

From 'Prevent' to 'Enable' – reclaiming radical thinking spaces through democratic education

Kay Sidebottom*

Address

*Correspondence: K.Sidebottom@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

Abstract

Given the increasing pressures on teachers in Further and Adult Education across a range of economic, political, and managerial factors, this article argues that inquiry-based approaches to education can open up much-needed transformative learning spaces to the benefit of tutors, students, and wider communities.

Through the presentation of a case study, this article suggests that the inclusion of such 'pro-social pedagogies' in teacher training programmes will both equip teachers with tools to facilitate dialogue and provide reflective spaces in which they can consider their own positions regarding challenging education policy.

The case study, a 'community philosophy enquiry' into Prevent and Fundamental British Values involving trainee teachers in the North of England, is outlined and the ethical challenges considered.

The approach taken is based on a post-human 'ethics of affirmation' (Braidotti, 2012) and a nomadic ontology which facilitates change through

Peer review: This article has been subject to a double blind peer review process



© Copyright: The Authors. This article is issued under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial Share Alike License, which permits use and redistribution of the work provided that the original author and source are credited, the work is not used for commercial purposes and that any derivative works are made available under the same license terms.

the joining together of agents for transformation, across a series of on- and off-line rhizomatic assemblages. The article concludes with recommendations for the further implementation of democratic educational practices such as community philosophy, which allow space and time for discussion and dissent.

Introduction

‘Becoming post-human is regulated by an ethics of joy and affirmation that functions through the transformation of negative into positive passions’ (Braidotti, 2013:194).

For teachers who see themselves as democratic educators and agents of change, the Prevent agenda presents a paradox; namely, how can we truly create spaces of safety and trust whilst at the same time being bound by a legal duty to report our students when they are deemed at risk of becoming radicalised? For Sukarieh and Tannock (2015:1), the Prevent policies ‘constitute a direct attack on the core elements that make up the centuries old radical education tradition’. This article aims to explore how pro-social teaching approaches can allow educators to reclaim the notion of radicalism, using issues such as Prevent not as barriers, but as levers to open up discussion. In the process of educators working creatively and rhizomatically together, it suggests that change and action can occur through a spirit of positivity that Braidotti (2013) refers to as an ‘ethics of affirmation’.

Background context

Since Prevent (formally Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015) was first launched in 2003, it has moved through different

phases in response to subsequent acts of terror both in England and across Europe. The over-arching aim of the duty is to ‘stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism’ (HM Government, 2011). In 2014, Prevent was enshrined in Ofsted’s guidance, which places emphasis on the promotion of ‘Fundamental British Values’ (FBV) through education. British values are defined in the Duty as democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs (Department for Education, 2015).

Extremism is defined as ‘vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values’ (HM Government, 2011) and it is interesting to note here that whilst Prevent and FBV are often separated in practice (Prevent as the ‘safeguarding’/reporting duty, and FBV as the promotion of British values through teaching), the Government’s definition of extremism provides an indisputable link between the two. All educational institutions must have in place an anti-radicalisation policy, generally communicated to teachers via WRAP (Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent) training, in which teachers are given indicators on how to spot signs of individual radicalisation, identify vulnerable adults, and understand the reporting processes.

Although 84 per cent of Higher Education providers have responded appropriately to Prevent guidance (HEFCE, 2017), with FE equally compliant on paper (ETF, 2017) (via the three factors of ‘managing external speakers and events, establishing clear processes for dealing with safeguarding concerns, and delivering training for staff’), on the ground teachers are uncertain of how to deliver the agenda in practice (Lambert, 2016). Three sectors, until recently separated into different Government departments, are uniting around the fear of mis-reporting, lack of knowledge around threats such as ISIS and the rise of the far-right, and

what constitutes 'genuine concern', as school teachers described in a news media investigation (*Guardian*, 2015): 'We need more help and understanding from the Department for Education. These are new kinds of conversations that we're not used to having.'

Lambert (2016:5) calls for 'teachers to be given the tools to deliver sensitive, well-prepared and thoughtful citizenship-type lessons' rather than outsourced training which focuses on the transmission of information, assessed via multiple choice questioning. Such an approach ensures maximum notional compliance for minimum resource implication, but does not allow spaces for debate and exploration. E-learning courses in particular come nowhere near addressing the concerns, fears, and prejudices of educators, who can be left either further confused and bewildered, or hardened in pejorative assumptions. The requirement to 'actively promote British Values' (Department of Education, 2014) has also been interpreted in a variety of ways, resulting in a piecemeal approach to their integration. The ubiquitous use of posters and images displayed in classrooms is often more about perceived 'Britishness', not 'British values'. These displays lack 'creativity and individual interpretation' (Wild, 2016) and are often reduced to memes showing motifs such as tea, the Queen, pubs, and the Union flag.

The instrumental nature of the training and ensuing narrow implementation of the policy reflects the current state of English education. Ever-increasing workloads, interventionist education policy, intrusive performance monitoring and observations mean that for many, the addition of another Ofsted 'box to tick' is limiting and demoralising (Groves, 2015). The introduction of a policy like Prevent into a sector already driven by neo-liberalist practice, where inherent tensions and barriers enmesh education with other social and political factors, was

always likely to be seen as a threat rather than an opportunity to promote democracy. As Reay (2012) states: 'a neo-liberal socially-just education system is a contradiction in terms'.

Problematizing Prevent

Critiques of Prevent and the FBV agenda are easy to find. The policy has been described as being underpinned by 'the most Orwellian anti-terrorist agenda in Europe' (Amnesty International, 2017), as a 'securitisation of British society' (Thomas, 2016) and more strongly still, as an 'instrument of social control' (Sabir, 2017). Sabir goes on to describe Prevent as 'an extension of social welfare policies that aim to reform lawbreakers, insurgents and terrorists into positive and productive members of society' rather than emphasising social inclusion: 'It [Prevent] leads to a sense of exclusion and isolation; not a sense of inclusivity and belonging.' Prevent doctrine is seen as a "continuation of colonial warfare on the home-front" (Sabir, 2017:4) – primarily about discipline and control. And the proportion of Muslim referrals is high 'with around 70% of the 3,000 plus referrals [to the reporting mechanism, Channel] being associated with signs of 'Islamic extremism'" (Mythen et al, 2016:5). Even when referrals from educational establishments have been found to be erroneous and have not met the Channel threshold, there is no doubt that trust relationships between students and teachers can be significantly damaged where the policy is misunderstood.

Of course, there are also advocates of the policy. Prevent Co-ordinator Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal, writing in *The Telegraph* (2017), suggests that Prevent has been misrepresented and that it is a vital means to 'protect and safeguard our young people'. The emphasis placed on 'safety', 'wellbeing', and 'safeguarding' here seem justifiable, yet the agenda (as demonstrated in Haroon-Iqbal's article) continues to focus primarily on cases related to

Islamic threat. Stories of far-right referrals and interventions are rare, despite almost 300 people under 18 being flagged up in 2016 because of concerns about the far right (Gadher, 2016) and evidence of significant localised issues: 'In some areas of the country, Far Right referrals outnumber those about the other parts we are worried about' (Ben Wallace, MP, cited in HC Deb, 2016). Such cases are less commonly referred to or discussed during Prevent training, just as wider issues of fundamentalist resurgence are often overlooked.

Regardless of counter-narratives concerning the Prevent agenda, there is no doubt that the Prevent 'duty to report' places limitations on what can be said in the classroom and can place both adults and children in vulnerable positions. Walker (2017) suggests that Muslim students in particular are fearful of engaging in debate about controversial issues.

The Case for Democratic Education

This case study is based on the experiences of in-service teacher trainees studying for the Certificate in Education (Cert Ed)/Professional and the Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) at colleges in the North of England – one the provider of traditional vocational further education, and the other an adult residential institution. The sector context is, therefore, the under-researched 'HE in FE', a traditional site for widening participation in post-compulsory learning (Feather, 2012). Both teacher training programmes are founded on notions of democratic, values-based 'social purpose' education (Mycroft and Weatherby, 2015) and are underpinned by a commitment to social justice, brought to life through a series of critical pedagogical approaches. They are based on principles of co-production and rhizomatic working (Braidotti, 2013); social media is used to open up thinking spaces which join teachers together beyond the walls of the classroom and the limitations of fixed teaching cohorts. So 'we

teach to change the world' as Brookfield (1995:1) suggested, yet, as stated previously, the challenge of Prevent, alongside the other increasing number of duties placed on teachers (Maxted, 2015) is limiting space and opportunity for transformational teaching linked to action. Natasha Devon – the government's former mental health 'tsar' who was controversially sacked in 2016 – suggests in *The Guardian* (2016) that teachers are increasingly shouldering social responsibilities previously undertaken by the police and National Health Service, particularly in relation to vulnerable students experiencing mental health issues (Coppack and McGovern, 2014). Funding issues mean that support previously provided by other internal providers (such as pastoral care or academic tutoring) is increasingly incorporated into teaching roles.

For trainee teachers, there is little space to explore these challenges in a meaningful way and to consider their own identities, authenticity, and subjectivities. Their views are marginalised and their perspectives often ignored if they are perceived as being 'other' to the dominant theoretical canon (Santoro, 2014). However, as Freire (1997:55) states: 'an educator that says one thing and does another is irresponsible, and not only ineffective, but also harmful'. Are we, in his words, currently training learners to 'adapt without protest'? How can we create authentic, liberating spaces to truly explore the issues whilst being cognizant of the impact of legislative constraints on our practice? As Sen (1999:287) suggests: 'The role of public discussion to debate conventional wisdom on both practicalities and valuations can be central to the acknowledgment of injustice.' As social purpose educators, we are perhaps duty-bound to explore and evaluate such means of achieving effective discourse for social change.

One important aspect of our exploration relates to the etymology of Prevent. The words used freely throughout the Prevent policies assume received and common interpretations. However, the meaning of words such as ‘radical’ has shifted considerably from the following definition: ‘characterised by departure from tradition; innovative or progressive’ or ‘a person who advocates thorough or complete political or social reform; a member of a political party or part of a party pursuing such aims’ (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2017). ‘Radical’ in the Prevent sense now refers to the process of people joining extremist groups that are violently opposed to the general way of life in Britain. Wild (2016) suggests that terms like ‘extremism’ and ‘radicalism’ are being ‘made strange’ by constant repetition. Yet for teachers, who are required to carry out the Prevent legal duty, where is the space to examine or critically discuss this etymological shift? Furthermore, what does the change in definition mean for teachers who consider themselves to be ‘radicals’ in terms of their approaches to education?

When looking for reasons for involvement in extremism, the government focuses on common factors that individuals have, in order to identify potential risk. This is a much-criticised approach which focuses on binary approaches to identity and buys into identity politics which can be limiting and divisive (Sen, 2007). As Mythen et al (2016) suggest, ‘the strategy seeks to map out both the ‘drivers’ of radicalisation and the means of combating violent extremism’, whilst basing this ideology on the notion of a ‘flawed individual’ as opposed to ‘shining a light on iniquitous institutional structures and poorly judged security policies’.

The Prevent strategy suggests that radicalisation can occur when individuals are searching for a sense of identity, meaning, and community (HM Government, 2011:17). It goes on to suggest that ‘some second and

third generation Muslims in Europe ... can find in terrorism a value system, a community and apparent just cause'. However as Thomas (2016) suggests, by conflating religious identity with other aspects of personal and cultural identity '[the Duty] has approached British Muslims as a single, essentialized community'. This implication that religious or cultural beliefs are drivers for behaviour is limiting and narrowing, and in the words of Kundnani (2015), produces a 'Muslim problem' which limits individuals within 'fixed binaries of cultural identity.'

More generally, Sen (2007) refers to the 'miniaturisation of identity' whereby one dominant system of classification can be used to categorise human beings. The implication made by Prevent, that humans can be classified into distinct and discrete categories, ignores internal diversities and the 'multi-dimensional nature of diverse human beings' (Sen, 2007:16). Sen instead suggests that we need to recognise the 'plurality of our affiliations and identities', emphasising that identity can be choice and not an aspect of self that you discover. The shift in focus to 'becoming' – acquiring and attributing meaning – is echoed in Braidotti (2012) who proposes that through nomadic thinking, we can belong and associate in many different ways. Perhaps, indeed, that striving for belonging, meaning, and identity is a common part of the human condition, particularly prevalent in young people. It therefore seems pertinent that research is undertaken that explores how democratic, pro-social approaches to education can focus on aspects of 'belonging', fostering social relationships which may in turn address the very issues of social isolation that Prevent exposes.

Yet despite the well-publicised controversy and conflicting viewpoints as outlined here, the Prevent agenda is rarely explored in a philosophical sense by teachers who find themselves at the sharp end of its

implementation. Both Thomas (2016) and O'Donnell (2016) suggest that the way forward is through democratic and political education: 'only through such citizenship education, with a human rights framework at its core, will young people be equipped with the individual and peer group resilience to examine and reject ideologies that promote hatred and violence' (Thomas, 2016:6). While teachers are waiting for this, how can they act with the agenda in a way that stops them becoming stuck in a 'place of pain' (Braidotti, 2013)?

The Case Study – A Community Philosophy Inquiry

Given the controversial context and background to the Prevent agenda, and limited opportunities to explore it, the case study aimed to provide spaces of inquiry for educators to critically discuss the ideology and resulting issues.

In 2016, a small amount of funding was secured to explore how the Prevent and Fundamental British Values (FBV) agenda had affected our in-service trainee teachers in both colleges, by providing a space for philosophical debate and enquiry into the policies and practices. The overarching aim of the project was to provide a space for these educators – teaching across a wide spectrum of FE, HE, adult and community education – to critically discuss and analyse the issues raised by the Prevent and FBV agenda together, as professionals. The practice was undertaken in a spirit of affirmation, inspired by the vitalism of post-humanist thought which continually seeks out and extends 'horizons of hope' which take us beyond places of pain (Braidotti, 2013). Our hope in this instance was that we could enable trainee teachers to find ways of working and thinking together ('assemblages') which would allow them to take affirmative action and gain confidence, both within and beyond the classroom.

We selected a 'community philosophy' (CP) approach to stimulate discussions about Prevent and FBV among groups of trainee teachers whose only prior experience stemmed from participation in conventional workplace 'compliance' training. Using a post-human ontology (Braidotti, 2013), we did not want to be overly prescriptive in terms of identifying the process. Posthumanism stresses affirmation and praxis, as we are always in a process of growth and 'detaching ourselves from the dominant systems of representation' (Braidotti, 2013). Questions for discussion and debate would be provided by the participants themselves rather than ourselves as researchers; this process-driven approach allows information and ideas to emerge organically, and the inquiry does not necessarily end with the conclusion of the study. The emphasis is on praxis and affirmative action, whereby as a result of shared dialogue, positive steps can be taken for social change; and our intention was that these would continue via rhizomatic connections, mediated by technology and played out in online discussion spaces.

The rhizome as a-centred image of thought shifts the focus from knowledge 'about', procedures for producing knowledge, and concerns about what knowing 'is', to questions about what knowledge does, how it works, and how its effectivity may generate more (not less) of life. (Taylor, 2016:24)

Community Philosophy, as the starting point of our process, is an inquiry-based learning technique which encourages questioning and critical thinking. It is 'a growing movement, in which voluntary groups in civil society engage with philosophical thinking and action' (SAPER, n.d). Its most common manifestation in education is via the Philosophy for Children (P4C) movement; it is less frequently used in further or adult education. The principles draw on practices of traditional philosophy and are also based on the work of critical pedagogues such as John Dewey, Paulo Freire, and bell hooks. The process itself promotes five types of thinking: *Creative, Critical, Collaborative, Reflexive, Active*. The

identification of core concepts (such as justice, love, truth, equality) is particularly promoted. 'They are normally concepts where we might reasonably disagree about meaning and value. If we change the way we understand these concepts, we change ourselves and the world, so we might call them concepts with potential' (SAPERRE, n.d). One task of Community Philosophy is to identify and analyse these in the context of enquiry.

Community Philosophy was deliberately chosen as an appropriate vehicle to instigate discussions due to its emphasis on problematisation, the examination of language, and the potential for action. The importance of talking as a form of action is often underplayed in education, perhaps due to the emphasis placed on individual assessment and the difficulties apparent in linking group discussion to individual performance or acquisition of knowledge. However, as Tiffany (2009:14) suggests: 'talking supports thinking, and thinking is a precondition to changing one's mind; it is the foundation for behavioural change. And reasoned behaviour change (based on critical, creative, caring and collaborative thinking) must be considered a form of action'.

A community philosophy inquiry also encourages democratic participation via turn-taking and the facilitation of a process whereby every voice is heard.

We also wanted to explore whether, having experienced community philosophy techniques themselves, educators would consider implementing this kind of 'pro-social' intervention in their own classrooms. It also supports the idea of 'modelling' teaching practice and the need to work in spaces of uncertainty (Lunenbergh, Korthagen and Swennen, 2007). 'Critical to the process is the educator not being in

control of the setting; teachers would give up some of their ability to predict and control' (Garratt and Piper, 2011:79).

The community philosophy sessions were undertaken, initially with Cert Ed/PGCE students at the two local colleges, and then rolled out more widely to other colleges within the awarding university's consortium group. Over 150 trainee teachers were involved over a period of six months. Approval for the project was provided by the University's Projects Steering Committee and regular updates provided. Final findings and recommendations were made to the Committee and permissions to share quotes and questions (both provided face-to-face and online) were negotiated with all groups on an on-going basis.

We used BERA Ethical Guidelines (2011) to lead our approach, paying particular attention to openness to disclosure and the right to withdraw consent. For some participants, consent was gained post-hoc, where discussions arose in subsequent teacher education classes or in the online spaces provided for further thinking.

Four tutors involved in the facilitation of the workshops received training in Community Philosophy (CP) in January 2016 and were able to undertake enquiry-based approaches using techniques approved by SAPERE (Society for the Advancement of Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education).

The Community Philosophy Process

Starting with an examination of personal and professional values, we considered the wider concept of 'British values' as defined by HM

Government (2011). We then went on to outline the professional duties of education under Prevent before using various artefacts to stimulate a community philosophy (CP) inquiry. One such example was the now infamous ‘cooker bomb’ drawing – an image in actual fact of a cucumber, created by a four-year-old boy at a nursery who was subsequently reported to Channel as described in *The Guardian* (Quinn, 2016). Other stimuli included artwork (Gil Mualem Doron’s *New Union Flag*) or poetry (*I Come From* by Joseph Buckley).

Participants were encouraged to ‘problematise’ and question accepted concepts arising from their discussions, connect ideas, and use reflection and action to gain a critical awareness of social reality. Throughout the inquiry, participants created their own questions. In this way, the views of the tutors were minimised, helping to remove (as far as possible) bias in discussions. Given the emotive nature of the topic, we felt as facilitators that it was important to maintain criticality, limiting the imposition of our own views and values as leaders of the sessions. Discussion of the stimulus led to a number of questions; some specifically related to Prevent itself, others taking the issues wider into consideration concepts such as community, identity, and belonging. Examples included:

‘What does it actually mean to be radical?’

‘Is Prevent racist?’

‘How can we build community in our classrooms?’

‘What does it mean to “belong”?’

‘Who is Prevent for?’

‘How can we change to a world where we ‘enable’, rather than ‘Prevent’?’

Philosophical inquiries always conclude with a call to action, and organically, in the case of every session, this was a consideration of how

to build community and identity, flipping the idea of 'Prevent' to the idea of 'Enable'. We introduced concepts of restorative practice (Mannhardt, 2017) as possible methods to create communities that extend beyond teacher-student to deeper peer support, sustained beyond the classroom. Techniques such as circles and restorative language were explored and discussed; each participant then identified an action to take away and instigate with their own classes.

At the end of each session, participants were also asked to identify one action to implement in their practice. These generally fell into categories of: improving knowledge (either of government policy and ideology or of social issues and history); widening spheres of information by seeking out alternative viewpoints; and learning or experimenting with practical pro-social pedagogical approaches to facilitating debate. The following practical examples were shared:

- re-reading and analysing the original Government guidance
- following diverse voices on Twitter and joining campaigns
- learning more about the nature and rise of fundamentalist movements of all kinds
- researching 'non-violent communication' as a means of facilitating respectful debate
- running a philosophical enquiry on British Values with their own classes
- using restorative practice approaches to build classroom communities.

Interestingly, and as hoped, the intervention did not end with the conclusion of the workshops. In the spirit of 'potensia' (as described by Taylor (2016:34) as 'energy, vitality, the constitutive desire to endure'),

students have continued to explore the issues in a variety of online spaces – thoughts emerging and crystallising through rhizomatic connections. A *Yammer* social networking platform used by the trainee teachers has been instrumental in facilitating this; one student created a space entitled ‘Prevent Question of the Week’ and this continues to be regularly populated one year after the start of the project. In this activist and reflective space, students analyse articles, identify actions, and even produce poetry (see Appendix 1). The agenda has widened to consider anti-fascist approaches to education and consideration of political events more generally (e.g. responses to the election of Donald Trump and reactions to Brexit have been shared and debated). Most recently, British Values themselves have been explored in an etymological sense. One recent discussion has centred on the British Value of ‘mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs’ and whether in fact the word ‘tolerance’ is appropriate:

‘I was thinking what ‘intolerance’ would look like - you meet someone who isn’t ‘the same’ as you and react with fear, resentment and prejudice. And what we would like to see from this encounter is - intrigue, acceptance and engagement. So we aren’t looking for the opposite of intolerance as an ideal, we’re looking for engagement!! :)’ (Project participant)

Analysis continued into the idea of ‘tolerance’ as implying maintenance of the status quo and limiting growth or change. Students also explored the idea of the values as not being especially ‘British’ and discussed alternative standpoints, such as ‘human’ or ‘universal’. Echoing Sen (2007:54), students reminded each other that the value of democracy is not only a British or Western concept and that it is part of the ‘long history of public discourse across the world.’

Students also discussed the impact of the sessions on their teaching practice:

‘I’m increasingly experimenting (ethically, I hope) with shelving the session plan to explore issues as they organically arise in classroom discussions. It can become fraught or challenging at times but it is an invaluable opportunity to engage students in critical dialogue.’
(Project participant)

‘I get scared sometimes during the process because I feel like I’ve lost control, but I know this is a relic of my previous, erroneous ideas of the role of a teacher as an authoritarian figure. I’m not there to wield control or dictate the discourse, instead I can facilitate the discussion in a way that doesn’t silence people but fosters an atmosphere of enquiry as suggested by bell hooks.’
(Project participant)

The emphasis stressed throughout the project on affirmative action enabled participants to feel empowered. Voices were elevated and thinking valued, so that they felt able to elicit change despite the constraints of the legal agenda.

Evaluation, reflections and conclusions

Feedback from the workshops was extremely positive and the impact continues to be felt one year after the commencement of the project. The sessions were evaluated qualitatively by each participant using a Critical Incident Questionnaire (Brookfield, 1995, see Appendix 2). When asked for views on the use of philosophical enquiry, comments included:

‘I now know how important it is in teaching to allow spaces for disagreement, exploration and uncertainty’

‘I have realised how much I need to learn to really listen’

‘This process makes me stop and think’

‘The process [of philosophical enquiry] brought the whole class together’

‘I want to build enquiry-based approaches into my own teaching to develop critical thinking.’

When asked ‘What surprised you most about the session and why?’ participants noted in particular how struck they were by the luxury of being given time to think. They also welcomed the change to explore the ‘things we dare not ask’ – this perhaps reflects how rare it is that people are given space to challenge hegemonic practices or be allowed to air controversial views.

Following the workshops, a number of participants have gone on to run successful inquiries with their own students; they are being encouraged to reflect on these (both the process and the product) as a part of their on-going Cert Ed/PGCE work. Their own inquiries have not necessarily referenced Prevent or FBV, but instead have addressed general issues of politics, fundamentalism, identity, and media bias. One trainee teacher used a newspaper article on homosexuality and the US Christian far-right to debate human rights issues; another selected one on birth control in developing countries to provoke discussion. In both cases, using CP as a facilitation tool enabled them to be courageous in their selection of materials. Having faith in the process meant that they could focus on enabling positive conversations, rather than controlling them or shutting them down.

Key project findings have been disseminated on social media via a blog and shared Research and Scholarship Conferences at two universities in summer 2016.

Recommendations

In his call to resist the ‘miniaturisation’ of human beings, Sen (2007:185) states that ‘there is a compelling need in the contemporary world to ask questions not only about economics and politics of globalisation, but also about the values, ethics, and sense of belonging that shape our conception of the global world’.

Since the project took place, global and local issues such as Brexit, the refugee crisis, and rise in fundamentalist violence have reinforced the clear need for thinking spaces such as these for both educators and their students. Whilst this is certainly useful in the context of Prevent and FBV, there are clearly possibilities for wider applications of inquiry-based approaches and dialogic work to address. Generally speaking, a curriculum is needed that equips teachers to support students in managing difficult reactions to the modern predicament, handling complexity, and challenging both secular and religious authoritarianism. The following practical recommendations for teacher education have therefore arisen as a result of the project and have been shared with the University awarding body as part of a curriculum review:

- approaches such as community philosophy, that encourage critical thinking and questioning, are included (or considered) more explicitly in the teacher education curriculum sessions
- sessions that go beyond the standard e-learning packages on Prevent/FBV, delivered via CP inquiry or as a minimum facilitated reflection time, should be offered to all Cert Ed/PGCE students
- pro-social behaviour management methods which emphasise belonging and community, such as restorative practice, are included in sessions on classroom management.

Conclusion

‘nomadic thought rejects melancholia in favour of the politics of affirmation and mutual specification of self and other in sets of relations or assemblages’ (Braidotti, 2012:55)

This project took a very different approach to counter-radicalisation measures in education which, to date, have largely been reactive by nature. By focusing on the development of positive, affirmative relationships and behaviours, we have attempted to flip the idea of ‘Prevent’ to the idea of ‘Enable’. We have promoted powerful counter-narratives that speak of the value of creating communities and shared identity through peer learning and growth, by introducing teachers to concepts of philosophical practice, creating rhizomatic networks that extend beyond teacher-student to deeper peer support, sustained outside the classroom walls and impacting on the wider education community. Techniques such as inclusive thinking circles and restorative language have been subsequently trialled by trainee teachers alongside values-based teaching, which seeks out commonality whilst also celebrating diversity.

Teachers using these approaches for learning will develop important critical thinking skills in their own students, encouraging them to question accepted practices and exploring the ‘grey areas’ of the complex and changing worlds in which they live. In this way, the project has led to a belief that ‘pedagogies of belonging’ have the potential to build transformative learning environments that will support students to become resilient through the development of social capital.

Whilst it could be argued that there can never be truly safe spaces for discussion whilst teachers have a legal duty to report, having an ‘ethics of

affirmation' (Braidotti, 2012) encourages us to focus on the importance and hope for the reconstruction of the 'social imaginary'. 'The pursuit of collective projects aimed at the affirmation of hope, rooted in the ordinary micro-practices of everyday life, is a strategy to set up, sustain and map out sustainable transformations' (Braidotti, 2012:192).

This research supports Thomas (2016) in his call for 'processes of political and citizenship education for young people, that directly address the challenge of extremist ideologies, and which re-enforce processes, standards and embodied values of equal, democratic citizenship'. In fact, it goes beyond this to suggest that pro-social pedagogies can be used across every subject and promoted daily, through general teaching processes that foster belonging and community.

Although moving beyond localised approaches is a challenge, the modelling of community philosophy as good educational practice and the 'trickle-down' effect of trainee educators using pro-social methods in their own teaching should not be underestimated. Remembering Braidotti's call to 'think global, act local' (2013), we can continue to work in a spirit of affirmation; continuing conversations in rhizomatic ways via communities of practice and social networks, and making use of 'levers' such as Prevent to open up critical thinking spaces.

Prevent, as a policy, is complex; it needs, as Thomas (2017) suggests, 'a more nuanced analysis' that takes into account its contestation and shift in focus (to more general anti-fundamentalist work) since its first iteration in 2003. It could be suggested that Prevent is asked to do too much: 'There are plenty of reasons to promote tolerance, encourage critical thinking and open closed minds. But try to do those things through a vehicle

designed for counter-terrorism, and you have to work harder to earn people's trust'. (BBC Radio 4, 2017)

Our duty as educators is to help students navigate this complex and uncertain agenda, through honest and humble dialogue. Community Philosophy and other pro-social practices can help us reclaim our roles as radicals and agents for change, through democratic and participative education. Perhaps, by implementing such pedagogical approaches, we can begin to reclaim the 'radical' spaces that education so desperately needs. In the words of Kundnani (2015): 'We must therefore defend the spaces of radical politics, for the right to dream of another world'.

Kay Sidebottom is Lecturer in Education at Leeds Beckett University.

References

Amnesty International. (2017) *Dangerously disproportionate: The ever-expanding national security state in Europe*. Available from: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur01/5342/2017/en/> (Accessed 25 February 2017).

Braidotti, R. (2012) *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Braidotti, R. (2013) *The Posthuman*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

British Educational Research Association. (2011) *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*. Available from: <https://www.bera.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/BERA-Ethical-Guidelines-2011.pdf> (Accessed 25 February 2017).

Brookfield, S. (1995) *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Clover, D. & Stalker, J. eds. (2007) *The Arts and Social Justice: Re-crafting Adult Education and Community Cultural Leadership*. Leicester: NIACE.

Coppack, V. & McGovern, M. (2014) "Dangerous Minds?" Deconstructing Counter-Terrorism Discourse, Radicalisation and the "Psychological Vulnerability" of Muslim Children and Young People in Britain. *Children and Society*, 28 (3): 242-256.

Department for Education. (2014) *Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools*. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/380595/SMSC_Guidance_Maintained_Schools.pdf (Accessed 4 March 2017).

Department for Education. (2015) *The Prevent Duty: Departmental advice for schools and childcare providers*. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/439598/prevent-duty-departmental-advice-v6.pdf (Accessed 6 March 2017).

Devon, N. (2016) Teachers have to be therapist one moment, social worker the next. *The Guardian*. 31 May [Online]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/may/31/teachers-natasha-devon-childrens-mental-health-tsar-schools> (Accessed 13 February 2017).

ETF (Education and Training Foundation). (2017) *Prevent for Further Education and Training*. Available from: <https://www.preventforfeandtraining.org.uk/> (Accessed 15 May 2017).

Faure Walker, R. (2017) *How Preventing Terror is Promoting Violence*. Available from: <http://discoversociety.org/2017/02/01/how-preventing-terror-is-promoting->

[violence/?utm_content=bufferc0814&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer](#) (Accessed 15 June 2017).

Feather, D. (2012) Oh to be a scholar – an HE in FE perspective. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 36: 243-261.

Fenton-Smith, R. (2017) Understanding Prevent. BBC Radio 4. 30 July [Radio]. Available from: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08yp16m> (Accessed 30 July 2017).

Freire, P. (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin.

Freire, P. (1997) *Pedagogy of the Heart*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Gadher, D. (2016) Warning over rise of Hitler Youth. *The Times*. 20 November [Online]. Available from: <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/warning-over-rise-of-hitler-youth-79pkwnfkl> (Accessed 10 March 2017).

Garratt, D. & Piper, H. (2011) Citizenship education and philosophical enquiry: Putting thinking back into practice. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 7 (1): 71 –84.

Groves, B.E. (2015) Teaching and Ideology. Or, why aren't we all dancing? A Personal View. In: Daley, M., Orr, K. & Petrie, J. eds. *Further Education and the Twelve Dancing Princesses*. London: Trentham Books

Haroon-Iqbal, H. (2017) Prevent scaremongering is dangerous - our anti-terror programme is vital in the battle against extremism. *The Telegraph*. 13 February [Online]. Available from: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/02/13/prevent-scaremongering-dangerous-anti-terror-programme-vital/> (Accessed 3 March 2017).

HC Deb. (2016) Online Radicalisation. 31 October [Online]. Vol 616. Available from: <https://goo.gl/eBAfc9> (Accessed 20 February 2017).

HEFCE. (2015) Implementation of the Prevent duty in the higher education sector in England: 2015-16. Available from https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/*/http://www.hefce.ac.uk/ (Last accessed 3 February 2019)

HM Government. (2011) Prevent Strategy. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf (Accessed 13 February 2017).

Kline, N. (1999) *Time to Think*. London: Cassell Illustrated.

Lambert, S. (2016) Preventing extremism in our communities, colleges and schools. *Post-16 Educator*, Issue 84 (July-September).

Lunenberg, M., Korthagen, F. & Swennen, A. (2007) The Teacher Educator as a Role Model. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23: 586-601.

Mannhardt, L. (2017) Implementing Restorative Practices in Schools: A Practical Guide to Transforming School Communities. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 64: 113-115.

Maxted, R. (2015) Critical Pedagogy in FE. In: Daley, M., Orr, K. & Petrie, J. eds. *Further Education and the Twelve Dancing Princesses*. London: Trentham Books

Mycroft, L. & Weatherby, J. (2015) Delivering Learning. In: Ashmore, L. & Robinson, D. eds. *Learning, Teaching and Development*. London: Sage

Mythen, G., Walklate, S. & Peatfield, E.J. (2016) Assembling and deconstructing radicalisation in PREVENT: A case of policy-based evidence making? *Critical Social Policy*, 37 (2): 1–22.

O'Donnell, A. (2016) Securitisation, Counterterrorism and the Silencing of Dissent: The Educational Implications of Prevent. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 64 (1): 53-76.

Open Democracy. (2015) *Violence comes home: an interview with Arun Kundnani*. Available from: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/arun-kundnani-opendemocracy/violence-comes-home-interview-with-arun-kundnani> (Accessed 13 February 2017).

Quinn, B. (2016) Nursery “raised fears of radicalisation over boy’s cucumber drawing”. *The Guardian*. 11 Mar [Online]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/mar/11/nursery-radicalisation-fears-boys-cucumber-drawing-cooker-bomb> (Accessed 13 February 2017).

Reay, D. (2012) What would a socially just education system look like?: Saving the Minnows from the Pike. *Journal of Education Policy*, 27 (5): 587-599.

Sabir, R. (2017) Blurred lines and false dichotomies: Integrating counterinsurgency into the UK’s domestic “war on terror”. *Critical Social Policy*, 37 (2): 1–23.

Santoro, N. (2009) Teaching in culturally diverse contexts: what knowledge about “self” and “others” do teachers need? *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 35: 33-45.

Sen, A. (1999) *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sen, A. (2007) *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*. London: Penguin.

Society for the Advancement of Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education [no date]. *Community Philosophy*. Available from: <http://www.sapere.org.uk/Members,Schools,Partners/CommunityPhilosophy.aspx> (Accessed 21 February 2017).

Sukarieh, M. & Tannock, S. (2015) The deradicalisation of education: terror, youth and the assault on learning for social change. *Race & Class*, 57 (4): 22-38.

Taylor, C. & Hughes, C. eds. (2016) *Posthuman Research Practices in Education*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Thomas, P. (2016) Youth, terrorism and education: Britain's Prevent programme. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 35 (2): 171-187.

Thomas, P. (2017) Changing Experiences of Responsibilisation and Contestation within Counter-terrorism Policies: the British Prevent Experience. *Policy and Politics*, 45 (3): 305-321.

Tiffany, G. (2009) Community Philosophy: A Project Report. *Joseph Rowntree Association*. Available from:

<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/community-philosophy-project-report>

(Accessed 10 March 2017).

Wild, C. (2016) Going to extremes: How radical are you? Art education & British values. *The Sociological Imagination*. 16 September [Online].

Available from: <http://sociologicalimagination.org/archives/18892>

(Accessed 9 March 2017).

Williams, R (2015) School heads raise alarm over new duty to protect students from extremism *Guardian* 9 June [Online] Available from

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/jun/09/schools-duty-police-extremism-anti-terrorism-laws> (Last Accessed 3 February 2019)

Appendix 1

Prevent Prevent

Politicians colluding to take your freedoms

Racism, phobias, communities in crisis

Eroding the trust, losing your right to assemble.

Visceral policy makers divide this Kingdom

Endemic paranoia, reading a book makes you ISIS!

Nefarious referrals, schools with students who tremble.

Teachers unite, it's our time to lament.

Persecution again is back on the agenda

Radical thinking the enemy of state

Encouraging intolerance and tolerating injustice.

Vicarious harassment due to your colour

Enforcement of policies that solidify hate

Nuanced communities crumbling and schistose.

Teachers unite, we must protect not Prevent!

(Poem shared on social media by project participant and reproduced here with permission)

Appendix 2

Critical Incident Questionnaire

At what point during the session did you feel most engaged with what was happening, and why?

At what point during the session did you feel most distanced from what was happening, and why?

What action did anyone take that was most affirming or helpful for you, and why?

What action did anyone take that was most puzzling or confusing for you, and why?

What surprised you the most, and why?

(Brookfield, 1995)

To cite this article:

Sidebottom, K. (2019) From "Prevent" to "Enable" – reclaiming radical thinking spaces through democratic education. *Feminist Dissent*, 4, pp. 246-273. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.31273/fd.n4.2019.189>