

WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND: PERSPECTIVES ON DIFFERENT PHYSICS CURRICULA IN AUSTRALIA

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ABSTRACT

The curriculum has always invoked great contestation. In one of the states in Australia, New South Wales, the high school physics curriculum (for university entry) has undergone some significant changes over the last twenty years (Georgiou & Crook, 2017). Rather than incremental changes, these changes were substantial, including attempts to include socially and culturally physics knowledge and to provide students with opportunities to undertake independent research. We discuss the nature of these changes, and how they fit into the landscape of curriculum design, in particular, how certain characteristics seem to cycle in and out of fashion. We also report on teachers' perspectives of these changes, as reported on a survey administered in 2021, three years after the 'new' curriculum had been introduced. Teachers agreed on some aspects in relation to curriculum design in physics, including that it needs to be 'rigorous' and mathematical, however, there were also some disagreements, particularly in relation to whether the curriculum was achieving its aim to develop 'depth' of knowledge (NSW Education Standards Authority [NESA], 2020).

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