Greater serve of history in national curriculum


Sunday 12 October 2008

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HISTORY lessons will be soon be compulsory for every Australian student until the end of Year 10 under radical national curriculum proposals.

The Rudd Government is pushing for extended and compulsory history subjects across Australia as educators survey a generation of students with "gaps in their history".

The National Curriculum Board will this week unveil its proposals to transform history, science, maths and English subjects in our classrooms from 2011.

Arguably the most controversial of these reforms is the content and structure of history taught to students from Cape York to Perth.

The NCB proposes the subject become compulsory and stand alone with about 100 lessons a year from Years 7 to 10, and a "distinctive branch of learning" constituting 10 per cent of all primary class time.

The NCB also suggests what and when matters of ancient, modern, Australian and world histories should be learned by students.

- Short quiz: How well do you know history?

Currently most Queensland schools teach history to Year 10 as part of the studies of society and environment (SOSE) subject, which also integrates geography and social studies.

Less than half of Australian students now learn history as a stand alone subject.

The radical reforms were formulated by a 10-strong advisory group containing Brisbane Girls Grammar School head of history Julie Hennessey, and led by University of Melbourne Professor Stuart Macintyre.

Professor Macintyre said many high school leavers now had "gaps in their history" and were "not aware of major topics".

"History should be taught as history because the skills of historical understanding and the importance of historical knowledge are not being given as important a place in the timetable," he said.

The proposals draw heavily from Monash University's National Centre for History Education.
A NCB spokesman said the reforms could be modified at an educators' forum in Melbourne on Wednesday, before being placed on the NCB website for "public discussion" from November 2008 to February 2009.

The changes to history, science, maths and English curricula - forming the first national curriculum - will then be trialled for two years before implementation in 2011. Future science students are set to learn about cloning, stem cell research and hybrid cars.