

TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES OF THE 'NEW' BACK-TO-BASICS NSW PHYSICS SYLLABUS

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BACKGROUND AND AIMS

In NSW from 2018, senior high school students have been experiencing a transformed Physics syllabus. This syllabus is considered to take a 'back-to-basics' approach where core principles and problem solving were prioritised (NSW Education Standards Authority [NESA], 2020), and was a response to the earlier syllabus which was more contextualised and included a discussion of the history of ideas and technologies. This earlier syllabus (2001-2017), attracted significant attention for straying away from 'real' physics, for including too much 'sociology', for being 'dumbed down' and 'feminised' (Georgiou & Crook, 2017). Four years on and amongst a backdrop of falling Physics enrolments and worsening female participation, we ask NSW teachers to share their perspectives on some of the most publicised views on the syllabus.

DESIGN AND METHODS

Teachers completed a survey with nine demographic questions, 18 Likert-style questions and 8 open-ended responses. We received a total of 49 responses, though only 37 were admissible after data screening.

RESULTS

Teachers mostly agreed that the new syllabus was more 'rigorous', higher quality, more mathematical, and they generally enjoyed teaching the subject. However, there were also some disagreements amongst the teachers related to whether the new syllabus excluded certain groups of students and whether the aims of the syllabus, in particular, for achieving 'depth', were met.

CONCLUSIONS

These results have implications for national curriculum reform and aims to improve STEM participation and expertise.

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