The deradicalisation of education: terror, youth & the assault on learning for social change

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Forthcoming in *Race & Class*
September 2015

Abstract

A high profile anti-radicalisation agenda in schools and other educational institutions throughout Europe has risen in response to terrorist attacks on European countries in the first decades of the twenty-first century. This article looks critically at anti-radicalisation in education, arguing that it needs to be placed in the broader context of ongoing neoliberal educational reform, and questioned not just in terms of its dubious efficacy in addressing terrorism, or the civil rights harm it inflicts on Muslim and ethnic minority citizens in Europe, but also as a direct attack on the centuries old radical tradition in European education. In particular, anti-radicalisation diverts attention from the analysis of structural root causes of social problems, opposes the use of education for fundamental social change, and stigmatises transformational educational practices that many would argue are now vitally important in helping us collectively address a range of contemporary global social, economic and environmental crises.

> To be radical is to seek (practically or theoretically) to uncover and uproot the roots, foundations, or origins of a problem or a project.
>
> - Paul McLaughlin (2012) *Radicalism*[1]

> As a school we recognise that safeguarding against radicalisation is no different to safeguarding against any other vulnerability…. The objectives … are to ensure that staff are fully engaged in being vigilant about radicalisation.
>
> - *Anti-Radicalisation Policy* (2015) Bhylls Acre Primary School, Wolverhampton, UK[2]

Introduction

At the moment when education should be fostering increased radicalisation among the young, it is instead being harnessed to the project of deradicalisation, under the banner of fighting Islamic terrorism. In the first few months of 2015 alone, over ninety educators from across Europe met at a Conference on Radicalisation and Education in Manchester, where they drafted a *Manifesto for Education* as a 'call to action' for schools in Europe to work together to prevent radicalisation of students; the European Union held its first ever meeting of EU education ministers focusing specifically on the topic of radicalisation in Paris; EU Education Commissioner Tibor Navracsics spoke at the European Youth Work Convention in Brussels to ask European youth workers to 'join in' the continental fight against radicalisation; and in London, the UK's Counter Terrorism and Security Act was passed, imposing a statutory duty on all educational institutions to have explicit anti-radicalisation policies in place. All of this continues a line of policy, practice and research concern with radicalisation and education that goes back to the September 11 attacks in New York and Washington at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In the eyes of the anti-radicalisation movement, as the Manchester *Manifesto* proclaims, 'schools and educators are on the front-line to help identify and safeguard youngsters at risk of radicalisation' and must 'make 'prevention' work fundamental and a priority'.[3]

Previously, there has been a much different discourse surrounding education and radicalisation, one that embraces radicalisation as a direct goal of education. This is the tradition of Paulo Freire, critical pedagogy, radical youth work, and feminist, anti-racist, independent working class, environmental, democratic and popular education that flourished most notably in the context of 1960s radical social movements. 'Radicalization', as Freire wrote in *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, is a 'process of liberation' that is 'nourished by a critical spirit' and 'involves increased commitment to the position one has chosen, and thus ever greater engagement in the effort to transform concrete, objective reality'.[4] Education, in this view, is to be developed as a means of fundamentally transforming the world, in order to overcome deep social and economic structures of injustice, inequality, oppression, exploitation and exclusion. Today, we face perhaps an unparallelled set of global crises: growing economic inequality, instability and unsustainability; environmental disaster and distress; collapse of traditional institutions of mass democracy; resurgence of aggressive forms of cultural prejudice and exclusion; and the spread of endemic geopolitical conflict and violence.[5] Some activists, scholars, and educators argue, consequently, that such crises demand a radical rethinking of education and reorientation of the core goals of learning.[6] In the UK, Fielding and Moss claim that the embrace of 'radical education' as an alternative to 'the current dominant but failed and dysfunctional discourse about education and the school' is essential in order 'to confront the growing dangers facing humankind that prevent flourishing and put our very survival at risk'.[7]

The conflict between these two discourses of radicalisation and education has been overlooked, as they have not tended to be considered in parallel. It could be argued that the two discourses, though sharing terminology, are not about the same thing. Indeed, anti-radicalisation proponents in Europe have sometimes tried to distinguish between radicalism as 'an expression of legitimate political thought' that entails 'advocacy of, and commitment to, sweeping change and restructuring of political and social institutions', as distinct from radicalisation that is tied to illegitimate forms of extremism, violence and terrorism, and is the real concern of their policies.[8] This distinction, however, does not hold up well in practice. There is now an emergent critical literature on anti-radicalisation in education that focuses, in particular, on its harmful effects for Muslim, black and minority ethnic youth.[9] Our argument in this paper is that the harm of anti-radicalisation in education goes far beyond its negative impact on racial and religious minority groups in Europe. Rather, the anti-radicalisation agenda needs to be put in the context of broader shifts in schools and society that are leading to the abandonment and undermining of the radical tradition in education at precisely the time it is needed most. As Foley wrote over a decade ago, 'the room for radical education seems to shrink [while] the material reasons for radical education and learning have never been sharper'.[10] In the following pages, we draw on an analysis of government and institutional documents that articulate current anti-radicalisation policy and guidance in the UK to develop a critique of three key ways in which this policy and guidance constitutes a direct attack on the radical tradition in education: through diverting attention from an analysis of structural root causes of social problems, opposing the use of education for social change, and stigmatising transformational educational practice. The documents we analyse include a corpus of over sixty publicly available school anti-radicalisation policies collected from webpages at a range of primary, secondary schools and sixth forth colleges throughout England. While our analysis focuses on the anti-radicalisation movement in the British educational system, due to the UK's globally leading role in developing this policy agenda, we draw attention as well to the close parallels that exist in the contemporary promotion of anti-radicalisation in education elsewhere in Europe and beyond.

The rise of anti-radicalisation in education

Current concern with using education to prevent radicalisation among the young has its roots in the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington in 2001, Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005. As Kundnani writes, 'the concept of radicalisation has become the master signifier of the late 'war on terror".[11] The core premise is that in the fight against terrorism, it is not enough for security establishments to focus on apprehending individuals who are actively planning or in the process of carrying out acts of mass violence; rather, there is a need also to focus on those who might possibly be anticipated to commit such acts of terrorist violence at some point in the future, based on 'tell-tale signs', such as the ideas they hold, emotions they express, identities they embrace, company they keep, or even clothes they wear. To do this, states are forced to enlist the assistance of all institutions of civil society, including schools, colleges, universities, teachers, lecturers, youth and social workers.[12] Formal and informal education alike thus have become seen as pivotal locations for anti-radicalisation work, both as sites of surveillance and places of intervention, to prevent radicalisation from developing further or occurring in the first place. A massive industry of anti-radicalisation research, policy-making and training has now developed, that seeks to help teachers and others know how to recognise and prevent radicalisation among the young.[13] The widely reported phenomenon of youth from Europe travelling overseas to join radical Islamist groups such as ISIS in Syria, and terrorist attacks in Paris and Copenhagen in early 2015, only served to intensify the promotion of the anti-radicalisation agenda throughout the entire education sector across Europe.[14]

In this, the UK has widely been seen as a 'frontrunner' or 'market leader', developing what has been called 'the world's most extensive counter-radicalisation policy', known as *Prevent*.[15] First launched in 2003, *Prevent* was dramatically scaled up after the London bombings in 2005, as part of what the British government described as a 'battle of ideas', aimed at 'reasserting shared values and winning hearts and minds'.[16] In its early years, *Prevent* focused on developing youth and community programs targeted almost exclusively at Muslim communities in the UK; but over time, its anti-radicalisation agenda increasingly moved into and across the entire UK education sector. In 2007, the *Channel* program was created that trained teachers, lecturers, youth and social workers to identify young people who were 'vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism' and refer them for de-radicalisation intervention. In 2008, the Department for Children, Schools and Families released *Learning Together to Be Safe*, as a 'toolkit to help schools contribute to the prevention of violent extremism'. In 2009, the Association of Chief Police Officers published guidance on how police and schools could work closely together to challenge radicalisation among the young, by doing such things as having police design anti-radicalisation lessons, monitor student internet usage, or even attend after-school cooking clubs set up specially for students considered at risk of radicalisation. It was after the election of the Coalition government in 2010, however, that anti-radicalisation in UK education fully took off. A review of the *Prevent* program in 2011 led to the creation of a new Preventing Extremism Unit (later called the Due Diligence and Counter Extremism Division) within the Department for Education, with staff recruited from the British security services. It also led to new requirements for schools to actively promote 'fundamental British values' throughout their curriculum, as a strategy for countering radicalisation and extremism; and it established Ofsted school inspections to verify that schools were addressing the threat of student radicalisation. In 2012, the country's Teachers' Standards were revised to explicitly forbid teachers from 'undermining fundamental British values'. In 2015, the Counter Terrorism and Security Act made *Prevent* work a statutory duty for all educational institutions in the country, each of which was now required to have in place an explicit, comprehensive anti-radicalisation policy.[17]

Anti-radicalisation in education is not limited to the UK. Parallel developments have taken place throughout Europe, particularly in its northern countries.[18] As in the UK, programs have focused on training teachers, youth and health workers to identify and report signs of radicalisation among the young people they work with; developing anti-radicalisation curriculum; fostering closer cooperation between educators, the police and security services; and disseminating best practices throughout Europe through the creation in 2011 of an EU-wide Radicalisation Awareness Network, and the decision in 2015 to use Erasmus+, the EU's program for fostering student mobility and transnational educational partnerships in Europe, as a primary vehicle for 'tackling radicalisation through education and youth action'.[19] In France, the Charlie Hebdo killings in early 2015, along with the refusal of students in some schools to support the national 'Je Suis Charlie' response to the killings, led education minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem to launch a *Grand Mobilization of Schools for the Values of the Republic*, a multi-million Euro program that involves changes in teacher training and school curriculum to better promote 'Republican values', re-establish the 'authority of the teacher' strictly enforce school discipline, and train headteachers to detect and report signs of radicalisation among students. Though less developed outside of the EU, anti-radicalisation education has also been developed elsewhere around the globe. In Australia, for example, the federal government proposed in spring 2015 a new national *De-Radicalisation in Schools Strategy*, that includes a 'Jihadi-watch' curriculum in which 'teachers and students would be taught how to spot potential jihadis in the classroom'. In the Arab region, the USAID sponsored Arab Civitas network has promoted anti-radicalisation and tolerance curriculum and training in schools since the beginning of the twenty-first century.[20]

The radical tradition in education and youth work

The emphasis on anti-radicalisation sits in tension with an alternative contemporary project of calling for a revival of the radical tradition in education and youth work. This tradition, which encompasses a range of different pedagogies (popular, feminist, anti-racist, democratic, labor, environmental, etc.), has at its core three key elements: a belief in the importance of sustained, substantive critical analysis of underlying social structures and cultural logics, with the aim of understanding the root causes of social problems and injustices; an embrace of fundamental social change as a core goal of education, and more particularly, a promotion of utopian ideals of a more just, equal, democratic and sustainable world; and a fostering of educational practices that can best enable emancipatory learning, including the direct linking of learning to collective action and social movements, and a recognition of the need to work through a range of 'difficult' emotions (anger, outrage, discomfort, etc.) as hegemonic and prejudicial ideologies are contested in the classroom.[21] In the radical tradition, as Darder writes of the work of Freire, radicalisation is seen as:

> an imperative of emancipatory life…. [W]e radicalize and are radicalized, through relationships, labor, and struggle with one another…. Without a consciousness of radicalization to support us, as educators … it is impossible to support the imagination, creativity, and dreams of our students…. [R]adical hope develops in conjunction with the formation of critical consciousness …, as we push against debilitating ideologies and structures that attempt to squelch our emancipatory dreams…. This process of radicalization predisposes us to reevaluate constantly our lives, attitudes, behaviors, actions, decisions, and relationships in the world.[22]

While Freireian approaches have only ever made limited inroads into formal education, many liberal and progressive pedagogies that have previously been a central part of schools, colleges and universities around the world share many of radical education's core concerns, goals and practices.[23] Progressive educators such as Steiner and Malaguzzi, for example, were initially motivated by the vast destruction caused by global warfare to 'develop an art of education which will lead us out of the social chaos into which we have fallen', and build a 'new society' in which

such wars would never again happen. Democratic education always has had a 'utopian' element, in that it seeks to use education to create societies that are much more democratic than they are now. Environmental education, as stated originally in the 1977 UNESCO Tbilisi Declaration, has long sought 'to create new patterns of behavior of individuals, groups and society as a whole towards the environment'.[24] Liberal arts education, as Brown notes, is based on the goal of liberating students from the constraints of contemporary social structures and cultural practices, lifting them 'from the immediate present to a longer temporal and larger spatial domain, one only accessible through knowledge'. In the context of mass higher education, Brown argues, the extension of 'liberal arts education from the elite to the many [was] nothing short of a radical democratic event, one in which all are potentially eligible for the life of freedom long reserved for the few'.[25]

At the start of the twenty-first century, economic and environmental crisis have led to calls for the need for radical social, cultural and economic transformation. Many climate change scientists, for example, now argue that 'revolutionary change to the political and economic hegemony' is essential in order to address the threat of global warming.[26] 'In the face of an absolutely unprecedented emergency', wrote a group of Blue Planet Prize winners in 2012, 'society has no choice but to take dramatic action to avert a collapse of civilization. Either we will change our ways and build an entirely new kind of global society, or they will be changed for us'.[27] If such transitions are to occur, radical approaches to education and youth work are essential. Yet, rather than a flourishing of radical, progressive or liberal arts traditions in schools, colleges and universities around the world today, there has instead been an increasing narrowness of vision, as formal and nonformal education alike are pushed to focus on the short term market values, vocational goals and standardised test scores that have become the dominant currency of learning in global neoliberal society.[28] The anti-radicalisation movement that has been sweeping through the education sector in Europe and beyond over the past decade, though ostensibly about the prevention of terror, is more appropriately seen as constituting one of the most overt and extreme manifestations of this narrowing process. For though individual schools, educators, youth workers and students may carve out local spaces of alterity and resistance, the overall policies associated with this movement – which in the UK now represent a statutory duty imposed on all educational institutions – constitute a direct attack on the core elements that make up the centuries old radical education tradition.

Against looking at structural root causes

The anti-radicalisation movement in education opposes radicalisation in the most literal sense of the word. For the concept of radicalisation was promoted by the security establishment, first in the United States and then Europe, in the context of strong governmental opposition to any discussion of the 'root causes' of terrorism, which was seen as tantamount to justifying terrorist activity. Rather than address underlying social, economic, political and military conflicts that generate terrorist responses – including the foreign policy actions of western states – the concept of radicalisation locates the source of terrorist violence in the identity, psychology and ideology of individuals and groups. The premise of anti-radicalisation is that there are certain kinds of ideas, dispositions, relationships, ideologies and cultures that are responsible for triggering terrorist violence, and that must be altered or suppressed if terrorist violence is to be stopped.[29] As such, anti-radicalisation discourse is part of what Mahmood Mamdani and Wendy Brown have described as the 'culturalization of politics', that 'analytically vanquishes political economy, states, history, and international and transnational relations', while 'in their stead, 'culture' is summoned to explain the motives and aspirations leading to certain conflicts'.[30] One almost inevitable consequence is the stereotyping and scapegoating of those (largely Muslim)

cultures, ideologies and social networks now deemed by security experts to be linked with terrorism: as Sedgwick observes, as long as 'wider circumstances' are excluded from analysis, 'the Islamist radical will often appear as a 'rebel without a cause."[31] When schools, educators and youth workers take up the agenda of anti-radicalisation, they thus enter into a discourse that is of distinctly 'political origin', 'builds into official thinking biases and prejudices', and was 'contrived' as a way of analysing terrorism without ever questioning 'the basic parameters of [western] foreign policy in the Middle East and South Asia'.[32]

More than this, the positioning of educators with respect to students, society and the state tends to get inverted in the anti-radicalisation movement. Rather than work with students to train their critical and analytical lens on the states and societies that shape their lives – to foster the 'healthy doubt about what both politicians and [other] leaders tell us' that Davies and others argue 'is the best safeguard against dogmatism and acceptance of authoritarianism' that democratic education can properly be expected to provide – the anti-radicalisation movement asks educators to work hand in glove with the state security apparatus to train their analytical lens on students themselves.[33] In part, this inversion comes from the surveillance role now being imposed on educational institutions that, as many students and educators argue, threatens to shut down space for debate and open discussion, and endanger the principles of academic freedom and freedom of speech in the classroom.[34] As one teacher in London complains, the British state now expects teachers to act as 'front-line stormtroopers who listen, spy and notify the authorities of students who we are suspicious of'.[35] 'We fundamentally believe that universities and colleges are places for education, not surveillance', declared the National Union of Students in the UK, in its 2015 conference resolution to oppose all *Prevent*-related strategy and programming: 'Any expectation by the state for academic staff to be involved in monitoring their students is deeply worrying and could have a chilling effect on relations between staff and students'.[36] Inversion, however, also comes from the culturalist framework of the anti-radicalisation movement: for when identity, psychology and ideology are held to be foundational, then the external, material referents for student concerns and opinions are placed under erasure. For example, according to anti-radicalisation policies now adopted by many schools in the UK, if a student has a 'grievance that is triggered by personal experience of racism or discrimination or aspects of Government policy', then this is not something to be responded to in the first instance as the beginning of an investigation and possible challenge to social structure or state practice, but rather is treated as evidence of that student's current state of mind and personal identity, and more specifically, as a possible 'indicator of vulnerability' to radicalisation that demands close monitoring and possible future intervention and referral for deradicalisation programming.[37]

The irony of all this is that were educators, schools and youth workers to embrace the tradition of being radical in the classroom, and work with their students to look closely at the structural roots of the anti-radicalisation movement, they would find that the concept of radicalisation is deeply problematic and controversial, even within the security establishment itself. Among counterterrorism experts, as Richards observes, there is no 'consistent notion of what is meant by 'radicalization', [and] a legacy of confusion as to what forms of 'radicalization' should be the focus of a counterterrorism strategy'.[38] 'The idea that the adoption of radical ideas causes terrorism', argues the director of the International Center for the Study of Terrorism at Pennsylvania State University, John Horgan, 'is perhaps the greatest myth alive today in terrorism research'.[39] There is no direct link between any one type of ideology and terrorism, as terrorism 'is a method of violence that has at some time or other been perpetrated in the cause of doctrines within all [political] categories'.[40] Terrorist violence, as many counterterrorism experts would argue, has to be understood within its broader social and political contexts, since the 'dynamics of violence by [terrorist] organisations are relational: they result from the process of interaction between a series of actors, which include governments and their policies at home or abroad'. A

2014 review of the academic literature on radicalisation for the European Parliament thus concludes that ''radicalisation' appears to be an unhelpful concept to understand forms of political violence'.[41] In embracing the concept of radicalisation, some scholars argue, counterterrorism 'has gone beyond the remit of countering terrorism and ventured into the broader realm of tackling ideological threats to the state'.[42] Despite such controversy, the concept of radicalisation continues to be used to reshape curriculum, pedagogy, and teacher-student relationships throughout the education sector; and is all too often invoked by sector leaders in an uncritical manner – as when (to take one example among many) the intellectual organiser of the 2015 European Youth Work Convention, Howard Williamson, argues that 'there is clearly evidence of the radicalisation of some young Muslims' in Europe, that constitutes a 'toxic' threat to the 'democratic imperative' on the continent.[43]

Against learning for social change

Across the UK, schools of all types and levels now have anti-radicalisation policies in which they pledge to be 'vigilant' in 'safeguarding against radicalisation' – which, as the UK Department for Education argues, is no different 'to protecting children from other harms (e.g. drugs, gangs, neglect, sexual exploitation)'.[44] What is this radicalisation that schools are so concerned about? The most commonly used definition is the following:

> Radicalisation is defined as the act or process of making a person more radical or favouring of extreme or fundamental changes in political, economic or social conditions, institutions or habits of the mind.[45]

The claims of social reproduction theory that education functions in society to reproduce the (highly unequal) political, economic and social status quo could hardly be more bluntly illustrated than in such statements.[46] Nor are such definitions unique to the UK. In Denmark, for example, anti-radicalisation proponents have defined radicalisation as the development of a 'desire to create a more 'orderly', 'pure' or 'just' society', of 'simplified world views' in which 'certain groups or social conditions are seen to constitute a threat', and as 'a growing readiness to pursue and support far-reaching changes in society that conflict with, or pose a direct threat to, the existing order'.[47]

When considering these commitments to oppose and pathologise any individual who favours 'fundamental changes in political, economic or social conditions', the key point is not that something dramatic is being changed in schools and other educational institutions with the introduction of anti-radicalisation. Rather, the willingness and ability of schools to accept and publicise such statements as being sensible and unremarkable, may be taken as a sign of how much has already changed in the education system. After decades of neoliberal restructuring, as many educational researchers have noted previously, 'the purposes of education … have been (re)articulated away from any social welfare notion of education playing a central role in socially engineering a more inclusive, just and egalitarian society, to one in which the central concern is on the individual abilities of pupils, schools and workers to compete in a global market economy'.[48] It is only in the context of this re-orientation of the goals of education that we can make sense of one of the more peculiar claims found in many school anti-radicalisation policies. That is the statement that:

> it is recognised that children with low aspirations are more vulnerable to radicalisation and therefore we strive to equip our pupils with confidence, self-belief, respect and tolerance'.[49]

Not only is it unclear what evidence base supports this claim; but given that aspiration is typically understood as 'a strong desire to achieve something high or great', then asserting that a student who hopes to fundamentally change society overall has low aspirations would seem something of an oxymoron.[50]

In many anti-radicalisation policies, schools do invoke the importance of fostering discussion, debate and critical thinking around issues of radicalisation, extremism and terrorism. 'Education is a powerful weapon', states one school's anti-radicalisation policy, 'equipping young people with the knowledge, skills and critical thinking to challenge and debate in an informed way'; 'education can play a powerful role in encouraging young people to challenge ideas, think for themselves and take responsibility for their actions', states another.[51] But the outcome of discussion and debate in the classroom tends to be strictly proscribed: the direct assumption of these policies is that if a student maintains or ends up with radical ideas, this can only be due to a failure of the educational process, not its success. Education is deemed a 'powerful weapon' against radicalisation, not for it. 'We will all strive to eradicate the myths and assumptions that can lead to some young people becoming [susceptible to] radical influences', states Cox Green Secondary School in Berkshire: 'in our school this will be achieved by good teaching'.[52] Indeed, one of the goals emphasized throughout school anti-radicalisation policies is that of 'equipping our pupils with the appropriate skills, knowledge, understanding and awareness for resilience'.[53] Resilience has increasingly become 'a pervasive idiom of global governance'; and, as MacKinnon and Derickson point out, tends to be 'conservative when applied to the social sphere, referring to the stability of a system against interference' that 'not only privileges established social structures … but also closes off wider questions of progressive social change which require interference with, and transformation of, established 'systems''.[54] This is clearly the case with school anti-radicalisation policies, where resilience is defined as being able to 'understand the dangers of radicalisation and exposure to extremist's views … and knowing what to do if they experience them'.[55]

One of the interventions that has attracted the most controversy in the anti-radicalisation movement in the UK is the 2011 decision of the Coalition government to demand that schools teach 'fundamental British values', defined as 'including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs', as a way to prevent radicalisation among the young – a parallel with the school program to teach 'Republican values' set up in France in 2015 in the wake of the Charlie Hebdo killings. Much criticism has focused on the social divisiveness and intellectual dishonesty of labelling and promoting a particular set of 'British' values.[56] But concern, too, has centered on the apparent ruling out, or at least strong dampening down, of any questioning, challenging or changing of core social and political values by educators and students in the classroom. All of these 'fundamental' values, as Bolloten and Richardson note, 'are open to conflicting interpretations, and over the years have had different meanings at different times and in different contexts'.[57] Even if one looks just at school anti-radicalisation policies, it is notable that the same schools that identify 'tolerance of different faiths and beliefs' as a 'fundamental' value, also announce they have 'a zero tolerance approach to extremist behaviour for all school community members'.[58] Depending on context, all of these values could be subject to contestation. For example, as Howard Zinn once observed about the rule of law:

> Obedience to bad laws as a way of inculcating some abstract subservience to 'the rule of law' can only encourage the already strong tendencies of citizens to bow to the power of authority, to desist from challenging the status quo. To exalt the rule of law as an absolute is the mark of totalitarianism…. To urge the right of citizens to disobey unjust laws, and the duty of citizens to disobey dangerous laws, is of the very essence of democracy.[59]

Similarly, Michael Goodwin, headteacher of the Quaker Sibford school in Oxfordshire, points out that, in the context of the UK, categorical acceptance of the rule of law 'would have meant that slavery remained legal, that homosexuality was a criminal offence and that women were wrong to campaign for universal suffrage'. 'It has been the questioning and challenging of the rule of law', Goodwin writes, 'that has shaped and developed some of the British values that we are now asked to promote'.[60]

Against transformative educational practice

Despite the great variety of radical educational approaches, one core principle that binds them all together is a commitment to holistic, integrated, transformative educational practice.[61] Successful, transformational learning is seen as encompasssing:

> a deep, structural shift in basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions … a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race, and gender; our body-awareness, our visions of alternative approaches to living.[62]

For theorists such as Freire, this holism is articulated as a necessary connection between thought, language and action. 'When a word is deprived of its dimension of action', writes Freire, 'reflection … suffers as well; and the word is changed into idle chatter, into *verbalism*, into an alienated and alienating 'blah.' … [T]here is no transformation without action'.[63] The process of radicalisation, as Darder notes above, necessarily requires us 'to reevaluate constantly our lives, attitudes, behaviors, actions, decisions and relationships in the world'.[64]

What the anti-radicalisation movement does is directly oppose all of this model of transformative educational practice. First, there is a strong opposition to education and discourse that seeks to change individual student minds. Many school anti-radicalisation policies in the UK, for example, include a statement that 'children are encouraged to share their views and recognise that they are entitled to have their own different beliefs *which should not be used to influence others*'.[65] One school even promises not to '"promote' teachings, beliefs or opinions that conflict with individuals [*sic*] own beliefs or opinions' – raising the question of how exactly the nature and purpose of teaching and learning is being understood.[66] Throughout the anti-radicalisation policies, there is suspicion of any non-officially sanctioned forms of talk that are designed to influence or transform the thinking of another individual. The UK Department of Education thus warns schools of the danger of 'persuasive narratives' that are capable of 'inspiring' and 'persuading' students 'of the legitimacy of their cause'.[67] While freedom of speech is upheld as a fundamental value, some schools state that 'free speech that is designed to manipulate the vulnerable' (which, if it could be clearly defined, would presumably include all forms of rhetoric) will be banned.[68] Overall, there is a commitment in the anti-radicalisation movement to promoting 'tolerance' as a fundamental principle in education, in that students must be taught to 'respect and tolerate difference', not seek to question, challenge or change it.[69] But tolerance, as theorists such as Herbert Marcuse, Laura Nader and Wendy Brown have argued, can often work to suppress, control and maintain an often unequal and unjust status quo.[70] In place of equanimous and neutral tolerance of all social positions, many educators who are committed to promoting social change through teaching and learning thus speak of the necessity of embracing a 'pedagogy of discomfort' that 'invites students to critique their deeply held assumptions, and to destabilize their views of themselves and their worlds'.[71] 'Any real change' in society, as James

Baldwin once wrote, 'implies the breakup of the world as one has always known it, the loss of all that gave one an identity, the end of safety'.[72]

Beyond this, the kind of learning desired by the anti-radicalisation movement is expected not to be accompanied by any overt transformation in an individual student's appearance, demeanour or practice. So if a student changes 'their style of dress or personal appearance' in accordance with new ideas or values they are learning, increasingly centres his or her 'day-to-day behaviour' on 'an extremist ideology, group or cause' (where extremism is defined as seeking fundamental social, political or economic change) while losing 'interest in other friends and activities', possesses 'materials or symbols associated with an extremist cause', 'attempts to recruit others to the group/cause', and/or speaks or acts in a way that 'suggests identification with a group, cause or ideology', these are all now marked not as signs of the effectiveness and impact of learning, but worrying indicators that the student is at risk of becoming radicalised.[73] If you are to learn and change your mind, you must do so without changing your friends, habits or leisure time activities. Indeed, if we look at all of the indicators of vulnerability to radicalisation and extremism that are listed in school anti-radicalisation policies in the UK and substitute their opposite – what is implicitly the desired, ideal learner – then what we end up with is the ultimate neoliberal subject: someone who is committed to narrow self-interest, but no greater group, cause or ideology; someone who neither changes in themselves nor desires or seeks changes in the social, political or economic structures that surround them; and someone for whom learning is an entirely internal, cognitive act of acquiring skills for use in an already existing, unchanging and unchangeable education and work marketplace.

Conclusion: pathologising radicalism among the young

Perhaps the most damaging impact of the anti-radicalisation movement on radical, progressive and liberal approaches to education comes not in its opposition to the specific approaches and goals of radical educational practice – looking at structural root causes, promoting education for social change and fostering transformative learning – but in its more broad-based stigmatisation of radicalism and radicalisation in society. When radicalisation is explicitly positioned and policed by schools and other educational institutions as the equivalent to sexual exploitation, crime, drug abuse and child neglect, then it is not surprising that both academic studies and media reports have found that some students are becoming fearful of speaking out and being labelled as radical. 'I think it has become a taboo word to be called a radical', says one university student leader in the UK, 'but before it was something to be proud of – radicals are our best activists in history, radicals were people who changed thoughts, changed society through their radicalism'.[74]

All of this is part of a more general (re)orientation and insulation of both formal and informal education away from the goals of fundamental social change. It may be tempting to frame this harm as deriving solely or principally from the increasing incursion of the state security sector into schools and other educational institutions – one that could be cured by pushing such security concerns back out again. But this would be too limited of an analysis and response. For one thing, it is not clear that the practices of anti-radicalisation really stem from core security practices and concerns: at least, there are a significant number of counter-terrorism experts who themselves question the assumptions, claims and impacts of the anti-radicalisation movement. But more than this, anti-radicalisation is better seen as one part of a much broader set of changes sweeping through education and society with the neoliberal turn. In its approach it has strong parallels with many other developments that have occurred in the education system over the past decade, most of which have occurred under the banner not of fighting Islamic

terrorism, but of preparing students for work in the global economy in the twenty-first century. These include the narrowing of the curriculum to focus on market-valued skills and knowledge, the closing down of humanities, social sciences and liberal arts perspectives, the imposition of high stakes standardised assessments, the suppression of student dissent and recurrent attacks on academic freedom, and the overall, endless promotion of corporate interests and partnerships. All of these together – for which we take anti-radicalisation in this article to be both emblem and epitome – present a serious challenge to the kinds of radical learning that just might be crucial for working our way collectively out of a concurrent set of social, political, economic, environmental and, indeed, global crises and dilemmas.

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