

The early history of teacher training colleges in Britain, 1836-1918

Call for participants: Deadline 8th May 2026



We are inviting participants to attend and contribute to a workshop day at the Quaker Meeting House, Liverpool, on 2 June 2026, organised by Edge Hill University, in collaboration with Lincoln Bishop University.

The intention is to orient most of the day around workshop sessions that contain introductory (c.8-10 minutes) presentations which enable us to collectively discuss and progress particular research questions relating to the early history of teacher training colleges across Britain, broadly speaking between the 1830s and the end of the First World War.

Further aims of the day are to establish a national network to research the history of teacher training, unlock underused archival collections related to this field and to develop interdisciplinary and collaborative research opportunities for the future.

Requested info:

Please provide a 250-word (max) overview of your interest and background in this area to enable the organisers to construct a thematic and coherent programme. Please email to Professor Alyson Brown (browna@edgehill.ac.uk) with this info.

- If you have any suggestions or ideas for the best way to present/share your knowledge and research, please do indicate this. We are open to whatever works to advance collaboration and research and make the day as productive as possible.

Last booking date is 29th May for attendance and **8th May** if you are offering a session.

Please book here - [The Early History of Teacher Training Colleges 1836 to 1918 | Edge Hill University Online Store](#)

The attendance fee is £25 whether you are giving a session in a workshop or attending and participating in discussion. Refreshments, including lunch, will be provided.

- If you have any mobility needs or questions, please include these along with your online booking.
- If you have any dietary requirements, please include this information along with your online booking.
- Limited funds are available to cover travel costs for those without institutional support – see booking form.

Academic context and research questions

The transformation of teaching into a professional discipline requiring qualifications has a history that dates back to the rapid expansion of male and female teacher training colleges from the 1830s into the early twentieth century.

These colleges, designed to train those who would teach the rapidly growing population of boys and girls from the lower classes, were at the heart of one of the biggest social transformations in British history.

Institutional teacher education transformed the lives and social trajectories of these trainees who in turn impacted the lives of millions. Over a few generations these trainees transformed the nature of the teaching profession and contributed to far-reaching changes in communities across the country.

Despite this importance there is a lack of research on the nature and impact of these institutions, staff and trainees within their communities and nationally as well as of the archival resources that have been preserved.

The focus of this workshop day is on information sharing and open discussion in order to develop a picture of the influence of these colleges, staff and trainees within their communities and nationally.

Attendees are encouraged to share their existing research into any aspect of this field and/or provide insight into extant archival collections that are pertinent to discussion.

Some exemplar research questions that could be addressed:

- How many teacher training colleges existed? Where were they established? When, why and by whom? Why did some succeed and others fail?
- Where are the residual archival collections currently located and what do they contain? Do some collections need to be made more accessible to researchers? How can this be achieved?

- What collection outlines, descriptive catalogues, archival projects and historical publications have emerged about these colleges?
- Who chose to study and why? What were their social and geographical backgrounds? What was their experience at the colleges?
- Who were the staff? What were their social and geographical backgrounds? What was their experience at the colleges?
- How did graduates develop their careers and/or lives afterwards? To what extent did they retain links to their training institution? What percentage remained in the teaching profession? How many left the region of their college? How many returned to their place of origin? How many went overseas?
- How were social mobility and educational transformation experienced? Was this a case of turning those of a working-class background into middle-class professionals?
- Who was responsible for the transformation? The college, the staff, the curriculum, the trainees themselves?

Any further queries or suggestions on this topic are welcome, please contact Professor Alyson Brown (browna@edgehill.ac.uk) or Dr W. Jack Rhoden (Wilfred.rhoden@lincolnbishop.ac.uk)