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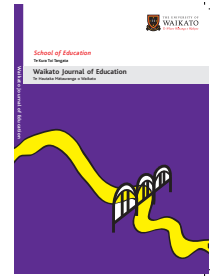
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## The collapse of the broad curriculum: The collapse of democracy

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### Abstract

*The impact of the implementation of National Standards and the continuing focus on the functional aspects of literacy and numeracy in the New Zealand curriculum can be viewed as part of a global neoliberal reform agenda that deliberately constricts and narrows curriculum and pedagogy. Building on a review of the impacts on curriculum by national assessment agendas in other countries, this article considers the impacts on curriculum depth and breadth by the introduction of National Standards in New Zealand. It considers the likely impacts in particular on arts and critical pedagogies, and the implications of these changes on progressive notions of the role of education and democratic citizenship. The article concludes that there is growing empirical evidence that what and how children are taught in New Zealand has narrowed as a result of the implementation of National Standards.*

### Keywords

National standards; democracy; narrowing; citizenship; arts

### Introduction

Recently we were working with a group of Year 9 students in the Waikato. We began by using the sophisticated picture book *Home and Away* (2013) by John Marsden and Mark Ottley. As an opening task, Peter asked the students to write down all the words they could think of about the word 'refugee'. The words tumbled on to the large A3 piece of paper: *terror, terrorist, Osama Bin Laden, threat, Muslim, Donald Trump*.

How had we come to this, we wondered? How had the plight of over a billion displaced people been subsumed into understanding refugees as a threat? How had these bright young people bought into a narrative that so readily and easily dehumanised suffering? Where was the beginning of any criticality? We wondered where the students might find opportunities to develop this within their schooling. Where might there be time to think about, to consider, to challenge, to wonder about the world today when we might argue education is so focused on preparation for future work? We asked, and mean no criticism of these young people, about the kind of education system where students know so little of the world they live in, an education system which Henry Giroux suggests is geared to create



useful consumers, not critical citizens (Giroux, 2013). It would be too simplistic to draw a causal relationship between the astonishing response of these young people and recent government reforms. Yet the students' response might speak to one of the consequences of what has happened. Students were able to decode the word refugee, had a functional, although we would argue, incorrect articulation of its meaning, but lacked any critical reflection on its significance.

We begin here by arguing that international research suggests many concerns about the imposition of national testing regimes including creating students that are short on Socratic/critical thinking and/or the democratic/empathetic competencies and reasoning necessary for robust citizenship (Nussbaum, 2006, 2010; O'Connor, 2013). We then consider the impacts on curriculum depth and breadth of the introduction of National Standards in New Zealand. We consider the likely impacts, in particular on arts and critical pedagogies, and the implications of these changes on progressive notions of the role of education and democratic citizenship. We conclude that the introduction of National Standards, as part of a neoliberal agenda for the reform of New Zealand schooling, has narrowed and limited the possibilities for education that leads to participatory democracy.

### **International concerns about the impact of national tests and standards**

International research shows that the introduction of various forms of national standards and standardised assessment tests has had harmful effects in many countries. These include inter-related changes to the nature of teaching, the delimiting of student learning, the diminishing prioritisation of contextual and deep knowledge and, for our purposes here, the narrowing of the curricula and the narrowing of focus within subject areas themselves.

Standardised tests narrow the entire curriculum in many schools, often squeezing out subjects such as music, art, foreign languages and, especially in elementary grades, social studies because they are not included in tests. For ELA teachers (English and Language Arts), these tests also lead to subject-specific narrowing. ELA teachers are required to focus their instruction on the literacy skills measured on standardised tests. Since reading is more prominent than writing in most tests, teachers spend more time on reading rather than writing, usually focusing on comprehension, not higher-order critical reading skills. Even when English language arts teachers deliberately teach beyond the test-based curriculum, important aspects of writing, such as revision, do not get attention, so students read a narrow range of texts and have limited opportunity to learn strategies for and the value of revising, rather than just proofreading, their writing (Squire 2015, p. 1). (Literature from the United States of America (US/A), the United Kingdom (UK), especially England, and Australia discusses the narrowing of the curricula and its negative effects in these countries (e.g., Au, 2007; Alexander, 2010; Lingard, Thompson, & Sellar, 2016). It highlights the prioritisation of core (regularly assessed) subjects, such as reading, mathematics and science, at the expense of non-core subjects and creativity within schools.

Au's (2007) synthesis of 49 US studies found a strong correlation between high stakes testing and narrowing of curriculum content to best fit tested subject areas, the fragmentation of subject area knowledge and increases of teacher-centred pedagogies. A secondary, but significantly minor effect, of high stakes testing was that certain types of high-stakes testing have led to the contraction of curricular content, the integration of knowledge, expansion and more student-centred, cooperative pedagogies. Robelen (2011) investigated the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act on the curriculum, surveying 1,001 public school teachers. Results showed that about two-thirds of respondents reported that subjects such as art, science, and social studies were getting crowded out of the school day. The National Board on Educational Testing and Public Policy (2003) argued that the introduction of accountability testing in schools in the United States had resulted in a significant increase in time spent on tested segments at the expense of non-tested curriculum content, whilst other subjects are getting pushed out of the classroom. Jerald (2006) also expressed concern at the hidden

costs of curriculum narrowing, teaching to the test, and the dramatically reduced instructional time for social studies, the arts and science in the US context.

In the UK the Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander, 2010) has argued that the British government's agenda that combined high stakes testing and national strategies for narrowing of educational focus upon numeracy and literacy has been at the expense of the arts, humanities and science in primary education. Australia's version of high stakes assessment, the National Assessment Programme: Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), introduced in 2008, has had many similar effects (Lingard et al., 2016).

Given the increasing credentialisation and accountability related to state/national assessments, there is increasing pressure to not teach curriculum content but rather teach test-taking skills. This is especially the case in low socio-economic (SES) contexts. King and Zucker (2005) argued that US teachers, particularly in lower SES schools, regularly allocated more time to core subject assessments and their accountabilities rather than deeper knowledge. They often relegated other subjects of the curricula such as social studies, physical education, foreign languages and the arts. They state,

Teachers exclude from their lesson plans the material that is not tested in an attempt to maximize the learning opportunity for students on the content of the test. This change is seen as a nearly unavoidable reaction to the pressure on teachers from district and state educational leaders to raise test scores. (King & Zucker, 2005, p. 5)

Hirsch (2006) reviewed US studies showing that curriculum narrowing is more common in low SES, high minority schools, than in high SES mainly white middle class schools. This narrowing of focus ostensibly denies opportunities for low SES students to gain 'background knowledge' in the only forum to which they may have access.

Another international concern is that the focuses/concerns of education has shifted from *knowledges* or content taught in schools to competencies, learning outcomes, high-stakes testing, performance and accountability brought on by the introduction of national standards systems which essentially test only skills. Priestley and Sinnema (2014) propose that the new curricula models are technical and instrumentalist in purpose and tend to downgrade knowledge.

While there is an understandable variation between subject areas, a number of educators and scholars are concerned that 'teaching to national assessments' delimits deeper knowledge inculcation (and Socratic abilities) for students in favour of learning sets of prescribed facts. Ormond (2016) argues that there is the potential for substantive historical knowledge to be downplayed in favour of procedural knowledge and the potential for assessment drivers to dominate or distort selection of knowledge for history. Local curriculum making places a heavy burden of responsibility upon teachers with implications for students' access to powerful historical knowledge.

The final report of the Cambridge Primary Review concluded that the "most conspicuous casualties are the arts, humanities, and those kinds of learning in all subjects which require time for talking, problem-solving, and the extended exploration of ideas; memorisation has come to be valued over understanding and inquiry, and transmission of information over the pursuit of knowledge in its fuller sense" (Alexander, 2010, p. 493).

## Arts education and democracy

John Dewey (1937) understood the intricate (and now fragile) relationship between the arts and democracy. He saw that an arts making approach led to children believing in the possibilities of the social imagination. Central to the possibilities of a truly participatory form of citizenship is the recognition that the world is not static, that it can be reimagined.

Martha Nussbaum (2010) recognises that the increasingly precarious place of the arts in education in Western schooling poses a direct threat to democracy. She argues the insatiable drive for increased

trans-national profit is at the expense of every other indicator of human value and worth; creating people who are less than fully human:

If this trend continues, nations all over the world will soon be producing generations of useful machines, rather than complete citizens who can think for themselves, criticize tradition, and understand the significance of another person's sufferings and achievements. The future of the world's democracies hangs in the balance. (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 2)

Nussbaum further argues that alongside the loss of the arts, it is clear that curriculum content has shifted away from material that focuses on engaging and firing the imagination and instead training the critical faculties towards material that is directly relevant to test preparation.

The critical, democratic aspects of Arts Education are inherently and inevitably bound up with the aesthetic. Maxine Greene (1977) suggests a truly democratic society requires people who are fully conscious, awake in the world, and she argues it is Arts making which brings the individual into awaken-ness; "aesthetic experiences provide a ground for the questioning that launches sense making and the understanding of what it is to exist in a world" (p. 120). Wide-awake citizens are critically informed and they see their roles as actors on, and with, the world rather than as spectators. Similarly, Nussbaum (2010) argues the moral imperatives sitting beneath a democratic society are based on the creation of empathetic citizens. She attests this role for education—perhaps one of its most and important roles—has been systematically ignored, and severely repressed, by standard models of education.

Elliott Eisner (2002) reminds us what is missing from a curriculum: "the options students are not afforded, the perspectives they may never know about, much less be able to use. The concepts and skills that are not part of their intellectual repertoire are part of the null curriculum" (p, 107). Like the formal curriculum, the null curriculum does not occur accidentally but is constructed by policy makers, teacher training institutions, schools and ultimately individual classroom teachers. The death of the arts in schools and its attendant issues for democracy is therefore a result of deliberate government policy, and springs largely from the imposition of national testing or core literacy and numeracy skills.

We would argue that the diminution of the arts is occurring because they are a potent force of resistance to neo-liberal visions for education on a number of levels. As schools reinstate the highly rationalised, Fordist factory like conditions on schools, the arts through their vibrancy, colour, noise, and joyful living manage to disrupt and challenge the ordered uniformity of schooling. The beauty created through the arts in schools is a reminder of the possibility for beauty in our lives and worlds.

The arts challenge the functional and linear nature of neo-liberal approaches by trafficking in subtleties (Eisner, 2002). By working actively with ambiguity, and in the non-linear forms of learning that characterises the arts, young people reimagine the world as a place where they might be makers rather than consumers. The arts deliberately deconstruct the notion that learning can be the accretion of discrete skills predetermined by measurable learning intentions. It instead constructs learning as a process in which surprises and unpredictable outcomes are both possible and desirable.

Radical dehumanising philosophies appeal increasingly to the young and the vulnerable. The inability of nation states to recognise the genuine desire of many to challenge the hegemony of the hyper-capitalist system can be understood to be the price we might pay for a global education system that fails to develop critical and imaginative thinking skills. The arts provide an opportunity for young people to think critically about what the world is and to develop the ability to imagine alternatives. This criticality is supported by the capacity of the arts to foster empathetic responses as they allow us to imagine the challenges and decisions faced by someone other than ourselves.

Democracy is sustained inevitably by critical hope. Critical hope is but a leap of the imagination, to see the possibilities of the world, to see the world not just different but better than it is. It is hope that

denies the trickle-down economics that has benefitted the very few at the expense of millions. The arts, if viewed as the agent by which we engage young people in reimagining the world, are a vital response to the anti-democratic and life threatening excesses of global capital.

While arts based subjects are still available in many schools, colleges and universities, the national and therefore individual habitus contains a ‘logic’ that legitimates employment and careers focused learning rather than subjects such as drama, history, philosophy, sociology, music, fine arts etc. (President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, 2011, 2013).

Nussbaum (2006) states,

Through the imagination we are able to have a kind of insight into the experience of another group or person that it is very difficult to attain in daily life—particularly when our world has constructed sharp separations between groups, and suspicions that make any encounter difficult. So we need to cultivate our students’ ‘inner eyes’, and this means carefully crafted courses in the arts and humanities, which bring students into contact with issues of gender, race, ethnicity, and cross-cultural experience and understanding. This artistic instruction can and should be linked to the ‘citizen of the world’ instruction, since works of art are frequently an invaluable way of beginning to understand the achievements and sufferings of a culture different from one’s own. (p. 8)

The increasingly rationalised/narrowed curriculum is to some degree propagated by underpreparing or deskilling those who are taught to teach arts subjects. Lowe and Lummis, (2013) outline the *Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority’s* (ACARA) push for generalist teachers to teach music in primary schools and considers music’s place in an increasingly crowded curriculum. The impact of NAPLAN testing and the APPA push for ‘core’ subjects (English, maths, science and history) has decimated Music teaching in public education in Australia. Simultaneously, an increasing proportion of Australian generalist primary teaching applicants are arriving at university with little or no prior formal music experiences. Similarly to the Australian example, UK literature suggests there is now a growing gap between music education and (a standardised) music curriculum, an undertrained music teaching population. In another Australian study (Lowe & Lummis, 2013), feedback from 19 Arts discipline primary teachers showed that they were working within what they described as a ‘crowded curriculum’ and lacked competencies in specialist knowledge in many arts areas, such as music.

## Neoliberal education in New Zealand

In essence, reforms in New Zealand have seen children inculcated with, and shaped by, the neoliberal agenda in and outside of the education system (Seddon, 2001). This is in no small part a result of the rolling out of neoliberal policies, practices and ideologies, within each nation-state (Sahlberg, 2004; Harvey, 2009). This has manifested within a globalised education market in the form of curriculum and pedagogical reforms, regulation of assessments, a shift from liberal era ‘holistic education’ that embraced creativity, critical thinking, knowledge, to the introduction of agendas of competition and accountability with concentration on fundamental skills such as numeracy, literacy and IT skills. This leads to reproducing the structures and thinking that masquerades as some legitimate social stratification/social class positions (Bourdieu, 1996; Bourdieu et al., 1999).

In ascribing these reforms as part of a neoliberal agenda, we acknowledge as Brownlee and Freebody (2015) argue it is possible the term ‘neoliberalism’ is becoming overused in contemporary critical discourse. As he suggests, “it is certainly a charged descriptor, widely used by the (many) critics and opponents of the set of arrangements it describes, but rarely if ever by ‘neoliberals’ themselves” (2015, p. 3). Neoliberal reforms were introduced in New Zealand in 1984 and, according to Rashbrooke, successive governments have used these to radically transform the country, “profoundly



altering not only the economy but the social fabric (2013, p. 27)". Rashbrooke suggests that in the two decades since the introduction of neoliberalism in New Zealand, "the gap between those at the top and the bottom of the income ladder in New Zealand opened up more rapidly than in any other comparable society" (Rashbrooke, 2013, p. 27).

The driving imperative of neoliberalism is to transfer power from the State to private capital and create profitable new markets in public services, including those catering for the basic necessities of life. This privatisation is "fuelled by transnational corporate greed that not does not pretend to put people ahead of profits and is rationalised by an ideology that shows contempt for the carnage that it leaves in its wake" (Kelsey, 2008). The evidence suggests that the reform of New Zealand's Keynesian-welfarist institutions was faster and more extreme than elsewhere, including other 'liberal welfare states' like Australia or Britain (Ramia & Wailes, 2006). Although Brownlee and Freebody (2015) warns against an over-reliance on blaming neoliberalism for all the evils of the twenty-first century, understanding New Zealand's unique experience of neoliberalism is vital to understanding the political dynamics of education reforms over the past eight years.

One area that the neoliberal reforms had not taken complete hold of when the National-led Government came in to power in 2009, despite the introduction of *Tomorrow's Schools*, which set up all the possibilities for such reform, was education. Education still retains national unions that advocate for its members; it retains state regulations in large parts to ensure equity and social outcomes. The compulsory schooling sector still has limited if increasing private sector engagement, although early childhood and tertiary are much more privatised. Further privatisation of the school sector has often been sought by the National-led Government. For instance, the desire for the destruction of teacher unionism through a deregulation and privatisation agenda is clearly spelt out in Step Change (Roy, Parata, & Flavell, 2010, see also Courtney, this issue).

## National Standards

National Standards are the cornerstone of the education reform agenda of the National government over the past eight years. They have served as the springboard for the release of public data at primary level. They continue the policy established under *Tomorrow's Schools* where schools are seen as competing business units. Most importantly they have been instrumental in narrowing and constraining both curriculum and pedagogy to create a particular kind of citizen for a neoliberal world.

The introduction of National Standards in New Zealand primary and intermediate schools had its genesis in the National Standards policy launched by the National Party on 2 April 2007. Central to the expected deliverables for school authorities included clear National Standards in reading, writing and numeracy assessments defined by a range of effective and achievable 'benchmark' tests aggregated by year and stage; that results of all assessments should be comparable between students within classes and students across New Zealand; that reporting of assessment results (and their criteria) was transparent and understandable to parents and caregivers (Lee & Lee, 2015).

The National Standards came in to effect in 2010. The stated purpose of the policy was to provide teachers, students and parents a clear direction for teaching and learning within *The New Zealand Curriculum* for English-medium schools and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa, the curriculum for Māori-medium schools and settings. Further, the National Standards provides a clear framework of assessment/achievement and progress for New Zealand school children from Years 1–8. The official line was that while the Standards support national expectations of student progress and what students should know across all areas of *The New Zealand Curriculum*, they also provide broad outlines and exemplars in the areas of reading, writing and mathematics at different points of their schooling, these three areas being foundational for successful educational outcomes across the whole curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2016).

It was argued that students' successful academic engagement at school and their mastering of skills and knowledges are in part a result of teachers' understanding the expected levels of achievement at stage/year-appropriate levels, how to measure the achievement of each student in relation to those expectations, and to improve teaching and learning for better student learning and progress in all areas of the curriculum. Somewhat reluctantly and haphazardly there was a national roll out of professional development for teachers, even as the Standards were being rolled out (Lee & Lee 2015).

The introduction of National Standards was the first salvo in what there has been a concerted attempt by the National Government to radically alter the public education landscape. The rhetoric of these changes has been grounded in the oft repeated claim by the government they are motivated by a desire to make a difference in the achievement of underperforming students especially in literacy and numeracy (National Party, 2014).

The development of National Standards is only one tool used to create a locally competitive nation of consumers with transferable skills for a globalised economy. This has been made possible by the emphasis within curricula on gaining the 'market preparation skills' of literacy and numeracy. The rationalisation of these skills is assured through standardised assessment criteria/testing in Australia, New Zealand and the United States (Berlak & Berlak, 2012; Ditchburn, 2012, 2012b; Keddie, 2016; Ritzer, 2013; Vickers, 2013).

### **Narrowed curriculum in New Zealand**

Mary Chamberlain, the Ministry of Education official charged with the implementation of national standards, attempted to head off the charge that they (national standards) would engender a focus on testing and therefore narrow the curriculum, as had occurred internationally:

New Zealand has taken a different approach to the rest of the world. We have used our national curriculum to determine the standard of achievement that needs to be reached at the end of each year. Other countries' approach to standards has been to set them in relation to how students have actually performed on National tests. This approach could lead to narrowing the curriculum, and mediocre outcomes. Our approach has been bolder, to look to the future, and to determine what our students need to know in order for them to succeed. It's not just about where we are today but where we can be in the future. (Chamberlain, 2010)

Such hopes, or public relations spin, however, seems to have given way to what Thrupp and White have suggested is an awareness of

... damage being done through the intensification of staff workloads, curriculum narrowing and the reinforcement of a two tier curriculum, the positioning and labelling of children and unproductive new tensions amongst school staff. These problems are often occurring despite attempts by schools and teachers to minimise any damaging impact of the National Standards. (Thrupp & White, 2013, p. i)

Although there has been no research on the extent or scale of the narrowing of curriculum in any measurable sense, teacher and principal perceptions of such narrowing are clear. The 2016 NZCER National survey of primary and intermediate schools found that

over two-thirds of teachers reported a narrowing of the curriculum they teach, associated with National Standards; 32% of principals reported that National Standards drives what the school does; and 40% indicated the focus on literacy and mathematics has taken their attention away from other aspects of The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC), which schools started to work with in draft form in 2007. (Bonne, 2016, p. 1)



The imposition of National Standards has driven teacher behaviour, which it was always designed to do. The pressure on schools to perform well in publicly released data on National Standards has locked “them into a form of indentured practice in which their function is to contribute directly to enable the government to meet its larger education priorities” (O’Neill, 2005, p. 123).

### **The loss of the arts in New Zealand schools**

There has not been any detailed research undertaken into the state of the arts in primary schools since the implementation of the Standards. We argue if there has been a narrowing curriculum then it is most likely to impact on the arts the hardest. The 2015 National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement reports only half of children in their final year of primary or intermediate school were achieving at the expected level of the curriculum in music and drama, while the figures for dance and visual arts were 68 and 66 percent respectively (National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement, 2015).

There are other indicators of how the arts are increasingly missing from New Zealand schools. First, Education Ministry figures showed that the number of secondary school enrolments in arts subjects has fallen by a quarter from 201,432 in 2005 to 163,915 in 2015, even though the number of school students had risen in that time. Association of Arts Educators chairperson Lee Devenish said New Zealand had one of the best arts education systems in the world, but it was at risk of becoming a marginal part of the curriculum with few students choosing to study it at secondary school (Gerritsen, 2017). Second, the arts (as a subject), which have traditionally held a significant profile in teacher training and teacher practice in New Zealand, have become increasingly marginalised in teacher pre-service training education programmes and fights for space in the increasingly busy school curricula (Cody, 2013; Luton, 2014). National Standards policies are directly impacting on the quantity and quality of pre service training in all subjects besides literacy and numeracy. For example, at the University of Auckland, preservice provision in the arts has been decimated. A thriving music department that once housed 12 staff is reduced to two lecturers who deliver ever decreasing hours of music education to students. With no arts advisory support in the country, even if you wanted to teach the arts, new teachers have little or no knowledge or training to be able to do so.

Given that National Standards’ expectations do not take context into account, low SES schools that have traditionally performed poorly in the ‘key areas’ are especially compelled to spend more teaching and curricula resources in the attempt to raise National Standards performance levels. The Research, Analysis and Insight into National Standards (RAINS) project illustrates how this has created a two tiered education system (Thrupp & White, 2013) with a richer curriculum more feasible at middle class schools than in low SES contexts. They report recent arts graduates at Cicada School, one of their low SES case study schools, talking about how they had no time to fit the arts into their programme. The author has also previously argued that the narrowing of the curriculum and the declining presence of arts in the New Zealand curriculum is felt more by low SES students than middle class students (O’Connor, 2016)

Children from wealthier families get the arts in abundance in after school classes and attendance at Eurocentric arts events (O’Connor, 2016, p. 2). The National Monitoring of Student Achievement report on the arts in schools (REF) noted in 2015 that “school decile was strongly associated with student achievement on the Nature of the Arts (NoTA) scale at both Year 4 and Year 8. Students from low decile schools (deciles 1, 2 and 3) scored lower, on average, than those who attended high decile schools (deciles 8, 9 and 10) by about 16–17 NoTA units”.

## Conclusion

Working in and through the drama in Waikato with the group of children, we explored the fictional story of a family who face the invasion of their country, sell everything they had and by boat travel to a new world where the children are placed in prison-like detention centres. Although they had written many words about refugees on the paper, we asked the students when they thought this story might have happened. They thought it must have been after the Second World War. There was no sense that refugees of today faced these same issues. There was a superficial reckoning that they were people who were dangerous and a threat. The work we did with them over two days was about helping them, through the arts, to notice what is happening in the world around them. Finding spaces for this sort of work is diminished by the ongoing impacts of National Standards. We wonder if the killing off of critical hope, of Maxine Greene's (1977) idea of an 'awakeness' to the world, is the collateral damage of the implementation of National Standards. Our time working with these students seemed for us to be a chilling reminder that the narrowing of curriculum means we risk creating children who can answer questions but not ask them. The loss of critical citizenship as an indirect consequence to the education reforms of the past nine years is a real threat to democracy.

In this article we have argued that the rolling out of the national testing regimes has had multiple negative effects upon the education systems of many western countries—and the curricula, pedagogy, teachers and students within. Further, the pseudo-commodification of education systems has led to a two tier social class based/cultural streaming of what subjects can/should be taught, what can be learned and the development of Socratic/critical thinking for some students only. The changes to curriculum depth and breadth by the introduction of standardised testing and national standards have the potential to pit school against school, introducing a public education system that (should potentially) sit outside of competition, commodification and privatisation.

While empirical evidence of the effects of National Standards on the curriculum is limited, there is no evidence to suggest that the choice of National Standards over national testing has avoided the collapse of a broad curriculum. There is some growing evidence of the negative impacts on teacher behaviour and classrooms that narrows and constricts what is taught and learned. We should worry about the anti-democratic impulses of the shifts in education policies that jeopardises the place of the arts and its particular relationship to the creation of democratic critical citizens.

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