

Critiquing Approaches to Countering Extremism: The Fundamental British Values Problem in English Formal Schooling

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1. Introduction

The teaching of fundamental British values (FBVs) in English schools has been placed at the heart of counterterrorism policy, with the aim that this will have a significant and positive effect in deterring and countering extremism. This article focuses on the particular context of formal education in England: critiquing the current approach by highlighting the more controversial aspects of the FBV agenda and suggesting that there may be other values frameworks more suited to the role of combatting extremism within formal schooling.

Section 2 explains how the policy of promoting FBVs evolved, and the way interested parties in the community reacted to its introduction. The academic research into different aspects of teaching FBVs is then examined in section 3. Section 4 discusses a scoping study of London school websites, conducted by Diane Webber in 2018-19, that revealed which values are currently prioritised by London schools. This is followed in section 5 by the suggestion that an education based around human rights values is likely to offer a more effective framework than FBVs for building resilience in learners. The article concludes that universal values, in particular human rights values, may be considered more relevant and beneficial than FBVs for schools to teach and that this might offer the basis for a policy that: (i) is more effectual in terms of building resilience in learners; and (ii) generates less controversy within different sectors of the British community. A suggestion is also made that a broader and more detailed study drawing on the views of educators, learners, and the wider community is urgently needed to facilitate the evolution of an effective policy in this area.

2. The Evolution of FBVs

Winter and Mills trace the source of cultural values in school curricula through historical analysis. They demonstrate how from the beginning of the twentieth century, schools taught values that

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included nationalism, militarism, imperialism, racial superiority, and Christian paternalism, and suggest that schools struggled to deal with multiculturalism after the influx of immigrants from former British colonies after World War 2.¹ Whilst the late 1970s saw the rise of progressive, bottom-up efforts to embed anti-racist education in English educational policy and practice, this radical, grass-roots movement began to peter out during the 1980s and 90s when faced with populist resistance perpetuated through the mass media.² The movement had drawn upon universal values frameworks, including human rights, but little evidence of its legacy remained towards the end of the 1990s. There were, however, various attempts to encapsulate values within the education system throughout this decade, particularly following the violent murder of James Bulger at the hands of two primary school-aged children in 1993,³ and the concept became more prominent in the educational discourse in 2001 following widespread inter-city violence.⁴ It was not long after this that the roots of the current formulation of FBVs, including democracy, rule of law, tolerance, respect for this country and its shared heritage, and equal treatment for all, were first mentioned by the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, in 2006.⁵

The term 'Fundamental British values' was 'coined in 2011 and the original context had nothing directly to do with education'.⁶ It first appeared in a definition of extremism found in an annex to the 2011 Prevent Strategy: 'Extremism is vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs'.⁷ In fact, the prefatory words of Theresa May, the then Home Secretary, in the 2011 Prevent Strategy suggested a broader approach to the meaning of values:

First, we will respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat from those who promote it. In doing so, we must be clear: the ideology of extremism and terrorism is

¹ Christine Winter and China Mills, *The Psy-Security Curriculum ensemble: British values curriculum policy in English schools*, *Journal of Education Policy*, 4, (Jun. 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2018.1493621>.

² Alastair Bonnett and Bruce Carrington, *Constructions of Anti-Racist Education in Britain and Canada* 32(2) *Comparative Education* 271-288 (Nov. 1996).

³ Monica J. Taylor, 'Voicing their Values: Pupils' Moral and Cultural Experience' in Mark J. Halstead & Monica J. Taylor (eds), *Values in Education and Education in Values* (The Falmer Press, London 1996) 121-142 at 122.

⁴ *Id.*, 5, citing David Blunkett's speech, reproduced in *The Guardian*, (11 Dec., 2001), <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2001/dec/11/immigrationpolicy.race>: "our democracy must uphold fundamental rights and obligations to which all citizens and public authorities adhere. Citizenship means finding a common place for diverse cultures and beliefs, consistent with the core values we uphold."

⁵ *Id.*, 6, citing Tony Blair, "Our Nation's Future- Multiculturalism and Integration." *The Duty to Integrate: Shared British Values*, 8 Dec., 2006, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20080909022722/http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page10563>.

⁶ Robin Robinson & Bill Bolloten, "Fundamental British Values," compiled for Race Equality Teaching symposium, Jan. 2015; Robin Richardson, *British values and British identity: Muddles, mixtures and ways ahead*, 13(2) *London Review of Education*, (Sep. 2015).

⁷ *Id.*, citing H.M. Government, *Prevent Strategy, Annex A*, 107, Cmd. 8097 (Jun. 2011).

the problem; legitimate religious belief emphatically is not. But we will not work with extremist organisations that oppose *our values of universal human rights, equality before the law, democracy and full participation in our society*. If organisations do not accept these *fundamental values*, we will not work with them and we will not fund them.⁸

This wider set of values did not appear again in the Prevent discourse. Instead, commentators point only to subsequent mention of the five stated British values that appeared in various relevant documents, including: the more specific definition of extremism in the Prevent Strategy itself;⁹ Teachers Standards in 2011;¹⁰ the Department for Education (DfE) Schools Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) guidance in 2014;¹¹ and relevant Ofsted guidance.¹² In the aftermath of the Trojan Horse affair, which had been prompted by an anonymous letter describing an Islamist plot to infiltrate a number of schools in the West Midlands, a subtle yet important shift occurred in the DfE guidance.¹³ In November 2014, the requirement upon schools '*not to undermine* FBVs' within the 2012 guidance was modified to an obligation to '*actively promote* FBVs'.¹⁴ DfE Guidance in 2015 also stated that '[s]chools and childcare providers can also build pupils' resilience to radicalisation by promoting fundamental British values and enabling them to challenge extremist views'.¹⁵ The Prevent guidance was finally cemented into a statutory duty when the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 mandated schools and childcare providers 'to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'.¹⁶ Converting, or 'enacting' government policy into school practice has been described as a very complicated process.¹⁷ In the case of FBVs, they are not taught as a separate subject, but rather constitute a broad over-arching obligation upon schools to be woven through their SMSC provision.¹⁸

⁸ Prevent Strategy, 1 (emphasis added).

⁹ Winter and Mills, 6.

¹⁰ Department for Education, Teachers' Standards, 9, 14, (Jul. 2011.).

¹¹ Department for Education, Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools, 5-6, (Nov. 2014).

¹² Ofsted, The Common Inspection Framework: Education, Skills and Early Years, 12-13, (2015): "Inspectors will make a judgmentabout the extent to which leaders, managers and governors....actively promote British values." In the Ofsted School Inspection Handbook of September 2018, 41, inspectors are required to evaluate the social development of pupils by seeing evidence of their "acceptance of and engagement with" FBVs.

¹³ Winter and Mills, 6; H.M. Government, Peter Clarke, Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools arising from the 'Trojan Horse' letter, HC 576, (Jul. 2014).

¹⁴ *Id.*, Department for Education, Press Release, Guidance on promoting British values in schools published, (Nov. 27, 2014); The Prevent Duty, Departmental Advice for Schools and Childcare Providers, 5, (Jun. 2015).

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, c.6, §26.

¹⁷ Joel Busher, Tufyal Choudhury & Paul Thomas, The enactment of the counter-terrorism "Prevent duty" in British schools and colleges: beyond reluctant accommodation or straightforward policy acceptance, Critical Studies on Terrorism, (2019), DOI: 10.1080/17539153.2019.1568853, 4 (*citing* Stephen J. Ball, Meg Maguire & Annette Braun, How Schools do Policy: Policy Enactments in Secondary Schools, 4 (Routledge, 2012)).

¹⁸ Winter and Mills, 6.

A continuing stream of concern and negativity about teaching FBVs has emanated from the press, the teaching profession, and communal groups right across the religious spectrum, from secular to faith groups.¹⁹ For example, the teachers' union NASUWT commented in 2016:

There is a fear that the term 'British Values' implies that these are values that are unique to Britain, which could foster alienation and division, implying that Britain is somehow better and more civilised than other countries. The requirement has also sometimes been misinterpreted as an instruction to promote stereotypical ideas of what it means to be British or to celebrate Britain's imperial past'.²⁰

The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), together with Browne Jacobson, conducted surveys on the Prevent duty in 2015 and 2016. One in four survey respondents in 2015 expressed concern about their ability to discharge their obligations under Prevent, and twenty-two percent of respondents surveyed in 2016 similarly reported encountering significant problems in implementing the Prevent duty. The greatest challenge identified in 2016 related to the promotion of 'British values' as opposed to 'values' more generally, with concern that the stated values were clearly not exclusive to Britain and that 'the label 'British' may alienate students and staff with another heritage, and that it has the potential to divide communities and people from different cultural backgrounds'.²¹

In terms of faith based comments, Dr Shuja Shafi, of the Muslim Council of Britain said: 'To me, the title [of the conference] "British Values: What they are and how we can impart them to our pupils" illustrates the challenge we all have on this matter: we can't quite firmly agree what they

¹⁹ See e.g. Uvanney Maylor, *Promoting British values opens up a can of worms for teachers*, The Guardian, (6 Jun., 2014), <https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2014/jun/12/promoting-british-values-opens-up-a-can-of-worms-for-teachers>; Sarah Cassidy, *Muslim leader: 'Teaching British values in schools creates atmosphere of suspicion'*, The Independent, (29 Jan., 2015), <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/muslim-leader-teaching-british-values-in-schools-creates-atmosphere-of-suspicion-10011944.html>; Sally Weale, *Prevent strategy stigmatising Muslim pupils, teachers say*, The Guardian, (3 Jul., 2017), <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jul/03/prevent-strategy-anti-radicalisation-stigmatising-muslim-pupils-teachers>; Sasha Pleasance, *Do the "British values" we teach have any real value?* Times Educational Supplement, Issue 5263, London (25 Aug. 2017); Carol Vincent & Myriam Hunter-Henin, *The trouble with teaching 'British values' in school*, The Independent, (10 Feb., 2018); Simon Rucker, *Government announces new plans to strengthen British values in UK schools*, Jewish Chronicle, (14 Mar. 2018), <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/new-plans-to-beef-up-british-values-in-uk-schools-including-strictly-orthodox-charedi-schools-1.460655>; National Secular Society, "Fundamental British Values" and citizenship, <https://www.secularism.org.uk/fundamental-values-citizenship/>, (last accessed 15 Mar. 2019); Robert Bowie & Lynn Revell, *Negotiating Fundamental British Values: Research conversations in Church schools*, (Sept. 2016), <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/78863476.pdf>.

²⁰ NASUWT, *Universal Values: Responding holistically to the requirement to promote Fundamental British values*, 2016, <https://www.nasuwat.org.uk/uploads/assets/uploaded/b49175fd-4bf6-4f2d-ac5b2759c03015be.pdf>.

²¹ See e.g. Association of School and College Leaders and Browne Jacobson LLP, *School Leaders' Survey 2016*, 18.

are'.²² And TellMAMA, a national project that records and measures anti-Muslim incidents in the UK, commented that British Values:

[A]re not uniquely British nor does this country hold any historical monopoly on a free press, tolerance or parliamentary democracy. A weak definition merely fuels the belief that 'British values' are merely a coded term to remind a non-white minority about their lesser position in Britain.²³

The Christian Institute remarked on the vagueness of the definition of FBVs and put forward allegations of controversial 'British values checks' by Ofsted on Christian and Jewish schools. It further lambasted that FBVs offer a 'broad-brush and clumsy approach. What is needed instead is a targeted, intelligence-led response to the radicalisation of children'.²⁴ In 2018, the Jewish Chronicle also reported that 'the last few months have witnessed the words 'British values' being used as a battering ram to demolish the schools of the strictly Orthodox Jewish community'.²⁵

With criticism emanating from so many interested parties, and in the absence of any significant developments to allay the concerns of the various groups since the FBV agenda was introduced, it would serve the Government well to look afresh at the issue of how best to equip learners in England with the necessary resilience to counter the pull of extremism.

3. Academic Analysis of the FBV Agenda

This section briefly examines the burgeoning body of academic research that has analysed FBVs in order to illustrate the predominantly negative discourse around their implementation. Amanda Keddie, for example, notes that being British means different things to different people, and that from the outset teachers appeared 'deeply sceptical about promoting the idea of Britishness or a distinct set of British values'.²⁶ She further observes that 'Britishness' is perceived to have racial

²² Muslim Council of Britain, Speech by Dr. Shuja Shafi on British and Islamic Values, (29 Jan., 2015), <https://mcb.org.uk/mcb-updates/shuja-shafi-speech-british-values/>.

²³ TellMAMA, British Values and "Muscular" Interventions by Steve Rose, (Jun. 20, 2014), www.telmmamauk.org/1955-by-steve-rose/.

²⁴ The Christian Institute, Ofsted and 'British values,' (Jun. 2017), https://www.christian.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Ofsted_briefing_web-2.pdf.

²⁵ Leibel Black, *Charedi schools are a true model of British values*, The Jewish Chronicle, (May 30, 2018), <https://www.thejc.com/education/education-features/charedi-schools-are-a-true-model-of-british-values-1.464748>.

²⁶ Amanda Keddie, *The politics of Britishness: multiculturalism, schooling and social cohesion*, 40(3) British Educational Research Journal 539-554, 541, (Jun. 2014).

connotations, with the term often interpreted as synonymous with ‘Englishness’ and ‘whiteness’.²⁷ Other commentators have emphasised that FBVs: are not uniquely ‘British’ but universal;²⁸ are vague in meaning and concept;²⁹ and stigmatise Muslims.³⁰ Claims have also been made that the teaching of FBVs securitises education.³¹

A number of the academic studies in this area rely on relevant empirical data. Maylor, for example, conducted interviews with teachers who all expressed resistance to teaching FBVs,³² and the Elton-Chalcraft study concluded that many of their interviewee teachers were insufficiently trained to teach FBVs.³³ Farrell and Lander interviewed eight Muslim teachers and their comments led the authors to conclude that ‘FBV discourse is inherently divisive, magnifying the exclusionary dynamics of structural racism by creating a new constitutive outside’, and that further empirical work was needed on the subject.³⁴

Jarvis, Marsden and Atakav’s British [Muslim] Values report in 2018 found that the term ‘British values’ has ‘no obvious or immediate meaning for many people living in Britain today’, being

²⁷ *Id.*; Also see e.g., Uvanney Maylor, ‘I’d worry about how to teach it’: *British values in English classrooms*, 42(3) *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 314, 317 (2016): “the emphasis on British values assumes that minority ethnic communities do not share liberal democratic values and, as such, what is required is forced assimilation in adopting British values; however, they are defined;” Joel Busher, Tufyal Choudhury, Paul Thomas, Gareth Harris, What the Prevent duty means for schools and colleges in England: an analysis of educationalists’ experiences, 27, (Jul. 2017), (this study analysed *inter alia* interviews of 70 education professionals from 14 schools and colleges in London and West Yorkshire, plus 225 responses to an national online survey of teaching staff); Sally Elton-Chalcraft, Vini Lander, Lynn Revell, Diane Warner & Linda Whitworth, *To promote, or not promote fundamental British values*, 43(1) *British Educational Research Journal*, 29-48. February 2017.

²⁸ See e.g. Sally Tomlinson, *Fundamental British Values*, in *The Runnymede School Report: Race, Education and Inequality in Contemporary Britain*, 10 (Eds., C. Alexander, D. Weekes-Bernard, J. Arday, 2015); Uvanney Maylor, 315; Farid Panjwani, *Toward an overlapping consensus: Muslim teachers’ views on fundamental British values*, 42(3) *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 329-340, 331, 2016; Anne-Lynn Dudenhofer, *Resisting Radicalisation: A Critical Analysis of the UK Prevent Duty*, 14 *Journal for Deradicalization*, Spring 2018; Imran Awan, Keith Spiller, Andrew Whiting, *Terrorism in the Classroom*, 115 (Palgrave 2019).

²⁹ Bill Bolloten & Robin Richardson, *The Great British Values Disaster – Education, Security and Vitriolic Hate*, Institute of Race Relations, for Race Equality Teaching, January 2015; Panjwani; Winter & Mills, Alison Struthers, *Teaching British Values in Our Schools: But Why Not Human Rights Values?* 26(1) *Social and Legal Studies*, 89-111, 90, (2017).

³⁰ See e.g. Keddie, 539; Busher, 54; David Barrett, *The UK’s Anti-Radicalisation Prevent Duty*, 26 *Nottingham Law Journal* 110, (2017); Aislinn O’Donnell, *Pedagogical injustice and counter-terrorism education*, 12(2) *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 177-193, 178 (2017); Dudenhofer; Joel David Taylor, *Suspect categories, alienation and counterterrorism: Critically assessing prevent in the UK*, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 2018; Jan Germen Janmaat, *Educational influences on young people’s support for fundamental British values*, 44(2) *British Educational Research Journal* 251-273 (Mar. 2018).

³¹ See e.g. Vini Lander, *Introduction to Fundamental British Values*, 42(3) *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 274 (2016); O’Donnell, 178; Winter & Mills, 14;

³² Maylor, 324. This involved interviewing the heads, 9 PSHE teachers and 95 learners within focus groups from 6 schools across the UK.

³³ Elton-Chalcraft.

³⁴ Francis Farrell & Vini Lander, *“We’re not British values teachers, are we?”: Muslim teachers’ subjectivity and the governmentality of unease*, *Educational Review* (Jan. 2018).

described variously as elusive, vague, unfamiliar, unclear, divisive, and exclusionary.³⁵ Some participants in this study opined that Muslim values, British values and Christian values were all inherently similar,³⁶ with the authors concluding that ‘rather than British Values being used to differentiate between ‘in’ and ‘out’ groups the inclusive qualities or values of tolerance, rule of law, equality of opportunity, freedom, integrity, self-deprecation and reserve should be emphasised without regard to religious faith or practice or its absence’.³⁷ Robert Bowie and Lynn Revell reached a similar conclusion in their 2016 study into the relationship between FBVs and Christian values: the most common theme throughout the study being that although there was a perceived overlap between FBVs and Christian values, the latter were seen not only as morally and ethically more demanding than the former, but also as universal and inclusive.³⁸ However, in 2019 Joel Busher *et al.* reported ‘some evidence of positive acceptance’ of the Prevent duty in schools.³⁹

A number of commentators have emphasised the advantages of teaching universal values as a means of countering the pull to extremism.⁴⁰ For example, such teaching is fundamental to ‘peace learning,’ which instils in learners skills of critical thinking, conflict resolution, decision-making and coping,⁴¹ all of which are considered relevant to the building of resilience. As aforementioned, the preface to the 2011 Prevent Strategy emphasised the significance of universal human rights in countering extremism and, since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, schools have been viewed as favourable locations for the transmission of human rights.⁴² It is unsurprising, therefore, that for a decade and a half, UNICEF’s Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) has put human rights, and in particular the UN Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), at the heart of formal education. Almost five thousand schools in the UK have currently achieved, or are working towards, this award.⁴³ Both the UN and Council of Europe’s guidelines for the UNCRC refer to values of peace, including human rights, tolerance, respect, intercultural understanding and non-violence, and these values are therefore central to the RRSA

³⁵ Lee Jarvis, Lee Marsden, Eylem Atakav, *British Muslim Values*, University of East Anglia, 6 (Jul. 2018).

³⁶ *Id.*, 12.

³⁷ *Id.* 14.

³⁸ Robert Bowie, Lynn Revell, *Negotiating British Values: Research Conversations in Church Schools*, (Sept. 2016), 9-10.

³⁹ Joel Busher *et al.* (2019).

⁴⁰ See e.g. Lynn Davies, *Educating Extremism*, (Stylus Publishing, 2008); Sally Tomlinson, 10; Farid Panjwani, 331; Anne-Lynn Dudenhofer; Imran Awan, Keith Spiller, Andrew Whiting, 115.

⁴¹ Julie McLeod, *A Peaceful Pedagogy: Teaching Human Rights Across the Curriculum*, 152 *Procedia, Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 1225-1232, 1227 (2014).

⁴² *Id.*, 1226.

⁴³ See UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools, <https://unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/> (last accessed 20 Mar. 2019).

program.⁴⁴ As will be discussed in greater detail below in sections 4 and 5, it is likely that a number of schools in the UK are already teaching a far broader set of values than those encompassed by the FBV agenda; many of which would be categorised as human rights values.⁴⁵

4. Scoping Survey: FBVs in London Schools

This section examines the nature and scope of the values that London schools indicate that they are currently teaching. In 2018 Diane Webber conducted a scoping study that examined all available websites of London primary and secondary schools to establish what the schools say that they are teaching in terms of values.⁴⁶ An assumption can be made that websites are the public face of an educational institution and that they may provide the first port of call for many parents when considering their choice of school. Websites are thus likely to contain information that schools consider important to attract prospective parents and learners. It must be noted, however, that the data from this scoping study must be read with the caveat that it relates only to the information set out on websites, and this may differ from what the schools are *actually* teaching. The findings are nevertheless likely to provide valuable initial information regarding how schools are interpreting the obligation to promote FBVs. How many schools say that they are teaching FBVs? What other values are considered important for schools to teach? Does a pattern emerge that could form the basis for a reformed policy on values-based education in schools that is: (i) more effective in terms of building resilience in learners; and (ii) generates less controversy within different sectors of the British community?

In total, 3119 primary and secondary schools are listed over 33 London boroughs on the DfE's online database.⁴⁷ Of those schools listed, 95 are either closed or do not have active websites, or both. The remaining 3024 active school websites were examined, with Figure 1 showing the incidence of FBV promotion compared with reference to alternative values frameworks. Whilst a notable 356 schools (12%) make no reference at all to the teaching of values on their websites, the majority of schools outline their preferred framework for the teaching of values.

⁴⁴ Julie McLeod, 1227; UNESCO, OCHR & OSCE, Human Rights Education in the School Systems of Europe, Central Asia and North America, 47 (2009), <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/CompendiumHRE.pdf> (last accessed 28 Mar., 2019).

⁴⁵ Alison Struthers, *Teaching Human Rights in Primary Schools* (Routledge, forthcoming); Joel Busher *et al.* (2017 and 2019), reporting that some interviewees indicated that they had always taught, and continued to teach school or universal values.

⁴⁶ With thanks to Elkin Girgenti, Dr. Rachel Pimm-Smith and Jamie Winner for their assistance with the scoping study. The scoping study included all maintained schools, free schools, academies and independent schools.

⁴⁷ Department for Education, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-in-england>.

Figure 1

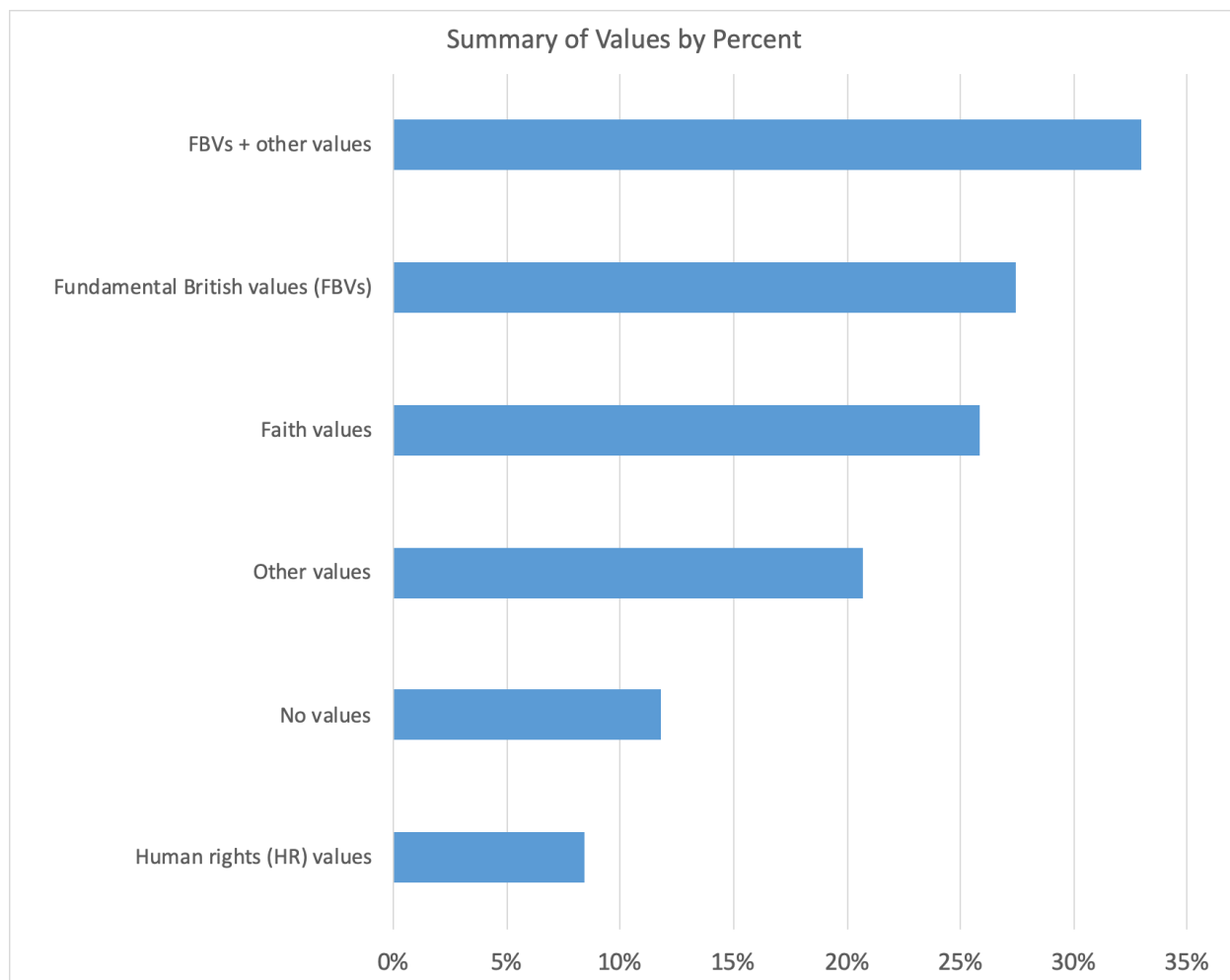


Figure 1 reveals that the highest prevalence of these schools (998 schools, or 32% of the sample) suggest that they teach a combination of FBVs and other values. This is followed by 830 schools (27%) indicating that they teach FBVs with no reference to other values. In total, therefore, 1828 out of 3024 schools (or 60% of the sample) explicitly state that they teach about FBVs.

One particularly interesting finding regarding the promotion of FBVs on school websites is that almost every definition comprised only four of the five stated FBVs: democracy, rule of law, respect and tolerance of those of other faiths. The value of liberty was seldom included in the list of values displayed on school websites, thus seeming to have dropped out of the equation when it comes to schools' promotion of FBVs. And another notable finding relates to inspection reports

prepared by Ofsted. Where available on school websites, these reports were also examined during the course of the current study, as Ofsted is required to evaluate how schools promote FBVs. The most common relevant comment in these reports was a statement to the effect that pupils were well-prepared for life in modern Britain. This, however, is not the same thing as evaluating the promotion of FBVs. Statements about promoting FBVs were found in inspection reports for 476 London schools, and comments commending schools for their teaching of SMSC were included in reports for 920 schools.⁴⁸

The other sizeable category of values apparent from the data in Figure 1 is faith values, with 26% of the sample identifying their values framework to be denominational. Some examples of the specific values listed on these websites, categorised by religion, are shown in Table 1 (FBVs are marked in bold).⁴⁹

Table 1

Christian (679 schools, 22%)	Muslim (43 schools, 1%)	Jewish (51 schools, 2%)
Compassion	Accountability	Compassion
Creativity	Compassion	Community
Endurance	Courage	Courage
Faithfulness	Fairness	Decency to others
Forgiveness	Forgiveness	Doing good deeds/improving the world
Gentleness	Generosity	Fairness
Hope	Honesty	Honesty
Humility	Modesty	Hope
Joy	Respect	Human dignity
Justice	Sincerity	Humility
Love	Tolerance	Justice
Peace	Truth	Peace
Self-control	Wisdom	Respect

⁴⁸ Percentages of these numbers have not been calculated because a number of schools were academy conversions or new schools which had not been inspected, and some of the most recent dates of inspections took place before the Prevent duty had statutory effect. Inspections in independent schools were not counted for this purpose.

⁴⁹ Sikh and Hindu values are not shown, but these were found in 9 schools (0.3% of the sample)

Service		Responsibility
Thankfulness		Truth
Wisdom		Trustworthiness

Figure 1 also shows that 254 school websites (8%) made reference to human rights values, with many of these schools having achieved, or currently working towards, UNICEF's RRSA.⁵⁰ Table 2 provides some examples of human rights values listed on these websites.⁵¹

Table 2

Human Rights Values (254 schools, 8%)	
Democracy	Human dignity
Education	Live in a family environment
Equal opportunity	Non-discrimination
Freedom	Respect
Freedom of Expression and thought	Responsibility
Health care and nutrition	Safe environment

A number of schools (625, or 21% of the sample) specified a wide range of other values. Table 3 shows the 30 most popular values listed on the websites, excluding reference to those values specifically categorised by schools as FBVs or human rights values. The number that follows each value reflects how often it was promoted on a website. Figure 2, which follows, then depicts the popularity of these values in graph form. It is noteworthy that neither liberty nor freedom features in the top thirty.

Table 3

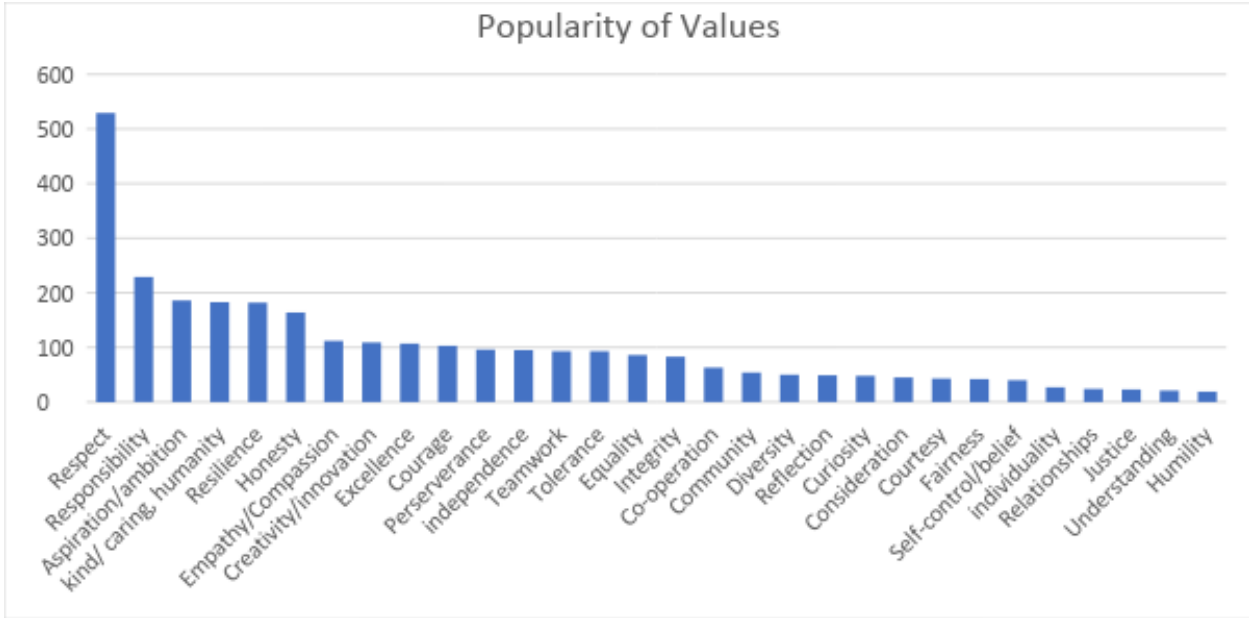
Respect	529	Integrity	83
Responsibility	229	Co-operation	63

⁵⁰ 162 London schools have achieved the RRSA awards to date, of which 93 are Silver awards, and 69 are Gold awards, <https://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/the-rrsa/awarded-schools/>.

⁵¹ It is recognised that not all of the 'values' listed by schools on their websites are actually values. Some are virtues, others are rights or processes. Whilst discussion of these distinctions is beyond the scope of the current article, more detailed discussion on this issue can be found in Alison Struthers, *Teaching Human Rights in Primary Schools* (Routledge, forthcoming).

Aspiration/ ambition	186	Community	54
Kindness/caring	183	Diversity	50
Resilience	182	Reflection	49
Honesty	164	Curiosity	48
Compassion/empathy	112	Consideration	45
Creativity	109	Courtesy	43
Excellence	107	Fairness	42
Courage	103	Self-control/belief	40
Perseverance	96	Individuality	27
Independence	95	Relationships	24
Teamwork	93	Justice	23
Tolerance	93	Understanding	21
Equality	86	Humility	19

Figure 2



These findings suggest that aligning values-based education with Britishness is a problematic strategy. If London school practice is reflective of a broader national approach, then many of the values that schools currently prioritise are universal, i.e. they are not unique to any nationality or faith, and a combination of those values might be far more beneficial in formal education. Careful consideration must also be given to the nature of the values prioritised, however. Tolerance, for

example, can be problematic as, for many, it carries with it a negative connotation that whatever is being tolerated is being 'put up with' rather than being accepted or respected. And, perhaps more alarmingly, in the particular context of FBVs, it has been suggested that the promotion of tolerance has the aim of stifling political debate and promoting normative conceptions of citizenship.⁵² The relatively low positioning of 'tolerance' in the table above might be reflective of these concerns.

The five FBVs do not encapsulate all, most, or even very many of the other common school values listed above. The question must therefore be asked whether FBVs are adequately equipping all learners with the necessary tools for building resilience, or whether there are other values frameworks more suitable to the vital task of countering the pull to extremism?

5. Ways Forward: A Human Rights Solution

A number of issues with utilising FBVs as a means of countering extremism in education have been identified above. How then could these problems best be addressed? Perhaps the most obvious and, as will be argued, efficacious means of doing so is by encouraging learners in English schools to understand values in the broader context of the human rights framework.⁵³ Whilst FBVs were introduced as a means of promoting those values likely to bring people in the UK 'together as a diverse, unified nation', their potential for subversive interpretation runs the risk of significantly undermining this goal.⁵⁴ Human rights values, by contrast, stem from notions of universality and common humanity, and are therefore considerably more likely to be successful at countering extremism and contributing to national unity.

For at least half a century, the UK has been subject to international obligations that mandate the teaching of human rights values, including equality, justice and freedom, at all levels of formal education. These obligations stem principally from the international Human Rights Education (HRE) framework, with the relatively recent – albeit legally non-binding – UN Declaration on HRE and Training (2011) (UNDHRET) advising that HRE 'comprises all educational, training, information, awareness-raising and learning activities aimed at promoting universal respect for

⁵² Hugh Starkey, 'Fundamental British Values and citizenship education: tensions between national and global perspectives' 100(2) *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 149-162 at 152 (Feb. 2018).

⁵³ For detailed consideration of this argument, see Alison Struthers, *Teaching British Values in Our Schools*, 90.

⁵⁴ Rt. Hon. David Cameron, British values: article by David Cameron. *Gov.uk*, 15 June 2014. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/british-values-article-by-david-cameron>.

and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and thus contributing, *inter alia*, to the prevention of human rights violations and abuses by providing persons with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviours, to empower them to contribute to the building and promotion of a universal culture of human rights'.⁵⁵ HRE is seen as vital for building a universal culture which respects and upholds human rights values. Its provision facilitates a better understanding of the common humanity inherent in the movement: that human rights are applicable not only to those suffering in distant war-ravaged countries, but are equal and inalienable standards belonging to everyone, simply by virtue of being human. And, perhaps of particular importance in the context of formal education, HRE enables people to recognise violations of rights in their own lives, whilst empowering them with the necessary knowledge, skills and values for defending and promoting rights more broadly.

It is for these reasons that many significant international human rights instruments have enshrined the right to HRE, including *inter alia*: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Article 26(2); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (1966); and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) (UNCRC), Article 29(1). Each of these documents represents not just a moral position, but also a legal commitment, obliging signatory states to ensure that their laws, policies, and practices conform to the standards within them.⁵⁶ The framework is comprehensive in its requirements for effective state implementation of HRE, and is accompanied by *inter alia* UN explanatory guidance, academic commentary and teaching materials. By signing and ratifying the above instruments and expressly supporting key soft law HRE initiatives, including UNDHRET, the UK has accepted the international requirement to offer age-appropriate HRE at all stages of formal schooling.⁵⁷ An appropriate definition of the values to be taught in schools therefore ought to reflect the requirements enshrined in these documents, for any satisfactory interpretation of the term 'British values' should recognise the broader values frameworks accepted by the UK.⁵⁸

With HRE having a key role to play in building a broader culture that respects and upholds human rights, it is perhaps unsurprising that teaching about human rights values is at the heart of the

⁵⁵ UNDHRET, 2011: Article 2(1).

⁵⁶ Robert B. Howe and Katherine Covell, (2005) *Empowering Children: Children's Rights Education as a Pathway to Citizenship*. Canada: University of Toronto Press, 25.

⁵⁷ Ministry of Justice (2011) UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training. Press Release, 24 March. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/un-declaration-on-human-rights-education-and-training>.

⁵⁸ Hugh Starkey, 'Fundamental British Values and citizenship education: tensions between national and global perspectives' 100(2) *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 149-162 at 154-155 (Feb. 2018).

HRE framework. UNDHRET, for example, expressly mandates that HRE encompasses education 'about human rights, which includes...the values that underpin them' (Article 2(2)). Learners should, therefore, be equipped with an understanding of the values that lie at the root of the human rights movement. This is, however, a somewhat difficult task when the nature of these values is not clarified at the international level. A plausible interpretation, based on the content of the documents themselves, can nonetheless be offered. For example, through analysis of their prevalence in key human rights instruments, it is reasonable to suggest that equality, justice, non-discrimination, dignity, freedom, fairness, tolerance, and respect for others all constitute human rights values.⁵⁹ The UNCRC (Article 29(1)) promotes the values of respect, tolerance and equality; the ICESCR (Article 13(1)) mandates education addressing dignity, respect, freedom and tolerance; and UNDHRET (Article 4) stresses the importance of respect, freedom, tolerance, non-discrimination and equality.

Although the international framework is vague on the nature and precise meaning of values, at the core of human rights arguably lie values that stem from notions of universality and the equality and dignity of every human being. The UK has signed up to key human rights instruments that mandate the provision of HRE, and the teaching of human rights values therefore ought to be included in English formal schooling. Through its absence of reference to the broader human rights framework, however, the FBV guidance arguably represents a threat to the teaching of human rights values. It prioritises a very specific governmental interpretation of FBVs, thus squeezing out alternative understandings of the values important for formal schooling, including human rights. At worst, this may lead to a situation where teachers with existing anti-human rights sentiment disregard any notion that they should be teaching universal human rights values, based on the fact that they are already under an obligation to teach FBVs.

There are solutions to this problem, however. If the FBV agenda is to be retained in some form, for example, then its values should be understood in the broader context of human rights. The ethical aims of HRE include promoting the idea that the values lying at the root of human rights stem from a conception of common humanity, where the rights of everyone are respected and upheld. In other words, they 'are essentially cosmopolitan, promoting solidarity with our fellow human beings, regardless of such factors as race, nationality, or religion'.⁶⁰ Interpreting FBVs

⁵⁹ Alison Struthers, *Teaching Human Rights in Primary Schools* (Routledge, forthcoming).

⁶⁰ Audrey Osler, (2015) Human Rights Education, Postcolonial Scholarship, and Action for Social Justice. *Theory & Research in Social Education* 43(2): 244-274, 246.

against a background of human rights values would therefore assist in ensuring that the values being taught in schools are understood as stemming from the foundation of universality and common humanity, thus countering any possible interpretation that particular values apply only to certain ethnic groups.

Construing the existing FBV framework within the broader context of human rights would furthermore not necessitate strained linguistic interpretation, for the 'British' in British values can be understood with a wider or narrower meaning.⁶¹ It can either denote values deemed to be unique to British citizens, or it can refer more broadly to values with which people in this country are considered to identify. If the latter understanding is accepted, this provides scope for these values to relate to wider frameworks such as human rights. And because the UK has signed up to key international instruments and initiatives that mandate the teaching of human rights values, a requirement for teachers to educate about the values with which people in the UK are considered to identify, leads naturally to an interpretation that FBVs could provide a natural home for broader education on human rights values.

What is likely to be more effective than re-interpretation of the FBV agenda, however, is for HRE itself to be afforded a more prominent position within formal schooling in England. There exists a comprehensive international framework for the provision of effective education on human rights, with persuasive requirements upon the UK to honour their commitment to effective interpretation. The British values guidance is arguably both hasty and ill-conceived in comparison, and offers teachers little by way of concrete guidance regarding how they should promote FBVs in their classrooms. It is arguably only through HRE that learners will be equipped with the values that stem from a place of universality and dignity and that are, in turn, likely to contribute to the building of a culture that is respectful of human rights. Looking to the broader human rights framework would mean that human rights values, including equality, justice and dignity, would become core to educational entitlement in the UK. HRE provides a framework for the teaching of values that is not only more likely to be effective at countering extremism through the promotion of universal values, but that would also contribute to a Britain that is fair, just, equal and tolerant. And indeed, as has been suggested above, schools in fact already promote a number of human rights values

⁶¹ Robin Richardson, (2015) British Values and British Identity: Muddles, mixtures, and ways ahead, 41; J. Ganesh, Fly the Flag for the Liberal Values That Define Britain. *Financial Times*, (16 Jun. 2014). Available at: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/e1041832-f536-11e3-afd3-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3pmMEL6A7>.

on their websites, indicating that these values are considered by many in the education sector to be of greater importance and value than the vague and potentially discriminatory FBVs.

6. Concluding Remarks

Current Government policy mandating that all schools promote FBVs in order to deter and counter extremism has generated, and continues to generate, significant criticism from educators, faith groups and academics alike. Many issues have prompted these negative reactions, including: (i) the vague and uncertain meaning of FBVs; (ii) the fact that the values are not uniquely British, but are instead universal; (iii) that the teaching of FBVs is divisive and, in particular, stigmatises Muslims; and (iv) that the teaching of FBVs securitises education.

The scoping study summarised in section 4 indicated that, according to the information available on the websites of London schools, only 60% say they are teaching FBVs, and more than half of those schools say they are teaching FBVs in conjunction with other values frameworks. Individual liberty, in particular, barely features in the lists of values promoted on school websites, and thus appears to have been largely dropped from the FBV package. Perhaps this is based on an assumption that the UK is a free and democratic society, as opposed to a totalitarian and despotic one, but one cannot escape the notion that this itself suggests some form of British exceptionalism, stemming from the idea that violations of rights and freedoms occur only in distant and undemocratic lands. The notion of Britishness may therefore be considered as particularly problematic and divisive, with this study suggesting that many schools tend towards other values frameworks that favour the promotion of values more universal and inclusive in nature.

The fact that the UK is already subject to international obligations that mandate the provision of holistic HRE at all stages of formal education offers a compelling justification for values-based education to address human rights values, as opposed to divisive national values. When combined with the above evidence that many schools are in fact already teaching universal values, the case becomes stronger still. A human rights framework is inclusive: encouraging recognition of key underlying principles, such as equality, dignity and common humanity. In contrast to the divisive and potentially subversive FBV agenda, therefore, HRE has a far better chance of fostering empathy in learners and discouraging differential treatment of others. It is thus more likely to be successful in countering extremism in all its guises. In order for the UK to

become a more fair and tolerant society, learners must come to understand and accept universal values that unite people, rather than nationalistic values that risk dividing them.

When the scoping survey results are considered in light of observations found in the additional academic studies discussed in this article, all point to the following conclusions: (1) the teaching of FBVs is fraught with problems and is divisive and counter-productive. It is not doing the job that needs to be done; (2) many schools are recognising the benefits of alternative values frameworks, particularly HRE; (3) the Government is urged to abandon the obligation on schools to promote FBVs, and review this aspect of the Prevent strategy; and (4) there is an urgent need for further detailed research to discover what schools across the UK are teaching, and to elicit the views of teachers about what they should be teaching in order to build resilience and critical thinking skills in learners without alienating any sections of the community.