

Unpacking the *Social systems and structures* strand of the HSIE K–6 syllabus

This is the fourth in a series of articles looking at the teaching and learning implications of a particular strand of the HSIE syllabus.

The *Social systems and structures* strand is different to the other three strands of *Change and continuity* (History), *Cultures* and *Environments*. Each strand in HSIE has two parts or sub strands, for the other three strands these sub strands are closely interwoven with each other. In *Social systems and structures* the strands could be considered as two separate parts: *Resource systems* and *Roles, rights and responsibilities*.

Resource systems:

Resource systems is about meeting the needs and wants of people, families and communities through a range and structure of community networks and systems. Examples include: from the farm to the table; economic and monetary systems, including financial understandings; systems related to trade – local, national and international; the system of Australian imports and exports; and how Australia fits into an international setting.

Roles, rights and responsibilities:

Roles, rights and responsibilities is about how individuals, families, different groups and government interact to fulfill their roles, rights and responsibilities within the economic, social and political constructs of the Australian community.

Both sub strands could be very broad, but they are clarified and defined for each Stage by the subject matter of the syllabus. Refer to pages 43 (ES1), 49 (S1), 55 (S2) and 61 (S3). The pages that follow these provide some ideas about the level of engagement for both students and teachers with these sub strands.

For Early Stage 1, the sub strands are merged into one outcome. The key concepts covered in Early Stage 1 are personal needs, and the needs of others and how they are met. Students learn about the structure of families represented in the class, how their own and class needs are met, the roles, rights and responsibilities of different people at school and about classroom rules and routines.

For Stage 1, *Resource systems* looks at how systems link to provide goods and services to meet the needs and wants of people. This includes learning about the difference between needs and wants, systems for producing goods and services, the different types of families, family functions and activities, and ways of acquiring, using and saving money.

Roles, rights and responsibilities is about the support roles of different people in the community, including volunteers. Students learn about class, school and community rules and responsibilities, such as traffic rules and sporting rules. Family roles and responsibilities include an understanding of families different to students own.

Social systems and structures in Stage 2 is more closely linked than in other Stages because one of the learning focuses is about local council. This covers resource systems, such as those provided by council, e.g. garbage, sewage, water and other systems that communities need, as well as developing an understanding of the decision making processes to elect and work in local government that are part of roles, rights and responsibilities. Students learn about the roles and responsibilities of citizens in local government. This includes the structure and elections of local council and the range of services provided by councils and other community groups.

There is also scope within the resource systems outcome to learn about the monetary system, financial products and services and some consumer and producer's rights and responsibilities. More complex production systems can also be investigated, such as the process a primary product goes through from being grown, through refining and changing to become a product that is used by people in the community, e.g. wool, oilseeds, cotton, rice, mineral ores, timber, food crops.

In Stage 3, the two sub strands diverge, again more clearly with the *Resource systems* strand, providing significant opportunities for a large variety of topics or focus areas to be addressed. These can include further development of financial literacy, the role of imports, exports and trade on the Australian and wider community, and a detailed investigation into some aid organisations. The *Roles, rights and responsibilities* outcome in Stage 3 has two main components: a study of different roles, responsibilities, decision making and electoral process of state and Australian governments; as well as some examples of social justice, such as Reconciliation.

Throughout this strand there is a strong emphasis on the skill of *Social and civic participation*. While engaging in learning in this strand, students have the opportunity to engage with a range of opportunities to behave as responsible

and informed citizens in a range of contexts. Teaching and learning activities inform students about current and relevant social and environmental issues. Students have the opportunity to consider their own rights and the rights of others, reflect on the impact of particular decisions and actions, and participate in a range of appropriate individual and group actions that inform, encourage or initiate operations and solve problems related to roles, rights and responsibilities.

The importance of this strand in K–6 HSIE should not be underestimated, for many of our students this will be the only opportunity they get to learn about some of the roles, rights and responsibilities of being a citizen in the Australian community. Some aspects of this strand are picked up in the mandatory History and Geography subjects in Years 7–10, however much of the content is only followed up if students choose to undertake Commerce as an elective.

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