

## **Decolonising the curriculum: why it has to include the development of teacher activists in ITE and Postgraduate teacher education courses**

There is a ground swell of calls from education activists of all backgrounds to decolonise the UK school curriculum and the education system as a whole. These voices are predominantly found in social media and blogs which aim to give voice from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) perspective (Patel, 2019; Rabiger, 2016). Concerns range from the dominance of white literary authors valued by school staff, to the lack of non-white historical or scientific figures taught. Government statistics about the ethnicity of the teacher workforce from 2017 indicate that there were 451, 900 full-time teachers in the UK with 86.2% identifying as being White British (GOV.UK, 2018). The dominance of White British voices in the UK education system, and feelings of white discomfort, may be a cause of maintaining white colonial practices (Zembylas, 2018).

The Teachers' Standards (*Teachers' Standards*, 2011) are a core component of both Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and qualified teacher's working lives including those who return to university to study for a Postgraduate teacher education course. The Teachers' Standards have an expectation that teachers create environments both 'rooted in mutual respect' and that provide challenge for 'pupils of all backgrounds' (*Teachers' Standards*, 2011). This conference paper will address the role that ITE and Postgraduate teacher education play in addressing this issue within UK schools by challenging the roots of a white centric curriculum and exploring how relevant it is in modern Britain.

A specific focus will be the decolonisation of the ITE and Postgraduate teacher education curriculum with one implication being that this in itself is not enough to address the issues of colonisation within UK schools without explicit teaching about why certain theorists or literary authors are included or excluded. In a neoliberal higher education system, where students are consumers of a product, there is a risk that this approach is too passive. Seeking to create change via intellectual osmosis does not go far enough to address the root issues and create the activism needed for trainee or Postgraduate teachers to aware of the need to decolonise the curriculum within schools.

The conference paper therefore proposes a two-fold approach. Firstly, a reflexive and pragmatic approach is taken to explore both the ITE and Postgraduate education courses at one university with suggestions posed for how the curriculum could be developed to have a less white centric focus. Secondly, the paper will discuss the role that academics can have in challenging student preconceptions and developing teacher activists. A specific focus will be on white academics ability, and ethicality, to do this with the danger of such academics perceiving themselves to be 'white saviours' (Cammarota, 2011). The issue is also discussed whether this is achievable when they are already working within the predominantly white centric world of academia (Arday and Mirza, 2018).

## **Bibliography**

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