



What is education for?

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Contributors

Kathryn Ecclestone is Visiting Professor of Education, University of Sheffield. Over the past 15 years, her books, articles and public speaking have challenged the consensus that there is a crisis of 'emotional well-being' and 'mental health' and that building education around 'positive mental health' is educationally and socially progressive. She has published widely and spoken to many audiences on this topic, both here and in other countries. Kathryn is currently a co-investigator on a research project on student mental health, funded by the Economic and Social and Medical Research Councils.

Joe Nutt is an author, international educational consultant and TES columnist. After almost 20 years teaching English, unusually in schools ranging from the highly selective, private sector to challenging, inner city state schools, he was seconded by the UK's Department of Education from his teaching post at the City of London School. The second half of his career has been in business and he has held senior roles at Digitalbrain, RM and EDT. He has published books on John Donne, Shakespeare and Milton and his new book, *The Point of Poetry*, was published in March by Unbound.

Alka Sehgal Cuthbert is an academic and educator. Her research interests are in liberal education, social epistemology and aesthetics and literature as aesthetic knowledge in the curriculum. Alka is a researcher and author, part-time teacher and education consultant. She was an advisory member of the committee for Ofsted's new Inspection Framework for English.

Hannah Stoten is a teacher in the primary sector. During her SCITT year, Hannah developed an interest in evidence-informed approaches to curriculum design and pedagogy, writing about alternative approaches to primary education on her popular blog, 'The Quirky Teacher'. Since then, Hannah has worked with and taught pupils across EYFS, KS1 and KS2, firstly as a class teacher and subject leader and lately as vice principal, putting into practice evidence-informed approaches that have improved behaviour and transformed academic outcomes for children. She has given talks at researchED and authored chapters in the researchED series: evidence-informed guides for teachers. Curious about neurological development in young children and how this manifests and affects their later academic progress, Hannah is currently pursuing a Master's in Developmental Science alongside her current work as an education consultant.

What is education for?

The key concern of education is inculcating the wisdom, intelligence and capacity for critical thought necessary for the next generation to assume responsibility for our world. Education provides a fundamental link between society's past, present and future. Teachers introduce children to the knowledge society considers necessary or valuable in order for them, in turn, to interpret and add to our collective understanding. Education is, at best, led by teachers driven to pass on their own love for and knowledge of a particular subject.

Recent decades have witnessed a swirl of government policies and initiatives that have, in combination, distanced school and teachers from the project of education. Back in 1997, Tony Blair's New Labour government may have been elected on the slogan: 'education, education, education,' but in practice schools were expected to focus on explicitly political concerns of social inclusion and social mobility. This led to an emphasis in the classroom on raising children's self-esteem through so-called 'personalised learning' alongside a curriculum that was relentless in pursuit of the functional and relevant. The upshot was an increase in the number of children gaining certificates alongside a lowering of academic standards.

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The Conservative-led coalition government, with Michael Gove as Education Secretary, instigated a backlash to this approach. Many GCSE and A level exams were reformed and made more challenging, often through the inclusion of substantially more content. The introduction of free schools offered some parents and school leaders a greater degree of freedom to implement new approaches to the curriculum, the structure of the school day or a tougher approach to behaviour and discipline. At the same time, grassroots movements like ResearchEd have empowered many more teachers to question the pseudoscience behind the latest classroom fads.

And yet, despite the pendulum swinging first one way and then the other, there is still a sense that something is wrong in our schools. Exams may be tougher but to what end? And do more challenging exams necessarily mean standards are improving? It can seem to some teachers that meeting targets has become an end in itself: children are taught to pass exams with little time left for cultivating understanding or a love for the subject. Likewise, there continues to be concern about children's behaviour. Schools may have more rules but teachers have not necessarily gained authority in the classroom. Enforcing discipline can appear to be an end in itself rather than a means for allowing children to access education.

There remains little sense of education being valuable in its own terms. Instead, schools continue to be driven by a number of extrinsic goals:

- To meet data-driven targets
- To provide credentials for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and drive social mobility
- To support the mental wellbeing of vulnerable children
- To tackle social and political priorities through the inculcation of particular values
- To develop children's functional skills: primarily, learning to learn
- To introduce children to the latest technology

One constant has underpinned changing demands and fluctuating goals: a pervasive fatalism that sees children as a product of their genes on one hand or of their home environment on the other. This means that although children can be drilled to follow rules and pass tests, a poverty of low expectations remains. As a result, complex knowledge, high culture, hard work and self-discipline are considered beyond the reach of some children.

Policy churn, political interference and the imperative to solve social problems means that schools have become dislocated from the project of education. Teaching is confused with socialisation and subject knowledge is entangled with extrinsic and often political demands on the curriculum. The upshot is that teachers work extremely hard and children are kept busy with a range of activities that often have only a passing significance to the primary task of education.

We urgently need to return schools and teachers to the goals of education. The aim of this short collection of essays is to offer a critical commentary on some of the trends currently dominating our school system, alongside some proposals for rehabilitating education.

We argue that:

- The aim of education is not individual happiness or a child's emotional wellbeing. Struggling to master challenging new ideas is often antithetical to short term contentment but ultimately worthwhile. The popular perception that children's mental health is fragile can easily become a barrier to high academic expectations.
- All children deserve to learn in a calm and orderly environment. Teachers, as experts in both subject knowledge and pedagogy, have authority in the classroom and should be supported by their school's senior leaders in instilling the discipline and habits required for learning and living.
- Parents, not teachers, should be responsible for raising children. It is not the place of the state, through schools, to determine the values or the political outlook of children.

These essays are not intended to provide a definitive critique or a comprehensive list of solutions but to lay down a marker in what we hope will be an ongoing debate. Crucially, the question posed needs to be: what is education for?

Therapeutic Education

Kathryn Ecclestone

Over the past two decades, panic about young people's psychological and emotional fragility has grown apace. This hyper-sensitivity to concerns with children's mental health and wellbeing makes many parents, teachers, children and young people regard life generally, and education in particular, as profoundly difficult.

From a very early age, children are presented with a vocabulary of stress, anxiety, trauma, abuse and vulnerability which permeates popular culture, politics and everyday life. Talking about, scrutinising and managing emotions, is presented to even the very youngest children as essential for good mental health. The education system as a whole has been subject to huge growth in formal interventions such as counselling, alongside universal interventions such as a therapeutic form of circle time, mindfulness, managing stress and anxiety workshops, resilience training, life coaching and peer mentoring. Children are given 'wellbeing' family homework tasks or made to complete weekly wellbeing questionnaires. Meanwhile, campaigns to de-stigmatise mental illness elide 'mental health problems' and vague notions of 'issues' and 'difficulties' with normal emotional responses and experiences.

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This heightened awareness of mental health emerged within the context of continued disaffection with the pursuit of knowledge through subject disciplines, the notion of teacher authority and 'traditional' teaching and assessment methods. As a result, difficult or irrelevant curriculum knowledge, as well as the general pressures of studying, researching and being assessed, have come to be seen as psychologically damaging by supporters of child-centred and holistic education. Relational pedagogy, alternative education and a 'critical pedagogy of engagement' are concerned not only about groups with difficult social and family backgrounds but, increasingly, about *all* children and young people.

These trends press nurseries, schools, colleges and universities to make wellbeing or, in its most recent incarnation, 'positive mental health', a measurable outcome. This raises crucial questions for educators:

- Why has society come to regard children and young people as less psychologically resilient than in previous eras?
- Why is there such a strong consensus around the need to minimise emotional and psychological pressures on children?
- What is the impact upon education of pessimistic assumptions about what students are capable of achieving and of growing fearfulness about their mental states?
- How is the slippery and vague use of language around mental health and mental illness affecting access to scarce resources for specialist intervention?
- How much public money has been spent on a spurious, ad hoc, unregulated psycho-emotional industry in the education system?
- What is the evidence base for these interventions?

In response, a growing number of counsellors, clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, learning support workers, teachers and mental health practitioners are now questioning both the premise and vocabularies of 'crisis' as well as the promotion of routine mental health intervention in the classroom. At the same time, there is concern that those with serious mental health problems are not getting the right specialist help. Some clinical psychologists now argue there is a problem with over-diagnosis and the pathologising of normal emotional responses. As a result, some designers of university induction and school–university transition programmes are removing the ubiquitous vocabulary of stress, anxiety and mental health difficulties and not encouraging automatic recourse to formal psycho-emotional support.

There is an emerging interest in how curriculum subjects can offer philosophical, cultural and spiritual insights necessary for wellbeing, not least as a necessary distraction from the mundane and as a counter to alienation. 'Knowledge Schools Hubs' are countrywide networks that aim to support schools and teachers to develop a 'knowledge-rich' curriculum. In parallel, a research-based teachers' network, ResearchED, scrutinises evidence for educational fads, including injunctions for teachers to privilege students' emotional wellbeing and mental health in everyday classroom activities.

Some parents are campaigning for risk and resilience in childhood and attempting to resist notions of 'safe spaces'. Of particular note is the *Let Grow* movement, founded by Lenore Skenazy, which is spreading throughout the United States. *Let Grow* aims to counter the culture of overprotection and argues that treating young people as physically and emotionally fragile is bad for their and our future.

Head teacher of Huntingdon school, John Tomsett, has translated some of these alternative perspectives into practice. He argues that educators have a key role in 'turning the tide' of

crisis and resisting knee-jerk responses that require schools to offer more emotional support to growing numbers of pupils. He identifies three areas for action: resisting cuts to specialist mental health support for those with serious problems; providing an excellent subject-based education with strong expectations of what children and young people are capable of achieving; requiring teachers to communicate authentically and often with their students in order to identify problems without pathologising or over-reacting to them. Other experts argue that young people, parents and teachers need to be better able to differentiate between normal emotions and mental illness.

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As pressures intensify for wellbeing and mental health to be fundamental educational priorities, these challenges are a springboard for the pressing tasks of understanding what is happening and finding educationally sound alternatives.

The Importance of Schools

Joe Nutt

Historically, education in the UK, as in most of the world, relies on the provision of good schools. All genuinely great schools are unique but have two things in common: stability and longevity. Yet schools struggle to develop stability and longevity when politicians are free to interfere with educational policy and insist upon subjecting state schools to wildly oscillating and entirely political demands. Political interference is disastrous for schools.

Politicians talk about providing a world class education in the UK, while ignoring what the rest of the world knows: the UK already has schools that provide children with a first-class education. This is why the independent sector has been so successful in establishing schools abroad. No other country has been able to do anything even remotely like this. Our genuinely independent schools are one of our greatest educational, cultural and diplomatic assets. Yet they are now under threat.

The Labour Party has proposed abolishing private education - and therefore some of the UK's most successful schools. Nothing illustrates better why all schools now need to be taken out of political control than this Labour campaign to abolish private schools in the face of the immense value they deliver to the only people who matter, the children they educate. Labour's talk of 'integrating' private schools into the state sector further exposes why allowing politicians to design educational policy is fundamentally foolish: no one who truly values education would propose such a naive and unworkable idea.

The same is true of Labour's proposal that universities only admit 7% of students from private schools, to reflect the proportion of all pupils who attend them. Apart from the obvious fact that closer to 16% of university entrants (sixth formers) attend private schools, using entry criteria other than scholarly potential fundamentally undermines the academic focus of some of the world's leading universities. Why would anyone advise a scholarly child to apply for a university that doesn't value scholarship?

It's not just the Labour Party: the past couple of decades have witnessed an ever growing list of social and political initiatives schools are expected to deliver in addition to - or sometimes instead of - simply teaching children subject knowledge.

Political interference is disastrous for schools.

Since January 2019 alone, 114 different proposals for tackling social or political problems through schools have been mooted by charities, campaigners or politicians. The list, compiled by *Parents and Teachers for Excellence*, includes teaching children about fertility, gardening skills, fake news, climate change, how to use emojis and of course, more politics. When state schools are subjected to wildly oscillating political demands and teachers are forced to deliver political goals they become convenient repositories for every political and social initiative real politicians dream up then under-budget for. The attitude that 'schools can do it' inevitably means teachers have less time and resources available to do what they are meant to do: teach.

One impact of politicising education is that for too long schools, like many other public organisations, have been pressured into appearing innovative not for the benefit of those they teach, but because politicians and policy makers, having lost faith in tradition, are in awe of technology. Technology is by its very definition inhuman. Poorly thought through, commercially blinkered technology, has led to all kinds of unforeseen and unwelcome cultural changes in the media, in publishing and even in the home. In education its impact has been both dramatically successful and highly pernicious. The reification of data by technologists and technocrats has had a hugely detrimental impact on schools, encouraging school leaders to generate statistics instead of well-educated, young adults.

Schools and teachers should have been the very institutions that challenged the uses new technologies were being put to, but were far too often caught up in the rhetoric of innovation themselves by politicians equally naïve and ignorant of the risks and challenges new technology posed. That naivety and ignorance is currently visible in discussions about Artificial Intelligence where more humane, measured thinking would expose the marketing lie of 'AI' for what it really is, nothing more exciting than machine learning. Schools that put humanity at their heart ask hard questions about technology and ensure it remains just another tool within their control. Schools that don't, leave their children vulnerable to

habits and behaviours technology businesses have clearly shown they have no interest in predicting or preventing.

The link between politicians and educational policy that impacts on state schools must be broken in order to free all schools to build the stability and longevity that has made the private sector so successful at educating children.

We urgently need a moratorium on new politically-driven policy initiatives in order to allow state schools to establish the stability that has been so beneficial to the independent sector. All political parties need to agree to leave schools alone so that teachers and senior leaders can build successful schools with a respite from innovation and novelty. This moratorium needs to embrace activists, celebrities, campaigners and lobbyists who see the answer to every social problem as lying within schools. The aim of this moratorium is to protect schools from the damaging see-saw effect of party politics and elections which has plagued the education sector for decades.

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Schools are extraordinarily effective at educating large numbers of children as long as they remain self-determining communities, free from political interference and external pressure from organisations eager to influence them for their own purposes or gain. The state assumes the right to educate children on behalf of its citizens not for its own utilitarian purposes. All schools should be free to learn from, and build on, previous generations of schools that have guided many millions of children successfully into adult life and society, without the kinds of external interference schools today routinely experience.

The Primary School

Hannah Stoten

The primary school should be a calm sanctuary where children can enjoy the bliss of childhood, free from adult worries, while adults ensure they are gradually inculcated into a

tradition of scholarship and increasing personal responsibility, so they are ready to face the demands of secondary education when the time is right.

Children need to play, make friends and not worry about who they are, what they look like, or whether the planet is about to be destroyed. They need teachers who will take charge of them and their education, regardless of their background. Children need space to be children and they can only do so if adults assume full responsibility for their education and welfare.

The primary curriculum

Children have a right to a broad and balanced curriculum that not only imparts knowledge, but also inculcates scholarly dispositions and habits. This means that from the moment a child enters primary school, they should be given opportunities to develop their concentration which in turn improves their ability to acquire new knowledge, either through independent reading, or during lessons. Developing concentration requires increasing moments of silence and of disciplined, studious endeavour. This is one of the reasons why we would like a revival of the lost art of penmanship, an aspect of the curriculum that has fallen out of favour despite its amazing ability to improve concentration, resilience and a sense of pride in one's handiwork. Appropriate time should be given to literacy and numeracy to ensure that all children can access the full curriculum and have the essential skills needed for life.

Children need adults to assume full responsibility for their education and welfare.

Every primary school should endeavour to develop a knowledge-rich curriculum which communicates that knowledge is interesting and worthwhile in itself. This knowledge should be sequenced and mapped coherently with intelligent links between subjects made explicit to pupils. The curriculum should also foster an aspirational high achievement culture which celebrates both academic, sporting and artistic success. Further, the curriculum should develop young people who can understand the world and are able to make a positive contribution to society in modern Britain.

Pedagogy

All children should have a right to be taught in ways that are evidence-informed, equitable and that minimise the confusion or low self-esteem that comes from not knowing what to

do. Responsible pedagogy prioritises those who need us most - children with SEN, children who have not received opportunities to acquire knowledge in the home, children who do not experience calm, orderly routines outside of school. Therefore, aspects of responsible, evidence-informed pedagogy should include:

- Explicit teaching of both substantive and disciplinary knowledge
- Teaching styles that take into account the nature of the subject being taught
- High expectations of children: self-control, listening to instructions, concentration
- Pre-teaching vocabulary
- Inclusive rehearsal and retrieval opportunities, such as choral response where all pupils respond together
- Questioning used to check retention and understanding, not for discovery or guessing games
- Rigour and pace for all, not just the most able
- Opportunities for pupils to secure fluency through discrete and then applied practice, rather than rushing on to new topics
- Low-stakes, frequent testing to aid retention of knowledge and develop positive attitudes to personal accountability
- Provides extra-curricular experiences that augment and embed what is taught, rather than merely providing entertainment
- An understanding that all children can learn and have potential, rather than seeking to label, lower expectations for, hold back and decline to teach those who appear 'not ready'

Bold leadership

We believe children have a right to be educated in primary schools where teachers and leaders prioritise evidence informed teaching methods over pseudo-scientific fixes. Teachers and leaders must ensure children receive their full curricular entitlement, regardless of what informs national accountability measures. Further, children have a right to be taught by authoritative teachers who are respected and supported by school leaders. Children need to learn that their actions and choices have consequences and that it is better for them to work hard and be kind in order to get on in life. School leaders are integral to this process and should take responsibility for discipline alongside teachers.

Honesty

For too long it has been considered kinder to children to keep parents in the dark about their children's attainment relative to their peers. As a result, parents frequently only realise

that their child is underperforming or constrained by gaps in knowledge long after those gaps have opened up - at the end of year 6. Parents have a right to know how their child is performing at school. This requires honesty and avoiding euphemisms, platitudes and excuses that lull parents into a false sense of security. One option might be to have national, yearly, easy-to-administer CAT tests that give parents full knowledge of where their child is relative to their peers.

Socialisation or Social Engineering?

Alka Sehgal Cuthbert

At St Stephen's Primary School in east London and The Priory School in Lewes parents have recently protested over changes in uniform policies. At Parkfield Primary School in Birmingham, some parents demonstrated against the introduction of a curriculum intervention called 'No Outsiders' which promotes LGBTQ relationships in compulsory Sex and Relationships Education classes. Earlier, in the mid 2000s, parents of pupils at Rawmarsh School in Rotherham protested about the introduction of a strict healthy eating policy. These conflicts between parents and schools mark an intensification of a longstanding tension inherent in state education.

Parental complaints are sometimes procedural based: parents feel they were insufficiently consulted over a new rule that impacts upon them or their children. But often, more fundamentally, conflicts indicate a clash of values and democratic principles. Whatever the cause, such clashes pose questions concerning the different roles families and schools play in socialising the next generation.

Meira Levinson (1997) poses this as a succinct political question: how do we balance individual private interests central to political liberalism with public virtues central to democracy? A key liberal value is autonomy, which entails the right of parents to bring up their children according to their *own personal* beliefs, including religious beliefs. Democracy, on the other hand, requires a commitment to *public virtues*, one of the most important being tolerance of difference for the collective good. The tension between the two has generally been mediated by observing a relatively strong boundary between private and public spheres of life. People consent to the curtailment of some interests in the public sphere in the expectation of a greater level of freedom to pursue their individual preferences in the private sphere.

Levinson argues this fundamental political tension is played out in schools that need to diversify (to meet individual interests and value commitments) but not to the detriment of demonstrating 'common demands of civic identity and public life (represented by the school)' which enable pupils to 'participate and acknowledge each other as equal partners in the democratic process.'

Which boundaries are identified, observed, reinforced, or weakened is a political question, but it is also the work of culture and cultural institutions, including those of education. Writing in the early 20th century, a period marked by the ruling elites' weakening *moral* authority, Emile Durkheim argued that contrary to critics of secular education who feared modern schooling was undermining authority and bonds of social trust, schools had a vitally important function in inculcating social bonds. His key insight was that while schools had a social duty to ensure pupils came *to know the reality* of society's morals, schools could not *create* its values. Moral values had to substantively, not merely rhetorically, exist in society before schools could demonstrate their reality to the young in educational contexts.

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For Durkheim, moral education is an important aspect of a school's socialising function because it facilitates the creation of common bonds or trust in a modern capitalist society which in the economic and political spheres, fosters differentiation and stratification. Durkheim's insight may seem obvious but an important implication is often overlooked. *It turns on its head the idea that society can be morally or democratically improved through schooling.*

This is a difficult lesson for teachers to heed at the best of times. The model of schools as an embryonic society makes intuitive sense: generally living entities grow from small/young to large/old. This biological model of development dovetails with an inherent future orientation of the teaching profession. All teachers hope for their pupils to progress. Consequently, it is easy for teachers to see their work as not just teaching knowledge to pupils in the present, but as forming citizens of the future. No doubt this is how many teachers involved in, for example, teaching the 'No Outsiders' programme at Parkfield Primary see their actions. The problem is that, historically, the division of labour between educators and parents in relation to socialisation has been predicated on a relatively strong consensus in society about the value of formal knowledge and moral values and democratic principles more generally.

In a context of weak or no consensus, attempts to introduce values at the behest of government or the whim of campaigners is more readily understood as social engineering. For Hannah Arendt (1993) the process by which schools try and change adults' values and ideas via pupils amounts to a form of indoctrination. The fact that school policies that aim to improve moral values and personal preferences continue to provoke parental protest illustrates that contemporary society lacks a strong value consensus. Although the difference between socialisation – induction into society's existing moral norms, and social engineering, changing society's existing moral norms – is not always clear-cut in practice, it is important that educators, and education policy-makers, are aware of their different aims and intentions.

Historically, the division of labour between educators and parents in relation to socialisation has been predicated on a relatively strong consensus in society about the value of formal knowledge.

For most Parkfield teachers, and their many supporters in the council and profession, compulsory LGBTQ lessons are the liberal and progressive way forward in order to improve democracy. One argument made by supporters of the school is that the values of modern liberal society have moved on from a past in which homosexual people faced systematic discrimination. Consequently, introducing compulsory SRE/LGBTQ lessons is a straightforward exercise in modernisation: updating the outdated values of schools or teachers who favour a traditional curriculum or parents who oppose social developments like gay marriage.

While many people now hold socially liberal views, not everyone subscribes to the positive endorsement of homosexual relationships or gender self-identification required by interventions such as the 'No Outsiders' programme. For the Muslim parents at Parkfield, awareness was experienced as attempts to de-legitimise aspects of their religious beliefs pertaining to conduct in intimate relationships and marriage. But, given that they had kept their children at the school despite knowing that the deputy head is openly gay, and had affirmed that they had no personal dislike for him, it is hard to categorise them as die-hard homophobes. Traditional, yes; old-fashioned, yes; socially and morally conservative, yes; but if we value a democracy, there has to be space for views we dislike or find offensive. The parents tacitly subscribe to a negative view of tolerance, where private views are respected as off-limits for state intervention. In this light, it is the school, with its positive view of tolerance, where the state has to actively promote stipulated liberal values, that is breaching liberal principles and being intolerant.

It could be argued that the school was being at best, premature, and at worst, disingenuous, in claiming that *everybody* supports equality and therefore opposing LGBTQ lessons could only be a view held by illiberal anti-democrats. If this were truly the case, 'No Outsiders' would be unnecessary. For Andrew Moffat, the deputy head at Parkfield, the decision to change the books to show positive representations of gay and transgender relationships in order to normalise them is merely continuing an older commitment to equality. But this ignores new political realities. For example, the 2010 Equality Act redefines equality as positive discrimination for those with protected characteristics. Effectively, the inclusivity offered by 'No Outsiders' and other such school initiatives is antithetical to equality as understood by most people. Individuals are invited to be included by virtue of being a member of a vulnerable group, or a member of a group of protectors of the vulnerable. Far from encouraging equality, policies based on such principles encourage divisiveness that is at odds with the need for schools to foster bonds of commonality.

In fact, the main focus of the parents' objections was the way the school crossed the previously observed boundary between school and home knowledge. Our conduct in intimate relationships, our sexual preferences and choice of marriage partners may be the stuff of literature and art taught in lessons for older pupils, but they are not the accepted object of direct moral instruction via state or religious institutions. The separation of our private lives and beliefs from direct state instruction is one of the great achievements of modern secular societies. To make schools the sites for the *direct instruction of private preferences* (food or religion), or for changing values (LGBTQ curriculum and uniform policies) transgresses both the epistemological and moral demarcations needed for schools to play a constructive part in democratic societies.

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If teachers were to uphold a traditional role as pedagogic authorities teaching a curriculum based primarily on disciplinary knowledge, they would simultaneously be teaching their charges two important lessons. First, that there is a world of ideas and imagination that is universal in principle and that making such knowledge meaningful is a collective endeavour between a knowledgeable teacher, the subject and pupils. The second lesson – taught experientially – is that it is possible to accept adults who have different values and ideas as long as certain normative boundaries are maintained. The closer schools let themselves act as social engineers rather than as socialisers, the more difficult it is likely to be to win the level of public consent needed for education: and the greater the risk of turning schools into anti-democratic institutions.

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