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McDonnell, Jane (2021) How do you promote British values when values education is your profession? Policy enactment of FBV amongst teachers of Religious Education, Citizenship and Personal, Social and Health Education in England. Cambridge Journal of Education, 51 (3). pp. 377-394. ISSN 0305-764X

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2020.1844149

Publisher: Taylor & Francis (Routledge)

Version: Accepted Version

Downloaded from: https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/626731/

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Additional Information: This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in Cambridge Journal of Education on 20th November, available at: http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/0305764X.2020.1844149

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How do you promote 'British Values' when values education is your profession? Policy enactment of FBV amongst teachers of RE, Citizenship and PSHE in England.

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How do you promote 'British Values' when values education is your profession?

Research on the promotion of 'fundamental British values' (FBV) in English schools has tended to focus on its nationalistic and securitising elements. Its role within a broader, politically conservative shift in values education, both in England and beyond, has received less attention. This paper address**es** the latter, reporting on research into FBV with secondary school teachers who already see themselves as values educators. Using life history methods, the research investigated how the teachers' subject backgrounds and existing commitments to values education influenced their enactment of the policy. Findings suggest that the teachers' existing enthusiasm for values education *per se* acted as an important factor in their willingness to engage seriously with the policy. Personal and professional commitments, as well as subject-specific pedagogies, were important in the ways teachers responded *creatively* to FBV, indicating the significant role of teacher agency in responding to the shifting policy landscape in values education.

Keywords: values, values education, policy enactment

Introduction

Internationally, schooling has become the site for detecting radicalisation linked to national and international fears of terrorism (Davies, 2016), with new uses of religion in education emerging in pursuit of this agenda (Gearon, 2013). As part of this trend, the school curriculum in England has shifted to include the promotion of 'fundamental British values' (FBV). Defined as, 'democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs' (DfE, 2012; 2014a), FBV first appeared in an educational context as part of the revised Teachers Standards enforced from 2012 - as values that teachers 'must not undermine' (DfE, 2011). However, they originated in the government's anti-terror legislation, specifically the

revised Prevent Strategy of 2011 (Home Office, 2011). Since 2014, all schools in England have been expected to 'actively promote' FBV as part of their existing provision for pupils', 'spiritual, moral, social and cultural development' (SMSC) (DfE, 2014a) and since 2015, have a legal duty to do so (Home Office, 2015).

As practitioners of those subjects most closely associated with values education in secondary schools, teachers of religious education (RE), personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship education (CE) occupy a particularly interesting space in relation to FBV. The current advice on FBV makes explicit reference to curriculum content in these areas and teachers of these subjects have existing commitments to values education, informed by their own personal biographies and professional backgrounds. Research with teachers of these subjects is therefore vital for understanding how FBV is being enacted in schools and its implications for values education more broadly.

The small-scale study reported in this paper aimed to explore the enactment of FBV amongst teachers of RE, PSHE and CE in secondary schools in England. Detailed studies of how practising teachers of RE, PSHE and CE at this level are dealing with FBV as an instance of values education are lacking. This research sought to address that gap. The research worked with an understanding of policy enactment as a complex process of translation, interpretation and re-contextualisation (Ball et al., 2012). Alert to the ways in which teachers are both rendered as 'policy subjects' and 'policy actors' through the uptake of various 'policy positions' (Ball et al., 2012, p. 73), the research focused on how individual teachers are negotiating FBV in their work. The research had two, interrelated objectives: Firstly, to illuminate how teachers' subject backgrounds informed their enactment of FBV. Secondly, to investigate how this connected to existing trends in pedagogies of values education.

Policy context

Though most obviously associated with the global counter-terrorism agenda, FBV also represents the latest government intervention into the broader arena of values education, which has a patchy history in England. Conceived in moral terms, this originally formed part of the school's duty to provide a Christian upbringing via 'Religious Instruction' later Religious Education (RE) (Copley, 2008, p. 10). More recently, values education in England has been informed by a health and wellbeing agenda through Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) (latterly Personal, Social, Health and Economic education) (PSHEe) and by a political agenda in the form of Citizenship Education (CE), which became a statutory subject for secondary schools in 2002. In some schools, the three subjects are no longer offered discretely but form part of a broader provision of education in beliefs and values. All of these contribute to schools' fulfilment of their SMSC duty.

It is important to note the particular history of RE in England as a pioneer of pluralistic, non-confessional but compulsory provision of religious education in non-faith schools (Cush & Robinson, 2014). Since the 1970s, pluralism has been a strong feature of RE in England. Though pedagogic trends have varied over time, a commitment to delivering multi-faith RE that goes beyond mere description has been central outside the faith school sector. Everington (2016) has mapped out key features of RE teachers' sense of professionalism over time, noting a strong commitment to multicultural RE amongst qualifying teachers at the turn of this century and key themes, including autonomy and commitment to a vision and mission (2016, p. 180).

The history and development of 'values education' more broadly is also significant. The term is used here to cover work in moral, political, civic, character and virtues education. In the US, where the term is more common, an important distinction

has been drawn between relativistic, ‘values clarification’, informed by theories of moral development, and more conservative ‘direct teaching’, inspired by philosophical traditions such as Aristotelian virtue ethics (Arthur, 2008). This distinction also resonates in the UK, where a strong tradition of values clarification was established in the humanities and social sciences in the 1970s and 1980s, influenced by the work of Lawrence Stenhouse (Stenhouse, 1968; 1971). This gave way to a more directive, ‘values promotion’ approach in England with the inclusion of a ‘statement on values’ within the National Curriculum review of 2000 (Starkey, 2000). Movements such as ‘Philosophy for Children’, with a focus on non-directive inquiry, have gained in popularity more recently (Vansieleghem and Kennedy, 2011). Hand (2014) whose work on moral education has been influential in the UK, takes something of a ‘middle way’, advocating both ‘directive’ and ‘non-directive’ moral inquiry, alongside ‘moral formation’ in schools.

Recently, values education in England has also come under the influence of a broader (re)turn to ‘character education’ internationally, which involves the cultivation of specific moral virtues and incorporates the promotion of traits such as ‘grit’ and ‘resilience’. While character education is not necessarily aligned with conservative political agendas, ‘the political dominance of the Right has ensured its take on character has had the most influence on policy’ (Sayer, 2020, p. 476). As such, it has come under criticism from many educational researchers writing from a sociological perspective. Ecclestone (2012) has argued that an emphasis on character has contributed to the rise of therapeutic approaches in education, while Suissa (2015) has expressed concerns about the ‘erasure of the political’ inherent in them. Allen and Bull (2018) have traced the funding and institutional support behind the character education movement in England, including the influence of politically conservative, Christian organisations

from the US, such as the Templeton Foundation. Though distinct, both FBV and character education form part of a broader policy nexus in values education. Just after the advice on FBV was published, the then government issued a statement of ambition for England to become a 'global leader in character' (DfE, 2014b). Vincent (2018**, p.** 2) has described FBV and character education as 'two forms' of the 'current wave of values education' gaining hold in schools.

Existing research

Given the context of the policy, it is perhaps not surprising that research on FBV to date has tended to apply a critical perspective to its role within the promotion of civic nationalism rather than on its place within the policy history of values education. **Problems identified with FBV in the literature include the (racialized) 'Othering' implicit in the policy and the processes of securitisation associated with it. This relates both to Muslims - who were specifically targeted by early Prevent initiatives (O'Toole et al., 2012) and who still make up the majority of Prevent referrals (Home Office, 2017) - and to the teaching profession (Revell and Bryan, 2018), including Muslim teachers (Panjwani, 2016).** Other researchers have explored the question of whether FBV promotes an imperialist, predominantly white, version of Britishness (Habib, 2018), and investigated the complexities of FBV in the context of the contested nature of Britishness itself (Maylor, 2016).

Elton-Chalcraft et al.'s (2017) research has been important in mapping out how some of these different dimensions of the policy, and the critiques of these in the above literature, articulate with each other. They argue that an ongoing de-professionalization of teachers, coupled with an erosion of multicultural and anti-racist content in teacher education, have contributed to the emergence of a teaching body more pliable to the reactionary edicts of government. They write,

> '[t]he combination of a public discourse on Britishness that is belligerent, backward looking and fearful, with the introduction of standards for teachers that are explicitly assimilationist and prescriptive creates an environment where opposition to the model of Britishness implied in the standards could compromise them professionally' (Elton-Chalcraft et al., 2017, p. 32).

Working from a sociological perspective, much educational research into FBV has attended to ways in which the policy constrains teachers and narrows educational agendas, though some have also explored its enabling dimensions, outlining how teachers might enact the policy more critically. Sant and Hanley (2018), for example, have reported on the ways some trainee teachers of English have treated 'Britishness' as a controversial issue in itself – one that is always up for discussion, contestation and renegotiation, as part of a radical to national citizenship education. McGhee and Zhang (2017) have highlighted the potential for teachers to challenge any narrowly nationalistic and securitising elements of the policy.

Vincent's (2019) research, which represents the most large-scale study of FBV in schools to date, identifies a number of school-level responses to FBV, ranging from superficially 'representing Britain' in school iconography to serious critical engagement with the values included in the advice. She concludes that many schools are, in fact, 're-packaging' their existing practices as FBV or 'relocating FBV as school values' (Vincent, 2019, pp. 23-4). She reports that some schools are enthusiastically embracing FBV as an implicitly Christian version of values education and highlights how schools' responses sometimes result in 'stereotyping' pupils perceived to be in need of more liberal and Christian inflected values – both 'the white working classes and the potentially too-conservative Muslim populations' (Vincent, 2019, p. 26). Vincent's research, adopting a post-secular lens, is significant in highlighting the various manifestations of religion that are implicitly privileged and sanctioned by the policy, as

well as arguing that serious engagement with FBV is often limited to RE, PSHE and CE, which are already marginalised areas of the curriculum.

Some research has highlighted the specific implications of FBV for RE, PSHE and CE. Farrell (2016), for example, found a dissonance amongst student teachers of RE between their commitment to pupils' moral development and their concerns about the potentially alienating features of FBV – particularly the way they perceived it to contradict the pluralism that has been an important feature of RE in England in non-faith schools, since the 1970s. He argues that a commitment to critical, pluralistic RE might enable teachers to re-contextualise the policy creatively. This argument is further advanced in a study of Muslim RE teachers' views on FBV (Farrell and Lander, 2018). Concerns that nationalist notions of values will obscure existing commitments to cosmopolitan and global CE also feature in the literature (Starkey, 2018). This subject-specific literature highlights a deep commitment to values education in these areas of the curriculum and raises the possibility of teachers working creatively with FBV, informed by older pedagogic traditions and commitments.

Methodology

Life history research

The research adopted a life history approach, which is often used in educational research to illuminate the influences, experiences and relationships that affect teachers' professional identity and inform their work. Small sample sizes are common for such research, which focuses on depth rather than breadth (Goodson and Sikes, 2016). Life history methods were chosen for this research to help gain insight into teachers' perceptions of the experiences and relationships that informed their responses to FBV, which in turn form an important part of the overall story of the policy's enactment in

schools. Goodson (2012, p. 8) has described life history research an important way to, 'access to the unpredictable element' in education policy, while Sikes and Everington (2001, p. 17) have argued that life history is supremely suited to the study of RE teachers, whose work is 'fundamentally concerned with the development of the self'. Life history methods were used here, therefore, to access the unpredictable element in the enactment of FBV by teachers of RE, PSHE and CE – i.e. to better understand how these teachers' professional backgrounds and commitments influenced their responses to the policy.

Methods

Five teachers from four schools in one major conurbation in the north of England took part in the research. Participant selection involved a combination of 'purposive' 'opportunistic' and 'snowball' sampling methods (Goodson and Sikes, 2016, p. 76). The criterion for selection was that participants were currently teaching one or more of RE, PSHE or CE in secondary schools in England. The project was promoted to teachers through direct contact with schools. Three participants responded directly to calls sent out through schools, while one was referred by a fellow teacher and another by a research colleague. Given the politically contentious nature of FBV and the sensitivity surrounding schools' compliance with it, particular care was taken to reassure participants about anonymity and the non-evaluative nature of the research.

The primary method of data generation was narrative interview. Interviews were semi-structured, with minimal questioning, which is typical of life history research. The interviews were designed to capture 'occupational' rather than 'full' life histories (Goodson, 2008, p. 38), with an emphasis on teachers' careers. The interviews began by asking teachers to tell the story of how they came to be teachers of RE, CE and PSHE, which also elicited important information about the teachers' lives outside of school,

including prior to teaching. Following this, thematic prompts were used, which included asking participants to talk about their memories of teacher education, their first teaching posts, influential people in their career, and their overall approach to values education. Participants were then asked to talk about their initial responses to FBV and their ongoing experiences of it in practice. Interviews lasted between 40 minutes and one hour.

Interview transcripts were analysed inductively. On first reading, all recurrent themes were highlighted and briefly coded, then grouped and re-coded on a second reading. Patterns between the themes were identified and mapped out to arrive at 'overarching stories' for each participant. These included sub-plots that captured key moments and turning points in the interview. Participants were invited to read and comment on these and to participate in a second interview, as part of a collaborative process of interpretation. Two teachers offered further comments via email and two participated in a second interview. This new data was used to arrive at a fuller picture of the participants' life histories. All interviews took place between January and August of 2018.

The framework for analysing these histories was constructed from a combination of heuristics drawn from the literature. These include Ball et al.'s (2012, p. 49) schema of 'policy positions' ('narrators', 'entrepreneurs', 'transactors', 'enthusiasts', 'translators', 'critics' and 'receivers'), and the processes of policy 'interpretation', 'translation' and 're-contextualisation' (Ball et al., 2012, p. 142), as well as Everington's (2016) themes in RE professionalism and pedagogies in values education (e.g. Hand, 2014).

Strengths and limitations

The methodology allowed for an in-depth study of five teachers' responses to FBV – particularly their perceptions and internal conversations as they made decisions about how to incorporate FBV in their practice. The account that follows illuminates how their different backgrounds, both professional and personal, influenced these responses as they made sense of policy. As such, a further strength of the research was that it allowed space for reflection and increased self-knowledge amongst participants (Sikes and Everington, 2001).

There were also limitations to the methodology - some of them typical of life history research. The sample size is small and the data are limited to interview transcripts rather than being triangulated through, for example, documentary evidence or observation. In addition, the focused sampling, which prioritised teachers' professional characteristics, not their personal identity (for example, ethnicity, religion), resulted in relatively a narrow range of identities represented in the sample. All participants identified as 'White British' and all worked in urban, multicultural schools. **The research offers a close reading and interpretation of the internal dynamics of some teachers' responses to the policy. Interpreted in the context of broader policy narratives, this interpretation also offers insights into the complex dynamics involved in the enactment of FBV.**

Findings

The findings are presented below in the form of the teachers' life histories, followed by analysis and interpretation of how the teachers drew on these in their responses to FBV.

Rebecca

Rebecca was relatively new to teaching and was the only participant in the study who

had not trained in RE, PSHE or CE. Rebecca had completed a PGCE in Drama, following a career in the theatre and some work in Theatre in Education. She also had a history of political activism, having taken part in protest marches, including the recent women's marches against Donald Trump. She initially found the transition from theatre to the classroom challenging but became more comfortable with the formal structures of school over time. Having been 'drafted in' to teach RE and PSHE at her previous school, Rebecca volunteered to co-ordinate FBV in her current school because she enjoyed teaching what she described as 'taboo' topics. Rebecca followed government guidance closely when planning her teaching, partly for 'reassurance that I'm doing the right thing' and 'covering my own back'.

Rebecca's approach to following government guidance closely, combined with her activist background, resulted in an interesting response to FBV. Rebecca was keen to point out that FBV permeated all aspects of school life. She was supportive of this and felt it was something that both pupils and parents needed to accept:

> You're on board with British Values if you're within this school building.

One way of interpreting this is that Rebecca was operating within a professional context in which there was a strong 'institutional narrative' (Ball et al., 2012: 51) around the policy:

> coming here, it wasn't like, 'Okay there's this thing called British Values' it was just almost a given that it's just part of the ethos here. And the language that is used within staff to staff, and when we have staff training as well, it's intertwined with that.

As is evident in the above extract, Rebecca's enthusiasm about people being 'on board' with FBV also applied to staff:

> I mean if they're teaching in the right way then it should just be there naturally in terms of…yeah, crossing different cultures and community projects, looking at right and wrong and fair play and things like this.

Not only does the above extract indicate that Rebecca was keen for all staff to engage seriously with FBV but also that she saw this in terms of a 'right way' of doing things. In this sense, Rebecca acted as a strong advocate of FBV in her school setting. This reading is also supported by the *way* in which Rebecca promoted FBV via policy 'artefacts' in the school (Ball et al., 2012: 121):

> And the children are very comfortable with me saying, 'Okay this is our title for today, how does this link to a British Value? – and they'll know what they are…and if they don't then they've got it in their planners anyway. Yeah, and I just think it's just really quite engrained… I mean they're not posters, they're these big canvasses…so we have them in pretty much every corridor so it's always up.

Rebecca's enthusiasm for FBV could be read as part of her enthusiasm for government guidelines in general; Rebecca wanted to make sure that FBV was 'faithfully' delivered, as with any other policy guidance:

> I don't think I would approach any material really without seeing if it's on the government guidelines. I don't like the idea of sort of plucking things out of thin air and just going 'Well I think it's relevant and I think the kids should know it' so I need to feel like I have a reassurance that I'm doing the right thing.

While this might initially seem at odds with her history of political activism and protest, Rebecca saw a congruence between her activism and her enthusiasm for FBV, as her following interpretation of promoting the 'rule of law' indicates:

> I like it to be challenging…I want to make sure the children walk away as knowledgeable as possible, to be the most well informed children…wanting the children to be as switched on as I was and for them to know their rights and what they can't say and what they should say.

Rebecca was also creative in her response to FBV. Her reference above to 'fair play' illustrates how she added to the values outlined in the policy. Likewise, her interpretation of 'mutual respect' encompassed acceptance of diverse sexualities, indicating a creative alignment of FBV with her own political commitments:

> in terms of mutual respect, some children find it difficult to…and the tolerance…find it difficult to get past perhaps what they've been taught at home regarding sexuality – is a big one here…we do spend a lot of time, especially at Year 8 but more so in Year 9 looking at gender and sexuality…it's either you get on with it, you accept it, or the kind of message is you can go elsewhere really.

Rebecca's response to FBV was one of creative enthusiasm. Encouraged by a school environment in which FBV was taken seriously, she combined her existing commitment to following guidelines with her personal history of activism in relation to gender and sexuality in her interpretation of the policy.

Maeve

Maeve was the most experienced of the participants in the study, having trained with the first cohort to teach the then new subject of CE. With a background in Psychology and Sociology, Maeve qualified as a teacher of Social Sciences and taught at one other school before taking up the post of RE teacher at her current school. She had recently become Head of RE, PSHE and CE, which involved planning and co-ordinating the provision of SMSC with a range of non-specialist teachers. Maeve had a personal commitment to these subjects, laughingly describing herself as the 'moral compass of the school'. As a self-described, 'working class single mum', who came to teaching later in life, she wanted her pupils to benefit from education just as she had, and to know that they could make a difference in the world. Maeve was well-versed in balancing her deeply held pedagogic commitments with the institutional and policy

demands of her profession:

> I've got a list of legalities that I've got to follow, I've got a list of things I need to do to enrich the children but I've also got to respond to what's going on in the news, in the world, in the school, in our community.

Maeve initially interpreted FBV as having chauvinistic, imperialist and even racist overtones, making the promotion of FBV in school uncomfortable for her:

> Well I felt like it was like, we were sort of putting ourselves up there going, 'Oh', you know, 'we're great; these are our values, they're not your values' because I felt that's, media-wise, that's what it was, you know like citizenship examinations and we've got to…you've got to be like us.

In the above extract, it is clear that Maeve had concerns about FBV falling within a conservative political agenda bordering on assimilation. Maeve's account of her experience at a conference for RE teachers illustrates the trouble she had in reconciling her love for values education with her suspicion about the potentially racist politics behind FBV:

> I went on a course a while ago and we were all there moaning and saying, 'we don't like it, we don't like it…it's values…we like, we like what it is but we don't like calling it British values', 'why do we have to call it British values? Cause it's just values' ….and like we had a big talk about that, about why we felt like that and we were like, 'you know, gosh, it's like hundreds of years of guilt' and but it…that's what it is, you know, you don't…if you see…like the British flag or the England flag you totally quickly equate it like with the BNP or EDL…do you know what I mean?

However, Maeve's response to FBV changed following an encounter with another teacher, in which she was prompted to reconsider her own preconceptions about Britishness, whiteness and racism:

> there was a lady there, she was a teacher, and she was Spanish…and she said, 'no you should be proud that it's British Values and it's what you think is being British. Do you think that you're British because you're a white British person and that everybody else who isn't, isn't British?' and it was like, 'Oh God, yeah you know, you're making a point.'

Following this, Maeve became more comfortable with promoting FBV but, crucially, via an interrogation of the concept of Britishness itself:

> So I try to come at it with the kids about thinking about what is British? Cause we're all British, because we're all here and we're British and we…you know we're part of this country whether our parents we're born here or whether they were born somewhere else, or whether we we're born here…

In terms of pedagogy, Maeve found ways of enacting this version of FBV based on strategies drawn from global citizenship education, which she explained she had some training in during her teacher education in CE:

> we've got some blow-up…some blow up globes and we're going to throw them to each other and wherever your thumb lands, you've got to say what country it is; do you know something about that country? Do you know somebody from that country? Does anybody else know something? So we're all thinking about how much we know about the world.

Taken together, the above extracts illustrate how Maeve worked creatively with FBV, from her position as an experienced teacher of CE, to assuage her own fears about racism behind the policy and make it fit within her existing commitment to engaging pupils in a critical and expansive consideration of what it means to be British. One way of interpreting this is that Maeve shifted from the position of 'policy transactor' (ensuring the policy was done and seen to be done) (Ball et al, 2012: 56) to one of 'policy enthusiast' for whom FBV was an opportunity to get on with 'proper' teaching (Ball et al., 2012: 59). However, this did not come without a personal and emotional

struggle:

> when I first started doing British Values, I very much felt that I was doing it because it ticked a box but I feel that, since I've discussed it with other people – and like I say, at that conference I was at – I think I've changed the way I look at it…that anxiety's gone away and I do feel that it's something that we should be promoting.

Crucially, it was the appeal to Maeve's concern with values education per se that persuaded her that 'British values' could also be a worthwhile educational project, if divested of its imperialist overtones, or at least if these were sufficiently troubled and challenged. Her training in CE allowed her to operationalise this but her commitment to values education more broadly is what motivated her to do so.

Jenny

Jenny was also an experienced teacher, with a career spanning fifteen years. Having taught at one other school, she was now Head of RE and PSHE in her current post. Jenny enjoyed RE at school – chiefly because of a charismatic teacher who allowed her pupils to explore and articulate their own beliefs – and initially tried to emulate this in her own teaching. Jenny studied Theology and Religious Studies at University, then completing a PGCE to fulfil her ambition of becoming an RE teacher. However, Jenny was keen to distance herself from the wider RE community, which she regarded as being, 'full of religious people – not my thing'. Jenny was driven by a strong desire to 'broaden the horizons' of her pupils and offer alternative perspectives ('from the left side of the political spectrum') to those she believed they were exposed to ordinarily.

Like Maeve, Jenny was initially very suspicious of FBV but over time found a way of making FBV because of her concern about the potentially racist motivations behind it and the tone of the policy:

> it had a racist undertone…or not a racist undertone but it had a racist motivation undertone. I felt it to be awkward and I looked at it and I thought, pushing British Values in school, is it just to say you know, 'This is what Britain is' and to say you know it's cups of tea and it's the Empire and things like that.

As the above extract indicates, Jenny was concerned not only about racist motivations behind the policy but also that promoting British values meant celebrating Britain's colonial past. Jenny's response to this was a purposeful attempt to redress the balance in her teaching of 'Britishness' and 'British values':

> And I thought, what am I going to do, like reinforce the Empire with 50% Asian kids here and talk about how wonderful Winston Churchill or somebody like that was?...so I do Florence Nightingale, we did Mary Seacole…and then Mo Farah…Alan Turing...yeah it fits my kind of lefty agenda but also I look at it and go, 'that's what's relevant to our kids'.

The above extract illustrates how Jenny worked creatively with FBV to make it fit with her existing personal and political commitments but also with the context in which she taught. One way of interpreting this is that Jenny was re-contextualising the policy and making it fit her 'situated context' (Ball et al., 2012: 21). It was not only Jenny's personal and political commitments that informed this re-contextualisation but also her commitment to multiculturalism and pluralism in RE:

> So what I tend to do is just get these British Values and look at them and go right, I'm not going to say this is about drinking cups of tea and scones, I'm going to look at all the parts of British society and say what are these amazing bits here – you know the self-control of Ramadan and the respect for your family that the Hindus have for arranged marriage or something like that – take all those out and then that's me as British values.

The above extract also indicate how Jenny drew on pedagogic strategies from pluralistic RE – emphasising the manifestation of values in a variety of faith traditions in Britain –

in her approach to FBV.

Jenny's engagement with FBV involved reshaping it – adding and taking away from the policy as presented in the government guidance – in order to make it fit her existing personal, political and pedagogic commitments. As Jenny remarked, she was 'okay' with FBV, 'just as long as I can take ownership of it and look at it and put my interpretation on it'.

Ben

Ben had taught for nearly ten years at the time of interview. Having studied Comparative Religion and Anthropology at university, Ben went on to complete a PGCE in RE and was working as a teacher of 'Beliefs and Values' at his current school. Ben's interest in religion was ignited by philosophical questions about the nature of the universe and arguments for and against the existence of God. In his own life, he combined an early commitment to atheism with an interest in Buddhism and Taoism, resulting in 'synthesising all the different world religions into one thing'. Ben was sceptical about the standards agenda in schools, seeing it as a threat to the person-centred, humanistic approach he adopted in his own teaching. In this regard, he was particularly inspired by a mentor who made clear her distaste for policy directives that represented 'all the things they say we have to do' but which got in the way of what she (and he) considered the real work of teaching.

Ben's response to FBV was coloured by his strongly humanistic approach to teaching and his resistance to 'top down' directives from government. This was combined with scepticism about the imperialist and colonial overtones of FBV:

> Like we've got, our safeguarding officer made…I don't know how many thousands of stickers, like there are enough to go on every child's book in every subject...and it's a little sticker which says SMSC in big letters in the middle, and

> there's a Union Jack in the background, and then like in the lines of the Union jack are, 'tolerance, rule of law, democracy, freedoms…' you know. And for me it's just like, 'That can't represent democracy' because the history of that flag is so terrible.

In the extract above, it is clear that Ben's concerns about the policy related not only to the problematics of promoting democracy as a 'British' value but also to the extra administrative burden it placed on staff. One way of interpreting Ben's response is that he took up the position of a 'policy critic' in relation to FBV, highlighting its 'second order implications' for teachers' workloads and maintaining counter discourses of teaching (Ball et al., 2012: 62):

> there's such a burden of administrative duty that she would make thousands of stickers and hope that you can stick that on the book and then like you're done, do you know what I mean?

From this position of 'critic', Ben talked about deliberately attempting to subvert FBV by encouraging pupils to explore some of the values named in the policy from a critical stance:

> I've tried to do it in as subversive a way as possible…so I've just made a scheme of work which is about global citizenship, which explores…like one of the lessons is called Uncomfortable Histories, which is about our histories as part of the slave trade and the arms trade, and of imperialism…sort of under the title of 'democracy'.

Although Ben described this as an attempt at subversion, it could also be understood as a way of engaging seriously with the values outlined in the policy, by highlighting the difficulties of Britain's past in relation to 'mutual respect and tolerance'. Similarly, he tried to problematize 'the rule of law' with his pupils in a way that prompted them to confront the inherent tensions within democracy:

> so I made a scheme of work about asylum seekers and refugees, so we get them to write letters to…they have a choice of what they want to do. If they feel like the situation with asylum seekers is unjust then they have the opportunity either to make posters of welcome in the school or to write letters to their MPs. Or if they have sort of ideas that like we shouldn't accept any refugees then we get them to write why they think that and we try and like have a critical discussion about that.

Pedagogically, this reflects 'active citizenship' but Ben also drew on strategies from comparative RE, teaching pupils about key figures from various religions to explore a shared principle:

> So I'm really interested in finding safe ways to teach young people about the power of direct action…and like Martin Luther King is a great way to do that, and Mrs Gandhi…problematic figures though they are.

Ben was particularly keen for his pupils to understand how these figures' religious faith sustained their political activism and kept them resilient, marrying an established pedagogic approach from RE (the exploration of religious role models) with his interpretation of values education as creating 'change-makers', who are politically engaged:

> Lots of the great social revolutionaries in history – most of them have had a great depth of resources on the spiritual level, whatever that is, to draw from…And for me that is a really important part of having successful change-makers, is people who have that depth of resource and that sort of deep sense of being part of something much bigger than themselves.

Ben's overall view of values education, which he elaborated on in interview, was **eclectic:**

> One is encouraging young people to pursue their personal journey or spirituality or truth or quality of their presence or connection with God, or the dharma…another one is about developing their social awareness, so understanding their place in the

> world and how to do that skilfully and how to understand trauma and like traumatic events, and how they reinvent themselves and how to break that cycle, so kind of more citizenship-y changing the world.

The influence of Ben's own religious journey appears to be influential in the description above. However, this also resonates with a broader shift in values education towards the cultivation of specific virtues in ways that blur the boundaries between the political, the moral and the psychological.

Ben's response to FBV involved a serious engagement with the values described in the policy, including the moral complexities and difficulties associated with those values – and with describing them as British. This response was informed by **an eclectic** approach to values education based on his own religious and academic experiences (which also resonated with broader agendas in values education) and specific pedagogies drawn from RE and CE.

Kieran

Kieran was relatively new to teaching but had progressed quickly through his career, teaching at one other school before taking up his current post as Head of Humanities. Kieran studied Politics before entering the RE profession, out of a desire to help pupils develop holistically. Kieran felt he had a flair for discussion and debate and was keen to translate this to the classroom. He also drew explicitly on strategies from 'Philosophy for Children', having been mentored by an advocate of this approach during his PGCE. Kieran found he was spending less time in the classroom in his current role and was conscious of the demands of 'the data' on his time and missed classroom teaching. This was somewhat mitigated by the fact that Rebecca (who worked with Kieran) was responsible for FBV in their school.

Kieran was not initially critical of FBV, instead seeing it as simply another administrative burden:

> In all honesty, I think when it first came out I thought, 'Is this another box to tick?' because at that point in my professional career I was still…you know I was in my first or second year, I think.

One way of interpreting the arc of Kieran's narrative is to observe a shift in his position over time from one of 'policy receiver', as a new teacher simply 'coping' with FBV as one of a whole raft of policy directives (Ball et al., 2012: 63) to one of 'policy transactor' (Ball et al., 2012: 56). In his role as Head of Humanities, he had responsibility for ensuring the policy was done and seen to be done:

> I think in my role as Head of Humanities, History and Geography are the kind of primary focus because they are what the school are judged by, by the government. And I think I'm fortunate that we have a head of SMSC and British Values, Rebecca – she's responsible for co-ordinating that across the school.

Over time, Kieran arguably moved more towards more an 'enthusiast' position, seeing some intrinsic benefits to FBV that fit with his overall educational philosophy:

> I always felt like it was about kind of getting pupils to develop morally, ethically, holistically. And I think RE and British Values, I think they do intertwine in that it's about getting pupils to kind of develop a sense of self and awareness.

However, doubts and 'discomforts' (Ball et al., 2012: 89) about the way FBV might be affecting his pedagogic practice also emerged in interview:

> I think sometimes young people are impressionable – knee jerk reactions can be sometimes quite extreme. I think we need to make very clear to young people that they're not necessarily…well these knee jerk reactions are extreme reactions, aren't the correct…I say in brackets…reactions. With my RE background I don't want to tell pupils what to think.

In the extract above, Kieran literally stopped himself from saying he needed to tell pupils the 'correct' way to think, act and behave because of his commitment to non-directive discussion in RE. Later, he expanded on this:

> I don't think I would, I wouldn't have a slide saying, 'This is why British democracy is fantastic'…because I'm not sure if that would add value to that piece of information. That would potentially tick a box for British Values on our curriculum and that kind of stuff, but actually I think with the pupils I think it would be more valuable if their own just consideration brought that conclusion to them.

This was particularly troubling for Kieran because he saw non-directive discussion as a key part of his professional identity:

> For the whole moral and ethical kind of development, I think discussion and being able to lead and kind of structure a discussion with pupils is…well what I've found and believe to be the most important.

Like Ben, Kieran was inspired in his approach by a mentor on his PGCE course, someone who gave him access to the 'historic archive' of alternative teaching discourses (Ball et al., 2012: 62):

> I just think…her approach towards it and kind of looking back now it's kind of based in that whole kind of discursive, where she used to use the Philosophy for Children type approach…especially with the Key Stage 3. Which you don't so much now, I don't really hear so much about as I did a couple of years ago, but I always thought it was really interesting for them…as a teacher and for the pupils.

Kieran's reflections on FBV centred on the question of whether it is ever okay to 'tell pupils what to think'. This was something that went to the heart of his professional identity as a teacher of RE but which he was being forced to reconsider and perhaps reassert in the new policy context.

Discussion

The findings illustrate the variety of ways in which a small number of teachers of RE, PSHE and CE responded to FBV. Building FBV into their practice came more easily for some than for others. For all, an existing commitment to values education prompted them to engage seriously with the policy and find ways to accommodate FBV within their practice. Though the teachers had different visions of what this was, all were committed to values education per se. In some cases, FBV provided an outlet for their existing, 'directive' (Hand, 2014) approach to values education, in which the promotion of prescribed values in the 'right' way was key – though they still interpreted those values creatively. For others, the directive nature of FBV gave pause for thought and prompted a re-evaluation and re-assertion of discursive approaches, which came closer to 'values clarification' than values promotion. For others still, a commitment to 'values' per se superseded their initial concerns about FBV and motivated them to work creatively with the policy.

Because of their position as values educators, the teachers were also 'hailed' (Ball et al., 2012, p. 97) by FBV in ways that afforded them greater power in their schools. Maeve, Jenny and Rebecca all found themselves doing the important work of policy narration and interpretation that is often the responsibility of senior management (Ball et al., 2012, p. 50). Context was important here - particularly, the 'professional culture' (Ball et al., 2012, p. 26) and 'relocation' of FBV as school values (Vincent, 2019), which arguably allowed Rebecca to create a 'policy career' (Ball et al., 2012, p. 67) out of FBV. As a new entrant to teaching, and the only teacher without training in RE, PSHE or CE, Rebecca's field of reference for adapting and applying FBV related more to her personal experiences and the school culture in which she was working, rather than older, subject-specific traditions that were sometimes in tension with FBV for the other teachers.

For those teachers with a longer career history and training in these subjects, the existing traditions, commitments and developments in RE, PSHE and CE played an important role in how they adapted FBV to their practice. For example, Maeve and Jenny, who had both trained to teach when multicultural RE was in its ascendancy (Everington, 2016), re-contextualised FBV along more pluralistic and multicultural lines. For Jenny, this involved applying a pluralistic approach to RE to illustrate the diverse ways in which British values are manifest in society – including through different faith traditions. For Maeve, this involved drawing on her training in global citizenship education to explore contested and expansive views of Britishness.

For those teachers who had trained in RE, PSHE and CE, but were still at a relatively early stage of their career, connections to older pedagogic discourses in these curriculum areas, via relationships with mentors, formed an important part of their responses to FBV. For Kieran, a commitment to non-directive discussion in RE and specifically to methods from 'Philosophy for Children' acted as a 'corrective' against any simplistic promotion of values associated with FBV. For Ben, a holistic and humanistic approach to values education, incorporating classic methods from RE such as the exploration of religious role models, informed his response.

The findings lend weight to claims about the potential of pluralistic RE in forging more critical responses to FBV (Farrell and Lander, 2018; Farrell, 2016). It is worth noting here that these teachers may have been aided in this by their privileged position as teachers whose own ethnic and religious identity was not directly targeted by the policy, as experienced by some Muslim teachers (Farrell and Lander 2018; Panjwani 2016). Of course, it is also possible to read some of the teachers' responses as conforming to the conservative version of values education of which FBV forms a part. Rebecca's concern with following the guidelines closely and Ben's **eclectic** approach to

pupils' development in moral, psychological and political terms are perhaps illustrative of this. However, in their efforts to adapt to a policy that many found questionable in terms of its motivations, these teachers worked creatively, drawing on personal and professional commitments but also on older pedagogic traditions to make FBV work in a way that fit their own educational commitments.

In many cases, these connections – both to older traditions and to existing policy agendas remained implicit. One implication of the research for practice is that making space for teachers to reflect and make explicit the influences on their practice, as they respond creatively to policy, could form an important part of teacher education and continuing professional development (CPD) in these subject areas.

Conclusion

The findings reported in this paper are based on a small-scale, exploratory study, and are not generalizable to a wider population of teachers of RE, PSHE and CE. As is typical of life history research, it involved only a small number of participants, offering a creative interpretation not an objectively verifiable truth. As a study of how some teachers of these subjects are responding to FBV as an instance of values education, however, the study offers important insights into the internal conversations and dynamics involved in the responses of those teachers who are already engaged in values education.

The complexity, variation and creativity of the teachers' responses to FBV in this study offer a counter-narrative to the straightforward and simplistic story of 'values promotion' implied by the policy documentation and the equally straightforward and simplistic story of co-option and constraint by the policy**, which, as observed above, can be implied in some of the sociological research on FBV.** The enactment of FBV often rests on the work of teachers who are well-versed in a longer history of values

education and who bring to it a rich history of pedagogic traditions in RE, PSHE and CE (either directly or indirectly). As such, its 'afterlife' in practice is likely to be much more rich, varied and complex than the context surrounding its political inception implies.

Understanding this 'unpredictable element' (Goodson, 2012, p. 8) of the policy, as this research helps to do, is one important way of expanding our perspective on the broader shifts happening in values education both nationally and internationally. Further research with a wider cross-section of teachers across a greater range of geographic settings would help to add to this work, while reflective work in teacher education and CPD that explores this hinterland of policy could help support teachers as they respond creatively to the shifting landscape in values education.

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