

Title: The new 'F-bomb' - Fundamental British Values, more damage than good?

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Context

Fundamental British Values (FBV) originate from a politicised, securitised agenda (Lockley-Scott, 2019), and the 'Prevent' programme to address radicalisation and extremism, imposed upon HEI lecturers (Henshall, Sanjakdar, & Prosser, 2024), embedded into curriculum and policed by the government, with non-compliance judged and penalised by Ofsted and associated ratings. They consist of:

- Democracy
- Rule of Law
- Respect & Tolerance
- Individual Liberty

Discussion Points

FBV is based on an assumption that they encapsulate 'Britishness', but can Britishness be branded (Alexander and Weekes-Bernard 2017)?

Who decreed these values are exclusive to the essence of being British and may this imply we are 'culturally superior'? Can Britishness be measured?

Does inclusion of FBV in degree apprenticeship programmes suggest pick 'n' mix policy borrowing from other sectors?

Furthermore, could the inclusion of the word fundamentalism, may be viewed as negative rather than positive, often decoded to fanaticism, extremism, and militancy and this troublesome wording and ill-defined term may be perceived as a toxic brand?

Is a rethink of FBV required in order to develop a more appropriate branding via discussion with wider stakeholders to ensure they are more aligned to 'generic human virtues and values that unite us' (3D Eye, 2015.p 1)? Others have suggested:

- Universal Values (Richardson, 2015);
- Human Values (Struthers, 2017)
- Principles for Life (Warner, 2022)

Do we (HEI professionals) have permission (and from whom) to encourage critique, debate and challenge, rather than merely present FBV to apprenticeship learners?

HEI's are directed to challenge 'opinions or behaviours that are contrary to FBV (Henshall, Sanjakdar and Prosser, 2024), however, in practice, does this occur, are we prepared to 'police the classroom' and what issues might this raise?

Are FBV's in danger of alienating marginalised groups and contributing to a 'them' and 'us', relating to those 'others' which do not fit the 'normal mould' (Chaturvedi, 2023 p1)?

Does the concept of FBV possess contemporary relevance?

Could FBV be more holistic and explicitly consider diversity, inclusion, equity, belonging and respect for all (DEIBR), and even more so to consider values in relation to sustainability and United Nations sustainable development goals?

Currently, are FBV missing the mark? Instead, are they instilling fear in HEI's, with more emphasis placed on ticking the FBV box to avoid poor Ofsted judgements and its ramifications, instead of channelling attention into providing education for multi-culturalism and a diverse society?

Whilst research examines FBV through an educationalist lens, there remains a paucity of research from degree and post graduate degree apprenticeship learners, of which there were 621,000 in 2022/23 (DfE, 2024). We must question in their current form, the extent to which FBV's hold value and relevance particularly to those learners' following degree and post graduate degree apprenticeship pathways in HEI's, many of whom are mid-level and senior managers.

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