

Fundamental British Values

Edited by
Vini Lander



Fundamental British Values

This book seeks to investigate how the pedagogic space of schools and classrooms has been defined by the UK government's counterterrorism 'Prevent' strategy, most notably through the requirement on teachers not to undermine 'fundamental British values' as part of the Teachers' Professional Standards. The term 'fundamental British values' migrated from Prevent to the statutory framework that regulates teacher professionalism and has effectively securitized education practice. The Prevent strategy was conceived in response to the 7/7 bombings in London by so-called 'home-grown' Muslim terrorists. The need for teachers to promote British values is an attempt to forge a cohesive British identity among young citizens within a multiracial, multicultural and multilingual society. However, as the chapters in this book illustrate, the state project to harness education to engender belonging – or as some would argue, civic nationalism – while simultaneously undertaking surveillance of children and young people from the Muslim community for signs of radicalization, has led to the perception of a hierarchy of citizens or, conversely, 'insider-outsider' citizens.

The imperative to promote, and not undermine, fundamental British values has, in some instances, transformed the safe space of the classroom where children and young people's right to explore their perceptions of current affairs, citizenship and belonging has been curtailed for fear of surveillance by teachers who may interpret their utterances as either undermining British values or to be signs of radicalization. This book explores these dilemmas for teachers and the implications for their professionalism, and examines how racist nativism has pervaded society, educational policy and practice through the promotion of a Britishness perceived by many as a raced, classed and exclusionary discourse. This book was originally published as a special issue of the *Journal of Education for Teaching*.

Vini Lander is Professor in Education and Head of Research in the Faculty of Education at Edge Hill University, UK. Her passion for teaching about race equality arose from her childhood experiences as an immigrant to Britain. As a teacher and teacher educator, she is committed to improving professional understanding of race and racism in education. The persistence of race inequality has been the driving force behind her commitment to educate teachers to think beyond the status quo that may perpetuate these inequalities. Her dedication to promoting race equality and her long-held belief that teachers can make a difference underpin her teaching and research.



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Vini Lander

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Chapter 1

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Francis Farrell

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Chapter 2

Britishness as racist nativism: a case of the unnamed 'other'

Heather Jane Smith

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Chapter 3

'I'd worry about how to teach it': British values in English classrooms

Uvanney Maylor

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Farid Panjwani

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Chapter 6

A place for fundamental (British) values in teacher education in Northern Ireland?

Alan McCully and Linda Clarke

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Preface

Securitisation and Values

Peter Gilroy

Australian values are being unhelpfully positioned in fixed and static terms, rather than as shared and unforced values, thereby privileging certain standpoints to the exclusion of others.

(Peterson and Bentley 2016, p. 249)

For some years now the issue of values, often intertwined with questions about citizenship (see Hayward and Jerome 2010), has become the focus of public debate, spurred on by what has come to be seen as a threat to what is termed 'the British way of life' (see Tebbit 2016). Thus, the publication of the Teachers' Standards in 2012 (DfE 2012) could be seen as an important first step in the government attempting to formalise the teaching of British values. Much of this document consists of statements that are so breathtakingly obvious that they hardly seem worth stating, such as that teachers should 'plan and teach well structured lessons', as if teachers would set out to do otherwise.

However, a little later in the document we are told something more controversial, namely that teachers should 'uphold public trust in the profession by . . . not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.' There are two reasons why this at first innocuous statement can be seen as controversial. The first is that the statement was taken from the 2011 *Prevent Strategy* (see in particular HMG 2011, p. 44, para. 8.7), whose first objective is identified as 'challenging the ideology that supports terrorism and those who promote it' as part of 'our counter-terrorism strategy' (ibid.). As a result this makes it clear that teachers who are now required to promote 'fundamental British values' (DfE 2014) find themselves, whether they realise it or not, a key element of the government's anti-terrorist strategy.

The second is that in attempting to define 'fundamental British values' by reference to examples such as 'democracy, the rule of law', liberty, respect and tolerance seems to be assuming that those exemplars are somehow unique to Britain when in fact it seems clear that they are not. Attempting to argue by listing examples is a flawed exercise, if only because those examples can easily be applied to many other social contexts. Moreover, all but one of the examples (the rule of law) are concepts that are candidates for Gallie's category of essentially contested concepts (Gallie 1956). Indeed one of them, democracy, is an example Gallie used himself to make the point that there are certain concepts whose very nature is such that agreement about their meaning cannot easily be made. In fact such agreement becomes even more difficult in a multicultural society such as Britain's if only because it is the cultural expression of such contentious concepts that gives them whatever meaning they might arguably possess.