

THE BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC EXPERIENCE OF TEACHER EDUCATION

An examination of student/mentor relationships in the training environment

Background

- Black and Minority Ethnic teachers are significantly underrepresented within the teaching workforce, with Black trainee teachers being twice as likely as White trainees to not complete or fail their training course (Department for Education, 2021)
- Statistical evidence couples with experiential data describing suffering racial microaggressions, enacting neutralisation and double consciousness, and relying on fictive kinship which can all be summarized by the term “racial battle fatigue” (Poku, 2023, Pearce, 2018)
- Mentors are responsible for supporting trainees in school, but they have no specific training related to supporting racialised trainees

Research Questions

- 1) How do Black and Ethnic Minority trainee teachers experience their training environment during their training year?
- 2) How do Black and Minority Ethnic trainee teachers experience the mentor/trainee relationship during their training year?
- 3) What knowledge do mentors draw on to support Black and Minority Ethnic trainee teachers?
- 4) How do mentors navigate supporting Black and Ethnic Minority trainee teachers?

Context and Methods

- University based Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses partnered with secondary state schools in England during 2023-2025
- Self-identified Black and Minority Ethnic trainee teachers
- Experiential data collection methods: walking, drawing and photo elicitation interviews with trainees
- Initial small scale pilot to test the efficacy of experiential data collection methods
- Observations of mentor meetings in school between trainee and mentor
- Discourse analysis carried out by mentor peer group
- Thematic, inductive, reflexive analysis

Pilot Initial Findings

(From 3 ECT participants)

Microaggressions

- Microaggressions are often subtle and clumsy

☞ [The administrator] I think she's in charge of cover when it was Eid, she basically decided that she was gonna e-mail out to anyone that she thought sounded like their surname was ethnic,

“Hi. Are you taking it off? Cause you haven't told me.” ☞

Barriers to understanding

- Strong and supportive relationships can still result in trainees being reluctant to discuss the impact of microaggressions with mentors

☞ ... the subtle things. Unfortunately, it's just something that I'm used to ... nothing will happen if you escalate it. You actually look like you look like the stupid person. Because then people who don't understand think I cannot believe you're making such a big deal out of such a little thing. ☞

☞ You know when you ... you wouldn't experience that or you you haven't had that thing [happen to you] ... You haven't maybe that much of a stake in it. ☞

The Environment

- There is comfort in an ethnically diverse community
- There is discomfort in lack of diversity in leadership roles

☞ My department is so diverse and I love that. If you look at the school in terms of the students, it is diverse. If you look at the senior leadership team, it's so cliché and I find it so frustrating how cliché it is ... it does make me uncomfortable that the higher up you go the the whiter it gets. ☞

☞ [Having] a head of department who's a woman and Ghanaian. That's really, really amazing. And it's kind of inspirational when you really think about it. Also having like my mentor - a hijabi woman. I already had that presence there. I felt really comfortable in the department. ☞

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