

Controversial issues - Topic 3: Controversial issues in the curriculum

Controversial issues in the curriculum – Where and what?

The curriculum can often be a source of controversy in a school. Some school subjects are more associated with controversy than others. Here are some examples to look out for.

- **History** – conflicting versions of your country’s history
- **Religious education** – conflicting views on morality and religious truth
- **Health education** – conflicting attitudes towards sexuality and moral behavior
- **Civic and social education** – conflicting political programs and ideologies
- **Literature** – conflicting views on moral and social attitudes expressed in fiction
- **Science** – conflicting views on the application of science, and the clash with religion.

As principal it is important to be aware that people in your school community might disagree strongly with the way your school is handling some of these issues, e.g., with the version of history taught in History lessons, or the use of a particular book in Literature.

In many cases the curriculum is mandatory and you have no power to alter it. Thus, where there is a concern about a disagreement getting out of hand, you may need to address the situation by making a **public statement** to allay fears about the way your school is handling the issue in question.

In the longer term, however, the best strategy is to ensure that your teaching staff are aware of the potential for controversy in the subjects they teach, and that they have the **skills** required to deescalate controversial issues safely.

