



Fundamental British Values in Education

A Research Project LED Research Centre

The Focus

In the wake of terror attacks in London and Manchester in 2017, concerns have been raised about the extent to which governmental strategies to combat terrorism are successful in preventing extremism. The requirement “not to undermine fundamental British values” (FBV) has become part of the Teachers’ Standards (DfE, 2012) slipping silently, seamlessly and seemingly unchallenged from the government’s counter terrorism strategy Prevent ([2011](#)). FBV are denoted as:

- Democracy
- The rule of law
- Individual liberty
- Mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

Guidance on Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) education to “actively promote fundamental British values” (DfE, 2014) as well as the need to monitor children and young people at risk of radicalisation, places teachers in a precarious position having to negotiate their role as teacher and agent of surveillance within their classroom.

Yet the role of the teacher should allow children and young people in our care the time and space to explore, articulate and share their developing ideas with respect to a range of social, cultural and moral issues (Revell and Elton-Chalcraft, 2016).

The Key Findings from the research

Our research aimed to gather the perspectives of student teachers with respect to the inclusion of the term FBV within the standards (Elton-Chalcraft et al., 2017). The research involved student teachers at four universities located in the North-West and Southern England, the majority were White British and it seemed students from one university who had studied modules on ‘race’, racism and education appeared to be more critical in their responses to the FBV agenda.

The student teachers’ responses to ‘what are fundamental British values?’ fell into three categories:

1. Stereotypical notions
2. Assertions of superiority and the need for assimilation
3. Critical and sceptical

Some respondents cited the familiar tropes of politeness, queuing, drinking tea, patriotism and monarchy. We would question how well they are preparing their students for a society which is distinctly multicultural choosing to maintain a nostalgic notion of Britishness which bears little resemblance today.

Even more worrying were responses which clearly delineated a sense of belonging for some but not others, such as this, “*The fact that people who live here should love Britain and promote **our** key ethics, such as freedom. Any person living in our great country, whatever race or creed, should love the country and live by **our** laws.*” This response reflected how the respondents viewed those “who were British and those who were not quite British enough” (Smith, 2012) thus maintaining an “us and them” binary asserting also the need for “them” to assimilate into British society. Will these teachers be maintaining this notion of Britishness in their classrooms and placing under surveillance some children who they don’t consider “quite British enough”?

Nevertheless, some of our student teachers demonstrated what we termed as greater levels of criticality:

“Britain is a truly diverse society ... we need...a debate about British values in which everyone is involved so we can decide ourselves, rather than being told what they are by the elite and the Church”.

The Implications for Practice

1. Our research encourages teacher educators and teachers to provide spaces for critical and courageous conversations related to fundamental British values, securitisation, ‘race’, racism and education.
2. Using RE, Citizenship and PSHE sessions effectively with children and young people can provide opportunities to value diversity.

The Outputs and Impact on Practice

1. Bryan, H., Revell, L. and Elton-Chalcraft, S. (in press 2018) Counter terrorism Law and Education: student teachers’ induction into Prevent Duty through the lens of Bauman’s Liquid Modernity In Edited by Trimmer, K, Dixon, R. and Findlay, Y., eds. *Education and the Law – Considering the Legal Context of Schools*
2. Elton-Chalcraft, S, Revell, L. and Lander, V. (2018 forthcoming) Fundamental British Values: your responsibilities, to promote or not to promote? Ch 15 In Cooper, H. and Elton-Chalcraft (Eds) 3rd edition *Professional Studies in Primary Education* London:Sage
3. Elton-Chalcraft, S., Lander V., Revell, L., Warner, D. and Whitworth, L. (2017) To promote, or not to promote fundamental British values? Teachers’ standards, diversity and teacher education *British Educational research journal* vol 43 no 1 Feb 2017 available at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/berj.2017.43.issue-1/issuetoc>
4. Lander, V., Elton-Chalcraft, S. and Revell, L., (joint editors)- (2016) Special Issue in JET (*Journal of Education for Teaching*) Fundamental British Values Vol 42 issue 3 available at <http://tandfonline.com/toc/cjet20/42/3?nav=tocList>
5. Revell, L. and Elton-Chalcraft, S. (Nov 2016) Religious Education, Racism and Citizenship: developing children’s religious, political and media literacy. *Teaching Citizenship: Faith and Citizenship* professional journal issue 44 Autumn 2016 available at <https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/journals>

Our research has contributed to the debate concerning Fundamental British values and researchers have been asked to present seminars and keynotes nationally and internationally:

- a) Elton-Chalcraft, S. (2017) *Fundamental British Values- a politicization of the curriculum* Centre for Education studies Warwick University seminar series Nov 1st 2017
- b) Elton-Chalcraft, S. (2017) *To promote or not to promote Fundamental British Values* Invited to give a Keynote at Limerick University Winter conference Jan 2017
- c) Elton-Chalcraft, S. (2016) *British values in schools – implications for NQTs RQTs and schools* Invited presentation to school Direct alliance March 2016 The Willows Catholic Primary School, Kirkham
- d) Elton-Chalcraft, S. (2015) *Fundamental British Values, Tying ourselves in knots* available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRaeGplkG4g&feature=youtu.be> Invited Keynote presentation to Newly Qualified teachers at Edge Hill University Oct 2015

If you have read this far and are interested in critically considering Fundamental British Values in your educational work setting, then please get in touch with us at LED Research Centre. We are keen to pursue further research and development with practitioners / teachers in this area of work. LED@cumbria.ac.uk