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Introduction

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Abstract The introduction in 2015 of a legal duty requiring that all providers of compulsory education in Britain pay ‘due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism’ prompted extensive policy, academic and public debate. To date however we still have a limited understanding of how this ‘Prevent Duty’ is playing out on the ground in schools, colleges and early years provision. This chapter sets out how this volume contributes towards addressing this gap in the literature. We draw attention in particular to the volume’s emphasis on detailed empirical analysis, introduce the concept of ‘policy enactment’ (Ball, S., Maguire, M., & Braun, A., *How schools do policy: Policy enactments in*

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secondary schools. Routledge, Abingdon, 2012) and discuss how this concept has informed the broad analytical approach adopted in this volume.

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• Policy impact • PVE

The Prevent Duty in Education

In July 2015 the UK government introduced a legal duty requiring that ‘specified authorities’ show ‘due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism’ (Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, s.26)—popularly referred to as the ‘Prevent Duty’. due to its association with the Prevent strand of the UK’s wider Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The ‘specified authorities’ to which the Duty applied included all schools, registered early years childcare providers and further education providers, alongside universities, and health and social care providers. For providers of early years, primary, secondary and further education, the statutory and supplemental guidance issued by the government sets out two areas of responsibility: first, ensuring that ‘staff are able to identify children who may be vulnerable to radicalisation and know what to do when they are identified’ (Department for Education, 2015, p. 5), and second, requiring that they ‘build pupils’ resilience to radicalisation by promoting fundamental British values and enabling them to challenge extremist views’ (Ibid.).

Both aspects of the Duty were presented by the government as a straightforward extension of existing policy and practice. The first requirement was presented as an extension of existing safeguarding requirements and practices (Home Office, 2015); the second as a continuation of non-statutory guidance already set out in the framework for Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural (SMSC) education urging schools to promote fundamental British values (DfE, 2014). Nonetheless, it has been seen by many observers—among them policymakers, academics, civil society groups and educationalists—as constituting a significant change to the way that the country responds to and conceives of its response to the threat of terrorism. Indeed, with this legislation, the UK became the first country in the world to place specific legal responsibility on educational

institutions to play an important role within attempts to prevent extremism and terrorism.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Duty quickly became the focus of substantial policy and public debate. Those supportive of the Duty argued that it was a necessary response to a very real social problem and that its continuity with existing practice meant that it would cause little if any disruption to education provision. Those critical of the Duty argued, among other things, that it would undermine free speech, securitise educational spaces, exacerbate the stigmatisation and alienation of British Muslims, and that the notions of ‘risk’ and ‘vulnerability’ that underpinned the Duty denied student agency and potentially pathologised dissent (see Chap. 2 for further details). To date, however, we still have relatively scarce available evidence with which to evaluate such claims or with which we can really understand how the introduction of the Duty has shaped practices within these educational settings and how the enactment of the Duty is evolving over time.

Official government statistics do indicate that the Duty generated a sharp increase in the number of referrals being made to Prevent. There was a steep 75% year-on-year increase in overall referrals when the Duty was introduced, with 7631 referrals between April 2015 and March 2016 (Home Office, 2017). Since then the numbers have fluctuated, but have remained well above where they were prior to the introduction of the Duty (Home Office, 2018a): 6093 referrals in 2016–17 (Home Office, 2018b), 7318 in 2017–18 (Home Office, 2018c) and then a drop to 5738 in 2018–19 (Home Office, 2019). Throughout this time, approximately a third of those referrals have come from the education sector, between 56% and 58% of referrals were for people aged under 20 and over a quarter were aged under 15 years. As well as making up the majority of referrals to Prevent, young people aged 20 and below make up the majority of cases actually discussed at Channel panels and the majority of cases which subsequently receive support through Channel, the government’s anti-radicalisation mentoring programme (Home Office data cited above).

There have also emerged a number of academic studies with which we can begin to build a picture. These comprise smaller- and larger-scale studies, and encompass a range of qualitative, quantitative and mixed

methods (see Jerome, Elwick, & Kazim, 2019, for a summary). Yet as Jerome and colleagues observe, the evidence base is still in its infancy. This is particularly the case when it comes to capturing how the Prevent Duty is playing out in practice and understanding how this is being shaped by broader developments within policy, politics, society and the relevant professions.

Our Contribution to the Debate About Prevent

This volume responds to the need for more research that documents how the Duty is playing out on the ground. It does this by bringing together research that examines the enactment, impact and implications of the Prevent Duty across statutory education provision—in early years, primary, secondary and further education. Chapter 2 provides an account of the evolving policy context and the debates that surrounded the Duty as it was introduced in 2015. Chapter 3 uses data collected during the first 18 months after the introduction of the Duty to interrogate claims about the potential impacts of the Duty in school and further education settings. Chapter 4 explores student perspectives on the educational provision around the Duty and assesses the extent to which some of the materials promoted in response to the Duty meet students' requirements. Subsequent chapters examine the enactment of the Duty in early years settings (Chap. 5), primary schools (Chap. 6), secondary schools (Chap. 7) and further education settings (Chap. 8).

The chapters employ a variety of methodological approaches, from medium-scale quantitative surveys to small-scale qualitative studies. They also vary in terms of the extent to which they focus on the perspectives of staff or children and young people, or a combination of the two. What binds them together, however, is a shared interest in asking a relatively simple question: what is happening in the education system as a result of the Prevent Duty?

To date, the literature on Prevent in education, like much of the academic literature on the effects of programmes to counter or prevent violent extremism (C/PVE) more generally, has deployed a number of critical theoretical perspectives in order to identify and interrogate issues

raised by the growing emphasis on education within C/PVE programming. One prominent focus has been on concerns about the securitisation of education (Awan, Spiller, & Whiting, 2018; Gearon, 2015) and the way that the Prevent Duty and similar technologies of power might distort the relationships between staff, children and young people, and parents (O'Donnell, 2016). Other scholars have employed a range of perspectives to explore the relationship between C/PVE and secularism (Davies, 2008), religious education (Miller, 2018), cosmopolitanism (Gholami, 2018) and tolerance (Bowie, 2018). There have also been calls for early years practitioners and teachers to define what might constitute a distinctively educational approach to Prevent (as opposed to a security-led approach) (Panjwani, 2016), which recognises young people's agency (Sieckelinck, Kaulingfreks, & De Winter, 2015) and encourages the development of critical citizenship (Vincent, 2019).

Such approaches are important for framing questions and opening up new lines of enquiry, but such theoretical critiques, or proposals, also have their limitations. Indeed, and at worst, the inclination to theorise about such policy problems can encourage a tendency 'to substitute mere abstract ideas for concrete, specific investigations' (Meiklejohn cited in Thomas, 2007, p. 45), and we must remain alert to the risk that theory can sometimes provide a 'strait-jacket' into which the evidence is coerced (Wright Mills, 1959/2000).

In this volume, by contrast, the contributions have been developed adopting what we might call a theoretically parsimonious approach to the collection, analysis and reporting of data. The contributors focus primarily on the detailed description and discussion of empirical data, rather than foregrounding whatever theoretical framework they might prefer. We recognise that there is a fine line to tread between foregrounding empirical data and slipping into a kind of naïve empiricism (Juslin, Winman, & Olsson, 2000), in which we somehow expect empirical observation to speak for itself and deliver conclusions, and in which we become blind to the way that empirical findings themselves are shaped by pre-configured values, world-views and theoretical starting points. We believe however that there is a very real need for the sort of empirically focused research presented in this volume if we are to find a way of cutting through the often heavily polarised and polarising debates that

currently dominate public and policy discourse about Prevent, the Prevent Duty and C/PVE work more broadly.

There are also a number of ways in which we can mitigate against falling into a naïve empiricism. One of these is by making clear when we are switching from presenting data to arriving at conclusions, and in doing so, to clarify how those conclusions draw on values or theory (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2006). This is something that all the contributors to this volume have sought, and have been encouraged, to do at every turn.

Another way is to clarify our starting point. There are significant individual variations between the authors in terms of how we identify as researchers or how we would position ourselves in relation to the Prevent Duty. For example, some contributors engage with the Duty as scholars of C/PVE more broadly, whilst others do so more as educational practitioners or researchers. However, one of the key shared starting points that provides coherence to the book is an interest in Ball, Maguire and Braun's (2012) notion of policy enactment.

As Ball and his colleagues observe, policy is not simply implemented, but rather it is interpreted by different actors, in different contexts and potentially as part of different policy ensembles. Through processes of interpretation, translation and reconstruction, practitioners and others transform policy and often develop their own 'take' on it as they enact it. Indeed, whilst policy constrains, it can also open up opportunities for creativity and innovation.

What Ball and his colleagues draw our attention to is the importance of understanding the deeply situated nature of policy enactment. They noted for example that the four schools where they collected data to study 'how schools do policy' were concurrently enacting at least 170 separate policies, highlighting both how much policy work is going on and how many competing priorities there are. The simple fact that something becomes a 'top-down' policy tells us very little therefore about what, if anything, will happen as a result. In addition, individual members of staff may have very different relationships to any one of those policies. Sometimes practitioners will feel like they are rather passive recipients of policy, but others will be actively engaged as critics, enthusiasts or policy entrepreneurs, with some seizing on opportunities for new forms of specialism, responsibility, expertise and, with that, career advancement.

Our shared focus on the enactment of the Duty has tilted all of the contributions to this volume away from taking up or promoting strong substantive positions ‘supportive’ or ‘critical’ of the Prevent Duty itself, and towards a focus instead on capturing how the Duty has played out in practice, and with that, how such practice has been shaped by the geographic, temporal, professional and policy contexts in which it has been enacted.

Finally, a third way to avoid slipping into a naïve and potentially misleading empiricism is to be clear and realistic about the limitations of the data that we have been able to compile. While some of the chapters in this volume seek, through the use of survey instruments, to provide something of an overview of how teachers have responded to the Duty (Chaps. 3 and 6), much of the discussion in the volume seeks to use ‘low-hovering’ (Anderson, 2007) qualitative analysis to provide insights into specific aspects of practice or contexts. As such we are cautious about generalising from this work, and would encourage the contributions to be read as illuminative (Thomas, 2007, p. 110), rather than definitive.

Nevertheless, as the first collection of empirical studies into the effects of the Prevent Duty across the statutory education sector, we believe the material offers an important source of information and insight. On one reading, Chap. 3 provides a snapshot of the first responses to the Prevent Duty, as this data was collected very soon after the Duty was introduced. Subsequent chapters are based on data collected since then and therefore enable us to get some indication of whether interpretations have changed over time. Our observation of this longitudinal reading is that it does not seem to have changed much over time. On another reading, Chaps. 2, 3, and 4 provide an overview of the issues arising, and Chaps. 5, 6, 7, and 8 provide a series of insights into how the Duty is translated in each of the age phases. This reveals some important insights into how the policy has been transformed as it is enacted in these rather different contexts.

A Note of Thanks

All empirical research relies on finding willing participants, and in the increasingly pressurised world of education, we are grateful to all those who participated in the various research projects reported in the

following chapters. Given there are always so many other pressing priorities, it is heartening that people make the time to participate in such activities, and this is even more impressive given the potentially controversial nature of this research. Ultimately, what motivates people to give up their time to such endeavours is the belief that it is worthwhile making some contribution to knowledge. In dealing with the data collected, the authors of this collection bring to mind Thomas's exhortation:

What respondents say and do in interviews and what teachers say and do in their work are what they say and do. We have no right to impute more; no right to impose 'theory'. We can certainly listen, empathize and try to understand. (Thomas, 2007, p. 81)

We hope that our various participants would recognise themselves from the accounts of practice we have produced here and that they would recognise this collection as a valuable contribution to knowledge in this important area.

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