

**INTERACT**  
**WP 8 The Intercultural Dimension in Teacher Education in  
England: a review of 5 higher education initial teacher  
education courses in Citizenship Education**

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**Objectives:**

- To identify those initial teacher education (ITE) courses in citizenship that have an explicit intercultural dimension.
- To obtain detailed information about these courses.
- To analyse these courses in order to determine good practice.

**Report outline:**

1. Selection of 5 ITE courses for investigation of more detailed content and provision of an intercultural dimension
2. Overview of data from the 5 focus ITE institutions – emerging convergent and divergent features
3. Summary

**1. Selection of sample of citizenship education courses claiming to have a multicultural dimension**

As we noted in WP3, there is little usage of the word intercultural in England. We therefore refer to *multicultural* education. Five courses were selected from the original 14 institutions and courses analysed in WP7 on basis of explicit references to multicultural education. The courses are drawn from a range of geographical and institutional contexts. Those selected are:

1. Birmingham – Newman College
2. Bradford College
3. Bristol University
4. Institute of Education, University of London
5. Leicester University

Geographically these teacher education courses are located in the North of England (Bradford), the West Midlands (Birmingham), the East Midlands (Leicester), the West (Bristol) and the South East (London). These universities are all in urban settings with ethnically diverse populations. However, students on these courses undertake teaching experience in schools both in the multicultural inner city and also in the suburbs or surrounding countryside where the population is largely white British.

Student teachers recruited to these courses may come from any part of the country, though there are usually a number who have lived locally for some time.

We investigated the provision of citizenship and multicultural education in relation to:

- i.) Key developments and challenges in the provision of courses taught within the Higher Education Institution (HEI).
- ii.) HEI - school relationships, particularly the perceptions of school provision articulated by the PGCE citizenship coordinator within the HEI.
- iii.) The Local Authority context and support in relation to multicultural education.

### **Methodology**

- i) We examined course prospectuses and course information provided on the website of the providing institution
- ii) We conducted telephone interviews with 3 PGCE course leaders for citizenship education and face to face interviews with a further citizenship education course leader and with the overall course leader for secondary PGCE courses. We explored with them key developments and remaining challenges in providing a multicultural perspective in the course.
- iii) We examined documentation on the context of the Local Authorities of the schools in which student teachers undertake their practical experience. This included official government inspection reports by Ofsted.
- iv) We interviewed an Advanced Skills Teacher (AST). That is a teacher who supports other specialist teachers in nearby schools in relation to the school partnership with the Institute of Education in London.

## **2. Overview of data from the 5 focus ITE institutions – emerging convergent and divergent features**

### **Institutional context:**

The focus courses come from a variety of English higher education institutions in terms of type and size. Three of the providers are from education departments within older, well-established universities (Bristol, Leicester, London). Two providers are former colleges (teacher training and further education).

These providers account for just over one third of the total citizenship student places on PGCE courses (78/245).

We conducted telephone interviews with PGCE citizenship education course leaders from Bradford, Birmingham and Leicester and face to face interviews with staff at London. We were unable to interview the citizenship education course leader from Bristol.

### **Some convergent features:**

Each interview confirmed the impression gained from the website information relating to the course aims. Course leaders stressed that multicultural education was included in the programme of study and that there were discrete topics relating to it on the curriculum. In London, half a day is devoted to multicultural education. Leicester described activities carried out including a joint session taught with the local authority advisor. Although work on multicultural education is influenced by recent policy developments, including the Race Relations Amendment Act (RRAA), coordinators stressed that work in this area had some tradition implying that their multicultural education provision is not driven by this (Leicester, London and Bradford).

Course leaders tended to associate the provision of multicultural education with the presence of minority ethnic groups within the HEI and the partner schools. In all cases coordinators stated that they took account of the cultural environment and nature of pupil population in trainee placement. In some cases coordinators mentioned that multicultural issues are raised in class management training in general. Coordinators of three courses mentioned their active recruitment of students from minority ethnic backgrounds.

All course leaders mentioned challenges in partnerships with schools. Since courses in citizenship education only started in 2001, and citizenship became a formal part of the school curriculum in 2002, teachers in schools acting as mentors to the students were likely to be untrained as citizenship teachers and inexperienced compared to more established school subjects. In some cases multicultural education continues to be a topic within Personal and Social and Health Education (PSHE) rather than citizenship education. These challenges were seen as diminishing as more trained teachers of citizenship become available in schools. Therefore coordinators viewed this unequal school provision as a temporary obstacle rather than a systemic failure. Mentor training in relation to multicultural issues was raised as an explicit priority in one case.

We also examined some Local Authority provision in order to gain a fuller picture of the kinds of school context and support the trainees working in the five focus PGCE courses were likely to experience. All the relevant Local Authorities mentioned multicultural education as a stated priority and they are addressing policy initiatives in relation to schools – in line with recent legislation outlined in WP7.

In two of the courses PGCE citizenship course leaders had formal links with local authority advisers in delivering multicultural education to trainees. An Advanced Skills Teacher working with the London PGCE coordinator gave a sense of the complexity of the London school and local authority context. The London Institute of Education works with 33 different boroughs (Local Authorities). Overall in relation to local authority information on school provision and support the data confirmed that trainees in these focus courses are working in school environments where multicultural education is an explicit policy priority for the Local Authority.

### **Some divergent features:**

Dealing with racism was mentioned in only two of the interviews. In one case predominantly white schools were described as raising issues relating to racism for student teachers. They might be confronted with overtly racist attitudes. This is particularly apparent when the trainee is black or from a minority ethnic background. Similarly another course leader stated that the HEI had to take account of local racist groups in placing trainees from BME groups in certain schools.

A further difference that may be significant is that different institutions have quite different research environments. Some coordinators mentioned relevant and innovative research going on within institutions, e.g. a study of BME perspectives on citizenship education; the retention of BME trainees; the INTERACT project.

### **3. Summary**

Overall, in the courses examined here and in WP7, the key issues emerging are that in preparing teachers to teach citizenship education the multicultural dimension is promoted and facilitated by:

- existing adequate legal frameworks
- policies at Local Authority level to promote multicultural education and antiracism
- teamwork between the various parties: HEIs, schools, Local Authorities

On the other hand, intercultural education would be more strongly supported if there were:

- more detailed formulations within the national standards for teachers in relation to what trainee teachers should know, understand and do
- guidance as to what this implies in practice
- more detailed guidance on what pupils should know, understand and do
- National policies from the TDA and DfES to promote multicultural education and antiracism within HEIs and schools.