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School leadership and the civic nationalist turn: Towards a typology of leadership styles employed by head teachers in their enactment of the Prevent Duty and the promotion of fundamental British values

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Abstract

British schools are teeming with cultural richness and have long been at the heart of a celebration of heritage. However, the riots in the north of England in 2001 exposed fractures in community cohesion, a loss of economic opportunity for marginalised groups and a rise in far-right activity. The London bombings of 2005 revealed deep fault lines across communities and by 2012 the government had implemented the 'Hostile Environment' and Immigration Laws of 2014 and 2016 which saw citizens assume the mantle of 'border enforcer.' The Windrush scandal of 2017 was an expression of this environment, and coupled with a resurgent nationalism, the UK voted to leave the EU. Schools, nested within diverse communities across the country, negotiate societal issues and tensions in the quotidian spaces of the school day and head teachers, charged with ensuring the Prevent Duty is enacted and British values promoted, determine the ethos and approach of their respective schools. Drawing on literature from school leadership, this research engages with head teachers in schools in England to explore the leadership styles they employ when enacting the requirements of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Home Office, 2015) and the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2012) and navigating the civic nationalist turn.

Keywords: Leadership; Radicalisation; Schools; Civic nationalism; Fundamental British values; Prevent

1. Introduction

The policy document Prevent (Home Office, 2011), the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2012) and the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (Home Office, 2015) represent a trinity of UK policy initiatives that require teachers to ensure that (fundamental) British values are promoted within and outside of school. In this way teachers have been positioned as both policy actors and policy subjects (Ball, 2006). Designed to counter a narrative of radicalisation and extremism, OfSTED inspections of schools now encompass this aspect of the Prevent duty and in this way, senior school leaders are required to ensure their teachers promote the values set out in the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2012). Many academic discussions of fundamental British values have focused on the ways in which fundamental (British) values are being taught in the curriculum (Farrell, 2016; Maylor, 2016; Ramsay, 2017; Elton-Chalcraft et al, 2017; Bryan, 2017; Revell & Bryan, 2016) and on Initial Teacher Education courses (Revell et al, 2018). This research is the first study to investigate the ways in which school leaders navigate their way through the statutory requirements articulated in the Prevent duty and the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2012) and to consider their practices in relation to contemporary leadership styles. In the UK there is a symbiotic relationship between school leadership and school improvement. This is as a consequence of government emphasis on standards in schools and, as such, senior school leaders have a particular role in ensuring targets are met, and this is systematised via OfSTED inspections.

This research represents the first empirical research into the relationship between education leadership styles and the requirement to promote fundamental (British) values articulated in the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2011). Leadership became a focus for this study because it has a significant impact on the ethos, values and practices within any given school or schools. We identified leadership as a focus because the approach leaders employed would have a disproportionate effect on the way FBVs was understood, characterised and enacted in schools, and because this policy aligns to the Standards agenda which is necessarily led and implemented by leaders.

The timing of this research is significant, situated as it was in 2016/17. This was a unique moment in this policy narrative because whilst teachers and school leaders were statutorily required to implement and respond to FBVs, we interviewed them before many of the critical discourses with which we are now familiar had been developed. Similarly, school leaders were responding instinctively to our questions – they too had a limited critical vocabulary or reference points with which to respond; this was demonstrated by one head teacher who, above all else, wanted to know what other head teachers had said in terms of their practice. Today, some six years later, FBVs have been theorised and normalised, but at the time of interview, none of this was available – it was, in a sense, an evolving discourse and practice. Since 2016, many academics have reflected on how this policy agenda was implemented. This article is unique, however, in capturing the voices of leaders mid-engagement with the policy at a time when academics, practitioners and policy makers were unsure of the impact these policies would have. This research therefore represents a brief but significant moment in the way we understand the trajectory of this policy enactment – we captured their views, perspectives and concerns as they responded instinctively, grappling with ideas before there was an inspection regime or a critical discourse around this policy.

In this article we explore and chart the dominant theories around leadership in education as a precursor to situating the data in the wider context described above. The theories are significant because they relate to the way the role of the leader is understood and situated in schools and to the way school leaders understand their identity in relation to policy.

2. Leadership Theory

Leadership Theory can be categorised in many ways. A helpful way in which to understand such complex theory is through modernist and postmodernist lenses. Early leadership theory, namely Transactional

Leadership Theory, was particularly influential from 1950 to approximately 1990. Then, what we now know to be a transition period in terms of leadership theory, gave expression to Instructional Leadership Theory and Situational Leadership Theory. From approximately 1990 (Leithwood, 1998) the postmodern leadership theories of Transformational Leadership Theory and Distributed Leadership Theory evolved.

a. Transactional Leadership

Infused with a modernist mono-narrative of the role of the leader and positivist influences that foregrounded quantitative approaches to efficiency and order, Transactional Leadership Theory describes the exchange between leaders and followers within organisations. In this model, leaders reward the efforts of followers who strive to achieve organizational goals or increased productivity through financial or non-financial reward (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Described initially by Burns (1978), Transactional Leadership does not require leader and follower to share a common purpose and nor does it require moral assumptions on the part of the leader. Timescales relating to Transactional Leadership are often short term as it has at its heart the notion of exchange, and as such, is likely to exist with the status quo, rather than seeking a change in culture. Transactional Leadership is successful when goals are understood, priorities are articulated and accepted and the methods employed are agreed. Such a model is likely to achieve minimal success in the face of the need for significant organizational change requiring creative input and solutions.

At the heart of Transactional Leadership are structure and order. Examples of this style of leadership include the military or large organisations where regulations dominate and determine the ways in which goals are achieved. Such an environment requires self-motivated followers who excel in a structured environment. It has a focus on achieving the results of the organization where rewards and penalties measure success and where individual and group performance are monitored via performance reviews. In this way, Transactional Leadership is mechanistic rather than evolving or organic (Smith & Bell, 2011).

Transactional Leaders operate well during times of crisis that require efficiency, short-term solutions, procedures and repetitive tasks. It is clear that Transactional Leadership rewards the follower in a one-way direction, and that creativity and initiative are not necessarily valued. However, this form of leadership is valuable where there are cultural or language differences, where tasks are repetitive, where consistency is essential and in times of crisis or emergency.

b. Situational leadership

At its heart, Situational Leadership is flexible and adaptable. Rather than focus on a particular skill or characteristic of a leader, Situational Leadership shifts the gaze to two other factors: (i) the needs of the organization at any given moment in time and (ii) the skills, competences and attributes of the workers to meet the needs of the organization at that time. With these two factors in concert, the Situational Leader will draw upon a range of styles that best fit the need. This of course requires the leader to, firstly, have the insight to know *when* to employ a particular style, and secondly, the experience to know *which* style will be most useful and relevant in any given context.

Clearly Situational Leadership changes from context to context. It is important for managers to know this is a strength, and also to know their intrinsic style, which is one they are most likely to revert to in times of stress. Goleman (2000) drew upon his work on Emotional Intelligence to develop his six styles of Situational Leadership:

i. **Coaching Leadership** works with individuals developmentally. This style is valuable if staff know their limitations and are ready to be developed
ii. **Pacesetting Leadership** sets aggressive goals and high expectations. They lead by example

but followers need to be competent and motivated or burnout occurs;

iii. **Democratic Leadership** invites followers to contribute and take responsibility; this is time consuming when deadlines loom;

iv. **Affiliative Leadership** uses praise with employees; they put them first to build confidence. This could cause poor team performance;

v. **Authoritative Leadership** is useful where there is an issue with organizational direction; this style facilitates the analysis of problems but can be challenging for experienced staff who may resent being directed;

vi. **Coercive Leadership** has clear goals and staff are directed. This style is valuable in times of crisis.

c. Instructional Leadership

Emerging in the 1980s, Instructional Leadership was characterised by Hallinger & Murphy (1985) as a framework that defined the mission of the school (framing goals and communicating goals); managing the 'instructional programme' (coordinating the curriculum, supervising and evaluating and monitoring student progress) and developing the 'school learning climate programme' (protecting instructional time, incentivising teachers, incentivising learning, promoting professional development and being highly visible). Instructional Leaders have a focus on supervision, curriculum development and staff development (Blase & Blase, 1999), setting the school's direction and vision, negotiating shared goals, planning, clarifying roles and objectives, motivating and setting high performance expectations (Leithwood et al, 2004).

d. Transformational Leadership

Transformational Leadership is characterised by four key attributes including idealised influence (the leader is an admired role model; inspirational motivation (the leader empowers their followers); intellectual stimulation (the leader approaches problems in new ways); individualised consideration (the leader takes interest in followers' career goals) (Bass, 1998).

The successful enactment of all four factors leads to performance beyond expectation:

i. **Idealized influence** relates to the way the leader is a role model to others; how they have a purpose that drives them and influences others, referred to as 'charisma'. The leader appears competent by ensuring goals are attainable; they set high expectations;

ii. **Inspirational motivation** – the leader inspires others to follow them. They see and know how to attain future success through long-term time frames, winning hearts and minds;

iii. **Individualised consideration** demonstrates a genuine concern for the needs of followers; the leader is people-driven and develops others through counselling. Followers develop a concern for achievement and meeting organizational goals.

iv. **Intellectual stimulation** describes the leader's innovating character- they challenge their followers to be creative and innovative.

Leithwood et al (1998) propose that the Transformational Leader models practice, has high expectations, builds culture, has a vision and shared goals and provides individualised support for colleagues. The Transformational Leader seeks to lift levels of morality in both parties, has a vision for the school (Green, 2010) and can articulate this with clarity to stakeholders. Skilful at recruiting talented employees they see individual skills or talents and are able to direct these for the benefit of the organization.

Transformational Leadership requires the leader to have a vision underpinned by values and the initiative to embed these into the culture of the organization; followers are empowered through the development of an esprit de corps. This value system nurtures the learning environment where common goals are shared. In this environment needs are reciprocal between leader and follower; Transformational Leaders place the needs of followers centrally.

e. Distributed Leadership

Spillane's Distributed Leadership Model (2006) has a focus on leadership practice and interactions between key players (leaders, followers) and their situated context. Spillane proposes that effective leadership practice occurs in the interactions between the leaders and followers within their given context, where interaction is central. This is not a 'shared leadership' model, and nor does it focus on the actions of key individuals but on collective interaction. Caldwell too suggests that a distributed leadership model is successful because of its capacity to "join networks or federations to share knowledge, address problems and pool resources" (Caldwell, 2006, p. 75).

The Distributed Leadership model brings the needs of students to the fore – as Harris et al note, school leadership has a greater influence on both schools and students when it is widely distributed (Harris et al, 2007). Drawing on research evidence, and adopting an interpretive stance on distributed leadership, Harris notes that there are numerous leaders within any given school and between schools, where the architecture comprises hierarchies and set roles to focus on interactions, on learning, on innovation and agency to innovate. Empowering leaders throughout the organisation of the school to assume leadership practices necessitates a culture and environment of trust, with a focus on pupil development.

These five examples of leadership theory are not intended to be exhaustive. Rather, they have been identified as offering a range of theoretical perspectives on leadership practices such that they provide us with a theorised language with which to engage with our data.

3. Methodology

Participants in this study were senior leaders in forty-one primary and nineteen secondary schools in Kent, Medway and London and were aged between forty and sixty-five. Thirty-nine of the participants were women, and twenty-one were male; most were white majority British and three participants were of south Asian heritage. The schools were a mixture of academies (9), community schools (19), church schools (11) and schools in multi academy trusts (21). It is worth noting that schools in Kent and Medway are part of a selective system and that five of the secondary schools were grammar schools. The original mechanisms for recruiting participants were through professional links and relationships and then through snowballing. Senior leaders who took part in the initial interviews recommended other potential interviewees whom they thought might be willing to take part in the research and in some instances made the initial introductions. The personal and professional recommendations and introductions of our first participants were particularly important at a time when many school leaders were uncomfortable and wary of talking about an initiative that originated from the Home Office. Forty-eight head teachers and twelve assistant head teachers and/or deputy head teachers ultimately agreed to take part in the research. They were all experienced teachers and all had been in post for between five and twenty-three years. All the interviews took place in the participants' place of work, usually in their office although in three cases interviews took place in an empty staffroom at the end of the school day.

The interviews were structured around two distinct (although related) areas of inquiry that were approached using different prompts. At the time of the interviews the concept of fundamental British values was still relatively unexplored, and we suspected that because of this, senior leaders might not have had the opportunity to reflect in depth on the implications for their practice and their relationships will colleagues. We also rejected a paradigm that posited us as omniscient specialists whose aim it was to extract information and data from our participants. Rather, we recognised that the interviews must be sites of co-creation in understanding the implications and significance of fundamental British values as part of a leadership landscape. We therefore identified and privileged the notion of dialogue as a component of our methodology. Dialogue reframes not only the participant but also the researcher; it ruptures the static polarisation between inquirer and subject and permits a more fluid and

natural interaction than might otherwise be expected in a traditional interview (Anderson, 2014). Enacting dialogue through the interviews enabled us to recognise the views and opinions of the participants on the relationship between leadership and fundamental British values; we recognised that participants' views might be unformed and embryonic and that as such, the interviews would be a process through which those ideas became formed and articulated for the first time.

The secondary mechanism in the interviews was the use of counterfactual prompting. This is the process by which artificial scenarios or case studies are presented to participants, who then respond. The use of counter factual strategies in interviews can intensify participants' responses to questions through providing a definite focus for their deliberations (Sanna, 2000). This is not only a process of making the abstract concrete but of supporting interviewees as they understand the possible relationships between their actions and possible outcomes when the situations have not yet occurred (Wenzlhuemer, 2009). We suspected that because research on fundamental British values in relation to leadership was at the time still relatively uncharted, the majority of our participants would not have had opportunity to reflect from a personal leadership perspective on experiences. In this context, counterfactual prompts provide the interviewer and the interviewee with a hypothetical focus and this creates opportunities for the participant to reflect on future possible actions. The prompts nudge the interviewees to consider their possible behaviour, and also create the potential for 'flickers of transformation' bought about by refection (Way et al, 2015). The prompts employed in this research incorporated imaginary scenarios that could occur in an 'average' school; they also presented a range of contexts where fundamental British values might explicitly or implicitly be an issue. The prompts were:

Would you consider the following acts as examples of a teacher undermining fundamental British values?

- A teacher who said they did not support the monarchy as part of a discussion in a citizenship lesson;
- A teacher who, during a classroom discussion, said that in some circumstances they thought political violence was justified;
- A teacher who said that they could understand why in some circumstances young Muslims would be attracted to extremism.

And then:

Would you consider it unprofessional if a teacher?

- Attended a local rally to protest against cuts in the NHS;
- Attended an anti-war march where pupils and parents could be present;
- Stood in local elections as a councillor.

Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed and anonymity was protected through the use of pseudonyms and changing gender where appropriate. In terms of analysis the corpus of data was mined and coded three times to identify the a priori themes of British values and leadership. The first coding was used to identify specific references to leadership. Further themes were identified during subsequent analysis of the data. The dialogic approach to interviews added new foci to the coding process. As well as coding language and meaning, we also coded interactions between participant and researcher. The nature of the interactions in interviews can reveal instances and patterns in the fluidity and coherence of talk as well as in the ways that participants engaged or disengaged from questions (Ongena & Dijkstra, 2006).

4. Data

The findings suggest that the overriding approach by senior leaders to enacting fundamental British values was one of engagement and compliance. However, within the broad category of compliance there were responses, levels of commitment and differences in interpretation that could be aligned with different leadership styles. The use of counterfactual prompts revealed tensions and apparent contradictions in leadership traits. When senior leaders were discussing the ways in which they implemented fundamental British values they were more likely to exhibit traits that

could be aligned to models of transformational and distributed leadership. However, when they were responding to the scenarios presented through the counterfactual prompting, they were more likely to exhibit traits typically associated with transactional styles of leadership.

All senior leaders were aware of the requirements to implement fundamental British values, they understood that it was a statutory requirement and that it was embedded in the Teachers' Standards and therefore had implications for teacher professionalism. There were no differences in response to age, ethnicity or gender although it was notable that participants from the five grammar schools were more likely to suggest flexibility in relation to the interpretation of fundamental British values. The number of participants from grammar schools was too small for us draw any certain conclusions but it may be that responses by leaders in these schools were contextualised by the belief they were working in more liberal environments (Beighton & Revell, 2020). As well as a universal recognition of the importance of fundamental British values, three themes appeared in the data in relation to leadership. These were leaders as custodians, leaders as buffers between teachers and policy and leaders as policy actors.

a. Leaders as custodians

All participants interpreted the requirement to implement fundamental British values as in some way impacting on their responsibility to create and develop values within their school. In this, participating school leaders engaged in discussion about the moral purpose of their practice, and this was a clear demonstration of the way in which Transactional Leadership has evolved. In line with other studies involving teachers and student teachers, there were concerns about the term 'British' in relation to values and in even in the legitimacy of a project to create a sense of national values (Maylor, 2010; Jerome, 2012). However, school leaders were proud of the values and ethos that informed their schools and were suspicious of policy that sought to remake those values or ethos in some way. Leaders repeatedly noted that the creation and implementation of values in a school was ultimately *their* responsibility and that they would not sanction values that they thought were not appropriate for *their* school. It is noteworthy here that the culture of the school, including a discussion of values, is highly significant to the school leaders; the underpinning mission of their schools was discussed in relation to values and again, this demonstrates a move away from an understanding of leadership as Transactional.

When asked if the requirement to promote fundamental British values would affect their approach to the existing values of the school all but two respondents said no. Two reasons were repeatedly given for this. The first was that the existing values of the school already echoed fundamental British values. Senior leaders argued that fundamental British values added nothing new to the existing values or ethos of their school. Echoing Situational Leadership indicators, the senior leaders were highly focused on *their* school, on what was appropriate to *their* setting. Some pointed out that the values as articulated via fundamental British values were vague and open to interpretation and in this the contemporary senior school leader is epitomised – in their daily roles they had a clear focus on negotiating their mission including goals and values, on setting high expectations and overseeing progress in these endeavours; the fact that they felt fundamental British values were ill-defined is an example of the way senior leaders seek clarity in order to demonstrate progress. This is a marker of an educational system in which smart targets are set such that they can be measured and achieved. Over half of the participants also made the point that the values were essentially universal and would therefore have been incorporated into their ethos or mission statements as a matter of course.

The second reason senior leaders gave for stating that fundamental British values would not change the values of their school was that it was inconceivable that the Home Office could intervene so authoritatively in such a significant area. Many of the senior leaders were visibly affronted at the idea that an external agent could impose values on the school that had not been agreed by the community of the school and again this represents the contemporary senior school leader;

drawing on indicators of Transformational Leadership the leaders saw as their responsibility the building of school culture, of goals and a vision for their community - and the imposition of these from government sat uncomfortably with models of school leadership in which they were immersed. One assistant head at a Church of England primary school described how the development of values for the school was a whole school venture that ensured that everyone in the school was committed to the same vision:

> *We do things very differently at a school like this, I mean the values we have are everywhere, really, they're in everything we do and we went through a long process, it was very thorough and, and democratic as well, it took …. Well, it took nearly the best part of a year. We worked very closely with the diocese and it really helped to bring us all together, they (the school values) had to be agreed by everyone.*

This is a clear articulation of Distributed Leadership, where the interactions between the leader, the staff and the wider school community acted in concert to develop a set of collective values; the staff had agency to influence this development and the result is a situated representation of the community.

b. Leaders as stewards

We asked participants if they could envision a scenario where a colleague undermines British values and if this happened how and if they would approach it as an issue that warranted conversation with line managers. Most participants were certain that as senior leaders they knew enough about their colleagues to anticipate that it would be unlikely that such a scenario would happen. They spoke with pride and confidence in relation to the abilities and professionalism of the teachers in their schools.

The participants drew on indicators of Situated Leadership in demonstrating that they were au fait with the skills and competencies of their staff; as senior leaders they were insightful and knowledgeable about the characteristics and qualities of their staff such that they were confident that their staff were able to enact and embody the values that underpinned their school community. A quarter of participants mentioned teacher agency in some way when they were asked if they were concerned that teachers in their schools might need support to interpret the guidelines. They referred to the importance of 'independence', 'professionalism, of teachers being 'old hands at that sort of thing' and the fact that good teachers' know how to act in the moment because 'that's what this job requires'.

Rather than drawing on authoritative or coercive models of Transactional Leadership, the participants demonstrated Transformational Leadership skills in that they sought to empower their staff in their practice. Five participants volunteered that they thought head teachers should have greater confidence in colleagues to be able to negotiate policy, because as one head teacher said 'God knows, we've all had enough practice'. Twelve senior leaders (20%) used the word 'trust' in response to the question about how confident they were that teachers could interpret the guidelines on fundamental British values appropriately:

> *I don't think it would ever come to something like that here, I mean I can't think of anyone, and I mean, this is a big school. Teachers need to know that I trust them, and I do, I say it all the time, they need to know because, well, I think, they (the government) make it pretty clear that they don't trust us.*

Nearly 75% (43) of respondents discussed the act of reinterpretation of policy as part of the way they acted as a buffer between teachers and policy. When they were asked how they would react if a teacher undermined fundamental British values many responded by talking about the ambiguity of the guidelines and of fundamental British values themselves. When we suggested as part of the dialogue that 'the rule of law' was not ambiguous at all, participants were more likely to insist that the policy *could* be interpreted by them as senior leaders, and that the act of deciding exactly how policy was worked out in school environments was a part of their role. Senior leaders therefore presented themselves as a buffer

between teacher and policy by positioning themselves as an interpreter of policy.

c. Leaders as policy actors: responses to counterfactual scenarios

The responses to the counterfactual prompts were different in tone compared to the open questions discussed above. A majority of school leaders in the primary phases (75%) and a quarter of leaders from the secondary sector answered that all six scenarios could constitute undermining fundamental British values or unprofessional behaviour on the part of teachers. Some interviews suggested that when participants answered questions that were more specific, and which required senior leaders to respond to concrete situations, leaders were less flexible and accommodating in their answers. So that before, where many had been keen to emphasise teacher agency, autonomy, ambiguity and nuance, now participants were more likely to emphasise the responsibility of teachers to the school and in this there was a sense of the mono-narrative of leadership expressed in Transactional Leadership.

In response to the question of whether teachers could be trusted not to undermine fundamental British values when they were teaching most participants had said that they trusted teachers and that teachers did not need support. But when asked whether 'a teacher who said they did not support the monarchy as part of a citizenship lesson' and whether a 'teacher who said that in some circumstances they thought political violence was justified during a class discussion' most primary participants thought that both activities constituted undermining fundamental British values. Secondary leaders were less likely to say this although 25% agreed that it did. One primary head teacher voiced his concerns that a teacher would say that they did not support the monarchy in class:

> *I think I would say to a teacher, why are you saying this? I'm not saying, I'm really not, that, they are not entitled to their own views, they absolutely are, but with young people they have to think very carefully how they can be interpreted. It's a very fine line and we do have to have to be careful. You can discuss different views, but ... even then? I think parents might ask, what are you doing and then, that might not be so easy to explain.*

The counterfactual prompts that asked participants to consider whether certain activities of teachers would be considered unprofessional reflected a similar pattern in the differences between senior leaders and primary and secondary settings. In answer to the prompt, 'Would you consider attending an NHS local rally to protest against funding cuts as unprofessional?' 43% of primary senior leaders said yes in contrast with 7% of secondary leaders. In answer to the prompt, 'Would you consider attending an anti-war march where pupils and parents could be present as unprofessional?' 30% of primary senior leaders said yes and 17% of secondary leaders said yes.

The discussions that followed indicated that senior leaders tended to consider the reputation of the school and their relationships with parents and governors in relation to teacher behaviour. The issue of legality was mentioned by 15 senior leaders (25%) and three participants questioned the interviewers as to whether the activities suggested by prompts were illegal. Two participants asked the interviewer what other senior leaders had said in the interviews and nearly a third (18) mentioned that Ofsted may look on the activities of teachers unfavourably.

5. Discussion

Education leadership involves the interplay between enacting the hegemonic discourse of education policy whilst simultaneously leading a professional community that may have conflicting agendas or foci. The discourses of Transformational and Distributive Leadership bring to the fore notions of agency, empowerment, networks and action and yet tensions can be found between these aspects of the leader's role and policy positions. This tension was clearly illustrated by the complex response of school leaders to the issue of political protest. Participants indicated in the abstract that they did support political freedoms and that they would support the democratic right to

protest. When asked to respond to the question of political rights in response to concrete situations, participants were concerned about contextual factors and the consequences for their schools. This ambiguity on the part of participants suggests that in part, their commitment to implementing fundamental British values was performative. That is, their compliance was in part for consumption by parents, governors or Ofsted. Other research has suggested that schools' engagement with fundamental British values is performative in that the display of compliance is only a 'show' (Robson, 2019). Our research suggests that this performativity may be underpinned by an uneven commitment to political freedoms.

The complex understanding of political freedom held by school leaders is further illustrated by their ambiguous approach to issues of agency. The question of teacher agency is often discussed in relation to engaging with Prevent and some research argues that teacher agency is underestimated (Jerome et al, 2019). Busher et al's research, examining the way teachers interpret and enact Prevent, suggested that teachers are not entirely without agency (Busher et al, 2020). Our research suggests that agency is understood and experienced by school leaders in ways that are malleable. Many school leaders appeared to exhibit signs that their views were aligned with a distributive model of leadership, particularly in the way they acknowledged and valued their own agency and the agency of their teachers. We align this to leaders as custodians. However, the same leaders exhibited more nuanced views on agency revealing themselves to also be policy actors. Their later contradictory views on agency in relation to the counter factual prompts suggests that agency is not experienced as an absolute state but rather, is fluid – a changing disposition, as it were.

Education is regarded as the cornerstone of liberal democracy, and school leaders have traditionally been regarded as having a civic duty, at the forefront in the project of education as a moral enterprise. The civic nationalist turn has seen an emphasis on the nationalist, with expression in, for example, the notion of fundamental British values, and a policy assumption that assumes non-consensus around values. Our research suggests that the fluidity of school leaders' responses to questions about professionalism and agency were in part informed by their perceptions – they were aware that this policy requirement was statutory and this influenced their responses.

This research problematises the way that school leaders may engage with policy requirements such as FBVs and the Prevent duty where even the custodians' responses were framed by the policy context.

6. Conclusion

The civic nationalist turn in education – which is arguably given expression in the requirement to promote (fundamental) British values – reveals the fault-line in a policy terrain that codifies the moral purpose of education and its underpinning values. This, we suggest, is because the process of codifying by government disregards the autonomy of the education leader (expressed in Situated, Transformational and Distributive Leadership styles) to determine the values of their respective school communities. And herein lies the rub: by codifying a set of values and infusing their enactment with a statutory requirement, they become hegemonic. As such, school leaders must, by definition, ensure they are enacted. And this situates the school leader in a Transactional Leadership space; the intersection of education policy influenced by the Home Office and the values underpinning contemporary forms of educational leadership is revealed as one of tension.

At the time of writing, we expected that school leaders would demonstrate some agency and there would be some resistance to FBVs, and while ongoing research has demonstrated teachers have some agency in the classroom, the nuanced and contradictory responses to FBVs at an early stage were an indication of how quickly FBVs would be rationalised and normalised in schools. We had anticipated that school leaders would resist the imposition of FBVs as an affront to their authority and the rights of their colleagues, but this was not necessarily the case. Research by Farrell & Lander (2019) and Elton-Chalcraft et al (2017) demonstrates that FBVs, like other aspects of the

Prevent agenda, are now enacted and legitimised as part of the school safeguarding practices, evidenced by the fact that so many schools advertise their commitment to FBVs alongside their safeguarding policies on their public facing webpages.

7. Disclosure statement

The author(s) declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

8. Open Access Policy

PRISM is also indexed in the world largest open-access database: DOAJ (the Directory of Open Access Journals). DOAJ is a community-curated online directory that indexes and provides access to high quality, open access, peer-reviewed journals.

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