

A differently imagined margin: Initial Teacher Training and Black and Minority Ethnic groups in the Lifelong Learning Sector in the north of England.

Sandra Rennie

SEQUALS
HUDCETT

Bob Walker

SEQUALS

Abstract

We look at how marginal education spaces are differently imagined and (re)produced. We trace aspects of learners' journeys and the different pathways into Initial Teacher Training (ITT) made available through a university and an Adult Education-based networking organisation in the Lifelong Learning Sector (LLS) in England. We focus on urban localities and the venues used to offer and run PTTLS¹ courses aimed at attracting Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) recruits to teaching careers. We compare the profiles of these trainee groups and the effect of the different approaches taken by these organisations. We look at organisational and spatial aspects of training 'offers' and provision, the impacts of this on the recruitment of learners and how teaching careers are differently imagined within this marginal space. We conclude with suggestions for altering the discourse used to review and plan the recruitment of BME teacher trainees.

Key words

Black and Minority Ethnic; Spaces of Education; Margin; Out-Reach; Out-Centres; Under-Represented Groups; Equality; Access.

Introduction

The paper looks at pre-service ITT, targeted at BME groups in the LLS. For the sector as a whole, in terms of student numbers and their ethnic profile, the calculation or perception may be that this is a marginal educational space. For a particular provider network or organisation, in terms of their teacher training provision, the same judgement may apply. Centre-margin relations may be viewed differently, according to one's position, interests and perspective. This kind of targeted ITT will be of more concern for student recruits, for providers operating in areas with large BME populations, and for those committed to output measures in line with UK Equality legislation or to a whole organisational approach to Equality and Diversity.

Learning is unavoidably spatial. Even in the case of distance learning, it requires the bringing from different spaces to the same space of at least one resource and a learner. This entails an offer, its provision, a journey and a learning experience of some kind. These are real-time and future-orientated activities which each carry their own past. They are psycho-spatial. They depend as much on each participant's imaginings of the potential learning encounter, or how it is to be organised, as on calculations related to the material conditions of the provision (Manuel-Navarrete, 2009).

The providers of ITT, here reviewed, variously used an undifferentiated approach or mixed approaches to target BME groups. Where mixed, elements of marketing or community development were used; that is, staff had recourse to personal, professional, community, sectoral and organisational or internal institutional networks to communicate what was on offer. Significantly, recruitment numbers for the courses varied by a factor of three. Their profiles ranged from the mono-cultural - a single sex course intake of women of Pakistani Muslim origins - to attendees at an event where just under two thirds had origins in India, Pakistan and the Caribbean, and a third were more recent arrivals; of these most came from Sub-Saharan Africa. This provision at the margin is not simply organisationally constructed but involves students' participation. The space is transactional, constructed by broader social and economic processes and, on the basis of our evidence it is cross-cut by cultural dissonance. It is in this context of inversions of perspective, the ramifications of organisational and social practices and the imaginings of each participant that we conceptualise the transitional educational space under review as a differently imagined margin.

This paper has arisen out of a previous university research project and as a result of our different experiences, promoting and teaching on ITT courses and profiling the catchment areas for provider institutions. In this review, one of the authors collected part of the data from learning providers while in the role of university researcher and other data while in the role of a Teacher Educator for an Adult Education-based organisation. This covered a total of 100 teacher trainees. The other author surveyed aspects of the localities and venues where training took place and researched labour market and population data for the cities and towns in the study. Of the six courses providing the data for our analysis, three were held in Leeds and one each in Bradford, Halifax, and Accrington. Though varying

¹ The PTTLS award (Preparation for Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector) is a short, nationally recognised qualification course of 30 contact hours designed as an induction for teachers in the Lifelong Learning Sector i.e. Further, Adult and Community Education, Work-Based Learning and the voluntary sector.

considerably in size, these are all urban areas with relatively high proportions of the populations from BME groups. We have also drawn on official government statistics in relation to ethnicity, on social policy discussions around race, ethnicity and community, on pedagogy and thinking around 'spaces of education', including the book by Jos Boys on architecture in post-compulsory education. In this she frames a 'call for spaces that are "safe" enabling belonging but not re-enforcing comfort zones' (Boys, 2011: p. 48).

Between 2007 and 2010 several courses aimed at those considering entry to teacher training in the LLS were held in the north of England at venues connected to a university-based and to an Adult Education-based organisation. These courses consisted of PTLLS courses, some of which were preceded by taster events, aiming to attract new recruits from BME groups who were under-represented in teaching in the LLS. The UK equality laws (Equality Act 2010) have recently changed to include a duty for the public sector to advance equality and this has encouraged some publically-funded education organisations to arrange for positive action projects to address under-representation or under-achievement on their courses. One positive action approach is to offer 'taster' courses or events to attract those who are under-informed, have misconceptions of, or are undecided about a particular course or career. A taster event targets its advertising at an under-represented group by ensuring appropriate images are used or by specifically stating that BME people (or disabled people or women or men) were under-represented on the course and so applications from this group would be particularly welcome. Another approach is to offer a course in a particular venue that is more likely to attract learners from an under-represented group. Courses offered in or near, for example, a mosque or 'minority-led' community centre might attract more ethnic minority participants; courses offered in the afternoon near schools might be placed to attract more female applicants.

Views of entry routes into teaching for minority ethnic recruits

Entry to teaching in the LLS is achieved by many and varied paths with varying outcomes. Only a small proportion of teachers enter teaching in the LLS via pre-service courses. A large majority become qualified teachers via in-service teacher training (training and working at the same time) usually while working as part-time trainers and tutors. Course admissions tutors and professional standards bodies have views on the necessary knowledge and skills for teacher trainees and these affect access to UK teaching qualifications and opportunities for teaching practice. The issues for minority ethnic recruits from abroad are different from those who are longer-term local residents; for example, education practitioners who have gained their qualifications abroad may struggle to have their degrees recognised in the UK and many have to use and pay agencies like UK Naric² to provide them with evidence of formal recognition. Lack of UK teaching experience is another hurdle to be negotiated. Most employing agencies require previous UK teaching experience so direct access to temporary teaching work in schools or colleges may be closed to them. The view of pedagogy experienced by education practitioners from abroad can also be very different from those of UK Teacher Educators as one teacher trainee put it:

"It's very different. In Italy you don't need any formal training but in England you have to be taught how to do everything as well as the subject you are teaching. I think there's a bigger emphasis in England on making sure that the correct teaching methods are in place rather than the pure knowledge of the subject alone".

All the recent arrivals to the UK on the PTLLS courses and most of the course participants who were local residents became interested in acquiring a teaching qualification in the LLS as a result of their contact with bridging places in the Third Sector³. They visited or volunteered in community centres, supplementary schools⁴, places of worship and social enterprises, and these places provided a bridge for them between informal community work and formal teaching. Many of the participants also had contact with specific migrant and minority organisations providing advice services, ranging from legal and welfare advice to housing and health, training opportunities and English classes. Migrant workers used the networks in these organisations and in their residential communities to engage in volunteer teaching in the Third Sector. Those course participants who were new to the UK often did not have a strategy in mind for how they would develop a teaching career. As an intending teacher they did not know what subject to offer to teach, what subjects were likely to be in demand or which economic sectors were likely to provide them with work. Some had experience of working in schools in their place of origin and applied for the PTLLS course after having failed to be accepted for a school teaching course. School teaching as a career in the UK was described as having many hurdles to negotiate whereas Adult and Community Education seemed to be more accessible.

Migrant workers in the UK have in the recent past represented one extreme of the skill spectrum or the other. That is, they have been employed carrying out unskilled jobs that failed to recruit others, or at the other extreme, have

² UK Naric: a national agency that provides a statement about the comparability of overseas qualifications with UK qualifications. The fee for this was £84 at the time of writing.

³ Third Sector: Charities, Voluntary Organisations, Social Enterprises and Non Governmental Organisations (NGO).

⁴ Supplementary schools: these are sometimes referred to as 'complementary', 'community' or 'Saturday' schools. They vary in organisation and in the type of education they provide but in general they offer out-of-school-hours educational support, religious and cultural education and extension classes for children and young people, many of whom come from minority ethnic communities.

arrived in the UK as professional workers and part of a global labour market with hopes of improving their career prospects.

'The largest employment group for the foreign-born population is either elementary occupations (e.g. couriers and labourers) or professional occupations in most regions and countries.'

(20.1.11 ONS: p. 2)

The current prevalence of degree qualifications amongst the foreign-born population may account for their interest in employment as teachers in the LLS in the localities studied. In the Hyndburn area (Accrington), the percentage achievement for Level 4 and 5 qualifications (degree equivalent) for the general population was only 13 per cent and even in the Leeds local authority area, where there are two universities, 19 per cent of the population has a Level 4 and/or 5 qualification. The percentage of degrees amongst the foreign-born population for the North East region as a whole was much higher at 34 per cent:

'The percentage of foreign-born population with degrees also differs by region and country. In the North East 34 per cent of the foreign-born population hold degrees while in the East Midlands only 18 per cent had such a qualification.'

(20.1.11 ONS: p. 2)

Table 1: Population and qualification achievement compared for Leeds, Calderdale, Bradford and Hyndburn Local Authorities. Figures based on ONS Neighbourhood Statistics 2001: Local Authority: Qualifications (Dataset UV24) <http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/> accessed 25 October 2011

Urban Area (Local Authority)	Type	Population	% Qualification Achievement Level 4/5	% Qualification Achievement Level 3
Leeds (Leeds)	A metropolitan city 2 universities	761,100	19	10
Halifax (Calderdale)	A small city No university	200,100	17	7
Bradford (Bradford)	A large city 1 university	494,400	16	7
Accrington (Hyndburn)	A town, part of an urban conurbation No university	82,000	13	6

New immigration to the UK from outside the European community has officially ceased, however there are still new arrivals looking for training and employment as teachers. These include asylum seekers coming to the UK from certain selected countries, people migrating to the UK to join their families already resident here and long-stay, visiting foreign students. A background narrative to much research is that migrants are attracted by 'chain migration' to join their families and to live in those localities in urban centres where they can expect mutual support and a culturally familiar environment of shops, ethnic institutions, businesses, networks, and religious and community centres. However this notion of chain migration as discussed by Crow and Allan (1994) is insufficient to explain the movements and choices made by the trainee teachers in this study. A number of reasons were described by the trainees in informal conversations and in formal interviews for their decisions to live and work in certain areas. In the case of foreign professionals, who saw themselves as part of a global labour market, there were strong pulls to certain areas. Degree-educated migrants may have reasons to live near universities and other Higher Education Institutions or near centres for their industry. The facts that the UK Border Agency has offices in Leeds, and the regional immigration court is based there, and there are pre-existing, local asylum seeker and refugee support agencies provide an attraction to the area for some migrants.

The local minority ethnic 'communities' described

Around 10 per cent of Leeds' city population comprises of BME groups, with several well-established ethnic and religious groups settled in the city including African, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Indian, Pakistani and African-Caribbean and there are also large Muslim and Jewish populations. Halifax is a town but with more similarities to Leeds than nearby Bradford. It has a range of ethnic minority groups including a relatively high proportion of residents with degree level qualifications. Bradford and Accrington have similar profiles of ethnicity and social disadvantage. Accrington is one of the metropolitan centres of the north and west of the UK that has '*more than two and a half times their share of the poorest neighbourhoods and less than half their share of the least deprived areas*' (Turok et al, 2006: p. 77). Accrington, like Bradford, is an area with a long-established tradition of receiving migration as a result of the textile industry. Of the variety of national origins for the population, the largest groups in both of these urban areas originated from Pakistan and are Muslim, which may present to the external observer a picture of relatively homogenous and '*encapsulated*' communities (Crow and Allan, 1994: p. 104).

Different approaches to the course 'offer' and their results

Member colleges of the university-based network and workers in the Adult Education-based network used a range of approaches to promote their provision including targeted and contextualised PTTLS courses, dispersed or direct provision, community or market orientation, and top-down or bottom-up developmental approaches. The Adult Education-based organisation attracted people from BME groups by using subject-focused PTTLS courses (i.e. contextualised PTTLS courses) and by attracting trainees to particular, local training venues with connections to BME groups and individuals. The university-based organisation recruited BME trainees from a variety of backgrounds, localities and countries of origins through using the tactic of overtly promoting 'positive action' taster events and a 'targeted' PTTLS course. Recruitment numbers for courses were highest where the approach had support at strategic levels, when a sustained use of purpose-designed print media and electronic networks was made and where this was further enhanced by consultancy support to staff and offers of work shadowing for students. In the case with the highest numbers, a taster course was delivered near the campus in an annexe building and there were opportunities to continue in a range of teacher training courses. Results were three times lower in the two cases where relatively undifferentiated approaches were used; that is, using only inward-facing internal marketing within the college and outward-facing contacts made by the college-based community-liaison employee. Above average recruitment figures were achieved in two other cases. In one, a member college of the university-based network devolved its course to an ethnic minority-led organisation and venue used by minority ethnic residents. In the Adult Education network's dispersed provision, above average numbers were recruited where the course was provided to students known through previous contacts and held in a mosque near where they lived. Course marketing was enhanced through use of a community support worker and the availability of subject specific promotional literature produced at national level.

The ethnic profile of recruits varied. It showed differing relationships to the population mix in the immediate environs of a venue and the catchment area of a course provider. The three courses in Leeds attracted people from migrant groups including people who were black and highly educated from abroad, many to degree level. Most had originated from various African countries including North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa and there were several nationalities represented on the courses. Of the two venues near Harehills and Chapeltown in Leeds, only one recruited from the local African-Caribbean population. On the subject-specific, contextualised PTTLS course there were four white UK students recruited through a Leeds advice centre, as well as the ten BME recruits. The course in Halifax attracted learners with ethnic origins in India and Pakistan and the only recruit of Bangladeshi origins and, as expected, included more highly educated individuals. Postcodes showed a greater spread here than for most other courses. The Accrington course was attached to the university network and the Bradford course was attached to the Adult Education network. Although attached to different networks these two courses held in similar types of urban localities were both nearly completely mono-cultural in terms of ethnic origin.

Physical spaces of education

In considering the variety of physical premises used by the six courses we highlight a number of issues related to the meanings and accessibility of these spaces. Of the six courses two were held in main college premises, one was held in an 'out-centre' building next to the college, one in a 'Healthy Living Centre', one in a 'Resource and Training Centre' and one in a faith centre. Within the six buildings there were a back entrance and a side entrance used for access and an attic room on the top-floor and an annexe room allocated for course use. In practical terms this meant that it was doubly important for adequate signage or hosting and that reception, where it existed, was informed about the new course so students could be redirected and that the entrances and rooms were clearly signposted. In some courses on the first day, several of the course participants arrived late as they became lost when trying to locate the course room. Boys (2011) reminds us of the hybridity of space; individuals attach many meanings to the same space and this changes over time. Any judgement we make must therefore be provisional and viewed on a case-by-case basis. But the fact that the courses were in peripheral rooms or off-campus and accessed by other than the main entrance could reinforce a student's sense of marginalisation. The use of out-centres can have the advantage of being closer to new students, physically and culturally, and of improving the effectiveness of education providers' community outreach. In our examples their use enabled the recruitment of larger numbers and a greater diversity of students. However there was the attendant risk that a particular venue might encourage or only admit a mono-cultural intake; a risk justifiable in so far as it achieved the 'positive action' aims. A further disadvantage of out-centres is that fewer connections are made to mainstream provision. That step remains contingent on future events and may require formal actions, like work shadowing, to enable these connections to happen at all.

Cultural dissonance

The culture and practice of the UK education system was experienced as 'different' by all the trainees educated abroad and this was so even for those who had lived in the UK for several years and whose children had attended UK schools. Education expectations were laid down in childhood and through a trainee teacher's personal experience of being educated at school. For example, one trainee from North Africa saw the fact that the teacher was expected to refer disabled learners onwards to specialists so that they could receive special needs support as indicating an evasion of professional responsibility. In her view a class teacher and no-one else was responsible for the well-being and the learning of the students. She felt quite critical of the UK system of providing special needs

support, which she described as 'hypocritical'. Most trainees from both African and African-Caribbean backgrounds viewed education and learning as a community endeavour and saw this approach as different from that commonly taken in the UK. There were three instances of individual trainees quoting the saying that "*In Africa it takes a whole village to educate a child*". The teacher was also expected to provide moral authority, to provide a positive role model and to give support to the learners with their personal problems. The UK's strict delineation of professional boundaries for teachers was seen as restrictive; e.g. in the UK a teacher would not visit students at home unless there were exceptional circumstances.

One Teacher Educator from the university-based organisation described her view of this cultural dissonance thus:

"We had a lot of students on the Pre-Service course who had been born in other countries and had lived in Britain for some time...and they found discipline problems very difficult, because when they remembered back to their own childhood, their own student experience. The students sat in serried rows. They respected the teacher. The teacher was the great expert and they followed every word. And that's true of an awful lot of cultures outside this country. They find that sort of American, Western European culture very difficult to cope with".

Another Teacher Educator from the same organisation recognised that different cultural attitudes towards education could cause the trainee from abroad to feel alienated:

"[It's]...our failure to recognise that there are other valid ways to teach. I think it is a deep culture arrogance in our attitude, that, you know, when we've taught you, you will then be able to drop all your "silly little ways" and learn to teach properly like "not we do"... These people were saying that was what was making them feeling isolated and I'm not surprised. I would expect that to be quite an isolating thing. Not that you would expect people to change their teaching methods to suit you, but they would be some explicit acknowledgement that things might be different".

Both the trainees and the Teacher Educators recognised that this marginal and transactional space needed to be re-imagined. Some Teacher Educators focused on trainees needing to accept the requirements of the UK teaching profession and some Teacher Educators focused on the need for a general understanding and questioning of culturally situated approaches to pedagogy.

Real and imagined barriers to movement

One Teacher Educator reflecting on this study's findings expressed a view that ethnic minority trainees preferred to stay in their own localities and communities rather than move to study and work as teachers in a college:

"I had worked in the community with a number of people who wanted to train to be teachers, but they were just working in the community...they didn't want to go to a college setting to study. They liked the idea of going doing teacher training or developing their skills, but they liked it in their setting, it was basically a black setting. So they were perfectly happy in that setting and wouldn't go to college. Some did in the end".

Some barriers to educational journeys, like the location, the layout of the venue and the signage, have a physical form. Other barriers exist more in the minds of the course participants; that is the trainees, potential trainees and Teacher Educators. One discourse uses a traditional notion of community, including the dangers of communities being segregated or self-segregated and of the need for community cohesion (Turoq et al, 2006). This discourse, challenged by Finney and Simpson (2009) and Amin (2002) implies that all individuals necessarily belong as an 'insider' to a particular community and as an 'outsider' in relation to other communities. It is a perspective that causes us to look for, identify and label examples of self-segregation and homogenous groups in society. It also requires that we develop labels for 'ethnic origins' and identify the ethnic groups to which individual participants in learning provision belong. An alternative discourse would be to use the notion of a society consisting of dynamic, changing networks located in physical and psychological space, including cyberspace. This discourse would still allow for discussions of cultural differences and cultural dissonance within a learning space but would not demand that individuals labelled their own ethnicity and that social groups describe their changing and multiple identities as being that of a particular 'community'.

Conclusion

This paper has drawn on the practical experience of the authors and the collection of quantitative and qualitative data, published research and discussion papers. It has used a multi-disciplinary approach and has reviewed how two different provider networks aimed to tackle the same issue from their different perspectives. This perspectival comparison helps us to imagine and re-imagine ways of working with prospective teachers 'at the margin'. Psychological and physical margins exist at the level of the city and town, the locality, the physical buildings and in the minds of the course participants, and there they act on, regulate and limit change. Both the university-based organisation and the Adult Education-based organisation used different 'positive action' approaches to increase the proportion of BME trainees and teachers to more 'representative' levels. Both organisations have had different outcomes from the courses provided and we argue that the practical results of these courses emanated from the different discourses and 'imaginings' of a particular marginal space.

References

- Amin, A. (2002) *Ethnicity and the Multi-Cultural City: Living with Diversity*. Environment and Planning A., 34, 6, pp. 959-980.
- Boys, J. (2011) *Towards Creative Learning Spaces, Re-thinking the Architecture of Post-Compulsory Education*. Oxford: Routledge.
- Crow, G. and Allan, G. (1994) *Community Life: an Introduction to Local Social Relations*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Finney, N. and Simpson, L. (2009) *Sleepwalking to Segregation*, Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Manuel-Navarrete, D. and Redclift, M. (2009) *The Role of Place in the Margins of Space*. London: Kings College.
- Office for National Statistics (2011) *Regional Characteristics of Foreign-born People Living in the United Kingdom*. Newport: ONS.
- Turok, I., Kearns, A., Fitch, D., Flint, J., McKenzie, C. and Abbotts, J. (2006) *State of the English Cities*. London: Dept of Communities and Local Government.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5920/till.2011.3228>