

The Current State of Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean Language Education in Australian Schools

Four Languages, Four Stories



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Introduction: A New Focus

In 2009, the Australian Government commissioned the Asia Education Foundation to research and produce detailed reports outlining the current situation in Australian schools with relation to three of the languages targeted by the National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program – Indonesian, Japanese and Korean. Teams of academic experts in each language area have now completed these three reports: for Indonesian, Michelle Kohler (University of South Australia) and Dr Phillip Mahnken (University of Sunshine Coast); for Japanese, Anne de Kretser and Dr Robyn Spence-Brown (both of Monash University); for Korean, Dr Seong-Chul Shin (University of New South Wales). Chinese had already been the subject of such a study in 2008 by Dr Jane Orton for the Melbourne Graduate School of Education and Melbourne Confucius Institute. All four reports provide detailed insight into the situation of their topic language and are an invaluable resource to inform the future of Asian languages in Australian schools.

This overview has two purposes. The first is to provide access to key elements of the findings of the four reports, an overview of the issues they raise and suggested responses to those issues to guide and direct thinking about appropriate action by education systems and schools.

The second is to draw attention to the fact that, while at a broad strategic level the four languages have similar (but not the same) issues and requirements, their situations are very different. History, scale of operation, support base, nature of the student group, rationale, teacher profile – these are fundamentals in which there are many marked differences across the four languages. If students are to be engaged with Asian languages in Australian schools, these differences must be acknowledged and inform planning.

There are some general issues which are noted below. But the bulk of this report is devoted to the individuality of the actual circumstances of each of the four languages. This is a different way of thinking about language provision.

These reports could not be more timely. The National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP) provides the relevant impetus and context for Asian languages in Australian schools today.

The National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP)

In 2008 the Australian Government announced the NALSSP to operate over 2008/09–2011/12 and committed funding of \$62.4m to enable it to achieve its objectives:

‘to significantly increase the number of Australian students becoming proficient at learning the languages and understanding the cultures of our Asian neighbours – China, Indonesia, Japan and Korea. It also aims to increase the number of qualified Asian language teachers and develop a specialist curriculum for advanced languages students’ (*Program Guidelines*, DEEWR, page 1).

Three key result areas have been identified for the NALSSP.

- **Flexible delivery and pathways:** Ensuring primary and secondary schools are equipped with enabling infrastructure and resources that support the quality teaching and learning of Asian languages and studies of Asia, and strengthening strategic partnerships and networks between schools, universities, higher education providers, businesses and Asian communities to support and add real world experiences to the teaching and learning of Asian languages.
- **Increasing teacher supply and support:** Ensuring there is an increased and maintained supply of quality teachers of Asian languages and studies of Asia.
- **Stimulating student demand:** Ensuring that students are aware of the benefits of studying Asian languages and studies of Asia.

The aspirational target for the NALSSP is that, 'by 2020, at least 12 per cent of students will exit Year 12 with a fluency in one of the target Asian languages sufficient for engaging in trade and commerce in Asia and/or university study'. Australian Bureau of Statistics data (2008) shows that around 197,500 students are forecasted to be in Year 12 in 2020. Meeting the NALSSP's target will therefore require at least 24,000 students to be studying one of the four languages in 2020, up from the 11,654 students reported to have completed study of the languages in Year 12 in 2008. This equates to a 100 per cent increase in student numbers but does not address the issue of how many of these students achieve fluency.

The NALSSP target does not identify what that might mean for the number of students for each language by 2020 but provides an overall percentage.

Based on participation trends since 2002, proportional size and profile of each language, and 2008 data showing that Chinese had 5,000 students studying at Year 12 level, Japanese around 4,000, Indonesian 1,300 and Korean 177, the numbers of students would include:

- 8,000 studying Chinese
- 8,000 studying Japanese
- 5,000 studying Indonesian and
- 3,000 studying Korean.

Clearly, there are challenges ahead for each language if these participation numbers are to be met, particularly for Indonesian and Korean.

In addition, the L1, LH and L2¹ breakdown of the Year 12 student cohort in each language by 2020 is also not defined in the NALSSP target. Currently, students studying Indonesian at Year 12 are predominantly reported to be second language learners (L2). Those studying Japanese are mostly L2 learners (there is evidence of increased numbers of native and Heritage speakers in Year 12 Japanese courses). However, those studying Korean language are invariably L1 students, and an extremely high percentage of students studying Chinese are L1 (local born, immigrant and international students) learners. Within the L2 cohort of Chinese, many are in fact home-speakers/Heritage speakers of Chinese.

¹ In this document 'L1' refers to first/native speakers of a language who have also mostly or completely been educated in that language; 'L2' to speakers who have acquired or are acquiring a second language. L2 learners may be further categorised as 'beginners' or 'continuers', the former starting from scratch, the latter having had some learning experience in the language; 'LH' refers to 'Heritage speakers' who, in broad terms, speak the language at home but are educated and live in a world where another language is the lingua franca.

General Issues

Lo Bianco² has identified 67 reports on languages teaching in Australia over the past two decades. In these reports it has been customary to generalise the issues across languages:

- a shortage of qualified language teachers
- decline in student, school, parental and community value for language learning
- insufficient time allocated to languages learning in schools
- lack of ability to study languages continuously and sequentially
- bias of students against studying a language because of the fear in competing against native speakers and the perceived negative impact of language study on tertiary entrance scores (DEEWR, 2009).

While the four reports point to issues shared across languages, they also provide detailed data and analysis specific to each language, thereby making an important contribution to the field of research required to support implementation of the NALSSP.

Program Provision and Student Participation

Despite Japanese and Indonesian being in the top three most taught languages in Australian schools, the proportion of Australian students currently studying the four NALSSP languages, K–12, is 18.6³ per cent of the total Australian student cohort – down from 24 per cent in 2000. The most significant decline in student numbers is in Japanese and Indonesian. Graph 1 represents the decrease in K–12 student participation in NALSSP languages over the past eight years.

At Year 12, the focal point of the NALSSP target, two stories of student participation can be told (see Graph 2). In 2000, the proportion of students learning a NALSSP language at Year 12 was 4.8 per cent.⁴ In 2008, around 5.8 per cent of students nationally, completed courses in the four target languages at Year 12 level, indicating an increase in participation. Noteworthy however is the increasing number of first language (L1) students studying Chinese, Korean and to a much lesser extent Japanese at Year 12 level. Estimated to be as high as 70 per cent of the cohort in Chinese and known to generally be 100 per cent of the cohort studying Korean, L1 students underpin much of the growth in Year 12 enrolments. The figure for second language learners (L2) is estimated to be between 3 to 4 per cent of the Year 12 cohort.

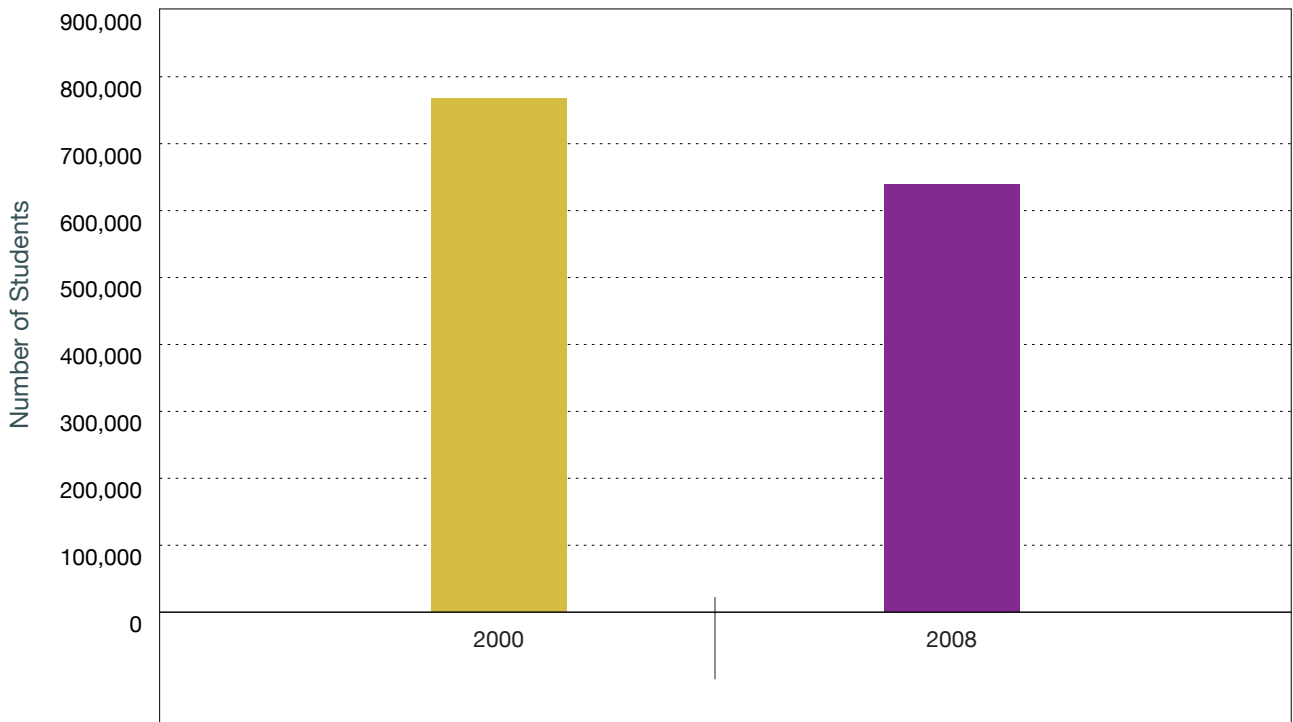
The picture over a longer period of time, demonstrated in Graph 3 (see page 6), indicates the significant impact that a major intervention such as the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) strategy (operating 1994–2002) can have on take-up of the four languages.

² Lo Bianco, J (with Slaughter, Y) (2009), *Australian Education Review – Second Languages and Australian Schooling*. Australian Council for Educational Research.

³ 2008 data drawn from the reports on the four languages and data provided by state and territory education jurisdictions.

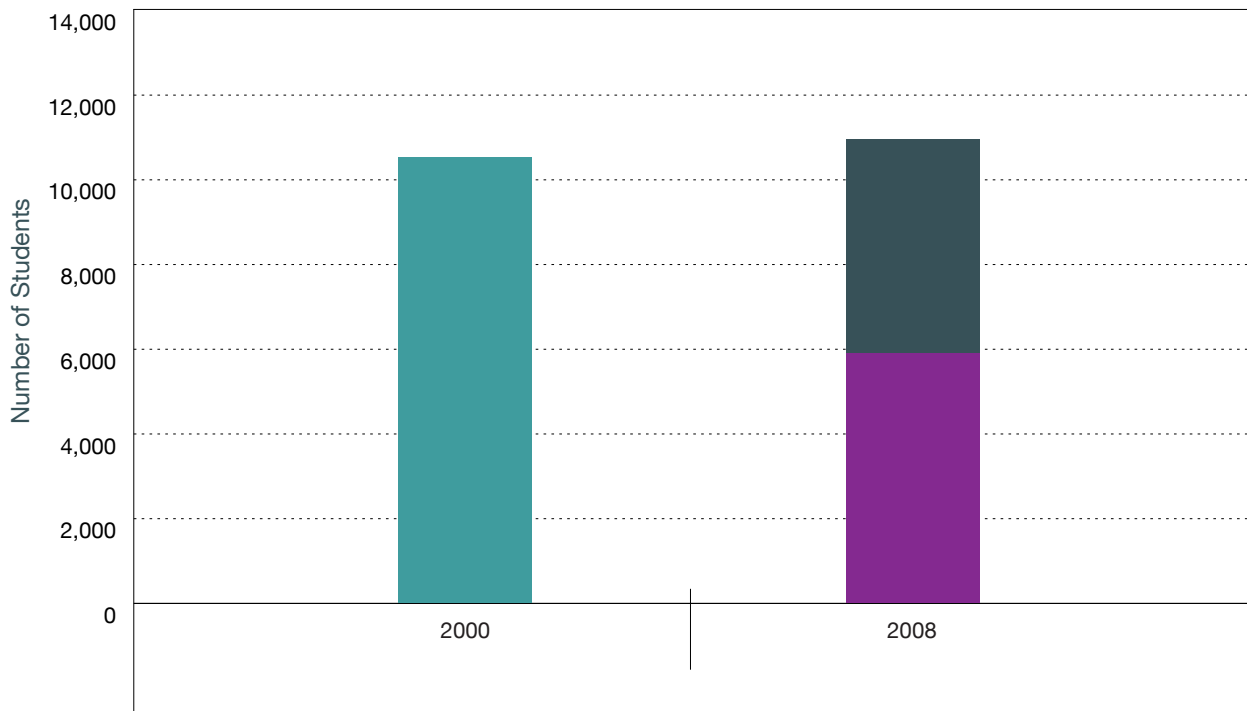
⁴ Erebus Consulting Partners (2002), *Evaluation of the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Strategy*, Canberra, DEEWR, page 124.

Graph 1: Total Number of Students in K-12 Studying NALSSP Languages 2000 and 2008



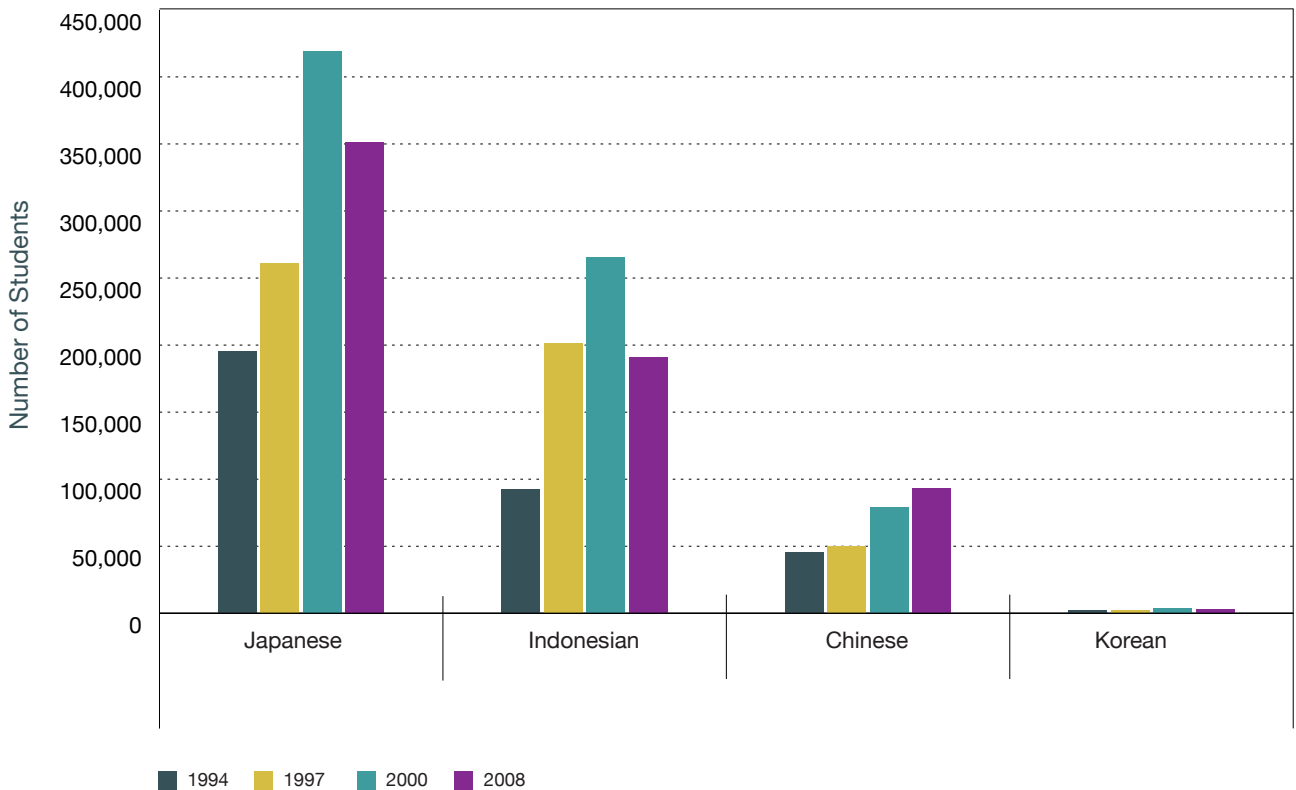
- Source: 2000 data based on Erebus Consulting Partners (2002) evaluation of the *National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Strategy* Canberra, DETYA

Graph 2: Total Number of Students Studying NALSSP Languages at Year 12 Level 2000 and 2008



- Source: 2000 data based on Outcomes and National Reporting Branch, DETYA, included in Erebus Consulting Partners (2002) evaluation of the *National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Strategy*
- 2008 numbers based on data provided by education systems nationally to DEEWR as part of NALSSP Strategic Plans, 2009 and from Curriculum and Assessment Authorities nationally. Some data (for example, Korean) also gathered directly from schools
- Purple section of column 2 shows the estimated size of the second language learner cohort at Year 12 in 2008

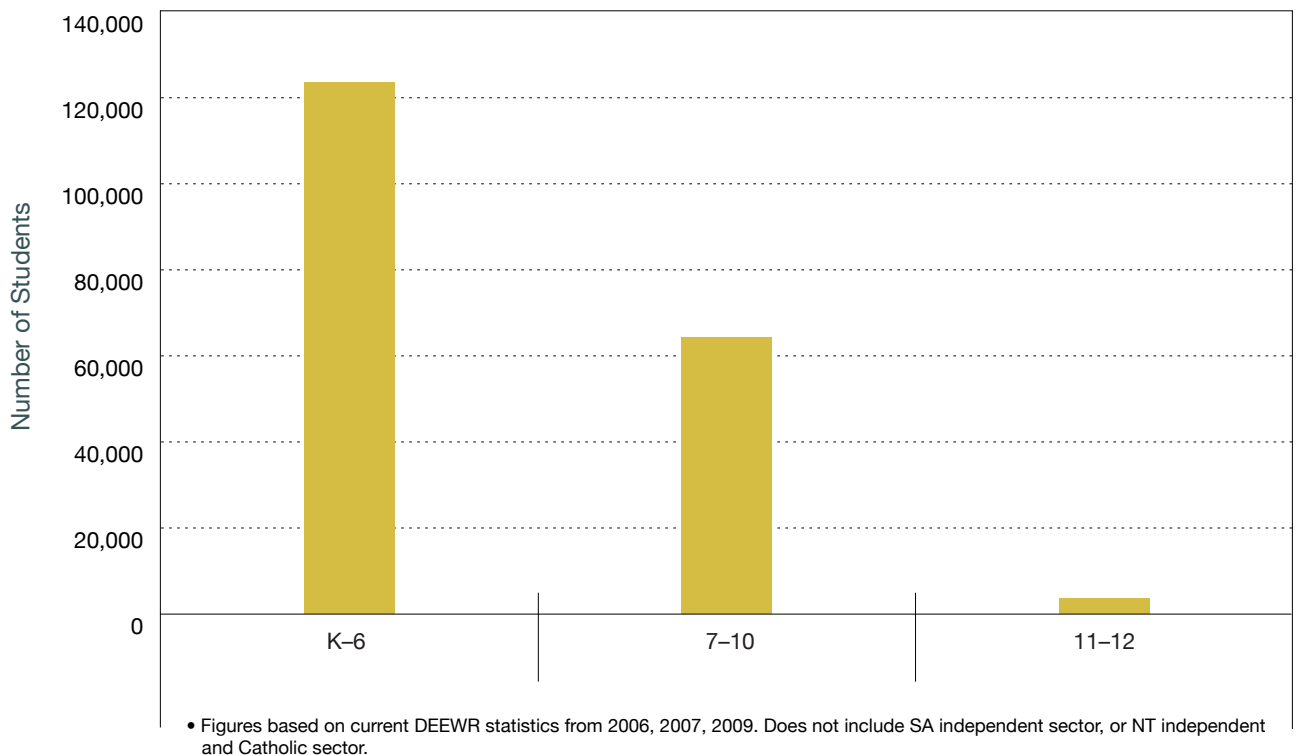
Graph 3 Number of Students in K-12 Studying NALSSP Languages 1994, 1997, 2000 and 2008



- The period 1998–2000 represents the midpoint of the NALSAS strategy.

Student enrolment data for Indonesian as shown in Graph 4 – and reflecting the trend in the other three languages – illustrates the steep decline in student participation from the primary to senior secondary years.

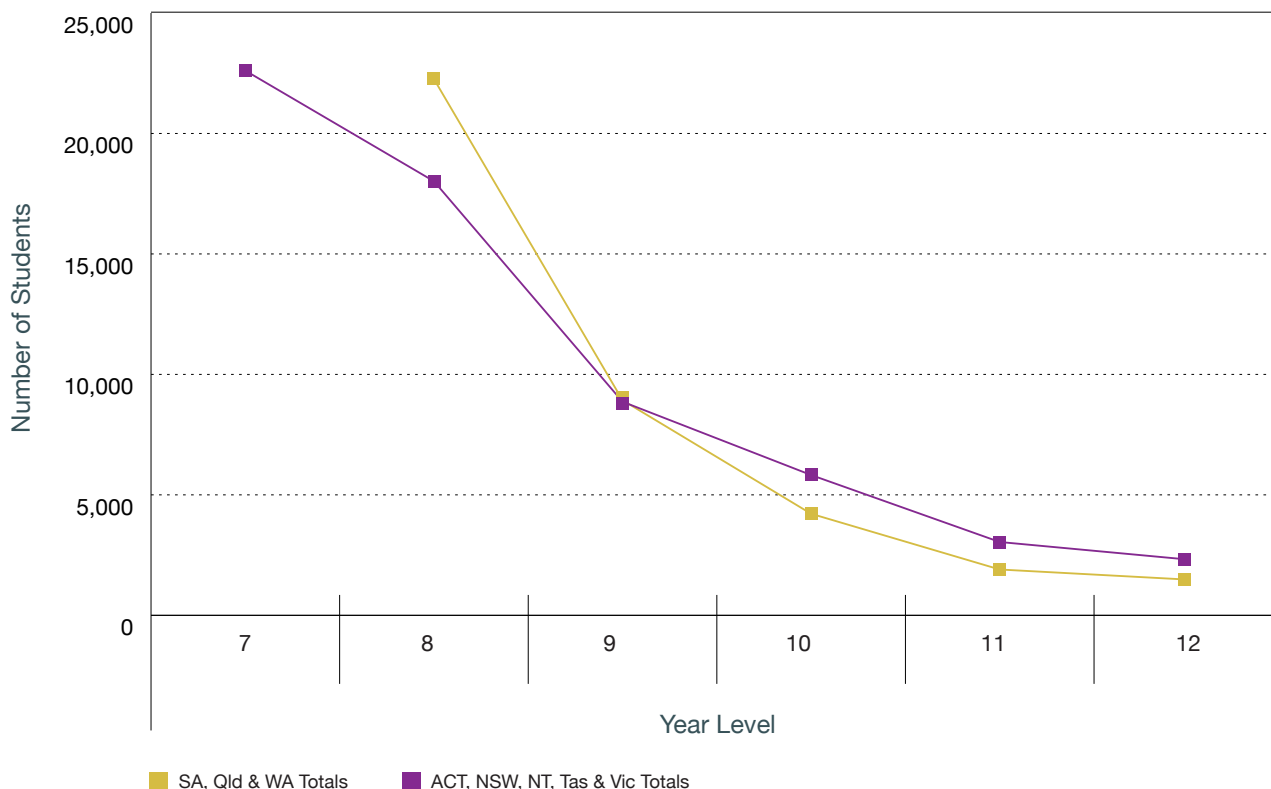
Graph 4: Total Enrolments by Grouped Year Levels



- Figures based on current DEEWR statistics from 2006, 2007, 2009. Does not include SA independent sector, or NT independent and Catholic sector.

The proportion of students discontinuing study of each NALSSP language, usually between the early secondary and senior secondary years, is extremely high. Detailed figures for Japanese, which again reflect the trend in the other three languages, reinforce just where student departure from programs occurs (see Graph 5).

Graph 5: Total Number of Students Studying Japanese at Secondary School Level 2008



Curriculum structures that incorporate student ‘election’ of non-core subjects is conventionally introduced in Year 9. Languages are rarely included in the core.

Better pathways for language study between primary and secondary schooling, and from junior-middle to the senior years of secondary school, are essential if the pattern of participation at Year 12 is to change. These must be both visible and attractive to students – and publicly valued by the school and the Australian community.

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Programs

The reports have captured sufficient quantitative and qualitative data to better understand the detail of the nature of the programs on offer. This is possible, for example, in Korean with its small enrolment and reach. However the true situation is disguised by no distinction being made in official data between a program, for example, which lasts for 10 minutes per week, a cultural studies element of a Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE) course, and a partial immersion course – all completely different learning experiences.

Serious concerns exist across all four languages about the content and duration of primary school programs and the impact of these programs on student achievement, levels of satisfaction and motivation to continue to study the language.

It is noted that the differing backgrounds of learners in Chinese and Korean classrooms must be officially recognised, with appropriate curriculums and assessment procedures developed for each category, especially at senior level where student choice is strongly influenced by issues of eligibility and tertiary entrance score calculation.

Teachers

It is noted that:

- L1 teachers of all four languages often struggle to adapt to Australian school 'culture' and to contemporary Australian approaches to teaching. Without intervention, this works against broad student and school support for programs.
- L2 teachers of all four languages experience ongoing challenges related to linguistic proficiency in the taught language. Without intervention this works against optimum conditions for program delivery.
- the professional learning needs of teachers of all four languages are significant, varied and ongoing and according to data gathered for all four reports require renewed attention.
- the nature and quality of training at the pre-service level for teachers of languages requires urgent reform to attract and keep quality students, and to produce and keep quality teachers of each language.
- the current practice of a general languages method in pre-service teacher education, covering all languages, is not optimum for producing well prepared teachers of Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese or Korean.

Serious concerns exist across all four languages about the content and duration of primary school programs and the impact of these programs on student achievement, levels of satisfaction and motivation to continue to study the language.

Advocacy and Management

A foundation for any additional success in building the strength and vitality of the teaching and learning of these four languages will be finding new and effective ways of persuading young people and their parents of the value of learning one or more of these languages. The right incentives for participation will have to be found, instituted and marketed. This process will require the development of a more satisfactory and convincing official rationale for the study of each of these four languages than exists at present. A 'one size fits all' rationale is not working.

The Task Ahead

The four reports have been developed at a time of significant impetus to better support Australian students to learn each language. In 2008, all Education Ministers endorsed the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* with its acknowledgement of the need for Australians to become Asia literate and, in increasing numbers, be able to communicate with Australia's Asian neighbours in their languages. The NALSSP gives flexibility to states and territories to target funding. It provides crucial leadership and resources to move teaching and learning of each language forward, and the willingness and opportunity for national collaboration and action to support each language is, arguably, unprecedented.

However, the extent of the work ahead to capitalise on this impetus cannot be underestimated. The NALSSP's aspirational target is that, by 2020, at least 12 per cent of students will exit Year 12 with a fluency in one of the target Asian languages sufficient for engaging in trade and commerce in Asia and/or university study. The four reports clearly illustrate that without new and sustained evidence-based efforts specifically tailored for each language, the target will be difficult to achieve.

Strategic work must focus on:

- Developing a persuasive new vision for language learning, communicated and committed to by education systems and school educators in general. This is especially critical for Indonesian.
- The establishment of national groups to develop and oversee the implementation of strategy plans for each language, and to provide effective advocacy for their language. These reports clearly indicate this is essential. These groups have potential to play a key role in supporting work towards the NALSSP aspirational target.
- A one-size-fits-all approach to supporting the NALSSP languages is not tenable. Meeting the 'aspirational target' for NALSSP must be based on initiatives that are evidence based and carefully tailored to the circumstances of each of the languages. The new effort must be systematic over time and support the coordination of language specific strategies and initiatives occurring nationally.

Data Collection

While it is true that quantitative data only tells part of the story of the health of a language, it remains central in developing an evidence base from which to assess, plan and implement support strategies. Quantitative data available for the four NALSSP languages is often inconsistent and in some cases difficult to obtain. This is acutely the case for Indonesian. New nationally accepted data collection procedures for the NALSSP languages are urgently required, particularly related (but not limited) to program provision and student participation in programs. Streamlining these procedures will support all stakeholders working to deliver improved outcomes for each NALSSP language.

The Four Stories

Chinese

The Key Issue

How is a growing cohort of continuing L2 learners produced? How are they attracted and provided with conditions in which competence in a language with particular challenges can be developed?

Retention of classroom L2 learners needs to be the first priority in any campaign to increase numbers in Year 12 Chinese. By senior secondary school, the teaching and learning of Chinese in Australia is overwhelmingly a matter of Chinese teaching Chinese to Chinese, increasingly frequently in China; 94 per cent of L2 learners drop out before Year 12. Any increase in the numbers taking Year 12 Chinese will need to come from increasing the number of L2 learners.

Over the period of their secondary schooling, Australian language students receive, at best, some 500 hours of instruction. The Foreign Service Institute in Washington DC estimates that it takes an L1 English speaker approximately 2,200 hours to become proficient in Chinese (compared with 600 hours for French). Chinese as a Second Language at Year 12 requires mastery of some 500 characters, a number reached in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan in Grade 1 primary. As a result, students learning Chinese as a second language cannot compete with those who speak Chinese and have mastered 2,000 characters or more.

Context

The teaching and learning of Chinese was part of an Australian Government-initiated drive that began two decades ago to produce 'Asia-literate' graduates from Australia's schools – among whom there were to be cohorts linguistically proficient in Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian and Korean – to serve the country's

economic interests. In the early- and mid-1990s, numerous projects were funded to promote and assist all aspects of Chinese teaching and learning at every level and in a variety of modes. Compared to the situation for the language before that movement, there were great and lasting improvements made, notably in curriculum design, assessment procedures, and textbooks for school learners, and in the diversity of Chinese programs offered.

With the cessation of the NALSAS strategy in 2002, some of this momentum around Asia literacy was temporarily lost. Despite strong support from the Rudd government for Asia literacy since 2007, school sector administrators remained unconvinced as to the possibilities for building up Chinese language provision and participation. While appreciating the growing significance of China in Australian life, their primary instinct was that Chinese, in particular, had proven too hard. 'What would be different this time?' they asked in interviews. 'Just more of the same is not going to work.'

There has been a small annual increase in the number of schools in all sectors adding a Chinese program in most government and non-government education jurisdictions (numbers cited are from one to three schools). Development is principally inhibited by lack of clear sustainability.

In an effort to encourage the development of Chinese language programs, China's National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, better known by its abbreviated Chinese name, the Hanban, conducts two-week familiarisation tours to China for school principals. The Hanban has provided each of the Victorian and NSW Departments of Education with a Chinese language consultant for three years. The Hanban self-publishes a number of resources and is the distribution agency for many more China-developed language learning resources, principally books, intended for use outside China. These have

not generally met Australian curriculum norms and for the most part are not readily used by local teachers of second language learners. The Hanban also arranges courses in China for overseas teachers seeking to upgrade their language and pedagogy skills. Finally, a key activity of the Hanban is to run the Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK) assessment of Chinese proficiency. In 2008 the International Curriculum for Chinese Language Education appeared, presenting a standardised Chinese language curriculum for learners of all kinds (school, leisure, professional) in countries outside China.

A recent initiative of the Hanban has been to set up Confucius Institutes around the world, and there is one in most state and territory capital cities of Australia, in partnership with local bodies. While predominantly directed at the wider community, and in some cases business people, Confucius Institutes fulfil part of their brief supporting the learning of Chinese in local schools by sponsoring student events and professional development for teachers. The Hanban has supported the establishment of a Chinese teacher training centre in Vic.

Students

In 2008, 92,931 students were enrolled in Chinese programs with around 5,256 enrolled at Year 12 level. The increase from previous years has mostly been generated by L1 learners studying in Australia or taking courses accredited in Australia in China or Taiwan.

The very high attrition rate has been noted above. Classroom second language students of Chinese (L2) drop out due to three main factors: the presence of strong numbers of first language speakers, locally born or otherwise, who share their classes and have an advantage in assessments; their lack of success in developing proficiency, which is due to the intrinsic difficulties of Chinese for an English-speaking learner, combined with insufficient teaching of certain aspects, and a totally inadequate provision of time needed for the task; and often they attempt to learn the language in an environment at school, in their family, and in the community, that is less than optimum.

Students who speak Chinese at home should be taught and assessed separately from students who learn the language in a classroom. Such students should receive education and assessment in the language appropriate to their level of proficiency. Those living in Australia by the time they begin their primary schooling should be regarded as one level – (LH in the terminology adopted for this report) – and those who do not come to Australia until their secondary school years (as immigrants or international students) as L1. Both constitute an independent language learner set from the classroom L2 learners.

LH and L1 students (as defined) should be particularly nurtured as they comprise a future pool of professionals, including teacher candidates, who are bilingual, bicultural and familiar with Australian schools, relationships and learning styles.

Programs

Chinese across Australia is estimated to be taught in more than 380 schools. In Vic, where there is the largest number of students who take the language, Chinese is taught in all education sectors, and in several centres of the government's Saturday Victorian School of Languages, as well as by its Distance Education service. It is also taught in a number of weekend Ethnic schools. This widespread provision across sectors and providers is mirrored in NSW, SA and the ACT.

The difficulty of sourcing and retaining language teachers in rural and remote Australia means that Chinese is rarely taught outside large urban areas. In remote areas, schools provision for language learning is generally through distance education.

In a number of cases in all sectors, a 'Chinese program' in primary schools amounts to little more than familiarisation activities such as cooking, counting to 10, and drawing a few characters. Secondary programs are fairly uniform across the country. In many schools there is not sufficient demand to enable absolute beginners, students who have had primary language studies and students who are proficient in the language to be taught in separate streams.

The key difficulties for learners need particular attention and recourse to innovative practice. Scaffolded practice resources need to be developed for all levels of Chinese learners. Ways to provide frequent, sustained opportunities to hear the language in natural contexts, and inviting opportunities to use it productively need to be created. Principals, school staff, parents and community members need support to better appreciate the task of learning Chinese, its value for the individual and the country, and be aware of how they may assist its success.

Teachers

Some 90 per cent of teachers of Chinese in Australia are L1 speakers, most by far coming from the Chinese mainland, but there are also some from Taiwan and South-East Asia. Many are not fully employed teaching Chinese.

The availability of qualified teachers is the primary concern of principals considering starting a Chinese program, and the lack of supply in most of the country has constrained development. This is especially because, at least in its first few years, a Chinese program will not support a full-time position. The staffing problem increases in country areas. In Qld and Vic, however, the picture is reversed with employers estimating they receive anything up to 40 applications from trained teachers for an advertised Chinese position, almost all of whom are native speakers. Many are rejected as unsuitable, however, due to doubts about their capacity to relate effectively to Australian students and successfully manage an Australian classroom. While L2 teachers are keenly sought after by schools, it is suggested that their language proficiency, in almost all areas, is often not at the desired level.

Teacher education programs for pre-service and in-service participants are needed to develop teachers' expertise in helping their students meet the learning challenges of Chinese, and to be sufficiently competent in digital technology to be able to use it creatively.

Recommendations

1 National Leadership

An Australian Centre for Chinese Language Education should be established to lead, protect and support developments in:

- long-term advocacy for Chinese language in Australian schools
- teacher education – at pre- and in-service levels
- teaching resources – targeted resource development of scaffolded materials, using electronic media
- innovative practice and research – promoting, monitoring and disseminating new approaches to Chinese teaching and learning.

2 Improving the Workforce

Working with the Hanban and others in the Australian education community, standards of language proficiency and pedagogy for teachers of Chinese should be developed.

A survey should be undertaken of current teachers of Chinese in Australia, and the graduate flow likely in the foreseeable future. Based on these data, recruitment plans should be developed.

3 Structural Adjustments to Arrangements for Teaching Chinese

In consultation with the Chinese Teachers' Federation, the Schools of Languages, Ethnic Schools Association, and Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities, state and territory departments of education should create three streams of Chinese learning that are officially recognised nationally and provided for in Chinese language assessment.

Time spent on Chinese in all programs should be extended through increased allocation of hours, use of digital resources, and opportunities to hear and use the language in shops, restaurants, cinemas, excursions, language camps, and in-country sojourns.

Renewed definition and support of Chinese classes at primary level is required to ensure they are language focused, have sufficient hours per week and lead to continuing development.

Innovative programs should be initiated which permit seriously concentrated periods of time to be spent on the language.

The availability of qualified teachers is the primary concern of principals considering starting a Chinese program, and the lack of supply in most of the country has constrained development.

Indonesian

The Key Issue

How does a 'big' language without a significant advocacy group arrest a steep decline?

Indonesian remains the third most studied language in Australian schools. However, the raw data obscures a very different story. From 2000 to 2009 there was a significant and ongoing decline in Indonesian. Student enrolments have been declining annually by at least 10,000 students since 2005. This is matched by a reduction in numbers of school programs.

As an additional concern, 99 per cent of Australian students studying Indonesian programs discontinue their studies before Year 12.

Unless these problems of attrition are reversed, Indonesian will make only a limited contribution to meeting the NALSSP 2020 target.

Context

Historically, Australia has been a world leader in teaching Indonesian as a foreign language and a centre of expertise on Indonesian politics, history, economics, anthropology and other disciplines. It is the only Western country to support the teaching of Indonesian in schools. As such, Australia has developed a significant pool of expertise at school level in teaching, curriculum and assessment, with a focus on non-background learners.

Study of Indonesian in Australian schools began in the 1950s not long after its adoption as the lingua franca across the Indonesian archipelago. By the mid-1980s teaching and learning of the language was supported by the growing interest in the economic as well as the perceived political and strategic benefits of Asian Studies and Asian languages in Australian education.

Under the *National Policy on Languages* (1987) Indonesian was identified as one of the 'languages of wider teaching' to receive additional funding support. Four years later, in the *Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (1991) it was named as one of fourteen priority languages and, in 1994, was also one of the four languages targeted through the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools strategy.

Despite this, the current report finds that Indonesian is 'undervalued and underrepresented across the Australian school education landscape. It is a language without a clearly articulated educational rationale that resonates with students, families and school communities more broadly.' The complexities of Australia's overarching relationship with Indonesia, events that take place in Indonesia, community attitudes towards Indonesia and popular media coverage of Indonesia are impacting significantly on Indonesian language learning in schools. No other language taught in Australian schools appears to be as vulnerable to these types of 'external' influences as Indonesian. It is also the only major language in Australian schools which does not have a funded linguistic and cultural organisation whose brief it is to support the target language and culture learning beyond the home country. These factors have a major impact on the level of demand.

While Australia maintains a leading role in this domain at present, as demand for program delivery diminishes so does the capacity to deliver high quality programs.

Students

In 2008, 191,316 students, or 5.6 per cent of the total national student population, studied Indonesian in Australian primary and secondary schools – the third most studied language in Australian schools. A very small proportion of those enrolled are L1 speakers of Indonesian. Unlike Chinese and Korean, Indonesian

does not have a significant cohort of L1 learners or teachers, or a large group of L1 speakers in the Australian community.

Teaching and learning of Indonesian is currently contracting to the primary school sector, with 63 per cent of Australian students who study Indonesian doing so in Years K–6.

Indonesian has become an ‘at risk’, low candidature language at senior secondary level, with only 1,167 students (less than 1 per cent of the total cohort) currently enrolled in Year 12 programs.⁵

Programs

In the Victorian government sector⁶ the number of primary Indonesian programs has fallen from 407 in 1998 to 250 in 2007. Over a similar period primary programs in the NSW government sector have fallen from 251 to 56. This same downward trend is evident across the country.

There are significant reservations among the teaching profession about the conditions (and related learning experiences) under which primary programs in Indonesian are offered. Data from Vic suggests a roughly equal but separate emphasis on the development of language proficiency in Indonesian and the inclusion of Indonesian in language and cultural awareness studies. This situation has implications for achieving targets focused on ‘proficiency’ in the target language. Further research is required to better understand what is occurring in the primary years, as well as what is desirable.

Teachers

Indonesian is largely taught by Australian-born teachers whose first language is typically English. The proportion of L1 teachers of Indonesian (or Malay) is relatively small compared, for example, to those teaching Chinese or Japanese. There are small numbers of recently graduated teachers of Indonesian and there is a large percentage of teachers close to retirement age. The majority of teachers of Indonesian are part-time with some working across several sites.

Reports of both oversupply and undersupply lead to major uncertainties about current teacher supply issues for Indonesian.

Recommendations

1 Establish a Working Party

Immediately establish an Indonesian Language Education in Schools (ILES) Working Party, as an expert group, to develop a detailed action plan to support Indonesian over the next three to five year period, and a renewed rationale for Indonesian language study.

The ILES Working Party will have the task of developing a detailed action plan to support Indonesian language programs in the context of the NALSSP, the revised MCEECDYA *National Statement and Plan for Languages Education in Australian Schools*, and the National Curriculum for Languages. The Working Party will also lead work to renew the existing rationale for teaching and learning Indonesian, which is failing to appeal to students, their families and school communities.

⁵ Student enrolments in Year 12 Indonesian syllabuses in 2009. Data provided by the relevant Curriculum and Assessment Authority in each state and territory. In some cases the figures are provisional (for example, Vic and ACT) and the data reflects those students enrolled in a Year 12 level program of study (in accredited units/courses) irrespective of students’ actual year level.

⁶ The Victorian Government sector is Australia’s largest provider of Indonesian language programs and has the largest student participation level, albeit diminishing.

2 Implement an Intervention Strategy

Immediately design and implement an intervention strategy targeted at junior secondary Indonesian in order to stem the present decline and increase retention of students into senior secondary years.

This is the largest threat to Indonesian language study. Currently there is a significant (albeit diminishing) base of students in primary and junior secondary school studying Indonesian. Strategies must be developed to maximise the number of students from this cohort who continue study into senior secondary Indonesian courses.

3 Investigate Key Issues

Investigate three key issues affecting Indonesian to inform further action:

- the relationship between student retention and the socioeconomic and geographic distribution of programs
- workforce planning in relation to teachers of Indonesian
- the nature of primary programs, specifically program conditions, quality of teaching, and learner achievement.

There is currently insufficient and/or inconclusive evidence regarding the impact that each of these issues is having on the current state and nature of Indonesian programs. The NALSSP provides an opportunity for deeper investigation to better understand and inform future support for Indonesian language at the national, state and territory and school levels.

The largest threat to Indonesian language study is lack of retention of students into senior secondary Indonesian courses.

Japanese

The Key Issue

How does a 'big' language capitalise on its strengths while addressing issues which have led to its decline?

After three decades of sustained and – at times rapid – growth, including six years (1994–2000) when numbers more than doubled, student enrolment in Japanese has fallen significantly over the last six to eight years. In some sectors the level of decline in student enrolments combined with the failure to support small senior programs is close to producing a self-perpetuating cycle of decline.

A lack of appropriate and detailed Japanese-specific curriculums is apparent in some states and territories, particularly at the primary level. Inadequacies in teacher training and development are also evident. Changes to the student cohort, including large numbers of students entering secondary school having studied Japanese at primary school, has created a need for different pathways and courses, but very few schools have responded by providing appropriately differentiated instruction. Despite an increasing number of LH students, mainstream schools do not provide courses which cater for their needs. At the senior secondary level, a failure to provide appropriate courses and assessment regimes for different groups of learners has created disincentives for both LH and L2 learners.

Context

There are reports of Japanese being taught in Australia as early as 1906 in Melbourne, and it was introduced at Sydney University in 1917 and at Fort Street High School in the following year. The teaching of Japanese expanded in the decades preceding World War 2 although it disappeared from schools during the war and its immediate aftermath. In the 1960s Japanese was introduced or revived at many of the major universities. This expansion was primarily motivated by the increasingly close economic ties

with Japan, supported by growing interpersonal links and interest in Japan's cultural heritage. Some of the most successful programs broke from the tradition of literature-focused courses and internationally respected scholars became actively involved in the development of the teaching of the language in schools.

During the 1970s, graduates of these programs, in conjunction with a small number of L1 teachers of Japanese trained both locally and abroad, introduced Japanese into secondary schools. An influential series of Japanese textbooks was produced by the Curriculum Development Centre with funding from the Asian Studies Coordinating Committee, under the direction of Anthony Alfonso and with the involvement of a national reference group. These resources provided the basis for a coherent approach to Japanese language education in schools nationwide.

The 1980s and 1990s saw massive growth in, first, the tertiary and then the secondary sector. This was augmented by a similarly strong demand for Japanese when language teaching was introduced on a major scale in primary schools in the second half of the 1980s. The 1987 *National Policy on Languages* identified Japanese as one of the 'languages of wider teaching' to receive additional support. The NALSAS strategy, introduced in 1994, increased attention on Asian languages and Japanese was a major beneficiary of this process. Teacher numbers were supplemented through recruitment methods including the retraining of teachers of other languages and recruitment from the growing pool of young Japanese wishing to work overseas.

Although its ranking varied somewhat from state to state and sector to sector, by 2000 Japanese was the most widely taught language in Australian schools and universities. In fact, the teaching of Japanese at school level was stronger in both proportionate and absolute terms than anywhere else in the world except Japan's immediate neighbour, Korea.

The rapid expansion of Japanese during the years of major growth imposed some strains, and the use of under-trained teachers with insufficient linguistic competence in some sectors had negative effects on student perceptions and achievement. Enrolments began to decline in the early years of this century.

Students

In 2008 approximately 351,579 students, or about 10 per cent of students across all year levels, were studying Japanese in Australian schools. This represents a decrease of approximately 16 per cent in student numbers since 2000. This decrease has been most severe in NSW, due to a severe decline at primary level. In some states (Qld, SA and WA) numbers have risen or remained stable.

The greatest decline in enrolments is at primary level. The reduction in the number of primary programs nationally over this period is approximately 22 per cent, with this figure being higher in some states and territories. Correspondingly, primary school student numbers declined approximately 21 per cent nationally between 2000 and 2008. That decline is most severe in the ACT, NSW and Vic. Numbers have risen in SA and WA.

Secondary level student enrolments have declined by around 6.4 per cent. There have been lower intakes in Japanese in the initial year of secondary school, and the number of years in which language is compulsory has decreased in many schools. The most obvious issue is the very high rate of attrition from Years 7/8–12 (of between 88 per cent and 94 per cent) mostly in Years 8, 9 and 10.

At the senior secondary level, numbers of students in the mainstream subjects ('continuers' or 'second language' courses) have fallen substantially in every state and territory except Vic and the NT. However, this has been offset by increases in students taking beginners courses (commencing at Year 11) and L1 learners. Total enrolments in the final units of senior secondary Japanese (Year 12) appear comparatively stable over the last decade (5,179 in 2002 to 4,910 in 2008), hiding somewhat the decline in mainstream programs.

Programs

At primary level there is no agreed common progression in terms of language proficiency or other skills, and conditions for delivery (especially class time) differ widely. There is evidence that the written and delivered curriculum do not match. Approaches to developing cultural and intercultural competencies are usually unsystematic and ad hoc.

Pathways for continuous structured learning in Japanese which are maintained from primary to secondary years are extremely rare. Commitment by schools to support Japanese to Year 12 has decreased. More schools are unable or unwilling to support small classes at senior levels, leading to unsatisfactory combined year-level classes or the abandonment of senior programs, which often results in subsequent discontinuation of the program as a whole.

At senior level, the needs and capacities of LH learners are unsuited to either L1 or L2 courses. In some states and territories they are excluded from participation at all. In others, tertiary entrance considerations encourage them to enrol in courses designed for L2 learners, which do not build on or extend their existing competence. In the latter case, their presence is also a disincentive to other students.

Teachers

Supply of Japanese teachers is meeting demand in most urban areas, although the quality of available teachers is mixed. Problems with supply remain in some rural and outer-suburban locations.

Lack of appropriate Japanese language-specific methodology in teacher training programs has resulted in important gaps in practical skills and theoretical knowledge for many teachers. Most non-native speaker teachers need support to develop and maintain their Japanese language competence and sociocultural knowledge and understanding, while some native speakers require support in dealing with conditions in Australian schools.

Recommendations

1 Establishment of a National Council for Japanese Language Education

A national expert council should be established to provide leadership and advocacy for Japanese language education across primary to tertiary levels, opportunities for the sharing of expertise and information, and representation in consultations with key stakeholders. The council should work closely with groups supporting other languages and languages in general. An outcome of the council's work will be a National Plan of Action for Japanese Language Education in 2010–2020.

2 Research into Factors Relating to Retention and Attrition at Senior Secondary Level

The report identified factors which may be affecting retention of students in Japanese, but noted a lack of information about their extent and significance. Detailed research should be conducted into the reasons students choose to continue or not with Japanese at senior secondary levels, including the impact of structural factors relating to senior school certificates and tertiary entrance criteria (for example, the number of subjects which are required for the certificate and counted towards tertiary admission rank). This research should be directed at formulating an agenda for structural and other changes to support retention.

3 Reform for Japanese in Primary Schools

The teaching of Japanese in primary schools requires urgent reform, not just at the curriculum level, but also in terms of structures. Education authorities should support schools to trial innovative models for staffing and delivery which reconceptualise the role of the Japanese teacher, the generalist teacher and the way in which Japanese is provided in schools. Such models offer an alternative to the current situation where the Japanese curriculum is provided at the margins by teachers isolated from core curriculum planning and from supportive peers.

4 Detailed Curriculum and Materials Development

In conjunction with the development of a national curriculum for languages, curriculum authorities should develop detailed Japanese scope and sequence, (primary and secondary) based on mandated minimum time allocations for language. This should provide common benchmarks for all schools and allow for different trajectories, including both a continuing and beginning trajectory at the secondary level. Comprehensive sequential teaching and assessment materials should also be developed to support the implementation of a national curriculum.

5 Profiling Teachers

The Australian Government should coordinate the collection by all sectors of comprehensive information on Japanese teachers, including their linguistic and pedagogic qualifications and age, to allow informed planning for recruitment and professional development.

6 Partnerships to Support Opportunities for Authentic Interaction

Wider support is required to develop and expand programs which allow for learning beyond those provided by a single teacher in a classroom. Education authorities in partnership with governments and universities in Australia and Japan, should establish professionally run programs to recruit, train and support native-speaker assistants from Japan to work in Australian schools. Schools, governments and industry should collaborate to expand opportunities for students to apply and develop their Japanese skills in authentic situations, through virtual and face-to-face interaction, internships and/or work experience and travel to Japan. This should include increased financial and administrative support for sister schools and travel abroad programs, as well as the development of new initiatives.

Korean

The Key Issue

What conditions will allow a 'small' language to grow?

By any measure, provision of and participation in Korean language programs is very low.

For more than 20 years Korean has figured in the list of priority languages for Australian schools (one of only four under the NALSAS and NALSSP strategies) – yet, in 2009, only 49 of the 9,562 Australian schools offered Korean, nine of them as a component of an International Baccalaureate course for international L1 students. The total national cohort of teachers teaching Korean could be fitted into a large classroom. The student enrolment in Korean is little more than 1 per cent of the enrolment in Japanese. The Year 12 enrolment is predominantly L1 speakers. There is no provision for LH speakers at this level.

There is no centralised organisation actively coordinating, initiating and supporting developments of Korean language education in Australia and little or no infrastructure established for a national coordination and support network involving states and territories.

Context

Korean is spoken by about 80 million people, including at least 6 million Korean expatriates, making it the 11th most commonly spoken language in the world. It is the first language of about 150,000 people living in Australia.

It was only in the late 1980s that Korean started to gain recognition in Australian language policy documents such as the *National Policy on Languages* (1987) and New South Wales State *Language Policy* (1988), and government-commissioned reports such

as the 'Garnaut Report' (*Australia and Northeast Asian Ascendancy*, 1989). Prompted by these policy documents and reports, a series of Korean curriculum and syllabus documents were developed through the National Korean Curriculum Project which started initially in the ACT, then transferred to NSW (Board of Studies) in the early 1990s.

During the 1990s, Australian schools began teaching Korean in NSW and the ACT, then in Vic. By the mid-1990s a number of significant curriculum and delivery projects such as *Korean using Technology* (NSW DET) had been undertaken while tertiary and secondary Korean programs were supported by organisations such as the National Korean Studies Centre (defunct after five years of operation). After 15 years of various development stages – summarised by Shin⁷ as the 'honeymoon, adjustment, and the fight-for-survival periods' – the current state of Korean language in schools gives cause for concern.

Korean is ranked 14th in terms of the number of enrolments in language courses in Australian schools. The total number of students studying Korean is very low (in 2009, around 4,220 students, or 0.1 per cent of all Australian school students, and approximately 0.5 per cent of NALSSP enrolments).

Much work needs to be done to address factors hindering the advancement of Korean in mainstream Australian schools. One of these factors is the very low level of mainstream Australian community awareness of Korea and the Korean language, even in places where a relatively large Korean community exists (for example, metropolitan Sydney). But there is also little capacity for advocacy and awareness-raising. There are small-scale associations operating amongst Korean L1 teachers around Sydney and Melbourne but there are no nationwide associations for teachers of Korean and the integration of L1 and

⁷ Shin, Seong-Chul (2006), Australasian Strategies for an Advancement of Korean Language Education, in the *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference for Korean Language Educational Organizations and Local Representatives*. (pp 99–109), Korea Foundation and International Association for Korean Language Education.

L2 teachers is virtually nonexistent. In particular, L2 teachers who mostly work in regional or country towns have been largely neglected in terms of collegial support, external support and networking opportunities.

Students

The total number of students studying Korean in 2009 was 4,229, up from 3,190 in 2008, when it recorded approximately 0.5 per cent of total NALSSP language enrolments K–12.

Of students who study Korean at junior secondary level, 78.4 per cent discontinue their study. Reasons include the absence of suitable courses, a lack of qualified, skilled teachers, no clear pathways for continuation of studies and non-engaging approaches to curriculum delivery.

In contrast to Japanese and Indonesian, the overwhelming majority of the 322 Year 12 students taking Korean in 2009 in NSW, SA and Vic (the states where it is offered at senior level) were L1 students.

Four groups of Korean learners are evident at secondary levels: L2 beginners, L2 continuers, LH speakers and L1 students. Each group requires its own curriculum and assessment framework. Strategies that specifically target increasing the L2 student cohort studying Korean are a priority. Locally educated Korean LH speakers who would benefit from development of their home language are deterred from continuing by having to compete in class and examinations with students raised and largely educated in Korea.

Programs

There were 49 schools teaching Korean in Australia in 2009, all in the eastern states and SA. Nine of these schools offered Korean through the International Baccalaureate program, which is the only evidence of growth in recent years.

Of the 33 government schools teaching Korean, 26 are day schools offering Korean in normal school hours. The remainder are government-run special language schools offering languages on Saturdays or after school hours.

There is an acute shortage of quality teaching resources available to support existing programs. Most resources used in Korean programs in primary and secondary schools are outdated and inappropriate for the Australian context.

Teachers

There were 69 teachers of Korean in primary and secondary schools across Australia in 2009, the majority (83 per cent) of whom are Korean L1 speakers. Nationally, there is a very limited supply of L2 teachers of Korean.

Korean L1 teachers tend not to have highly developed competency in English and to lack knowledge and training in areas of intercultural understanding such as the Australian educational context, and pedagogical practices. On the other hand, the Korean language proficiency of L2 teachers of Korean is largely at the beginner to lower intermediate level. There are only occasional, short-term training opportunities available to either cohort.

Recommendations

1 National Leadership and Advocacy

A Korean Language Working Party should be established immediately, consisting of representatives from education systems, the tertiary sector, Australian and Korean government agencies and Korean language teachers. A key task of the Working Party will be to develop a five-year strategic plan for provision of Korean language programs and to provide high-level program advice. The strategic plan and advice needs to focus on each of the change recommendations outlined in this report.

- The Working Party should oversee a project that leads advocacy and championing of Korean language programs nationally. Despite Korean being an Australian government priority language through initiatives such as NALSAS and the current NALSSP, a strengthened vision for Korean language is required at education system and school levels. There is an urgent need for nationally coordinated advocacy of Korean language teaching.
- The Working Party should oversee a project to articulate the rationale(s) for the study of Korean language in Australian schools. The very low demand for Korean derives in part from a lack of community understanding of the importance of the Korean language and the rationale must encompass the economic, strategic and sociocultural relevance of the Korean peninsula to Australia's future, as well as the intrinsic educational value of the learning process.

2 Supporting Program Provision

Students and Resources: State and territory education jurisdictions need to take action to support the large untapped pool of Korean Heritage speakers to complete Korean at Year 12. An immediate doubling of current Year 12 enrolments from 320 to around 700 is both realistic and feasible through support of this cohort. Achieving this will involve the following.

- Official recognition nationally that there are four groups of Korean learners in three categories at senior secondary level, all of whom require separate curriculum and assessment frameworks.

- The immediate development of new teaching and learning print and electronic resources for all levels and types of learners that engage students in novel ways, maximise the possibilities offered through new technologies and provide students with experience in using, hearing and experimenting with the language in formal and non-formal settings.
- The incremental growth of the L2 cohort remains a priority and requires a targeted and sufficiently resourced strategy. Growth should be based on each state and territory supporting one or more small clusters of schools ('lighthouse schools') to teach Korean. Some of these clusters will necessarily be new, others building on current clusters (for example, Qld, NSW). If well supported, this growth is both sustainable and a model for other small candidature languages.

3 Addressing Professional Learning Needs

There must be a renewed commitment to sufficiently support the professional learning needs of the two different cohorts of Korean teachers.

- L1 teachers are already proficient in Korean. They require support to develop their teaching methodologies to better suit the Australian educational context. This is an area of Korean language teachers' professional learning that has been insufficiently addressed.
- L2 teachers are usually well equipped with methodology that suits Australian school contexts but their Korean proficiency levels are, at best, Lower to Intermediate. This affects student outcomes and teachers' own sense of professional standing. Professional learning must include onshore and offshore opportunities.

4 Partnerships with Korean Schools

To further support program provision, a project should be established to ensure Australian schools teaching Korean have direct partnerships with schools in Korea. On current program numbers this would involve up to 50 partnerships. The project will require collaboration from Australian and Korean government and education agencies.



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