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History curriculum through the lens of national heritage

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National heritage is an important theme that needs to be included in a school curriculum of a country which has a rich history and a culture. This study was conducted to inquire into the current state of coverage of national heritage in the secondary history curriculum. The objective was to formulate a conceptual framework with a view to develop a strategy to enhance the qualitative and quantitative dimensions of teaching and learning “National Heritage” (NH) with special reference to cultural heritage to make a positive contribution to national development. The content analysis research method was used. The steps followed in the analysis were, screening the curriculum materials of teaching and learning history, a comparative analysis based on the Blooms classification (hierarchy of abilities and affective, goals) and synthesis. The goals and norms given by the National Education Commission of Sri Lanka were adopted as the basis for analysis.

The results of the content analysis were helpful in understanding three important characteristics (a) the nature and the extent of the presentation of NH elements (b) its relationship with the learning outcomes and (c) the organization of NH themes. The findings suggest that there is an imbalance of NH values represented in the secondary school history curriculum resulting from an overemphasis on the historical sources and inadequate concern on the archaeological evidence. Screening of school text books revealed that NH themes presented in the text books were not organized in a coherent manner to meet the true values of the NH education. The strategic approaches followed by the ancient rulers in Sri Lanka in order to safeguard the socio-economic and political integrity and the maintain diplomatic relations and collaboration with the pan-regional neighbors were identified as one of the NH themes that needs to be included.

Another shortcoming is the lack of attention given to the historic maps. It can be concluded that the internal consistency and organization of content have many shortcomings. Therefore, it can be recommended that meaningful sequencing of topics and integrity of the content be improved to fulfill the objectives of teaching and learning history.

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