Where HASS thou gone
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EDITORIAL

Where HASS Thou Gone?

Dr Julie Rimes FACE, FACEL, FAICO Editor

“The object of Art is to give life a shape”
William Shakespeare.

In this edition of Professional Educator, we explore the purpose and role of HASS in a future-focused, highly competitive, fast-paced, individualised and student-centric education system.

Where would we be without the arts? More specifically, where would we be as educators without the humanities, arts and social sciences? As educators, we are all too aware of the pressures of what we define as an ‘over crowded’ curriculum. The rise of a national (and one could argue global) focus on the sciences, technology, engineering and maths creates an interesting and perhaps somewhat controversial debate regarding the place and role of HASS in a future-focused, highly competitive, fast-paced, individualised and student-centric education system.

Does or should HASS hold the same status as ‘higher profile’ subjects such as maths, science and technology? With a future that includes the everyday use of artificial intelligence, greater space exploration even the possibility of the establishment of the ‘first’ space colony, advances in medical and health care treatments that at present can’t even be fathomed, what role will HASS play not only in education but more broadly in society?

Dr Loretta Dolan commences this edition by providing readers with an excellent overview of the current Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) Learning Area of the Australian Curriculum. Her article clearly defines the various subjects and learning areas contained within HASS, and establishes a clear platform from which this edition will discuss the issues and complexities related to seeking answers to the questions: Where HASS Thou Gone?

Does terminology actually matter when addressing the need for the Australian Curriculum to prepare the learners of today to be not only successful in school and for further education, but for the ever-changing world of work? Eileen McIlvenny and Rachel Sheffield’s article, Are Transversal Competencies the ‘New Black’? argues that competencies, whether termed 21st skills, soft skills or as the authors prefer, transversal competencies (TVCs) are already present in the Australian curriculum but, the authors argue, there is a growing need for these TVCs to be given the necessary attention at a school and systemic level that ensures we are able to appropriately assess and capture rich evidence of students’ acquisition of these competencies.

“The first consideration that strikes one in reviewing the work of a school is whether the work performed in that school is mere instruction or real education, because between the two there is all the difference in the world.” – Edmund Barton. Brett Henebery’s article, Why quality education can mean a healthy democracy, opens this edition with a fascinating exploration of the decline in Australians satisfaction with our country’s democracy. Brett investigates a similar decline in the United States and explores what options are being pursued to attempt to refocus curriculum on civics education. How does this translate to the Australian experience and how can general capabilities, particularly those taught through subjects outside of the STEM area have an impact on ensuring students become the engaged, informed, active and discerning citizens our country needs.

Professor Murray Rent in his article, STEM, HASS and the Australian Curriculum: The case for active, informed and critical citizens, argues that rather than a debate, there is currently an ongoing conversation between STEM and HASS, which is yet to be concluded. The attention and resources currently being channelled into elevating students’ engagement in STEM has yet, he argues, to result in either a significant increase in the percentage of students taking STEM subjects at an advanced level and/or a consequent decline in the percentage of students taking HASS subjects. However, he goes on to offer that it will actually be HASS learning opportunities, beyond simply History and Geography, that will ultimately offer learners the best avenues for well-rounded learning experiences that go towards achieving the goals that Australia has identified, in the Melbourne Declaration, as being of greatest significance.

Georgia Laurence-Dugay’s focus is on the complexities of teaching history in her article Teaching History – HOW? She investigates various schools of thought that have gained prominence and how these have increasingly influenced the evolution of teaching history to contemporary learners. She goes further to discuss how the use of various pedagogies, that may be viewed as non-traditional within the subject of history, are challenging educators in seeking to broaden the impact, role, relevance and value of history and how it influenced the socio-political environments of the 21st century.

What is at the ‘soul’ of HASS? Ryan Smith, Lecturer at James Cook University in Townsville argues that HASS’ ‘soul lies in its ability to critically investigate difficult ideas in the pursuit of ethical futures’. Drawing from his work in geography and place-naming, Smith argues that it is the role of ‘HASS’ to provide students with the opportunity to question the seemingly inconsequential and often time ‘normalised and narrow’ visions of what history ought to be.

Samantha O’neil’s highlights the historical (pun intended) path that has been taken in Australia and in other parts of the Western world that has led us to the current challenges facing the teaching of history. Her article addresses the confronting issue of genocide/massacres and the complex interplay of the disciplinary and post-modern approaches to history. Samantha also offers a thought-provoking discussion on the collaborative roles that disciplinary and post-modern approaches have when combined using inquiry pedagogy to ensure students become ‘active and informed citizens’ who seek to achieve ‘equity and excellence’ for all.

Should Geography be taught as a key learning area within the Humanities and Social Sciences, or should it be placed within the subject grouping of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)? How can the Theory of Reflexivity be used to consider whether the teaching of Geography is enabled or constrained by placing it in either of these contexts? Susan Coklis, a highly experienced Geography educator, puts forth an interesting argument, based on her own personal experience, that Geography is both enabled and constrained within both HASS and STEM. Susan suggests that the extent to which Geography is enabled or constrained is influenced by Reflexivity and its emergent properties.

Where HASS Thou Gone? is an extremely topical and at times, polarising discussion. Many of our contributors in this edition put forward interesting and challenging ideas in their opinion pieces. A taste of some of this edition’s opinion pieces include:

Many of our contributors in this edition put forward interesting and challenging ideas in their opinion pieces.
Taking a ‘selfie’ has become synonymous with generations from Gen Y onwards. In his article, *Our future citizen’s ‘selfie’ is found in humanities*, Richard Lee explores the importance of HASS in the ‘creation’ of not only ‘good’ citizens based on the service models of volunteerism and community service but of ‘empowered, active and engaged’ citizens. Richard draws on the current issue of student ‘activism’ and puts forward ideas and concepts around the ways in which the humanities when utilising an enriched pedagogy focused on transformative learning will determine how well the ‘selfie’ of our future selves is developed.

The Content vs Engagement dilemma is one most teachers within humanities have experienced. The importance of engaging ‘empathy as an essential route to understanding history’ is an ongoing challenge experienced by many history teachers. In her article, Jenny Jones, Head of the Humanities Department at St Michael’s College, Hobart, highlights the benefits of heuristic learning and the importance of ‘depth rather than breadth’ as the ‘gold standard in pedagogical terms’ particularly in relation to a complex and crowded curriculum.

It’s always interesting, and I believe valuable, to include a student perspective in *Professional Educator*, and the contribution from Lucy Vogel at Melbourne Girls’ College is just that, interesting and valuable! Lucy is a young adult who has carefully thought about and weighed up, in an informed way, the intrinsic benefits of not an either/or approach to her subject choices but an integrated and complimentary one. Touching on her knowledge of the benefits to her, as a current student, of the cross application of skills and experience acquired through humanities subjects to those in the STEM arena, Lucy’s opinion piece highlights the benefits of viewing curriculum ‘space’ as a competition rather than a platform through which subjects from both the humanities and STEM areas complement, support and enhance student learning.

Many educators will have considered Alanac Mauie’s proposition that decline in the number of secondary students studying geography will result in Australian students ‘missing out’ on something of educational value. In his article, Assoc. Professor Alanac Mauie argues for the importance of Geography within the Australian Curriculum and suggests a number of reasons why students and parents understanding of the ‘value’ of studying geography needs to be challenged from a holistic learning and more broadly, employability perspective.

Adding salt to a dish, as all chefs will tell you, enhances its flavour. Salt is an essential ingredient in all kitchens. Nathan Bessant, in his article *Historical thinking as the salt of education* argues that historical thinking and understanding are the ‘salt of education’ and the critical skills of evidential thinking, empathy and complexity are enhanced through the teaching of history, and it is these that skills which will ultimately ensure students flourish.

There is much to enjoy in this edition of *ACE’s Professional Educator*. It brings together the experience, knowledge and wisdom of educators from around Australia as it seeks to provoke and stimulate your intellectual curiosity and enhance your knowledge. As always, I thank the contributors for their work and the editorial panel for this contribution to this edition.

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**PRESIDENT’S COLUMN**

Dr Phil Lambert FACE, PSM National President and Chair Australian College of Educators

Over the course of the past few years I have been fortunate enough to work with various education systems around the world. Much of the work I have done (and continue to do) for agencies such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) relates to the Future of Education and Skills. Projects such as the OECD’s [Education 2030](https://www.oecd.org/education/2030/) initiative are specifically aimed at supporting education systems to determine the competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes and values) students need to thrive and shape their future. I specifically mention this work because I believe it directly relates to the theme of this edition of *Professional Educator*, Where HASS Thou Gone?

Many of the articles contained in this edition have a similar underlying theme, that being the subject matter taught through the humanities, the arts and social sciences play a significant role in the development of many of the competencies that have been identified as essential in the 21st century. These competencies include, for example, creative thinking, critical thinking, co-operation, empathy, and global competency. It is clear that the authors and contributors to this edition of *Professional Educator* are passionate advocates for the inclusion (and in some cases increased focus) on HASS as an essential component of the learning journey each student should take throughout their school years.

What also comes through in many of the articles are the challenges being faced by educators as they work through critical issues associated with the Australian education landscape.

The importance of a robust, diverse, flexible and future focussed education system and more specifically curriculum cannot, I believe, be overstated. In conjunction with this, it is essential that educators from across the education profession are directly involved in the discussions, debate and development of the system (at local and national levels) to ensure Australian learners have the best opportunity to develop the competencies they will need to not simply survive but live and thrive in the complex and constantly changing World we have created for them.

Warm regards.
The Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) Learning Area of the Australian Curriculum in years F-10 - and the State and Territory versions of the Australian Curriculum - is made up of four, discrete academic subjects: Civics and Citizenship, Economics and Business, Geography and History.

The HASS curriculum adopts a two-strand approach emphasizing both knowledge and understanding as well as subject-specific skills and in all states and territories it is taught as a single-disciplinary approach in years F-6/7. In years F-10, a multi-disciplinary approach is taken and HASS subjects are taught as discrete subjects. Western Australia however, retains this single-disciplinary approach until Year 10, with all four subjects given an equal allocation of teaching time (one term) throughout the school year, although subjects can be taught through programs that link to more than one subject (School Curriculum and Standards Authority [SCSA] 2014).

The Learning Area of HASS has had a number of iterations throughout the years before the implementation of the Australian Curriculum. The influence of the American term ‘Social Studies’ on this curriculum area suggests shifting definitions and boundaries on what should be taught within the subject, influenced by dominant political ideology and economic rationale (Marsh 2010). This could be clearly seen in the adoption of the term Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE), an integrated Social Studies approach, which was adopted by the Australian Education Council in 1991 as one of eight learning areas (Marsh 2010). The SOSE curriculum was underpinned by six generic concepts and many wide-ranging subjects including both discrete disciplines such as History and Geography, in addition to multi-disciplinary and integrated studies pertaining to topics such as religion, the environment and citizenship. This generic approach led to the criticism that ‘anyone can teach SOSE’ (Hart 2014). However, the demise of this approach is not welcomed by all who feel the Australian Curriculum limits the opportunities of educators to capitalise on the multi- and inter-disciplinary approach and thus make relevant to students (Hart 2016).

HASS as a learning area and the subjects within it, however, are often disadvantaged by the emphasis placed on the Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects by governments, industry and educational researchers. This results in students eschewing HASS subjects for those that can be directly linked to a career. Despite this challenge, research by the British Council in 2015 found that 44% of industry leaders – defined as someone in a position of influence – would hire someone with a Social Science degree. The same research noted that 33% of leaders in government positions have Social Science degrees, whereas the same percentage of leaders in not-for-profit organisations holds a Humanities degree. 51% of young leaders are more likely to have a Master’s qualification in a Social Science or Humanities subject (British Council 2015). Participants emphasised the broader skills these degrees provide, equipping them to handle complex situations and embrace the human dimensions of the work they do. So how does each discrete HASS subject prepare Australian students for life beyond the classroom?

CIVICS AND CITIZENSHIP

Civic knowledge, as taught in any national curriculum, should typically cover a country’s political system including its institutions, the rights and responsibilities of its citizens, and the ways in which those citizens can engage with society. Concepts of national identity, tolerance and values should also be included (Schulz, Fraillon & Ainley 2013). These aspects are reflected in the Australian Curriculum, where knowledge and understanding in Civics and Citizenship is divided into three distinct sub-areas: Government and democracy; laws and citizens, and, citizenship, diversity and identity. Students’ understanding of these sub-areas has been shown to be an indicator of future participation in elections as well as engagement with equity and issues affecting minority groups (Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Kerr & Losito 2010; Lauglo, 2012 cited in Schulz et al. 2013). Unsurprisingly then, the Australian Curriculum rationale for Civics and Citizenship seeks to develop a deep understanding of Australia’s federal system of government based on democratic values in order for students to become active and informed citizens able to engage in Australia’s democracy (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA] 2016).

Civics and Citizenship in the Australian Curriculum is taught in years 3-10 and is underpinned by seven concepts: democracy; democratic values; the Westminster System; justice; participation and rights and responsibilities. Although these concepts are specific to Civics and Citizenship, there is considerable overlap with the other HASS subjects, particularly Geography and sustainability (Brett 2017, p. 4) argues that we need to give students a ‘sustainable citizenship education’ so that they can actively engage in geopolitical problems.

Dr Loretta Dolan, University of Western Australia

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*Hereafter only the Australian Curriculum will be referred to.
The extent to which students understand their roles as emerging citizens in Australian Society is monitored through the triennial Australian National Assessment Programme on Civics and Citizenship, which is administered to selected Year 6 and Year 10 students in both public and independent schools across Australia. Findings from the last assessment in 2016 demonstrate that a large percentage of students in both year groups have significant gaps in their civic knowledge (ACARA 2017). It should be noted however, that young people engage in civic knowledge outside of formal instruction in HASS and that they belong to and participate in the communities that they interact with (Schult et al. 2008 cited in Schult et al. 2013).

**ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS**

Economics as a subject, considers production, allocation and consumption of wealth (Seth & Scavone 2016). The focus is the working of economies and how individuals, businesses and governments interact within those economies (ACARA 2012). Underpinning the study of Economics are markets, notably how individuals and groups make decisions in regards to limited resources when they have unlimited needs. Business is part of Economics as it addresses production and supply of goods and services, as well as the social enterprises that aim to satisfy the needs and wants of society. Business therefore, is part of the day-to-day life of Australians (ACARA 2012).

The Economics and Business syllabus in the Australian Curriculum aims to educate students in Years F-10 about how the impact economic systems will have on a personal, local, national, regional and global level and how these systems affect students’ daily lives including economic growth and the standard of living. To do this, students are introduced to the economic concepts of scarcity, making choices; specialisation and trade; interdependence of markets, economic performance, and living standards. Students begin their Economics and Business education in Year 5 with the study of markets and resources. By Year 10, they are examining Australia’s economic performance and the standard of living around the world having considered aspects of markets, consumption and interactions in a global economy in the years in between.

Educators have long advocated for Economics and Business education for all compulsory years of schooling in the national curriculum (Business Educators Australia Inc 2009). The Global Financial Crisis of 2008 highlighted the global connectedness of the world economies and the need for school students to be economically and financially aware. This recognition of the need for students to be well versed in economic systems underpins super-national organisations like the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Their publication, Trends Shaping Education 2019, notes that education is key to students understanding how shifting economic power towards Asian countries, particularly China and India, affects jobs and wages in their own countries. Similarly, education is a common thread that allows students understand interdependence in global marketplaces and global consumption patterns including their own (OECD 2019).

**GEOGRAPHY**

Geography has been described as a ‘fundamental human project’ and one of humanity’s ‘big ideas’ (Bonnett 2012, p. 39). In past years, it has been through many different interpretations about what knowledge and skills Geography provides for students. Bonnett (2012) argues that Geography has three fundamental aspects: an existential function (how Geography is used to understand the world), Geography’s relationship to human survival, and, useful knowledge for a globalising planet. These three functions demonstrate that Geography is a very diverse subject studied by experts in a large number of fields.

Bonnett’s assertion about the function of Geography is evident in the F-10 Australian Curriculum. The geographical knowledge and understanding underpinning the curriculum comprises two units for each year group, one ‘physical geography’ and the other ‘human geography’. Despite this, there is a considerable amount of overlap between the two units as you cannot study physical location without human interaction (Grady & Matthews 2017). Geography is taught in years F-10 and like all HASS subjects is underpinned by concepts: space, scale, change, environment, interconnection and sustainability. These high-level ideas are applied to Geography to guide an inquiry of work and its requirements (ACARA 2016). Concepts help with student understanding ‘geographical imaginings’ or the way that they think and feel about the world around them (Cantisini 2011). Whilst all concepts are important, place tends to be at the heart of Geography curriculum (Scott 2013). This connects the physical landscape to the human dimensions, as noted above, whilst technology with its ability to allow residency of multiple spaces simultaneously serves to make the concept of place effectively broader (Scott 2013).

**HISTORY**

As E. H. Carr (1964) stated in his seminal work, What is History? History is all about interpretation of the past but it is also about the ongoing conversation with the present and how that might influence the future. History is also about heritage - giving society roots as well as providing us with the ability to look back at past mistakes (Black & MacRaidil 2000). It is though, always open to new understandings by students and as such does not provide definite answers.

History then, is a subject that encourages students to question what is presented to them as knowledge. The ‘History Wars’, an ongoing debate about the colonisation of Australia, was also the subject that received the most attention in the 2016 review of the Australian Curriculum. The curriculum aims to educate Australians (ACARA 2012). It should be noted however, that young people engage in civic knowledge outside of formal instruction in HASS and that they belong to and participate in the communities that they interact with (Schult et al. 2008 cited in Schult et al. 2013).

**Biographies**

**Dr Loretta Dolan** is an Honorary Research Fellow in the Graduate School of Education and the School of Humanities at the University of Western Australia (UWA). Until December 2018 she was the Humanities and Social Sciences Coordinator (secondary) at UWA and has previously taught History as secondary and tertiary levels in Australia.

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How a quality education can deliver a healthy democracy

Mr Brett Henebery, Editor, The Educator Magazine and The Educator Asia

While a good education is often spoken about as a path towards employment, higher living standards and a more fulfilled life, there are other critical, long-lasting benefits that can be realised at a national level.

On an individual level, a good education can be a path towards employment, higher living standards and a more fulfilled life. However, there are other critical, long-lasting benefits that can be realised at a national level.

After all, some of the most highly-performing education systems in the world are also the healthiest democracies. Finland, Sweden and Norway are just some of the high-performing school systems that also enjoy a ranking at the top of the Global Freedom Index (Freedom House 2019). And for those wondering whether this is just a ‘European thing’, Japan and South Korea are other thriving democracies that boast enviable PISA scores.

One particular skill that these education systems hold in high regard is critical thinking, which enables young people to gather information, identify credible sources and take alternative views into consideration before making informed decisions.
When it comes to large portions of a nation’s population engaging with media, political discourse and the voting process, there are signs that the education system is in decline. One model, the Pathways to Technology (P-TECH) program – created in response to through various initiatives in recent years – is aimed at improving teaching and learning across the United States, and the world.

No doubt, the American education system will improve as researchers hone in on the sources of the systemic issues and indelibly shaped collaborative learning, teaching, and learning opportunities and outcomes. However, there is a growing sense that the nation’s policymakers could be doing a lot more to address the educational decline highlighted in the PISA and PIRLS studies.

On February 6, 2017, US Senator Michael Bennett delivered a speech on the Senate floor during the Senator’s consideration of President Trump’s nominee for Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos (whose nomination he opposed on the basis that her ideas on schooling were insufficient to overcome the significant challenges that the nation’s education system was facing). “Our generation is at risk of being the first American generation to leave less opportunity to our children than we inherited – and if we do that, we will have broken a fundamental American promise to our children,” Bennett warned.

It would be unsafe to assume that certain failings within the school system of the United States over the century is solely to blame for this decline in educational outcomes, and the public’s attitude towards education, but as Bennett pointed out, the quality of education that children are given certainly plays a significant part.

“Schools that once were engines of opportunity and democracy,” he warned, “are now too often ‘traps for inter-generational poverty,’ the Senator warned. “A commitment to choice without a commitment to quality served ideology rather than improvement, and a commitment to competition without a commitment to equity would forsoak our democratic ideal that a free, high-quality public education must open the doors of opportunity to all.”

America’s Founding Fathers held the precision of quality education in such high regard that they considered it as a crucial pillar of the nation’s freedom. In the words of Thomas Jefferson, the principal author of the Declaration of Independence, “education in such high regards that they considered it as a crucial pillar of the nation’s freedom.” Bennett pointed out, the quality of education that children are given certainly plays a significant part.

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WHERE HAS THOU GONE?

FEATURE

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FEATURE

“Indeed, the ‘Gonski 2.0’ review wasn’t the first time that a call for greater attention to the general capabilities has been made. The importance of the general capabilities was highlighted in the 1992 Moyers Report, the 1999 Adelaide Declaration of National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century, the 2008 Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, the 2010 Australian Curriculum and The Review of the Australian Curriculum in 2014.

The kind of sweeping change to our education system that is being recommended will take a course of time to implement. There are many nuances and complexities to tease out and further discussions to be had. State and federal governments are well aware of public attitudes towards the health of our democracy and the need to instil critical thinking in young people; so we can be sure that as long as democracy remains a central focus of concern, the issues continue to be released into the public domain, there will be progress, albeit gradual, towards addressing the issues they highlight.

However, some academics warn that unless a serious effort is made to equip the next generation with the tools they need to effect political and social change, the Australian role heading down a dangerous path. I spoke to Jackie Tiong, who holds a Master of Research at the Western Sydney University’s Graduate Research School. Tiong sees this as a problem, a concern that needs to be addressed. The high-quality education system is an important part of our democracy at large, it is a message that is clear and urgent.

Australians need to be well informed without prejudicing their views or interpretations, he wrote in The Educator.

Surely, we want our schools to educate our students to be able to take part in the society in which we live but we certainly don’t want to see public schools promoting particular political views. Instead, Pretland says schools should be providing an understanding of the role of politics as well as covering general political issues.

‘I think it’s important that schools help students to understand the issue without directing them in any way or encouraging them in any way to form a view that is not their own,’ he stresses.

And therein lies the challenge moving forward: balance. As with education in general, parents are a major influence in how their children engage with politics and might not necessarily respond well to a sweeping initiative aimed at potentially influencing how their child might cast their ballot when they reach voting age (especially if the whole family uses the same way).

In this sense, such an initiative could create tension between schools and parents. But while it would be a precarious one no doubt, achieving such a balance is possible to grow on what is broad and thorough consultation between governments, schools, parents and students.

Looking ahead, it is incumbent not just upon Australia’s leaders but communities everywhere to ensure that young people are not only ‘CIVIC ready’ but ‘future-proof’ once they leave school, but also sharply, discerning citizens who are fully aware of democracy and its rights.

The House of Representatives are elected to present the views of citizens and raise citizens’ concerns and grievances in debate, but the reports mentioned earlier about public attitudes to our democracy clearly show that something is terribly amiss with the way the system is working. In the words of our nation’s first Prime Minister, ‘the organ by which the will of the people is expressed is not necessarily the House of Representatives alone’.

And today, the message is clearer than ever before: for democracy to flourish, so too must a well-informed citizenry who can think critically – from the classroom to the ballot box.

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Biographies

Brett Hiney is the editor of The Educator Magazine and The Educator Online. Brett’s primary interests are in education, politics and human rights.

democracy, back on track, schools need to put a stronger focus on civic education, says Brendan Bernicker from the McCourtney Institute for Democracy at Penn State College of the Liberal Arts.

In an article published in Everyday Democracy, Bernicker said that for the last several decades, the focus of the US education system has shifted from civic to job training – so that all Americans have paid a steep cost for this.

“Special interest and lobbying groups have unprecedented power over our political system. A lack of knowledge about public affairs has made citizens unsuitable to political advertising, which has given the wealthy tremendous power to shape politics through campaign contributions and ad spending,” Bernicker said.

He went on to say that six of Americans trust the political system that nearly half of 2016 primary voters want to see candidates promising anti-establishment revolutions.

“As we know, the thing that makes a democracy work is not simply a set of checks and balances backed by a strong legal system, but a citizenry that is aware of its history, aware of its rights, and aware of its own role in defending democratic values.”

If we really care about preserving our democracy for future generations, we will stop treating civic education as secondary to math and science instruction and put it back at the core of our school curricula,” Bernicker said.

HOW WE CAN TURN THE TABLES

Earlier, we saw a glimpse of the unfailing vision that a high-quality education system is important for training – and that all Americans have paid a steep cost for this because between the two there is all the difference in the world,” Barton said. “This is not done by mere memory, it can only be done by careful training of the perceptive and the reflective faculties which are so often neglected in schools.”

In 2018, The Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools, commonly dubbed the ‘Gonski 2.0 review,’ addressed this all-important point, among others. The report laid out 23 recommendations to lift the quality of Australia’s schools, arguing more attention to general capabilities such as critical thinking, social skills and problem-solving is essential in preparing students for an uncertain future.

In this sense, such an initiative could create tension between governments, schools and parents. Bernicker said that teachers have a responsibility to inform their students about democracy and political engagement without impacting their opinions.

“It’s certainly not the place of public schools in particular to be advocating political views or political involvement in any way at it is certainly the role of teachers in public schools to help students to be well informed without prejudicing their views or interpretations,” he wrote in The Educator.

‘Surely, we want our schools to educate our students to be able to take part in the society in which we live but we certainly don’t want to see public schools promoting particular political views’.

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Every successful, sustained democracy requires active, informed citizens. All the better if these citizens are critical and engaged participants in their democracy. We tend to think of Australia in this category but there is plenty of evidence to indicate this is not the case. Studying young people’s civic and political engagement over many decades, primarily in the context of school experience, has led to many concerns (Print, 2007, 2015, 2016). In recent times these concerns have been exacerbated by the emphasis on STEM and the apparent demise of HASS in schools.

EDucators have long known that students in schools benefit from a balanced curriculum. When the school curriculum becomes unbalanced, problems emerge. We are currently witnessing an attempt to emphasise STEM in the school curriculum and to stimulate student numbers in STEM subjects in schools. This approach is observable through extensive political, policy and funding stimulus of STEM learning experiences, particularly in school contexts.

Yet all is not what it seems. This article contends that the STEM conversation (not yet a debate) with HASS is evident at two levels –

- A general ideological, persuasive level, directed to policy and student decision-making.
- A targeted approach at subject level in high schools, designed to influence student subject choices.

STEM - GENERAL

At the general level, there has been vigorous attempts in recent years to persuade the public of the value of studying STEM subjects. Ultimately this involves persuading students / parents to decide on STEM subjects in their high school curriculum where they have choice. This has been based on the rationale that:

- STEM subjects are essential for the future and will ultimately save the world and
- student numbers generally have been falling in the hard sciences and tough maths and we need to solve this problem, especially for university entrance and future careers.

This argument has been forceful, sustained and possibly successful, at least at a policy level so that a STEM approach is conscientiously advocated for students. Politicians, leading community members and scientists have pushed this strategy. Study STEM, the argument goes, and you’ll have better job prospects, better than average salary, a wide variety of careers with new technology and you can impact the world. You may even find a way of saving the planet.

These are essentially the arguments employed in Texas, USA. So they went ahead with an aggressive STEM program for schools. Texas has a population of some 30 million — more than Australia’s. Recently Texas spent USD120million (AUD 170million) on a major initiative to stimulate STEM in that state. Why? Endorsing a small, educated elite with strong academic STEM training, while essentially neglecting a large proportion of the student population, was considered untenable. Through some 51 academies and seven T-STEM technical assistance centres, the project sought to stimulate STEM in Texas schools. The results showed a few positive student outcomes, specifically for higher 10th-grade mathematics scores, higher likelihood of passing Algebra 1 by ninth grade, and higher attendance rates than students in matched comparison schools (Young, et al. 2016). Nonetheless, overall student outcomes were mixed. In all, quite disappointing considering the expectations and level of funding support.

STEM - SPECIFIC

At the more specific level, we can see the degree of success of this strategy reflected in the subjects students select when they have a choice. This mainly means subjects in upper secondary school as the degree of choice offered by schools in lower secondary is limited and negligible in primary schools (as it should be). The STEM approach is designed to turn the tide of students currently ‘avoiding’ STEM subjects, especially the more difficult ones. Taking NSW as an example, over the past decade the decline in STEM subjects, especially the most difficult ones, is apparent. Similarly a decline in the ‘difficult’ social
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Embracing “The Wrong Path”:
Place-Naming and the Work Yet To Do

Dr Bryan Smith, James Cook University

Last September, nine year old Harper Neilsen made national news for their refusal to stand for the national anthem. A powerful symbolic act, Neilsen argued that they were protesting against the celebration of violence that often goes hand-in-hand with the national anthem and its habitual recitation of the lyrics. Choosing to protest the celebration of nationalism, as well as its lyrical and political totemism, represents a bold assertion of conviction; the nationalistic historical narrative memorialized in the anthem commands a significant amount of sway over the public’s imagination and commitment of, and to, the past. Case in point, the response of critics, notably Senator Pauline Hanson, who made the argument that Neilsen, “is headed down the wrong path” and should be removed from the school (Murto 2018) by asserting their civic and ethical refusal. This tension reminds us of a much broader tension that is, the continued “history war” wherein two competing visions of the past vie for command of the public’s imagination (MacIntyre & Clark 2004). Hanson and Hanson serve as symbolic stand-ins for what has commonly been seen as the chasm between historical interpretation that catalyzes this “war.” On the one side, Neilsen and others sought and seek to illuminate how even the most seemingly banal moments (where anthems are powerful expressions of nationalistic sentiment, all too often people passively engage with them) are a reminder of how history has long served to mythologize and confuse exclusions and violence as “progress.” On the other hand, Hanson and others sought and seek to assert a vision of the past that demands complicacy and acquiescence; an interpretation of the past that prides itself on its awesomeness to critique.

I begin here as I want to suggest that the pressing issue facing HASS is less its disappearance from classrooms and more the need to preserve the field in spite of efforts and hours it becomes more than a space of acritical indirection (this is not a particularly new issue for the field but nonetheless still pressing). The soul of HASS ought to be its critical investigation of difficult ideas in the pursuit of ethical futures, something wondrously reflected in Neilsen’s convictions and dened in Hanson’s refusal to engage. And while Hanson’s view itself warrants extended critique (for its myopic and misinformed reading of the past, Hanson’s statements are symptomatic of a much broader effort to normalize overly narrow visions of what history is (and HASS ought to be). Said differently, the ways in which history is often imagined to be for many is commonly and rather compellingly unlocal and hyper focused on a select set of ideas, actors and events that come to be so taken (or granted) that they appear to reflect the past “just as it happened.” Or, that is, to borrow Hanson’s language, “on the right path.” To illustrate this, I turn to geography and place-naming as a demonstration of how “the right path” of concern here is written into the language of a collective subjectivity. Said differently, the complex web of place-names does ultimately help to represent and cement a particular social identity reflected through the kinds of events and people remembered throughout our identity and name places. Who “we” are, then, is embedded in the everyday commensurative commitments of place-naming practices. Perhaps an example of place-naming at work will help.

I live and work in Townsville, situated in tropical North Queensland, and on the Country of the Bindal and Wulgurukaba peoples. Named for the merchant who traded with the Aboriginal peoples of Port Douglas, Captain George Blackwood, surveyors who helped map the tropical Australian coast (for the British). The two blocks north of Sturt Street, named for famed explorer Matthew Flinders, Parallel to Flinders to the north is Sturt Street, named for Charles Sturt, famed British explorer. Interesting each of these is, from north to south, Denham, Stokes, Stanley and Blackwood Streets, named for Captains Henry Denham, Owen Stanley, John Lort Stokes and Francis Price Blackwood. When you extend outside of the CBD you begin to see the introduction of local business people and politicians along with Queensland politicians. North of the CBD you begin to see the city’s geography as a common street name; with Queen Victoria enjoying two streets (Queen and Victoria Street) and Alexandra of Denmark, Queen Victoria’s daughter in law, enjoying another (Alexandra Street).

Reading this text and the conception of historical significance that it unifies into the community’s geography, one would be hard pressed to conclude that the Bindal and Wulgurukaba peoples history is significant to this area, let alone that there is a history of each peoples. Indeed, the selection of commemorative namesakes in Townsville’s central core (and in most communities across Australia) accomplishes three things. First, it identifies the city’s geography with a history of British colonisation and mapping that works, simultaneously, via exclusion of non-colonial figures (while not exclusively, the consistency is difficult to resist). The consequence of this, Emiko Palomen (2008, p.220) suggests, is the “creation or representation of public values and thereby the construction of a collective subjectivity.” Said differently, the complex web of place-names does ultimately help to represent and cement a particular social identity reflected through the kinds of events and people remembered throughout our identity and name places. Who “we” are, then, is embedded in the everyday commensurative commitments of place-naming practices.

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names also serves to symbolically lay a claim to space — “this is settler space and will serve as a medium for celebrating colonisation.” It is, as Timothy Stanley (1998) suggests, the creation of a national community through racist denial.

CONCLUSION: LET’S HEAD DOWN THE WRONG (SKEWED) PATH

Reading everyday spaces as media for the memorialization of white, settler heroes is an intrinsically difficult task. By virtue of their “semantic displacement” — that their commemorative value cedes ground to their functional and “locational” meaning (Azaryahu 2009) — place names often elude criticism because they, ostensibly, don’t mean anything. Yet, they’re powerful symbols of who and what is thought to be important. In effect, they present themselves in such a way that is both unquestioned and supportive of “the right path.”

As suggested in the introduction, I don’t think that HASS has gone anywhere but it continues to be subject to efforts on the part of those such as Hanson who would have it become little more than a mechanism for securing “the right path.” To overcome this — to save the field’s critical soul — we have to support student investigation into not only what “the right path” is but how it becomes normalised. For myself, place-naming becomes the entry point for disrupting “the right path” because of its existence as a language that writes history, exclusion and settler claims over how the past is imagined into every aspect of our spatial lives. Engaging this process is rather difficult but when done well, HASS can continue to be the critical space that it needs to be, that is, “skewed, biased, and purposeful” (Lintner 2010, p. 19). This challenge — the development of openness and willingness to see “the wrong path” — is what HASS needs to do. And while this makes it subject to more and sometimes trenchant critique as an improperly biased space, drawing student attention to how certain history becomes the language of everyday life is worth doing. The “wrong path” needs to be made right, to save the soul of HASS from those who might see it do little more than the same old.

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Bryan Smith
is a Lecturer in Education at James Cook University, Townsville. His research looks at the role of place-naming as a critical tool to explore, inquire into and unpack historical memory in community spaces. Currently, his work focuses on Townsville, which includes mapping the city’s street names and their attendant commemorations as part of a larger investigation into how colonial remembrance becomes part of everyday place-making. That map can be seen at https://bryanabsmith.com/topomapper.
Teaching History - How?

Ms Georgia Laurence-Doyle, University of Sydney

“The study of history enriches the present and illuminates the future”

(Shape Paper, Australian Curriculum: History, March 2012).

History education has long been a point of contention in the Western world (Peterson 2016). This is most likely due to the fact shared history is such a fundamental—yet divisive—part of the national and cultural consciousness. Therefore, the nature and content of history teaching has been debated within schools, and also wider society. It also has often been utilised (even exploited) by governments to reiterate national sentiment and identity in schools (Peterson 2016; Clark 2006). Despite the central part that history pedagogy and discourse has played in our society, it has also proved to be a difficult subject in which to engage students. As Nair and Narayanasamy (2017, p.109) point out, teaching history is “a tough and challenging task for teachers” as many studies indicate that “students are not interested in learning history” due to it being “irrelevant” to their current lives. So how can history gain relevance? Can it become a subject that students find interesting, informative and one they are keen to engage whilst studying in the compulsory years of schooling and beyond?

NATIONAL HISTORIES AND NARRATIVES IN THE CLASSROOM

Historically, the teaching of history has revolved around content—namely, students memorising facts that are perceived to be important, and stories which align with a nation’s past (Van Den e Van Besela. 2008). As Seixas (2012, p.393) notes, for over a century democratic nation-states have experienced a “ tug-of-war” between “political demands to promote national solidarity” and a “liberal educational vision of history” in order to foster an “engaged, literate, critical citizenry”. He explains that this conflict was heightened during the 1970s, when academic history experienced its own crisis of disciplinary identity, which in turn trickled down to history education through national narratives (Seixas 1993).

This focus on history curricula and pedagogy in educational research has been more pronounced since the 1990s (Van Den e Van Besela. 2008). In Australia secondary history education has been much more prominent on a national level since the mid-1990s. According to Clark (2006), Australian students have been framed as significant but “vulnerable receptors” of the national narrative. Clark noted that it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that Australia experienced its first challenge to history education with the “critical interrogation” of the “stigmergy” mythologies. The figure who had previously been upheld as the quintessential Australian hero was becoming increasingly problematic, and historians, teachers and national commentators alike were exposing the dark, dealt (forgotten, aspects) of the nation’s past.

Clark (2006) stated that, with the advent of the bi-centennial in the late 1980s, Australia also became divided over the inclusion of “multiculturalism” in its national narrative. During the 1990s, this was followed by the “history wars” under the Howard government, whereby representations of Australia’s colonial past were divided between the more (arguing) “white armband” view of Australian history, or the more condemning “black armband” perspective (Peterson 2016; Clark 2009).

In recent years, these debates have once more featured in public discourse when the Australian Curriculum was reviewed in 2014 (Martin 2016, p.4). Christopher Pyne, then Commonwealth Minister for Education, justified the review of various subject-areas by stating that “concerns have been raised about the history curriculum not recognising the legacy of Western civilisation and not giving Australia’s history and culture the prominence they deserve, such as Angus Day”. Consequently, the history curriculum once more became a point of political and public contention. Martin (2016, p.7) argues that these debates are defined by the clash of two approaches to teaching history: the “heritage” paradigm, and the “disciplinary” paradigm. Martin explains that the former seeks to educate and re-affirm certain narratives about the nation’s past in order to cultivate a “shared identity and sense of civic duty.” The latter, however, aims to expose and examine myriad perspectives of the past. Martin (2016, p.7) states that, although the narrative approach is still important in relaying the past to history students, the disciplinary paradigm rather “encourages critical examination of various narratives in the pursuit of such explanations” if, as a nation, we are not effectively educating students in these issues, the kind of society we want our students to live in, and the kind of people we want them to be is directly impacted.

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES TO TEACHING HISTORY

There is an increasing trend in the scholarship of history education that calls for the shift from “traditional” approaches of “lecture, recall, and over-emphasis on the textbook”, to more constructivist methods of student-centered learning, and developing skills-based approaches to sources (Roberts 2011, p.122). Over the past thirty years or so, there has been a tension in the field between the more narrative “chalk and talk” approaches to teaching history, versus the more source-focused methods of critical analysis. Many scholars argue that today, history pedagogy remains trapped in the exam and role-learning centred mode of education.

The focus in Western history education in the latter third of the Twentieth Century aimed for students to develop the higher-order thinking skills of evaluation and analysis. Many scholars argue that students should be more “active participants” in their study of history (i.e. “doing” history) through more “hands-on” approaches (Roberts 2011; Warren 2007). According to Warren (2007, p.249) this can be achieved through a “more ambitious agenda of critical pedagogy”, which gives teachers the tools and support to move away from the “kill and drill” strategies that are still commonly used in history education, and instead to teach students to undertake actual historical inquiry themselves (Roberts 2011, p.122). Triole (2008, p.56) posits that this can be achieved through a return to the core, primary sources of historical research as well as the use of inquiry methodology, allowing students to “experience the real work of historians and detectives”.

There has been a shift to more constructivist approaches in history teaching. That is, the idea that teachers and students have more freedom in the classroom, with a focus on student-directed learning and construction of their own knowledge (Dinc 2011). Many constructivist methods have been proliferated in school studies discourses, such as the role of the concept map, which allows students to engage “actively in the learning process” through organising broader historical concepts (Nair e Narayanasamy 2017, p.129). The idea of the socio-political relevance of history has also arisen as a pedagogical emphasis in the
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ENGAGEMENT IN LEARNING

Engagement is a critical part of student learning and development both in the short and long term. Put simply, the more that students are interested in and apply themselves to a subject, the more they will absorb and learn about it. Further, by students having their skills through editing and drafting, and receiving feedback (thrive in the classroom as a pedagogical tool, it is more likely that they will become proficient in their work (Kuh 2003). Therefore, although much of the scholarship on student engagement tends to be more general in its subject areas, this seems especially pertinent to the engagement of students in history. By focusing on strategies that foster student engagement in the classroom, there will be a greater chance of them applying themselves to classroom interaction, assessments, and developing a deeper interest in the subject that continues to affect contemporary society today.

One of these engagement strategies is to encourage historical empathy in students. **Historical empathy** has been extremely under-researched, but is now emerging in the scholarship on history teaching and engagement. According to Ashby and Lee (cited in Donnelly 2004, p.18), empathy is an effective tool for informing and developing historical understanding in school students, and they outline five different stages of “sophistication in empathetic thinking.” Their study traced the students’ thoughts, findings, and the empathy and agency regarding the past, to a “reconstructed and contextualised empathy” whereby the student grasps the varying narratives used to illustrate the historical experiences of students, and they outline five different stages of “sophistication in empathetic thinking.” Their study traced the students’ thoughts, findings, and the empathy and agency regarding the past, to a “reconstructed and contextualised empathy” whereby the student grasps the varying narratives used to illustrate the historical experiences of students, and they outline five different stages of “sophistication in empathetic thinking.” Their study traced the students’ thoughts, findings, and the empathy and agency regarding the past, to a “reconstructed and contextualised empathy” whereby the student grasps the varying narratives used to illustrate the historical experiences of students, and they outline five different stages of “sophistication in empathetic thinking.”

Many scholars, however, including Long (2003) and Hawkey (2007) maintain that the narrative, direct teaching method remains the most effective way of teaching historical stories. However, Long and Lang’s concerns were mirrored by the Historical Association’s (2005, pp.29-39) curriculum development in the UK in the 1990s, which had been integrated in the “Historical Education Statement that “the construction of historical narrative from historical source material... is a high- order skill which lies at the heart of the historian’s craft. Moreover, they added that it is the “end to which historical research and source analysis leads.”

**USE OF SOURCES AND CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE IN STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**

Most prevalent in the shift from the more narrow, traditional literature, textbook-based approaches, is the embracing of non-traditional sources as a way of engaging students in the subject of history. This does not necessarily mean “you-written texts” but just that these sources are not from the textbook, or traditional historical scholarship. For example, these might include film and television, music, biographies of historical figures, historical fiction, and oral histories (Roberts 2011, Marcus and Stoddart 2007). Indeed, from the 1980s onwards, history has been influenced by the historical periods and contexts in which they lived.” In this manner, students can apply their knowledge to new contexts and stories of individual experiences in a way that textbooks simply cannot do. Oral histories remain an incredibly undervalued source in history education.

Coutright, Parker and Roberts (2018) advocate the role of sound/historical voices further in their work on the role of “sonic sources” in gaining an insight into the past. They argue that there is a growing body of work on “sound and the acoustic” in history, which they perceive as being neglected in scholarship and “everyday life” (2018, p.13). Documentaries, interviews, and oral histories, for example, often act as a “bridge” between the past and the present, allowing us to “fill in” parts of our past.

The role of technology and digital histories is also becoming increasingly important in the teaching of history. In the twenty-first century, scholars such as Simkin (2018); Frigo (2018); Baker (2018) are making strides in their research to form new strategies of teaching history in a digital classroom... Digital modes of teaching history have begun to (positively) “disrupt” the ways in which we teach, especially the ways we teach history.

It is essential, as Frigo (2018) argues, that teaching move beyond the “industrial model” (i.e. teacher facing the class) to existing digital modes and social media. He argues that this is the “power of the types of tools that most will mean new useful to teach and learn.” (Ibid). Greg Chapman, Jim Duklu (2018) and Simon Baker (2018) also embrace diverse digital sources, such as podcasts, YouTube videos, video games and Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality. Chapman and Duklu even host a podcast on how to achieve these very strategies. Baker (2018) pushes this further by attempting to include social media outlets such as Twitter and Facebook. He prays Simon Mokken’s “Tweetering Peramp” method, where students “retweet the enacted event via a Twitter.” Baker (2018, p.10) states that along social media, video games (such as Minecraft and Assassin’s Creed) and Virtual Reality can also be incredibly useful, in getting students to engage with the realities of the past. He argues that this is because they are, in their essence, created as “form of entertainment”, but also because they provide “good learning habits” by attempting to “master a situation, usually via multiple (Ibid).

References


Margaret Simkin (2018, p.19) outlined her use of inter- 
skype, Skype conversations, where students debate various scenarios, or conduct mini-Russian Revolutions. She states that this is the “power of the types of tools that most will mean new useful to teach and learn.” (Ibid). Greg Chapman, Jim Duklu (2018) and Simon Baker (2018) also embrace diverse digital sources, such as podcasts, YouTube videos, video games and Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality. Chapman and Duklu even host a podcast on how to achieve these very strategies. Baker (2018) pushes this further by attempting to include social media outlets such as Twitter and Facebook. He prays Simon Mokken’s “Tweetering Peramp” method, where students “retweet the enacted event via a Twitter.” Baker (2018, p.10) states that along social media, video games (such as Minecraft and Assassin’s Creed) and Virtual Reality can also be incredibly useful, in getting students to engage with the realities of the past. He argues that this is because they are, in their essence, created as “form of entertainment”, but also because they provide “good learning habits” by attempting to “master a situation, usually via multiple (Ibid).

Essentially, Frigo (2018) and Baker (2018) concern on the importance of these “Twenty-first century skills”, often referred to as the “4Cs: communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity”, which allow us to build on these new strategies. However, students and teachers, “collaborate on projects, essentially, create a “professional presence online” (Baker, 2018, p.8). It is thus increasingly the case that many scholars now that history teachers need to embrace technology, as not living in a time where “the entire knowledge of history” is “sitting in our pockets” (Ibid).

Whilst this is true, and it is essential that we move forward—and not against—but the tide of this “digital revolution”, history educators need to be much more critical and careful as to how we treat and transmit these new sources of learning. Simply possessing infinite knowledge in one’s pocket makes one more knowledgeable, nor does having more “tools” to engage students mean that you are automatically engaging them. Rather, teachers, to embrace and adopt these digital sources of learning, must first be knowledgeable of what is “sitting in our pockets” (Ibid).
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Adelaide. This is reflected in Georgia’s dissertation on the HASS curriculum, and especially strategies to make the subject of her passion for teaching history to young people, she is currently studying for her Masters in Teaching at the University of Adelaide in 2012, receiving the University Medal for Outstanding Academic Achievement (2012), and both the Lynda Tapp prize and the Tinline scholarship for History. Georgia has since completed her PhD in History at the University of Sydney, her thesis (Summer), pp. 117-125.

Biographies

Georgia Lawrence-Doyle completed her Bachelor of Arts degree with First Class Honours in History from the University of Adelaide in 2012, receiving the University Medal for Outstanding Academic Achievement (2012), and both the Lynda Tapp prize and Tinline scholarship for History. Georgihas since completed her PhD in History at the University of Sydney, her thesis examining the interactions between modern Italian history, politics, and the Italian film comedies of the 1950s-1990s. Due to her passion for teaching history to young people, she is currently studying for her Masters in Teaching at the University of Adelaide. This is reflected in Georgia’s dissertation on the HASS curriculum, and especially strategies to make the subject of history more engaging and relevant to Australian secondary school students.


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Contesting Inquiry to Preserve History

Dr Samantha Owen, Curtin University

 HOW DO WE READ AND TEACH THE STORIES THAT WON'T GO AWAY?

In the week beginning 4 March 2019 Guardian Australia hosted The Killing Times, a special report on genocide in Australia. The articles that (do not) appear in our history books yet that refuse to go away. (Allam and Evershed 2019). The first instalment was an interactive “massacre map of Australia’s frontier wars” which virtually took readers to the massacres sites closest to their homes (Evershed & Ball 2019). The report also asked how genocide in Australia is taught. History Teachers Association of Victoria executive officer, Deb Hull, suggested that the method was “in passing” as to deal with an overcrowded curriculum “History is being squeezed out (...) A lot of schools will say, ‘We’re all about STEM’” (Martin 2019). The First Dog on the Moon comic “When […] A lot of schools will say, ‘We’re all about Stem [sic]’” (Banchi and Bell, 2008; Schwartz, 2017). The inquiry process draws on the skills and knowledges of all participating – and seeks to develop new ones – and is necessarily collaborative, creating an inquiry community, even though the individual learners may have their own journey. To bring the inquiry to an end the learners and facilitators should critically reflect on the process, the actions taken, the skills and knowledges developed, and possibilities for improvement.

HAS HASS A PLACE IN THE NEW AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM?

On 5 December 2008 the Australian Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs approved the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians. The document was presented by Julia Gillard, then Federal Minister for Education and Training, and articulated five main goals. First, linking education and nationbuilding. “Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence” to create “a society that is prosperous, cohesive and culturally diverse and that values Australia’s indigenous cultures.” Second, “All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens,” thus connecting schooling to job readiness. The Melbourne Declaration outlined a purpose for schools as harvesters of citizens and future thinkers and contributors and was a blueprint for the national curriculum. The curriculum designers created the category “General capabilities”, which identified twenty-first century skills, introduced three cross-curriculum priorities, which encourages integration, and named pedagogical approaches for discipline areas (ACARA, 2011a). In the HASS learning area they endorsed and recommended an inquiry-based and student-centred approach to be adopted alongside disciplinary thinking (ACARA, 2011b).

From the HASS area the new History curriculum was included in Phase One of the National Curriculum by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). In this article I ask the question: what does Inquiry Learning mean for Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) and how do teachers and students engage with contested histories?

INQUIRY LEARNING

Inquiry Learning is a learner-centred pedagogical approach which privileges active learning through a question asking process and which seeks to trigger the curiosity of the learner/s. Inquiry learning is authentic and constructivist and a core principle of inquiry is that the learning comes through doing. Inquiry is conducted in stages – Immersion; Question Design; Finding Out; Drawing Conclusions; Taking Action; Reflection – and the understanding gained from the inquiry process takes precedence over the final product or knowledge learned by rote (Munnoch, 2010; Wilson and Wing Jan, 2009; McKenney, 2009). Inquiry is an integrated and holistic approach to learning as the process of questioning may lead the inquirers to draw on other subject areas or to learn new skills. The teacher operates in an inquiry learning space as an inquirer but also a facilitator and to carry out the inquiry process they may be required to use a number of teaching methodologies, including explicit teaching methods for specific knowledge or skills, as well as planned, incidental and responsive teaching. Inquiry learning is thus a dialogue between the inquirer and the facilitator and these roles may be exchanged and transferred. The facilitator may introduce the inquiry to: confirm an understanding of a concept; carry out a structured inquiry on an assigned topic; guide an inquiry with an assigned research question; or conduct an open inquiry where learners formulate their own questions and research cycle (Banchi and Bell, 2008; Schwartz, 2017). The inquiry process draws on the skills and knowledges of all participating – and seeks to develop new ones – and is necessarily collaborative, creating an inquiry community, even though the individual learners may have their own journey. To bring the inquiry to an end the learners and facilitators should critically reflect on the process, the actions taken, the skills and knowledges developed, and possibilities for improvement.

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WHERE HASS THOU GONE?

We read the histories written without the massacres. We read the narratives which contest the accepted or known. We teach studeaboriginants how to listen to the silences, to search for unheard voices.

Weil and Donnelly (2013) reported that “in relation to the history and the civics and citizenship curriculums” they received a “significant number of submissions arguing that “the Australian Curriculum did not pay enough attention to the impact of Western civilisation and Judeo-Christianity on Australia.” These submissions informed their recommendations for what should be taught.

1. History should be revised in order to properly acknowledge the impact of Western civilisation and Judeo-Christian heritage, utilising an overall conceptual narrative.

2. The curriculum needs to better acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses and the positives and negatives of both Western and Indigenous cultures and histories (p.18).

They also raised concerns about the “focus on skills and capabilities at the expense of explicit knowledge and the need for explicit teaching” and suggested that “the curriculum priorities should be slimmed-down and only embedded where relevant or educationally sound” (p.146). Finally, Pyne’s reviewers advised inquiry learning should not become “the prevailing orthodoxy in comparison to other evidence-based approaches” (p.124-126) because “the emphasis should be on imparting historical knowledge and understanding the different understandings of expecting children to be historiographers” (p.181).

CONTESTED HISTORIES AND THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Pyne and his reviewers advised a return to the “best story” approach: teaching children a controlled and selected narrative which is presented as objective and unmediated in an attempt to create a collective memory (for the society). It seems (Seixas 2000). The narratives brooked no contestation. To Willshire and Donnelly, History taught through an inquiry approach was potentially dangerous because the National Curriculum brings together the “disciplinary approach” with the “postmodern approach” (Seixas 2000). The “disciplinary approach” relies on taught skills as disciplinary methodologies and used to assess multiple perspectives and narratives as an historical event. These may challenge what was once the “best story” and students must select one, thus making the educator an active co-creator. The “postmodern approach” is when multiple narratives are analysed and the student is pushed to question the roles each plays in contemporary society. Unlike the second approach, the aim of the disciplinary approach is not to choose a narrative – objectively and truth are taken as relative – but to understand how the story is constructed. When using the postmodern approach students are drawn into social and political debates, they must question the silences and the forgotten, why some stories can be only told now, so that the relevance of history and historical constructions to their present becomes clear.

In conclusion, this – to answer First Dog on the Moon – is how we teach about the massacres. We read the histories written without the massacres. We read the narratives which contest the accepted or known. We teach studeaboriginants how to listen to the silences, to search for unheard voices. We use historical and historiographical methodologies to do so. We use the skills of critical literacy to understand how and why narratives are analysed and the student is directed students to do so through co-application of the disciplinary methodologies and used to assess multiple perspectives and narratives as an historical event. These may challenge what was once the “best story” and students must select one, thus making the educator an active co-creator. The “postmodern approach” is when multiple narratives are analysed and the student is pushed to question the roles each plays in contemporary society. Unlike the second approach, the aim of the disciplinary approach is not to choose a narrative – objectively and truth are taken as relative – but to understand how the story is constructed. When using the postmodern approach students are drawn into social and political debates, they must question the silences and the forgotten, why some stories can be only told now, so that the relevance of history and historical constructions to their present becomes clear.

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WHERE HASS THOU GONE?
FEATURE

Ms Susan Caldis, Macquarie University; Vice President, Geography Teachers’ Association of New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory (GTANSW&ACT)

ABSTRACT
The Theory of Reflexivity (Archer 2010a, 2010b, 2012) is used to consider whether Geography is understood to be enabled or constrained within the key learning area (KLA) of the Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) or within the subject grouping of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). A positioning of key terms including Geography, HASS and STEM opens the discussion, and an overview of the theoretical framework that underpins the Theory of Reflexivity follows. Properties that emerge from this theoretical framework provide a structure for exploring the enabling and/or constraining influences of policy and praxis in response to understanding where Geography is situated amongst other subjects. Ultimately, there are many points to consider and this article touches on only a few. The article also provides a personal account and opinion drawn from my lived experience as a Geography educator and curriculum developer. Evidence suggests there is no definitive ‘one-size fits all’ answer, although drawing from personal experience it can be concluded that Geography is both enabled and constrained within HASS and STEM. It is also reasonable to suggest that Geography provides a bridge between HASS and STEM. Whether Geography is enabled or constrained more within HASS or STEM is related to the influence of Reflexivity and its emergent properties upon each practitioner and educational context, as well as one’s willingness to act upon such influences.

POSITIONING THE KEY TERMS
Definitions for Geography, Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS), Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), and integrated-curriculum are evident across policy statements including curriculum documents and strategic plans, empirical research, and also in the way each becomes represented or enacted in schools and universities. Such definitions vary. Therefore, the following definitions of the aforementioned terms, drawing heavily on policy, are provided for the purpose of clarity and consistency throughout this article.

Geography is defined as a wide-ranging and dynamic discipline where phenomena from the natural world, social world, and the humanities are integrated and studied through the perspectives of place, space, and environment. Geography provides an understanding of the world around us, for example through exploring the diversity of environments, places, peoples and cultures; the inequalities existing within and between these places; dependence on the environment for survival; attachment to place; and connections between places and people throughout the world (National Committee for Geographical Sciences 2018).

At a national scale, in a school-based education and curriculum context, Geography is typically identified as a subject within the Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) learning area with a focus on inspiring curiosity and wonder about the diversity of the world’s places, peoples, cultures and environments, and encouraging active citizenship towards creating a socially just and sustainable future (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2013a; Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs 2008; National Committee for Geographical Sciences, 2018).

Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) is defined in the Australian Curriculum structure as a learning area comprised of several subjects including Geography, History, Civics and Citizenship, and Economics-Business. Learning focuses on future challenges through the study of human behaviour and interaction in social, cultural, environmental, economic, historical and political contexts, from the personal to global scale (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2013b; Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs 2008). It should be noted that across states and territories the name and inclusion of HASS identified subjects varies slightly.

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education refers to the collective teaching of the disciplines of Science, Technology, Education and Mathematics; and it is a national school education strategy which advocates a multi and cross-disciplinary approach to teaching (Education Council 2015). The aim of such an education strategy is to enhance Australia’s future competitiveness in a rapidly changing global economy, through using the lenses of Science, Mathematics, Engineering and Technology to develop...
individual and national capacity to respond to challenges around productivity and economic wellbeing. There is an emphasis on the need for a multi-disciplinary, integrated approach to learning (via STEM) to develop critical analysts, problem solvers and creative thinking skills to solve real-world challenges. (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2016; Education Council 2015; Office of the Chief Scientist 2013, 2014; Selleman et al 2015b).

An integrated-curriculum refers to the purposeful combination of subject matter from different subjects, that is, meaningful teaching, learning and assessment activities that are designed across several subjects (2013; Smith et al 2006). An integrated-curriculum allows complex real-world problems to be solved through critical and creative thinking using a cross-disciplinary or multi-subject lens (Acedo & Hughes 2014). In summary, for a national, school-based education setting and for the purpose of this article, the following definitions apply: Geography is a subject; HASS is a formalised key learning area comprised of several subjects including Geography and identified in national curriculum policy including the Melbourne Declaration; STEM is a national education strategy emphasising a multi-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary approach to teaching rather than being siloed, and an integrated curriculum is an approach to teaching, learning and assessment strategies that deliberately connect learning from more than one subject.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

An internal conversation is defined as the 'bending-back' of thought to stimulate inner conversation that creates distance between self, circumstance, and the firm. For this reason, the firm requiring discernment and deliberation refers to whether Geography is evidenced as being enabled or constrained by its connection to HASS or STEM.

Reflexivity is an iterative progressive cycle of reflection (action, thought, action) where three emergent properties – personal, structural, and cultural – guide an internal conversation that encourages a decision: whether Geography is enabled or constrained by its connection to STEM education or by the key learning area of HASS. It is acknowledged there are many points worthy of consideration, however, within the brief of this article, only a small number are selected for coverage. The personal emergent properties are reflective of personal knowledge and experience, as required by the Theory of Reflexivity.

STRUCTURAL EMERGENT PROPERTIES

Empirical evidence and national policies, such as curriculum documents and strategic plans, can assist in determining whether Geography is evidenced as being enabled or constrained by its connection to STEM education or the key learning area of HASS.

The Melbourne Declaration and structure of the Australian Curriculum identifies Geography within the HASS learning area. This is evidenced by the liberal arts modeled at the time suggesting that Geography provides a bridge between the social sciences and biophysical sciences but is characterised by the analytical, critical and speculative methodologies of the Humanities through determining the impact of place, space and maintenance on the human condition (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority 2013b; Sorenam 2008). However, as the curriculum development process continued, and further research emerged, the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum: Geography was written to have specific points of connection and complementarity to the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum: Science and the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum: Mathematics.

The prelude of international research around the effective use of geospatial technologies in a geographical education context to promote understanding and to develop skills of spatial reasoning supports the specific inclusion of spatial technologies and Geographical Information Systems into the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum: Science and Skils strand of the Australian Curriculum for Geography (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority 2013a; Kerle 2015; Miles, DeMerci, Kerle 2012).

To further emphasise the connection between Geography and STEM education, National Geographic has produced a series of multi-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary resources, focused on the skills of critical thinking, teamwork, problem-solving, and the use of geographical information systems, to show how Geography can be integrated as part of the STEM because the best STEM resources and programs go beyond Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (National Geographic, date unknown).

Nevertheless, the importance of understanding Geography through the lens of HASS is evidenced as being enabled or constrained by a process of time (Archer 2010b, 2017; Caetano 2015). Cultural emergent properties (CEPs) refer to values connected to a specific place and/or period (Archer 2010b, 2017; Caetano 2015). Structural emergent properties provide a structure for discernment and deliberation, and to propose possible dedications related to whether Geography is enabled or constrained by a STEM education approach or by the key learning area of HASS. It is acknowledged there are many points worthy of consideration, however, within the brief of this article, only a small number are selected for coverage. The personal emergent properties are reflective of personal knowledge and experience, as required by the Theory of Reflexivity.

From here-on, the structural and personal emergent properties provide a structure for discernment and deliberation, and to propose possible dedications related to whether Geography is enabled or constrained by a STEM education approach or by the key learning area of HASS. It is acknowledged there are many points worthy of consideration, however, within the brief of this article, only a small number are selected for coverage. The personal emergent properties are reflective of personal knowledge and experience, as required by the Theory of Reflexivity.

Drawing from policy and praxis identified within Geography: Shaping Australia’s Future and the GTANSW/ACT submission to the NSW Curriculum Review, it is evident that the study of Geography in schools and at university level requires students to increasingly develop their capacity to access, use, interpret, and communicate through a range of comparative and critical perspectives related to data, sets and the tools of Geographical Information Systems (GIS). Augmented reality sandboxes provide an example of a technology that enabling skills can be used to connect learning about terrain and topography (Geography) with atmospheric processes and climate (Science, Geography, Soil, Agriculture, and Crop Systems); the importance of urban planning and how to make connections between food, soil and water, transport, energy, and resources, health, and population to develop innovative solutions to the so-called ‘wicked problems’ of a connected world. Such technologies are currently being introduced for use in schools, within Geography classrooms and across STEM education projects.

Therefore, a formalised statement where Geography also becomes recognised as a STEM education subject will promote the development of the so-called 21st Century skills, and general capabilities, Interdisciplinary Understanding of Geography for Society to be within the key learning area of HASS and as part of the STEM education repertoire will allow educators and students to grasp what is both new and important, either as separate or in combination, have distinctive characteristics which can either drive and enable, or inhibit and constrain, the process of action and dedication (Archer 2017).
seeking recognition of Geography as a partial STEM education subject. (National Committee for Geographical Sciences 2018). The Curriculum Review (focussed on the subject of Geography) illuminates both the HASS nature of geographical content and its increasing recognition as a key component of STEM through the use of geospatial tools and emerging technologies such as augmented and virtual reality to develop skills of representational, critical, and creative thinking. The response concludes with a specific request to the Curriculum Review team for Geography to become formalised as a subject of STEM education (Geography Teachers’ Association of New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory 2018).

Enabling or constraint of Geography being more deeply and formally understood as a subject of the key learning area of HASS or as a subject of STEM education, or being a bridge between both will depend on the strength of policy and praxis combined with stakeholder ability to effectively champion the desired change.

PERSONAL EMERGENT PROPERTIES

Reflecting on my career as a Geography Teacher and Head Teacher HASS – most of which occurred prior to the ‘STEM education era’ – it would seem my personal beliefs, values and attitudes about geography as a subject are simultaneously enabled and constrained by connecting Geography to the key learning area of Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS).

In the 1990s, Bachelor of Education programs required completion of a Humanities block in order to become a specialist Geography teacher. A Geography major in such a pathway emphasised coverage of units from Culture, Development and Geography. Because in this era, a second teaching subject in the Humanities would typically be Sociology and Culture, or Economics, or History, or English. As a Geography teacher, I endeavoured to complete a Humanities pathway, my understanding about and capacity for creating meaning and value from the interconnectedness of place and space, and landscape and livelihood was well developed (Hulme 2013). To then be employed in a variety of Social Sciences or Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE) subjects. The words ‘Teaching Geography’ for over a decade meant that HASS truly enabled my understanding about and love for Geography. I would connect with other subjects in HASS or as partially a STEM subject. (National Committee for Geographical Sciences, 2018 p.87). This policy, discussed in the structural emergent properties section, connects with my personal emergent properties. The words ‘Geography’ (HASS), ‘partially’ signify Geography can belong to both HASS and STEM. For Geography to be formally and not constrained as a subject in terms of its usability, integrity and profile, its knowledge and understanding within the Australian population, and ability to impart important, unspoken pathways and career trajectories to support the productivity and relevance of Australia in a changing world, it is time for the lens about Geography to expand. Formally, therefore, the strength of policy and praxis combined with the underpinning ability to effectively champion the teaching and learning of Geography are set to achieve the desired outcome.

Over time, my values and beliefs about whether Geography is enabled or constrained by its connection to the key learning area of STEM or as a subject of STEM education develops, extends, and changes. As a leader in geographical education I have a responsibility to respond to policy and praxis.

CONCLUSION

Now it is time to decide which emergent property becomes most powerful – the structural or the personal. A combination of properties would be ideal. In reading through the closing paragraphs of Chapter 13, Geography in Australian Schools in Geography: Shaping Australia’s Future, I am struck by a sentence: “An awareness that school geography extends beyond the school geography perspectives and also has significant content science, would be greatly helped if it was nationally recognised as a partially a STEM subject.” (National Committee for Geographical Sciences, 2018 p.87). This policy, discussed in the structural emergent properties section, connects with my personal emergent properties. Geography ‘partially’ signify Geography can belong to both HASS and STEM. For Geography to be formally and not constrained as a subject in terms of its usability, integrity and profile, its knowledge and understanding within the Australian population, and ability to impart important, unspoken pathways and career trajectories to support the productivity and relevance of Australia in a changing world, it is time for the lens about Geography to expand. Formally, therefore, the strength of policy and praxis combined with the underpinning ability to effectively champion the teaching and learning of Geography are set to achieve the desired outcome.

Biographies

Susan Caldis is a highly regarded Geography teacher in school and university contexts. Currently, she is the Vice President of Geography Teachers’ Association of NSW & ACT (GTA/NSW & ACT) and a Doctor of Philosophy (PhilD) candidate at Macquarie University. Her research focuses on the development of pedagogical practices in the teaching of Geography in secondary schools. Prior to PhD candidature, Susan was a Head Teacher Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE) in NSW government schools and also led the development of the Australian Curriculum: Geography: Shaping Australia’s Future. (NSW Ministry of Education, 2018). Susan Caldis is an appointed member of Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). In 2019, Susan gained international recognition for her work and was invited to Singapore by the Academy of Singapore Teachers as the Outstanding Educator in Residence for geographical education.

Please note this article is the authors’ interpretation of policy and literature and includes a personal account and opinion drawn from key moments in the author’s career as a Geography teacher. This article does not represent the views of the Department of Educational Studies, Macquarie University or OTAN/NSW & ACT.
Are Transversal Competencies the ‘New Black’?

Ms Leonie McIntuenn, Associate Professor Rachel Sheffield, Curtin University

ABSTRACT

“The debate surrounding what constitutes quality education and learning in the 21st century is ongoing” (UNESCO, 2015, p. 3). While traditional disciplines such as English, mathematics and science continue to have a strong hold, there is a concern that the current educational focus is not addressing the ‘new generation’ of skills, often referred to as ‘21st century’ or ‘soft skills’. The questions Australian educators must ask include: What are these competencies, what is their significance and where, if at all, are they addressed within the Australian Curriculum? This article examines the acting forces and key organisations involved in developing international skills frameworks. It discusses where and how these competencies are addressed in the Australian Curriculum and how they could be embedded and consequently assessed more thoughtfully and strategically in the classroom. We suggest that these ‘transversal competencies’ are already present in our curriculum as the General Capabilities. Therefore, there is no new framework to consider - they are not the ‘new black’. The challenge for educators, however, is to recognise these competencies, provide strategic learning opportunities, and collect evidence to ensure their students attain the necessary skills to be ready for the future.

INTRODUCTION

An increasing number of reports are espousing the importance of the so-called ‘21st century’ or ‘soft’ skills. For example, the OECD (2012a) states that “Skills have become the global currency of 21st century economies” and McKinsey (2017) suggests that as machines are becoming more capable of (AI) artificial intelligence, workers of the future will need to focus more on activities that require skills rather than content knowledge. Gonski (2018, p.36) stated, “every student needs to be equipped with the skills and knowledge to navigate a rapidly changing world”, indicating both skills and knowledge are equally important. In Australia this trend will impact 4.3 million young people who will be required to make this shift towards balancing skills and knowledge and consequently the Australian education system will need to equip young people with the necessary skills and capabilities required in the era of the “new work smart” (FYA 2017, p. 8). It is imperative then, that we identify shortcomings in our current curriculum and develop bold strategies to create a progressive education system that develops a ‘new work smart’ workforce of the future (OECD, 2012 p.124).

A QUESTION OF TERMINOLOGY

Various terminologies are currently in use in an attempt to capture, compartmentalise and name this shifting cluster of skills and competencies. Within research communities, educational institutions and international organisations, however, there is no definitive list or title to describe them collectively (Gonski 2018 p.39). Terms in use include ‘21st century skills’ or ‘21st century learning’ (e.g. the Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills [ATC21S] Partnership for 21st century skills [P21], ‘key competencies’ [OECD 2005], ‘soft skills’, ‘new collar skills’ (McKinsey 2017), and ‘entrepreneurial skills’ (New Work Smarts). ‘21st century skills’ is widely used, but many argue that the skills and capabilities referred to were important before the 21st century, while also noting that with rapid change, century-long milestones are inappropriate (Koelt 2013, p. 301). Another term, ‘transversal competencies’, is re-emerging as a way of describing these broad-based skills, knowledge and understandings. For the purpose of this article, the authors will be referring to this cluster of skills as “transversal competencies” (TVCs).

In April 2018, the European Parliament and Council (EU) 2018/646, articulated a common framework for the provision of better services (for skills and qualifications (Eurpass), acknowledging that “transversal or soft skills, such as critical thinking, team work, problem solving and creativity, digital or language skills, are increasingly important and are essential prerequisites for personal and professional fulfilment and can be applied in different fields” (European Commission 2018). The European Commission also suggests that transversal knowledge, skills and competences are the building blocks for the development of the “hard” skills and competences required to succeed in the labour market (European Commission 2018). ATS2020 (2018) describes TVCs as a broad set of key skills that are known to be critically important to success in school, further education, and the world of work.

TRANSVERSAL COMPETENCIES IN THE CURRICULUM

There is evidence that education systems from a number of countries around the world have taken steps to redesign their curriculum and explicitly embed 21st century competencies such as problem-solving, collaboration, global awareness, and communication skills in the curriculum (New Basics, 2017, p. 8). UNESCO (2015) suggests that there are two main approaches to this process:

• an analytic approach where learning of TVCs is facilitated through a cluster of learning areas or learning experiences, each intended to provide the learner with a particular competency (e.g. the Australian Curriculum’s General Capabilities); and
• a holistic approach in which TVCs are introduced as a scheme or programme that encapsulates an overall message. All participating countries use the analytical approach, except for Japan, which sought to engage in an holistic approach called ‘Zest for Living’, (UNESCO 2018).

The UNESCO Report also identified a number of challenges facing educational institutions in their efforts to address TVCs in the countries they canvassed and identified them as Definitional, Operational, and Systemic (Table 1).

The Australian Curriculum identifies seven capabilities that play a significant role in equipping young Australians to live and work successfully in the twenty-first century.

The recent Gonski Report (2018, p.74) also stated that the General Capabilities provide “a clear list that has been nationally agreed and established as part of the Australian Curriculum” and that they “need to be at the core of our curriculum and teaching practice” (p. 36). It is important that Australian teachers understand that these skills are already embedded in the Australian curriculum, though not explicitly identified as ‘transversal competences’. Table 2 illustrates how frequently these ‘transversal competencies’ are presented within the Australian Curriculum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Challenges to the Implementation of Transversal Competencies in the Curriculum</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definitional</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of, or a vague definition of transversal competencies in policy documents, such as education plans and curricula.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of clarity in scope of transversal competencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of clarity in the desired outcomes of the teaching of transversal competencies</td>
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ASSESSMENT
A major challenge associated with the implementation of 21st-century competencies or tVCs concerns their assessment. Gonski (2018) suggests there is a lack of support for the General Capabilities as there is no consistent method of assessment. Many scholars agree that there are few research-based tools or assessment models for use in education settings that facilitate the assessment of "transversal competencies". Despite the attention and importance given to the general capabilities, teachers and schools are insufficiently supported to teach and assess them. (Gonski 2018, p. 29).

The focus of assessment has traditionally been the measurement of factual knowledge and not the more complex competencies of problem-solving, critical thinking, and communication, which require students to complete complex tasks to real-world situations across multiple settings and diverse situations (Hicksen, Loyd, & Joyce 2005). In most educational settings this is difficult to achieve given the current timetable structure, time constraints and subject-timed learning that occurs in schools. Therefore, the challenge involves developing new assessment procedures and instruments that can create opportunities to apply these competencies in authentic contexts, and facilitate the collection of evidence across multiple contexts (Pepper 2020).

PEDAGOGY, PRACTICE AND PROFICIENCY
Another challenge related to the teaching of tVCs is teacher expertise and proficiency. The acquisition of 21st-century competencies requires specific pedagogic techniques such as project-based learning, cooperative learning, experiential learning, or formative assessment (cf. Dede 2000). Gonski (2018, p. 40) supports this by suggesting that teaching and assessing the General Capabilities, particularly in an embedded form, is a highly complex task requiring teachers to have a sound understanding of how to teach these capabilities and to integrate their teaching into different learning areas. Some solutions include the introduction of inquiry, problem-based, or project-based learning in authentic real-world contexts. To develop "in-service and pre-service teachers' pedagogy in this area, the requisite skills need to be embedded in initial teacher education and ongoing professional development. As with most professional learning, it is recognised that the designed activities need to be sustained, involve the development of teaching materials, and be integrated into teachers’ daily working routines (Rand 2012).

INTERNATIONAL APPROACHES
A number of education systems around the world are offering project and problem-based learning experiences that go beyond the classroom environment. These include working with local businesses or facilitating arts and film projects in local communities. These learning experiences are designed to develop transversal skills management and enterprise skills that will be critical for future success (OECD 2014). These support the development of the tVCs in real-life contexts.

The European Union’s Review of Transversal Skills 2020 (ATS2020) Project was designed to provide a comprehensive learning model for the enhancement of transversal student skills within their curriculum. It introduced new approaches and innovative tools for the development and assessment of these skills. The project’s consortium consisted of 17 partners from 11 EU countries, and involved over 1,000 teachers. There are extensive materials available for review on their website (see these reviewed in the ATS2020 approach. (www. ats2020.eu).

CONCLUSION
The term "transversal competencies" (tVCs) is becoming increasingly popular to describe the essential skills and competencies needed to operate effectively in today’s world. Some might call it the "new black" (Freeman 2014, p. 86) suggests “while it will be important to keep up with the contemporary thinking surrounding these skills... the focus need to be on teaching our profession and development”.

The General Capabilities exist at the core of the Australian Curriculum and reflect what are widely recognised internationally as “transversal competencies”. These will become increasingly important as more pressure continues to be placed on educational systems through political and economic agendas to prepare a transversally competent workforce. The next stage must focus on mechanisms for capturing evidence of a student’s acquisition of these competencies.

Some future questions include: how do we understand the understanding of tVCs? How is our school currently addressing the General Capabilities? Are we capturing evidence of the General Capabilities? If so how? Are there some competencies (such as affective ones like empathy and resilience) that we need to focus on? What non-formal opportunities do we provide that might allow us to capture evidence of tVCs (e.g. extra-curricular activities, clubs, etc.)? How might this evidence be collected (e.g. through the LMS, digital portfolios, digital badges)? What pedagogical approaches could we implement that support the development of these competencies? What programs are already in place (e.g. ATS2020) that we could emulate or modify? What pedagogical practices would help us ensure these skills are developed within our curriculum (e.g. inquiry learning, problem-based learning, integrated units of work)?

The worldwide trend of recognising the importance of “transversal competencies” as essential for the future workforce has elevated the importance of the General Capabilities in the curriculum. The challenge for Australian schools, therefore, is to ensure they are given the necessary attention at both a school and systemic level.

Table 2. Key skills and competencies from the UNESCO Transversal Competencies Framework and General Capabilities from the Australian Curriculum (AC)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNESCO tVCs</th>
<th>Key Skills and Competencies (reordered for presentation in AC)</th>
<th>Australian Curriculum General Capability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Innovate Thinking</td>
<td>creativity (*53), entrepreneurship (55), resourcesfulness (3), application skills (132), reflective thinking (44), decision-making (328)</td>
<td>Critical and Creative Thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Skills</td>
<td>presentation skills (1312), communication skills (277), leadership (64), organisational skills (338), team skills (57), collaboration (155), initiative (90), sociability (84), collegiality (86), empathy (83), compassion (7)</td>
<td>Personal and Social Capability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrespersonal Skills</td>
<td>self-discipline (637), independent learning (1651), flexibility (860), adaptability (90), self-awareness (880), perseverance (3), self-motivation (606), compassion (7), integrity (14), risk-taking (527), self-respect (900)</td>
<td>Personal and Social Capability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Citizenship</td>
<td>awareness (2163), tolerance (9), openness (20), respect for diversity (86), cultural understanding (335), conflict resolution (99), ciuc / political participation (190), respect for the environment (950), national identity (1080)</td>
<td>Intercultural Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media and Information Literacy</td>
<td>accepting information (2667), locating information (2704), communicating ideas (2177), participating in democratic processes (2039), analysing information and media (3468), evaluating information and media content (3011)</td>
<td>ICT Capability Critical and Creative Thinking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Biographies

Leenie McDevoy, Library and Innovation Consultant is an experienced educator of 35+ years with interests in the transformative power of learning in a connected world.

Dr Rachel Sheffield is an Associate Professor in the School of Education at Curtin University and is passionate about innovative and engaging STEM education.
Lived experience: increasing student engagement with the humanities

Teachers of history have long understood the need to move beyond the textbook to tell the stories of the past in order to generate empathy through lived experience.

Ma Jenny Jones, St Michael’s Collegiate, Hobart

WHERE HASS THOU GONE? • OPINION PAPERS

LOCHNAGAR CRATER, THE SOMME, APRIL 2014

I am aware that this moment in time is profound. We are standing in a field surrounded by impenetrable mist with nothing but the starkness of a cross and silhouettes dominating my vision. The sensory response to a situation like this is often to focus on the minutiae: the smells of mud and wet grass and the sounds of distant vehicles on a busy highway. Yet here there is more than just the immediate, much more. There is a sense of what and who has been before in this place; that now, no matter how disorienting it might be, it is peaceful and calm compared to what has happened here a century before. I can sense fear and despair, pain and suffering but also strength and friendship. History is alive in this place. I feel it and, most importantly, the students feel it. This is evident in the cessation of chatter, the awe in their faces and the enquiry in their eyes. Emotion is often considered to be a hindrance to understanding. “Don’t let emotions get in the way,” we often say. On this occasion, however, the experience of emotion is a critical step towards understanding the terrible reality of war.

The legitimacy of lived experience as profound evidence in research has gained prominence in recent years through the works of Dutch-Canadian academic Max van Manen. Van Manen’s works have foregrounded the strength of the connection between the phenomenological experience and pedagogical practice in the classroom. Van Manen (1997, p.54) argues that writing about lived experiences should be described, “as possible in experiential terms, focusing on a particular situation or event. I try to give a direct description of my experience as it is, without offering causal explanations or interpretative generalizations of my experience.” This is of course, an incredibly difficult exercise for human beings to do well, programmed as we are to make judgments as we experience a moment in time. Yet our understanding of history often depends on the myriad of personal stories available to us both in the classroom and beyond, and our ability to be ‘in the moment’ in a contextual sense can greatly add to our contextual empathy.

The ongoing tension for teachers of all disciplines often centres around the content versus engagement dilemma. This is especially relevant in the humanities, with the range and depth of curriculum now expanding from the central canons of history and geography to economics and citizenship content. The undoubted benefits of heuristic learning are often subsumed by time constraints and curriculum limitations. This often runs counter to the development of empathy, which can take time to allow for students to come to their own realisation of context. Teachers of the Humanities, more than in any other discipline, have learned that depth rather than breadth is the gold standard in pedagogical terms. We have learned to address the central learning intentions without trying to incorporate everything suggested in the Australian Curriculum. To do otherwise would be to skim across history like a stone across a pool with no real engagement, empathy or understanding of anything but facts and dates.

An excellent example of this is demonstrated in the teaching of the Holocaust, a cataclysm of such magnitude that the telling of personal stories is vital to understanding its impact. Compounding time limitations, there is also the problem of achieving a semblance of balance between the tragedy and survival narrative, as well as the 21st Century’s enduring dilemma, the ease of accessibility to confronting, unfiltered information. The World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, Yad Vashem, is a trove of information both in terms of resources and advice, for teaching this most challenging of topics.
The Centre has undertaken a mammoth task to record the stories of as many survivors as they can in the form of filmed testimonials, easily accessible through their web site. The personal testimonials exemplify their philosophical approach, which is to focus on the lives of survivors both before and after the Holocaust, so that the evils they experienced do not define them. It is self-evident that the bald recitation of data and statistics is far less effective than the story of one person’s lived experience. To learn that 6 million died is nothing compared to the searing testimonial collated by Yid Vashem. The understanding of such an incomprehensible event is given more meaning in examining the lived experience of just one person.

The enduring challenge for educators is to provide opportunities for students to understand the motivations and emotional context for people who lived in profoundly different times. Historical empathy can be defined as “a process of understanding people in the past by contextualising their actions” (De Leur, Van Bastel & Wilschut 2017). This, of course, makes it very difficult for students to understand the personal impact and reality of war on those who served.

In addition to the opportunities of virtual travel, museums have really improved student access to artefacts through pre-curated resource boxes that can be hired by schools. The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery offers a loan service of boxes brimming with artefacts about such topics as the indigenous people of Tasmania and Antarctic exploration (Loan Service 2019). The Australian War Memorial also loans Australian War Memorial boxes, which can be borrowed through local museums. All of these opportunities add to student engagement and wonder about the past.

In the final analysis, what matters to all of us who are passionate about the teaching of history is that students are given an opportunity to empathise with the people who came before us. In the world in which we currently live, it seems to me that the very best education we can give our students is to understand the lessons of history in order to understand the circular narrative of the future.

The profound sensory impact of visiting places resonant with history is uncontestable. In a different more accessible world, the possibility for young Australians to travel has increased. The benefits of this were clearly demonstrated to me on a school trip to the battlefields of World War 1 in 2014. Our School was fortunate enough to be selected to provide the choir for the Dawn Service at Villers Bremetonne. This provided an unrivalled opportunity for students to stand on the very ground where Australians not much older than them had fought and died. The trip afforded students the chance to hear the personal stories of horror and survival that (fortuitously) are anathema to today’s generation.

Standing in the mist at the Lochnagar Crater or in the pre-dawn silence of thousands at Villiers Bremetonne, students were transported to a world of a different generation, questioning again why this war had even started. The experiences of Peronne and Ypres were an essential experience in providing an understanding of the personal and the scale of the horror, once again reinforcing the engendering of empathy and personal narrative. Providing the opportunity to travel does, of course, have its economic limitations. The profundity of the impact on the students who toured the battlefields of the Somme was, however, significant. My description of the lived experience at the beginning was repeated over and over again, as these young Australians began to have a sense of the reality of war as opposed to its glorification.

The cost of providing such opportunities should not, however, mean that all students cannot experience the benefits of educational travel. The chance to immerse ourselves in other times and places continues to grow exponentially through the virtual world, with impressive and highly accessible technologies supporting pedagogical practice. Some of these sites require subscriptions, but many others provide access to schools at very little or no cost at all. The advent of some excellent virtual field trips has been of great benefit for educators seeking to generate deeper understanding of what it was like to live in different times. A good example is the virtual tour of the Edinburgh of Mary Queen of Scots (see link below) which has enabled students to observe the sights and sounds of 16th Century Scotland.

Some of the more useful links are listed below:

- http://www.discovereducation.com/Events/Virtual-field-trips/explore/by-theme/history.cfm
- http://www.discovereducation.com/Events/Virtual-field-trips/history.shtml
- https://www.australianwar Memorial.com/2014/01/20/wonderful-online-museums-and-sites.html

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The importance of Humanities in an era of STEM

As I am confident that I intend to work in the field of Engineering, I have frequently been asked why I would not only ‘cross the divide’ between humanities and STEM subjects, but enrol in a 50/50 split (Global Politics, 20th Century History and English Literature, along with Specialist Mathematics, Mathematics Methods and Physics).

It may be a surprise to many that MIT, the number one university in the world (QS: Top Universities 2018), is also the ultimate world leader in STEM education, and is ranked number two worldwide, in facilitating a well-rounded humanities education. Every undergraduate student at MIT, must enrol in eight humanities subjects, in order to graduate. This accumulates to one quarter of a student’s classes. There is an integration of both disciplines in all subjects, for example designing and engineering a printing press as part of a history module about the Renaissance.

MIT’s School of Humanities was born out of crisis, at the end of World War II, when it was acknowledged that the world’s complexities of the time required integrated knowledge. Seventy years ago, in March of 1949, Winston Churchill addressed the MIT Mid-Century Convocation and stated, “no technical knowledge can outweigh knowledge of the humanities…technology, philosophy and history must be hand in hand.” Professor Deborah Fitzgerald, Dean of MIT’s School of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, states that “MIT’s mission is to prepare students to solve the world’s most challenging problems, while this does require scientific knowledge and technical skills, the world’s problems are never fully confined to the laboratory or spreadsheet,” (2014). Furthermore, she states that “urgent challenges like poverty, climate change and diseases are always embedded in broader human realities.” (2014).

The ‘why’ to the MIT success formula is embedded in science and disseminated through the humanities.

According to Hikaru Taakeuchi et al. (2014), in a study of brain structures of students studying sciences compared to those studying humanities, the science students had significantly larger regional grey matter volume around the medial prefrontal cortex, whereas the humanities students had significantly larger regional white matter volume, concentrated around the thalamic and hippocampal regions. This can be explained by the phenomenon where overlearning in a particular area or discipline, can create what is known by neurobiologists as the Einstellung Effect. “Einstellung” comes from the German language and translates to fixed mindset, due to embedded and seemingly ‘overused’ neural connections. This phenomenon dictates the way one approaches and perceives a problem and the manner in which the solution is derived. Familiar neural pathways are revisited to the detriment of being able to explore or recognise new and innovative options. Entrenched neural pathways are ignited, solutions are quick, however, the Einstellung Effect creates a ‘road block’ to evolution of novel and creative ideas.

In my STEM classes, I focus on calculating answers to posed questions. There may be more than one method, and there is collaboration and an emphasis on the process of problem solving, however the answer is generally right or wrong. I love the challenge of solving the equation and calculating the answer to the problem, the more difficult the better. In my humanities classes, I like to debate societal problems, discussing historical context and content, along with world politics and its implications. The real learning with humanities subjects, is the organic formulation of the questions to be solved, not necessarily the answers. With the Einstellung Effect, problems may be solved however, innovation is absent. This effect is enhanced when one ‘streetlearns’ in one particular subject or where one is entrenched in one type of discipline, at the expense of another; humanities VS. STEM. As opposed to humanities and STEM. This is not a new phenomenon but one that is not commonly acknowledged in traditional education.

The validity of the Einstellung Effect is what is considered ‘psychological inertia’ and came from the classic Water Jar Experiment in 1942, by Abramah Luchins, where the effect showed that there is no need to do it this way. In suboptimal initial ideas are formed and repeated, preventing new solutions, innovations and even efficiency when approaching problems. This also relates to ‘solution blindness’ and ‘confirmation bias’, where one subconsciously ignores or rejects results that do not uphold an initial hypothesis.

How can we prevent or negate our human inclination to default to the mechanized Einstellung Effect? Student’s require, a broad education, with a balance of humanities and STEM learning opportunities, encouraged and valued equally and most importantly NOT separately. The arts in a design need to be considered as an integral component to technological development, not after, not before and not in isolation.

Biographies

Lucy Vogel is a Year 12 Student and Humanities Vice-Captain 2019 Melbourne Girls’ College

References

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As mentioned, I benefit now and will continue to benefit in the future from moving from STEM subjects to humanities subjects across the day, complimented by extra-curricular activities, in these areas as well as sport. Although I intend to work in the field of Engineering, I plan to enrol in a double major, Engineering and Arts. This will allow me to experience (focused and diffused learning each day, creating learning experiences that are interleaving (multi focused) in nature as opposed to chunking (single focused). This arrangement not only allows me to approach ideas and problems from diverse angles, it supports me to foster ideas from unique perspectives. According to Neuro science, interleaving has the additional benefit of promoting the acquisition of stored knowledge gained, in the long term memory, as opposed to short term memory. This is a great advantage towards fluency in the engineering of solutions to world issues.
In some ways the subject has been strengthened by the introduction of the Australian curriculum. It is now a mandatory subject from Foundation (Kindergarten, Prep, Reception) to Year 8, 9 or 10, depending on the state or territory. In primary schools it may be taught as a component of a combined HASS subject, but has a separate Knowledge and Understanding sub-strand in the curriculum. This means that whereas geography was previously taught within an integrated social studies in most states and territories, a practice that was widely criticised as lacking in rigour and depth, it now has a separate disciplinary identity. Whether it is taught this way in primary schools, however, has not been studied. In secondary schools, geography is a separate subject from Years 7 to 12, which it wasn’t previously in some states and territories. The introduction of the Australian curriculum has consequently strengthened geography’s identity, and it was the fifth subject to have a curriculum developed by ACARA.

On the other hand, when judged by Year 12 enrolments, geography has experienced a significant loss of students in the upper secondary years. The graph shows that since the mid-2000s the number of students taking the subject has remained relatively stable in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria, but declined in Western Australia and South Australia. However, these numbers represent a major decline since the 1970s, when measured by the percentage of all students who took geography as an examination subject in their final year of schooling. In 1973 this ranged from 22.0 per cent of all students in Victoria to 50.3 per cent in New South Wales, while the most recent figures range from 2.1 per cent of all students in South Australia to 8.1 per cent in Queensland.

The relatively weak position of geography in the upper secondary years, as measured by Year 12 enrolments, geography has experienced a significant loss of students in the upper secondary years. The graph shows that since the mid-2000s the number of students taking the subject has remained relatively stable in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria, but declined in Western Australia and South Australia. However, these numbers represent a major decline since the 1970s, when measured by the percentage of all students who took geography as an examination subject in their final year of schooling. In 1973 this ranged from 22.0 per cent of all students in Victoria to 50.3 per cent in New South Wales, while the most recent figures range from 2.1 per cent of all students in South Australia to 8.1 per cent in Queensland.

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The relatively weak position of geography in the upper secondary years, as measured by Year 12 enrolments, geography has experienced a significant loss of students in the upper secondary years. The graph shows that since the mid-2000s the number of students taking the subject has remained relatively stable in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria, but declined in Western Australia and South Australia. However, these numbers represent a major decline since the 1970s, when measured by the percentage of all students who took geography as an examination subject in their final year of schooling. In 1973 this ranged from 22.0 per cent of all students in Victoria to 50.3 per cent in New South Wales, while the most recent figures range from 2.1 per cent of all students in South Australia to 8.1 per cent in Queensland.
in getting students to imagine places they have never seen, and in encouraging them to think about places and landscapes emotionally as well as intellectually. To counter Academy that they have learned, students will use language in a variety of spoken and written contexts, further developing their oral and written skills.

Geography also develops numeracy. In primary school geography, students count, measure and construct graphs and tables, and the subject can provide many practical applications of mathematical skills. In secondary school geography, a wide range of statistics and graphs are used to portray and analyze information and relationships. Students learn these methods best when there is a purpose for using them, and geography can provide this purpose.

**Geography Develops Personal Capabilities**

The geography curriculum develops the ability of students to think logically, critically and creatively in a variety of ways. They learn the importance of creative questions and how to develop them, and the value of speculation, and are encouraged to be creative and imaginative in investigations and fieldwork. They learn how to think logically in evaluating and using evidence, testing explanations and analyzing arguments, and to think deeply to answer questions that do not have straightforward answers.

Geography teaching emphasizes learning through student inquiry, often involving fieldwork. When they work cooperatively with others in the classroom and in the field, students develop their teamwork skills, and learn to appreciate the different insights and perspectives of other group members. They may, of course, also develop a strong dislike of ‘free riders’.

**Geography Teaches About the World**

Geography teaching responds to students’ curiosity about places. It nurtures their wonder about the world and its diversity of peoples, environments, societies and cultures. It develops a geographical imagination that enables them to relate to other places and to the lives of people in those places, and helps to foster a sense of global citizenship.

Geography gives students a knowledge of the world. It helps them to understand its environments, and its changing demographic and economic patterns, and to comprehend the processes producing greater global integration and their varying outcomes in different places. It can help students to understand a range of global issues, such as international migration and its consequences, pressures on global water supplies, climate change, differences in human wellbeing, food production and consumption, ways of managing environmental problems, and international geopolitical conflicts over resources, ethnicity, ideologies and borders.

Geography also teaches students about their own place, how it is connected with other places throughout the world, and how and why it is changing. This provides them with an understanding of some of the influences on their locality and their lives, and in turn helps them to make informed decisions on a range of community issues.

One of the negative consequences of the Australian curriculum is that history is the only HASS subject made mandatory in Years 9 and 10. This means that in some states and territories, but not all, students in Years 9 and/or 10 will learn nothing of the contemporary world, and they will not have the opportunity to study some of the topics mentioned in the previous two paragraphs.

**Geography Develops an Understanding of the Significance of the Environment**

Geography teaches students about the resources and services that the environment provides to support their life. They learn how these are produced and maintained by environmental processes. They explore the opportunities and constraints that these resources provide for human life and economic activity and evaluate scenarios of future resource issues. They explore the different ways people have perceived, managed and used these resources and services, and how they have changed them through this use. Where these resources are being degraded, students investigate the causes and consequences of degradation, and integrate environmental explanations with demographic, economic, social and political ones. In all, this geography has a vital role in explaining the significance of the environment for people and societies, and in developing a sense of environmental responsibility. And because part of geography is natural science, the subject also has a vital role in linking the humanities and social sciences with the sciences.

**Geography Has Distinctive Ways of Thinking**

A recent Academic Society report on geography described geographical thinking this way:

> Geography is distinctive in its emphasis on spatial thinking, its interest in knowledge generated from the study of specific places, and its recognition of the fundamental importance of the environment to human welfare. Its vision is both local and global. It is also marked by an awareness of the interconnections between phenomena and processes both within places and across space, and its fields of study span the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities. (National Committee for Geographical Sciences 2018, p. 4)

Because of this awareness of interconnections, geographers try to think holistically, and be open to a wide range of ways of understanding and explaining the phenomenon or problem being studied. This helps to prepare students for the interdisciplinary understanding that is increasingly needed to comprehend complex issues.

**Geographers are Employable**

One of the reasons for the decline in geography in schools is that the subject, like other HASS disciplines, is perceived by many parents and students as not leading to future employment. This perception needs to be challenged. Because a university major in geography can lead to two types of careers. One uses specifically geographical knowledge and skills in careers in environmental management, environmental policy, natural hazard management, urban planning, regional development, geographical information systems, applied economic and social research, market research, teaching, tourism and travel, and other fields. Some of these careers require further study for a professional qualification, as in the case of urban planning or teaching.

The other type of career is based on the broad knowledge and general capabilities gained through studying geography. The broad knowledge includes the ability to comprehend information and ideas from the natural and human sciences, an understanding of the world and its diversity of places, environments and peoples, and an awareness that the distinctiveness of places means that what works in one place may not work in another. The capabilities are variously described as soft, enterprise or transferable skills, and are increasingly sought by employers. Those gained from the study of geography include breadth of thinking, learning skills, problem identification, problem solving, analytical skills, digital literacy and critical thinking. These are the capabilities needed by young people to successfully navigate their way through varying career paths in different occupations and industries during their working life, which is rapidly becoming the employment of choice. Awareness of a geography degree is that it does not have a set career path but can lead in many directions. In the UK, data suggest that many geography graduates get jobs in banking, finance, marketing and other types of business, and are less likely to be unemployed after their degree course than those studying almost any other subject.

Geography has much to offer!

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**References and further reading**


**Biographies**

Alaric Maude BA, PhD, AM. Associate Professor of Geography, Flinders University (retired since 2004); Lead Writer and Writing Coach for the Australian geography curriculum 2009-13; Chair, National Committee for Geographical Sciences, Australian Academy of Science, 2011-2017.
A World History Curriculum for twenty-first century Australia

The Australian Curriculum has been in operation for five years and we are now in a better position to reflect on its strengths and weaknesses. A full revision may be several years away, but we can start imagining what a possible history curriculum for the middle of the twenty-first century might look like.

One criticism was that, despite the occasional optional and isolated topic on pre-modern Asia and/or the Middle East, it essentially presented a Eurocentric history and effectively ignored Asian and Middle East history over the last 400 or so years. My other main criticism was that in thousands of years covered by human history, a disproportionate period equated to two thirds of a year or 27% of the total curriculum was spent on the ten years covered by the two World Wars.

There were good reasons for these failings. Because of the relatively short time available for formulating the curriculum there was a heavy reliance on what was already being taught in schools. Conversely to the "left-wing radical" stereotypes, history teachers are very conservative when it comes to topics, and only a few are ready to step outside familiar territory. In the NSW Senior History Syllabus, for over 40 years, an in-depth study of World History over the last four hundred years has been the history taught at Year 11. The result is a curriculum that caters to the interests and abilities of students in philosophically and pedagogically sound ways.

The second, more difficult but vital, component will be the provision of training and resources to support both new and current teachers to teach such a curriculum. Achieving this would involve universities, educational administrations and subject associations. Having an Australia-wide curriculum can create efficiencies through sharing the load and avoiding duplication of effort.

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An overview of a twenty-first century curriculum

A meaningful twenty-first century curriculum would respond to developments in the last fifty years or so that offer new perspectives on human history.

In terms of human origins, the advances in genetic mapping mean we now know far more about the movement of women and men out of Africa by 70,000 years ago. There were two migrations that are particularly relevant to understanding the massive feats of navigation involved during the last thousand years.

Looking at more recent times, over the last five hundred years there have been four significant, and inter-related movements that have resulted in bringing these disparate populations together again. The first was European exploration and colonisation. The second, the development of modern economies; and felt that they could cope with, and gain from, such migration. Australia is a leading example of such a country.

The World History Movement

Over the last fifty or so years as a historical approach to this large-scale perspective on human history has developed under the umbrella of World History. One of the leading proponents of World History is David Christian. He would be known to Australian Senior History students for his work on the Russian Revolution. He taught at Macquarie University from 1972 to 2000 but was born in Brooklyn, and is now based in the United States. His book, This fleeting world (2008), provides an overview of human history in just over 500 pages. A more detailed account by Yuval Noah Harari (2015) is the very popular Sapiens: A brief history of humankind. There is also, A short history of the world (2003), by the Australian historian, Geoffrey Blainey, as well as his other book, A very short history of the world (2nd ed., 2013) - although this latter book also goes to 500 pages.

Guidelines for a World History Curriculum for Australia

The above-mentioned books (and many others) will help provide a suitable overview for a course of World History for Years 7 to 10, but the biggest challenges will come in the next two stages.

The first of these stages will be converting this overview into a curriculum that students will find interesting and relevant, to their current needs, and contributing to their development as informed citizens. While much of the present curriculum is still relevant, there are at least three special considerations:

1. If we are to begin with the earliest human migrations and Indigenous Australians as an example, it is crucial that we do not see pre-colonial Indigenous societies as examples of “Stone Age” cultures. The complex history of land-use is only now being written in books such as: The biggest estate on earth: How Aborigines made Australia (2011) by Bill Gammage, and at a more popular level, Bruce Pascoe's Dark emu. Black seed: agriculture or accident? There is still so much in accounts of early explorers that is not common knowledge, such as the dogs sent by Indigenous peoples preparing for elaborate ceremonies like initiations or corroborees. (The process was taken just as seriously as setting up a set for a modern stage play).

2. At all stages of development, the primary focus should be on how the topics help us understand contemporary Australia. For example, early Greek democracy, the Roman Senate and Romanesque city-republics and nineteenth century political reform in England are all relevant to understanding our form of government. Just as important is a knowledge of our South Eastern neighbours.

3. A series of ‘snapshots’ in the form of world maps at different times could provide an overview. Aspects of British history will remain important but just as important will be other topics such religious movements from around 600 BCE to 700 CE when almost all the major religions were established; and an overview of South Asian history that leads to a better understanding of our current position in the world and possible future developments.

Once a curriculum has been formulated the next stage is to ensure that the training and resources for teaching any new areas that have been included is carried out.

Where to from here?

I would be interested in working with a small group of those with curriculum and teaching experience, both inside and outside the subjects covered by the current History Curriculum, to produce an outline of what a true World History for Australian students in Years 7 to 10 might look like. If I were to propose this was a good place for our own thinking, I would be happy to co-ordinate a discussion group on what a new curriculum might look like and welcome any feedback.

Endnotes

1. Professional Educator Vol 11 Issue 4 (June 2012) p22-24

2. My website, www.lkiokes.com.au has further background and a contact page or email to kkees@gmail.com

Biographies

Ian Keese FACE, Retired History Teacher
Within a decade of its first usage online in 2002 as a slang word by young Australians, the cultural practice of taking a ‘selfie’ had become a global phenomenon. So much so that the Oxford English Dictionary was compelled to declare ‘selfie’ as its word of the year in 2013. Since then, all manner of Kardashian-style Twitter or Insta feeds have been spawned, the most (in)famous being the moment that Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt, grabbed a selfie with then global leaders British Prime Minister David Cameron and US President Barack Obama at the funeral of former South African President, Nelson Mandela – apparently, much to Michelle Obama’s chagrin.

According to the philosopher Charles Taylor (2004), cultural habits, like taking a selfie, act out a ‘social imaginary’ that brings society together in ways that define social expectations. Individuals, says Taylor (2004), ‘imagine’ their social surroundings and express it not as theory but in images, stories and songs that are shared by large groups of people. These practices help us to feel, instead of think, our way around our world and our relationships with each other (Taylor 2004).

Taking a selfie, therefore, becomes a snapshot that helps us to make sense of where we came from and where we may be going. The early years of debates around the Australian Curriculum were described by Kerry Kennedy (2009) as a conversation that tried to ‘capture a nation’s soul’ by clarifying what future Australians will know, value and do. Seeing the Australian Curriculum as a selfie of our national soul that captures our present and future curriculum often helps pre-service education students in my HASS or history curriculum classes to make sense of the purposes of the various humanities curriculum they need to teach. Exploring how the relationship between school knowledge and everyday life (our old and new communal ‘images, stories and songs’) can be organised through HASS or humanities curriculum, encourages the next generations of both students and educators to explore what the selfie for a future Australia could represent.

Despite the recent, and at times somewhat partisan, discussions around what should or should not be included, at its core, HASS and the other humanities learning areas are more than just content knowledge. The three-dimensional structure of the broader curriculum, with its opportunities to investigate 21st century skills, attributes and cross-curricular priorities as part of the content matter allow educators to practise a more enriched pedagogy that focuses on transformative learning through inquiry in the HASS or humanities classroom.

Lilley, Barker and Harris (2015) identify four complementary lenses of transformative learning theory that have potential for any humanities inquiry classroom:

- personal transformative approaches of meaning making through interpersonal relationships and related encounters
- emancipatory approaches that promote critical reflection within social contexts as students learn to examine positions, values or power relationships that exist in groups and societies of which they are members
- philosophical approaches that challenge the comfort zones of students and build on their capacities to become consciously aware and make sense of the world around them and
- disciplinary perspectives that encourage ‘high risk learning’ that leads students to new capabilities and cognitive awareness.

The varieties of these transformative learning models beg the question as to the type of selfie the next generations could take. Finlay et al (2014) conducted a longitudinal study in Britain of the future values of adolescents to determine if future adult behaviours could be predicted. Building on classic conceptualisations of values theory, they define (future values as those abstract beliefs that are organised into a system of overarching principles guiding the perceived importance of future attitudes and behaviours. Raising their work on the assumption of classic value theory that an individual’s values are relatively stable, they argued that the future values of adolescents will be likely to offer insights into adult behaviours. After concluding a longitudinal study of nearly twenty years, they found that the future values formulated during adolescence play a ‘theoretically meaningful’ role in adult life. In terms of civic behaviours, they found that adolescent future values in the areas of autonomy, civic

Our future citizen ‘selfie’ is found in the humanities

We can practice future social imaginaries through empowered and engaged citizenship practices in our humanities classrooms today.

Mr Richard Lee, Mills Institute, Brisbane
These roles also will help students to find a variety of them to find a place to becoming an empowered active connect with one of these roles is a way that can assist contain these four roles. Finding ways that students can but Moyer was adamant that any ongoing change must
political models of civic education. The British Quaker
movements, known as the ‘Movement Action Plan’. known for developing the eight-stage model of social
was the social change activist Bill Moyer who was
One of the leading lights in social movement theory
students will become placard waving demonstrators.
approaches to civic learning have developed ‘good
citizens’ who show characteristics such as Tatien[Jen]
to authority, figures dressing neatly, being nice to
neighbors [sic], and helping out at a soup kitchen’ as
the key markers of civic action. Wahning says that
these types of democratic pedagogies emphasize the ‘satisfaction’ of community service rather than
deeply engaging with social policy issues. Instead, he
describes a model that involves the political sensibilities of study that becomes ‘empowered’ citizens rather than just ‘good’ citizens. This is a subtle difference and provides a more nuanced understanding of what an ‘active engaged citizen’ could resemble in the
Australian context.
Transforming students to engage their political as well as their service sensibilities does not mean that all
students will become placard waving demonstrators. One of the leading lights in social movement theory
was the social change activist Bill Moyer who was
introduced to the philosophy and practice of nonviolent actions by some Quaker Friends. He is most well-
known for developing the eight-stage model of social movements, known as the ‘Movement Action Plan’. He later also developed a theory of the four roles
of social engagement which are a useful reference when discussing the difference between service and political models of civic education. The British Quaker
organisation Turning the Tide provides a useful summary of these roles in their online training material
(‘Turning the Tide 2016’). These roles (Moyer’s terms in parentheses) are the advocate (reformer), helper
(citizen), organiser (change agent), or rebel role. These
roles can be too generalized and subjective or egotistical, but Moyer was adamant that any ongoing change must contain these four roles. Finding ways that students can connect with the four ways that can assist them to find a place to becoming an empowered active and
elected citizen. These roles also will help students to find a variety of ways to engage with value-loaded issues that help them to become the full citizens to build a better world for the common good. The recent student climate strikes
in Australia and around the world are an interesting case study in how students can be empowered as more than just ‘good’ citizens. Inspired by their Swedish
peer, the teenager Greta Thunberg, Australian students have organised, according to their website, to ‘tell
our politicians to take our future seriously’ in an era of
climate change (School Strike 4 Climate Australia 2019). They continue by stating that ‘climate change is one of the biggest problems facing the world and it isn’t
being addressed quickly enough’ and link to their demands for climate action including the eventual cessation of coal and gas mining and developing a 100% renewable
energy base by 2030.
Without explicitly saying so, these students have identified what Dipesh Chakrabarty (2016) describes as
the two dominant approaches in the debates around climate change. The first approach is a simple ‘one-
dimensional challenge’ of achieving a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in the coming decades. The
second sees climate change as ‘part of a family of interlinking problems’ that have combined to create the
‘phenomenon of ecological overshoot’ by humanity and that the challenge now is to intelligently manage our
resources (food, water, land, population) to solve the problems that will emerge as we move forward as a species into the Anthropocene. Whilst there is discussion in academic circles about when, or even if, we can talk
about an ‘Anthropocene’, using this future framework has value in providing us with a perspective against
which the human enterprise can be assessed as it
interwines with the larger processes of the Earth system (Chakrabarty 2016). As Tom Griffiths says, it allows
us to revisit the story of the ‘exceptionality of humans’ and reassess how we continue to live into the future (Griffiths 2017). It allows us to see the world in a
new, more complex, way. Cars are no longer just a form of transport, but alongside coal and gas mining and
building nuclear power stations, they are part of the
‘anthropogenic’ changes that are happening. The
student climate strikes are one example of young people
who have engaged in ‘dialogue and discussion in and
outside school contexts’ to determine the most effective
strategies to help them feel cherished as community
members (Hinks, Jarmood, J and Villalba 2012).
We must, though, naturally ask if this type of active and informed citizenry would contribute to creating healthy democracies of any future Australia. According to Aidan
Ricketts (2012), activist and academic, advocating for social change, engaging in democratic practices and activism are all interlinked in healthy democratic
practices. The students involved in the climate strikes are too young to vote, in many cases, too young to have
any form of formal political membership and yet are
able to practise being active and informed ‘good citizens’ in ways that are more than a service model. They are
engaging in ongoing democratic practices outside of school, partly because their age prohibits them from
taking part in that cycle.
Admittedly, there are natural concerns that are raised when we see school students engage as actively
informed ‘political citizens’ as opposed to ‘service
students. The citizen climate strikes were not immune to
such criticisms with several politicians saying that
students should be in school undertaking more formal learning. A more nuanced criticism could be found in
the growing discussion around the idea of ‘slactivism’, a term coined in 1995 by Fred Clarke and Sueigt皋
in Illinois. ‘Slactivism’ describes the ‘feel good’ factor that people experience when engaged in social causes. It has also come to mean political or social actions that
use the internet and requires little time or involvement. Examples of slactivist behavior might include signing an online petition, ‘liking’ a campaign group’s social
media and sharing a social media meme such as Isaac
Cordall’s famous artifact ‘Follow the Leaders’ which went viral on the internet with an alternative title ‘Politicians debate Global Warming’. Criticism from within is also worth hearing. Michael White, who founded the Occupy Wall Street movement of the early 2010s says that there seems to be a changing view of protest
matches. He says that attending a protest march these
days has become a bit like going to a concert; just
another way to connect with friends to have worthwhile experience.
What is not under debate is that many thousands of young Australians joined many with other young people
around the world to make a statement and raise awareness about their combined (future). They have
directly questioned and enacted a social imaginary by
subverting the dominant narratives and imagining a new set of stories, dreams and images to
remimge how we can feel our way into a
future. By seeing the opportunities that are afforded
teachers of the humanities and the Australian Curriculum to promote a self of our future selves, our visions of the future, in the
words of the Irish poet Seamus Heaney, may see hope
and history begin to rhyme.

Biographies

Richard Lee MEd, MA(Hons), BA, Dip.Ed. After graduating as a teacher in Tasmania, Richard taught a range of subjects in the humanities, including history, in South Australia and Queensland. He is currently a lecturer in Art History and in education at QHC Higher Education in Brisbane, Queensland where he also coordinated the Graduate Diploma of Education program. He has contributed a chapter on the history of the Environmental Movement to a new textbook for Senior Modern History in Queensland published through Cambridge University Press.

References

I’ve often thought about cooking as an excellent metaphor for teaching and learning. No two dishes are ever the same, in the same way, that no two lessons are ever the same. Crafting an amazing dish requires a complex set of ingredients, and teaching an amazing lesson requires the same. Yet, the results are often satisfying. By understanding more about the past and the ways that we should think about the past, we gain a greater appreciation for everything else we might learn. The importance of judging mathematics is so much easier to grasp when students understand that mathematics has been the foundation of cuisines. Believing in the evidence that mathematics is significantly easier when you have spent time reasoning as you interpret sources in the history classroom.

Historical thinking is the basis of the thinking of society. It is the teaching of history that makes these experiences and this learning worthwhile. But beyond this, it is history that lies an education into something more than simply a certification process. Understanding history allows students to leverage their understanding into being better citizens, engaging in debate and conversation, at a level beyond the screaming and shouting that so often defines our current discourse.

Salt is arguably the most important ingredient in many dishes, vital to any cuisine. Whether it is soy sauce from Japan, anchovies on a pizza or the piles found on the best hot chips, salt makes the meal. Why? Because salt enhances flavour, deepening the dish and drawing out more complexity in the things we eat. There is a reason why we cannot find any caramel slice that is not salted anymore.

Mr Nathan Ressant, Northern Beaches Christian School, Terrey Hills, New South Wales

WHERE HASS THOU GONE? • OPINION PAPERS
The creation of personalised content which is essentially creating echo chambers, as well as the increasingly partisan nature of much of Western society, leaves an impression (Quattronecchia et al. 2016). Addressing and challenging norms that students have developed outside of the classroom is one of the most important and challenging aspects of a quality history classroom.

Complexity

Finally, and maybe most importantly, a quality history education introduces students to complexity and ambiguity. While students often come into the history classroom believing that they will be studying one narrative of the past, teachers must convince their students that the narrative they are looking for is unfinished, unclear and often unsatisfying. For every story of a hero in history, there is an alternative perspective that sees a villain, for every explanation there is an equal and valid alternative explanation. For every dominant voice in history, there is a whisper of a voice that has been ignored or skipped over. Each of these alternatives makes learning history more difficult, but also more rewarding. It is this complexity that adds flavour to learning history.

How does a history teacher introduce this complexity? With careful planning, attention and thought. The history teacher has to provide a core arc to the story that a student can grasp then add layers to this story that questions the core narrative and complicates a student’s understanding. The teacher has to question the dominant narrative, provoking student’s understanding and instilling in them an uncertainty about what the past actually looked like. A history teacher has to encourage the voices that have a place within the history being taught, and the most effective moment to introduce voices that challenge and broaden the history. Importantly, the history teacher must be careful to avoid using definitive language but instead must speak conditionally, leaving space that encourages alternative interpretations. A history teacher has to consider how they can allow students to grapple with this complexity, constructing tasks that are open enough to allow them to voice their theories and opinions whilst giving feedback that guides students to new depths of their work.

This complexity is vital to a student’s education in preparation for a world that is more complex and more ambiguous than ever before. Complexity in the history classroom is not limited to imagination or creativity but it is instead based on the experiences of people throughout generations. It teaches a student how knowledge is built over time and how our time this knowledge is transformed anew. It also teaches students that definitive ideas and answers are both rare and often unhelpful and that there needs to be a certain level of comfort with the unknown and the uncertain.

Bringing Faourve back

Every dish will benefit from salt. Without it, food is one dimensional, plain and unfulfilled. Too many of our students are at risk of receiving this kind of education if those of us who give education the most thought don’t fight for balance. Central to this balance is the need for a strong, well thought through history program for every student. Without historical thinking, Science, Mathematics, Literature and Art risk being less satisfying and lose some of their wonders. Historical thinking is the salt that brings out the best in every other subject.

Two issues hinder quality history teaching, focused on evidence, empathy and complexity, from happening in every class. The first is a lack of support for quality history teaching in schools. Too often school leaders undervalue the role of the trained and thoughtful history teacher. Instead, there is a belief that anyone with knowledge of the past can teach history. This is untrue.

Teaching history requires a specific approach that is not easy in its application. Valuing history teachers and ensuring that history teachers have training and time to devote to their approach and to the discipline should be vital (for every school). The second challenge is the apathy of the community. Schools value history needs to explain its value to its students and parents, helping them to see the ways in which studying history will be of benefit across the wider spectrum of their learning. Without a clear occupation (beyond that of the historian – a not particularly lucrative field) to point to, history is suffering in a world of certification. Support from school leaders is vital here, particularly in key stages where students are starting a course load to take into the senior years. Conunciuring students to study history shouldn’t rely on the latest historical narrative. As they begin the course, teachers need to give them an idea of why the student can grow and flourish in their studies.

Ferran Adrià, one of the world’s best chefs and founder of the paradigm-shifting restaurant elBulli, once declared salt “the only product that changes cuisine”. When applied correctly and intentionally, historical thinking and understanding can entirely change a student’s education, helping them to see broader and deeper and to think with more clarity. Like salt is to a dish, history is fundamental to every student’s flourishing.

Unleash the HAMSTER!

Putting humanities first in a fancy new acronym

Mr Steve Hawkins President Geography and History Teachers Association of the Northern Territory (GHTANT)

As a teacher I’ve come to develop a loathing for acronyms, which can be an issue because education is full of them. I’ve quite convinced that entire divisions exist in the education system that are departments of education created to create acronyms. Whether it’s forcing my goals to the SMART or my coaching to be GROWTH (I find myself rolling my eyes at pretty much every abbreviated buzzword except TGF (which is technically an initiation, so doesn’t count)).

The prevalence of acronyms lies in their ability to simply market a complex idea. For this reason, acronyms are powerful, and in education name more so than STEM. A focus on STEM would concern me less if jurisdictions spent more time considering how science, mathematics, technology, and engineering ways of thinking were embedded across all equally-valued learning areas in mutually beneficial ways. But this is not what is happening. Systems focus on the acronym are trying to out-STEM each other. We have STEM officers, STEM programs, STEM teachers, STEM buildings, STEM, STEM. STEMming across the curriculum and sucking up resources that have the potential to threaten other learning areas, including my own.

As a humanities teacher and the president of a humanities teaching association, I look with some trepidation at the pace of technological change and the subsequent risks of humanity’s inability to adapt. I wonder if emphases on STEM is allowing us to fully consider the implications of contemporary and future technical innovations – such as artificial intelligence or the human genome project – on our society. Is the acronym still working for us? Does it need a reboot?

STEM Education

5.5 million Google hits

STEM hit the big time with a reference in President Obama’s 2011 State of the Union address, but has been in common parlance since the mid-2000s when the US National Science Federation opted for STEM over the far less poetic S&MET (Meh-Schindler et al., 2015). While STEM as an acronym was relatively uncommon in the late 20th century, its unencumbered impact on the humanities was certainly felt. I learned this on the very first night at residential college during O Week of 1993 when I was handed a tasseled to cries of “Here’s your degree” and hoots of “laughter. It was one of many light-hearted but influential jokes at the expense of the Bachelor of Arts students, whose career prospects were seen as only requiring command of the phrase, “Would you like fries with that?” There were maybe a dozen Arts students at that time, and the low proportion of Liberal arts students and liberal arts graduates has been declining in many educational jurisdictions around the world (Strauss, 2017) although the trend is not uniformly negative (Singhal, 2018).

I was fortunate that I had a strong interest in studying the humanities and no clear idea of a future career path (thankfully teaching was a good fit because working the Flyer held little appeal). To engage in lectures and tutorial discussions on Australia’s colonial history, the economic development in Indonesia and to learn a smattering of French has left me with some of the brightest memories of my life and a strong sense of social justice that carries me to this day. Other students, however, are clearly being put off, lured instead by promises of bright careers in industries not yet invented (Strauss, 2017). It is this concern for future-proofing the

References

- Trout, J D 2009, The empathy gap: Building bridges to the good life and the good society, Viking, New York

Biographies

Nathan Bessant (@nathanbessant) is the Head of the History and Social Sciences Faculty at Northern Beaches Christian School, Sydney. He holds a Masters degree in History and is currently completing his Masters of Educational Leadership.

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The workforce that drives much of STEM educational policy, even though a strong case can be made that these concerns are unfounded (Charotte, 2013). Whether the humanities are in crisis in the face of STEM is debatable. Much controversy over the decline of the liberal arts is American (Strass, 2017), but Tilly Barnett (2015) from Flinders University argued in The Conversation, Wade-Leeven et al. (2018) explains that the arts includes “humanities, language arts, dance, drama, music, visual arts, design, and new media.” George Yam (2010), founder of STEM-ed also includes the manual and physical arts. With these definitions it may be reasonable to ask if the A stands for “All that’s left over” and to wonder what hope the liberal arts can have in such a crowded space. Certainly both STEM and arts educators have questioned whether their place in the STEAM is mutually advantageous (Breidte, 2016).

Perhaps we humanities teachers, fighting for the odd kid who isn’t doing double maths, physics and chemistry, should be grateful for the recognition of the liberal arts in the STEM space. But admit “how STEM truly values the role of humanities can play in the STEM space, as the arts are often not included to critique the influence of technological advancement on society, but rather to maintain the pace of technological development using creative ways of thinking. Warren (2018) tells us that the arts are “the lens into creative and imaginative thinking which is an essential, driver behind innovation”. Wade-Leeven et al. (2018) explains that STEM still investigates science, technology, engineering and maths but does it using “the creative process”, going on to give examples of mathematics being used to create art or the arts used to advance technology. This is a perfectly appropriate and engaging approach to teaching both the arts and sciences, and is no less valuable to humanities teachers. After all, it is impossible to teach geometry without using elements of STEM and history teachers frequently use technology to engage and enhance student learning. But the humanities can do for more than this, teaching us how scientific and technological advancements have occurred — and that it is going to challenge the communities in which we live.

STEAM Education

44,000 Google hits

Break developments in artificial intelligence and the integration of STEAM into the classroom would, even when occasionally added to the acronym with an R—demonstrating the urgency in which humanities education is essential. For considering the risks of technological development on societies and cultures. None of us can read the future, but history allows us to learn from the past to prepare for the future. Exploring the impact of earlier technological advancement provides many essential lessons for us to carefully manage dramatic advances in robotics and artificial intelligence, and other controversial areas such as genetic engineering.

As a Darwinite

sustaining through one of the driest wet seasons on record, I can afford to be grateful to Lili Whitton. His mention of the continent’s contribution to the development of an industry that gives me breathable fabric for this humid weather. But even non-history teachers will know that an innovative tool contributed to the move of the Indigenous communities in the cotton industry had shocking short and long term impacts on slavery, segregation and race discrimination that continue to impact on our world today. The gin itself is not the issue—just as advances in robotics are not the issue—it was the desire to exploit technology for profit at the expense of human rights that provides an essential lesson for today.

History is rife with examples of technological advances dramatically influencing the human world. Some, such as the Gutenberg press, could be considered revolutionary in a generally positive way, while others—like the development of nuclear weapons—are decidedly not. More common, however, are innovations that cut both ways. Steam engines revolutionised travel and opened the eyes of the world, yet sent children into coalmines. The Internet shares the best of human knowledge with the worst of human experience. Mapping the human genome may cure our worst diseases but raises significant ethical concerns regarding designer babies or genetic discrimination. To me, the liberal arts are essential for managing these changes and if humanity must be a strong focus in a STEM-driven education.

HAMSTER Education

5,800 Google hits (but a couple of the videos are quiet cute)

The term has been made to add an H for humanities to the acronym, convincingly spelling a word we can all remember. But let’s be honest; HAMSTER is not an acronym that is going to take off. No education minister is going to stand on stage claiming the values of their latest HAMSTER program. But that’s not what I’m talking about. The ridiculous idea of HAMSTER education should—I hope—allow us all to reflect on how an infusion with STEM is of concern, and that we should very quickly reform our thinking. The issues facing our world today and into the future—including those directly linked to scientific and technological advancement—cannot be neatly boxed down in a bugwagg. The opportunities for humanity from artificial intelligence, genetic manipulation and biengineering require scientific, technological and engineering and mathematical skills to be sure, but the students of today and the workers of tomorrow must have the good sense to reflect on potential risks to our society. We can prepare for the future by looking at the past, and can learn to manage threats by exploring the historical and contemporary impacts of scientific and technological innovation on societies and cultures around the world. The humanities are essential. So bring forth the HAMSTER, if only to hasten then end of the obsession with the acronym that is STEM.

References


Biographies

Steve Hawkins is the current president of the Geography and History Teachers Association of the Northern Territory (GHTAN) which represents the interests of humanities and social science teachers across the Northern Territory. Steve has been involved in the arts and culture scene in the Northern Territory for 25 years in other capacities, for the Northern and rural schools. Steve is passionate about the humanities in action, actively supporting teachers of the humanities across the NT—Australia’s most diverse and challenging educational jurisdiction, and in building productive partnerships with teachers across Australia for the advancement of the humanities in Australian schools.
NSW enjoys a broad, flexible and multicultural curriculum in its primary and secondary education system. With the momentum of an Australian Curriculum (AC) gain traction in both the publics’ and governments’ best interests1. Near a decade has now passed since the AC was commissioned and as of 2019 all states and territories have begun to implement, or have implemented, the AC with NSW leading the charge. The AC includes English, mathematics and science as part of the NSW curriculum, there is the opportunity to understand how we can change behaviour based on psychology-driven research5. Figure 1 illustrates the national educational timeline and the NSW review outline which suggests, coincidence or otherwise, the next 2 years will shape the next decade within NSW education, and possibly Australia.

Why psychology?
In a nutshell, we know that most problems in the world today (e.g. conflicts based on in-group/out-group thinking, mental-health disorders such as depression, life-style diseases such as obesity etc) are psychologically based. Unfortunately, despite the impressiveness of the human brain, it is difficult for us to (a) realise the sociocultural and political factors that lead to these problems and (b) subsequently work together to create solutions2. However, through studying psychological science as part of the NSW curriculum, there is the opportunity to understand how we can change behaviour both in ourselves and in others.

Linking to major reports and policy
The aims of the 2018–19 NSW Curriculum Review are to: provide an engaging and challenging education that promotes high standards and rewards effort for all students, and prepare students with knowledge, capabilities and values to be lifelong learners, and to be flourishing and contributing citizens in an unpredictable, technological world.

With these in mind, the implementation of psychology will need to include an adaptive and reflexive syllabus. In 2007, as a key voice of the AC Final Report, the Curriculum Standing Committee of National Education Professional Associations (CSCEPNA) stated that all students should have an understanding of scientific content, including psychology, as well as an appreciation of how personal and interpersonal skills can be applied within human society. The addition of psychology will ensure that an emerging and relevant course, with cognitive science, neuroscience and neuropsychology at its core, has a key place in a future focused curriculum. Increasing evidence illustrates the clear links between improved academic, social and behavioural outcomes of students, and their learning experiences with interpersonal skill, supported by psychology-driven research3. Figure 1 illustrates the national educational timeline and the NSW review outline which suggests, coincidence or otherwise, the next 2 years will shape the next decade within NSW education, and possibly Australia.

Table 1: Most common pathways for psychology students and the demand/reward in Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Future Growth</th>
<th>Skill Level</th>
<th>Weekly Pay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatrist</td>
<td>Very Strong</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>Very Strong</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>$1,934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td>Very Strong</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>$1,364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Very strong</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>$1,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor</td>
<td>Very strong</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>$1,330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising/Marketing</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>$1,346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research – Life Scientist</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>$1,645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>$1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resource</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>$3,339</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The highly regarded publication Through Growth to Achievement: Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools, a.k.a. Gonski 2.0, has suggested that the education of our students must prepare them for a complex and rapidly changing world. Research around the implications of continued technological advancements and society are showing that as routine manual and administrative activities are becoming increasingly automated. More jobs will require a higher level of skill, and school leavers will need skills that are not easily replicated by machines, such as creative problem-solving, interactive and social skills, and critical thinking4. Supporting such a statement is the job outlook platform provided by the Australian Government, highlighting the increasing need for developing psychologically literate citizens, as summarised in table 1.

Progressing towards other educational systems
The HSC has a strong international reputation, however with the increasing presence of systems such as the VCE, SB-SC, ATAR, A levels and the AP Curriculum, and their rigorous psychology courses, the HSC, and by extension, the Australian education system is at risk of being left behind. For now, let’s just look at the sciences within Australia. Data obtained from each of the states curriculum authorities quickly shows a similar pattern of distribution with student course completions as shown in table 2.

Excluding psychology, the typical hierarchy of the sciences goes from biology to chemistry to physics to EE6. However, once psychology is brought into the mix, there is an enormous change in this pattern and an increase in students completing sciences (table 3). An interesting finding is the consistent position of the earth sciences and environmental sciences, even though it is one of the four senior science courses implemented as part of the AC. Findings also showed the amount of growth each course has experienced over the past decade. Biology enrolments continue to increase across all states, whereas chemistry and physics are in decline. EE6 is growing in both NSW and Victoria but is shrinking elsewhere. Psychology has been offered from the beginning of the VCE in 1991 and has shown that it consistently enrols between 10,000 to 15,000 students each year. As part of the WACE.

Table 2: Average number of students by course and by state from 2008-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Science Courses</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>WA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>16,683</td>
<td>11,908</td>
<td>11,281</td>
<td>3,286</td>
<td>1,622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>10,697</td>
<td>9,389</td>
<td>7,690</td>
<td>2,219</td>
<td>4,614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EES</td>
<td>4,255</td>
<td>4,255</td>
<td>4,255</td>
<td>4,255</td>
<td>4,255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>9,366</td>
<td>7,055</td>
<td>5,976</td>
<td>1,969</td>
<td>3,473</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Student subject enrolment as a percentage of total number of students in 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>WA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biology (26%)</td>
<td>Psychology (50%)</td>
<td>Biology (28%)</td>
<td>Biology (23%)</td>
<td>Human Biology (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry (26%)</td>
<td>Biology (26%)</td>
<td>Chemistry (18%)</td>
<td>Psychology (16%)</td>
<td>Chemistry (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics (25%)</td>
<td>Chemistry (20%)</td>
<td>Physics (13%)</td>
<td>Chemistry (15%)</td>
<td>Physics (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EES (13%)</td>
<td>Physics (14%)</td>
<td>EES (14%)</td>
<td>Physics (12%)</td>
<td>Psychology (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EES (1%)</td>
<td>EES (1%)</td>
<td>Biology (7%)</td>
<td>EES (4%)</td>
<td>EES (1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mr Scott Waring, MAEd, Great Lakes College Senior Campus
psychology was only introduced in 2009 and had shown rapid growth (increasing at 33 per cent each year, whilst not reducing enrolments from the other sciences but adding to the total number of students engaged in a science at a senior secondary.

NSW would likely follow a similar trend as the other states. Psychology would start small but would see a rapid rise in popularity. It would likely see enrolments outstrip biology (currently approaching 20,000 in 2018) and plateau for an extended time period, as has occurred in Victoria. The successful implementation will no doubt be of great benefit to our students and curriculum, and progress us to a similar slate as other educational systems; but: could we do more? Perhaps we should also be looking at a combination of human biology and psychology as one course, and EES/ecology in another?

Pioneering
Part of the OECD’s Future of Education and Skills 2030 policy highlights the necessity for tomorrow’s schools to help our students to think for themselves and join others, with empathy, in work and citizenship. The policy goes on to suggest the role curriculum will play in assisting students to develop a strong sense of right and wrong, and sensitivity to the claims that others make. That is to say, the curriculum has a responsibility to immerse their students in the world beyond the school fence and develop their personal skills particularly in building self-esteem and personal confidence.

There is a near-outrunning amount of evidence that outlines the need for high quality psychological information to be taught amongst adolescents8, 9. Awareness of the biological and chemical processes that influence psychology have been used as a means to produce negative effects between students and their teachers, resulting in increased dropout rates and personal difficulties. That is to say, the association is statistically significant. For example, the evidence is also linked to a student’s path towards lifelong learning, on their perceptions towards education10. This study is highlighting the real-world effects psychology has, and that is, how to have a personal and interpersonal role in classrooms that influence psychology to produce better states of wellbeing are associated with their teachers reducing their own depressive symptoms. It went on to show that better teacher wellbeing can lower psychological difficulties of their students, and that this association is statistically significant. This evidence is also linked to a student’s path towards lifelong learning, and their perceptions towards education10. This study is revealing the real-world effects psychology has, and that is, how to have a personal and interpersonal role in classrooms that influence psychology to produce better states of wellbeing are associated with their teachers reducing their own depressive symptoms. It went on to show that better teacher wellbeing can lower psychological difficulties of their students, and that this association is statistically significant.

The GenX 2.0 paper has laid down the priorities for the future of Australian education and states that every student should emerge from schooling as a creative, connected, and engaged learner with a growth mindset that can help to improve their educational achievement over time. When combined with the goals of the National STEM School Education Strategy 2016-2026, to increase the number of STEM literate students and to engage in meaningful partnerships to build the essential skills required after schooling (figure 2), psychology seems to fit in quite a missing piece.

Most schools already have these partnerships in place, they are less not just used for educational outcomes but student support services. Counsellors and psychologists are part of education systems and should take a greater role in classrooms reflecting a real-world and authentic learning experience that provides students with the right mix of knowledge, skills, and understanding for a world experiencing significant economic, social, and technological change.

In the USA, the APA provides leadership, resources and professional development to teachers, schools and students. Psychology is recognised as an advanced scientific course that employers and tertiary education systems recognise and reward. The APS in Australia has already begun supporting psychology in schools, however, to increase the partnerships and maximise the outcomes of students, other organisations (Psychology Council, Psychology Board of Australia etc) will need to take up the challenge.

To paraphrase the Science Extension syllabus, science is not conducted in isolation. Psychology will extend and provide authentic, relevant and relevant learning experience for NSW students, and ensure they are prepared for a future in STEM learning and enterprises.

Figures

Figure 2: Addressing student outcomes and future-needed skills12.

References
•  Tannigaa, H., Rigtera, J., Diekstraa, R. 2014, Developing a psychology curriculum for high school, Cognitive Ccos, pp. 7-12.

Biographies
Scott Waring has been teaching for 6 years in the fields of science and mathematics, currently at Great Lakes College Senior Campus in NSW. He is undertaking Highly Accomplished accreditation and is a Member of ACE. Scott completed his post-graduate degree in 2015 majoring in physics (USGP).
A little birdy told me: teachers using social media

Mr Matthew Esterman, Our Lady of Mercy College Parramatta

As Simon Sinek says, we need to “start with why” when it comes to using social media. Before jumping into handles, hashtags and thehoghurd world of memes, likes and creating personal, professional or social connections across the globe, we need to establish a clear purpose for our social media presence and use thereof (even if our purpose changes over time). Knowing why we are there helps to anchor our thoughts, focus our attention and manage the truly endless world of content that exists in the digital space.

Personally, I use social media for three reasons: to connect with people I can’t easily connect with in person; to find new, interesting ideas regarding educational research, policy and practice that I may not encounter in other reading; and to share my own thoughts and practice so that I can also contribute to the global conversation on education.

With purpose, we can begin to explore people we wish to ‘follow’ or connect with, especially in a professional sense. It may be that you find it most useful to connect with like-minded teachers of a particular subject area or domain, such as the humanities, which is often expressed differently across the world. For example, in Australia it’s highly likely that most teachers (primary or secondary) can connect fairly easily because of a similar curriculum base. But looking at the UK or the USA - and especially beyond the anglophone world - there may be different language or assumptions that shift the focus of what ‘humanities’ might mean.

There are literally billions of people and communities with which you can connect through social media. It’s a special kind of madness to try and connect with them all. You will also notice that celebrities often don’t ‘follow back’ and sometimes delegate the operation of their own social media accounts to others, as it would otherwise be impossible for them to keep up. Facebook is still one of the most popular platforms, though it is much less popular with people the ages of 13 and 30, who prefer to use the more instantaneous platforms Instagram and Snapchat. People graduate towards those similar to themselves; so if you are an experienced teacher, Twitter is probably your best bet at finding the people and content you want.

Staying professional in the digital space is a concept that is potentially fraught with challenges and complications but generally managed by simply saying, doing and sharing things online that you know align with the expectations of your system, your peers and your school community. Within your school or institution, social media policies may exist but that doesn’t alleviate the responsibility to act as if you were speaking with a parent, a student or a colleague; because you are. Simply accept that anything you say and do online in public circles (and even in less public circles) can and might be seen by those to whom you have a professional responsibility, and think before you post.

As a teacher in the humanities, specifically History, there are hundreds of potential conversations in which I could engage on a daily basis through Twitter and other platforms. These conversations are usually grouped by a hashtag or # symbol, to identify that a particular topic, region, group or event is. As much as one can - claiming a wall-less room on Twitter to itself. You will have seen or heard ‘hashtags’ promoted on television shows or similar. This is so that when searching through a platform, you can use the hashtag to view all posts relating to that topic. It’s a useful way of collating and tracking a topic in a very busy world.

For example, one of the most useful hashtags to me is #historychat. Run by teachers for teachers, it collects and collates links and posts that may be of use to history teachers. It also has regular ‘live chats’ where, at a particular time in a given week, dozens of people will come together digitally to share ideas, usually by answering a series of pre-determined questions. It’s a collegial activity that encourages people to think critically, communicate effectively and manage their time well.

Twitter and similar platforms are like a global staffroom. Big ones. Open plan. Where anyone can potentially hear what you are saying, and be part of the conversation. Those who manage to respond to these ideas and join in, for better or worse, are part of the conversation. Many of these tables will happily jump into your classroom via Skype or be a guest in a Twitter chat in order to provide an interesting perspective on a given issue. There’s no harm in asking, the worst they can say is no! I’ve had several extremely positive and fulfilling conversations with experts from around the world, most powerfully when I’m in the classroom with my students asking the questions and leading the conversation.

Whatever platform we’re using, we need to remain human whilst adapting new technologies. Underneath all the layers of photos, filters, symbols and algorithms is a very human urge to communicate, to belong, to be heard - or at least to feel connected to others. We need to remain aware of how we are using social media - the effects it can have, the responsibilities we have to both promote our own ideas and listen to those of others; and to be responsible digital citizens we expect our students to become.

We can remagine learning and teaching with technology, but to do this we will require mindful innovation, curious exploration and adaptation to our own contexts.

Biographies

Matthew Esterman is Director of Learning Technologies and Innovation at Our Lady of Mercy College Parramatta. He is a higher education and professional development specialist, an author of several published articles and chapters, and has been a speaker and facilitator at workshops and conferences in Australia and overseas. Matt holds Masters degrees in Learning Science & Technology and also Modern History from the University of Sydney and Macquarie University, respectively. He is @mesterman on Twitter.
The Role of Podcasts in HASS Teaching and Learning

Mr Marco Cimino, Magdalene Catholic College, Smeaton Grange, New South Wales

Introduction

What role, if any, do podcasts play in the teaching and learning of HASS? Can they help bridge the divide which is the false dichotomy of HASS vs STEM? This article draws on personal experience through the work of the recently developed ‘Oh, the Humanities! (and Social Sciences)’ podcast in order to answer these questions.

The Pod Has Been Cast

Back in 2016, I began a monthly Twitter chat using the hashtag #HASSchat. It took place on the last Thursday of every month at 7:30pm and had a different focus every month. Some topics included technology in HASS, literacy in HASS, and innovation in HASS. It enjoyed moderate success, with educators from around Australia taking part. In 2017, I made the decision to convert the Twitter chat into a podcast with the intention of reaching a wider audience, and allowing educators to access professional learning whenever and wherever they want, and it launched in January of 2018.

Through my teaching experience and conversations with other HASS educators, the question about the relevance of HASS always comes up. My response to this question is always the same: HASS always has, and always will be, relevant to the world. Regardless of which agenda is being pushed by governments, industries, or the media, HASS always plays a part in ensuring that people are informed and active citizens. Yes, the study of HASS subjects seems to be declining, but that does not mean that people are not utilising the skills that HASS offers. The work being done by HASS teachers is immense, and they are striving to ensure that their student’s develop the critical capacities (critical thinking, collaboration, and empathy for example) required to engage in the world in an active manner. Because of the tireless work being done by HASS educators, HASS will never fall to the wayside, and nor should it. This is where I believe podcasts play a critical role. As they increase in popularity, they provide teachers access to quality teaching and learning strategies whenever and wherever they want, in order to better serve their students.

Why Can’t We All Just Get Along?

I once saw an image that someone had shared via social media that read something along the lines of: “STEM tells you how to build nuclear weapons, but the Humanities tell you why you shouldn’t.” This is a false dichotomy. HASS and STEM could, and should, work together to further develop student’s skills. Again, this is where podcasts play a vital role in bridging the gap in the HASS vs STEM debate. There seems to be a silo mentality within education that say that HASS and STEM are not to be mixed, or even, at war with each other. Many of the guests I have had on my podcast spoke about ways in which HASS and STEM can work together to achieve the same ends: quality learning for students. There are many examples as to how HASS and STEM can work together for example, coding can be utilised in Geography to create weather stations that collect data which can then be interpreted and analysed. AI can be analysed regarding its ethics in Philosophy, and History classes can be enriched by the use of a Makerspace. This again shows how podcasts can help quash the false dichotomy of HASS vs STEM; it breaks down the silos of ‘us’ vs ‘them’ through a more accessible professional learning library.

Biographies

Marco Cimino is a 7-12 HASS, VET, and Religious Education teacher from South-West Sydney. He is the creator and host of a podcast titled ‘Oh, the Humanities! (and Social Sciences)’. The podcast can be located by visiting marcociminoedu.wordpress.com/ and Marco can be found on Twitter via @MrMCimino.
As all members in NSW (and probably more broadly) are aware, probably more broadly) are aware,

In March, New South Wales went to the polls which saw the Gladys Berejiklian led Liberal/National government returned to power. In the lead up to the election there had been much discussion and debate around education. The coalition campaigned on a platform to:

- Recruit 4600 extra teachers
- Clear the school maintenance backlog down to zero
- Expand before and after school care to give access to every child

A commitment of $500 million in funding for new buildings for non-government schools.

Post the election, that the Honourable Sarah Mitchell MILC would be appointed as the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning. As the new Minister for Education, Ms Mitchell will face several major challenges early on in her role. One of the most significant being the delivery of a major review of the NSW curriculum. In addition to this, she will be responsible for managing an ACE program that was begun by her predecessor, Rob Stokes as well as the school building backlog. Ms Mitchell is expected to evolve into something that better serves the community. There might be opportunities for it to work in partnership with the private sector to deliver projects.

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The ACE Tasmania committee led by Convener Dr Duncan Bradley is currently preparing for the annual Richard Selby Smith Oration on Tuesday 14 Mag. The Guest Speaker will be Professor Toby Walsh, University of New South Wales. This year’s oration concerns “AI and Education” with a goal of making education both at both at home AI can help education and how to use AI to meet future educational needs.

The lecture will be followed by an informal dinner at the University Club. Pre-dinner drinks, coffee and three course dinner and beverages are included in the ticket cost. This live-streamed event is sponsored by both the University of Tasmania and the Selby Smith family.

The NSW Department of Education has launched this month for system leaders, principals and teachers. The Department is providing a range of new initiatives to support teacher professional development.

tasmania

The Tasmanian Department of Education is preparing a range of new initiatives to support school leaders. The Department’s Steering Committee announced the newly formed Early Learning Initiatives Steering Committee made up of nine volunteer members with diverse skills and expertise across the early childhood education and care communities. Chaired by the Secretariat, the first meeting was held in late March.

The T asmanian Education Department is preparing a range of new initiatives to support school leaders. The Department’s Steering Committee announced the newly formed Early Learning Initiatives Steering Committee made up of nine volunteer members with diverse skills and expertise across the early childhood education and care communities. Chaired by the Secretariat, the first meeting was held in late March.

The Principal Wellbeing Action Plan 2019 – 2021 has been launched this month to address some of the key challenges that principals identify as impacting upon their ability to ‘feel good and function well’ at work. Areas of concern include the strength of support available, Principal Wellbeing Leader positions will be established to ensure that there is a coordinated and sustained approach. A forthcoming development will be a staff wellbeing framework. Increasing the opportunity for principals to build mentoring connections and to clarify the school leadership team roles.

A new anti-bullying website was launched this month for system leaders, principals and teachers. The site features quality educational content that is research-driven, evidence and experience-based, including informative articles, videos, webinars, summary infographics, and tools for teachers and student leaders. The Tasmanian Government funded this work through its Combating Bullying Initiative.

As with the NSW Government, there is a place for standardised reporting; however, there might be opportunities for it to work in partnership with the private sector to deliver projects.

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- Expand before and after school care to give access to every child

A commitment of $500 million in funding for new buildings for non-government schools.

Post the election, that the Honourable Sarah Mitchell MILC would be appointed as the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning. As the new Minister for Education, Ms Mitchell will face several major challenges early on in her role. One of the most significant being the delivery of a major review of the NSW curriculum. In addition to this, she will be responsible for managing an ACE program that was begun by her predecessor, Rob Stokes as well as the school building backlog. Ms Mitchell is expected to evolve into something that better serves the community. There might be opportunities for it to work in partnership with the private sector to deliver projects.

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The ACE Tasmania committee led by Convener Dr Duncan Bradley is currently preparing for the annual Richard Selby Smith Oration on Tuesday 14 Mag. The Guest Speaker will be Professor Toby Walsh, University of New South Wales. This year’s oration concerns “AI and Education” with a goal of making education both at both at home AI can help education and how to use AI to meet future educational needs.

The lecture will be followed by an informal dinner at the University Club. Pre-dinner drinks, coffee and three course dinner and beverages are included in the ticket cost. This live-streamed event is sponsored by both the University of Tasmania and the Selby Smith family.

The NSW Department of Education has launched this month for system leaders, principals and teachers. The Department is providing a range of new initiatives to support teacher professional development.

tasmania

The Tasmanian Department of Education is preparing a range of new initiatives to support school leaders. The Department’s Steering Committee announced the newly formed Early Learning Initiatives Steering Committee made up of nine volunteer members with diverse skills and expertise across the early childhood education and care communities. Chaired by the Secretariat, the first meeting was held in late March.

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The Principal Wellbeing Action Plan 2019 – 2021 has been launched this month to address some of the key challenges that principals identify as impacting upon their ability to ‘feel good and function well’ at work. Areas of concern include the strength of support available, Principal Wellbeing Leader positions will be established to ensure that there is a coordinated and sustained approach. A forthcoming development will be a staff wellbeing framework. Increasing the opportunity for principals to build mentoring connections and to clarify the school leadership team roles.

A new anti-bullying website was launched this month for system leaders, principals and teachers. The site features quality educational content that is research-driven, evidence and experience-based, including informative articles, videos, webinars, summary infographics, and tools for teachers and student leaders. The Tasmanian Government funded this work through its Combating Bullying Initiative.

As with the NSW Government, there is a place for standardised reporting; however, there might be opportunities for it to work in partnership with the private sector to deliver projects.
VIEW FROM THE STATES

notion that the health and wellbeing of children is a community responsibility. It is worth noting that when the VCU the term ‘children’ they are referring to children and young people. When taking into consideration the findings from various reports such as the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) 2018 and Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) report card it is clear that Australian children could be doing better. For example, The ARACY report card noted that Australia is “still an average only middle of the pack by international comparisons” (p. 4) and that outcomes had deteriorated since the previous Report Card was released. For too many children poverty, mental illness, sexual abuse obesity, poor school readiness and chronic disease impact their lives.

The results from such comprehensive research projects are sobering indeed. Teachers are often at the front line and continue to grapple with the requirement to take on many more roles in the lives of the children they teach. Ensuring that children and every child has the best start in life as well as a happy and fulfilling school experience is the responsibility of the community as a whole. It is this notion that underpins a one-day conference held in Woden, ACT in May called ‘Do I belong? What does the standard look like for educational assessment?’

A Synopsis of The Valuing Children Benchmark Survey – Part B: March 2017


Victoria

John Spig, ACE Victoria President

It has been a busy start to the year for all in education in Victoria. That is not an evidential-based comment, of course, but one based on enough anecdotes that there may be some truth behind it!

Members of the ACE Victoria Committee have been diligently working in their day (often stretching into their nights) in education, to get the year off and running positively in their schools and the other institutions we connect with. Our focus is on researching and identifying the events that allow us to come together to learn, to network, and thus to advance our careers.

The first event on the ACE Victoria calendar for 2019 was the Len Falk Lecture. Held on Thursday 2 May in the Len Falk building of the Department of Education in Melbourne, the Len Falk lecture was delivered by Professor Margaret Whitlam and Barry Jones. To see the full list of past Len Falk lectures, and for further information on this year’s Len Falk lecture, please see: https://australian.edu.au/products/len-falk-lecture/

We are also putting together our other events for the year. ACE Victoria is proud to be one of the foundations of the Victorian Academy of Education and Claiming: a new way of learning. Where are the exemplars? Is this influence the way in which we are following the narrative that we are following? Perhaps the sticking point change the way we support for teachers, leaders, academics and the wider educational community. If these are the assumptions that we make, is the evidence-based comment, or is it just an anecdotal story?

Liam Diederich

ACE Victoria President

enforcement to encourage pre-service teachers to join ACE as Associate Members, a fee membership category for the newest members of our profession.

It is a fantastic to be a member of our professional association, the Australian College of Educators, as it enables us to speak across sectors, subjects, schools.

Warms regards

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Jason Locke, President ACE SA

“SACE is not a competition. It’s a standard.” Professor Martin Weisweiler, Chief Executive SACE Board of South Australia, signed off with this statement in a recent article in The Advertiser (April 1, 2019). “What the world cares about is what that student knows and, more importantly, what they can do with what they know.” Skills, capabilities and dispositions rather than memory of content and process. A simple yet profound statement that has been echoing around the world for many years now. Almost two decades into the ‘21st Century Skills’ revolution and we still don’t seem to have settled into a new paradigm for learning. This year will see the eighth generation of school students finishing their school-based set of values within this construct? Perhaps this would be the most compelling narrative of all.

Let us take a leaf from our own book. Where are the exemplars? Tried, tested and moderated to give validity to a new way of learning. What does the new ‘A’ standard look like for educational assessment? What does the standard look like to teach? It is no exaggeration to say that the decisions we make as educators, have students’ lives at stake. We are suitably reckless to take a plunge into the abyss unless someone lights the way into the murky depths and we know what is at the bottom.

A pervasive trend in education is that we value what we assess and we teach what we value. If we are evaluating complex competencies, skills and the dispositions of learners, then how do we support all educators to develop their own set of values within this construct? To reshape their own professional identity within the new learning and assessment paradigm? Perhaps this would be the most compelling narrative of all.

Jason Locke, President ACE SA

sa@austcolled.com.au

annual conference in South Australia. One of his concerns, framing pre-service teacher presentation was put as “When first gets really fast, being slow to adapt makes education really slow.” When we look at the past, we need to challenge the notion that we are following. Does this sticking point change the way in which our support for teachers, leaders, academics and the wider educational community. It is worth noting that the health and wellbeing of children is a community responsibility. It is worth noting that when the VCU the term ‘children’ they are referring to children and young people. When taking into consideration the findings from various reports such as the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) 2018 and Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) report card it is clear that Australian children could be doing better. For example, The ARACY report card noted that Australia is “still an average only middle of the pack by international comparisons” (p. 4) and that outcomes had deteriorated since the previous Report Card was released. For too many children poverty, mental illness, sexual abuse obesity, poor school readiness and chronic disease impact their lives.

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VIEW FROM THE STATES

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QUDENSLAND

Luke Ralph, Australian College of Educators Board Member President, ACE Brisbane Central Region

It is interesting that this edition of Professional Educator is focusing on the role that HASS (or could we
say non-STEM subjects play in an increasingly complex school curriculum as changes to the Queensland Senior Schooling Curriculum and Assessment have come into effect this year.

According to the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) ‘For success in work and life, young Queenslanders in the 21st century need to be innovative, entrepreneurs, lifelong learners, valued employees and responsible global citizens’. 2019 will see the introduction of the first ‘wave’ of changes to the curriculum and assessment set and marked by QCAA. The changes to the senior schooling curriculum are aimed at ensuring Queensland’s education system is keeping pace with a transforming society and economy and to ensure Queensland school leavers have the 21st century skills they will need for the future.

Earlier this year, the federal government inquiry into the status of teaching held its Brisbane hearings. According to reports, one-third of Australia’s teachers leave the profession within their first five years. According to the Queensland Minister for Education, Grace Grace, analysis by the Queensland College of Teachers indicates that around 14 per cent of new teachers leave the profession within four years. Further to this, the Queensland College of Teachers have cited several articles reporting that “between 30 per cent and 50 per cent of Australian teachers leave the profession within the first five years”. The inquiry has officially been closed due to the recently held Federal Election. The College will continue to monitor and report on the outcomes from the inquiry and ensure that members are afforded every opportunity to actively contribute to this important and ongoing discussion.

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BOOK REVIEW

Committed to Learning
A History of Education at The University of Melbourne
Juliet Flesch

Reviewed by Anthony Mackay AM

Author Juliet Flesch notes that accounts of administrative changes do not make for riveting reading. However, in her History of Education at The University of Melbourne, administrative changes coupled with personalities, politics and institutional changes do make for compelling reading.

This is a remarkable story of the transformation of Education at the University from “Cinderella to Star” – on the local, national and international stage.

It is a play of four acts spread over 110 years – taking us on a journey encompassing the amalgamation of the University and College, the inauguration of the Melbourne Model, and the transition from Faculty of Education to the Melbourne Graduate School of Education.

It is a journey that reveals the reasons why MGSE is consistently rated amongst the world’s five best faculties of Education.

For those of us who have a strong affinity with and deep affection for “Education @ Melbourne” the leading actors come to life in a way that strengthens our admiration for outstanding scholarship, thought leadership, ground breaking research and development, quality teaching & learning, world leading professional & clinical practice, highly influential policy formulation & advocacy, administrative acumen, disciplined innovation & experimentation – and above all superb leadership.

Many who will read this wonderful account have been participants & contributors - fellow travellers - happy to be implicated in the past, present and immediate future of what is a highly respected institution.

Other readers, once removed - educators, historians, and those drawn to the drama of a ‘compelling story’ with a cast list of Australia’s outstanding educational leaders - will find from the pen of this professional historian a narrative of drama, twists and turns - volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity and success - a work worthy of a VUCA world.

Reputation of the order that MGSE now enjoys is hard won - and retaining & further enhancing that standing is even tougher in today’s global environment where sustainability is the ultimate prize.

The Foreword to Committed to Learning reminds us that public discourse on education in Australia is poor at best. At a time when learning has never been more important to our individual and collective well-being the role of Faculties of Education is crucial.

Judith Flesch’s History of Education at the University of Melbourne is a celebration of the extensive influence of one institution’s contribution to an educated society. It is good to have this story now to inspire all of us to lift our game to ensure we have the service of the next generation of equally outstanding educational leaders.

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