



## **Economics and Business Educators NSW Submission to the NSW Curriculum Review (2018)**

Economics and Business Educators NSW (EBE NSW) welcomes the opportunity to participate in the consultation on the Review of the NSW Curriculum ('the Review'). EBE NSW is the peak professional association for current and future teachers of economics, business and legal education in NSW and overseas in Australian International Schools.

This response represents the views of the Board of Directors of EBE NSW. In addition, a recent survey of members probed teachers' views regarding aspects of the review as represented in the Terms of Reference, and other issues deemed to be relevant.

In the preparation of this response, the EBE NSW Board had regard to the Terms of Reference and to the key questions recommended for focus:

- *What should the purpose of schooling be in the 21st century?*
- *What knowledge, skills and attributes should every student develop at school?*
- *How could the curriculum better support every student's learning?*
- *What else needs to change?*

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.

*In a recent survey of members:*

*69.6% of respondents indicated that they supported the scope of the Review*

*96.4% of respondents indicated that they valued transparency regarding the way in which changes are made to the curriculum they teach*

*98.2% of respondents agreed that the contribution of EBE NSW to curriculum decisions and processes is invaluable.*

The position of the EBE NSW Board in relation to the key issues is as follows:

- 1. *The curriculum itself – its scope and “content”; the “essential entitlement” for every child.***

Whilst there is clearly a need to reform the current traditional and dominant knowledge-based approach to curriculum in NSW, EBE NSW supports the identification of a core



of knowledge, skills and capabilities, and attitudes, values and dispositions for every child.

EBE NSW affirms the value of economics, business and legal education as an important and relevant component of this core. EBE NSW recognises the need to embed 21<sup>st</sup> Century ('and beyond') skills in the curriculum in a more explicit and contemporary way, but supports an approach whereby these skills can be developed through a core curriculum that is discipline based. That is, it is not an 'either/or'. Curriculum design can ensure that the integrity of the disciplines is retained, whilst developing skills that society is demanding now and will demand more of in the future.

*80.4 % of respondents agreed that it is important that Economics, Business and Law related subject matter is compulsory for all students to study from K -10.*

*94.6% of respondents agreed that Economics, Business Studies, and Legal Studies should be retained as distinct subject disciplines in the senior curriculum.*

EBE NSW recognises the importance of foundational knowledge and skills of literacy and numeracy for every child, and thus as part of 'core'. However the recent member survey also affirmed the contribution of economics, business and legal related curriculum to building students' literacy and numeracy:

*More than two-thirds of respondents agreed that curriculum related to Economics, Business Studies, Legal Studies and Commerce assists in developing students' literacy and numeracy*

## **2. The contribution of economics, business and legal education to '21<sup>st</sup> Century learning'.**

Recent discussions at the World Economic Forum focused on the contribution of the humanities to education. See article – "The humanities re becoming more important Here's why": <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/06/how-a-humanities-degree-will-serve-you-in-a-disruptive-economy/>

The Academy of Social Sciences in Australia's 2017 report, "The Social Sciences Shape the Nation", gives examples of how Social Sciences are of value to Australian society: <http://www.socialsciencesweek.com.au/social-sciences-shape-the-nation/>  
The following paragraph is from the website:

### **Improve the National curriculum**

A recent overhaul of primary and secondary high school curricula aims to improve national education standards, providing all students (not just high achievers) with access to a world-class education. It also hopes to help arrest significant declines in Australia's global ranking of education quality across all disciplines. To achieve these goals, evidence suggests that the social sciences must be jointly prioritised alongside the sciences within the education system. While recognising the importance of better national performance in STEM, evidence suggests that to lift learning outcomes it should not be a case of either/or but rather one of both, and more. For Australia to reverse the worrying trends in educational outcomes, it must invest in the social sciences and advance reforms that respect and reflect national needs and aspirations.



Indeed, in a similar vein, our own Minister of Education the Hon Rob Stokes MP, at the *Queenwood Balmoral Lecture* in March 2018 reminded us about the importance of the humanities and cautioned against “prioritising STEM over other disciplines”.

<https://www.queenwood.nsw.edu.au/Queenwood-News/Events/Challenging-the-STEM-Orthodoxy>

The current curriculum content of courses including Commerce, Business Studies, Economics and Legal Studies encourages and fosters teaching strategies and learning experiences that will prepare students for life beyond school. Creativity is linked strongly to enterprise and is represented in many aspects of the Years 7 – 10 Commerce curriculum. Our members incorporate real-world learning experiences that foster creativity into their pedagogy, such as participation in the *Plan Your Own Enterprise Competition*.

*In a recent survey of members:*

*More than two-thirds of respondents agreed that curriculum related to Economics, Business Studies, Legal Studies and Commerce assists in developing students’ critical thinking skills*

### **3. Overcrowding and the appropriate level of detail in curriculum documents**

EBE NSW agrees that the current curriculum is overcrowded and the “outcomes” of this impact negatively on student engagement, the use of productive pedagogies and the capacity of teachers to shape teaching and learning experiences in a way that meets the needs of individual students. Related to the issue of overcrowding is the fact that teachers only have a set amount of time to cover the curriculum in a school year. Time is limited and sometimes less is more. Curriculum documents need to consider more closely the amount of time teachers have in a school calendar year to teach the content for a particular course.

Curriculum documents that are too general and suggest “examples” of content dot points for teacher to pick and choose from, can affect the flow of a topic and cause it to lack structure and progression. While “examples” may be appropriate for issues that may be studied for a topic, this style of curriculum design is not appropriate for essential knowledge and skills that should be taught in a topic in order to achieve the learning outcomes for that topic. This level of detail also assists out of field teachers and maintains a level of consistency across schools in terms of what is taught.



## 4. Curriculum design issues.

EBE notes that a recent review of curriculum in Victoria has resulted in the development of a model of pedagogy. See “The Pedagogical Model”:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/teachingresources/practice/pedagogicalmodel.pdf>

Victoria has developed a “Victorian Teaching and Learning Model” which has four interrelated elements - Vision for Learning, the Practice Principles for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, the Pedagogical Model and High Impact Teaching Strategies.

When it comes to pedagogy, NSW tends to have a more ‘hands-off’ approach, arguing that *how* a teacher delivers the content is a matter for teachers. Perhaps it is time for change.

EBE NSW supports a ‘re-think’ of current curriculum design principles, based on an extensive review of the literature and the identification of evidence of approaches to curriculum design that facilitates a focus on pedagogies that improve student engagement and outcomes.

Scotland’s “Curriculum for Excellence” also represents an approach that articulates clear design principles for curriculum and is strongly focused on the quality of a student’s learning experience rather than only the content. See “What is Curriculum for Excellence?”:

[https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-\(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5\)/What%20is%20Curriculum%20for%20Excellence](https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5)/What%20is%20Curriculum%20for%20Excellence)

The Scottish education system is highly regarded for its innovative approach to business and enterprise education and financial capability initiatives in schools.

## 5. Teachers

EBE NSW sees this review as an opportunity to consider critical issues that are related specifically to teachers who must:

- interpret - *for example: What does it mean? Which bits are important? Which bits are mandatory? Have my students done this before? Is it too hard or too easy? Is it relevant for my students – all of them?*
- resource – *for example: what do I need to support student learning about this curriculum? Scootle? Textbooks? Maps? Excursions? An MP? 800 websites – which ones?*
- implement - *for example: write the scope and sequence and write the teaching program*
- assess - *for example: should it be Assessment as learning? Assessment for learning? Assessment of learning? Peer assessment? Self assessment? Test? Oral?*



- report on - *for example: A-E? Achieved/Working towards/working beyond; satisfactory or unsatisfactory progress? 100%? Can do better?*
- register and evaluate the curriculum – *for example: sign and date, what did I leave out? How much time did I take? What did I add? How many indicative hours? How many lessons? And did it work? Were students engaged? Did they achieve the outcomes and enjoy it? Did I enjoy it?*

....the curriculum.

At the same time teachers are expected to be involved in other activities such as professional development programs (sometimes in their own time), maintaining good discipline in all classes (sometimes without adequate support from other school personnel and parents – lack of joint responsibility) and producing written reports related to student wellbeing.

Concerns about **teacher workload** are well documented. For example, the 2018 Report to the NSW Teachers Federation, “Understanding Work in Schools The Foundation for Teaching and Learning”:

<https://news.nswtf.org.au/application/files/7315/3110/0204/Understanding-Work-In-Schools.pdf>

NSW schools are victims of “**regulation creep**” that is a huge cost in financial and real terms as more and more evidence of compliance with the requirements for school registration and accreditation is required by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) and employing authorities, not to mention the reporting requirements of the Australian Education Act and the National Education Reform Agreement. Despite the recommendations of the BOSTES review panel to reduce the administrative burden of school registration and teacher accreditation on schools and teachers, little seems to have been achieved.

The unfortunate malfunction of eTAMS continues to leave teachers frustrated and has resulted in confusion and anxiety.

Combined with the demands of implementation of new courses and new assessment requirements, it is no wonder that teacher retention rates are so poor. Teacher workload must be a key consideration.

## 5. Credentialing – the HSC

Assessment-driven teaching and learning has a place in schools and can act as a motivator for teachers and students.

The HSC with its external examination system places everyone on an equal footing and can develop important qualities and traits like perseverance, hard work, discipline and reward for effort.



There is room to improve the HSC, including introducing a component of community service, similar to the International Baccalaureate community service component.

## 6. Concluding remarks

1. EBE NSW looks forward to the next phase of this review, and would welcome an invitation to respond to the draft recommendations being developed by NESAs.
2. EBE NSW requests that the research and literature reviews of the evidence base and of good practice elsewhere be published on the NESAs website so all can review and benefit from the work.
3. EBE NSW believes that education, and therefore the curriculum, lead to both self development, as well as “the common good”. It is then fitting to close with reference to the data from the recent EBE NSW members survey in which:

*Over 80 % of respondents agreed that curriculum related to Economics, Business Studies, Legal Studies and Commerce:*

- *engages students in learning at school and contributes to developing knowledge and skills that contribute to life-long learning*
- *assists in developing young people as active and informed citizens.*

Joe Alvaro  
President – Economics and Business Educators NSW  
2018