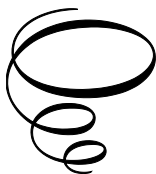# Reinventing Society with Philosophy, Religion, and Science

# Reinventing Society with Philosophy, Religion, and Science

Edited by

Neil Wollman and Carolyn J. Love

Reinventing Society with Philosophy, Religion, and Science

Edited by Neil Wollman and Carolyn J. Love

This book first published 2023

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

# Table of Contents

# INTRODUCTION

# NEIL WOLLMAN AND C.J. LOVE

"Reinventing Society with Philosophy, Religion, and Science" is a bridge for applying the best theories and principles of philosophy, religion, and social science to the real world. For too long, academics have had little to say to practitioners and policymakers. Yet as this book shows, the fields of philosophy, religion, and social science are ripe sources of practical insight. They can provide foundational principles and practical tools for organizing and operating our social institutions: education, social welfare, government, criminal justice, and the economy.

Given the complexity of our institutions and society, we need to call upon all the tools we can muster to improve our world. Philosophical, religious, and social scientific approaches to understanding human behavior and social institutions are quite different, but together they offer a comprehensive prescription for creating a well-functioning society. What might society look like that utilizes the valuable insights from these perspectives?

The fifteen essays in this book are written for practitioners and policymakers, teachers, police officers, social workers, legislators, and the like. The authors apply relevant knowledge from their respective disciplines in hands-on, practical ways to make their ideas useful in tackling real-world problems. Examples include reducing crime, improving our social welfare system, helping students flourish, and developing humane and earth-friendly economic systems. Decision-makers can apply specific principles to their particular needs or, thinking big, work with others and use relevant chapters as a blueprint for completely remaking an institution. In the following chapter, *How to Put Ideas in the Book into Action*, we explore uses for the material beyond the most relevant chapters for your work.

The book has five major sections, each covering a particular social institution, with three chapters (philosophy, religion, and social science in each section. Each chapter covers improving the institution's work using philosophy, religion, and social science perspectives. The philosophy chapters utilize Western philosophical traditions and lean heavily on work in ethics and applied philosophy. The religion chapters focus on religious

thinking and practices from Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. The social science chapters call upon investigation and theory from psychology, communications, sociology, social work, criminology, political science, policy studies, educational studies, and economics.

By coincidence, one author who contributed to the three chapters on the economy lives outside of the United States, and both authors of Chapter 14 reside internationally. This international perspective adds extra flavor to the reading. Since the various proposals in the chapters are based on broad principles, we feel they can be applied worldwide. Indeed, we hope that those worldwide can find some value in the ideas here.

Though the chapters in a particular section do not each cover the same content areas, there is overlap. So, in the area of education, the chapters examine topics like administration, curriculum, and classroom management. The social welfare chapters look at the work of social service providers and administrators. The pieces on government examine areas such as policy, legislation, administration, and ethical governance. The criminal justice essays investigate topics like criminal justice policy, values-based justice, policing, corrections, and crime and prevention. Finally, the economics chapters address concerns such as sustainable development, government economic policy, inequalities, and business practices.

While this book is written principally for and geared toward practitioners, we see many other possible audiences. The various chapters show academics and students in religion, philosophy, and social science how their discipline's knowledge can be applied in real-world ways they may not have considered before. The book could be used as a supplemental text in those disciplines. Action-oriented citizens can take these ideas to audiences who could use them. And big-picture thinkers, or those with a general interest in science, philosophy, or religion, will find ideas that spark their imagination and action. To learn more about the positive potential for society seen at the intersection of philosophy, religion, and science, we direct you to the work of the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science (www.IRAS.org).

We invite readers to engage in ongoing discussions to enhance the book's usefulness further, and to this end, we provide our contact information below. We welcome general or specific comments, examples of where and how you applied the chapter's ideas, and reports on your successes (or failures) using the book's insights.

We trust that readers will find this book unique in its comprehensive, cross-discipline, and practical nature and will enjoy the journey through its chapters. If you are concerned about how our social institutions can work better at the local, state/provincial, and national levels,

we hope you will use the insights here or pass them along to others who can. Ultimately, we hope the book serves as a tool to build a better society.

Neil Wollman and C.J. Love, Co-Editors; contacts are neiljwollman@gmail.com and carolyn.love@elmhurst.edu.

# How to Put Ideas in the Book into Action

First, start by reading the summaries of the chapters as covered in the section introductions. It won't take that long and will give you a general idea of what the book contains. Though the tendency will be to focus on the summaries most relevant to your work or those to whom you want to convey the information, read them all. You may find that you can get some hints in chapters you would not have expected to be helpful or start identifying some themes that might help organize your thinking.

Here are just a few examples of how chapters that, on the surface, might not be relevant to your work might be. Though the chapters on social welfare applied to religion and government applied to religion may seem too removed from each other, they are not because both chapters focus on the same policy areas. The chapter on religion applied to criminal justice gives a general paradigm for approaching problems that can be used in the work of any social institution. The chapter on social science applied to criminal justice presents a methodology applicable to someone working in any social institution interested in using evidence-based work. If you work in government, particularly if you are a legislator concerned with policy, aspects of all other social institutions would be relevant, as governments are involved in all those areas in some ways. The chapter on social science and the economy covers such diverse areas as government, social welfare, criminal justice, and education administration. Some ideas you read that are not directly relevant to you might be with a bit of creativity.

If you want to focus, your immediate attention will be on the three chapters comprising the social institution most relevant to your work or those you want to inform. Investigate how to best combine the ideas from those three chapters, considering the particular profession, position, and circumstances involved.

Don't forget the index! If you take the time to look at the whole index, you may find some relevant terms you would have missed by just looking at chapter summaries or even the chapters themselves if you skimmed through some. If you have the time, read the whole book. There may be ideas outside your area of interest or expertise to pass along to others.

As you read, use the examples given to spark further thought on possible applications to your situation. Also, each chapter presents questions to reflect on, which should spark further inspiration.

If you want to go the extra mile, look at the various references, footnotes, etc., and see where you can look for further information that might be helpful. Consider reaching out to experts, academics, or other practitioners for other ideas.

A good strategy is to take notes from what you read and make an action plan for yourself or your organization. Realize that not all concepts will work in all situations but applying many ideas in various and creative ways will improve your work. Good luck.

# SECTION ONE:

# PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION, AND SOCIAL SCIENCE APPLIED TO EDUCATION

# EDUCATION INTRODUCTION

In the age of COVID-19, the traditional educational system morphed from in-person classroom learning to online-only, to hybrid-online before moving back to in-person learning. The COVID virus changed all aspects of education, from the classroom to the school board meeting room. Our students, parents, schools, teachers, staff, and administrators learned the value of flexibility to help our children continue to grow academically, socially, and emotionally.

This section looks at how the latest ideas can be applied to all spheres of education, from planning, training, and implementing strategies to improving learning. Each chapter offers a different look at possible improvements in today's education system. This section's application suggests how the best ideas from philosophy, religion, and social science can help in our classrooms today.

Starting with philosophy, Chapter 1 asks how philosophy can inform educational policy to practice. Principally, it identifies the values that should guide decision-making and hold systems accountable. This chapter identifies two different categories of values for educational decision-making and offers some ideas in each category that should inform decisions throughout the educational system. The central concept understands that the education system should equip students to flourish and contribute to the flourishing of others. Similarly, this chapter explores what values might mean for decision-making, specifically regarding school administration (broadly conceived), the curriculum, and classroom management.

After examining philosophy, Chapter 2 turns toward religion and what insights aid in promoting holistic formation toward full human flourishing. It gives practical advice on how religion could inform administrative practices, curriculum development, and classroom management. Also, it suggests ways teachers and administrators might draw inspiration from the collective wisdom of various religious traditions to inform their pedagogies, policies, and practices. Overall, this chapter considers the religious dimensions of experience and mines the wisdom of those traditions as a resource for educational practices today.

Finally, Chapter 3 focuses on employing scientific evidence in three roles that identify effective practices in PreK-12. One role is "evidence seeker." Teachers and principals determine school needs and search for research support in published evidence reviews such as the What Works

Clearinghouse. Another role is "evidence producer." They conduct pilot studies of selected practices and partner with research communities. Finally, a third role is "evidence users," which relies on scientific evidence for instructional, administrative, and classroom management decisions that routinely occur throughout the school.

All three of these chapters speak to the practitioner as they navigate the changing world of education. Each chapter offers questions to consider that help guide the reader in applying the information to their unique situation, allowing teachers, parents, administrators, school boards, and staff to personalize the information. Thus, the chapters help in adapting to our changing educational environment.

CHAPTER 1

PHILOSOPHY APPLIED TO EDUCATION:
FLOURISHING OF THE SELF
AND CONTRIBUTING TO THE FLOURISHING
OF OTHERS

HARRY BRIGHOUSE

## Introduction

Despite talking about 'data-driven decision-making' in schools, data cannot drive anything by itself. Data simply gives us a rough picture of what is happening in a school and school system. If the data are good enough, it enables us to arrive at informed, probabilistic judgments about the effects of changes we might be considering. But the data do not tell us whether what is happening in the school is good or bad or whether the effects that we might produce are worth pursuing. To arrive at those judgments, we need data, for sure, but we also need to know what is actually valuable. Data can and must inform our decisions, but it is and must be values that drive them.

"But" you might ask: "whose values?" I think that's the wrong question. Different people have different perspectives on what is valuable. Their diverse backgrounds, upbringing, and experiences give them insights that others lack and create blind spots that others can overcome. When it comes to values, all of us get some things more or less correct, and all of us get some things more or less wrong, and the fact of diversity means that the things we get wrong and right are different. Therefore, when it comes to decisions – such as decisions about education – that are not personal but concern our shared collective life, we don't just take the values we happen to believe and apply them to our situation. Nor do we defer to the values that others happen to have. Instead, we harness the fact of diversity to benefit all by engaging in an open giving and taking of reasons. The hunch is that with goodwill, careful thought, and the asset of our shared, if

imperfect, reasoning capacities, we can collectively get more things right and fewer things wrong than when each reason alone. "Whose values?" is the wrong question because it assumes that we have to choose someone whose values will govern us all, whereas what we have to do is seek the truth, together, in good faith, and act on our conclusions. The right question is, "Which values, and how do we find out what they are?"

What I'll offer in this chapter are resources for that process, specifically regarding education that developed over the years in the field of analytical philosophy. I've stuck to the analytic tradition of philosophy: other traditions create and offer additional resources, but it seems most appropriate to stick to my area of expertise in a short chapter. The specific claims about value are my take on and my interpretation of values that are widely endorsed. I don't offer detailed and extensive arguments for my take: interested readers can read those elsewhere (Brighouse et al. 2019; Brighouse 2005). I offer them in the spirit of give and take: as resources to ground further deliberation by the reader and as diverse a pool of others that the reader can engage.

The chapter is organized as follows. In the first section, I distinguish two different categories of values that bear on educational decision-making and offer some items in each category that I hope readers will agree should inform decisions throughout the education system. This section draws very heavily on work I have done with another philosopher, Adam Swift, and two economists of education, Helen Ladd and Susanna Loeb (Brighouse et al. 2019). In sections 2, 3, and 4, I explore what these values might mean for decision-making, specifically regarding school administration (broadly conceived), the curriculum, and classroom management. In section 5, I offer some conclusions and questions for the reader.

## Values and decisions

In our book *Educational Goods: Values, Evidence, and Decision-Making* (Brighouse et al. 2019), Helen Ladd, Susanna Loeb, Adam Swift, and I argue that the central aim of education should be ensuring that students have excellent prospects for flourishing. Also, the students will contribute to the flourishing of others in the society they will inhabit. Of course, children are (typically) raised in families. Those families realize a range of essential and valuable goods and are also responsible for equipping their children to have good lives in which they also contribute to society. But in modern complex societies, families cannot do everything which children need. To do well in and contribute to modern complex communities requires a range of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions that families cannot foster

alone. At a minimum, we need specialist skills and knowledge that our parents may not possess and may not be skilled at teaching even if they do have them. We also need to be able to socialize well with a wide range of the kinds of people that we simply won't meet within our own families and the narrow networks they inhabit. A social enterprise ensuring that all students get formal schooling for 10-13 years frees parents to contribute to society in ways that they couldn't if they were educating their children. It educates the children in ways that parents just couldn't.

Identifying flourishing as central to the aims of education is, of course, only the start. Two obvious questions arise immediately. What do we mean by flourishing? And what, more precisely, does the education system have to do to promote it?

This chapter focuses on the second question, but a word about that first. Reasonable people have a great deal of scope for disagreement about precisely what is good in human life – exactly what constitutes flourishing. In our book, we thought it prudent not to take too firm a stand on a question that has consumed hundreds of thousands of pages of philosophical argument. For myself, I think of human flourishing in a pluralistic way. There are many ways of living well. Even though challenging, we should try to equip children to work out the best way for *them* to flourish, the best way for *them* to contribute to the flourishing of others, and to develop the ability actually to do whatever those ways involve. I guess that most readers agree with me about that: and that while we might have disagreements at the margins, for most examples of human life, if we knew enough about it, we would, after sufficient discussion and deliberation, have something close to a consensus about how much flourishing it involved. If I'm right about that, the reader should engage with the rest of the chapter. (For a valuable discussion of the place of flourishing injustice, see Sypnowich 2016. See also Layard 2007, and Layard 2011).

Let's return to the second question: what does the education system have to do to promote the aims we identify? Imagine telling an elementary teacher that her job is to encourage the flourishing of her students and equip them to contribute to the flourishing of others. She might, quite reasonably, respond, "Yes, I know *that*. But how does that help me decide what to actually do?"

To answer that, I think we need a less abstract set of values to guide us. My co-authors and I identified six capacities, the development of which seems necessary for flourishing and contributing to the flourishing of others in modern society. The knowledge, skills, habits, and dispositions – what we call the educational goods – that support these capacities are the proximate aims of the education system. I will rehearse the list, which I

think is sufficiently concrete to guide actual practice. (For a fascinating, detailed discussion of the aims of education, see White 2010).

## Economic productivity

In market societies, nearly everyone needs to produce an income; almost everyone must work to contribute to the economy broadly conceived in all cultures. In modern economies, a great deal of work requires knowledge and skills that have to be taught over a prolonged period of time. At a minimum, every child needs a non-trivial level of literacy, numeracy, and communication skills for employment; to flourish in the economy. In addition, they need the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions that enable them to work cooperatively as part of a diverse workforce and continue developing new knowledge and skills and refining existing skills. Participation in the economy – broadly conceived – is something we all need to do, and when the economy is complex, that requires specialized schooling.

## Personal autonomy

In modern, complex, and pluralistic societies, everyone needs to make, and act on, judgments about the long and short term. Laws restrict our options, and social norms both guide and limit us, but we have many choices to make: what career to prepare for, what job to take, whether and if so, whom to marry, whether to have children, and how to raise them if we do, where to live, whether and how to practice a religion. Similarly, we need to learn: how to dress, how to respond to a request, how to prioritize a task, and how to execute a task. Others can advise us, and on the big decisions which have life-altering effects, we'd be foolish not to seek wisdom from those who know and care about us. But ultimately, the choices are ours; and to make them well, we need knowledge about the world, knowledge of ourselves, facility in weighing different considerations and making trade-offs, and decision-making experience. (For a deeper discussion of autonomy, see Raz 1986)

## Democratic competence

In democratic societies, many decisions are made collectively; and all citizens have a place in that collective decision-making process. Democratic input is complicated; it calls on us to represent our interests and give appropriate weight to the interests of our fellow residents, whose lives will be affected and to some degree shaped by the outcomes of the process. To

participate responsibly and well requires specific competencies. On a superficial level: it requires us to be able to make sound judgments about what evidence is relevant to the political decisions at stake, as well as judgments about the goodwill and abilities of politicians who, once they are in power, will not be easily held to account in the short term, and will have to make choices that neither they nor we can confidently foresee. (For more on democratic competence, see Gutman and Thompson 1998; Levinson 2014; Hess and McAvoy 2015)

## Healthy personal relationships

For most of us, personal relationships are the key to our flourishing, such as friendships, partnerships, marriages, and relationships with our parents and children. Also, our relationships with neighbors, co-workers, and even acquaintances contribute to making our lives meaningful and giving them the particular meaning they have. Other things being equal, when our relationships go better, so do our lives, and so do our relationships with other people. One line of thinking is that when it comes to the kinds of characteristics that influence our relationships, parents and families are the primary influence. That may well be right, but they are not the only influence, and, as with other capacities, schools can do things that families usually cannot. Schools can teach students relevant social science. Yet, more importantly, they can open up the imaginative space for a child to explore healthy relationships and provide an escape from the confines of the family home. The benefits are apparent for those in unhealthy or abusive family relationships and are also real for healthy and happy family relationships. (See Layard 2007 and 2011 for discussions of the role of healthy personal relationships in a flourishing life).

## Treating others as equals

Nuclear families are very limited in the amount of exposure they can provide to difference. Even extended families usually have limited diversity, as do the social networks in which children are embedded by virtue of their family members. There's nothing wrong with that. But in pluralistic, multiracial, complex societies, we consistently encounter and must relate to people who are different from those we have encountered at close quarters in our families and communities. Learning that "Everyone should be treated equally regardless of race, creed, color, sexuality, or nationality" is valuable. Yet, treating others equally requires goodwill, knowledge, and practice that is not always easy to pick up in our limited

familial experiences. Education – and schooling in particular – can ensure that students meet people unlike themselves and their families and must learn with, socialize with, work with, and play with them, thus enabling them to move from an abstract commitment to a persistent practice.

## Personal fulfillment

Social wealth makes it possible for everyone to have "spare time," time that need not be committed entirely to paid or domestic work. Healthy personal relationships are at the center of what gives meaning to our lives. Still, other projects and activities have value for us even though they don't contribute to our bank accounts. It might be sport, art, music, acting, gaming, enthusiasm for astronomy, trainspotting, collecting bottle caps, or rewriting song lyrics to comic effect. School can alert us to an expanded range of potential enthusiasms and equip us better to pursue them. The eccentric Economics teacher whose love for Morris Dancing infects a student and thus contributes to broadening the range of enthusiasms; the music teacher who patiently works with a not-very-talented student so that she begins to analyze the shape of Taylor Swift's melodies and notices the most common chord changes in her songs equips her better to pursue her enthusiasm for music. By simply bringing the students together and facilitating safe and good-natured socialization, the school can expand their horizons, allowing them to experience different pursuits and find their passions.

Before moving on to talk about the second category of value, it is worth noting the contingent nature of much of the knowledge, skills, habits, and dispositions that support these capacities. The most obvious examples concern economic productivity and democratic competence, but the general point applies to all six capacities. Exactly what skills are economically productive depends on the prevailing technologies and the demands of the economy. Typesetting went from being a highly valuable (and highly valued) skill to becoming essentially obsolete over the course of little more than a decade in the 1980s and early 90s. Blacksmithing skills were essential before the advent of the motor car; by the middle of the twentieth century, there was little need for them; whereas the ability to drive the motor car was increasingly necessary for wealthy countries. Similarly, each country has a different political history and acquaintanceship, which sits behind responsible participation in politics. Different political systems call for considerably different knowledge and skills: a country with weak parties and winner-take-all elections requires other calculations about candidates and parties than a country with a strict proportional representation system.

The second category of value I want to introduce is distributive. As with any goods, we have reason to ensure that they are produced and be concerned about their distribution. An education system that shaped just a small elite of highly educated people but neglected the majority would be in one (important) way less good than one that ensured everyone or nearly everyone emerged well-educated. Sometimes this category of values is acknowledged through the term "equity," which is best thought of as referring to a species of importance in education rather than as describing a precise goal. I'm just going to distinguish two goals that I believe we have good reason to pursue (within limits that I'll acknowledge).

The first is the equality of educational goods. We have reason to want people to enter adulthood equally well equipped to flourish and contribute. The main reason for this is quite intuitive: many of the things that make our lives go well are unequally distributed, and to some extent, we compete for them; and educational goods are central to the competition. Opportunities to contribute to the flourishing of others are also unequal: those who are better equipped for the labor market are also typically better equipped to contribute—equality of educational goods levels the playing field concerning prospects for flourishing and opportunities to contribute.

Obviously, actually achieving equality of educational goods would require extreme measures, and some of those measures are undesirable: it would probably require us to undermine the family and, at the limit, might require severe neglect of very competent students. This doesn't make it an undesirable goal: it is desirable, and we should pursue it, except insofar as seeking it would undermine other, more important, values.

A second distributive value that relates to but is distinct from equality is prioritizing the less advantaged. What Gina Schouten calls the *Prioritarian Principle of Educational Justice* "insists that educators work to improve the life prospects of those students whose natural differences interact with the external social environment to render them disadvantaged relative to their peers" and "directs teachers to distribute their resources to benefit students disadvantaged on account of these natural differences, where the benefit owed is proportional to the extent of disadvantage" (Schouten, 2012, 477).

The idea is that some inequalities are not just justifiable because eliminating them would, in practice, require undermining values more important than equality but are actively desirable because even the worse-off people are better off than they would be in an equal distribution. A just society would need highly educated nurses, teachers, physicians, therapists, inventors, and technical workers: their education would redound to the benefit of all and, especially to the least advantaged. (For more detailed

discussions of distributive values and education, see Schouten 2012; Brighouse and Swift 2014).

**Questions to consider:**

1.  Do you disagree with, or want to reinterpret, some of the values listed in this section? Why?
2.  What other values can you identify that I have not included? Why do they matter?

# Administration

Let's conceive of administration broadly. How do the philosophical ideas I've articulated in the first half of the chapter help someone trying to decide how to fund a school system? Or whom to hire in which school? Or how to treat them once they have been hired them? More generally, how do they help the decision-maker ensure the effectiveness of a system or a school?

They do that by setting the standards according to which the effectiveness of the system or school is judged, thus, guiding decision-making. Consider, first, funding decisions at the system level. The US Federal Government has no constitutional role in education; decision-making occurs at the State and local levels. But the Federal government can exert influence through the power of the purse: it can offer additional funds to those collected at the local and the State levels, contingent on states complying with specific requirements. States bear the ultimate responsibility for school systems: they decide how much state funding to allocate to which districts, how much communities may raise locally, how much latitude to give districts over spending, and whether to accept Federal funds under the specified conditions. What should guide them in making these decisions? First is the production of educational goods. Suppose the Federal funds carried conditions that would inhibit the development of the capacities I've articulated by, for example, requiring racial segregation in schools: that would count strongly against accepting the funds. Also, though, the distributive values I have identified – equality of educational goods and prioritizing the less advantaged – play an essential role. Suppose, plausibly, some districts were spending more money on students from affluent families than students from low-income families.

Neighborhoods with more affluent families spent more money per student than districts with low-income families. The former would count in favor of conditioning state funding on re-allocating expenditures. The latter would support state-level funding formulae that take the students' affluence

into account. In fact, many states have 'weighted' funding formulae for distributive reasons: For example, Delaware grants districts with 30 percent poverty or greater an additional 78 percent per student on top of the standard per-student amount of state funding; California provides an additional 20 percent for each disadvantaged student, and a further 50 percent per impoverished student for districts with high concentrations of disadvantage; Minnesota, Utah, Ohio, New Jersey, South Dakota, Tennessee, Massachusetts, Indiana, and North Carolina all have increments of 10 percent or more. The UK deploys a labyrinthine central government funding formula and a "pupil premium" that gives schools with low-income students additional money on a per-pupil basis. Schools with high concentrations of disadvantaged students have up to twice as much funding as schools with affluent populations. Of course, these are small amounts relative to the advantage that affluent children have. A system committed to optimally producing equality of educational goods and/or prioritizing the less advantaged would probably have to increase these weights considerably to ensure that more effective teachers and principals are attracted to districts and schools with disadvantaged students than in more affluent environments. (For illuminating discussions of state funding formulae, see Chingos and Blagg 2014. For a detailed discussion of distributive justice and funding, see Brighouse et al., 2019, chapter 5).

Education is unavoidably a high labor-intensive business as far as we can tell. It requires the intensive labor of teachers who constantly interact with students, manage and facilitate constant interaction between students throughout the school day, and spend extended time preparing and planning for each class. Two groups of young people may be similar, but no two groups are the same, and to optimize student learning, teachers must calibrate their plans for their specific students. Leadership and administration are also labor-intensive: effective leaders and administrators must get to know their staff and their students and maintain good relationships with a wide range of people. The labor involved is highly skilled and must be developed and maintained, which, in turn, requires an infrastructure. During their pre-service period, teachers need instruction on the specific skills involved in managing a classroom, adapting curricular materials, and, most importantly, instructing a classroom of students. Yet, in current conditions, teachers are largely left alone to get on with the job once hired. If we wanted them to become excellent teachers, we would ensure that someone regularly observes them, that they watch their colleagues and peers, and that they receive regular and high-quality coaching. Imagine a professional musician without a teacher or a professional athlete without a coach, especially during the first five years of their professional life. She wouldn't survive. Yet

teachers, whose job is not just training for occasional performances but whose job consists of transforming young people into productive, emotionally healthy, democratically competent adults, are left, essentially, to their own devices to figure things out for themselves.

The philosophical ideas inform the initial training, recruitment, and professional development of teachers simply. The aims I have described are, in fact, the purposes of the system, and those aims should inform the infrastructure that frames the teaching profession. *Precisely* what that looks like, I can't tell you in a short couple of paragraphs. But I have some general observations.

First, and most obviously, since the educational system aims are multiple, teachers, especially at the secondary level, enact a division of labor, and their training should reflect that. I'll say more about this when I talk about the curriculum.

Second, it takes time and expertise to train teachers and school managers: both teaching and managing are crafts, and success in either involves getting numerous micro-decisions per hour right, which in turn requires training, observation, reflection, and experience. A successful school is one in which the skills of many individual teachers are effectively harnessed together by skillful managers and leaders who facilitate continuous professional development and instructional improvement. But such improvements cannot occur in a vacuum; they require supporting infrastructure. That infrastructure begins with the recruitment and training of teachers. Think about how nurses and physicians are trained: they spend many hours observing experts practicing their skills, guided by experts, and interacting with their fellow trainees, reflecting on what went well and what didn't. In teacher education, by contrast, students probably spend too much time learning theory and not much time observing truly *expert* practice, practicing skills, and reflecting collectively on their successes and failures. Cooperating teachers in schools are rarely selected through a competitive method that is attentive to their quality, and trainee teachers are seldom observed consistently by a range of experts. Investing in and improving teacher education would be a vital component of a sensible way of running a country.

Third: exactly because teaching involves such a demanding and complex skill set, teachers need a well-designed professional infrastructure to maintain and improve their skills. Many public-school teachers deny that there is waste in the public school system in the US, but if you ask them what they did on their last professional development day, the chances that they will tell you it was well spent are very low. Skilled professionals learn and improve by observing others who do things well, getting meaningful

feedback on their own practice, and reflecting on that feedback. The very idea of a "professional development day" is probably a mistake: professional development needs to be embedded in the daily and weekly practice of the profession in the form of coaching, teamwork, and routine mutual observations. Good teaching needs to be identified and supported. And the culture of the school faculty needs to be infused with collaborative thinking about teaching and learning. Judith Warren Little expresses the thought as follows:

> School improvement is most surely and thoroughly achieved when: Teachers engage in frequent, continuous and increasingly concrete and precise talk about teaching practice (as distinct from teacher characteristics and failings, the social lives of teachers, the foibles and failures of students and their families, and the unfortunate demands of society on the school). By such talk, teachers build up a shared language adequate to the complexity of teaching, capable of distinguishing one practice and its virtue from another (Little, 1981, 12-13).

If this sounds abstract, think of it this way. Remember the conversations you have heard between the best informed and most enthusiastic football, soccer, basketball, or cricket fans you know; envision the forensic level of detail they use in talking about a specific play, goal, assist, or bowling spell. Teachers need that sort of talk, with that level of forensic detail, but about strategies for teaching specific skills to specific students would infuse the school.

**Questions to consider:**

1. Given the distributive values you think we have reason to care about, what reforms would you like to see to the funding formula in your State?
2. If your district provided an additional two days of salary per teacher per year to support professional development, what professional development activities would you want to see?

# Curriculum

There's an old saying that "Elementary teachers love their students, and secondary teachers love their subjects." And so they should. However, the reference to "their subjects" suggests a way of thinking about the curriculum that the idea of educational goods challenges. The ultimate point of

education is not to promote and continue particular subject matters but to equip students with the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and attitudes they will need for the six capacities I have described. There are excellent logistical and organizational reasons for dividing the curriculum into disciplines and fostering a somewhat specialized division of labor. Those disciplines and what gets taught within them should be guided by thinking well about what students need to develop those capacities.

This doesn't mean that something like the division into traditional disciplines is illegitimate. Yet, it claims that a discipline or some topic within a discipline needs to be scrutinized in the light of the capacities we have reason to want our students to develop.

Consider an obvious example. Students in American schools are typically required to learn Mathematics throughout elementary, middle, and high school. The pinnacle of the K-12 mathematics curriculum is calculus, and from about $6^{th}$ grade, the curriculum aims for that goal. Calculus is essential if you plan to become a mathematician, a scientist, or an engineer, and many of the preparatory steps have value even if that is not one's goal. Consider one of the demands of competent democratic citizenship in modern societies that need the ability to critically evaluate claims and counterclaims about social phenomena and policies that could bring about improvements. To make responsible assessments of those claims and counterclaims requires some acquaintance with the principles of statistics and some understanding of methods in social science. Yet, statistics courses are typically an elective in American high schools, and it treated as an "easy" alternative to "more serious" mathematics.

Consider also the way social studies is taught in high school. Typically, a one-year course in World History covers, well, world history, and a one-year course in US History covers US History (starting before the birth of the US and ending sometime in the late twentieth or early twenty-first century). In the best case, most students come away with a vague sense of the past two millennia in the world, the past three centuries in the US, and some knowledge of specific highlights. But those curricula are unlikely to yield even the beginnings of an understanding of how the US evolved into the world's only superpower, that this situation is almost certainly quite temporary. What happens when emerging superpowers challenge existing superpowers – that is, the kind of knowledge that would help students gain the understanding that we need, creating a substantial slice of the population who can engage responsibly in world politics over the coming half-century. My own high school history teachers would have scoffed at the idea that the current understanding of politics was the purpose of learning history. They thought the point was to invest us with a lifelong love of and enthusiasm for

understanding the past. In other words, their pedagogy was driven by a concern with developing the capacity for the fulfillment, not the capacity for democratic citizenship. I have some sympathy with their view, not least because, with me, they succeeded in their aim. But that passion is more likely to be served by detailed, focused attention on specific historical events than by bland surveys.

Someone might, reasonably, say, "We should teach statistics *and* calculus," and "We should give detailed attention to specific historical events *and* teach surveys." They may well be right; my point here is not to decide what the curriculum should be but to illuminate the significance of the values I've articulated for curriculum choice. If we teach statistics and calculus, and if we teach events and surveys, in both cases, there is something else that we will *not* teach. With limited time and resources at our disposal, we need to set priorities, and those priorities must be guided by judgments about what serves the development of the capacities.

If I sound overly critical of the current priorities, I want to add that I think remarkable progress has been made in the US over the past few decades. In the late-1980s and early 1990s, many states began taking seriously the idea that common standards might improve the quality of schools and that establishing common standards required system-wide thought into curricular matters. This led to many states adopting state-wide curricular standards, inevitably prompting debate both within and beyond the teaching profession about what standards should be adopted and why. My colleague Kailey Mullane and I were commissioned in 2017 to audit the California State Standards, with the specific responsibility of establishing what the aims were behind the curriculum. Through analysis of The Quality School Framework, the particular rationale statements provided for each of the 11 subject standards, and scrutiny of the standards themselves, we discerned that the basic philosophical framework underpinning the State's curricular choices almost mirrored the framework I've articulated above: driven by a concern with students' prospects for flourishing and contributing to the flourishing of others, through developing the six capacities I've outlined. It probably won't surprise any readers that the documents reveal a concern with economic productivity, and I don't want to bog the reader down with extensive quotes concerning each capacity. Still, the following part of our discussion concerning healthy emotional relationships is illustrative:

> The ELA standards expect students to learn "to discern a speaker's key points, request clarification, and ask relevant questions… build on others' ideas, articulate their own ideas, and confirm they have been understood" and "become engaged