



## Hannah Coltman on the benefits of the Early Career Development Programme

### Transitioning from ITT to ECT

As a result of completing my ITT year while schools were still facing lockdowns and COVID-19 restrictions, I have often felt that my training was stilted, only covering the basics and not pushing for a deeper understanding of teaching history. When the opportunity to take part in the Historical Association's Early Career Development Programme (HAECDP) arose, it was a chance that I could not miss. Having used the HA's training opportunities previously, the thoroughness of the course gave me hope that I could develop as a stronger, more confident history teacher. It did not disappoint! It feels as though I have learned more about teaching my subject in the last three months than I did in the last 18 months of my ECT training.

What was particularly invaluable during the course was the support and experience of subject leaders such as Otis Blaize, Ruth Lingard and Mike Hill. To hear the problems that experienced teachers have faced and still face was not only reassuring but also helped bring out the tentative ideas and problems we face as newer teachers. This has allowed conversations to open up and generated new ideas and solutions.

### Bridging the theory-to-practice gap

The mentors and other teachers on the course have been supportive and understanding of the different pressures of those just beginning their career, with their experience being vital in helping us to navigate the various approaches to teaching history. Particularly helpful were the connections made between the

theory and the practice and the understanding of why we do what we do. Especially useful was the idea of bringing the discipline of history to the fore while also ensuring a balance with the substantive history – the two being 'synonymous' an idea that I will take away with me for the rest of my career.

The course provided training on a multitude of topics, from medieval history to the more conceptual 'What is history?' and 'How do we get better at history?'. Some of these ideas seemed so abstract in my training year but now, because of the conversations in the online webinars, we were able to reflect on how these things look depending on your cohort, your own experience and the implementation of the curriculum. Having the opportunity to sit down and look at our individual curriculums and see how the idea of questions can fit everywhere, see the need for stories to give meaning to the topics (rather than the list of facts they are at risk of being reduced to) and see how building students' resilience to making mistakes but improving as a result has been a privilege. As teachers, we often don't have the time we would like to consider, reflect and implement all the different ideas we have. However, this course has enabled me to start that process, as well as made teaching history magical all over again.

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### Impact on practice

The impact that the HAECDP has already had on my practice as a second-year teacher has been extraordinary. I have become a more confident teacher, with the ability to improve my schemes of work to a much higher level, using stories to allow my students to immerse themselves in the period of study. I have already begun to develop my own resources, using the techniques and strategies that I have come to learn about through this course. Possibly one of the most important pieces of advice I have taken from this course is that 'one hour of reading is worth 20 hours of fiddling with PowerPoints'. It has stuck with me throughout the modules and given me the encouragement to read more history and bring it into the classroom.

These initial connections have allowed me to become more confident in my own understanding, as well as helping me to question that understanding. Richard Kennett talked about 'the more questions, the better'; this course has certainly done that. I have finished the course with many of my original questions answered, but I am leaving with so many more. It's invigorating;

it's why I became a history teacher – to question, learn and question again. The way I have felt participating in this CPD is how I want my students to feel about history: to be excited by the possibilities that the subject brings, frustrated by the questions that it brings and eager to delve further into it.

Ultimately, the only downside to this course was the time-frame, and you do have to be willing to give it the time it needs. However, the amount I have gained over the last three months is immeasurable. I can only imagine the possibilities if this was the ECT programme I was engaging with for the two years of being an ECT. I cannot think of a better CPD programme for newly qualified history teachers to gain a deeper understanding of how to teach a subject they love to students.

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