

Submission
No 83

INQUIRY INTO REVIEW OF THE NEW SOUTH WALES SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Organisation: Economics and Business Educators NSW

Date Received: 2 November 2020



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October 2020

Submission by Economics and Business Educators NSW to the 2020 NSW Parliament Inquiry into the review of the New South Wales school curriculum

Economics and Business Educators NSW (EBE NSW) is an active professional teachers association representing and supporting teachers of Economics, Business Studies, Legal Studies and Commerce in NSW. It is also a member of the Professional Teachers' Council NSW and an affiliate member of the national subject association, Business Educators Australasia.

By way of a preamble, EBE NSW strongly affirms the role played by professional teacher associations in consultation about the school curriculum, after all it is teachers whose job it is to “translate” curriculum into engaging and relevant learning experiences that meet the current and future needs of students.

EBE NSW thanks the NSW Legislative Council for the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry. Please find below five key recommendations in response to the issues raised in the “Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No.3 Review of the New South Wales School Curriculum Chair’s Discussion Paper” (October 2020) and “Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No.3 Review of the New South Wales School Curriculum Committee’s Discussion Paper” (October 2020).

Decluttering the Curriculum and Developing a Deeper Understanding

The NSW Curriculum Review has recommended decluttering syllabuses in order to focus on deeper understanding and core skills (Recommendations 1 & 2). Likewise, the Committee’s Discussion Paper recognises that submissions largely echoed the concern that the curriculum is overcrowded and focuses on surface-level knowledge rather than deep understanding of critical skills (Chapter 2.5). In response, EBE NSW recommends that the NSW Government retain and deepen consumer and financial literacy knowledge and skills in the NSW curriculum, and ensures that consumer and financial literacy knowledge and skills are taught by subject-experts with real-world context.



Retain and deepen consumer and financial literacy knowledge and skills in the NSW Curriculum

Students need to develop a deep understanding of consumer and financial literacy knowledge and skills in order to make decisions to improve their quality of life and to contribute productively to the Australian economy. However, unlike other Australian states and territories, financial literacy is not explicitly taught in the NSW curriculum. Rather, it is superficially covered within the Mathematics syllabuses. It is not taught in primary schools within the social sciences learning area. Consumer and financial literacy is taught within the elective Commerce course in Years 7 – 10, meaning that only students who choose to study this subject gain consumer and financial literacy knowledge and skills.

In order to facilitate a “deeper understanding” of consumer and financial literacy knowledge and skills, EBE NSW recommends that the NSW Government:

- 1. Retain consumer and financial literacy knowledge and skills in the NSW curriculum, and cover them in more depth as part of the process of “decluttering” and removing other content from the curriculum;**
- 2. Enable primary school students to learn about consumer and financial literacy knowledge and skills within the Social Sciences learning area.**

Ensure consumer and financial literacy knowledge and skills are taught by subject-experts within a real-world context

Currently, the only mandatory consumer and financial literacy knowledge and skills in the NSW curriculum are covered in the Years 7-10 Mathematics Syllabus, where students learn about comparing prices and calculating tax, superannuation and interest.

However, the approach of rolling consumer and financial literacy knowledge and skills into Mathematics has led to a lack of real-world context, application and “deep understanding” of the knowledge and skills being taught. In general, students memorise how to find the answer to Mathematics questions related to consumer and financial literacy skills and knowledge (e.g. “when you get a compound interest question, just use this formula’) rather than actually understanding what it is they are calculating and how they will apply the knowledge and skills in their life.

Furthermore, many teachers are ill - equipped to teach consumer and financial literacy knowledge and skills.

Students’ inadequate understanding of consumer and financial literacy knowledge and skills is evident when students elect to study Economics and/or Business Studies in Years 11 and 12. It then becomes clear that even students who achieved strong results in financial mathematics in Years 7-10 often do not even know what superannuation or tax returns



actually are. Rather, they only know how to complete calculations in relation to superannuation or tax when given a standard examination - style question. As not all students choose to study Economics or Business Studies for the HSC, all students do not receive the necessary clarification to assist them in life beyond school in relation to consumer and financial literacy knowledge and skills.

Clearly, the current curriculum design is leading to a superficial understanding rather than a deep understanding of consumer and financial literacy and skills.

EBE NSW recommends that the NSW Government:

- 3. ensures all students from K – 10 learn about consumer and financial literacy knowledge and skills within the social sciences learning area so students can apply this knowledge and skills to the real world.**
- 4. ensures that consumer and financial literacy knowledge and skills are taught by trained teachers rather than consumer and financial literacy knowledge and skills being superficially covered as a part of a Mathematics course.**

A new framework of learning in the senior years of school

The NSW Curriculum Review recommended replacing the existing learning areas in the curriculum (Mathematics, English, Science, Human Society and its Environment etc.) in the senior years of school with new learning areas for the senior years of school (see Figure 15 – “A new framework of learning in the senior years of school” – page 102 – NSW Curriculum Review – April 2020). Reorganising subject areas will lead to teachers being split across faculties, leading to inefficiency in how they are managed.

For example, many Legal Studies teachers also teach Business Studies and/or Economics. Currently these subjects fall within the Human Society and its Environment (HSIE) learning area. However, the suggested new learning areas would split these teachers across the “Humanities, Society and Social and Community Services” faculty and the “Business, Economics and Financial Services” faculty.

Splitting teachers across faculties and staff rooms in this way often leads to inefficiencies and oversights in communication, administration, managing staff performance and professional development.

In addition, economics, business and law related subject matter contains important synergies between the concepts and terms covered within each subject.



EBE NSW recommends that the NSW Government:

- 5. adjust the proposed learning areas in the NSW Curriculum Review to accommodate the most common subject combinations for teachers, with Economics, Business Studies and Legal Studies being part of one learning area called “Economics, Business and Law”.**

Effectiveness of the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) in curriculum development and supervision

More resources need to be invested into NESA to ensure each syllabus has a subject expert, with experience in the classroom teaching the subject, employed by NESA to offer support and advice to teachers teaching a particular syllabus in the classroom. At present, for example, there is only one person employed on an ongoing basis to administer the many syllabuses in the Human Society and its Environment learning area (K-12). Consequently, teachers contacting NESA to ask syllabus specific questions based on subject matter and how to teach it can find themselves unable to access a NESA staffmember to support them and offer advice. This support mechanism is especially critical for beginning teachers, teachers who are the only teacher teaching a syllabus in a particular school and teachers teaching out of field. This curriculum support will have significant benefits in relation to quality expectations as the curriculum is being implemented in schools.

EBE NSW recommends that the NSW Government:

- 6. Employs more educators who have knowledge of each syllabus and who know how to teach it to children in schools so each syllabus has a subject expert teachers can access for support and advice.**

EBE NSW thanks the NSW Legislative Council for the opportunity to provide this submission to the Inquiry. We welcome your engagement with teachers on the frontline and will be happy to further discuss any of the points raised in this submission or other issues related to the NSW Curriculum Review.