



**Advancing Equity in Scotland:  
Developing Race-Cognisant Policy in Teacher Education**

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**Citation:** Kennedy, A., Carse, N., Mohammed, K., Valdelièvre, M. & Garbett, D. (2026). Advancing equity in Scotland: Developing race-cognisant policy in teacher education. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 34(5). <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.34.9015> This article is part of the special issue **Advancing Equity Globally: Innovations in Curriculum, Teaching, Teacher Education and Professional Development** guest edited by Maria Teresa Tatto and Trevor Mutton.

**Abstract:** In Scotland, recent years have seen a national declaration across Higher and Further Education acknowledging the existence of racism in education and the development of various

policies designed to challenge racism and promote racial diversity. This has particularly been the case in the field of teacher education policy where we have seen the publication of *Teaching in a Diverse Scotland* (2018) and subsequent annual targets for recruitment and retention of Black and Minority Ethnic teachers, the establishment of a national programme of professional learning to build educators' racial literacy, and the publication of *The National Anti-Racism Framework for Initial Teacher Education* (2023). However, the 'success' or otherwise of these policies has not yet been established across the system. This article, therefore, seeks to bring together the evaluations of individual race-conscious policies in teacher education to date, and to synthesise them, drawing on McConnell's (2010) three strands of policy analysis. Based on this analysis, the article concludes with some future-gazing as we move towards Scottish Parliament elections in 2026, and the likelihood that the long-dominant Scottish National Party will face a serious challenge.

**Keywords:** equity; policy; race cognisance; teacher education; Scotland

### **Avanzando la equidad en Escocia: Desarrollar políticas conscientes de la raza en la formación docente**

**Resumen:** En Escocia, en los últimos años se ha producido una declaración nacional en los sectores de Educación Superior y Formación Profesional reconociendo la existencia del racismo en la educación, junto con el desarrollo de diversas políticas destinadas a combatir el racismo y promover la diversidad racial. Esto ha sido especialmente evidente en el ámbito de la política de formación docente, donde hemos visto la publicación de *Teaching in a Diverse Scotland* (2018) y la posterior fijación de metas anuales para la contratación y retención de docentes negros y de minorías étnicas, el establecimiento de un programa nacional de desarrollo profesional para fortalecer la alfabetización racial de los educadores y la publicación del *National Anti-Racism Framework for Initial Teacher Education* (2023). Sin embargo, el "éxito" o el impacto de estas políticas aún no ha sido evaluado de manera sistémica. Por ello, este artículo reúne las evaluaciones disponibles sobre políticas individuales conscientes de la raza en la formación docente y las sintetiza empleando los tres componentes de análisis de políticas de McConnell (2010). Con base en este análisis, el artículo concluye con una reflexión prospectiva ante las elecciones del Parlamento escocés en 2026 y la probabilidad de que el histórico dominio del Partido Nacional Escocés enfrente un desafío significativo.

**Palabras clave:** equidad; política; conciencia racial; formación docente; Escocia

### **Avançando a equidade na Escócia: Desenvolvendo políticas racialmente conscientes na formação de professores**

**Resumo:** Na Escócia, os últimos anos testemunharam uma declaração nacional nos setores de Ensino Superior e Educação Profissional reconhecendo a existência de racismo na educação e o desenvolvimento de várias políticas destinadas a enfrentar o racismo e promover a diversidade racial. Isso tem sido particularmente evidente no campo das políticas de formação de professores, onde observamos a publicação de *Teaching in a Diverse Scotland* (2018) e a subsequente definição de metas anuais para o recrutamento e a permanência de docentes negros e de minorias étnicas, o estabelecimento de um programa nacional de formação profissional para desenvolver a literacia racial dos educadores e a publicação do *National Anti-Racism Framework for Initial Teacher Education* (2023). No entanto, o "sucesso" ou impacto dessas políticas ainda não foi avaliado de forma abrangente em todo o sistema. Assim, este artigo reúne as avaliações existentes sobre políticas individualmente racialmente conscientes na formação docente e as sintetiza utilizando as três dimensões de análise de políticas propostas por McConnell (2010). Com base nessa análise, o artigo conclui com reflexões sobre o futuro à medida que nos aproximamos das eleições do Parlamento escocês em 2026 e da possibilidade de que o tradicional domínio do Partido Nacional Escocês enfrente um desafio significativo.

**Palavras-chave:** equidade; política; consciência racial; formação de professores; Escócia

## Advancing Equity in Scotland: Developing Race-Cognisant Policy in Teacher Education

In recent years, the global teacher education policy discourse has focused increasingly on issues of inclusivity, diversity, discrimination, and intersectionality. This increasing emphasis is apparent in the work of supranational organisations, for example, UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report (2020) emphasises the need for inclusion and equity in teacher 'training', and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has invested considerable resources in its ongoing 'Education for Inclusive Societies' project. However, a specific focus on anti-racism in education more generally, and in teacher education specifically, is less obvious at the supranational level. While some countries have made targeted, systematic efforts to develop race-cognisant teacher education policy, this has not been widespread. Our focus here on the development of race-cognisant teacher education policy in Scotland is therefore of interest and relevance internationally, as other countries begin to focus on such work, or indeed, seek allyship in this area in contexts where national or federal policies have taken a more explicit right-wing turn.

The need to address racism in Scottish education has been put more firmly on the policy agenda in recent years. In particular, there has been recognition that teacher education is a key policy area requiring a much more explicit race-cognisant orientation. In part galvanised by the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, the Scottish Government committed to supporting a multi-strand Anti-Racism in Education Programme (AREP) through which several linked policy initiatives are being supported, several focusing on elements of teacher education policy. To date, however, there remains a lack of systematic research and evaluation to help our understanding of the extent to which this work is making a difference. This article seeks to chart the development of race-cognisant policy in teacher education in Scotland to synthesise what we know about its impact. The article starts with an overview of the educational, political, and social context in which this work sits, before providing a brief overview of the timeline of race-cognisant policy in teacher education. It then moves to consider three key policy initiatives before analyzing what we know about impact in these areas drawing on McConnell's (2010) three-strand framework for identifying policy success/failure. The article concludes with consideration of the immediate future political context and what this might mean for the future development of race-cognisant policy in teacher education in Scotland, and indeed globally.

### The Emergence of 'Race' in the Scottish Education Policy Discourse

Over the past 20 years, much of the Scottish education policy discourse has emphasised 'excellence and equity'. This direction of travel draws heavily on the traditional narrative of Scottish education as democratic and inclusive. The discourse of excellence and equity is now well and truly part of mainstream education policy, being most prominent through the introduction of the 'Curriculum for Excellence' (Curriculum Review Group, 2004)—a curriculum reform designed for learners from age 3-18—and the introduction in 2015 of the annual 'National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education' which bears 'Achieving Excellence and Equity' in its title.

However, one of the first mentions of this twin focus on both the quality and the fairness of Scottish education came in the OECD review commissioned by the Scottish Government, the report of which is entitled *Quality and Equity of Schooling in Scotland* (OECD, 2007). This review provided what Raffe (2008, p. 22) describes as "a rare opportunity to 'see ourselves [sic] as others see us'". He goes on to summarise the OECD review conclusions as follows:

... what Scots may see as a vigorous tradition of general education is perceived by the OECD panel as a narrow, conservative, and socially exclusive ethos of schooling. What Scots see as a flexible curriculum and qualifications framework is seen by the panel to offer insufficient challenge to low achievers and to divert

energies from the need for curricular and pedagogical innovation. What Scots see as a consensual, partnership-based model of governance is seen by the review team to produce confused lines of responsibility, barriers to innovation, and too little autonomy for local authorities and schools. (Raffe, 2008, p. 22)

The OECD Report (2007) does highlight that “Notable progress has been made in improving the achievement of children living in poverty” (p. 14) but tempers this with a view that despite some recognisable improvement, “children from poorer communities and low socio-economic status homes are more likely than others to under-achieve, while the gap associated with poverty and deprivation in local government areas appears to be very wide” (p. 15). Much of the report points to differences in achievement and attainment in relation to levels of poverty and socio-economic status. Indeed, the report uses the word ‘poverty’ 18 times, ‘socio-economic’ 12 times and ‘deprivation’ 29 times, yet there is not one single mention of either ‘race’ or ‘ethnic/ethnicity’.

The National Improvement Framework (NIF) also reflects this early focus on poverty as the main equity issue, with ‘race’ not mentioned until much later. The NIF is a set of performance indicators published annually since 2015. The (very brief) first mention of race in the NIF came in 2019, where it was referred to under a performance indicator relating to STEM education, acknowledging inequalities relating to a number of protected characteristics including race. However, coinciding with the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, the 2021 NIF published in December 2020 (Scottish Government, 2020), stated that

A number of sources highlight that children and young people are not experiencing an education where racial equality is consistently embedded across the curriculum and Black and minority ethnic history and heritage are not successfully and sensitively delivered through learning. This is underpinned and exacerbated by the significant lack of diversity at all levels in Scotland’s teaching workforce and reports of racism and racist bullying, which remain unaddressed. (p. 47)

The 2021 NIF document then announced what was to become the Scottish Government’s ‘Anti-Racism in Education Programme’ (AREP), signalling the first overt policy focus on race and racism in Scottish education.

### **Scotland: A Welcoming Context?**

While there can be no doubt about the fact that racism exists in Scotland, it might be argued that the wider social and political context is broadly welcoming of diversity, and therefore ripe for the development of anti-racist policies in education.

Scotland has been a devolved nation of the UK since 1999, although it has had separate education legislation since 1872. With education as a devolved function of the Scottish Parliament, policy decisions are made in Scotland for Scotland. We are a small country with a population of around 5.5 million, with approximately 5000 schools for just over 700,000 pupils, served by around 54,000 teachers. In the 2022 census, the proportion of Scottish citizens identifying as Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) rose to 7.1%, from 4% in 2011 (initial results from the 2022 Census, which is yet to be published in full).

Arguably, Scotland has a more welcoming context than other parts of the UK/Europe, attributable to its political and cultural history and habits. Since the inception of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, Scotland has been governed by left-of-centre parties, broadly subscribing to a social democratic political ideology, and drawing heavily on what has been called the ‘Scottish myth’ of meritocracy which promotes a narrative that Scottish education is universal and egalitarian—open to all and based on meritocracy not class (Raffe, 2004).

While debates on migration elsewhere in the UK, particularly in England, centre on limiting migrants entering the country, Scotland needs migration for both economic and demographic reasons, and Kyambi & Kay (2023) state that “The impacts of immigration are seen as positive by the majority of people in Scotland” (p. 5). Reporting on attitudes to ethnic diversity, they report that, in their survey of 1,162 adults from across Scotland, “Nearly 3 in 4 (74%) believe that diversity is good for Scotland, while 3 in 5 (60%) believe that diversity makes an area more enjoyable to live in, and less than 1 in 5 (18%) would prefer to live in an area where people are from the same ethnic background” (Kyambi & Kay, p. 18). This suggests a relatively, although not wholly, welcoming context in embracing diversity, and therefore, we might assume, an openness to race-cognisant policymaking in pursuit of greater equity. In his analysis of the ‘Scottish approach’ to race equality policy, Meer (2020) reports a UK-wide equality practitioner as saying that “The atmosphere in Scotland [relating to anti-racism policy]... is much more conducive to the type of work and thinking that we have. We are genuinely in a situation where we have far less concern about the direction of travel of the Scottish Government than we do about what is happening in Westminster” (p. 238). This suggests a much more progressive and permissive context in Scotland, where policy embraces the development of active anti-racist work. This context makes advancing race-cognisant policy potentially more possible, although not without challenges. The following section outlines key policy developments relating to teacher education, showing, at the very least, a permissive context in Scotland where it is possible to talk about race equality in the public sphere—something that should not be taken for granted.

### **Race-Cognisant Policy in Teacher Education in Scotland: Tracing the Timeline**

In 2016, the Scottish Government published its ‘Race Equality Framework for Scotland 2016 to 2030’ (Scottish Government, 2016), identifying education and lifelong learning as one of five key focus strands. Since the publication of the 2016 Race Equality Framework, there have been several key policy developments that have foregrounded the need to address anti-racism in education head-on and to build the racial literacy of educators in Scotland. Meer, however, writing in 2020, suggested that the Race Equality Framework “is itself reflective of a type of divergence in mood if not yet deed” (p. 238), suggesting divergence of thinking from the rest of the UK, but acknowledging limited action resulting from that thinking.

Undoubtedly, the prominence of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 served as a catalyst for policy action in the space of anti-racism in education generally, and in teacher education specifically. While work had already started on addressing a lack of ethnic diversity in the teaching profession in Scotland, 2020 saw the ‘Advance HE’ declaration and the establishment of the Scottish Government’s Anti-Racism in Education Programme (AREP). “Advance HE is a member-led charity of and for the sector that works with partners across the globe to improve higher education for staff, students and society” (Advance HE, 2020a). Its declaration is described as “A landmark commitment from Scotland’s universities and colleges to support a declaration against racism, and emerged from the ‘Tackling Racism on Campus’ project” (Advance HE, 2020b). The declaration is endorsed by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and the Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science’ (Advance HE, 2020c). The declaration itself reads: “Racism exists on our campuses and in our society. Call it what it is and reject it in all its forms. We stand united against racism.” This declaration, alongside the establishment of the AREP, served to create a more permissible discourse in the education policymaking sphere. AREP comprises four strands:

1. Diversity in the teaching profession and education workforce;
2. Education leadership and professional learning;
3. Curriculum reform; and
4. Racism and racist incidents.

In relation to the development of race-cognisant policy in teacher education, we will focus on specific policy developments in two of these four strands: the ‘Teaching in a Diverse Scotland’ report (Scottish Government, 2018) and subsequent annual reports (strand 1) and the Building Racial Literacy professional learning programme (strand 2). We will also consider the National Anti-Racism Framework from Initial Teacher Education which considers elements of both strands 1 and 2. While the focus of this article is on strands 1 and 2, it is helpful to know the focus of the other two strands. Strand 3—curriculum reform—seeks to embed anti-racism across the curriculum from early years to the end of secondary education, while strand 4—racism and racist incidents—seeks to support schools in responding to racist incidents and improve processes for recording and monitoring them.

Arshad (2024) asserts that, in relation to anti-racism in education in Scotland, “groundwork is being laid to develop an education system that can systematically acknowledge and understand ‘race’ matters” (p. 8). She goes on to claim that “The term anti-racism is now more widely accepted by those in political power, senior leaders and practitioners in Scotland”. However, despite this favourable landscape, there exists limited evidence of impact to-date, in large part owing to a lack of investment in and commitment to research. Before going on to unpack why this might be the case, and what the implications of this dearth of evidence might be, we move now to describing each of these policies in turn, sharing their rationale and focus, and considering any evaluations undertaken to-date on their impact.

### **Diversity in The Teaching Profession and Education Work Force**

‘Teaching in a Diverse Scotland’ (Scottish Government, 2018) reported on the work of a committee chaired by Professor Rowena Arshad. It explored ‘how to address equality and diversity issues in the Scottish education workforce’ (p. 5) and made 17 recommendations designed to achieve the ambitious target of having 4% minority ethnic teachers in the teaching profession as a whole by 2030, from a baseline of 1% in 2017. In this context, ‘minority ethnic teachers’ were considered to be those who identify as Black or Asian—not non-Scottish/British White teachers, and not White minority ethnic citizens from elsewhere in Europe and from minority groups such as travellers and gypsy/Roma communities. The report considered ways in which Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) teachers would be encouraged and supported across the career lifespan, focusing on interrogating the appropriateness of entry requirements, admissions policies, support during the induction year, and support for career development. It also elevates the importance of understanding racism in professional learning and leadership programmes and recruitment and retention policies across the career spectrum. It requires providers of initial teacher education (ITE) to draw up action plans and share them with the ‘Diversity in the Teaching Profession’ working group (part of AREP).

Annual data reports have followed the original 2018 report and has prioritised the importance of gathering and interpreting accurate data capable of supporting the identification of challenge areas and tracking progress towards the target. It is also worth pointing out that the 4% target by 2030 is likely to be revised upwards as the 2022 census data, which is still being processed, is likely to show an increased number of BME citizens across the population as a whole. The target reflects the overall percentage of BME citizens in the teaching profession.

The most recent Diversity in the Teaching Profession annual data report (Scottish Government, 2024), reporting on 2023 data, shows very slight increases in numbers of BME teachers year on year in most categories. For example, it shows 1.9% minority ethnic teachers in the profession as a whole, up from 1.8% the year before. There is also a slight increase in BME probationer teachers (induction year): 4.3% in secondary schools (up from 3.6% in 2022) and 2.6% in primary schools (up from 2.2% in 2022). Interestingly, 7.5% of Scottish domiciled applicants to ITE (with a known ethnicity) were BME, suggesting that barriers exist somewhere in the admissions and ITE phases, given that numbers of BME teachers making it to the

induction year, i.e. the year immediately post-qualification, are much lower than those applying to initial teacher education.

The annual reports from part of the remit of the ‘diversity in the teaching profession and education workforce’ strand of AREP, which states one of its key actions as being to “collect, collate and analyse data relating to the ethnic diversity of Scotland’s education workforce” (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/diversity-in-the-teaching-profession-and-education-workforce-sub-group/>). These annual data reports draw together existing data from several sources, including: the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), the annual Scottish Government Teacher Census, and the most recent Scotland population census (data are beginning to emerge from the most recent census in 2022, but this is as yet incomplete, therefore 2011 census data has been used in the annual data reports to-date). While these annual reports do demonstrate better data capture year on year, providing the opportunity to track progress over time, they are restricted to the collation of existing datasets and are therefore limited by the data available and ways in which it is collected and published. The annual data reports do not involve empirical data collection, and they do not provide the deep qualitative insight that would allow us to understand better the experiences of BME teachers at various stages of their careers.

### **Education Leadership and Professional Learning: The Building Racial Literacy Programme**

Developed under the AREP ‘Education leadership and professional learning’ strand, the Building Racial Literacy (BRL) programme is a Scottish Government-funded professional learning programme which aims to support educators to be racially literate and explicitly not race evasive. The programme was launched in 2022 and is now working with its fifth cohort. To-date, over 400 educators from across Scotland have completed the programme.

The ultimate, and aspirational goal of the BRL programme is to support every educator in Scotland to be racially literate and to be confident in leading anti-racism in their own professional sphere. It starts from an understanding of racial literacy as ‘having the understanding and practice to recognise, respond and counter forms of everyday racism or racial microaggressions at all levels, personal, cultural and institutional levels’ (Scottish Government, 2021, p. 6). The whole programme is framed by a commitment to ensuring ‘safer, braver spaces’ for genuine, honest and open engagement in as safe environment.

The programme is delivered entirely online: it involves two afternoon induction sessions, three twilight webinars and a full-day reflection and sharing session at the end of the programme where participants share their anti-racist action plans. Participants are also expected to engage in self-directed study between sessions and to maintain a reflective diary. While the programme is subject to ongoing review and updating, typical areas of focus include: conceptualising anti-racist journeys through exploring black and white racial identities; racial diversity in the teaching profession and education workforce; terminology; understanding privilege; linking anti-racist learning and practice to the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC) professional standards; understanding systemic racism; intersectionality; and familiarisation with relevant policy and legislation. The online facilitation includes a range of different activities, for example, direct presentation (usually from experts with lived experience), film clips and small group activities such as role play conversations to develop skills in handling difficult conversations.

While we acknowledge Dille and Røkenes’ (2021) observation that there is as yet limited research into the longer-term effectiveness of online teacher professional development, the design and delivery of the BRL programme meets most of the commonly cited features of quality online professional learning (Bragg et al., 2021; Brennan & Gorman, 2023; Morrison & Hughes, 2024). Perhaps more uniquely, though, each BRL participant is given membership of three different affinity groups: racial affinity; professional role affinity and geographical affinity, designed to provide safe spaces and to build networks that might last beyond participation in the

programme. Programme participants are also supported by ‘compassion captains’ who are trained counsellors, and programme tutors make use of the online space to keep contact with participants between meetings. BRL programme leaders have developed a strong alumnus, continuing to offer opportunities for current and previous participants to connect and sharing information and resources.

The BRL programme was evaluated independently (Chefeke et al., 2024) by The Collective, a consultancy informed by intersectional feminism as a lens through which to analyse policy and conduct research for social change. The evaluation consisted of desk-based research together with surveys and interviews with 40 programme participants, Education Scotland programme staff, and Compassion Captains. The evaluation recognised intersectional challenges faced by participants, highlighting:

... racialised differences in the support participants of colour receive from power holders in their own contexts and the levels of risk and harm they experiences compared to white participants. Similarly, nearly all participants we spoke with were women. Women of colour are often undertaking multiple roles to progress the work with less support than their white peers. (Chefeke et al., 2024, p. 6)

The report also surfaces racial trolling directed at programme staff of colour, reporting that “extremists have been able to commit online harms towards programme staff” (p. 7), indicating that while the context in Scotland might be more welcoming of minority ethnic people than other parts of the UK and elsewhere, there nevertheless exists serious levels of overt personal racism in addition to structural racism: systemic challenges remain. In terms of impact, while the report highlights BRL participants’ experiences of the programme, it also acknowledges that “we know little about the impact on children and young people” (Chefeke et al., 2024, p. 7).

What was unusual, and possibly unique in the context of government-funded evaluations in Scotland, was the evaluators’ explicit surfacing of their own positionality as “intersectional, feminist researchers”, describing their approach as “socio-ecological... understanding that racism, like other public health issues, can be prevented or promoted across multiple levels” (Chefeke et al., 2024, p. 11).

### **The National Anti-Racism Framework for Initial Teacher Education**

The National Anti-Racism Framework for Initial Teacher Education (hereafter referred to as ‘the Framework’) was commissioned by the Scottish Council of Deans of Education (SCDE) —a group of senior representatives of all 11 university providers of initial teacher education in Scotland in 2023.<sup>1</sup> SCDE commissioned Khadija Mohammed (one of the co-authors of this article) to develop the framework, and it set up an Anti-Racism in Initial Teacher Education (ARITE) Network to support enacting the Framework.

Prompted by recommendations from the Teaching in a Diverse Scotland report (Scottish Government, 2018), and the Tackling Racism on Campus Project (Advance HE, 2020b), the Framework sets out to achieve three key objectives:

1. To assist the embedding of anti-racist practice in ITE from marketing to learning and teaching, and support for the probationary period;
2. To assist ITE staff in better supporting ITE students;
3. To assist ITE staff to reflect on the importance of anti-racist practice with white students. (SCDE, 2023, p. 5)

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<sup>1</sup> All initial teacher education in Scotland is degree level and is led by universities, with individual programmes being accredited by the General Teaching Council for Scotland (see Shanks (2020) for further details on teacher preparation in Scotland).

The Framework has been designed as a tool for all ITE providers in Scotland and offers an opportunity to consider structural changes to teacher education. It lays out recommendations concerning six distinct, but overlapping areas, namely: marketing and recruitment; racial literacy of teacher educators; teacher identity and positionality; anti-racist pedagogy and curriculum; placement; and the probationary period (which in Scotland is the first year after qualification). It draws on elements of diversity in the teaching profession and BRL projects, and links closely to many aspects of the Scottish Government's AREP.

There remains a consistent concern over the lack of BME student teacher enrolments into ITE programmes and so, the attractiveness of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) to students from diverse backgrounds must be increased. One of the first recommendations encourages university staff to explore the extent to which their 'Marketing and Recruitment' processes are capturing a diverse range of applicants. Universities should review their marketing and communications strategies and ensure that material should not simply be reduced to the tokenistic inclusion of the images of BME students. Moreover, diversity should be recognised and represented on open days (face-to-face and online). This extends to university admissions processes with due consideration given to the additional barriers faced by BME applicants. Admissions processes should not present additional barriers to BME applicants but rather ITE providers should consider how admission processes could enable entry into teaching.

It is clear that any framework or policy meant to support anti-racist work in education must start with a foundational understanding of race and racism. Without that, it becomes difficult to engage in real change or to reflect on how one's own teaching may be impacted by racial biases. The second recommendation 'Racial Literacy of Teacher Educators', prompts teacher educators and student teachers to consider what an anti-racist ITE would 'look' like and how to ensure that an anti-racist consciousness is applied in practice. For any meaningful change, the racial literacy of teacher educators is an essential starting point to foster an anti-racist culture of understanding. Where teacher educators have the language to name, frame and address race and racism in all its manifestations they are better positioned to support student teachers become race cognisant and committed to anti-racist practice.

The third critical component of the Framework includes 'Teacher Identity and Positionality' where ITE programmes introduce student teachers to frameworks that investigate racial and ethnic identity development for all and assist BME students to construct positive identities and coping strategies when experiencing racism (Tatum, 2019). This extends to the fourth recommendation 'An Anti-racist Pedagogy and Curriculum' where teacher educators are encouraged to engage with issues of inclusion, representation and decolonisation. The suggested areas of action reinforce anti-racist pedagogy as not simply about including racial content into programmes and curriculum but rather how one teaches and continues the process of applying an anti-racist consciousness into programmes, pedagogy and interactions with colleagues and students.

The final recommendations have a focus on 'Placement and Probation': the two critical phases in the retention and progression of BME students. During the early part of their school placement (practicum), BME students often face difficult challenges, for example, receiving differential treatment in comparison to their white peers and dealing with racial microaggressions. Moreover, they are reluctant to share their negative racialised experiences with their ITE tutor for fear of the implications to their progression. The Framework encourages ITE providers to acknowledge and address such issues appropriately.

While the Framework is still relatively new, and its impact might not yet be clear, the ARITE network has led to ITE providers developing action plans to embed the recommendations. Currently, there are no formal plans to evaluate or research its impact in the near future.

## Evaluating the Evaluations

As outlined above, while there has been considerable effort put into the development and enactment of race-cognisant policies in teacher education in recent years, there is currently somewhat limited evidence of their impact—that is not to say that there has not been impact, rather that there has been no systematic attempt to gather evidence. Such data that does exist is restricted to the annual ‘diversity in the teaching profession’ reports, which bring together existing data from a range of sources, and the relatively small-scale evaluation of the BRL programme. There appears to be no indication of plans for further evaluation, and no explicit mention of any research that might be commissioned to explore policy impact on a deeper level.

This next section considers how we might analyse the breadth and depth of existing research and evaluation on the race-cognisant policies in teacher education in Scotland, as outlined above. First, we consider McConnell’s (2010) framework for identifying ‘policy success, policy failure and the grey areas in-between’, and we then move on to use this framework to analyse the research and evaluation evidence that we have to date on the race-cognisant policies identified earlier.

### Introducing McConnell’s Three Strands of Policy Analysis

While it is perhaps more common to talk of policy impact than policy success, McConnell’s (2010) work provides some insightful thinking around what we might mean by policy success. For example, he suggests that “a policy is successful if it achieves the goals that proponents set out to achieve and attracts no criticism of any significance and/or support is virtually universal” (p. 351). However, in a deeply contentious area such as anti-racism, it is doubtful that any policy would achieve universal support, no matter how well it achieved its stated aims. What McConnell’s work does do, though, is to add some nuance to the idea of policy success or failure: “policy has multiple dimensions, often succeeding in some respects but not in others” (p. 345). He proposes that success can be analysed within three separate but related strands: process, programs and politics.

#### ***The Process***

Process, McConnell (2010) contends, is a longstanding concern of many policy analysts, having to do with “the means by which societies could and should make collective choices in the public interest” (p. 349). This includes identifying policy problems and potential solutions, consulting—or otherwise—and the process of making decisions. Process very much sits within the rational domain of policy analysis, which, while often critiqued in the policy sciences literature, remains a key cornerstone of the work of professional policymakers. Indeed, policy developments and analysis during the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, seem to have seen a resurgence in writing and thinking about the benefits of so-called ‘rational decision-making’ in policy (Berger et al., 2021), where decisions can be made in a ‘logical’ and transparent way.

#### ***The Program***

According to McConnell (2010), the program strand of policy is “what governments [policymakers] do... they give concrete form to the generalized intentions of statements of policy” (p. 350). Thus, analysis of the program strand of policy is based on the visible enactment of the policy text—the actions, or ‘deeds’ of policy (Ball, 1993).

#### ***The Politics***

McConnell’s (2010) third strand is *politics*, and while he acknowledges that some policy analysts, particularly those who favour more rational approaches, prefer to avoid considering the political ramifications of policy success or failure, “the choices of government (including timing of decisions and the symbolism of particular forms of action or inaction) have consequences for

the reputation and electoral prospects of politicians and their capacity to manage political agendas” (p. 350). It is clear, here, that McConnell is writing from a political sciences background, rather than an education policy specific one, but we can use ‘government’ as a proxy for policymakers more widely in teacher education. McConnell’s explication of the politics strand of policy success/failure is very much oriented to the impact on politicians as policymakers, but this idea could be expanded to consider also the political impact on those most closely impacted by the policy—in the case of this article, those engaging with the formal schooling system in Scotland, and society more widely.

Taken together, McConnell argues that these three strands allow us to consider success/failure in a more nuanced way as a particular policy may ‘succeed’ in one strand and yet ‘fail’ in another. Essentially, through the identification of these three strands, he provides a heuristic for thinking about the how, what and why of policy as separate but interlinked facets, each of which can demonstrate success or failure independently of the others.

McConnell (2010) goes on to illustrate success/failure in each of these three strands across a spectrum comprising: success, resilient success, conflicted success, precarious success, and failure. Thus, he introduces further nuance in relation to the extent of success or failure in each strand. This provides a helpful analytical construct for studying the impact of policy. In this regard, it might be seen as limited in that the framework is best used after a policy intervention has been developed and enacted, and thus is less helpful in the planning stages. However, for the purposes of our article, the framework allows us to identify what we do not yet know about the implementation of race-cognisant policy in teacher education, therefore providing an agenda for future research and evaluation that might better enable us to assess success/failure or impact across different strands.

## **Using McConnell’s Framework in Considering the Impact of Race-Cognisant Policy in Teacher Education in Scotland**

### ***The Process***

In looking at the process strand of these race-cognisant policies, we see a complexity of policy origins. The work on diversifying the teaching profession had already started prior to the establishment of the Scottish Government’s Anti-Racism Education Programme (AREP), but was commissioned by the Government and led by a well-known and respected advocate of anti-racist education—Professor Rowena Arshad. This work became mainstreamed through incorporation as a key strand of the AREP programme. The introduction of the process of collating and publishing the annual data reports has allowed the Scottish Government to be seen as more or less preserving their policy goals, certainly in terms of the expressed intention of monitoring the aspirational increase in Black and Minority Ethnic teachers in the teaching profession. The publication of these annual reports, together with the requirements of ITE providers to publish their strategic plans and report against them, serves to “confer legitimacy on the policy” (McConnell, 2010, p. 352), suggesting process success in this regard. Actively working towards creating a more ethnically representative teaching workforce has undoubtedly become a part of the education discourse in Scotland, and is rarely challenged, certainly in professional contexts.

Responsibility for developing the Building Racial Literacy (BRL) programme, while falling under the ‘education leadership and professional learning’ strand of the AREP, has been delegated to Education Scotland—the national curriculum and support agency for Scottish education. In terms of McConnell’s (2010) spectrum of success/failure concerning process, the BRL programme can be seen to be successful in “building a sustainable coalition” across the education workforce, and in “symbolizing innovation and influence” (p. 352). However, opposition to the process has been evident from a vocal minority, resulting in personal threats and targeting of colleagues involved in the programme (Chefeke et al., 2024), suggesting ‘resilient

success' which McConnell (2010) describes as being where “opposition to process is stronger than anticipated, but outweighed by support” (p. 352).

The National Anti-Racism Framework for Initial Teacher Education publication draws together elements of existing work, including the diversification of the workforce and BRL program, but goes beyond that. Unlike many other policies in Scottish education, the Framework was written by one author—Khadija Mohammed—again a well-known and highly respected advocate for anti-racist education in Scotland. Although aligning very clearly with several priorities in AREP, the Framework was commissioned by the Scottish Council of Deans of Education, rather than by the Scottish Government. However, it ties in closely with existing Scottish Government policies. This is perhaps symptomatic of the nature of policymaking in Scotland, owing to its relatively small size and the closeness of working relationships between various educational stakeholders (Hulme & Kennedy, 2015).

Overall, in terms of process, there is good evidence of what Cairney & McGarvey (2013) describe as ‘the Scottish policy style’—consensus politics achieved through networks: ‘A (perhaps vague or intangible) sense of ‘membership’ of that community is often based on the willingness of its members to follow and enforce the same “rules of the game” (p. 156). While this arguably ‘gets policy done’, it potentially masks contradictory views and quashes the open presentation of alternative perspectives, resulting in more predictable and conservative policy responses.

### ***The Program***

‘Programs’ as defined by McConnell (2010) “give concrete form to the generalized intentions of policy statements” (p. 230). The most obvious example of a policy program in the context of this article is the BRL programme. Considering the evidence of its impact against McConnell’s (2010) outline of program indicators of success/failure, it would appear to demonstrate some “resilient success” in terms of its “implementation in line with objectives” and its “achievement of desired outcomes” (p. 354). While the evaluation of impact (Chefeke et al., 2024) reports a number of successes, in particular that “the programme has achieved its goals in supporting participants to become racially literate and anti-racist educators”, it acknowledges that, for a range of reasons, “fewer participants have been able to deliver professional learning to other staff in their setting or develop cluster-wide resources” (p. 5).

The evaluation report also points out limitations in what can be said about the impact of the programme beyond that directly on participants, in particular that “understanding more about the impact on children and young people through their own voices would be welcome going forward” (p. 7).

The ‘program’ arising from the work on diversifying the teaching profession is a little less clearly defined in that it is not one bounded programme, but rather a series of different actions by multiple stakeholders. However, the work that ITE providers are charged with undertaking through the ‘Teaching in a Diverse Scotland’ report (Scottish Government, 2018) does give some tangible “concrete form” (McConnell, 2010, p. 350) to the policy intentions. However, the very small increase in BME representation in the teaching workforce suggest “conflicted success” (McConnell, 2010, p. 354) both in terms of the practical achievement of intended outcomes and in relation to the extent of benefit realised for the target group.

### ***The Politics***

McConnell (2010) suggests that “some policy analysts prefer to keep politics at arms’ length, because it is seen as a distraction from a rational form of policy analysis” (p. 350). However, as Cairney (2021) argues, “historic attempts to seek ‘rational’ policy analysis enjoy limited success because policymaking complexity is more in line with political reality” (p. 35). Analysing success/failure of race-cognisant policies in teacher education reveals a significant focus on the politics strand—perhaps in part to do with the growing realisation that rational

models of policy analysis are inadequate, but also most likely related to the subject matter of the policy field in question: how could anti-racist policy be considered without taking the political dimension into account given that its very root is about the unequal distribution and exercise of power that systematically advantages some groups over others?

That said, the main thrust of the Diversity in the Teaching Profession Annual Report (Scottish Government, 2024) tends to be presented in a fairly uncontentious way: reporting figures in a way that arguably masks the real meaning behind them. For example, the first “key finding” in the report states that “There has been an increase in the number of minority ethnic teachers working within Scotland’s schools... (1.9% of the workforce, a slight increase from 1.8% last year)” (p. 5). While the increase is acknowledged as being “slight”, to label a 0.1% increase as a positive key finding could be seen as overclaiming. While this could be interpreted as shying away from political considerations, on the other hand, it fits with McConnell's (2010) idea of success in the politics strand of policy being seen as “enhancing electoral prospects of governments and leaders” (p. 356).

Evaluation of the BRL programme is much more overtly political in nature, with the authors (Chefeke et al., 2024) stating that “as intersectional, feminist researchers we are not neutral” (p. 11). The inclusion of this explicit positionality statement from the evaluators clearly suggests that they have been chosen on the basis that their perspective as researchers aligns well with the values and intentions of the evaluation commissioners. This all suggests policy success in the political strand in terms of “sustaining the broad values and direction of government” (McConnell, 2010, p. 356). Overall, the BRL evaluation suggests what McConnell would term “resilient success” in that political goals of the policy have been met for the most part, but that some opposition has been met as well. However, although BRL participants are reported as being incredibly positive about the program's impact, it must be remembered that only 400 participants have undertaken the programme—a very small percentage of the overall education workforce in Scotland. The positive impact of the programme on participants must therefore be weighed against the capacity for them to contribute to systemic change in a system where the vast majority of the workforce will not have had this level of anti-racist professional learning. Indeed, the evaluation report acknowledges this, stating that while:

There is ample evidence to suggest that the programme has been able to build confidence and knowledge, instigate changes in practice, and support people to become catalysts of change. The role of power holders in enabling or preventing progress cannot be overestimated. (Chefeke et al., 2024, p. 22)

The political impact of the programme must therefore be considered within the wider education policy and practice space.

Overall, McConnell’s framework helps to identify nuance in the analysis of the impact of race-cognisant policy in teacher education. While limited in scope, the evaluation evidence to-date suggests a small but important policy impact in the move towards achieving an explicitly anti-racist teacher workforce.

### **Where Next for Scotland?**

While the above analysis shows positive, but limited evidence of progress in race-cognisant teacher education policy in Scotland, the wider political and social context does appear currently to be supportive of further movement in that direction (Kyambi & Kay, 2023; Meer, 2020). However, the political situation in Scotland is precarious, and continued progress in this direction is not necessarily guaranteed.

The Scottish National Party (SNP) has formed either a minority or a majority government in the Scottish Parliament since 2007. However, Scottish Parliamentary elections will take place in 2026, and after a long period of relatively stable governance, it looks much less likely that the

SNP, will remain in Government for another term. It is not entirely clear who might replace them though, with significant recent instability in some of the other main political parties in the Scottish Parliament. This context makes the future of consistency in education policy all the more uncertain.

Despite education policy being devolved from the UK Parliament to the Scottish Parliament, the influence of the UK-wide Westminster Government is also significant. It too has come through a period of recent instability, with a new Labour government replacing the Conservative government that had led for the previous fourteen years. These recent and imminent changes in Scottish and UK governments sit alongside the rise of the far-right across and beyond Europe, making a backlash against race-cognisant policies potentially more likely.

In addition to the instability of the governing parties in Scotland and the UK, economic pressure leading to a serious tightening of public finances has forced central and local government to make difficult choices about priorities, thereby meaning competing priorities for senior leaders and policymakers in education. This puts ongoing progress in relation to race-cognisant policies in education in a precarious position. The analysis against McConnell's (2010) framework demonstrates not only a lack of systematic investment in evaluating or researching the impact of race-cognisant policies, but what the limited existing evaluations do tell us is that while the place of anti-racist education in the discourse is becoming gradually more mainstream, 'success' is probably at best what McConnell would term 'resilient'. That is, while the broad thrust of the work is generally accepted, there is opposition in places.

In summary, while analysis of race-cognisant teacher education policy in Scotland appears to be gaining traction, it will require sustained investment in research, support for professional learning and clear political will—and as Arshad (2024) states, “in a small country like Scotland, this should be possible” (p. 15). We are not complacent, however, and would hope that building larger networks with nations and states across the globe might help us both to demonstrate allyship and to encourage some productive peer pressure that might support us to continue on this current policy trajectory.

## Conclusion

The foregoing section outlines a level of political precarity that currently exists in Scotland, warning that this implies an uncertain future for the current commitment to race-cognisant teacher education policy. However, this political precarity is not unique to Scotland, and indeed is present to an extent in all nations that could be described as liberal democracies. Such societies form governments through cyclical, regulated elections, with elected governments being held to account by parliaments, the media and wider civil society. This means that with every election cycle there is a possibility of a new party, or combination of parties forming the next government, and policy commitments and priorities are therefore subject to change.

While the possibility of a different political party forming the next Scottish Government has some impact on the potential to sustain current policy trajectories, we are conscious that the political swing to the right in other countries across the globe can have much more far reaching consequences in relation to the valuing of anti-racist education and social justice policies more generally. Thus, we contend that applying McConnell's (2010) three strand framework as an analytical tool can allow national policy developments to be understood in a more nuanced and granular level, thereby providing a more detailed analysis on which to make decisions.

We are well aware, however, that a country the size of Scotland, with its population of around 5.5 million people, operates in a different way to larger countries, and that the historical, cultural and political histories of countries result in vastly different approaches to policy development and enactment. Nonetheless, despite, or maybe because of, its small size, analysing policy in Scotland can prove to be a useful test-bed for analytical strategies and approaches.

Our analysis of the development and impact of race-cognisant teacher education policies in Scotland provides some interesting findings that are of relevance more widely. First, it appears that public attitudes to migration might well have a significant influence on the extent to which anti-racist education policies are taken up and supported. Thus, narratives created and shared through media and popular culture, which in turn influence public views on migration, can directly influence the success or otherwise of attempts to further race-cognisant policy in (teacher) education.

Finally, our analysis above, while revealing some useful findings, also illustrates a lack of investment in attempts to research the impact of race-cognisant policies. This not only makes it difficult to judge the extent to which policies are making either intended or unintended differences to the lives of young people in Scottish schools, but also thwarts attempts to interrogate evidence in a comparative way, which might lead to a persuasive body of international research. We believe this is needed now more than ever, and we offer our analysis as a contribution to this global effort.

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### education policy analysis archives

Volume 34 Number 5

January 13, 2026

ISSN 1068-2341



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