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**Beginning teacher agency in the enactment of fundamental British values: A multi-method case study.**

There has been significant discussion and debate about the meaning and implementation of the requirement for schools to promote fundamental British values. While much of the research in this area focuses on surveying teachers' attitudes, this paper set out to understand the processes of professional enactment through which beginning teachers interpret the policy agenda across sites and contexts in initial teacher education. A multi-method case study was undertaken at a large provider of initial teacher education in the North of England, following beginning teachers on project placement in primary schools. Theorising awareness and agency as axes of professional formation, the paper identifies three key thematic foci: community partnership, the treatment of inclusiveness and diversity and the professional understanding, interpretation and performance of value language. Context shapes enactment of each theme, with reflective space for criticality required if beginning teachers are to develop professional agency with regard to their role as values educators. This is a feature of the culture of placement schools, and while university-based teaching can ameliorate the effects of unreflective compliance, it cannot provide a replacement for professional acculturation. The paper explores the implications of reflection on enactment for the professional acculturation of beginning teachers, making recommendations for teacher education.

Keywords: fundamental British values; teacher education; qualitative case study; teacher agency; professional values

Subject classification codes: Education

### **Introduction:**

The 2012 Teachers' Standards for England included for the first time, a requirement for teachers not to undermine 'fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs' (DfE, 2013,p.14). The same language, taken from the UK Home Office 'Contest' counter-terrorism strategy, appears in the 2014 re-authoring of the Ofsted School Inspection Handbook (Ofsted, 2016). From February to May 2016, we employed a multi-method case study approach at a large initial teacher education (ITE) partnership in the North of England to understand the influences on beginning teachers' emergent understanding and engagement with the fundamental British values (FBV) policy agenda. By understanding *in situ* the role of university and school-based teacher learning in developing mature, nuanced and critical orientations towards values in the contemporary global landscape, this paper identifies factors necessary to facilitate spaces for the formation of professional identities.

Many of the critiques of FBV in schools have focused on the contested origins of the values themselves (Smith, 2013), the use of national identity to frame value dissent as creating outsiders and others (Mac an Ghaill & Haywood, 2017) or the appropriation of global values under a nationalistic rubric as fundamentally 'British' (Jackson, 2016). This paper set out to understand the processes of professional enactment through which beginning teachers interpret the FBV policy agenda during ITE. Our approach to agency is not deterministically shaped by context, but posits

schools as sites where professional identity is shaped through reflection on enacted practice. Drawing on a theoretical account of agency as a space within which to articulate projective identity (Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2015), the apprenticeship model (Brown, 2018) of professional learning for values education is found to be unstable, as the placement site is also, recursively, the site of pupils' own subjectification (Biesta, 2010), their becoming agentive.

Interest in national identity, values and citizenship have distilled over a number of years. Questions around the meaning of Britishness, multiculturalism and a 'loss of common values' (Osler, 2009) are not new (Uberoi & Modood, 2010). The Cattle report (2006) which followed race riots in Oldham and Bradford in the summer of 2001 problematised a context of 'community fragmentation' both between racial groups and in intergenerational relations within communities. The reframing of racial conflict along religious lines is a marked feature of the subsequent development of community cohesion policy in the context of the 'War on Terror' (Miller, 2013). At once, the articulation of 'Britishness' follows common threads in European responses to migration and radicalisation (European Commission, 2015; RAND, 2007) and also stands as part of a concern with distinguishing the nation against perceived suspicion of the other (Peterson & Bentley, 2016). Internationally, UNESCO guidance for teachers on how to prevent violent extremism (UNESCO, 2016, p. 15) reiterates the perceived role of fundamental values as education's response to the 'soft' war on terror. The polysemic (not to say vacuous) nature of the FBV as enumerated in policy, emerging from such contrasting and contested intentions has been characterised as 'little more than feel-good words devoid of real substance' (Arthur, 2015, p. 245).

The seductive simplicity of the concise list of FBV belies conceptual nuances and the complexity of their mediation and manifestation in educational practice.

Conflict between and within the values is concealed, for example ambivalence regarding the meaning of tolerance (DfE, 2014), failing to distinguish between committed openness, deliberative engagement and a grudging or uncritical acceptance of difference. Toleration is invoked as an apparently benign uncontroversial response to cultural and religious plurality, yet remains highly contested in contemporary political philosophy (Walzer, 1997; Marcuse, 1965; Parekh, 2000; Forst, 2013). Disputes around the meaning of democracy in education also centre around the practices of democratic pedagogy (Dewey, 1966; Biesta, 2006), while much of the material designed to support the teaching of democracy in the context of FBV focuses on learning about the legislative process.

#### **Awareness of FBV among teachers**

Recent research (Maylor, 2016) challenges the assumption that teachers share an understanding of Britishness or the requirements of the FBV agenda. Farrell (2016) investigated how beginning teachers positioned themselves personally and professionally in relation to the agenda, finding critical alternatives emerging to the 'totalising' discourse of FBV. Over a 3 year period, Smith (2016) found a decline in this critical discomfort; while among school leaders, Revell and Bryan (2016) found 'little in the way of discourse or sophisticated language with which to discuss the undermining of British values' (p.352), raising fears that the standard may compromise democratic rights to freedom of expression and individual liberty for teachers.

The emergence of professional and political interest in 'values education' as a common theme, galvanised by the same realities of cultural pluralism (Carr, 2000) encompasses a diverse range of theoretical schools, foregrounding moral, character, citizenship, civics and ethics education (Lovat, Toomey, Dally, & Clement, 2009). Although identifying or evaluating values is inherently problematic, both practically and

ethically (Campbell, 2003) this growing interest has already resulted in the creation of a 'global competency' metric to assess values and attitudes in the Programme of International Student Assessment 2018 (OECD, 2018). While few teacher education programmes intentionally prepare beginning teachers for values education (Schwartz, 2008), with much current provision 'largely implicit and unplanned' (Willemse, Lunenberg, & Korthagen, 2008, p.445), a growing literature highlights the importance of teachers attending to values in schools (Veugelers & Vedder, 2003).

Radical moves towards school-based teacher education in England have exacerbated competing demands for attention in the teacher education curriculum (Bamber & Moore, 2016), yet open up opportunities for in-situ learning and the cultivation of ethical practice. Despite the complexity of ethical challenges facing teachers in contemporary society (Levinson & Fay, 2016) research into the ethical dimension of teacher education is limited (Carr & Landon, 1999; Willemse et al., 2008) with little empirical research evaluating the contribution of differing approaches (Maxwell et al., 2016).

Confronted with challenging situations or controversial topics in the classroom, teachers draw upon complex assemblages of professional knowledge (Winch, Oancea, & Orchard, 2014), much of which is tacit, bound up with personal values, dispositions and beliefs. Discussion-based case analysis around moral dilemmas can help to surface ethical awareness in such contexts (Warnick & Silverman, 2011; Levinson & Fay, 2016). An explicit focus on teacher values presents the dilemma of a shift away from observable competences (Bryan, 2012; Carroll, McAdam, & McCulloch, 2012) yet opens up possibilities for critical and transformative engagement wherein the teacher may actively transform knowledge rather than simply consume it (Giroux, 2011).

In the case of ITE, the research recognised a need to move beyond induction and assessment (Moran, Abbott, & Clarke, 2009) to a more explicit account of the enculturation of professional values learning. Beginning teacher identity is negotiated in a space between university and school-based learning, and within the later, in a space between the societal and institutional needs of a placement setting and the motivational dynamic of the established teachers and leaders within that setting (Childs, Edwards, & McNicholl, 2014). While boundary practices (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013; Tsui & Law, 2007) recognise the discontinuities of settings, the case of teacher preparation for values education also requires a recognition of the discontinuities internal to professional identities (Leitch & Conroy, 2014). Fractures and fissures are refracted within one another, down to the level of the individual being made strange from within (Conroy, 2009). These are challenges which the authors are aware of from a range of professional perspectives, coming from academic roles which themselves straddle boundaries: between teacher education and academic studies in education in the case of the lead author, and between university based teacher education and third sector work in global citizenship education in the case of two others.

### **Towards a recursive model of agency**

Priestley, Biesta and Robinson (2015) theorise three intersecting elements to teacher agency: the iterational, projective and practical-evaluative. In the context of this study, iterational factors, including the emerging professional histories and values of beginning teachers, are located within a relationship between the reflective process of reconstructing professional knowledge in the university teaching context and the situative process of reproducing the 'craft' competences in placement settings (Carroll, McAdam, & McCulloch, 2012). The projective dimension of teacher agency concerns aspirations, with the subject's personal and professional values constrained by

instrumental factors – both meeting the academic and professional standards required by the university for qualification, and consideration of the placement school’s own narrative stance on FBV given its centrality to school inspection outcomes (Ofsted, 2016, pp.45-46). Performative approaches to professional values reducible to competences imply a technicist model involving the acquisition of trainable expertise (Beck, 2009); these can be contrasted with agentic approaches to empowering not only beginning teachers but pupils, parents and the wider community. For these reasons, the expectations of school leaders and placement lead teachers alongside beginning teachers’ reflective logs and project presentations formed important datasets to understand the scope of teacher agency in this study.

The practical-evaluative dimension of Priestley et al.’s model concerns the lived experience of day-to-day working. Cultural factors, including values, beliefs and discourses, and the power relations in which these are embedded comprise this dimension, as does the material environment (Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2015). Given that teachers develop their professional agency in an environment that expects particular values to be taught, this model of agency to understand the enactment of FBV is necessarily recursive. Practically, teachers bring with them a complex co-construction of personal and professional values, critical capacities and dispositions, but in this particular case the work demanded of them is precisely the promotion of values and dispositions of acceptance and engagement towards values. Hence the process of understanding teachers’ professional agency necessarily involves an understanding of values, which, in a recursive move, is heavily influenced by political agendas taking values as their core material. FBV are thus ‘nested’ within professional agency, and professional agency is itself changed by and changes those professionals (Conroy & Lundie, 2017). Because beginning teachers are recursively negotiating their professional

identities as values educators, it is necessary to problematize the value set as presented by policy and contextualised in the university and placement settings.

### **Methodology**

This study sought to understand the processes of professional enactment through which beginning teachers interpret the policy agenda within and between sites and contexts in initial teacher education.. The case study is bounded by an innovative partnership between a university ITE provider and project placement schools. Projects were negotiated through a network of university, school and community partners illustrating a ‘multi-layered system of distributed expertise’ (Childs, Edwards and McNicholl, 2014) that values both research and professional learning as part of ITE. These projects cover a range of issues relating to Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development; in all 6 of the schools in this study, the school leadership had specified activity explicitly linked to FBV. To nurture mutuality and criticality (Rosenberger, 2000), beginning teachers in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of a 4 year undergraduate course leading to qualified teacher status are encouraged to connect theory with practice and engage with multiple- stakeholders (university tutors, school teachers, school leaders, community groups and organisations, pupils and parents) to frame the problem being addressed and define resultant actions.

These placements fall within Wider Perspectives in Education (WPE); a compulsory component of the institution’s undergraduate ITE, providing beginning teachers with a broader experience of education beyond traditional teaching practice. An introductory university-based component examines national and international education policy agendas through historical critique and critical reflection (Giroux, 2011) and includes a project-planning phase. This was facilitated by Liverpool World Centre, a non-government organisation influenced by radical approaches within the

lineage of development education (Mannion et al, 2011). Project negotiation involved teacher educators from both school and university providing a space for professional development and, wherever possible, to align broad project goals and expectations. Working in groups across diverse educational settings the beginning teachers address a range of educational issues and consider their wider social, moral and ethical implications. Integrating curriculum with community engagement in this way provides a model of Service-Learning (SL), a pedagogical approach increasingly common to citizenship education (Bamber, 2015) and also used recently within the professional education of teachers (see for instance Moate and Riohotie-Lyhty, 2014).

While WPE is intended to explore ‘ill-defined problems in boundary zones’ (Tsui and Law, 2007: 1289) opening up possibilities for value dialogue through school-university-community partnership, further research has highlighted ways ‘criticality’ colonise and reify curricula, imposing Western constructs of ‘global’ norms rather than enabling authentic forms of critical being (Bamber et al. 2018).

Within this case study, attention was paid to university and placement school as sites for the emergence of professional dispositions, and to the spaces and tensions between them. [All research was approved in advance in line with the university’s ethics procedures and in accordance with the BERA Ethical Guidelines \(2011\). None of the research team have any role in awarding qualified teacher status to participants, or for assessing their performance on teaching practice.](#)

### **Study design**

[A preliminary survey of the cohort of beginning teachers was used to generate some hypotheses regarding confidence and disposition toward teaching FBV. Six schools](#)

were [then](#) identified from 37 engaging in [the WPE](#) component, employing a purposive sample to identify distinctive challenges and approaches to the teaching of FBV. The project phase took place in February 2016, not long after the 2014 reauthoring of the Ofsted inspection handbook, and Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 had come into effect. Recognising the risks of ‘method slurring’ in multi-method qualitative research (Kahlke, 2014), data from the case study schools was collected using four distinct methodological strands – document analysis, interview, participant observation and reflective logs. Publically available data was gathered from schools’ websites and most recent Ofsted reports. Additional contextualisation was provided by interviews with school leaders and with the teacher responsible for leading the WPE project placements. Participant observation was carried out during the planning and delivery of the project and beginning teachers shared reflective logs and project presentations with the researchers. This multi-method approach was designed to capture the context, enactment and reflection components of our conceptual model of professional values learning. One case study school [School Q] provided contextual data only, but is not included in this study, as no consent was provided to gather any data on enactment or reflection, leaving five.

#### *Teacher interviews*

Semi-structured metacognitive interviews were carried out with four headteachers, five project lead teachers [and 12 beginning teachers](#). Focusing on the intersubjective construction of meaning (Carspecken, 1996) school interviews focused on the articulations of practice to a range of stakeholders [e.g. “How would you describe British values to a prospective parent?”] as well as the range of sources of enacted practice [e.g. “What resources have you found that are helpful?”].

### *Participant observation*

An observation schedule was developed by an interdisciplinary expert group (Bamber et al, 2013) to capture the contribution of project-based school placement to beginning teachers' understandings of FBV. The observation schedule focused on pedagogy, planning and resources [e.g. the status of the project – how do teachers/school leaders relate to the project team; what school resources (including teaching staff) can the beginning teachers draw on in planning?], in order to understand both the sources of beginning teachers' understanding and the process of agency in the assemblage of diverse sources. [Observations primarily focused upon the formal activities led by beginning teachers as part of their WPE project and informal interactions between beginning teachers, school leaders, other teachers and, where applicable, community partners within the setting.](#) Research assistants carried out observations to avoid introducing the perception that the beginning teachers were being observed as part of the assessment for their course. [13 days of observation were completed in total across the 6 schools. This was undertaken, where possible, in the second week of the WPE project to allow the beginning teachers to establish project ideas and relationships in the setting and to permit observations of both planning and delivery.](#)

### *Reflective logs*

The research team analysed the project reflective logs from participating beginning teachers and attended end of project presentations where beginning teachers answered questions from course tutors and their peers on their professional learning and evolving professional identity. [In the reflective logs, participants were also specifically asked to reflect upon their understanding of SMSC development and their contribution, as beginning teachers, to the wider life and ethos of the school.](#) These logs completed a reflective cycle from university based learning, through practical-evaluative settings,

back to the university based context. [The reflective logs of 10 beginning teachers across 4 schools were analysed as part of this research. Reflections were completed daily and summarised weekly. The daily logs varied in length, and the summaries were between 1,000 and 2,500 words.](#)

Table 1. Available data for each school

[We developed a coding framework drawing on the double hermeneutic of interpretive phenomenological analysis \(Smith et al., 2009\) to theorise three conceptual themes represented in the data. Hermeneutical dyads were developed after double-coding of the data by at least two co-researchers to ensure inter-rater reliability. A comparative approach was adopted that sought to address the danger that mixed-method qualitative case study research can be atheoretical \(Kahlke, 2014\), and enabled an element of critical reflexivity amongst the research project team, given that 2 of the 4 members had been involved in the development and delivery of WPE in recent years.](#)

## **Discussion and Findings**

The resultant themes illustrate a spectrum of awareness and agency in the enactment of  
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illustrate a spectrum of awareness and agency in the enactment of the FBV policy [see Figure 1]. Across all themes, where professional context facilitates deliberative spaces for the reinterpretation of policy enactment, there is evidence of a concomitant increase in agentic reflection by beginning teachers.

[Figure 1. Thematic analysis conceptualised as a spectrum of awareness and agency.](#)

### ***Community partnership***

An important theme that differentiated approaches to FBV was the way beginning teachers and project placement schools understood the relationship to their community, especially parents. Navigating expectations of parents and families was identified by many beginning teachers in the preliminary study as the most daunting aspect of this policy agenda.

... it can be tricky to tell a child, 'Actually, that's not what we believe in this country,' ... because they will go home and say that to their parents and that can cause problems I think... parents can come in and complain about what you've said. I don't know, I think it can spiral [Beginning teacher interview: Rehani].

Recognising the potentially divisive and provocative nature of promoting FBV, some beginning teachers demonstrated a sensitivity toward sections of the community perceived to have different values. The shift in emphasis from the predecessor 'community cohesion' policy, which located consensus within and between communities at the societal level, toward a more explicit political origin (Lundie, 2017) has potentially far reaching consequences for school-community partnership. In some cases schools recognised that this shift rendered the policy contentious, attempting to reframe the policy in deliberative engagement with communities, in others the

contentiousness was elided, and a critical turn refused, while still others made use of the policy to outright challenge perceived parental prejudices.

This is illustrated by two schools in the study: school L, an ethnically mixed community junior school (Year 3-6, Ages 7-11), whose response to FBV was foregrounded by the anticipation of imminent Ofsted inspection. Teachers and leaders presented FBV policy as sitting alongside existing school values, as well as with elements of the school's engagement with a military ethos external provider, whose involvement consisted of reinforcing:

respect for authority and the rule of law... they have been doing team building activities... marching, survival shelter building... It taps into the rule of law, definitely, and discipline, also respect and working as a team [Teacher interview: School L].

The association of FBV with military discipline, and the reduction to a performative inspection focus had the effect of occluding challenge and avoiding controversy. In contrast, School M's leadership evidenced detailed awareness and reflection on the meaning of FBV as they developed with beginning teachers a project related to racial attacks in the local community. While some signs of a compliance model remained, beginning teachers at School M reflected on the extent to which value conflict may inhibit agency, and how this was dependent on other factors in the life of the school and the professional selves of the teachers:

... this can make children uncomfortable with being told to do one thing at school and one thing at home... that can cause a bigger issue than what the issue already is, then it's not worth dealing with the issue in the first place because it [be]comes a bit of a mess [Beginning teacher interview: Chloe].

Beginning teachers in school L were asked to lead on a project which focused on the Syrian refugee crisis. They demonstrated high expectations of the links between project, pedagogy, school and community, aiming to:

... make personal connections... in many of the children's lives, and will contribute [towards]... their own beliefs and community [Beginning teacher reflective log: Abbie].

The project focus proved controversial, given contrasting expectations between school leaders, school-based teacher educators and beginning teachers. For instance, some beginning teachers commented in their reflective logs that school pupils' perceptions of innocence, responsibility and moral judgment were blurred, with pupils confusing refugees fleeing war with economic migrants. In contrast, a similar project focusing on the theme of 'home' at school N, a School of Sanctuary, linking the global refugee crisis and homelessness in a local context, presented FBV within a democratic framing, as itself an agent to challenge parental prejudice:

we've got a lot of families who are stuck in their ways and aren't very welcoming to other faiths and lots of different things. So I think it's important for the children to be able to ask those questions for themselves, rather than letting their parents or people around them dictate what they're supposed to say and think [Teacher interview: School N].

you obviously have to let them [the pupils] make their own mind up. By educating them, hopefully, it will teach them that their parents beliefs might not necessarily be the best beliefs to have [Beginning teacher interview: Fatima].

While previous research reported reluctance among teachers to assert that the views of parents may be wrong (Carr & Landon, 1999, p. 174), this research found a willingness to question parental beliefs. For some, this involved metaphors of challenge

and conflict, with the influence of context on beginning teacher agency evident. School O, with a Christian foundation, brought to bear existing practical-evaluative cultures of normative clarity, while others refused the new political shift, and the agentive space to confront societal controversies:

We've got that battle of what they're exposed to at home, and the environment they grow up in. We find that a real conflict [Teacher interview: School O].

You've got to try and challenge those beliefs... telling the children that their parents are wrong [Post-project beginning teacher survey: Janine].

The potential for nurturing agency is frequently subverted by a discursive orthodoxy that restricts interruptive possibility; beginning teachers working in schools that recognised the FBV agenda as a significant step-change in values policy were in some ways more aware of the possibilities for change and challenge, counteracting anxiety around parental recrimination (RSA, 2014).

### ***Inclusiveness***

The uses of language to include, assimilate or mark boundaries were coded under the theme of inclusiveness. Some of these approaches lend themselves to an uncritical model of tolerance (Lundie & Conroy, 2015), such as in the example below:

The main objective of this class is "to gain an understanding of [School M] as a community..."

Beginning teacher A then pulled out a box which contained different coloured crayons, she passed them out to each child so each had a crayon. Then she asked "What is community?" encouraging the children to think independently [about their answers]. The children showed a sense of confusion. Teacher A continues by saying "We are all together as a community" and "there are different people in the community." Teacher A asked everyone with a blue crayon to stand up...

“Do they have the same crayon?... But are they the same people?”

Child 1: “We have different accents”

Child 2: “I have a Scouse accent”

Child 3: “We are all the same but different”. [Fieldnotes: School M]

The performative closure of such insubstantial approaches is totalising insofar as pupils, beginning teachers and schools become complicit in the negation of alterity, entering into a performance of a ‘colour-blind’ civility as constitutive of the discourse of ‘diversity’ and ‘inclusion’, such that it precludes genuine transformative critique (Bamber, Lewin and White, 2018).

The purpose of the project at School M was to increase children’s understanding of diversity [Beginning teacher reflective log: Diane]. The beginning teachers identified the lack of materials and challenges of family context as potential barriers to success and were encouraged to make use of open discussion to help mitigate these challenges. Nevertheless, their anxieties about engaging substantively with value diversity were masked by focus on pedagogical confidence and the need to keep pupils active and on task. This masking had parallels in the school’s flattening of difference in relation to an increasingly diverse and polarised parental culture.

The treatment of inclusiveness in School L tended to occlude challenge, foreclosing discussion of difficult or challenging topics:

We won’t go into that because, like you say, some countries, and the cultures there, are not necessarily things that you would want to expose the children to  
[Teacher interview, School L].

Inclusive language was used to describe the FBV agenda: ‘*our culture and our values*’, ‘*the way our nation is run*’, though the meaning and intentions behind some pedagogical activities remained opaque. Beginning teachers’ responses to the post-test

survey from School L evidenced a narrower perspective than had been the case prior to placement, attesting both higher confidence in teaching about British values, and lower levels of criticality toward the policy. This further reinforces the contrast between these two schools addressed in the previous theme.

Some participants in this study expressed concerns as to the alienating potential of FBV, either in regard to its content or title; approaches which presented more substantive diversities of value as deficit or problematic were evident, as was the impact of placement experience in culturally, ethnically and religiously homogenous schools.

Our children are very tolerant of all different, you know, faiths and cultures.

We're a predominantly white British school and we just don't have any issues

[Headteacher interview, School Q].

As with Smith (2016), much of this othering proceeded through a non-naming of the Muslim other.

An assimilationist or integrative approach was evident amongst beginning teachers that expected minorities to adopt the majority perspective. Jane for instance concluded '...it's important those coming from another culture know what we believe in Britain, and understand how they can follow our society'. Dichotomising between 'us' and 'them' in this way is characteristic of a 'diversity as deficit' orientation. This was also suggested by stereotyping amongst beginning teachers regarding, for example, the status of women in Muslim households and assuming pupils learning English as an Additional Language to be non-British.

Some beginning teachers did however pursue opportunities to constructively engage with difference and nurture empathy, for instance through simulating the experiences and feelings of a new arrival or incorporating community members from diverse backgrounds within curriculum activities. These initiatives, developed in

dialogue with school leaders, encouraged mutual engagement across difference creating possibilities for becoming other-wise (Bamber, 2015) through authentic and transformative encounters with others' beliefs. For Jem this process was catalysed by a university based lecture that challenged her own assumptions about Islam and helped her to 'open my eyes to realise I need to challenge the children's stereotypes as well'. With the support of a teacher in her placement school she subsequently introduced Arabic lessons for her pupils taught by a parent. There was also evidence that some beginning teachers developed a capacity and willingness to nurture empathy and pupil agency through pedagogy that promotes alternative perspectives. Julie's practice was influenced by a teacher in school qualified to teach Philosophy for Children and a university seminar that took used a TED talk by novelist Chimamanda Adichie on 'The Danger of a Single Story':

'many [children] have negative views on people coming over here so enquiry-based learning is key, giving children the evidence and letting them make decisions from that, otherwise they're getting this idea of a one-sided story...so we got them to ask questions from just giving them lots of different sources to look at, and letting them see the issues through their own questions' [Beginning teacher interview: Julie]

### *Explicit values*

Much coded discourse focused on the language and terminology, rather than the substance of values, in particular the naming of the values as 'British'. A deeper level of resistance or subversion of the policy focused on a recognition of higher level processes of value formation. For example, one beginning teacher told how a pupil in her placement project subverted the value of rules which was being taught unreflectively in her school under the rubric of 'rule of law':

Are rules there for a certain reason? Is the reason always right? So, one of the children made their story up, and their characters went for a walk, and one actually got lost, and although one of the rules that you teach children is don't talk to strangers, they changed it. "Well, actually, you're not supposed to talk to strangers, but if someone feels lost then you should feel that you should be able to help them." You should try and help them, as long as you know that you're safe [Beginning teacher interview: Fatima].

Beginning teachers in this study tended to reiterate, and even recite, the expectation that schools promote the 'skills and attitudes that will allow [young people] to participate fully in and contribute positively to life in modern Britain' (Ofsted, 2016, p. 39). As found previously (Jerome & Clemitshaw, 2012) this was linked by beginning teachers to preparation for diversity, multiculturalism and multiple identities (Jerome & Clemitshaw, 2012, p. 38), whereas the expectation to promote FBV also evoked civic and political nationalism, stereotypical and patriotic imagery, such as in Image 1.

Image 1. Wall display on British values, School M.

Very frequently, expanded, alternative or divergent value sets were also encountered. In some cases, this expanded values code captured ways teachers attempted to elide differences between the language of FBV and other professional and values related terminology. Distinct from critical subversion, these expanded value-sets repackaged earlier policy agendas around community cohesion. In other cases, broad universal values such as fairness were addressed under the aegis of the agenda:

I think it's in every subject, whether it's PE and children having to pick teams, whether you're teaching the children that actually, somebody is always going to

be last but why do you feel you need to pick that person last? [Teacher interview, School O].

In contrast to these more universalising expanded value-sets, an imaginative expansion of the significance of ‘Britishness’ akin to Elton-Chalcraft et al’s (2016) stereotypical notions as the distinctive component of FBV was also in evidence, such as in the observation data, again from School M:

One [display] with a significant title ‘Proud of our British Values’ including pictures, words, and [pupil] art about what it means to be British. Included the royal family, repeated Union Jack flags, English breakfast, NHS and teapots... [Fieldnotes: School M]

Established school value codes featured repeatedly in observations, though their framing relative to FBV evidenced significant differences in management practice, agency and authenticity:

The [School N] code: “We can achieve anything together”. Look after each other and show we care. Look after our school and the things in it. Try to talk through our problems. Follow instructions to ensure our school is a happy and safe place to be. Always try to do our best. Treat each other with respect [Text from visual display, Fieldnotes: School N].

Unlike the approach of School L, which treated FBV as polysemic and compatible with existing value statements, predominantly, School N viewed the policy agenda as an opportunity for critical reflection. Although non-compliance remained a concern, and the School N code’s expanded value-set contained terminology congruent with FBV, the language was repurposed in subversive ways:

I think it’s about teaching children mutual respect, and celebrating the uniqueness of a community... it’s about... making choices, informed choices,

the importance of rules, keeping them simple but the ones that we all work towards for the betterment of everyone [Headteacher interview: School N].

The headteacher at School N took a more critical approach to reinscribing the language of FBV; seeing the school as a reflection of society, and taking a democratic approach to school values. Post-project reflections from beginning teachers suggest that the critical reinscription of British values as democratic and reflective pedagogy at School N was accompanied by professional discomfort with the language of the values. Conscious management of the conflict between policy and professional expectations was in evidence in follow-up interviews. In their reflective logs, beginning teachers recognised that a focus for their project had been to ‘challenge’ pupils’ perceptions around ‘Britishness’.

School O is a Catholic primary school in an inner-city area illustrated not a compliant performance nor critical subversion orientation to FBV, but a congruent assimilation embedded in a deeper value commitment, in this case to Catholic ‘Gospel values’. In 2014, the school’s senior leadership undertook a comprehensive review, responding to both the changing political agenda around FBV and societal changes in the demographic of the school’s intake. The result of this process was a refocusing on ‘Gospel values’, including:

Tolerance and respect: relationships based on equality, trust and sincerity;

Integrity and honesty: decisions and actions based on Christian values – “doing the right thing”;...

Creativity and democracy: innovative approaches used to enhance learning and real opportunities for pupil voice [School website: School O].

The school faces a potential clash of cultures – between managing home-school relations, the moral expectations of the Catholic Church, its own commitment to

diversity, and FBV. These myriad normative resources potentially open up spaces for redefinition of the school's relationship to its community, but are also presented at times through the language of conflict, as illustrated earlier.

The language of FBV is reflected in School O's 'Gospel values', though inflected through a primary commitment to the school's faith ethos. This expanded value set provided the headteacher with normative vocabulary with which to critique FBV, particularly with regard to the diverse origins of pupils. Celebrating diversity was again a focus of the placement project, with a particular focus on appreciation of the children's and families' countries of origin.

Two notable outcomes of this approach are that teachers and beginning teachers in the school expressed a greater confidence in what the values mean to them, and the language of compliance and inspection appears to recede. Problematically, however, the congruent school's reflective horizon may be limited by its comfort with regard to the deeper, 'Gospel' value-set. By nesting FBV within this expanded value-set, critical reflection can be sublimated, as the two value sets become synonymous. For example, with regard to the rule of law:

The initial thought was we shouldn't be talking about [local crime], but then it was "no... that is... the area that the children grow up in so we need to address it, and we need to talk about it, and it seems to fit perfectly with the rule of law.

It fits in with our, you know, the Ten Commandments [Teacher interview, School O].

The easy elision between a policy agenda and the transcendent character of divine revelation in this example points to an insidious challenge of displacing incongruence in this approach. While in the immediate context of its conscious and agentive refocusing on 'Gospel values', School O operates in a context of critical agency, this masking of

the explicit origins of the policy agenda may lead both teachers and beginning teachers to an unknowing, unreflective acceptance in the longer term.

## **Conclusion**

The themes presented above illustrate the myriad challenges for schools, university based teacher educators and beginning teachers as they incorporate the teaching of a politically determined approach to values into the context of existing professional cultures, normative resources and community relationships. The vast majority of beginning teachers expressed broad agreement, alignment and support for the FBV agenda. They did connect the diverse range of policy interpretations in school contexts with a personal investment in the project of preparing young people for life in modern Britain. Firstly, this alignment was inflected through agency – beginning teachers' sense of confidence and competence, which could be enhanced by creative tensions between community engagement, enculturation through the values of the school and critical dispositions from the WPE component. However, in keeping with other studies (Conroy, Lundie, & Baumfield, 2012) a foregrounding of pedagogical competences at times masked deeper conceptual conflicts regarding the contested status and interpretation of FBV. The extent to which beginning teachers felt confident to take the recursive steps to recover agency in the context of professional practice depended on practical-evaluative contexts, including school leaders' responses and relationship to parental context. [The realities of this typology may yet be more complex, with the least agentive teachers unrepresented due to non-response bias \(Dillman et al. 2018\).](#) For this reason, a simplistic account which equates awareness with criticality or agency with pedagogical confidence must be rejected, recognising the two as existing in a more nuanced non-linear creative flux. At times, awareness necessitated a dwelling with

discomfort as to the realities of policy, while at other times a purported congruity with prior values occluded nuance or awareness. Beginning teachers' alignment to this policy agenda was also inflected through critical awareness, the capacity to engage in professional discourse around the purposes of their work as teachers, providing a normative horizon against which specific pedagogies of values education can be evaluated, distinct from regulatory compliance.

Beginning teachers whose professional experience came from practical-evaluative contexts which enabled space for reflexive reinterpretation, drawing on deliberative and normative resources from within the setting, demonstrated more nuanced reflections of their confidence with FBV, recognising the projective incompleteness of becoming values educators, while the study also highlights the need for attention to the realities of enactment when teaching in the university setting. In contrast to Wakefield (1997) beginning teachers were influenced by the context in which they were working, recognising the role of teachers and school leaders in reinscribing and valorising the policy agenda. In each setting, the school as institution either takes, or refuses, the recursive step of engagement with its culture; and in each case, beginning teachers' own choices and values are enframed by those steps. The distinctive approaches taken by placement schools have important implications for the professional socialisation and enculturation of beginning teachers, though the taught component of the course also played an important role in enabling a reflective contribution in their respective contexts.

University-based and professional placement components of ITE sometimes pulled in contradictory directions, as illustrated by tensions that emerged regarding project goals. This calls for a greater attentiveness from both – not necessarily to one another, but to their iterative roles in the formation of teacher agency. Making either the

school or university the exclusive site of teachers' professional subjectification masks complex dynamics between policy, parents, communities, established professionals and their pupils: a maelstrom into which beginning teachers are thrown. We echo concerns that teacher anxiety about engaging with controversial issues has led to 'an unhelpful sanitisation' (RSA, 2014: 18) of provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. ITE such as WPE that seeks to tackle 'ill-defined problems in boundary zones' (Tsui and Law, 2007: 1289) affords opportunities for teachers and teacher educators to model how contradictions and controversy can be addressed. This approach demands teacher educators, in both schools and universities, recognise their broader responsibilities to community engagement (Moate & Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2014), themselves developing openness and sensitivity and a reflexive awareness of the impact of policy on schools as institutions, both opening up and closing down spaces for community voices to be heard.

Given the importance of both awareness and agency for the development of teachers' professional identities, this highlights the need for further expansion of the liminal terrain between professional acculturation and discursive openness in ITE. Approaches to ITE which seek to reduce the critical, reflective and recursive space in favour of a purely practical-evaluative apprenticeship in teacher-craft are particularly problematic in the preparation of teachers with the agency to navigate the complex relationship between policy, parental background and pedagogical environment.

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