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*“I DON’T THINK LECTURES ARE EVER GOING TO CHANGE A CLOSED MIND”*: STUDENT TEACHERS’ LEARNING JOURNEYS AND TEACHING FOR DIVERSITY.

Dr Sally Elton-Chalcraft  
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TEAN 16<sup>th</sup> May 2014

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**“I don’t think lectures are ever going to change a closed mind”**: Student teachers’ learning journeys and teaching for diversity.

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### Context of research

- Repeated failures of HEIs to prepare student teachers adequately for working in diversity and inclusion field (Bhopal 2009)
- 2011 Teacher Development Agency NQT (Newly qualified teacher) survey (TDA, 2011),
- 52% of newly qualified primary teachers felt unprepared to teach learners from minority ethnic backgrounds
- 55% felt unprepared to teach learners with EAL

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### Aims of study

- To explore the relationship between
  - student teacher's experiences of Religion and RE
  - their attitudes towards teaching for diversity
- To discover if student teachers:
  - knowledge and experiences impacted positively or negatively on their attitudes and confidence
  - University sessions had any impact

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### Definitions - Teaching for diversity

- Teachers and schools ensure that
  - all children fulfil their potential whatever their culture and background (Ajebo report 2007)
  - the teacher's perspective is broad- critical multiculturalist and not monocultural (Warner and Elton-Chalcraft 2014)
  - the taught curriculum is critical multiculturalist not monocultural (children are not disadvantaged because of a 'one size fits all' curriculum which is aimed at the majority OECD 2010).

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## Barriers to effective teaching for diversity

- Unfamiliarity, many student teachers are unfamiliar with the cultures of the children in their classes. Cockerell et al (1999)
- Au (1993) and Ambe (2006) discuss the ‘cultural discontinuity’ where there is a mismatch between the children’s home culture and that of the school.
- blindness to own privilege, misunderstanding multiculturalism’s aims (Santoro and Allard 2005) and many appeared to adopt a dysconscious racism stance (King 2004, Warner 2010, Warner and Elton-Chalcraft 2012). King (2004) discusses dysconscious racism as a state of mind that justifies inequity by accepting the current ways of doing and believing as correct.
- deficiency of the ‘contact hypothesis’
- Santoro and Allard (2005) that mere ‘exposure’ to a range of different cultures does not necessarily equip student teachers with the “skills, knowledge and understanding to work with cultural and social differences in productive and constructive ways” (2005: 864). In the same way the ‘contact hypothesis’ failed to eradicate racism and prejudice in the school classroom- just putting groups of ethnically diverse people together will not miraculously produce anti racist attitudes (Troyna and Hatcher 1992; Elton-Chalcraft 2009). In fact as Davies and Crozier (2005) and Roberts, Elton-Chalcraft and Warner (forthcoming) have shown it can sometimes be counterproductive.



## Good practice and Inhibitors

- Using visits wisely avoiding tokenism (Crozier and Davies 2006, Warner and Elton-Chalcraft 2014)
- Children seen as a ‘rich resource’ (positive model) rather than a ‘problem to be solved’ (deficit model) (Conteh et al 2008, Ambe 2006)

British 2012 Teaching standards:

- children’s cultural background should not ‘inhibit learning’.
- teachers should promote ‘fundamental British values’



## Sample, Data collection

- Cohort of PG primary QTS student teachers

- Questionnaires
- Interviews undertaken by co researchers – (students from another programme)



## Intersection between subject knowledge and attitudes

**Attitudes (Elton-Chalcraft 2009: 82 adapted from Kincheloe and Steinberg 1997)**

1) **Conservative multi culturalists (mono culturalism)**

are 'tokenist'. They attempt to address multicultural issues but deep down, they believe in the superiority of Western (white), patriarchal culture. This is a starting place for many teachers, but this stance is superficial- there needs to be genuine celebration of diversity.

## Attitudes (Elton-Chalcraft 2009: 82 adapted from Kincheloe and Steinberg 1997)

### 1) Conservative multi culturalists (mono culturalism)

- are 'tokenist'. They attempt to address multicultural issues but deep down, they believe in the superiority of Western (white), patriarchal culture
- This is a starting place for many teachers, but this stance is superficial- there needs to be genuine celebration of diversity

2) **Liberal multiculturalists**

are dedicated towards working to 'one race'. They attempt to gloss over differences in an attempt to make everyone equal and the 'same' ('they' are the 'same' as 'us' they just happen to be a different colour.) Some teachers think this is 'equality in action' but actually they are adopting a 'colour blind' stance, denying diversity exists.

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### 3) pluralist multiculturalism

- Pluralism becomes a supreme social virtue, diversity is pursued and exoticised. There is cultural 'tourism' where 'they' (as opposed to 'us') live in an exotic parallel world. (Eg Hannukha is the Jewish Christmas - neo colonialism.)
- These teachers attempt to celebrate diversity but they use their 'own' cultural language to describe the 'other' (inferior) culture. There is not genuine equality



### 4) Left essentialist multiculturalists

- are extreme in promoting the minority culture; to the extent that the dominant culture is seen as 'bad' and the marginalised as 'good'.
- White youngster Darren Coulburn killed Asian heritage Ahmed Iqbal Ullah

(Elton-Chalcraft 2009)

This stance is the opposite of pluralist – the teacher elevates the 'other' culture and demotes the dominant culture.

No genuine equality



### 5: Critical Multiculturalists

- believe in the promotion of an individual's consciousness as a social being. They promote an awareness (self reflection) of how and why his/her opinions and roles are shaped by dominant perspectives. They appreciate that there are differences within as well as between cultures.
- This teacher appreciates that there are differences within, as well as between, cultures and there is open discussion of the dominance of one culture over another, while celebrating diversity and equality.

Intersection between subject knowledge and attitudes



**Intersection between subject knowledge and attitudes**

**A: Wealth of experience, informed positive attitude**

William – travelled and worked abroad  
 Holly – because I've got a lot of friends from a Sikh background or Hindu background so I've had experience of a lot of cultures and.....I don't know.....I don't want to sound big headed and say that I'm five [critical multiculturalism] but I'm possibly a bit five because like...my friend got married and it was like a Sikh ceremony but I was made to feel included so I got to really appreciate it for what it was and the meanings of everything. I don't know but I think it makes you aware that there's not just one way really, is there?  
 Sarah- looking at things from different perspectives, I come from an affluent background so it's easy for people like myself to say like I think immigration should be....you know, totally open. I think it's easy to be liberal when you are affluent.

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**B: Doubly disadvantaged no personal contact nor academic knowledge but positive and informed attitude**

Mary: doubly disadvantaged but sees her agnostic background as an advantage to teaching for equality, and she felt uncomfortable about teaching from a confessional perspective which she believed (rightly or wrongly) she was being required to do  
 Salma, the only BME student in the interview sample and a practising Muslim, I don't want to give out the wrong information. I remember once I was teaching about bones and joints and realised later that I'd said something wrong, but it didn't bother me too much. But when talking about religion I feel would be much more serious and it's hard to ensure all the facts are right, as you have to respect it and so cannot give out wrong information

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**C: Background knowledge is important, naïve attitude concerning diversity**

None of the interviewees could be described as fitting into quadrant C.  
 data from the questionnaire  
 - dysconscious racism (Piny 2004) stands as they said there would be 'no racism' (participant 18)  
 and 'no problem, welcome if' (participant 58)  
 - seemingly innocent phrases could also be interpreted as a colour blindness approach (Gaine 2002), where teachers claim they are not racist because they see all children as the same.

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- data from the questionnaires:
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- and ‘no problem, welcome it’ (participant 56),
- seemingly innocent phrases could also be interpreted as a colour blindness approach (Gaine 2005) where teachers claim they are not racist because they see all children as the same.

**D: Lack of knowledge, Overwhelmed when eyes are opened to ignorance**

Estelle

Limited or no knowledge of the principle world religions felt scared about offending other religions and worried that I won't have enough knowledge.

during the course of the interview realised she displayed 'dysconscious racism' (King 2004) because her interviewer, Amy McGlade, explained to her the different messages sent out by teachers who chose to use BC and AD (before Christ and Anno Domini) instead of BCE and CE (before the common era and the common era) and also the use of Anglo centric maps.

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- and worried that ‘I won’t have enough knowledge.’
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**Overwhelmed when eyes opened to ignorance**

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**The challenge for teacher educators**

Sarah – Erm.... I don't know about university really, I think it's hard..... I mean there are people in my class who come across as quite racist and make jokes about people or off-hand comments about.. you know what I mean? I just think that some people can be taught a bit about it and write an essay but it's not going to change their fundamental beliefs and if you have a closed mind, it might be due to your background or just that you're not willing to change and I don't think any lectures are ever going to change that. I don't think that uni has changed my perspective but meeting other people has because you learn something, and also living in B and D, I can see other people's perspectives

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