

Can educators prevent idealism of youngsters running astray?

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Motto

“Immoral means can never lead to moral ends. Bad means can lead to something, which might even look like the ideal, but it can never be the ideal.”

Aldous Huxley
In Ends and Means (1937)

Ideals and Utopias

Ideals are values that

- people believe to be excellent or perfect;
- value highly;
- have not been realised as yet.

Utopias are societal ideals; they are ideas about an excellent society that is the best for all.

Isaiah Berlin

“If one really believes that such a solution is possible, then surely no cost would be too high to obtain it...”

One-sided, but moral high ground can provide people with a justification to use every means to achieve the solution.





Radicalism

“Arising from or going to a root or to the basis”

“Departing markedly from the existing or being extreme”

Radicalisation

“The active pursuit of and/or support for fundamental changes in society that may endanger the continued existence of the democratic order (aim), which may involve the use of undemocratic methods (means) that may harm the functioning of the democratic order (effect).”



Extremism

- ❑ The feeling of acute threat and the tendency to magnify the enemy
- ❑ Denunciation of the current world order
- ❑ In contrast with evil there is a utopia of the good and harmonious world
- ❑ There is a chosen people that can realise this utopia under the leadership of a noble person
- ❑ In order to eradicate evil and purify the world, the good have to use force and violence



Terrorism

“Terrorism is the use or threatened use of violence against people or the causing of serious damage to property that disrupts daily life, with the aim of bringing about social change or influencing political decision-making.”



Sources of extremism

Personality traits and psychiatric disorders

Big Five, sociopathy + psychopathy

Environment

Social exclusion, harassment, discrimination

Ideology

Good against Evil



Bandura

Disengagement

- redefining harmful conduct by moral justification
- euphemistic labelling of acts
- minimizing or misconstruing the consequences
- dehumanization of the other
- attribution of blame on the victim





Preventing extremism

Personality characteristics

(Almost) impossible to change

Environment

Influence possible by ensuring that schools are moral and democratic communities



Preventing extremism

Ideology

Most influence

Critical thinking

Democratic education

Caring about moral principles

i.e. making youngsters immune for
moral disengagement





In conclusion

Educators have a duty to do everything that lies within their power to prevent youngster's idealism from running astray.