

How is *Prevent* Enacted in Secondary Schools & Colleges

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Research Question: What is the reality of how the *Prevent* Duty is operating in secondary schools and colleges?

My project uses a qualitative methodology – combining interviews and observation – to understand how teachers are implementing this Duty.

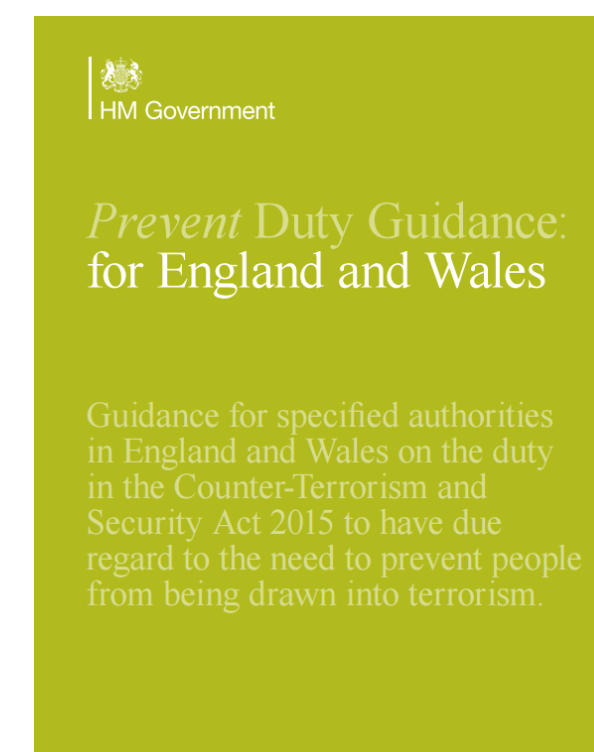
Policy context

The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 '*Prevent* Duty'

Schools and colleges are now under a statutory duty '*to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism*'.

Schools and colleges are now on the 'front-lines' of counter-terrorism:

Institutions are expected to promote '**British Values**' as an antidote to 'extremism', and know how to identify students '**at risk**' of being radicalised, and where appropriate, refer them to the Channel programme.



The Duty is central to an important debate

Several aspects of the Duty have proven controversial, including:

- Restrictions it may place on 'free speech';
- Potentially undermining principles of trust and safeguarding;
- Identifying 'vulnerable' pupils using potentially flawed indicators;
- Potentially stigmatising Muslim pupils.

Yet, education *can* play a key role if channelled correctly:

- There is growing international consensus on the important role of education in 'preventing violent extremism'.
- Educationalists have long spoken of 'Educating against Extremism'.

Educators are a key voice in this debate

Institutions and staff placed under pressure by counter-terrorism:

- Penalties for non-compliance with the Duty are high.
- The 2012 Teachers Standards requirement not to 'undermine' British Values means counter-extremism is influencing how teachers are expected to conduct themselves as individuals.

Understanding the lived experience of the policy is key:

- Studies have provided some evidence on *how* institutions are responding.
- However, further research is required to understand these experiences – not only uncovering responses, but investigating *why* they are adopted.

The study will address three central questions

Question 1: How are institutions practically implementing the *Prevent* Duty?

Research highlights that legislation is having an impact:

- Channel referrals from education sector have risen dramatically.
- 2016 Ofsted monitoring report into further education and skills providers found majority had implemented the Duty 'well'.
- Studies show some acceptance amongst educators that they have a role to play and some level of confidence in ability to implement the Duty.

However, appears to be a level of uncertainty in how to respond:

- Ofsted report found significant variation in forms of response.
- Several surveys highlight concerns about training and guidance.
- Teachers have regularly expressed concerns and 'fear' at being asked to prevent radicalisation and counter extremism.
- Evidence of over-officious reporting to Channel.

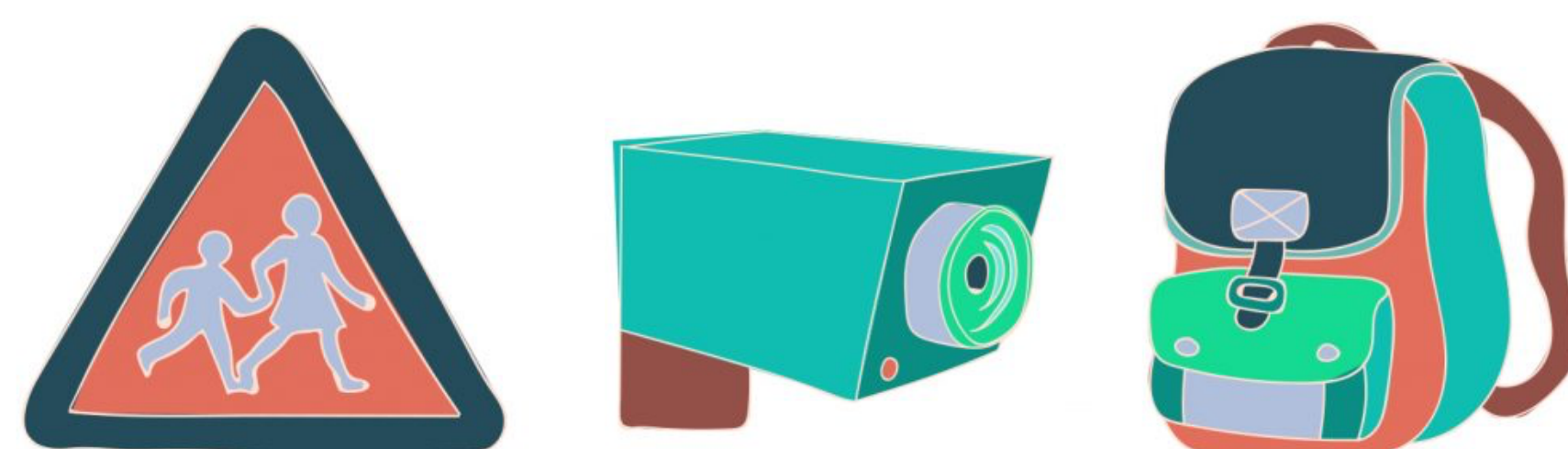


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Question 2: How is *Prevent* 'translated' and 'enacted' by educators?

There are clear issues with the '*Prevent* Duty' as written:

- However, discussions of *Prevent* often focus on policy texts rather than the reality on the ground – policy does not always operate as written.
- Teachers are 'agents' of policy: practice is a result of interaction between policy and existing practices and knowledges.

Processes behind the enactment of the Duty are unclear:

- Is educational knowledge harnessed or subjugated by the new Duty?
- How do practice-based and policy-based knowledges interact?
- Are responses adopted to demonstrate compliance or 'performativity' or are responses being driven by existing knowledge and practices?

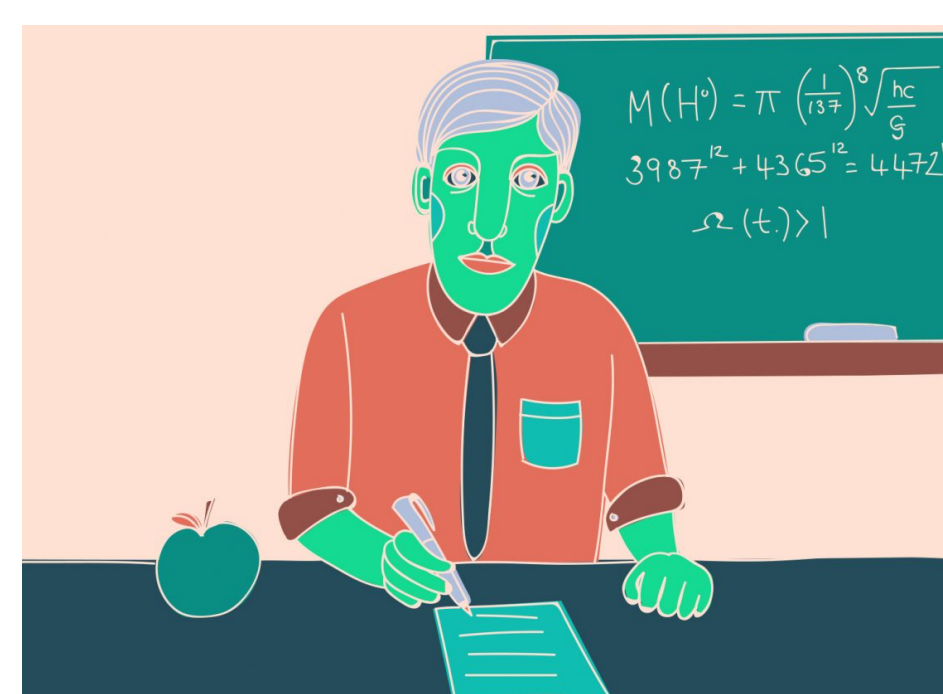


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Question 3: What are the theories of change behind such approaches?

Giving teachers a voice:

- Teachers already play an important role by promoting **positive** outcomes such as critical thinking *outside* of counter-terrorism.
- The Duty risks securitising the curriculum and safeguarding procedures by placing teachers under pressure to avoid a **negative** outcome.
- Whilst the policy speaks of teachers' central role, the importance of their existing 'craft knowledge' is often overlooked.
- Is there a better way that this knowledge can be utilised?

In answering these questions, the study will:

- Further our knowledge of how *Prevent* operates in practice;
- Develop a theoretically-grounded understanding of how security and educational knowledge interact 'on-the-ground';
- Investigate how policy is both enacted by educators, and potentially impacts on their sense of 'self';
- Make visible important educational insights into tackling extremism that could better inform policy.