Fundamental British values and 'dangerous conversations'

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Young Adults, Inequality and the Generational Divide: Learning and Life Chances in an Era of Uncertainty

Session: Radicalization: different policies in different states'

The task for teachers

- Teachers should promote the 'fundamental British values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance for those of different faiths and beliefs' (DfE 2014).

- The English school's inspectorate, Ofsted, include both how schools promote 'fundamental British values' and how they prepare pupils for 'life in modern Britain' as part of their inspection of SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social, Cultural) education.

This presentation

- Discusses the role of liberal democratic values in the light of an apparent retreat from multiculturalism and the rise of 'muscular liberalism'

- Draws on qualitative data to consider how schools engage with FBV

- Focus on:
  - Promoting democracy through school councils
  - Teaching controversial/sensitive issues – example of terrorism

- Conclusion

The research

- October 2016-September 2018. Funded by The Leverhulme Trust as a Major Research Fellowship.

- 56 interviews with teachers and 49 observations (mostly lessons and assemblies, but also four training sessions/conferences on the teaching of British values

- The majority of interviews are from nine case study schools (four primary and five secondary. Mostly in Greater London, but also the North-east, the South-west and the Midlands). One is a faith school

- One-off interviews with senior leaders at eight schools, including two faith schools.

- Interviews with ten other individuals who have a professional interest in the British values policy (e.g. faith school advisers, those offering training in SMSC, and teacher union representatives).

- 2/3 of interviewees White British

The retreat from multiculturalism and the rise of 'muscular liberalism'?

- A multicultural approach: ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity within a nation is recognized, welcomed and even celebrated in policy and adaptations may made for specific groups (see Bulmer & Solomos 2017, Modood 2013)

- 'Political leaders throughout the West have declared multiculturalism dead' (Joppke 2014 p.286)

- Turn to 'civic integration' (Joppke 2007)

- Banting and Kymlicka (2017) argue that despite the rhetoric – which they acknowledge matters – multicultural policies have remained stable in many European countries including the UK, during the first decade of this century.

- Across Europe: Growing emphasis on counter-radicalization policies that include schools (Ragazzi 2017)

'The Muslims are coming'! (Kundnani 2014)

- The 'visibilisation' of Muslims as [an apparently homogenous] group as being problematic (Werbner 2009 p.20, Shain 2017), as having 'broken the multi-cultural social contract' (Mac an Ghaill & Haywood 2017 p.3)

- 'The suspect Muslim presence...is seen to present an ontological threat ...to secular liberal values' (Miah 2017 P. 137)

- '"Culture" has become the sphere in which difference is marked, in part at least because of the taboo around racism - understood as overt discrimination-based on skin colour.   Thus 'the furore over multiculturalism […] is not separate from the story of racism; rather, it is its contemporary manifestation' (Lentin 2014 p.1273).

- The normalisation of suspicion and ridicule: Boris Johnson and the niqab

The English context

- Historical context of imperialism and colonialism

- Contemporary political and social context includes: Move away from state-sponsored multiculturalism; politicians' pronouncements on the importance of 'British-ness'; Prevent (anti-extremist policy); terror attacks; 2016 EU referendum; rise in hate crime; anti-Muslim discourses; tightening of citizenship regulations.

- Education policy context: Focus on performance targets; Prevent Duty; changes to curricula and assessment; shortfalls in teacher recruitment, retention and school funding.

- As a result, English schools have been brought into a securitization matrix, implicitly through the British values policy in 2014, and explicitly through the Prevent duty in 2015. Tension between 'logics of suspicion and logics of trust' (Ragazzi 2017 p. 12)

Engaging with Fundamental British values

- Fundamental British values (FBV) are promoted through artefacts, assemblies and lessons (especially Religious Education, Personal Social, Health and Economic Education, and Citizenship Education)

- Marginalisation of citizenship education in England

- Limited time for debate and discussion in system driven by results in written examinations in range of traditional subjects (Ebacc)

Democracy

- The majority of case study schools in the research tended not to explicitly teach British values (although there are plentiful resources available to this end)

- Instead they absorbed FBV into their already-existing practices

- A common example is promoting democracy through school councils

School councils: a lesson in the limits of representative democracy?

- Observed 6 school councils across the 9 case study schools, three primary and three secondary.

- Initiatives in student voice are often commonly considered to be inherently and uncomplicatedly positive (Teague 2018 p.98)

- BUT:
  - the gap between consultation and participation,
  - the status of the council, and questions of who decides the agendas: 'toilets and chips' (Whitty and Wisby 2007)
  - which students' voices are more likely to be heard: 'the good kids' ?
  - a process of responsibilization as students are encouraged to exercise power over their own and their peers' behaviour s and emotions (Whitty and Wisby 2007).

'Each week the children in years 3-6 are able to nominate and vote for children to achieve a "Tidy Class Award"' (primary school).

'Dangerous conversations' (Cantle 2015)

- The stated aim of citizenship education in secondary schools is to 'equip pupils with the skills and knowledge *to explore political and social issues critically*' (DfE 2013, Citizenship education programme of study, emphasis added).

- Anti-radicalisation programmes encourage 'critical thinking'

- Potential 'dangerous conversations' identified by teachers included Brexit, migration/immigration, terrorism, media representations of Muslims, RSE and LGBT+ issues

- These issues all involve democracy, rule of law and the other FBVs

- BUT:
  - Little space in a crowded curriculum for such debate and discussion
  - Impact of school performance targets
  - Teacher uncertainty

'They thought refugee was the same as terrorist!' (teacher)

- Teaching terrorism: data from 5 secondary schools. 2 schools: materials only, 3 schools: lesson observations.

- Teachers' main concern is to uncouple the notion that they understand students to have – the link between Muslims and Islamist terrorism. Hence an emphasis on non-religious and/or non-Islamist instances of terrorism

- Broader and deeper historical and political context not often addressed.

- One teacher, using a fictional case study, aimed to develop understanding of causes of terrorism and motivations of terrorists. Others adopted more impersonal approach.

- Teachers' dilemmas:
  - how much to put forward of own opinion - the shadow of possible indoctrination
  - how to let students express own views but move them to a less prejudiced understanding

Neutrality, partisanship and anxiety

- Sometimes I am so careful of not giving my own view that I almost promote the things that I don't believe in. So I am a member of the Labour Party and a keen Labour supporter, but when we are discussing the differences between the main political parties, Labour is blah blah blah, and the Tories are oh this is what they – and I am like – because I'm trying not to promote Labour too much. Trying to be neutral and actually probably going too much the other way, so it is really hard, I do think it is really hard. I sometimes wonder if it is just worth saying 'Look this is where I stand', but I know it is difficult because kids are impressionable (teacher, Downs secondary academy, mainly White British population, rural/suburban)

- '*Talking about terrorism*' (Jamieson & Flint 2017) was reported in the Daily Express as having 'been slammed by critics who say it is potentially dangerous'…'crackpot'…'misguided' (Daily Express 28/5/17).

'Domains of the sayable'

- Being 'neutral' and 'fair' is a moral imperative for teachers. Conscious choice?

- Judith Butler's concept of 'domains of the sayable'

- Butler describes internalised censorship.

- 'The subject's production takes place not only through the regulation of that subject's speech, but through the regulation of the social domain of the speakable discourse. The question is not what it is I will be able to say, but what will constitute the domain of the sayable within which I begin to speak at all' (Butler 1977 p.133)

'Domains of the sayable'

- Two aspects of this regulation - leading to teachers limiting or avoiding 'dangerous conversations'

  - The first is the explicit limits on what can be said. Teachers must promote FBV and to speak against them is - according to Prevent guidance - a sign of extremism. Also the PSED requires teachers not to make overtly discriminating statements in the classroom on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, or religion.

  - 'Censorship is an implicit internalised voice' (Teague 2018 p.104); the good teacher, the responsible teacher becomes a source of limit, of caution. 'To move outside of the domain of speakability is to risk one's status as a subject' (Butler 1997 p.133)

Prevent Duty and controversial issues

- 'The Prevent Duty is not intended to stop pupils debating controversial issues, but rather to give them the safe space of the classroom in which to do so' (DfE 2015 p.5).

- There is some tension between 'facilitating the discussion of controversial issues (which implies there are a variety of valid viewpoints) and the need to challenge some views or even report them to senior colleagues (which implies some views are forbidden)' (Expert Subject Advisory Group 2015 p.2)

- O'Donnell argues that 'pedagogical injustice' results from the lack of clarity over definitions and manifestations of extremism and radicalisation: 'neither teacher nor student can fully know which ideas, views, interpretations and thoughts are permissible' (2017 p.179).

Neutrality and partisanship

- What do neutrality and partisanship look like in a classroom situation?

- Pykett argues that this common-sense emphasis on neutrality – posing arguments for and against - 'serves to naturalise power inequalities and to re- inscribe them through supposedly neutral categories.' (Pykett 2007 p.314/5).

- One secondary school teacher in sample prepared to discuss criticisms of foreign policy of recent governments with the students:

- You also have to look at western politics [….] As a so-called civilised western democracy….you have got us contravening refugee international policies and things that we have signed up for. It is, like, pretty disgraceful. So you do have to look at things from those points of view as well

Concluding thoughts

- The requirement to promote FBV *appears* to promise an opening up of spaces for discussion and debate, but.....

- Barriers to promoting civic values and civic engagement in schools include:

  - Teacher capacity and confidence
  - 'Domains of the sayable'
  - Performative education system
  - Broader context including Prevent Duty and rise of 'muscular liberalism' the *imposition* of liberal values.
  - As a result of the external and internal limits on what can be said in school, coverage of contemporary controversies is limited.

Event:
All welcome!

Community, Citizenship and Cohesion: Schools and the Promotion of Fundamental British Values

Thursday November 29th 2018, Institute of Education,

room 728.

5.30-7pm (followed by refreshments)

The event is free but places are limited. To register please email Joanna Gzik j.gzik@ucl.ac.uk .

Speakers: Carol Vincent

Andreas Pantelides (a London secondary school teacher)

Reza Gholami (University of Birmingham)

Jonathan James (Doctoral student, UCL IOE)