers to the period of training that student teachers must undertake to qualify to work in state-maintained schools in England. Traditionally, student teachers have an undergraduate degree before entering a training route. 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 Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course was the primary route to qualifying as a teacher. PGCE courses prepare trainees to develop subject knowledge and pedagogical thinking through a combination of classroom experience during school-based placements, and university-based academic study. PGCE tutors, based at universities, are subject specialists with a degree of flexibility to shape the content of the training courses they deliver, and they are influential in developing the subject knowledge of their student teacher cohort, maintaining professional networks with placement schools and coaching school-based mentors.

Teacher trainees on this pathway spend most of their time in school placements, developing teaching and learning skills in classroom settings with the support of their PGCE tutor and a school-based mentor. Trainees are expected to complete two school placements as part of their PGCE course.

In recent years, alternative pathways to reaching QTS have been created, shifting away from university-led PGCE courses towards more vocational ‘on the job’ training. For example, since 2002, Teach First 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 Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) as a route to QTS.<sup>4</sup> The period between 2010 and 2017 witnessed significant changes in ITE, with other salaried and non-salaried school-based training routes being

2. This can be found at [www.ourmigrationstory.org.uk](http://www.ourmigrationstory.org.uk).

3. Although the terms ‘Initial Teacher Education’ (ITE) and ‘Initial Teacher Training’ (ITT) are sometimes used interchangeably, this briefing will use Initial Teacher Education (ITE) to refer to the period of formal training and education that student teachers receive, either at a higher education institution or in-school, before they qualify as professional teachers.

4. However, the numbers are relatively small – Teach First accounted for only 5% of new teacher trainees in 2019/20 and 4% in 2020/21 (DfE, 2020).

introduced. Unveiled by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government in 2010, School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) established a non-salaried, school-led pathway into teaching, allowing student teachers to be employed by their placement school after a period of training. SCITT training routes have no connection with universities. According to the Department for Education (DfE), the value of the SCITT pathway lies in giving schools greater autonomy to educate future teachers (DfE, 2010) and privileging a school-based, 'practice-led' approach (DfE, 2011b). 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 in a full PGCE programme delivered in partnership between the school and a local higher education institution. Now Teach, a further school-based recruitment programme, was introduced in 2017 and aims to tackle the teacher shortage by retraining 'professionals' looking for a career change. In the same year, the Conservative government launched yet another 'earn while you learn' route into teaching, the 12-month Postgraduate Teaching Apprenticeship.

These salaried, work-based programmes are becoming increasingly popular pathways to QTS. In the 2019/20 academic year, 16,243 new entrants embarked on school-led teacher training routes, making up 55 per cent of all trainees. In secondary history, in 2019/20 almost 588 new student teachers trained via SCITT (214), School Direct (fee-funded) (409), School Direct (Salaried) (65) and Teach First (113) (DfE 2020).

The increasing dominance of school-based ITE routes has raised concerns among educational professionals. Some argue that 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, 2011) leaves little scope for developing specialist subject knowledge among trainee teachers (Evans, 2011; George and McGuire, 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 technician 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, offering particular challenges for much-needed reform across the sector, and notably around issues of racial and ethnic inequality (Alexander and Shankley, 2020). As

our 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, 2020). 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, and in response to demands for curriculum change from pupils, parents, teachers and scholars (Alexander, Weekes-Bernard and Chatterji, 2015; McIntosh, Todd and Das, 2019).

So 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 would be mandatory in the school curriculum. To better support the delivery of these 'diverse' histories in Welsh schools, the Welsh government 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 demands for all training providers to undergo a re-accreditation process, 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).

## The need for change: the views of teacher educators

The recognition of the need for change was particularly apparent in our interviews with teacher educators reflecting on their practice after the BLM protests of the summer of 2020. One focus group participant described the 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*

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*educator, that has alleviated these problems or contributed to these problems. And I think that has led me to say, well, okay, so how can I remove all the problems that I've caused?*

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

*I think 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 and the way that I approach teaching on the PGCE.*

Individual efforts to improve 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 for 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 [history teacher trainees] could definitely do that through, you know, resources that are already online ... There's a fantastic wealth of stuff out there they can do themselves. They're spoiled for opportunity and this is what I always say to them.*

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 [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, they will get put in the way of things.*

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

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 about curriculum construction and enhancing trainees' subject knowledge about British histories of empire, migration and race.

Several PGCE tutors spoke of the importance of engaging student teachers early on in their training with foundational questions about the discipline of history and methods of historical inquiry. 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 the construction of historical narratives enabled them to better understand the constructed-ness of the school history curriculum, and how they could shape it through their own practice. One PGCE tutor said:

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*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, and working with that.*

Another PGCE tutor 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.*

The same tutor continued:

*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 minority communities 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 inclusion of course content about the discipline of history and engaging trainees with questions around curriculum construction was a matter of careful timing. 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 and brought into that whose history are we talking about here, 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.*

Respondents felt that increasing subject knowledge around local and global British histories of migration, empire and race was 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 might not have studied British histories of migration and empire at university, this lack of subject knowledge was even more pronounced where trainees came from a non-subject-specific training route. To strengthen trainees' subject 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' knowledge of '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.*

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Others talked about soliciting partnerships with archives and museums to provide their trainees with resources which they could utilise in their own classroom teaching. A 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 PGCE tutor 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 broader historical narratives and make them accessible was one approach. As one Teach First history subject tutor told us:

*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 (Lander, 2011;

Bhopal and Rhamie, 2014; Alexander and Weekes-Bernard, 2017; 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. I think that's only a starting point.*

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', flagging the inclusion of PGCE sessions that deal directly with anti-racism and anti-racist pedagogy. They told us:

*one of the things that we've done is, 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. A key factor here was training teachers to recognise and exercise their



autonomy, and to be flexible in their approach to curriculum design, responsive to the needs of their audience and sensitive to their locale. 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?*

*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.*

In addition to subject-specific concerns, a representative from a national teaching union spoke about the challenges of monitoring the quality of in-school teacher training, compared with PGCE training. They told us:

## Enduring obstacles: challenges in initial teacher education

Despite these encouraging signs of positive engagement and reflection on addressing racial inequity in training and in classroom practice, the interviewees also identified significant barriers to making changes. These included institutional barriers resulting from the externally generated changes to teacher training routes as well as constraints in 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 representation of Black and minority ethnic people among both teacher educators and trainee history teachers. We consider these constraints in turn.

*there is more regulation and there is more transparency in higher education [training routes].*

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

### 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.*

*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 was 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 central 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 for their intellectual freedom. One told us that they were especially worried about the prospect of:

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

*very tight constraints and a curriculum being directed ... for teacher training in a very controlling and specific way.*

The same tutor added:

*everyone's really worried about what could emerge, because it could be absolutely dreadful, really.*

*particularly at the beginning, they want to know how do I plan a lesson, how to set homework, how do I manage behaviour in the classroom? How do I do... all those very practical things? And they haven't got the headspace at that point to take on board all the messaging you want to give about curriculum and thinking carefully about curriculum.*

## Time constraints in ITE

A key concern among PGCE tutors was the limited number of university-based contact hours available to them on the year-long PGCE. This lack of time inhibits 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.*

One PGCE tutor called for better guidance from government, although felt it was unlikely to be forthcoming:

*I think 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 and it doesn't work with that model so they can't push it in that way.*

Another history PGCE tutor reflected 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.*

## 'Tick-box diversity'

Teacher educators expressed concern that even where approaches to 'diverse' histories have been integrated as part of teacher training courses, the lack of time (and, often, 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 sessions on British histories of 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.*

Some PGCE tutors pointed to the careful 'balancing' they perform to cover the 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. As one PGCE tutor explained:

Other interviewees noted a lack of funds for SCITT providers to support anything other 'general principles' training (MAT history subject lead). Better resourcing is required for school-based training routes to deliver high-quality teacher training and to include valuable subject knowledge enhancement, 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 among teacher educators

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

Several PGCE tutors were self-conscious about their own 'blind spots' (PGCE tutor) especially 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 knowledge on British histories of migration, empire and race. 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, 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 into 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 among ITE professionals and teacher trainees

Another barrier to effective change in the current history teacher education landscape is the lack of diversity among ITE professionals. One PGCE tutor noted:

*I think 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 on PGCE courses and on Teach First and SCITT programmes reported an increase 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 changes from year to year, but a more diverse cohort is always a good thing, is always advantageous.*

Seeking more applications from Black and minority ethnic history trainees is not an answer in itself. Teacher training providers must also pay closer attention to how Black and minority ethnic 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, one Black female history teacher told us:

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*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 that 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 about the ability of current ITE structures to address issues of racial and ethnic inequity, these barriers continue beyond the training classroom and into schools. Where ITE has begun to address these problems, enduring barriers in English secondary schools have contributed to a disconnect between ITE provision and the practical application of this material in the classroom. Some schools have risen to the calls for curriculum change, but 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'.*

Schools' prioritisation of other issues, teacher inertia, resistance from senior management, rigid curricula, limited time for innovation, and lack of subject expertise are among the reasons why lessons on local and global British histories of migration, race and empire are still not available to all pupils in history lessons (see Alexander and Weekes-Bernard, 2017).

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 and doesn't have inspectors down his neck every two minutes.*

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 the 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.*

Another respondent, whose organisation advises schools on equality, diversity and inclusion and runs training workshops for teaching staff on these issues, told us:

*You just feel that warmth when a school really cares and it's driving this forward and is getting things right for young people, and so that has to come from the senior leadership.*

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 in lessons of 'Black history' and wider British histories of migration, race and empire. Our respondents attributed this stance to several factors. First, the

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lack of engagement can stem from a misconception that more global and '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, you missed the entire point of this.*

Second, some suggested that disengagement among some history teachers was linked to complacency. As 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 respondent 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 exacerbate existing worries about how to teach 'difficult' or 'sensitive' topics such as 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 meaningful conversations among ITE practitioners and history teachers are few and far between.

Fifth, the gap has been exacerbated by intervention from government in whether and how British histories of migration, empire and race should be addressed in the classroom.<sup>5</sup> 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 and how you should be taught.*

The impact of the government's interventions on the work of history teachers, teacher educators and CPD providers has been significant (Begum, 2022). Based on their engagement with schools and teachers across the country, a representative from a not-for-profit equality and diversity teacher training consultancy told us:

*Last year, with Black Lives Matter and everyone suddenly waking up and realising there's an issue to deal with and now we've got this pushback right from the heart of government and you're like, well, there's not going to be any funding to do this work. And there's not going to be a drive or push for OFSTED or for Initial Teacher Training settings to embed this work. And actually there's this active opposition, where people are feeling nervous about 'am I even allowed to talk about structural racism in the classroom?'*

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

5. 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' (Gant, 2022).

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*We need more CPD for teachers, which are accredited perhaps. I'm always a 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.*

*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. As 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.*

In addition, teacher CPD, as several respondents noted, needs better resourcing from the state:

*I do think that 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*

The need for closer alignment between ITE providers and schools in the delivery of teacher training emerged as a notable ongoing challenge. As one respondent put it, 'getting some synergy in messaging' (PGCE tutor) between ITE providers and schools is key.

This respondent, a subject association representative, continued:

*It's about how we value and respect our teaching workforce.*

One effective solution might be to develop the roles of school-based mentors. Improved relationships between university-based tutors and school-based mentors would benefit trainees as well as their future pupils (Hazir, Harris and Williams, 2022). 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 [training] as a three-way relationship between [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.*

## 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 that 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. One PGCE subject lead commented that 'knowledge, unless you put it into practice, it's not real'. As one established secondary school history teacher told us:

School-based mentors occupy a critical role in the development of student teachers. Their work with trainees includes regular meetings to discuss what is going well and what needs improvement, setting targets for trainees, lesson observation and feedback, and reporting on trainees' adherence to professional

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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.*

*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:

For 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.*

*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 ... then I think the curriculum could look very, very different.*

Evidence from our respondents suggests that where school-based mentors do work closely with university-based ITE providers, it can be an empowering training experience. For example, one trainee talked about completing a PGCE school placement under a mentor who had taken a lead in the school's 'decolonising the curriculum' work:

*One of the smartest things that my mentor's done is that she owns decolonising the curriculum within our Academy. And she made sure that she briefed SLT [Senior Leadership Team] on it, she got buy-in from SLT, she's had a whole school briefing on it, everyone working in their own department know what it means, they're not defensive, they're comfortable.*

To realise the benefits for trainees and for schools of closer contact between ITE providers and school-based mentors, some PGCE course providers have been working to strengthen relationships with school-based mentors, especially in terms of supporting and developing subject content. One PGCE history tutor talked about the work underway with school-based mentors in their partner placement schools:

*it's such a priority I think for us to do more work with mentors and think more about what good history teaching is with mentors and communicate those ideas and messages.*

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 for change – can bring new ideas into the classroom. As one PGCE tutor argued:

When ITE providers and mentors are aligned, there is potential for trainees to apply university-based subject knowledge development in lessons in placement schools. On the other hand, 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 at university because they will find in their school context they don't think it*

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*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.*

*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.*

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 student history teachers engage with 'difficult' historical topics like race, empire, and migration in the course of their training, one mentor said:

*Train mentors on how to deal with that so they are the first port of call. They see [trainees] every day, I think they are the best people to train up and upskill on how to deal with things like that. I think that will make them very aware of how to access all of the academic resources that they need, and where to go to access those resources.*

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

*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.*

Several mentors noted the lack of tailored support available to them, in particular around subject knowledge development. Mentors who have been addressing gaps in their own subject knowledge have often done so on 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.*

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. 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.*

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

Another PGCE tutor suggested that school-based mentors ought to be paid for the work they perform:



*[mentors] certainly don't get any remuneration and I think that role needs to be recognised ... They're not really valued in school, they're not really given time by their senior leaders.*

In addition, mentors, like their teacher educator counterparts, have a diversity problem. In the medium to long term schools and ITE providers need 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, and certainly when I compare it to our science mentors, for example, where there's a much more diverse more representative range of mentors in schools.*

## Conclusion

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the BLM protests of 2020, there has been a growing recognition across the education sector that England's schools must adapt to reflect the increasing diversity of their pupils, address longstanding issues around racial and ethnic inequity, and meet the demands for change, from within and outside the classroom. Our research on teacher educators, who are a key gateway into the profession and to shaping the next generation of teachers, reveals immense goodwill and determination to address longstanding inequities in the profession, but also a range of obstacles – many of which are shared across the education sector and have long been recognised. These challenges, coupled with the DfE's recent 'market review' of ITT 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 subject knowledge in teacher education (Whittaker, 2022). Nevertheless, this is an important moment of reflection, challenge and change – in teaching 'better history' as a foundation to a more inclusive present and a more equal, shared future.

## Recommendations

These recommendations focus on lessons for ITE institutions and practices for secondary history in England, though there is scope for them to be applied more widely to teacher education in other subjects.

1. DfE should establish formal structures of training and accreditation for ITE professionals and school-based mentors, including requirements for mandatory subject knowledge development and training on anti-racism, inclusion and diversity in pedagogy and curriculum development.
2. The Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2011a) should be updated to require training in, and demonstrated commitment to, anti-racism, inclusion and diversity in schools and curriculum.
3. The ITT Core Content Framework (DfE, 2019b) should be revisited to strengthen and embed expectations and minimum standards for substantive and disciplinary knowledge prior to, and during, ITE.
4. The Early Career Framework (DfE, 2019a) should be reworked to embed requirements for ongoing CPD for beginner teachers around history subject specialism.
5. ITE providers should include mandatory training on anti-racism, inclusion and diversity in pedagogy and curriculum development for all trainee history teachers.
6. ITE providers should embed minimum requirements for subject knowledge for all trainee history teachers.
7. ITE providers should expand opportunities for collaboration with history subject experts and improve access to (recent) scholarship, to support subject knowledge development around British histories of migration, empire and race for trainee teachers and school-based mentors.
8. ITE providers should strengthen partnerships with schools and school-based mentors to enable collective consideration of curriculum issues and trainee recruitment. Alongside this, schools should improve resources (time and financial) for school-based mentors to engage with ongoing CPD and collaborative professional networks.
9. All established teachers should undertake mandatory and ongoing accredited CPD on anti-racism, inclusion and diversity in schools.
10. All established teachers should undertake mandatory and ongoing history subject-specific CPD opportunities on anti-racist, diverse and inclusive curriculum development and pedagogy, provided or accredited by subject associations.
11. DfE, ITE providers and school SLTs should commit to proactively recruiting and supporting Black and minority ethnic staff (including professional tutors) at all levels.
12. DfE, ITE providers and school SLTs should refer to and draw on recent recommendations made by the Welsh government for improved workforce training and continuous professional development in support of the delivery of 'diverse' histories in Welsh schools (Williams, 2021:12–16).

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