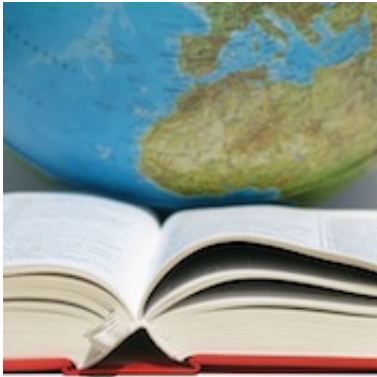


Academic sees decline in Social Studies in Australian schools

February 21 2014, by Candice Barnes



A Murdoch University academic has expressed concern about the loss of 'a vital learning area' in Australian schools – Social Studies.

Senior lecturer Dr Lisa Cary said there had been a dramatic 'narrowing of the curriculum' in recent years, with teaching now geared towards standardised tests, such as NAPLAN.

"Having spent the last two decades working in Canada and the United States as an academic, I would often talk about the Social Studies curriculum I had used as a teacher in Western Australia with great pride," Dr Cary said.

"Now it seems as if we have lost Social Studies in Australian schools!

"We have gone backwards and broken down the subject area of Social Studies into the individual disciplines, primarily history, geography and economics."

At a high profile invited international keynote address in Bandung, Indonesia late last year, Dr Cary said the advent of [social media](#) and new technologies meant that Social Studies (also known as Studies of Society and the Environment or SOSE) was more important than ever, both at home and abroad.

"We have to know ourselves so that we can know others, but this is becoming increasingly complicated by the huge amount of information available through the internet and the media," she said.

"It's important that we teach Australian students how these different information streams influence how they see themselves and others."

Dr Cary acknowledged that the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) seemed to have recognised this need in introducing a Civics and Citizenship subject, but she said it doesn't go far enough.

"One period a week is not enough to shape an individual's understanding of their responsibilities to the nation and to the global society they live in," she said.

"It's not an easy thing to do, so we'll see how these national efforts play out."

Prior to her academic career, Dr Cary was a Social Studies teacher at St Edmund's College in Collie, Western Australia (now closed). In training

the next generation of teachers, she focuses on the role education plays in wider society.

"We have to drive this from a grass roots level, teacher by [teacher](#), school by school, so that we can create the nation we want to be."

Provided by Murdoch University

Citation: Academic sees decline in Social Studies in Australian schools (2014, February 21) retrieved 14 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-02-academic-decline-social-australian-schools.html>

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