

SUMMARY

Changes to the Teaching of History in New South Wales: The Impact of the National Curriculum

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This paper attempts to examine changes to history education in the state of New South Wales, with a focus on the impacts of the national curriculum on the subject history (Australian Curriculum: History). The purpose of this study is to determine what sort of history education is required for public school education, especially during the various stages of secondary school, and is in response to the establishment of the first national curriculum in Australia's history. First, the study traces the social and educational backgrounds of the development of the national curriculum. Second, to clarify the changes, the present research compares the differences between the new and old history syllabus of New South Wales. Third, the findings are investigated looking at two categories: 'content' and 'competency', also known as 'knowledge' and 'skills', respectively. The evidence shows that, in terms of content, the relationship between the modern world and Australia in the context of global history is emphasized in the new syllabus. In contrast, the old syllabus required students to conduct site studies. These included examinations of historically and culturally significant locations, which could include the students' school and its surroundings or a visit to a local archaeological site, museum, or monument. This new trend shows a tendency to focus on macro perspectives; that is, global perspectives rather than investigating micro factors (e.g., local area research). As for competency, the new syllabus maintains an inquiry-based approach as its fundamental method for history education, which has been used for many decades in New South Wales. However, the new syllabus introduced historical thinking concepts to enhance students' competency skills. These ideas have been developed and modelled by North American researchers in recent decades. This systematically reinforces inquiry-based investigations. In short, the national curriculum attempts to enforce the teaching of more Australian history from a perspective of global history. It also teaches competencies that students should earn as historical concepts and skills. These changes, however, may act to narrow history education within a diverse Australian society. Furthermore, teaching planning and technical skills can be structured around a standard routine, and ideas and processes not targeted by curriculum requirements may be excluded.