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Executive Summary

This is an interim report for the 2019 Churchill Fellowship by Elspeth Grant to revive learning about state and territory perspectives under our national History curriculum.

In South Australia, teachers require support to make personal, familial, local, national, regional, and global connections to our state's history. While this is not necessarily a new issue, teaching state history under the Australian Curriculum has proven to be a challenge over the last decade.

This project investigates how other places with a strong sense of identity incorporate their histories into their curricula. It focusses on discovering innovative pedagogical approaches that engage young people with history that could be applied to boost South Australian history in schools. It should be of interest to history educators and historical organisations in South Australia, as well as other Australian states and territories due to its broad scope.

This interim report is organised around the following inquiry questions:

1. Whose South Australian histories are we trying to teach and learn?
2. To what degree should students learn about South Australian history?
3. How does this project relate to place-based education?
4. Is South Australian history relevant to young global citizens?
5. In what ways can South Australian history be promoted through historical thinking and critical literacy?
6. Should curriculum change play a role?
7. How can we harness educational networks?
8. What opportunities are there for strengthening connections with South Australia's cultural institutions?
9. Can we take advantage of new investments in physical learning environments in South Australia?

The author toured Thailand, Spain, the United Kingdom and United States of America in February and March 2020, including the province of Chiang Mai, the autonomous community of Catalonia, and the countries Scotland and Wales, as well as national capitals Bangkok, Madrid, and Washington DC. The remainder of the itinerary for the United States (Cleveland, Ohio; Salt Lake City, Utah; and San Francisco, California) has been postponed due to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

A key highlight of the project thus far has been visiting 12 schools, which enabled professional dialogue with teaching peers, revealing many commonalities in classroom practice around the world and other day-to-day realities teachers face. The chance to observe and interact with students across the globe has also greatly enriched the project. The university and government contacts who facilitated these school visits have provided invaluable academic and jurisdictional context. The author has also made the most of her background as a museum curator, by incorporating visits to relevant cultural institutions wherever possible.

Final conclusions and recommendations should be published in an addendum to this report in 2021, after the postponed component of the study tour is complete. However, tentative findings are evident in the body of the report and interim commentary is provided with regard to whether a new textbook of South Australian history is a recommended option (in short, yes, with qualifications).