The Current State of Japanese Language Education in Australian Schools

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Melbourne Centre for Japanese Language Education

MONASH University

Asia Education Foundation

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This work was funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations under the School Languages Program.

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ISBN: 978 1 74200 102 9
SCIS order number: 1441568
Full bibliographic details are available from Education Services Australia.

Published by Education Services Australia Ltd
PO Box 177, Carlton South, Vic, 3053 Australia
Telephone: (03) 9207 9600
Facsimile: (03) 9910 9800
Email: info@esa.edu.au
Website: www.esa.edu.au

Edited by Katharine Sturak and Zoe Naughten
Designed by Deanna Vener
Printed in Australia by GEON Impact Printing Pty Ltd

Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

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List of Acronyms

AEF	Asia Education Foundation
AFMLTA	Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Association
AFS	American Field Service
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
CLIP	Capricornia Language Immersion Program
DEECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
IB	International Baccalaureate
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILL	Intercultural Language Learning
JLTA	Japanese Language Teachers Association
JSAA	Japanese Studies Association of Australia

LOTE	Languages Other Than English
MCJLE	Melbourne Centre for Japanese Language Education
MLTA	Modern Language Teachers Association
NALSAS	National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools
NALSSP	National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program
NLLIA	National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia
NNS	Non-Native Speakers
NS	Native Speakers
PYP	Primary Year Programs
SIDE	School of Isolated and Distance Education
TER	Tertiary Entrance Ranking
YFU	Youth for Understanding

Executive Summary

Context

From the 1970s until the early 2000s, the teaching of Japanese in Australia expanded rapidly, and it is now the most widely taught language in Australia, in both schools and universities – a unique situation within the western world. The impetus for this expansion derived partly from the economic and strategic importance of the Australia–Japan relationship, which prompted government investments in promoting the teaching of Japanese. However, it was supported by many other factors, including the development of a core group of committed teachers, good resources and opportunities for students to travel to Japan. Importantly, the study of Japanese has captured the interest of many students, teachers and school leaders, who have recognised the humanistic and general educational reasons for learning Japanese, in addition to the more pragmatic ones which have often been the focus of government policy.

Today, the teaching of Japanese must fulfil a dual purpose:

1 **Ensuring that individual Australians can communicate in Japanese and understand Japan.**

Substantial numbers of Australians are being educated to interact with Japanese people and institutions in their working and social lives. The development of skills in Japanese starts at school and can be continued through study in tertiary and further education and beyond.

2 **Providing the wider educational benefits of language learning to a significant proportion of the overall school population.**

Language learning provides many cognitive, social and other educational benefits not restricted to fluency in the target language. As the language that more Australian students study than any other, Japanese provides a window into the wider world of other languages and cultures for over 350,000 primary and secondary students every year (over 10 per cent of the school population). This prepares them more broadly for an increasingly diverse and globalised world, whether they need to use Japanese extensively in the future or not.

This report argues that the teaching of Japanese faces significant challenges. Since 2000 there has been an overall decrease of approximately 16 per cent in the number of students studying Japanese, nearly 21 per cent at primary and 6.4 per cent at the secondary level, during a period when the total school population has been rising. In addition, there is a high level of attrition in the middle years and this is seriously threatening the ongoing health and effectiveness of programs. The decline in enrolments is strongly linked to changes in external conditions, particularly in the failure to develop policies and practices which value and support languages education in general by governments, education authorities and school managements, as has been noted in several recent reports (eg Liddicoat, 2007; Lo Bianco, 2009). In primary schools in particular this has led to conditions which undermine effective programs, while at the secondary level course structures which narrow student choices and discourage the study of languages have been allowed to develop unchecked.

There have also been issues more specifically related to Japanese which have exacerbated the situation. The lack of appropriate and detailed Japanese-specific curriculum and exemplar syllabuses in most states and territories, particularly at the primary level, coupled with inadequacies in teacher training and development, has contributed to issues in the quality of some programs, leading to student disengagement. Changes to the student cohort, including large numbers of students entering high 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 or classes.

Despite an increasing number of home-background (Heritage)[1] learners, 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 home-background and non-background learners, although the ways in which these operate have differed in different states and territories.

Over more than three decades, the teaching of Japanese has developed into an important component in the education of Australian students, and its achievements are widely respected internationally. It is ideally placed to capitalise on the economies of scale and advantages for continuity which come from widespread teaching. Recently, however, there are signs that the support and vision that led to these achievements has in some areas given way to complacency, and that a failure to address various problems has led to a decline in enrolments. Decisive action is required to reverse this decline, and to protect and extend the achievements of decades of investment and experience.

Within this context, the Australian Government's support for Japanese language through the National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP) comes at a crucial time. As well as providing highly significant national leadership and recognition of the importance of Japanese language, the NALSSP offers state and territory education systems the opportunity to address a range of issues supporting and hindering Japanese programs locally. State and territory education systems generally report a positive 'vibe' around the NALSSP and are currently scheduled to deliver a range of projects and initiatives with NALSSP funding.

These initiatives include:

- teacher training and retraining programs in most jurisdictions
- new programs such as immersion programs and programs to link Japanese to other curriculum areas (particularly English literacy)
- the development of online or technology-enhanced teaching materials and delivery systems
- support for development of new structures to support Japanese (such as 'hub' schools), better data collection and public information campaigns.

Although further improvements could be made in the targeting of some programs, and in increasing national cooperation to avoid duplication and enhance effectiveness, these projects provide a welcome impetus for change and their initial implementation is making a positive first step in the work towards the NALSSP target of increasing the number of Australian students exiting Year 12 with high levels of Japanese proficiency. There are also a number of other important national projects in train which will provide further opportunities for positive change. One of the most important is the development of a national curriculum for languages, due to begin in 2010. There are also well-advanced projects to develop a senior secondary curriculum for Heritage (home-background) learners, to examine issues relating to senior secondary courses and to determine achievement levels in Asian languages.

1 Terms for different groups of learners and different courses are not uniform across the country, and while terminology is currently being addressed in a number of different projects, no consensus has yet been reached. The authors have preferred the term 'home background' as more descriptive of the current group of Japanese learners in Australia in this category.

Nature and Purpose of the Report

Despite the plethora of reports and position papers relating to languages education in general, and several relating to 'Asian languages', there has been a notable absence of attention to, and information about, the situation within the teaching of individual languages. This report aims to redress this situation by focusing on issues specific to Japanese. It is the first major national report on Japanese language teaching since 1994, when the Japanese volume of *Unlocking Australia's Language Potential: Profiles of 9 Key Languages in Australia* was published (Marriott, Neustupný , & Spence-Brown, 1994) prior to the implementation of the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) strategy. This report seeks to supplement rather than duplicate the work of other recent general reports (for example, Kleinhenz, Wilkinson, Gearon, Fernandes, & Invargson, 2007; Liddicoat, 2007; Lo Bianco, 2009). It should be noted at the outset that measures to support individual languages such as Japanese will fail unless they are supported by a more general effort to address the pressing issues which face language policy and language education in general outlined in these reports.

This report presents statistical information from across Australia, and draws on interviews with key representatives of state, territory and national educational bodies and organisations, and with teachers in the field. It provides baseline data on the current state of Japanese teaching, and delineates some of its strengths and weaknesses, and the key issues which threaten its effectiveness and further improvement.

This is one of a suite of reports designed to provide information on the current state of Asian language education in Australian schools, to support the implementation of the Australian Government's National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP). It was commissioned by the Asia Education Foundation (AEF) and funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

Key Findings

Participation

After three decades of sustained and at times very rapid growth, enrolments in Japanese have fallen substantially over the last six to eight years, particularly at the primary level.

- There are currently approximately 351,579 students studying Japanese in Australian schools, of whom some 63 per cent are at the primary level.
- Japanese remains the most widely studied language in Australian schools and universities. Over 10 per cent of students across all year levels (K–12) studied Japanese in 2008, and a higher proportion of the cohort has studied it at some point in their schooling.
- There has been a decrease of approximately 16 per cent in overall student numbers since 2000. This has been most severe in NSW, with a decline of nearly 43 per cent.
- The greatest decline in enrolments has been at the primary level. The national attrition in terms of number of both primary programs and student numbers is approximately 21 per cent, but is much more severe in some states and territories. It is most severe in the ACT, NSW and Vic. There has been a small decline in Tas, while numbers have risen in Qld, SA, WA and NT.
- Secondary level enrolments have declined by around 6.4 per cent since 2000 (15.6 per cent in terms of number of schools).
- The number of years in which language is compulsory has decreased in many primary and secondary schools (leading to students studying for fewer years).
- There is a large rate of attrition after language becomes an elective (Years 8, 9 and 10), reflecting not only student disengagement but structural factors in schools and in course requirements.

- At Year 12, numbers of students in the mainstream units (designed for students who commence their study of Japanese at primary or lower secondary school – 'continuers' or 'second language' courses) have fallen substantially in every state and territory except Vic and the NT. In SA they have halved. However, the decline in the number of 'continuing' students has been largely offset by increases in students taking beginners' courses (numbering more than the continuing students in NSW in 2008) or 'advanced'/'first language' courses. Consequently, total Year 12 enrolments have appeared comparatively stable over the last decade, with the number of students completing Year 12 units falling from a high of 5,179 in 2002 to 4,910 in 2008.

Factors in Growth and Decline of Japanese

Understanding past successes and failures provides important lessons for future development of Japanese and of other languages.

Factors in the Growth and Success

- Breadth of the Australia-Japan relationship, significance of Japan internationally, and interest of Australians in Japan for cultural as well as economic reasons.
- Strategic support from federal and state governments and from Japan, especially in teacher and curriculum development. Support from key individuals within the leadership of educational sectors and schools.
- Strong support base at tertiary level, contributing curriculum leadership (particularly in the establishment phase), and producing locally trained graduates who become leading teachers.
- Active, committed teachers, including a core group of expert teachers who have provided curriculum leadership both for Japanese and for languages more broadly; cooperation and mutual support between local and overseas-educated teachers, providing a balance of skills and expertise; strong teacher organisations and support structures; extra support for students and teachers from native speaker assistants.
- Relevant and engaging programs, including opportunities to engage with Japanese culture and Japanese people.
- Extensive opportunities for students and teachers to travel to Japan, to host visitors from Japan, and to interact online, which provide important motivation and learning experiences.
- Characteristics that make basic conversational Japanese relatively straightforward to acquire, and make the culture accessible and interesting for Australian students.

Factors in Recent Decline in Numbers and Problems within Programs

- Declining support for Japanese from governments, sectors and school leaders, from which it has only just started to recover. This is evident in policy and resource decisions by various Departments of Education, and decisions on timetabling and resourcing in individual schools, which have great autonomy to either promote or devalue language teaching. (The recent NALSSP initiatives have injected welcome extra resources which it is hoped will spur changes in policy areas as well.)
- Strains imposed by over-rapid expansion without adequate planning, leading to employment of under-qualified teachers in some jurisdictions and lack of attention to continuity and transition issues.
- Lack of a coherent vision and appropriate conditions and curriculum for programs at primary level leading to unsatisfactory programs and widespread frustration and disenchantment among students, teachers and the community.
- Problems with transition and continuity between primary and secondary schools, whereby students are either denied the opportunity to continue with Japanese, or are forced to repeat what they have learned in primary school.
- Problems with the quality and suitability of some secondary programs and a disconnection between textbook-focused programs in early secondary and the demands of senior secondary syllabuses.

- Decrease in commitment by schools to support Japanese and to provide a clear pathway to Year 12. More schools appear unable or unwilling to support small classes at senior levels, leading to unsatisfactory combined year-level classes or the abandonment of senior programs. This deters students in lower levels from enrolling in or continuing with Japanese, as they see that it is not valued and supported by the school, and that they may not be provided with appropriate conditions to continue to Year 12. Less enrolments in lower year levels further decreases the likelihood of viable senior classes, thus a negative spiral of dropping enrolments is set in motion, which threatens the viability of the whole program.
- Problems with senior secondary curriculum and assessment leading to student perceptions that studying Japanese will be difficult and may not be a strategic choice in terms of maximising chances for tertiary entry.
- Neglect in analysing and addressing issues relating to Japanese in a focused way across educational levels and sectors and lack of input from experts in Japanese.

Curriculums and Programs

- General curriculum frameworks for languages do not provide an adequate guide for school-based curriculum and syllabus development or assessment in Japanese. Expectations are sometimes unrealistic, given the current conditions for teaching and learning and this leads to frameworks being interpreted very broadly or ignored. In many cases, the written and delivered curriculum does not match.
- At primary level, in most states and territories, curriculum frameworks are open to wide interpretation, and there is thus no agreed common content or progression in terms of specific language or other skills. Conditions for delivery (especially time) also differ widely. This has led to substantial variation in content and outcomes among programs, making transition between schools and into secondary programs problematic.
- Secondary courses are, in practice, generally textbook based. While the introduction of linguistic elements is normally systematic, exposure to authentic language use and development of the skills to deal with it may be limited. Approaches to developing cultural and intercultural competencies are often unsystematic and ad-hoc.
- There is a lack of consensus on what can realistically be achieved in Japanese programs, with some commentators arguing that teacher expectations are too low, and others arguing that students are dropping out because expectations are too high. More work is needed in determining realistic goals and the conditions and approaches needed to achieve them, and communicating these to teachers.
- Senior secondary curriculums and assessment standards and criteria are regarded by teachers in several states and territories as too demanding for 'continuing' students and are also unsuitable for students with a home background in Japanese.
- The teaching of reading and writing skills is a major problem for teachers and a barrier for students. Expectations and understandings regarding literacy are confused, and teachers lack adequate guidance on approaches to the teaching of literacy for Japanese.
- The teaching of Japanese has not yet adjusted to the changing demands of, and opportunities provided by, modern Information Communications Technologies (ICT), although there are many individual teachers using technology innovatively and effectively. In senior secondary school in states and territories with external examinations, the use of ICT is often discouraged, in favour of pen and paper practice which will prepare students for assessment.
- Many students at both primary and secondary levels have the opportunity to engage with Japan through sister school and exchange programs – probably more than for any other language commonly taught. Teachers overwhelmingly report that these programs are highly motivating for students and provide broadly enriching educational experiences. However, such programs place considerable extra demands on teachers, for which they are usually not compensated, and financial and resource constraints limit access in some areas.

Teaching Resources

The teaching of Japanese has benefited from several major curriculum development projects in the past. However, continued investment in new resources is required to keep pace with changing technologies and teaching approaches, as well as changes in Japan. The following resources are particularly necessary.

- Comprehensive resources which model a balanced and systematic program, encourage exemplary pedagogy, include assessment frameworks/ materials and demonstrate the range and level of outcomes which are targeted. Fully developed courses, which teachers can pick up and use as is, or adapt and adopt partially, depending on their circumstances, are required. These are particularly necessary at the primary level, to provide guidance and support.
- Resources for teaching Japanese script and literacy in Japanese more broadly, including the skills required for literacy in a digital environment.
- Online resources encouraging interaction using ICT, and allowing differentiated teaching for students with different backgrounds and abilities.
- Resources which deal in a systematic way with modern Japanese society and develop intercultural skills.
- Resources relating to students' interest in popular culture.
- Resources suitable for advanced learners who use Japanese in the home and community (including the global online community).

There is a need for materials for online and distance curriculum delivery in some states and territories to support students in schools which cannot provide full programs, to increase choice, and to cater for home-background learners.

Catering for Learner Diversity, Continuity and Transition

There is a lack of adequate pathways to cater for a range of learner backgrounds and allow all students to maximise their learning.

- Large numbers of students who study Japanese in primary school enrol in secondary schools where Japanese is taught. However, pathways for continuous structured learning across primary and secondary school in Japanese are extremely rare, although they exist in some curriculum documents. There is evidence that some states and territories with large numbers of students studying Japanese at primary school and entering secondary Japanese classes have poor outcomes with secondary retention, suggesting that the current approach of teaching beginner and continuing students in the same class may be problematic for both groups.
- Students with a family background in Japanese are not catered for adequately in mainstream schooling, and as the numbers in each school are small, it is difficult to do so. However, in major cities community schools provide courses which cater for such students, at least to pre-senior secondary levels. The links and disjunctions between the curriculum taught in community schools and the Japanese curriculums developed by Australian authorities require closer attention. There is also a need for better coordination among all providers, including community schools, government language schools, distance education providers and mainstream schools.
- At senior levels, home-background (Heritage) learners fall between the target populations for first and second language 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 non-background learners, which do not build on or extend their existing competence. In the latter case, their presence is also a disincentive to other students. This situation is currently being addressed by two national projects, but the issues involved are complex and are likely to require ongoing attention.

Teachers

The key issue for teacher supply is in increasing and maintaining quality, both for new and existing teachers. In terms of teacher quality, the picture is not all negative. Japanese teachers are generally regarded as energetic and resourceful. They have a high level of engagement in professional associations and have developed excellent support networks. native and non-native speakers generally cooperate productively. There is a core group of excellent teachers who provide leadership for the profession.

However, skills upgrading is required for many existing teachers, and measures are needed to ensure that teacher training programs produce teachers with high levels of linguistic, cultural and intercultural competence and of Japanese-specific pedagogic skills. Interviewees for this project were unanimous in indicating that improving teacher competencies is the key to improving student retention and outcomes.

- The supply of minimally qualified Japanese teachers is adequate in most urban areas, but the supply of quality teachers remains an issue. Supply problems exist in some rural and outer-suburban locations, and schools that offer poor working conditions are often unable to attract sufficient teachers. However, only anecdotal information is available about teacher supply, and there is a clear need for more research into the nature of the teaching workforce and its adequacy to meet current and future demands.
- The lack of appropriate Japanese-specific 'methods' components in teacher training programs has resulted in important gaps in practical pedagogic skills and theoretical understanding for many teachers.
- In most jurisdictions professional learning opportunities, including in-country study are available, but many teachers cannot find the time, and do not have the incentive, to take up such opportunities.
- Most existing teachers who are non-native speakers need support in further developing and maintaining their Japanese language competence and sociocultural knowledge and understanding. Past recruitment practices, in particular the retraining of existing teachers from other areas without skills in Japanese, have contributed to creating a group of teachers with low levels of language skills.
- Teachers educated overseas need more support in coping with the Australian educational environment.
- Native speaker language assistants provide an extremely valuable resource in schools which have access to them. However, availability, quality and preparedness for the Australian environment vary, as do the abilities of teachers to make best use of assistants.

Key Recommendations for Leading Change

1 Establishment of a National Council for Japanese Language Education

A national expert body 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 could be the development of a National Plan of Action for Japanese Language Education 2010–2020.

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

This report has identified factors which may be affecting retention of students in Japanese, but has noted a lack of information about their extent and significance. Detailed research should be conducted into the reasons students choose to continue, or not to continue with Japanese at senior secondary levels, including the impact of important structural factors relating to senior school certificates and tertiary entrance criteria (such as the number of subjects which are required for the certificate and counted towards the 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. It is recommended that education authorities actively encourage and support schools to trial innovative models for staffing and delivery which would reconceptualise the role of the Japanese teacher, the generalist teacher and the way in which Japanese is provided in schools. Such models would allow a move away from the current situation, where the Japanese curriculum is provided at the margins by teachers who are isolated from core curriculum planning and from supportive peers. For example, they might involve employment of two or more qualified teachers of Japanese who would also teach in generalist areas.

4 Detailed Curriculum and Materials Development

In conjunction with the development of a national curriculum for languages, curriculum authorities should develop a 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 should 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 the 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 opportunities 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 school and travel abroad programs as well as the development of new initiatives.

A national expert body 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.

1 Introduction

1.1 Why Japanese Is Important and Appropriate as a Language of Wider Teaching

Japanese has developed into the most widely taught language in Australia for good reasons.

Japan is important to Australia, to Asia, and to the world. As a near neighbour with many common regional and international interests, Japan has been a close strategic and economic partner for over 50 years and is likely to remain so (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Economic Analytical Unit, 2008).

- Japan is the world's second largest economy and will present significant new business opportunities for Australian firms over the coming decades. In addition, Japan is a significant presence in international trade and manufacturing and therefore of significance to Australia's wider international trade activities.
- Japan is Australia's largest export market and is our third most important source of imports.
- Japanese firms are key investors in Australia's energy, resources and agrifood industries.
- Japan is a world leader in science and technology.
- Strategic and security relations with Japan are well-developed and will continue to be of major importance. Australia and Japan were key partners in establishing the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum and work closely in a range of international economic, development and security organisations and partnerships.
- Because Japan is important, a core group of Australians is needed to work across a broad range of fields, who understand Japan intimately, and who can communicate in Japanese. All Australians need some knowledge about and understanding of Japan. There are employment opportunities for Australians with a knowledge of Japanese and an understanding of Asia in Australia, Japan and internationally.

Japanese language and culture are appealing and accessible to Australian students and provide a window into a different world. As an ancient Asian culture which has evolved into a modern advanced society, Japanese culture appeals to students on many different levels and offers opportunities for connections through food, popular culture, art, music, cinema, martial arts, technology and many other areas.

- Japanese culture is different enough to open new doors, especially to Asia, but also has features which appeal to students and encourage engagement. Its mix of traditional and modern features provides an excellent context for intercultural learning.
- Community level exchanges, including student exchange, working holiday programs and sister cities, as well as relationships developed through sport and the arts have built a strong network of interpersonal connections, which offer many opportunities to engage with Japanese people and experience Japanese culture both in Australia and in Japan. Tourism and educational exchange is also strong. School to school links provide rich authentic opportunities for students to communicate in Japanese while studying, and also provide a concrete and immediate motivation for language learning.

Hundreds of thousands of Australians have studied Japanese over the last 40 years and there is a strong infrastructure in place supporting the teaching of Japanese.

- Australia's expertise in Japanese language education is acknowledged internationally.
- The large number of programs already in place offers important advantages in terms of economies of scale (in curriculum development and other areas), depth of expertise, and continuity of learning for students.

The Japanese community in Australia is growing, and has reached substantial levels in major cities. Japanese Australians should have the opportunity to study their home language both for their own, and for the community's benefit adding to Australia's rich resource of multilingual individuals. According to the 2006 census:

- 40,968 residents claimed Japanese heritage, of whom 30,778 were born in Japan
- over one third of them resided in NSW (11,159), with 8,592 in Qld, 5,778 in Vic, and 1,238 in WA
- 4,890 were under 19 years of age.

1.2 Japanese Language and Culture and the Learning Task

Japanese is often perceived to be more difficult than European languages for English speakers, although there is little research to support accurate comparisons of level of difficulty in the Australian school environment, and most commentators rely on estimates produced in very different circumstances. In fact, there are several aspects of Japanese which are easier for English-speaking Australians than other languages, and others that are more difficult.

In terms of basic oral communication, Japanese is arguably no more difficult to acquire than many other languages, at least at the elementary stage. While word order differs from that of English, Japanese grammar is very simple and regular. Pronunciation is also among the simplest for students to master of all the languages taught in Australia.

In terms of vocabulary acquisition, the lack of cognates with English is often cited as a difficulty. However, Japanese employs many words 'borrowed' from Western languages, predominantly English (*gairaigo*), and this makes the learning task easier for students at beginning levels learning the names of everything from foods (for example, *banana, tomato, chokoreeto* [chocolate]) to sports, items of clothing and many other common nouns, verbs and adjectives.

The most incontrovertible difficulty relates to the complicated nature of the Japanese writing system, which requires the mastery of two syllabaries (*hiragana* and *katakana*) as well as numbers of Chinese characters, most with two or more readings. Even here, however, the difficulties are sometimes overstated. The Japanese *kana* syllabaries are phonetic, and any word can be written or read in hiragana once the 50 basic symbols have been mastered. Modern information and communications technology has also changed the nature of the learning task, and provided new tools to facilitate it. To write Japanese on a computer utilises input in roman letters via a standard QWERTY keyboard and students can start to type texts in *hiragana* very quickly – more easily than writing by hand. Reading Japanese texts is also easier in electronic form, as online dictionary tools can provide instant access to readings and definitions of difficult words or characters by simply hovering the cursor over the unknown word. Students still need to master basic handwriting skills and the ability to read printed texts, but technological tools can aid this process, and give earlier access to engaging authentic materials.

Because Japan is important, we need a core group of Australians, working across a broad range of fields, who understand Japan intimately, and who can communicate in Japanese.

The culture associated with Japanese language is perhaps its most significant strength, in terms of its suitability for study in Australian schools. Japan has a rich cultural, artistic, intellectual and technical history which Australian students find engaging and appealing and which opens their eyes to a very different world. At the same time, Japan is a highly advanced post-modern society, as is Australia, and therefore there are enough points of similarity for students to engage easily with modern Japan, and recognise shared aspects of our societies, as well as differences. Japanese culture also provides an excellent introduction to wider Asian culture. It is not only valuable for its traditional aspects, but for its continuing cultural contribution to global culture – be it in business, fashion, art, architecture, popular entertainment or many other spheres.

Thousands of ordinary Australian students have already learnt Japanese to a level which significantly enhances their ability to engage with Japan and with Asia. Some have become teachers, passing their enthusiasm for the language to the next generation, but many others are active in every sphere of Australia's international relations, both with Japan and more broadly. They provide the evidence that Japanese is indeed an important and viable language for Australian students.

1.3 Brief History of Japanese Language Education in Australia

Japanese language education has a long history in Australia. Understanding this history is important in understanding why Japanese has flourished, as well as the sources of some of its problems. It holds lessons for other languages, demonstrating the importance of a strong support base at the tertiary level, providing locally educated graduates, who together with committed teachers from Japan, have built successful programs in schools. It also shows the importance of strategic support, both from Australia and Japan, in areas such as teacher and curriculum development.

Japanese was taught in Australia as early as 1906 (at Stotts & Hoare's Business College in Melbourne) and was also taught as an unofficial subject at Melbourne University by the following decade (Shimazu, 2008). It was introduced at Sydney University in 1917 and at Fort Street High School in the following year (Jones, 2008). By the early 1940s, there were reports in Japan that the teaching of Japanese in Australia was booming, especially in Adelaide and Melbourne, with 600 school students in Melbourne studying the language (Shimazu, 2008). In the decades after the Second World War, growth in the study of Japanese was stimulated by close economic and strategic ties with Japan, as well as by growing interpersonal links and a fascination with Japan's cultural heritage, and was facilitated by support from Japan. In the 1960s, Japanese was introduced or revived at many of the major universities. Some of the most successful programs broke from the tradition of literature-focused university departments and were headed by internationally respected scholars who had a strong interest in language education and were actively involved in its development in schools (most notably Neustupný at Monash, Alfonso at ANU and Ackroyd at the University of Queensland).

During the 1970s, graduates of these programs, in conjunction with a small number of native-speaking teachers of Japanese trained both locally and abroad, introduced Japanese into secondary schools on a wider scale. An influential series of Japanese textbooks, was produced under the direction of Professor Anthony Alfonso of the ANU in cooperation with the Curriculum Development Centre, and funded by the Asian Studies Coordinating Committee which had been established by the federal, state and territories governments; and the Japan Foundation Sydney Language Centre. They were among the first in the world directed at school-age children and were considered a model in their day. A national reference group was involved in trialling the materials and they provided the basis for a coherent and dynamic approach to Japanese language education in schools nationwide, firmly focused on communication, and well-adapted to the needs of Australian students.

In the 1980s and 1990s, there was a dramatic growth in enrolments (often referred to as the '*tsunami*') (Coulmas, 1989; Lo Bianco, 2000) which swept across first the tertiary and then the secondary sectors, and 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* (Lo Bianco, 1987) identified Japanese as one of the nine 'languages of wider teaching' which were to receive additional support in order to be offered more widely and with greater continuity within the education system, from school to tertiary levels. The NALSAS strategy of the Australian Government, introduced from 1994, focused attention on Asian languages, and Japanese was a major beneficiary. Teacher numbers were supplemented through recruitment methods including the retraining of teachers of other languages or subjects in Japanese, and recruitment from the growing pool of young Japanese wishing to work overseas.

At the beginning of the 21st century, Japanese was the most widely taught language in Australian schools and universities, although its ranking varied somewhat between states, territories and sectors. In fact, the teaching of Japanese at school level was stronger in both percentage and also absolute terms than almost anywhere else in the world – second only to Japan's close neighbour Korea. However, the rapid and sometimes poorly coordinated expansion of Japanese imposed some strains (Lo Bianco, 2000, p 16), particularly in terms of teacher supply. Programs in areas without an adequate supply of quality teachers suffered as a result, which may have affected student attitudes and achievement. Changes in Japan's economic status may have also caused a cooling in student interest in Japanese. However, until recently, the teaching of Japanese has proved resilient, at least at secondary level, building on the strong base provided by a core cohort of excellent teachers and high quality, locally produced and nationally accepted teaching materials.

1.4 Methods of Data Collection and Structure of the Report

This report is based on statistical data collected from the government, Catholic and independent sectors in every state and territory, as well as assessment and accreditation bodies and other relevant organisations. Some data was provided directly and some was obtained from official reports and websites. Qualitative information was collected through extensive interviews conducted with key administrators, teachers and academics, between February and September 2009. Teachers were also invited, via email lists, to contribute their views in writing, and many thoughtful submissions were received. In addition, a literature review was conducted of relevant reports and research studies.

The report highlights strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for Japanese language education and makes a number of recommendations for the consolidation and improvement of Japanese language education in Australia.

2 Participation

2.1 Statistical Comparisons

Data was received from every sector in each state and territory. However, the conditions under which statistics were collected vary, meaning that numbers which on the surface look comparable do not necessarily reflect similar situations; for example, what constitutes a Japanese language program varies, particularly at the primary and lower secondary level. Some sectors and states and territories count programs which may be run for as little as 30 minutes a week, for one term in the year, or culture based programs which include little linguistic content. As well as using the recent figures supplied by jurisdictions, this report draws on figures from previous reports, in particular the *Evaluation of the NALSAS Strategy* (Erebus Consulting, Australia, Department of Education and Training, 2002) to provide a longer term perspective. However, the accuracy of these figures must also be treated with some caution.

Japanese is taught across both the primary and secondary levels in all sectors (government, independent and Catholic) in all states and territories. Although it was beyond the scope of this report to collect comparative data for other languages, previous surveys have indicated that averaged across years, states, territories and sectors, Japanese is the most widely studied language in Australia (about 23 per cent of all language students), and in the top three in most states and territories and sectors in both primary and secondary schools (Liddicoat, 2007).[2] Despite a recent decline in numbers, the relative position of Japanese does not appear to have changed markedly. Japanese is popular in both city and rural schools, although as is the case in other languages, access to qualified staff in some rural areas makes it more difficult to sustain programs.

2.2 Number of Schools

As can be seen from Table 1 on pages 18–19 (based on 2008 figures or closest available), the number of schools teaching Japanese is around 1,921. In 2000, the number of schools teaching Japanese was 2,276 (Erebus Consulting, et al., 2002, p 108), so there has been an apparent decline of approximately 15.6 per cent. However, in the 2000 figures there were more schools in the 'combined'[3] category (therefore counted only once), while recent statistics seem more likely to count such schools as separate primary and secondary programs, so this figure probably understates the attrition in program numbers overall.[4]

At the primary level, the decline is from 1,304 to 1,071. If combined schools are added to the totals, the decline is from 1,581 to 1,237, or approximately 21.7 per cent. Particularly significant is the very small number of primary schools now offering Japanese in NSW – only 25 in the government sector (2008). This compares with 28 government schools in the much smaller jurisdiction of Tas (2007), and 390 in Qld in 2008. The number of schools teaching Japanese is greatest in Qld, but this includes schools offering the Intercultural Investigations program (IcIs) which was essentially a cultural studies program, although it included linguistic elements that Qld authorities argued may be equivalent to the linguistic content of some of the more limited 'language' programs in the rest of the country.

2 This report has not been able to establish whether Japanese or Italian has the most students at primary level as the figures are quite close. Lo Bianco (2009) quotes 2006 figures which show Italian numbers marginally higher than those for Japanese in years P–6 but this does not take into account the fact that primary education extends to Year 7 in several states and territories. At Year 7 nationally Japanese numbers are nearly double those of Italian.

3 Most 'combined' schools are non-government schools, so the particular decline in this sector may be due to a steeper attrition in independent and Catholic schools, as well as apparent changes to accounting practices. As access to detailed figures from 2000 was unavailable this interpretation is not definitive.

4 This decline occurred while the number of schools overall was rising. According to the ABS, the number of schools in Australia increased by 25 between 1998 and 2008, while the number of combined primary-secondary schools increased by 278 (4221.0 Schools, Australia 2008 issued 17 March 2009).

At the secondary level, there are 684 secondary schools and 166 combined primary/secondary schools (that is, a total of 850 schools with a secondary program), compared to 692 secondary and 277 combined primary/secondary, or 969 in total in 2000 (Erebus Consulting, et al., 2002, p 108). This represents a fall of 12.3 per cent.

Anecdotally, it appears that some of the Japanese programs which have been discontinued have included the least supported and least successful programs. However, evidence from interviews and informal observation by the authors suggests that in the last few years more mainstream programs have suffered reductions and that unless counter-measures are implemented, further declines may be expected. Anecdotal accounts were received of formerly strong and successful programs being discontinued, particularly in primary schools, but also at the secondary level. Sometimes, this resulted from a particular teacher, who had built up a program, leaving the school and not being replaced or being replaced with a teacher of a different language, even though Japanese teachers were not in short supply in the area. It was evident that (as has often been observed for languages in Australia) the survival of a program was heavily dependent on the incumbent staff and the goodwill of the principal, in a way uncommon for other disciplinary areas.

2.3 National Enrolment Statistics and Trends

The data suggests that the total number of students studying Japanese in regular schools in 2008, across the Years K–12, was 351,579 (see Table 3, page 20).

Consistent data covering past years across all sectors and states and territories, which would enable the monitoring of enrolment trends accurately over an extended period, was not available.

However, somewhat comparable statistics are published in the *Evaluation of the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Strategy* (Erebus Consulting, et al., 2002). That report documented the doubling in the number of Japanese students from less than 200,000 in 1994 to 419,488 in 2000. The figures gathered for this report indicate a reduction in the following eight years (to 2008) of 67,909 students or 16.1 per cent, although to give some perspective, the figure is still considerably in excess of the levels recorded in 1994. A comparison of the 2000 and 2008 figures is given in Table 2, page 19.

Comparable data can also be found in surveys published by the Japan Foundation, which indicated that national student numbers were 369,000 in 2003, further decreasing to 352,629 students across primary and secondary levels in 2006 (Japan Foundation, 2005, 2007).[5] This confirms the gradual decline across that period.

The decrease in enrolments is unevenly spread across the country and across sectors. Most of the decline can be attributed to steep falls in Vic (which in 2000 had nearly 146,000 students, declining to a little over 105,000 in 2008) and NSW (with nearly 80,000 in 2000 nearly halving to just over 45,000 in 2008). In some states and territories total numbers studying Japanese have actually risen during the same period, although secondary numbers have declined in all states and territories except NT.

2.3.1 Primary Enrolments

By far the steepest decline has been at the primary level, with a fall of 21 per cent nationally, and even more dramatic falls in NSW, ACT and Vic, although in Qld, SA, WA and the NT numbers rose. The ACT suffered a steep decline, followed by a rapid recovery in the last two years, associated with policy changes mandating language study and number of hours (see 3.2.3, page 42).

5 Lo Bianco and Slaughter's figures from 2006 (Lo Bianco 2009), which were missing information from some jurisdictions, including Catholic secondary schools in NSW and Tasmanian independent schools, recorded a total of 332,943.

Table 1: Number of Schools Offering Japanese

Sector	Primary	Secondary	Combined	Total	
ACT					
Government	11	15	3	29	(2008–9)
Catholic	2	4	0	6	(2008)
Independent	4	7	0	11	(2009)
TOTAL	17	26	3	46	
NSW					
Government	25 (2008)	173 (2006)	0	198	(2006–8)
Catholic	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Independent	31	55	0	86	(2007)
TOTAL	56	228	0	284	
NT					
Government	10	12	0	22	(2009)
Catholic	0	0	1	1	(2009)
Independent	0	1	0	1	(2009)
TOTAL	10	13	1	24	
Qld					
Government	390	87	0	477	(2008)
Catholic	74	50	10	134	(2008)
Independent	11	11	54	76	(2008)
TOTAL	475	148	64	687	
SA					
Government	90	38	16	144	(2008)
Catholic	11	2	6	19	(2006)
Independent	11	4	20	35	(2009)
TOTAL	112	44	42	198	
Tas					
Government	28	27	0	55	(2007)
Catholic	4	2	5	11	(2009)
Independent	0	2	4	6	(2009)
TOTAL	32	31	9	72	

continued page 19

Table 1: Number of Schools Offering Japanese (cont.)

Sector	Primary	Secondary	Combined	Total	
Vic					
Government	199	87	0	286	(2007)
Catholic	51	40	0	91	(2009)
Independent	2	17	23	42	(2008)
TOTAL	252	144	23	419	
WA					
Government	99	36	7	142	(2009)
Catholic	11	9	4	24	(2005)
Independent	7	5	13	25	(2009)
TOTAL	117	50	24	191	
Total in 2000	1,304	692	277	2,276	(Erebus 2002)
National Total (most recent)	1,071	684	166	1,921	

In some sectors, the primary and secondary programs are counted separately even if they are in the same school; there may be more combined schools than the data suggests.This table is a composite of several years, reflecting the most recent data available.

Table 2: National Enrolments P–12 by State and Territory 2000 and 2008[6]

State	2000 figures			2008 figures (or nearest available)		
	Primary	Secondary	Total	Primary	Secondary	Total
ACT	6,826	3,071	9,897	3,794	3,078	6,872
NSW	44,702	35,253	79,955	10,838	34,692	45,530
NT	457	445	902	1,745	1,253	3,073
Qld	70,117	29,245	99,362	78,380	23,818	102,198
SA	31,036	6,793	37,829	35,543	6,637	42,180
Tas	4,110	4,979	9,089	3,907	4,687	8,594
Vic	101,214	44,725	145,939	63,137	42,220	105,357
WA	25,596	10,919	36,515	27,487	10,363	37,850
TOTAL	284,058	135,430	419,488	224,531	126,748	351,579

6 2000 figures are from the NALSAS evaluation (Erebus Consulting, et al., 2002) and 2008 figures are based on those in Table 3, and are for 2008 or nearest available year.

Table 3: Numbers of Students Studying Across Year Levels, States and Territories (2008, except where specified)

State & Territory	Prep	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7
ACT GOV	213	216	295	252	273	267	327	346
ACT CEO	109	100	96	118	112	116	111	442
ACT AIS	0	36	58	49	276	362	408	557
TOTAL	3,794							
NSW GOV	4,808							
NSW CEO	1,327			821		1,028		1,383
NSW AIS	289	263	330	381	436	582	573	1,712
TOTAL	10,838							
NT GOV	111	128	146	231	247	253	329	453
NT CEO	75	75	75	75	75	N/A		
NT AIS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	46
TOTAL	(ex. NT CEO Years 4–6) 1,745							
Qld GOV	879	731	1,145	1,642	5,074	9,664	15,491	15,324
Qld CEO	449	319	610	900	1,765	2,375	3,836	3,814
Qld AIS	806	978	1,121	1,162	1,873	2,215	2,889	3,318
TOTAL	78,380							
SA GOV	3,451	2,975	2,929	3,026	3,132	3,176	3,087	3,299
SA CEO	551	466	438	542	492	514	545	463
SA AIS	6,457							
TOTAL	35,543							
Tas GOV	32	47	65	302	508	513	537	1,893
Tas CEO	89	93	98	206	231	246	253	709
Tas AIS	0	110	99	106	113	146	113	347
TOTAL	3,907							
Vic GOV	5,716	5,995	6,207	6,754	6,767	7,147	6,809	7,782
Vic CEO	807	683	750	988	1,511	1,831	2,111	4,464
Vic AIS	965	987	1,038	1,303	1,411	1,620	1,737	2,520
TOTAL	63,137							
WA GOV	244	951	1,385	4,040	4,097	3,885	2,235	3,910
WA CEO	285	317	361	482	460	467	419	635
WA AIS	309	256	284	335	435	485	533	677
TOTAL	27,487							

Total Primary 224,831

- All figures from 2008, except where unavailable. Total Students Studying Japanese and Total Student Body figures may not be from the same year, please refer to dates given in the table.
- Where non-2008 data is used, % of students studying Japanese may appear different to other tables.
- The NT data is incomplete, and thus, the national total reflects this.

Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Total Students Studying Japanese	Total Student Body	% of total studying Japanese
425	118	121	149	128	3,130		
68	77	46	23	18	1,436		
313	100	87	36	24	2,306		
3,078					6,872	59,179	11.61%
20,400		2,080	1,446	1,146	29,880		
2,765	634	478	143	137	8,716		
1,198	352	380	245	193	6,934		
34,692					45,530	1,108,551	4.11%
328	158	27	56	44	2,511 (2009)		
	12	12	6	2	407		
41	35	33	0	0	155		
(ex. NT CEO Years 7–8) 1,253					3,073	39,057	7.87%
6,954	2,006	1,195	620	484	61,209		
3,341	1,058	751	274	270	19,762		
3,811	1,517	772	418	347	21,227		
23,818					102,198	706,462	14.47%
2,282	864	401	204	123	28,949		
295	275	90	42	27	4,740 (2006)		
2,008				26	8,491		
6,637					42,180	251,461	16.77%
455	101	94	118	78	4,743 (2007)		
334	95	73	6	12	2,445		
185	97	68	16	6	1,406 (2009)		
4,687					8,594	81,591	10.53%
6,324	3,345	1,576	652	468	65,542		
3,473	2,581	2,124	1,081	774	23,178		
2,149	1,208	749	518	432	16,637		
42,220					105,357	838,333	12.57%
3,255	2,304	658	174	97	27,235		
1,025	333	105	59	48	4,996		
1,296	570	243	111	85	5,619		
10,363					37,850	349,657	10.82%
		Year 12 Subtotal		4,969			
Total Secondary 126,748					351,579	3,434,291	10.24%

- The SA AIS Year 12 total was derived by subtracting the SA GOV and CEO numbers from the total of 176 Year 12 students in SA, as shown in the Year 12 table. This number, 26, was then subtracted from the figure for Years 8–12 (2,034) provided.
- For the purposes of this table, kindergarten figures have not been included.
- 2008 state and territory total student body figures obtained from ABS Bulletin number 42210DO008_2008.

In most states and territories, a decrease in enrolments appeared to be linked to a general decline in language education programs. In Vic, for example (for which the most complete figures are publicly available) the number of government primary schools offering a language between 2001 and 2007 fell from 94.9 per cent to 77.4 per cent (Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2008). Teachers in several states and territories report that there has been a perception by school management in recent years that languages are now considered less essential, or less strongly or clearly mandated, than had been the case in the past. In some states and territories this is linked to an explicit change in mandating, but in others the changes have been less explicit, but no less influential (for example, rolling earmarked language funding into the general budget, where it is less visible, and reducing reporting requirements).

It is clear that there was a significant drop in numbers of students of Japanese, particularly at primary level, after the withdrawal of the NALSAS funding in 2002. For example, in Victorian government schools, enrolments in primary Japanese programs rose between 2002 and 2004 by 2,187 students, but there was a sudden drop between 2004 and 2006 of 8,203 students (Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2008).[7]

Although the general trends are very clear, some care must be taken in interpreting the primary level statistics. What counts as a primary Japanese program varies widely. For example, some of the primary students are in programs which run for only 10 minutes of Japanese per week. Numbers of primary students have risen in the last two years in Qld, but this includes schools offering the IcIs program (see 3.2.3, page 42) which is really a cultural studies program. These programs, which only include minimal language, should be counted separately to Japanese language programs that provide a more substantial time allocation and a focus on developing communicative ability. At present, there is no nationally agreed definition of what constitutes an acceptable language program, in terms of either time requirements or attainment objectives, which makes monitoring of provision in Japanese problematic.

2.3.2 Secondary Enrolments

Numbers at the secondary level have been more stable than at the primary level, with a fall of 6.4 per cent nationally, and appear to have been less susceptible to the impact of policy and program changes (with the exception of senior secondary levels, as will be discussed below). Again, the case of Victorian government schools is interesting due to the large number of students and quality of statistics. The number and percentage of secondary colleges offering a language fell from 95.4 per cent in 2001 to 88.3 per cent in 2007 (Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2008, page 13) while overall language student numbers also fell, most severely at the Year 9 and 10 levels. For Japanese, however, there was some small fluctuation across the years but apart from a dip of about 1,200 in 2007 which was reversed in 2009, these fluctuations have only numbered in the hundreds. In 2002 there were 20,071 students and in 2008 there were 20,147 (Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2008, page 19). In other words, there has been no change in overall numbers in this jurisdiction. This attests to the relative robustness of Japanese at the secondary level, where it is well supported and resourced.

Although the school figures are somewhat unreliable due to different counting methods for combined programs, it appears that the fall in number of schools offering Japanese (15.6 per cent) is greater than the fall in enrolments (6.4 per cent). It is likely that this may be largely attributed to the fact that the number of students in Australian schools grew by about 7 per cent in the decade to 2008, while the number of schools decreased, according to ABS figures (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009).

Several informants reported that in some high schools offering more than one language, the number of students taking Japanese had fallen in comparison to other languages, although there are no statistics

7 There were also falls in Indonesian but not in Chinese, and in some of the European languages (for example, Greek, Italian, German) but not in French.

to indicate how widespread this phenomenon might be. This seemed to be particularly the case at entry level, where decisions are influenced by parental views, rather than being a matter of retention once students had commenced their study. It was suggested that due to the widely reported decline in the Japanese economy parents were no longer seeing Japanese as being as useful for employment purposes as they had a decade ago, and that they were also more likely to opt for more familiar and 'easier' European languages such as French. However, these are anecdotal reports, and more research targeting parents is required to confirm their accuracy. There were also consistent reports from teachers (particularly in Vic, SA and WA) that both they and their students believed that Japanese at the senior level has become increasingly difficult and competitive in recent years, leading to a drop in enrolments at these levels in some schools, and in a small number of cases, to the subsequent demise of the program. Again, it is unclear whether these views were objectively correct, but they were commonly expressed by experienced teachers.

2.3.3 State and Territory Differences

There are considerable differences across states and territories, both in the numbers of students studying languages in general, and in the numbers studying Japanese. As can be seen from Table 2 (page 19), the greatest population of students studying Japanese is located in Vic (105,357 – 30 per cent of national total). Although Japanese is not the most popular language in Vic (comprising only 20 per cent of all language students, much less than in states such as Qld), nor is it the most populous state, these high numbers are due to the greater penetration of language study overall, particularly in primary schools (70.4 per cent of students in primary, and 45.5 per cent of students in secondary schools [Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Victoria, 2009]). The next greatest population is located in Qld (102,198). The most populous state in Australia, NSW, has a total number of students nearly half of that of Qld (45,530). NSW, however, has a far greater proportion of students studying at secondary level (76 per cent), whereas in other states and territories (other than Tas) there are greater numbers at primary level (64.5 per cent of the national total). In terms of the secondary cohort, NSW is second behind Vic, and ahead of Qld.

If one examines the totals in terms of the percentage of total students in each state or territory studying Japanese, however, the picture is somewhat different (Graph 1, page 24). From this perspective, SA dominates, with 16.7 per cent of the students across year levels and sectors studying Japanese, and an even higher percentage of students in independent schools studying the language in 2008 – although the vast majority in all sectors are at primary level. Of course, the percentage at some year levels is even higher, so the number of SA students who gain some exposure to Japanese during their education is very substantial. The lowest proportion of students studying Japanese is in NSW, where only 4.1 per cent of students are studying Japanese, averaged across year levels.

2.4 The Nature of the Student Cohort

2.4.1 Student Background

In contrast to the situation in languages such as Chinese (Orton, 2008), the number of Australian students with a family background in Japanese is relatively small. Very few schools have more than one or two such students in their classes and the majority have none. In the main, Japanese is taught as a 'foreign' language and the learners generally represent a cross-section of the Australian community. Japanese is therefore regarded by students as a 'normal' or 'typical' mainstream school language, and as such is accessible to and attractive to students from a range of backgrounds. In terms of ensuring that more Australians gain the benefits of learning a foreign language, this is an important advantage, as many students are deterred from language study if they perceive that they will need to compete with peers with a background in the language.

Japanese is, however, particularly popular with students of other Asian backgrounds (particularly Chinese and Korean), who find the subject attractive for various reasons. As many of these learners are literate in Chinese, the task of acquiring literacy in Japanese is of a fundamentally different nature for them than for other students. As the numbers of such students increase, the design of curriculum and assessment tasks may need to be adjusted, particularly at senior levels.

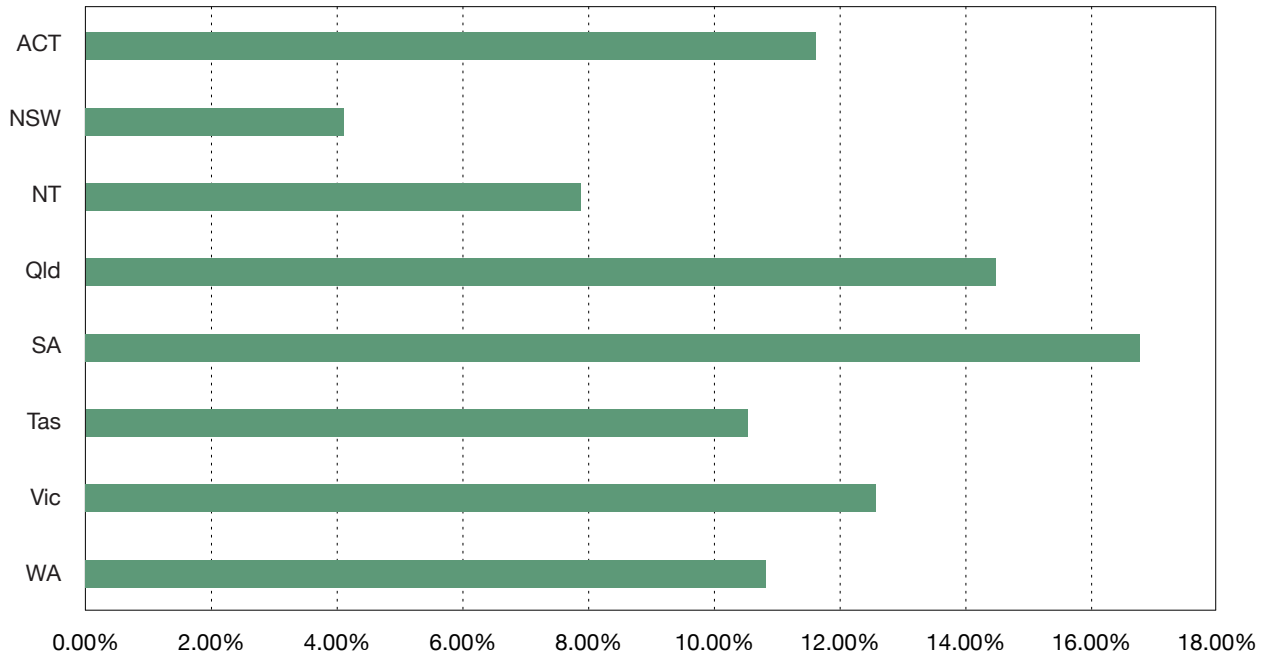
Such students are perceived by other students as having an advantage in acquiring Japanese, and in fact often do well in the subject, although in objective terms the advantage due to their language background is (for Chinese students) confined to the mastery of characters. In a few schools, the popularity of Japanese with Asian background students has become such a strong trend that other students may be deterred from taking it.

Japanese is a language of mass-teaching in Australia, and has an important role in encouraging more Australians of all backgrounds (particularly monolingual Australians) to broaden their horizons and develop intercultural sensitivity and skills through the study of another language and culture. Therefore, if its particular popularity among Asian-background students is starting to threaten the perception of Japanese as a subject that students of all backgrounds can and should study, and can compete in fairly, then this is something that authorities need to be aware of and counter (for example, with campaigns showing successful learners from a variety of backgrounds).

2.4.2 Female/Male Ratios

The proportion of female to male students at Year 12 varies from 54 per cent female/46 per cent male in ACT to 70 per cent female/30 per cent male in Qld (83 per cent female/17 per cent male in NT, but the numbers are very low). The national average is about 66 per cent female/34 per cent male (see Table 4 for 2008 figures, pages 30–31). This compares to 63 per cent female/37 per cent male for all languages at Year 12 nationally in 2005 (Liddicoat, 2007). Japanese is thus fairly typical in terms of its greater popularity with female students.

Graph 1: Percentage of Total Student Cohort Studying Japanese by State[8]



8 Figures on which this graph are based are for 2008 or closest available.

2.5 Continuation and Attrition

It is difficult to make precise comparisons of attrition, due to the different situations and transition points in different states and territories, and the difficulty of following a single cohort across years. Some sectors declined to provide year level breakdowns which would reveal attrition rates. Even where figures are available, apparent progression rates based on enrolments at different year levels in the same calendar year can be deceptive, unless information about changes in cohort size, drift between systems and other such factors are taken into account.

However, the figures displayed in Table 3 and Graph 2 (pages 20 and 26) reveal that there are disturbingly large drops in student numbers once language is no longer compulsory. For example, if the number of students studying in Year 8 and Year 10 are compared, it appears that over these two years around 65–85 per cent of students decide to discontinue their study of Japanese before senior secondary level, with the attrition rate being the greatest between Year 8 and Year 9. As in all languages, numbers at Year 12 are a small fraction of those in the first year of secondary school. The highest apparent retention is in ACT (12.6 per cent, although the subjects taken are not all equivalent to Year 12 subjects elsewhere) and Vic (11.3 per cent) and the lowest in Tas (3.3 per cent) and WA (4.2 per cent).

In fact, the attrition rate before Year 12 may be even more significant than it appears in Graph 2 as most students in senior secondary beginners and first language courses have not studied Japanese in earlier years and in some states and territories many home-background students join Japanese continuers' courses only in their final years of schooling thus boosting the apparent retention rates. An increase in the retention for Japanese in secondary school from around 10 per cent to around 20 per cent of those commencing would result in around 8,600 more students of Japanese at Year 12 level, which would go a significant way to contributing to the NALSSP targets to increase the numbers of students studying an Asian language to Year 12.

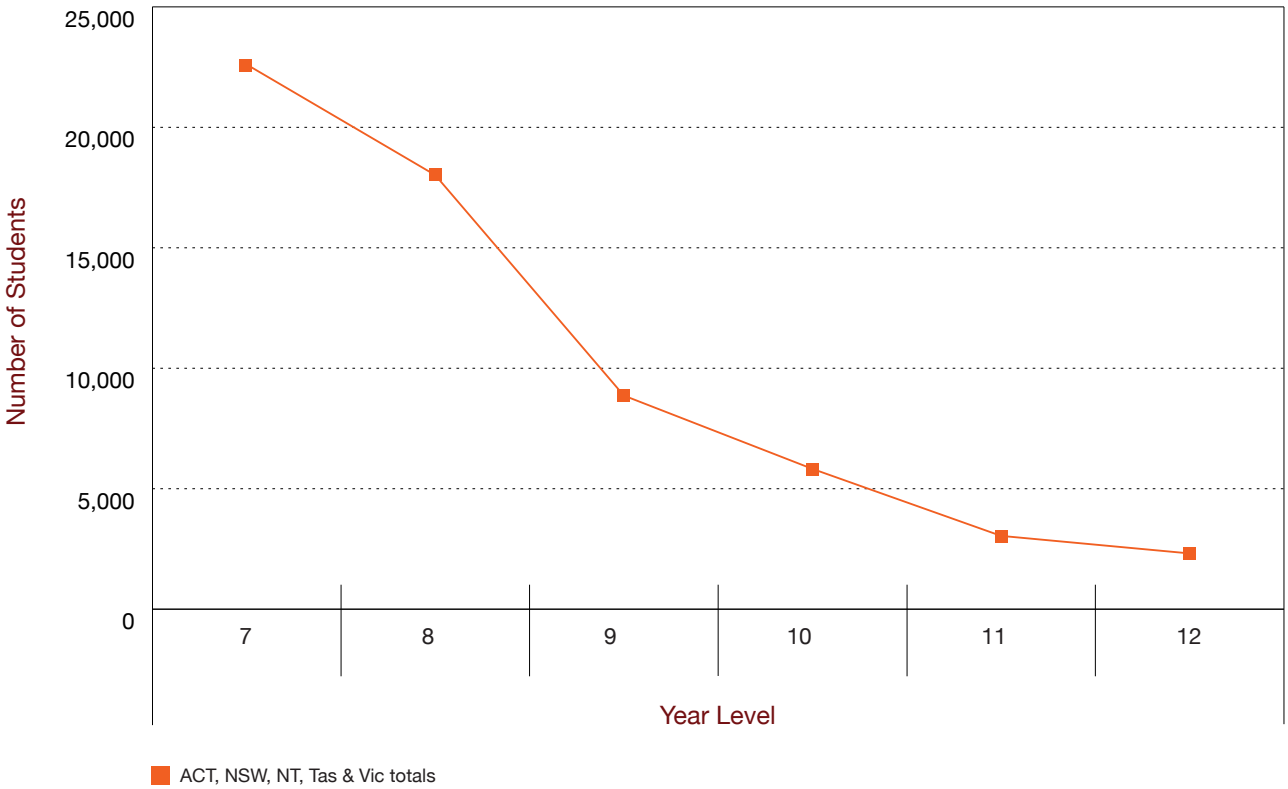
The discrepancies in retention across states and territories are significant, reflecting a range of factors.

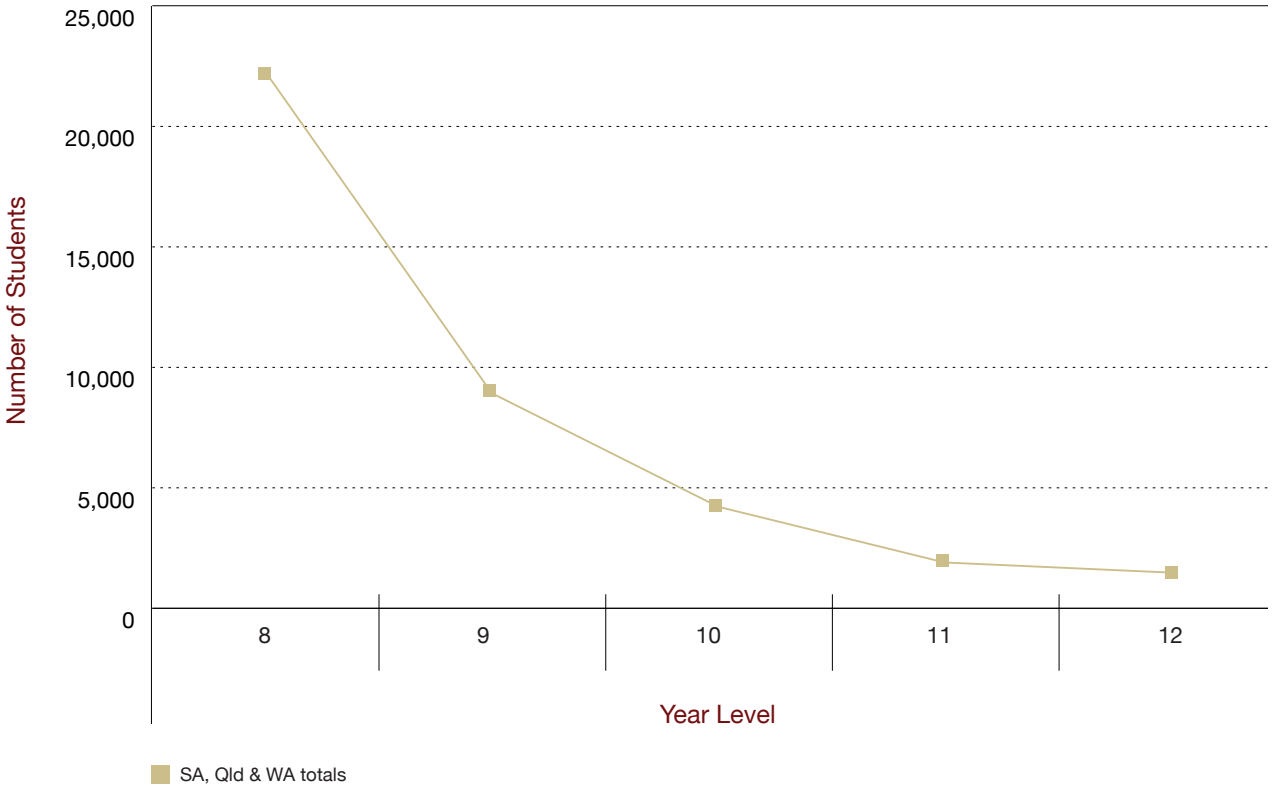
There are also significant differences between systems, with retention generally higher in independent schools, in some states and territories markedly so. This supports the view that attrition may be significantly influenced by school and course structures (for example, years of compulsory enrolment, timetabling of language against attractive electives, willingness to run small classes at senior levels), rather than being wholly a direct reflection of the popularity of Japanese itself. Socioeconomic background factors may also play a part in terms of the value placed on Japanese by parents and the community. More research on the reasons for the markedly different retention rates across sectors and schools is required if the causes for low retention are to be addressed.

Teachers continually reflect on the importance of institutional and structural factors to retention, and suggest that if schools considered Japanese to be important, promoted and supported it, and timetabled it appropriately against other subjects, retention rates could improve. Educational administrators, when questioned about such factors, usually invoke the autonomy of schools, and claim that they have little influence over them. One of the recommendations of this report is that schools be held to account for their retention levels, and be given serious incentives to encourage students to continue with Japanese. The factors associated with attrition and retention will be further discussed in 2.8, page 33.

One statistic which is not available, and cannot be easily inferred from the data currently collected, is the number of students who study Japanese in primary schools who go on to study it in secondary school. Teachers themselves, surprisingly, were often unable to give accurate figures for the number of students who had prior knowledge of Japanese in their classes. However, given the large numbers of students studying Japanese overall, it can be assumed that the numbers of such students are considerable. This is an area in which better information is sorely needed. Transition issues will be discussed in 3.4, page 46.

Graph 2: Decline in Enrolments After Early Secondary Years[9]





9 These graphs are based on data presented in Table 3. Numbers of students studying across year levels and states and territories (2008, except where specified). The first graph presents data from states and territories which start secondary school in Year 7, while the second gives figures for states and territories which start secondary school in Year 8.

2.6 Senior Secondary Courses and Completions

2.6.1 Diversity of Senior Secondary Courses

Over the last decade, there has been increasing differentiation of the levels of language offered at the senior secondary level, in response to recognition of the diversity of the cohort. The variety of courses currently offered can be seen in Table 4 (page 30) which uses colour coding to identify courses which are essentially similar, but have different names in different states and territories. Every state and territory has a mainstream 'continuers' course (termed 'second language' in Vic and WA). Five states and territories offer courses for 'first language' speakers of Japanese (also termed 'advanced' or 'background speaker' courses). In addition, three states and territories have beginners courses, and a variety of other courses are offered in individual states and territories. These courses are described in more detail below.

While differentiation has generally been beneficial, it has been driven in some cases by developments in other languages, particularly Chinese, which has a much larger and more diverse cohort of home-background and first language speakers than does Japanese. Arguably, some of the categorisations, and their effects on student choices, have not been ideal for Japanese, and this will be discussed further in 3.3.4, page 44.

The ACT, NSW and SA offer beginners courses at Year 11 and/or 12 level, and an *ab initio* pathway is also available nationally in the International Baccalaureate. The ACT also offers an 'intermediate' course comprising the final two units of the beginning course and the first two units of the continuing course. These courses are increasingly popular, and provide a 'second chance' to students who wish to change languages, or who have not had the chance to study Japanese earlier in their school career. However, there can be problems ensuring that students enrolling in such courses are genuine beginners in Japanese, and that their existence does not encourage students to take the easier beginners' option rather than maximise their skills through the continuers' course. There are heard anecdotal accounts of students at middle secondary level deliberately dropping Japanese so they can pick it up again later in the senior secondary beginners' course, providing a relatively easy option for their senior secondary years. School administrators have also been accused of encouraging this tactic and using it to justify cutting the middle years of a program.

The largest enrolment in all states and territories is in the 'continuers' or 'second language learners' course, targeting students who have studied for three to five years previously at secondary school.[10] In fact, large numbers of Japanese learners have commenced in primary school and in an ideal system would achieve higher levels by the end of Year 12 than those commencing in secondary school. However, despite nominal pathways in some curriculum documents, in practical terms there is no clear pathway which allows these learners to consistently maintain their head start and achieve higher levels by Year 12 in any state or territory in Australia. Significantly, there is no separate examination catering to a higher level of achievement for 'classroom' learners who have studied since early childhood. This sends a clear message about what results the states and territories expect from language study in primary school – they do not expect that it will make a significant difference to Year 12 achievement.

There is, however, some provision for those students who, either through longer exposure or other factors wish to accelerate their learning. In NSW, high performing students may take the 'extension' course, which involves an additional course taken in addition to the standard continuers' course. In Vic and Qld, students with advanced abilities can accelerate their studies by taking the Year 12 course in Year 11, and then either concentrate on other study areas, or extend their competence by taking a first year university course in Year 12.

10 Prior study varies due to differences in year level of secondary entry and in year in which exit level senior secondary study undertaken. A 'typical' student in Vic, for example, studies for six years in a secondary program before attempting the final year course. In Tas, the typical course is of only five years' duration, from Years 7–11, and attainment standards are therefore lower.

These post-secondary level courses can be taken either simultaneously with students' final school level unit (with approval) or in the year following, if they have completed a Year 12 unit in Year 11. They count towards the Tertiary Entrance Ranking as a sixth or seventh subject, and can also provide credit towards a subsequent tertiary degree.[11] In Tas, only one year of study is normally undertaken in a language across the senior secondary years, and students often complete their language study in Year 11. There is some opportunity to take an extension course offered by the university but, unlike the situation in Vic and Qld, this is not a 'normal' university course designed for tertiary level students but an extension course specifically for high school students.

Vic, NSW, SA, ACT and NT have a 'background[12] speaker', 'first language' or 'advanced' course, which targets students who have a home background in the language and have received a considerable proportion of their education in Japan. For Japanese, the numbers of such students are relatively few (131 nationally in 2008). Table 4 (page 30) provides a breakdown for these courses nationally.

Until very recently, an important group whose needs have been neglected is the group of home-background or Heritage speakers; Japanese-Australians who were born and educated in Australia or moved here early in their childhood. Their treatment will be discussed in 3.3.4, page 44.

2.6.2 Enrolment Trends behind the Statistics

Table 4 (page 30) provides figures obtained from states and territories Assessment and Reporting Authorities on completion of units in the final year(s) of schooling which are counted towards university entrance – typically two semester-long units which may be taken in Year 12, or in some states and territories in Year 11. Despite the decline in enrolments at lower levels, the total number of students completing the final level of secondary school Japanese appears at first glance to have been relatively stable for the last 10 years. The total in 2008 was 4,910, about 2.4 per cent of the national Year 12 cohort. (Figures for 2009 are enrolment, not completion statistics, so are not directly comparable, but are broadly consistent with 2008 figures.) However, the situation is complicated by changes to the courses offered and eligibility requirements over that period, and on closer analysis the picture is not as positive as the total numbers suggest. In fact, in the mainstream continuers' courses numbers have fallen substantially everywhere except Vic and the NT.

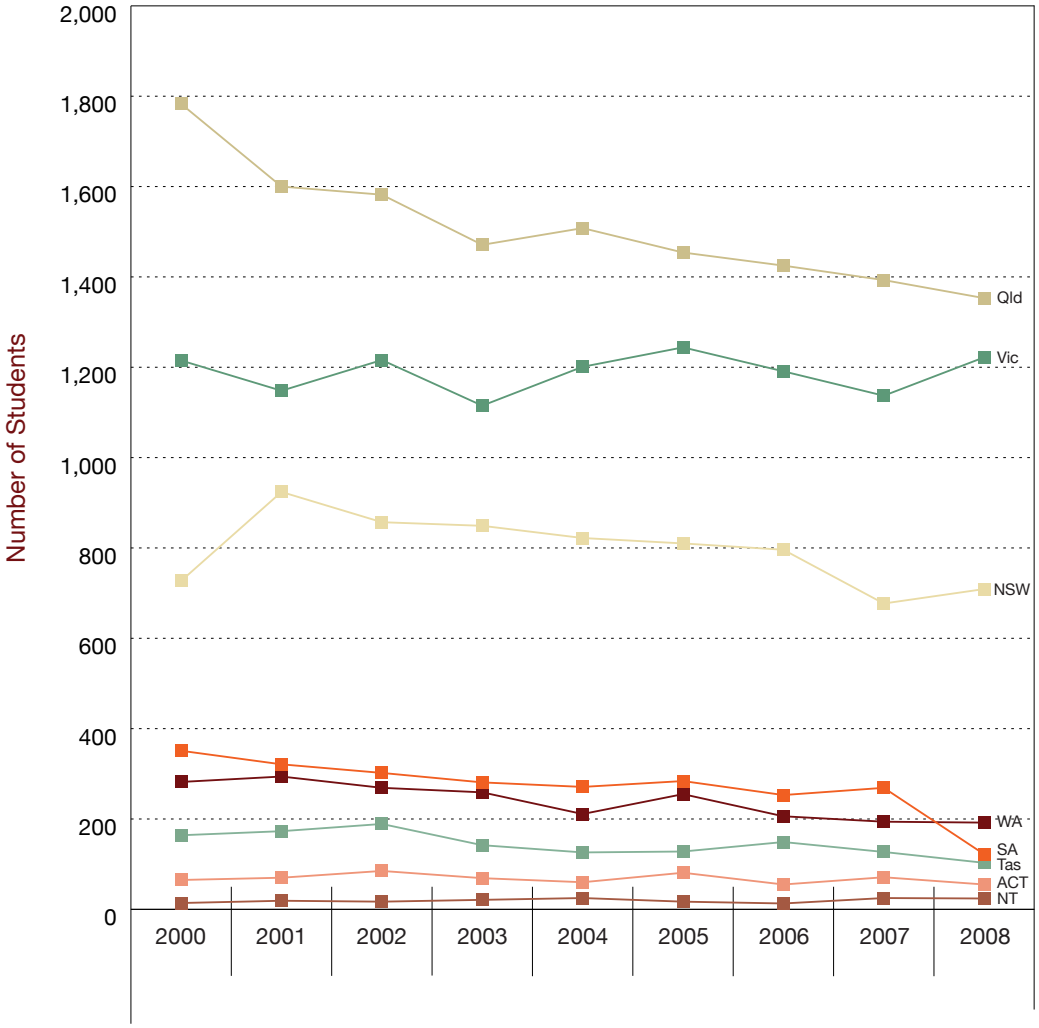
An apparent resurgence in the national total across all courses in 2008 is due to a small increase in Vic and a larger one in NSW (offsetting falls in the other states and territories). The main factor is a 20 per cent increase in numbers of beginners in NSW. While this is a welcome development, these learners reach lower levels of competence than do learners in other courses, and many are reportedly international students who may not stay in Australia. It is important that they are considered separately and do not cloud the picture for the more significant group of continuing students.

The large number of NSW beginners (801) also accounts for the fact that in contrast to the figures at lower levels, the highest numbers of Year 12 completions are in NSW. If beginners are excluded, Qld has the highest number (1,353), followed by Vic (1,275), then NSW (709). Numbers in other jurisdictions range from only 24 in the NT to 187 in SA – worryingly low considering the dominance of Japanese in that state, and predicted to fall even further under the new senior secondary course structure, which will see many Year 12 students studying only four subjects (Novac, 2009).

11 In Vic, Monash University runs an 'Enhancement' program allowing the completion of first year post-VCE Japanese in Year 12, effectively bringing students to the level of a beginners major before they even commence their tertiary studies. Typically, this program is completed by about 20–40 highly able students per year, and from 2010 a new higher level course, targeting Heritage learners, will be introduced. This course will be specifically written for Heritage learners, and will allow them to accelerate their studies, permitting access to advanced units in Interpreting and Translation normally taken at postgraduate level in the later years of their course.
In Qld, students who finish their Year 12 studies in Year 11 can undertake tertiary studies in Japanese. The course is free of charge to students, contributes to their TER and counts towards their tertiary studies.

12 Some jurisdictions refer to students with a home background in a language but who have been raised in Australia as 'background' speakers, while others use the term 'Heritage' learners and reserve the term 'background' for recently arrived students whose first language is Japanese.

Graph 3: Year 12 Continuers Completions 2000–2008



If the numbers in the mainstream course are tracked (the continuers, or 'second language' courses which best reflect the health of Japanese language education as a whole), the trends vary somewhat by state or territory (see Graph 3). In NSW, there was a steady decline totalling 27 per cent from 2001 (924) to 2007 (677), although there was a small improvement in 2008 and a bigger increase in enrolments in 2009. Qld witnessed a 24 per cent decline between 2000 and 2008 from 1,783 to 1,353 and in SA, numbers nearly halved in that period, partly because of a very sharp decline in 2008 (when eligibility criteria were changed, excluding many background learners). In WA, enrolments fell by more than a third between 2001 and 2008, (although they increased in 2009) and Tas also steadily declined, losing 45 per cent between 2002 and 2008. It should be noted that the Tas figures are not directly comparable, as these students only complete a one-year, rather than a two-year sequence in the language at senior secondary levels and are thus more equivalent to the Year 11 cohorts in other states and territories, although courses are 150 rather than 120 hours in length. In summary, there have been substantial declines of between 24 per cent to 49 per cent in five states and/or territories. The ACT and NT are more volatile, and have low levels of enrolment overall.

The only state or territory which has maintained continuers' numbers over the longer term is Vic. The figures in Vic in the second language course may have been marginally influenced by changes to the eligibility requirements, which were previously more restrictive. The Victorian second language subjects now accept home-background students who would be ineligible to enrol in the equivalent units in some other states and territories, although they are still only a small group within the overall Year 12 second language cohort.

Table 4: Senior Secondary Course Completion Statistics 2000–2008

NB: Similar courses which may have different names in different states and territories are identified by colour.

State/Territory	Course	2000	2001	2002
		Total	Total	Total
ACT[1]	Beginning Japanese	66	71	67
	Intermediate Japanese	27	26	30
	Continuing Japanese	65	70	85
	Advanced Japanese	6	6	7
	TOTAL	164	173	189
NSW	Japanese Beginners	333	326	326
	Japanese Continuers	727	924	857
	Japanese Extension[2]	279	235	243
	Japanese Background Speakers	66	49	56
	TOTAL	1,126	1,299	1,239
NT	Japanese (Accelerated)	7	–	–
	Japanese (Continuers / Extended) (from 2002)	14	19	17
	TOTAL	21	19	17
Qld	Japanese	1,783	1,600	1,582
	TOTAL	1,783	1,600	1,582
SA	Japanese Accelerated / Beginners (from 2008)	30	23	37
	Japanese (Continuers)	351	321	302
	Japanese Background Speakers	–	–	–
	TOTAL	381	344	339
Tas	Japanese 5C[3]	164	173	189
	TOTAL	164	173	189
Vic	Japanese Second Language	1,215	1,148	1,216
	Japanese First Language	–	114	126
	TOTAL	1,215	1,262	1,342
WA	Japanese Second Language	282	294	269
	Japanese Advanced / Background Speakers (from 2008)	7	10	13
	TOTAL	289	304	282
NATIONAL TOTAL	TOTAL ALL YEAR 12 COURSES	5,143[4]	5,174	5,179
	TOTAL CONTINUERS	4,601	4,549	4,517

1 ACT figures indicate the students who have completed majors in any of the listed courses.

2 NSW Japanese Extension is an advanced course that can only be taken by students taking Japanese Continuers unit. In order to avoid counting these students twice, the Japanese Extension figures are not included in the totals for NSW or the country.

3 Tas statistics are for pre-tertiary Japanese units undertaken at the Year 11 level, but which contribute to students' TER score. Although it is the highest level offered by high schools, it is not necessarily comparable to Year 12 in other states and territories.

2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008			2009[5]
Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Female	Male	Total	Total
90	91	99	95	108	47	42	89	94
17	18	25	21	14	16	7	23	18
69	60	81	55	71	26	29	55	57
6	8	9	14	6	6	3	9	7
182	177	214	185	199	95	81	176	176
459	601	556	594	634	519	282	801	793
849	822	810	796	677	461	248	709	803
252	273	300	265	238	175	97	272	291
59	52	50	49	55	37	22	59	27
1,367	1,475	1,416	1,439	1,366	1,017	552	1,569	1,623
–	–	6	–	–	–	–	–	7
21	25	17	13	25	20	4	24	35
21	25	23	13	25	20	4	24	42
1,471	1,508	1,454	1,425	1,393	956	397	1,353	1,348
1,471	1,508	1,454	1,425	1,393	956	397	1,353	1,348
38	22	9	24	25	20	8	28	31
281	271	284	253	269	122	58	180	176
–	–	–	–	–	3	4	7	10
319	293	293	277	294	145	70	215	217
142	126	128	149	127	71	32	103	108
142	126	128	149	127	71	32	103	108
1,115	1,201	1,244	1,191	1,137	782	440	1,222	1,201
95	90	92	73	74	30	23	53	31
1,210	1,291	1,336	1,264	1,211	812	463	1,275	1232
259	211	255	206	194	123	69	192	196
13	3	3	5	5	0	3	3	2
272	214	258	211	199	123	72	195	198
4,984	5,109	5,122	4,963	4,814	3,239	1,671	4,910	4,944
4,207	4,224	4,273	4,088	3,893	2,561	1,277	3,838	3,924

4 National Total for 2000 excludes Vic Japanese First Language figures.
5 2009 Student numbers are preliminary enrolment figures, not completions.

A major reason for continued higher retention to Year 12 in Vic (in addition to a generally positive and supportive environment for languages) is a cluster of factors relating to tertiary entrance calculations in that state: the advantage for university entrance in taking 6 subjects, the fact that Japanese is scaled up, and the additional bonus marks allocated for language study. These are further discussed below.

2.6.3 When 'Year 12' Is Not Year 12

The figures provided in Table 4 (pages 30–31) are somewhat different from those provided by sectors relating to participation in language courses by Year 12 students. One reason for this is that the numbers do not include students taking the International Baccalaureate.[13] Another cause for this discrepancy is the fact that in some jurisdictions (Tas and ACT) there is no clear distinction between Year 11 and 12, and students complete a range of units across the final two years of schooling.[14]

In addition, in Vic in particular, many students with a strong background in a subject take units normally taken in Year 12 (VCE Units 3 & 4) in Year 11 (or even earlier). If students complete six Year 12 level subjects (Units 3/4)[15] rather than the standard five, this provides a significant advantage in gaining a place in competitive tertiary courses as 10 per cent of the total score for the sixth subject is included in calculating the Tertiary Entrance Ranking. It is common practice to take one Unit 3/4 subject in Year 11, leaving adequate time to give proper attention to five subjects in Year 12. This allows good students to take units up to the senior secondary level that they would otherwise have to discontinue due to lack of space in their Year 12 study program. This practice provides a significant boost to language study – not only because students can take a language early if they are able to accelerate, but because they can take other final level subjects early, leaving more room for a language in Year 12. Students are encouraged to include a language among their six subjects by the bonus marks awarded for languages for university entry in Vic. As well, some of the students who complete Japanese early may then choose to continue their studies by taking a tertiary level unit during their final year. They can thus finish their schooling (and later, if desired, a tertiary degree) with a higher level of competence in Japanese than their peers around Australia who are not offered such opportunities.

The number of students undertaking Japanese early in Vic is significant – although not as great as in some other languages (such as Chinese). In 2008, 11.4 per cent of those who completed 'Japanese Second Language' were in either Year 11 (134) or Year 10 (6). The average over five years of those taking the units before Year 12 was 12.4 per cent, with one student in 2006 taking the units in Year 9. It is probable that many of these students had a home background in Japanese. Anecdotal evidence suggests that home background learners generally have a strong underlying competence in Japanese and often take it before their final year as a sixth or seventh subject, whereas for school-based learners language study is strongly cumulative and difficult to accelerate. Motivated school-based learners who have participated in an accelerated program in their school (perhaps after studying at primary school), or have visited Japan as an exchange student can accelerate their study, but this is relatively uncommon.

For 'Japanese First Language', in 2008 77.4 per cent of students took the subject before Year 12 (37 in Year 11, four in Year 10, out of a total enrolment of 53). The average over five years was 68.6 per cent.

The 'first language' units are thus predominantly treated as an 'extra' subject that students are able to take early, leaving room in their program for five additional subjects in their final year.

The Victorian figures suggest that the ability to count up to six subjects towards tertiary entrance scores, combined with the ability to take Year 12 subjects early (along with the language bonus

13 It should be added that the figures, while more reliable than those for enrolments in lower year levels, are not entirely comparable, as it is usually not clear at what point in the year the data was collected. On the website of one of the major state authorities three different figures were obtained for the total number of students enrolled in Japanese in 2008. Two different figures in the same document varied by 37 students.

14 In Tas, students typically do not take a language across both Years 11 and 12, but only in one of these years (normally Year 11) so the situation is not directly comparable with that in the other states and territories, and (especially considering the fact that secondary education has traditionally commenced in Year 8, not Year 7) both average total years of study and level of final achievement will be lower than elsewhere.

15 Ten per cent of the score for the sixth subject is counted towards the TER.

for tertiary entry, and the fact that Japanese raw scores are scaled up substantially) is contributing to relatively high enrolments in final year Japanese. Unfortunately, it was not possible to establish how many of the students who took Japanese in their final year undertook six or more subjects in total (ie, who took another subject early to make room for Japanese in Year 12). Anecdotally it is understood that there are many such students in addition to those who take final year Japanese in Year 11. If this is correct, it would confirm the importance to the health of Japanese enrolments of incentives to take more than the minimum number of subjects at final year level, spread across more than one year. There is no publicly available research into the impact on language study uptake of a smaller or greater number of subjects taken at Year 12, and given the changes that have recently taken place in some states and territories there is a clear need for more information in this area.

2.7 Interpreting the Statistics

With the help and cooperation of all jurisdictions, this report has compiled the most complete statistics yet assembled for Japanese, and yet some important gaps remain. As so many policy decisions focus around numerical targets and measures, it is crucial that the realities behind the statistics, and the possible distortions that can result from a focus on numerical totals, are understood.

Statistics, at the primary level in particular, do not reveal information about the quality of programs or levels of achievement within them, which vary widely. Programs of 10 minutes per week should not appear in the same table as those offered on a partial immersion basis – and yet this is what regularly occurs. Even at secondary level, where more parity could be expected, final year courses in some states and territories are based on five years of study, and six in others. As discussed, the apparent comparative stability in 'Year 12' completions may be largely due to increasing numbers of international students (from both Japan and other Asian countries) studying in Australia temporarily, especially in beginners' and first language courses, as well as increasing numbers of home-background learners, particularly in Vic. A focus on overall statistics conceals the fact that the number of continuing 'classroom learners' has declined substantially over the last seven to eight years. This is important, because it means that not as many non-Japanese background Australians are gaining the significant educational advantage of completing Japanese to senior secondary level as in previous years – both in terms of their Japanese competence, and their overall educational development.

In addition to the oft-repeated call to collect better and more nuanced statistics, there is a need for ongoing research on a language by language basis to look beyond the numbers, and examine the realities that the numbers fail to reveal, as well as those which they illuminate. As this report makes clear, a one-size-fits-all approach to Asian languages, or all languages, is no longer tenable, and the best solutions to problems will only be found when the complex conditions behind them are thoroughly understood.

2.8 Incentives and Disincentives for Retention to Year 12

Teachers and other informants across Australia interviewed for this project reported similar observations about why students continued or did not continue their study of Japanese into senior secondary, and in particular, Year 12. However, there were a few significant areas of difference, which related to senior secondary certificate structures and the structure of Year 12 Japanese course eligibility and standardisation assessment procedures in different states and territories.

Incentives for continuing Japanese included the following.

- Liking the subject, the teacher and the learning environment. Enjoyment of the language was often enhanced by an interest in Japan or Japanese culture and a desire to be able to access cultural products in the original language, or to travel to Japan.

- Being able to participate in a school trip or exchange to Japan was often cited as an incentive to continue to the year level in which the trip was offered (typically Year 10 or 11), and the experience of such a visit often enhanced motivation to continue on return (see 3.5.4, page 52).
- Availability of bonus points towards tertiary entrance for language study (either awarded across the board, as in Vic, or for entry to specific universities or courses) and/or positive scaling of Japanese raw scores (where this occurs). These provide some compensation for the perceived difficulty of Japanese.
- A general sense that knowledge of Japanese, or at least the experience of learning a language, was educationally worthwhile and might enhance both tertiary study and career options. A previous student survey, taken at a time when there was much publicity about the utility of Japanese, found that 'enhancing future career' was cited as a major motivation for continuing with Japanese (Marriott, et al., 1994, page 90) but that liking languages and culture, as well as 'good marks' and 'contact with country' were also very high.[16]
- Senior certificate structures and tertiary entrance score arrangements which encourage the study of at least five, and commonly six exit level subjects lead to higher retention to final year level, either taken 'early' at Year 11, or taken in Year 12.

Significant disincentives for continuing Japanese after it becomes an elective included the following.

- Structural issues in schools such as timetabling of Japanese against more attractive electives or lack of flexibility in timetabling so that Japanese could not be taken in combination with certain other subjects.
- The school not offering Japanese at senior levels due to unwillingness to support small classes or combining classes at senior levels (for example, Years 11 and 12 taught together): a significant deterrent to students and a major problem for teachers. As many schools apply the same quotas to languages as to other subjects, a vicious cycle was often set up: if numbers at the senior level dipped below a given point, classes were combined, or not offered at all and students further down the school, seeing this, decided not to continue, reducing the overall pool, and further compounding problems at the senior level. Senior administrators told us that extra funding was available to support small classes, but there was evidence that the problem was still a significant one in many schools. (See Case Study 1, page 36.)
- Lack of room in senior secondary course structures to accommodate a language in addition to subjects which are tertiary course prerequisites. This applies particularly in the case of students seeking entry to courses such as engineering where English, two maths, physics and chemistry are the combination of choice. The situation is even more critical in states and territories where four subjects at Year 12 is becoming the norm, due to changes to certificate and tertiary entrance score arrangements. Language has traditionally occupied the fifth (or sixth) place in students' subject choices, so is vulnerable to course structure arrangements. A previous study found that the fact other subjects were considered more important was the primary reason for discontinuation given by students who wished to continue their study of the language but could not do so (Marriott, et al., 1994, page 91).
- Students' perceptions of the difficulty in achieving a high score, and high workloads relative to other subjects. Perceived difficulty was also given as the major reason for discontinuation in the national student survey in the early 1990s (Marriott, et al., 1994). Teachers emphasised that a prime consideration for students selecting senior secondary subjects is the level of difficulty and workload balanced against the expected level of attainment. It is not just a matter of an absolute score – students also weigh up the effort required, as a subject requiring a very high workload will prevent them giving adequate time to their other subjects (or their social lives and jobs). Negative scaling of Japanese raw scores in some states and territories exacerbates this problem.

16 The only major national study of motivations to continue or discontinue Japanese (Marriott, et al., 1994) found results which were broadly in agreement with the information gained from teachers in this study. It was beyond the scope of this study to conduct a similar student survey, but more detailed current research is needed in this area.

- There were perceptions in some states and territories that the difficulty of Japanese had increased in recent years, due to the specification in general language syllabuses, and to the growing presence of students with a background in Japanese or with a character-language background. Some suggested that questions had become more demanding, often relying on very subtle distinctions, in order to rank students at the top end of the scale. It is clearly important that the difficulty of Japanese does not continue to escalate to a level where large numbers of students believe it is much more difficult than other Year 12 disciplines.
- Perceptions of unfairness due to the impact of the presence of 'advantaged' students on allocation of scores and scaling. In states and territories which have a strict proportional system for the allocation of grades, and allow those with considerable non-school background in the language to undertake the continuers' or second language course, there was a perception that marks of students at the top of the scale were being distorted by the presence of a relatively small number of background or Heritage speakers, many of whom scored in the top mark range.

Proportional grade banding relies on a subject having a 'normal' distribution of students, whereas it is arguable that in some states and territories the population is skewed in ways that make these assumptions questionable. Teachers who criticise this situation do not object to students who have worked hard for years at community schools being able to achieve high scores in Japanese. However, they believe that it is damaging if by doing so they deprive high-achieving and hard-working students without a background in the language of the chance to also achieve high marks. The scaling-up of Japanese is perceived not to adequately compensate for this effect in the upper range.

Teachers pointed out that it is the perception of unfairness that is as damaging as the reality – if students, parents and principals, perceive that non-background students are failing to achieve success in Japanese, then this will directly affect enrolments, even if such perceptions are incorrect. They believed that their top students were disadvantaged, and argued that if states and territories wish to allow students with very strong home and educational backgrounds to take the same Japanese course as school-based learners, then they need to review the assumptions under which subjects are scaled at the top end.

When examining the disincentives to language study, two principal observations can be made.

1. Decisions in individual schools relating to number of years for which Japanese is compulsory, time-tabling and provision of senior classes is crucial.
2. General structural issues (such as the nature of school certificate programs and Tertiary Entrance Ranking calculations), which are beyond the direct influence of language teachers, schools or sector administrators in charge of language programs, are very significant in determining choices, and need to be addressed at the appropriate policy levels. There is a need for stronger language policies that will ensure the place of language teaching is taken into account at all levels and in all areas of decision making.

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Case Study 1: Disincentives to Continuation to Year 12

A government secondary college with a well established Japanese language program that has been running for over 15 years is facing a challenge which could have an enormous negative impact on the program at Years 11 and 12 and ultimately throughout the school.

The school has always run separate Years 11 and 12 classes. However, from 2010 the school administration has decided for a class to run at either Year 11 or Year 12 level there must be a minimum of 15 students. At present there are 12 students wishing to study Japanese at Year 11 and nine students wishing to study Japanese at Year 12 in the following year. The principal has said that these students cannot be provided with separate classes even though in the past those numbers were sufficient to do so.

The principal has offered the teachers two alternate modes of provision:

- combining two classes, either Years 11 and 12 or Years 11 and 10, expecting that two year levels of Japanese will be taught in the same class
- enrolling the Years 11 and 12 students in distance education, despite the fact that there are three qualified teachers of Japanese at the school.

The content, level, and assessment tasks required at each level are quite different and combining two year levels into one class will result in a reduction in the quality of teaching and learning that takes place, jeopardising the teacher's ability to help students realise their full potential in Japanese. Further, some students have indicated that if amalgamation occurs they will drop Japanese in favour of a subject that has a stand-alone class, where the teacher's attention is focused solely on the requirements of one course.

The decision to not provide separate classes for both Years 11 and 12 students is likely to have a negative effect on the whole Japanese program. Students about to choose electives at the end of Year 9 will be deterred from taking Japanese, unsure of whether a pathway to Year 12 will be available or not. The school runs a popular and successful study tour to Japan, but parents have questioned whether they should spend the money on the tour if their child cannot follow a pathway through to Year 12. Therefore, the school's strong sister school relationship which includes a three-week study visit both to and from the sister school every year may also be in jeopardy.

Overall Result

A shortfall of three students in one year and six in another will seriously undermine a hitherto successful program which has taken years to establish. The number of students continuing with Japanese to Year 12 will reduce sharply and, without senior classes, the viability of the entire program may be threatened in the near future.

Combining two year levels into one class will result in a reduction in the quality of teaching and learning that takes place, jeopardising the teacher's ability to help students realise their full potential in Japanese.

3 Curriculums and Programs

3.1 Standardisation of the Languages Curriculum and Implications for Japanese

During the 1980s, all Australian states and territories replaced their single-language curriculums with standardised curriculums – typically generic curriculum and framework documents for all languages, with some language-specific addendum and exemplars. There were good reasons for these developments, which resulted in an upgrading and modernising of the curriculums in many languages as well as practical efficiencies. But they also had some unfortunate consequences.

The very different nature of different languages, and the learning tasks involved in their acquisition, has often been glossed over, resulting in a compromise (and therefore compromised) curriculum. Consequently, the curriculum is frequently described in terms that are very broad and open to interpretation. Most states and territories have language-specific supplements or work samples, but the nature and quality of these varies, as does the freedom given to the writers to interpret the generic guidelines. Some concessions have been made in the more obvious areas of the written language, for example, by the addition of different requirements for 'script' and 'non-script' languages. However, there are still unjustifiable expectations based on the incorrect assumption that languages such as Chinese and Japanese are very similar to each other. In addition, the major resources and expertise in curriculum development are focused on the general curriculum, with language specific exemplars produced by teachers who may not have much expertise in curriculum design, and who may not participate in the initial curriculum framing.

Issues which are important in the learning of Japanese are usually not given adequate attention in the curriculum, and the balance of skills and competencies addressed may not be optimal for Japanese. For example, fundamental issues such as the introduction of speech styles and of script are often neglected, or handled in ways inappropriate for Japanese. Curriculum documents for primary level often specify that students should start with casual or informal language, suitable for use with friends and family, but in Japanese informal forms are grammatically more complex than neutral polite forms, and are also patently unsuitable for use in addressing teachers. There is an ongoing debate among experts about whether the informal or neutral polite style should be introduced first, or whether both styles should be introduced for comprehension from the beginning. However, the issues involved have typically not been systematically addressed in a serious way by curriculum developers (most of whom have no expertise in Japanese), but left to the interpretation of individual teachers with little training in either curriculum development or linguistics.

There is also an assumption, implicit in the use of a standardised curriculum, that all languages will be acquired at a similar rate, in every area (with some, usually inadequate, concessions in the area of reading and writing for script-based languages). Various distortions have resulted from this situation. At the Year 12 level, demands for similar levels of achievement and identical assessment techniques are particularly problematic due to the greater central control of curriculum and assessment and the high stakes involved. For example, the curriculum may specify that students will complete individual research using newspapers and magazines, and yet only prescribe a fraction of the characters required to read a newspaper.

While some differences among languages are tolerated, there are still damaging assumptions made about the possibility of standardised frameworks. There were reports that Japanese examination papers were translated into English to be vetted by officials without competence in Japanese, with changes being demanded to bring the content and level of questions into line with those in other languages. Many teachers believe that the demands

placed on Year 12 students by external examinations are unrealistic, and that often what results is an over-reliance on rote and formulaic learning targeted towards exam performance.

The assumption of similar progress implied in curriculum frameworks contrasts with many of the contributions to the debate surrounding the choice of languages to be studied in Australia. Commentators often suggest that it will take three times as long to reach equivalent competence in languages such as Japanese compared with languages such as French. As yet there is little good empirical evidence for what can be achieved by Australian students studying Japanese in comparison to other languages. This issue is currently being investigated by a major research project conducted by the University of South Australia and the University of Melbourne, which should provide more information on which to base curriculum decisions in future. It should be noted however, that what is achieved under current curriculum regimes may not necessarily represent the best standard that could be achieved under a more appropriate curriculum.

3.2 Primary School Programs and Curriculum

3.2.1 Primary School Programs

There is a very wide variety of Japanese programs in primary schools, both in terms of the focus of the program and the resources allocated to it.

- In some states and territories, programs in many schools extend across all years of primary school (for example, SA and Vic, although this appears to be changing) while in other states and territories it is more common for programs to run for only two to four years, commencing in Years 3, 4, 5 or 6, or starting earlier and finishing at Year 4. In some cases, students are receiving Japanese classes each year, but for only one semester – a particularly invidious arrangement demonstrating a total lack of understanding of the nature of language learning.
- As has been noted in previous reports (for example, Liddicoat, 2007) the time allocation for primary language programs is very variable, and tends to be low – typically under an hour, once a week, and sometimes as low as 10 minutes per week.
- Some programs are well established and supported, with a qualified teacher and an assistant, dedicated and well equipped language classrooms and a clear place for Japanese in the overall curriculum. A considerable number of schools also have sister school programs which involve school visits or other forms of exchange (see section 3.5.4, page 52).
- There are also a small number of immersion programs, which produce impressive linguistic outcomes, and equally positive outcomes in other curriculum areas in the school (see section 3.6.3, page 53).
- At the other end of the spectrum, many programs have interrupted teacher supply (due to lack of provision for permanent positions and low fractional appointments), little or no budget for resources or teacher development, no documented and cumulative language curriculum and no integration with other curriculum areas.
- In many schools the status of language teachers is extremely low. They are often isolated, do not participate in general curriculum planning and suffer work conditions which would not be tolerated by other primary teachers. This impacts on their ability to develop good programs.
- In practice, the most important role of Japanese in many primary schools is to provide non-contact time to classroom teachers. Many teachers and administrators commented that while this nexus between Japanese time and non-contact time for classroom teachers remains, the ability to implement meaningful programs will be limited.

3.2.2 Primary Level Curriculum

- Although curriculum documents or frameworks exist in all states and territories, in most they are broad and open to wide interpretation. In some states and territories, standards and frameworks are based on a time allocation well above that which is actually offered in most schools and are therefore unrealistic and ineffective as a guide to curriculum and assessment. Teachers, confronted with such curriculum documents, have reinterpreted them to suit their own situations and ideas.
- In several states and territories there is no common agreement on what specific content should be

taught at different year levels, or what the specific outcomes should be, even within the same state, territory or district. There is a huge variation in the content of courses in terms of coverage of script, topics, grammar and vocabulary, and cultural and intercultural content. The focus of teachers varies, so that students in one school may achieve as much in one or two years as those at another do in four or five years, even where time allocations do not differ substantially.

- A previous study (Spence-Brown, 2005, 2006) by one of the authors found that it was fairly common practice in primary schools for there to be no detailed progressive and comprehensive curriculum in existence specifying outcomes across a range of year levels. Teachers often write their program term by term, adjusting it to suit materials that they find along the way. It is also common for teachers to teach the same basic lesson at every year level in a given week, with some adjustment to make it developmentally appropriate. Otherwise excellent and enthusiastic teachers in schools with well-supported language programs appeared to have little understanding of what students had studied in previous years, and little idea of exactly what should be covered by the time they left. In many secondary schools, textbooks provide the unofficial curriculum, but very few primary schools use a textbook.
- Students often learn vocabulary and sentence patterns tied to individual topics by rote, and gain little ability to generate their own utterances except within a very limited range. In many programs vocabulary and sentence patterns are not systematically recycled or built upon. Assessment practices are also poor, or nonexistent, and rarely focus on longer-term learning.
- This trend is sometimes reinforced by efforts to include Japanese in the topic-based 'integrated curriculum' common in primary schools. Students spend a lot of effort learning quite specialised vocabulary (for example, pertaining to 'recycling') which is not easily incorporated in subsequent units. Teachers struggle to find activities that are relevant to the theme, and are engaging, but which also develop language competence in a systematic way. Teachers remarked that integrating Japanese with the mainstream curriculum usually means adapting Japanese to suit other curriculum areas in superficial ways, but rarely involves the reinforcement of learning relevant to Japanese outside Japanese classes.
- Some programs pay great attention to language and literacy development, while others are culturally based, with less importance placed on language acquisition.
- Many Japanese teachers place a heavy emphasis on making Japanese 'fun' and 'enjoyable'. Teachers often argue that with only 30–40 minutes a week, a systematic program which builds language competence is almost impossible. (See Case Study 2, page 40.) Instead, they focus on offering engaging learning experiences, often introducing interesting aspects of culture involving games and songs, which they hope will give students a positive experience of learning. The knowledge that when their students reach high school they will almost universally be made to start learning Japanese again with complete beginners is a further disincentive to the construction of a more carefully planned, challenging and sequential curriculum.
- In some schools, teachers build an engaging and culturally rich curriculum around a sequential language program which results in meaningful communicative competence, as well as other kinds of learning. Teachers in such programs report that students respond well to challenges and often surprise them by the level of their achievements. Case Study 3, page 41, provides an example of such a program. In one way, it is unremarkable, as it merely does what any good primary school Japanese program should do, but it is certainly not typical. It is included as a way of showing what can be done by a well-trained and well-supported teacher in an environment that could be realistically provided in many schools, if authorities wished to give priority to doing so.

Case Study 2: Constraints on Delivering a Quality Program in a Primary School

A creative, energetic, fully qualified teacher of Japanese is employed on a yearly contract for three days per week in a primary school to teach all 500 students for 30 or 40 min per class per week (depending on the year level). The teacher has excellent language and cultural skills and a passion for Japan, Japanese and teaching. The teacher designs interesting and engaging activities but has no set curriculum, and responds to students' interests and needs or the current 'integrated curriculum' topic without long-term planning. The course is based on maximising student engagement rather than language outcomes.

Issues

- The teacher teaches every year level over three days: 500 students in total.
- The teacher is only in the school three days per week and only teaches each class once. She needs to teach in another school to make up a full-time load. In both schools, she is isolated as she is the only Japanese teacher, and is not a full-time or permanent staff member.
- At times the program is interrupted by other whole school or whole year level events such as swimming lessons. The teacher may not see a particular class for weeks on end.
- The teacher cannot adhere to curriculum and assessment frameworks because the time allocation per class is less than one-fifth of that recommended in the state or territory.
- The teacher is at times required to teach cross-curriculum modules integrating Japanese with other subject areas. However, this occurs with little consideration for the Japanese program and how the language involved will be beneficial to the students' overall learning. Often little language development results.
- Due to time and organisational restrictions, students from P–6 all study the same topic at the same time, with some variation in activities and expectations.
- The teacher is capable of providing a quality program but is not being supported to do so by the system.
- The teacher believes that a sequential program would be more productive and satisfying and is frustrated at the inability to implement a program with the depth and structure to develop sequential linguistic and sociocultural knowledge and skills.

Results

- The students 'do' Japanese for seven years but retain little due to insufficient time for exposure and repetition.
- The program is enjoyable and fun but does not provide a sequential language learning experience and offers limited educational outcomes.
- The time allocation sends a message indirectly to students and to the school community that the learning of Japanese is unimportant.
- The opportunity provided by a competent and enthusiastic teacher is not maximised.
- There is little satisfaction for the teacher in the present job structure and she will move on if the opportunity arises, so the school experiences a constant 'churn' of teaching staff.

Comment

The situation described here is typical of primary schools across Australia and may be worse. Quality primary school Japanese programs cannot be delivered within a structure where the Japanese language program fits around all other teaching and learning, and is not valued by the school, which does not or cannot offer the teacher a permanent full-time position and is not concerned that a comprehensive curriculum is not being delivered. Programs like this fulfil government requirements on paper but waste students' time and teachers' talent, commitment and enthusiasm.

Case Study 3: Sound Curriculum and Pedagogy in a Primary School

Japanese is taught from P–4 by a full-time, committed Japanese teacher (native speaker of Japanese, trained in Japan and Australia) who has developed a curriculum that maximises language learning in the time allocation of 90-minutes per week. Language development is the focus of classroom activities that aim to develop students' intercultural skills and include the use of ICT as a communication tool. At Years 5 and 6, students enter a middle school program taught by another teacher.

- Timetabling is driven by pedagogic considerations. A deliberate decision by the teacher resulted in a change from 2 x 45 min to 3 x 30 min sessions at P–2. More frequent Japanese classes meant less repetition of content was required and the students valued Japanese more because they had more classes. The students' ability and progress improved. At Years 3 and 4, the students were able to concentrate for a longer period and scheduling reverted to 2 x 45 min, giving students time to work independently on tasks.
- The teacher approaches the teaching and learning of Japanese through the application of principles of Japanese second language acquisition. There is an organised and sequential approach to Japanese language and literacy development.
- The teacher uses, wherever relevant, new methodologies and strategies but only after careful consideration of how they fit with the existing program and how they will result in improvement of student learning.
- The teacher believes that use of technology and exchanges with Japanese students are two key aspects of the program which particularly encourage engagement in the Japanese class. The use of technology is incorporated into the curriculum extensively where it can be justified in terms of language outcomes.
- In addition to games on the computer designed to improve language skills, the Year 4 students are involved in a web conferencing program which enables them to communicate with a class of similar age in Japan. The classes have exchanged a soft toy which each student took home for a few days. Students took photographs of the toy in their homes and wrote a diary in Japanese about what the student and the soft toy did. This diary was then sent to the class in Japan. This gave the students' writing purpose, context and an audience. It also linked their web conferencing to other classroom work and allowed the students to gain an insight into the lives of their peers in Japan, and an opportunity to reflect on differences and similarities with their own lives.

Results

By Year 4, students have acquired rudimentary linguistic and communicative skills, as well as the cognitive benefits and language awareness associated with such learning. They use these skills to engage in meaningful communicative activities with peers in Japan, which they find exciting and satisfying. At the same time, they gain cultural knowledge and insights and have the opportunity to reflect on their own and others' lives.

Comment

Factors which enable the delivery of a quality primary program include commitment by the school to employing a permanent, well-qualified teacher, allocation of adequate teaching time (90 min) and resources. This has allowed the teacher to develop a detailed, sequential language learning program, which incorporates meaningful communication and an intercultural focus. If the teaching time were increased to the recommended 150 min prevailing in the state or territory, it could be expected that results would be even more impressive.

3.2.3 A Recent Initiative

Recent declines in enrolments and program reviews have prompted new initiatives in several states and territories. One of the most extensive has been in the ACT.

In the ACT, the government sector has responded to declining enrolments by an overhaul of languages provision, based on much stricter mandating and time requirements. Under the ACT Government's Languages in Schools initiative, all ACT public schools will be required to offer a languages program to all students from Year 3 to Year 8 by 2010, in addition to language programs already offered in early and senior years of schooling. Primary schools will be required to offer languages for a minimum of 60 min per week for all students in Years 3–6. High schools will be required to offer languages for a minimum of 150 min per week for students in Years 7–8 (ACT Government, 2008).

This initiative resulted in a significant rise in student numbers in 2009 with further increases projected in 2010. To support the teachers implementing these programs for Japanese, the Japanese Teachers' Primary Network has developed a scope and sequence document for levels P–6 based on the ACT Curriculum Framework. Teachers and schools are not obliged to use this document but most are doing so, welcoming some direction and assistance in planning their programs.

The model for curriculum development in the ACT, where teachers work together on a detailed scope and sequence, which is then vetted and accredited, results in substantial and consistent curriculum, aligned with local needs and in a form readily employable in schools. This contrasts with the system which applies in most other states and territories, where curriculum development in primary schools is haphazard, and is largely the work of individual teachers (often in part-time and untenured positions) working in isolation and without other input or feedback, either from within the school or from Japanese language teaching colleagues.

Interviews for this report suggest that there is a sense among teachers of Japanese across Australia that languages in the primary school are in a state of flux, with an uncertain future. Some excellent programs have been developed, but others are under severe stress, and teachers in general do not believe that language teaching is adequately understood, supported or funded. Many are hoping that the development of the national curriculum may lead to improvements, However, in general, teachers are at once cynical about the role of external curriculum in determining what actually happens within a program, and fearful about changes that might interfere with the eclectic and individual approach to program planning which they currently enjoy. Many have never been asked to implement a systematic and sequential program, or been held fully accountable for the skills acquired by their students. If the national curriculum, and other developments around it, succeeds in providing the basis for the introduction of serious language learning in primary schools, many teachers will face enormous challenges and will require a great deal of support in implementing the new curriculum. Even more important will be assistance to schools in providing the conditions required to implement such curriculums, firstly in terms of the whole school taking the teaching of Japanese seriously, and secondly in terms of more practical issues such as curriculum time and teacher employment conditions.

3.3 Secondary School Programs and Curriculum

3.3.1 Secondary School Programs

- Schools offer Japanese in a variety of ways: either as the sole language or as one of a choice of languages. Data is not available to indicate the proportion of schools offering a choice of language, and the impact of such choices, and this is an area where further research would be useful.
- The vast majority of Japanese programs are 'foreign' language programs, designed for monolingual students with no background in Japanese.

- There are very few programs providing differential pathways for students with different backgrounds (see 3.3.4, page 44), even though Japanese is the most widely taught language in primary schools in Australia. Even schools with large numbers of students who have learnt Japanese at primary school often choose to form class groups on the basis of criteria other than language background. Programs in mainstream secondary schools are not equipped to deal with the needs of students who speak Japanese at home.
- Opportunities for acceleration are also limited, although there are some pathways available at senior secondary level in states and territories which allow early entry to 'final year' units and which have access to tertiary programs providing a tertiary unit in Year 12 (see 2.6.1, page 27).
- The amount of time allocated in Japanese language programs varies, impacting on quality and depth of curriculum.
- In some states and territories, a typical secondary program from beginning level through to senior secondary level ('Year 12') is of six years' duration, whereas in others it is only five due to later commencement (at Year 8 rather than Year 7) or senior secondary level courses based on a one-year rather than two-year sequence at senior secondary level. This has major implications for the exit level competence of students.

3.3.2 Secondary Level Curriculum

- Secondary school curriculum for Japanese is more standardised than at primary level, due both to the more prescriptive nature of Year 12 curriculum documents, which have a 'trickle down' effect, and the widespread use of textbooks, which *de facto* determine the curriculum in many schools. Curriculum frameworks are also more realistic at secondary level, and thus more useful, and there is a greater expectation by school authorities that they will be adhered to.
- Despite broad similarities, there are still wide differences in the nature of experiences offered in different programs and the level and nature of the learning that takes place. These differences have been heightened in recent years due to the accessibility of a huge range of resources through ICT, resources which are exploited extensively in some schools, but not in others. Differential access to in-country programs also affects outcomes.
- Some commentators believe that the expectations in many junior secondary programs are too low, particularly in the years of compulsory Japanese language education. For many teachers, the strongest imperative is to make the subject enjoyable and attractive in order to maintain healthy retention rates, on which the viability of senior classes and their own jobs depend. The best teachers do this while (and indeed through) maintaining challenging programs, but less skilled teachers may be tempted to 'dumb down' expectations and include activities less for their educational than their entertainment value. There is a sense that in the lower to middle secondary years students and teachers are marking time until the subject becomes non-compulsory, and will be taken seriously.

3.3.3 Senior Secondary Curriculum and Assessment

As discussed in section 2.6.1, there are at least four levels of courses offered at senior secondary level. The comments below relate to the 'continuers' or 'second language' courses, in which the largest numbers of students are enrolled.

- While there is quite a high degree of uniformity in senior secondary curriculums, there are some differences in the standards expected, partly depending on the average number of years for which students in different states and territories study before taking the final year or exit level course. The most obvious difference is in the number of *kanji* (characters) studied, but there are more subtle differences revealed in the nature of expectations in examinations.
- There is also evidence of a gap between the curriculum expectations on paper at senior secondary levels, and the programs that are actually delivered, particularly in those jurisdictions with external examinations. There is some disillusionment among teachers that elements of the curriculum are too difficult, and expectations

too broad. Paradoxically, despite the seemingly broad focus, the necessity to distinguish between high-achieving students (many of whom are background speakers) means that detailed assessment criteria sometimes appear to target fine points of grammar or obscure, pedantic and sometimes unfair points of style. Teachers are expected to deliver topic- and task-based programs, but find themselves concentrating on coaching students in how to introduce specific linguistic structures into essay topics in order to address the assessment criteria. Where assessment is pitched at too high a level, students' achievements in mastering more basic aspects of the language code are not captured by assessment or rewarded.

- Written assessment requirements for both school-based and external assessment are usually exclusively based on pen and paper tasks – thus the use of ICT, which may be flourishing earlier in the school, is strongly discouraged in Years 11 and 12 in some states and territories. Although this may also be the case in other languages to some extent, the distinction between the skills required for writing Japanese by hand and on a computer is much more profound than in alphabetical languages, so the 'wash-back' effect of the format of assessment is extremely important. Absurd practices have evolved, such as the requirement that students learn rules for the layout of emails on squared writing paper (*genkooyooshi)*, even though they are never written in such a way in real life.

3.3.4 Catering for Home-background (Heritage) Students

As discussed, despite the lack of differentiated pathways in lower secondary years, up to four different levels of Japanese are offered in senior secondary school. The motivation for this may be partly to cater better for different groups for educational reasons, but differentiation has gained added urgency because of the sensitivities around scores in units accredited for university entrance, and the impact of growing numbers of home-background learners. There has been a concern that if such students enrol in courses designed for non-background learners, they may gain high marks on the basis of an 'unfair' advantage, in other words, gaining scores that do not reflect their basic academic abilities and effort. (The reflection of general abilities and effort in the scores of any given subject are assumptions on which both university entrance decisions and the standardisation of scores are based.) In addition, given the scaling procedures commonly applied, which assume a population with a spread of abilities based on a normal curve, there has also been a concern that if the fixed proportion of high scores available is monopolised by 'advantaged' students, this will deter other students from taking the subject.

Such concerns have resulted in students with a 'background' in the language being barred from taking the mainstream course in some states and territories. However, these arguments have been balanced by pressure from advocates for background students, who maintain that often their abilities are inconsistent, that they cannot compete with recent arrivals in the first language courses, and that they are disadvantaged by not being allowed to access the 'normal' course and thus gain credit for the valuable language abilities which they possess. They also argue that some background students for whom English is not the home language are disadvantaged in other subjects, and that they should therefore be allowed to retain the advantage which accrues from their background in their language subject.

The criteria used for assigning students to one group or another vary across the country, depending on which side of the argument has been given greater weight. There are also different interpretations of the legal issues involved, and different legislative frameworks, which complicate the situation. In NSW, for example, students with a background in Japanese have been excluded from 'continuers' and 'extension' courses according to criteria which take into account the language used at home as well as study in a Japanese environment. Criteria in SA, NT, Tas and WA are also stringent and, in some cases, even affect non-background students who have been exchange students to Japan for one year and are forced to return before the full year is up so that they are not excluded from taking Japanese on their return.

Students with a home background in Japanese generally do not have the competence to compete equitably with students who have been primarily educated in Japan in the 'Background speaker/first language' course (even if they could benefit from it), and have thus been deterred from taking Japanese at all at senior secondary level. This is starkly apparent, for example, in a drop in enrolments of one third between 2007 and 2008 in SA, when the new criteria were brought in – from 269 students to 180 in the continuers' course, with only seven students being enrolled in the new Background speaker course. This is a major loss both for the individual students, and for the Australian community. Home-background learners have the potential to be truly bilingual and bi-cultural, and as many commentators have pointed out (for example, Clyne, 1997; Lo Bianco, 2009) are an invaluable asset who should be nurtured and developed.

In Vic, the pendulum has swung the other way. The only criteria taken into account is study at a school where the curriculum is taught entirely in Japanese for more than seven years, which in effect applies primarily to very recently arrived students, often international students. Students who speak Japanese at home, visit Japan regularly, and study Japanese curriculum at a Saturday morning community language school for four or five hours a week for eight or nine years are permitted to take Japanese 'second language' with students who commenced at Year 7 or 8. As there is no incentive to attempt the much more difficult 'first language' course, in which a lower score is guaranteed, almost all of them enrol in 'second language', even though they and their parents often recognise that they are gaining very little in terms of their Japanese competence. In some cases, students may complete VCE Units 1 and 2 (Year 11) in Japanese first language, gaining acceptable scores, but elect to enrol in Japanese second language for Units 3 and 4.

Recognition of the problems associated with home background learners has resulted in the Australian Government funded Framework for Heritage Languages Courses at Senior Secondary Level in Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean. This is a positive development and, as long as the design proves appropriate, will be particularly useful in specialised programs offered by schools of languages or community language schools. Unlike Chinese, there will be few regular schools with more than one or two students with a Japanese family background. Teachers interviewed for this report emphasised the difficulties of attempting to teach these students in the same classroom as students taking the 'regular' course. In major cities, where most of these students reside, home background students may be asked, or may elect, to take the course at a community school or school of languages. Unfortunately, this is not an option in many other areas of Australia, and there is a need to cater for these students by developing learning materials which can be used flexibly in a variety of combinations of face-to-face and distance settings.

However, unless the criteria for enrolment in courses, and incentives for taking higher level courses are adjusted appropriately, it is clear that many students who could benefit from such a course will not elect to enrol in it. This means that students will continue to enrol in courses which they do not benefit from educationally so long as this is the best way to maximise their tertiary entrance score. There is an urgent need to think creatively about solutions to this issue, which may require different approaches to those entrenched in assessment of other Year 12 subjects, acknowledging the unique features of language study. Possibilities which extend beyond standard secondary courses, such as, for example, the introduction of tertiary entrance credit for existing competence, to be gained through an examination based qualification, rather than a formal course of study may also prove worthy of consideration. An Australian Government funded Australasian Curriculum Assessment and Certification Authorities project – a national approach to access and incentives to study Asian and other languages courses at the senior secondary school level – is currently working on these difficult and complex issues.

3.4 Differential Pathways, Transition Issues and Continuity of Provision

3.4.1 Primary-Secondary Transition

Unless Australia can solve the problems of continuity of provision, and catering for differential levels of entry and learning pathways, it will be unable to capitalise on the early start to language learning made in primary school, and on the advantages which background learners bring to their language study.[17] As Japanese is the most widely taught language in Australia, it arguably provides the most favourable conditions for maximising continuity of provision and differential pathways. Although statistics are not available, it is almost certainly the case that there are more students experiencing continuity of language between primary and secondary school than there are for any other language. It could thus be expected that if secondary schools were able to offer programs for continuing students in any language, then that language would be Japanese.

Some state and territory curriculum documents outline two pathways at the entry level of high school: one for students continuing their language studies from primary school, and the other for beginners. In reality, the primary to secondary pathway is rarely offered to students for Japanese, except in a small number of P–12 schools, mostly in the independent school sector (see Case Study 4, page 48).

Some education jurisdictions and their respective regions are making efforts to ensure more continuity of provision by encouraging clusters of schools to offer the same language in primary and secondary school. However, this research suggests that whereas there are many students who have taken Japanese at primary school entering secondary Japanese programs (and therefore, on the surface, offered continuity of provision), there are very few programs which take full account of what students have achieved in primary school, and even fewer which build on this to ensure students graduate with higher levels of competence. Jurisdictions and education authorities seem to focus primarily on 'continuity' of *language*, and not on the continuity or content of *programs*. They do not offer extra support or incentives to encourage schools to conduct classes at different levels according to student background, and from the point of view of schools there are many disincentives for doing so. As Liddicoat et al. have also noted (2007, page 76), although curriculum documents often include different pathways for different entry points, the range of entry points maps inconsistently onto levels of achievement, so that learners without prior experience of language study are implicitly assumed to 'catch up' with those learners who have studied previously.

While statistics are unavailable, anecdotally it appears that at the lower and middle secondary levels, Japanese language programs are overwhelmingly undifferentiated (that is, taught in the same classroom using the same program), even where substantial numbers of students enter the school having studied Japanese at primary schools. Teachers indicate that this is due to the different content and level of the programs in different primary schools (even within the one region), other educational reasons for mixing students from different schools in class groupings, and the difficulty in finding out what students have actually studied. Many also frankly state that, in their view, what students have learnt doesn't amount to much (at least in terms of secondary level expectations), that the beginning students soon catch up and that it would be too difficult to have different groups at different levels in the same class.

This report found that few teachers conduct formal assessments of the prior learning of their students, as the variety of primary programs makes it very difficult to do so. Case Study 5, page 50, gives an example of initiatives by teachers to address this problem, but there is little evidence of jurisdictions doing so in a coordinated manner. Agreed benchmarks for Japanese language learning and a consistent level

17 It should be acknowledged that not everyone agrees with the concept of continuity of programs. There are some who take a philosophical position that all separation according to differential achievement in a subject area is inherently educationally unsound. It is unfortunate that in this regard the treatment of language students who have received different instruction in primary schools is sometimes bound up with attitudes to ability-based streaming in other areas. While there is not space to discuss these issues fully here, there is anecdotal, and some research evidence suggesting that the current situation of undifferentiated provision is having a negative impact on students, and that there is a need for ongoing development of approaches that cater better to the different backgrounds of students in Japanese. Whether or not physical separation occurs, there must be differentiated provision, which values students' prior learning and builds on it.

of achievement in the primary sector would assist this coordination.

There are some secondary schools that are able to provide a 'continuing' class for students who have studied the language in primary school, but this is usually only for the first year or two (after which time students get merged back into the mainstream). In a very few schools, usually P–12 schools, there is an ongoing pathway for students with primary Japanese, resulting in accelerated entry into Year 12 courses (see Case Study 4, page 48). There are also schools that provide a choice of pathways for students in middle secondary school.[18]

For example, a state high school in Qld uses a vertical curriculum model which means that students can enter the Japanese program at a level that suits their knowledge and experience. Of their feeder primary schools, two teach Japanese and the majority of the students from those schools enter the Japanese program at a higher level allowing them to finish earlier and undertake tertiary Japanese if they wish. The Japanese teachers at the high school work closely with the feeder primary schools to ensure a smooth transition and comparable approach to assessment practices (see Case Study 4, page 48).

3.5 Specific Curriculum Issues

3.5.1 Literacy in the Curriculum

Acquisition of the Japanese scripts is a big challenge for students and teachers and hinders progress in other areas until students are able to access the language in written form. Introduction of script is often a drawn-out process, due to a lack of preparedness by many students for the memorisation involved. On the part of teachers, there is a lack of confidence in utilising effective teaching techniques, coupled with low expectations, sometimes exacerbated by their own low competence in written Japanese. Teachers constantly experiment with ways to teach script, but often do so with little guidance. There is disagreement about the numbers of *kanji* that students at junior levels should be exposed to or expected to acquire, for reading, writing or both, and little attention is given to the significant stylistic differences between spoken and written language.

3.5.2 Culture in the Curriculum

One of the advantages of Japanese as a language of wider teaching is that the language is associated with a distinct and rich culture, which students generally find appealing and interesting. Both at primary and secondary levels most teachers include cultural activities, but the quality of the cultural curriculum varies. At best, students engage in significant learning about Japanese culture and society, which has broader educational significance, as well as enhancing their ability to communicate in Japanese and to understand their own culture and society. At worst, students are distracted from serious engagement with the language by a succession of cultural trivia, acquiring entrenched stereotypes and misconceptions that remain unchallenged.

The teaching of Japanese has always incorporated a cultural component, and in many ways has been a leader in this area. For example, the Vic curriculum in the 1970–90s was strongly influenced by Neustupný's stress on sociolinguistic and sociocultural competence, which was given systematic attention at a time when this was rare in other languages. The strong emphasis on Intercultural Language Learning (ILL) over the past few years has provided a new impetus for the development of greater attention to culture in Japanese teaching, but has not provided solutions to all of the complex issues associated with the teaching of culture. Although the original approach stresses the embedment of culture within language, in practice teachers of Japanese have often found it easier to address cultural issues in English, with little reference to how they are manifested within the Japanese language. In this way, the teaching of intercultural competencies has sometimes displaced, rather than enriched (and been enriched by) the teaching of communicative competence.

18 A typical case from the data is a large government school in Vic in which Japanese is compulsory to Year 9. However, by Year 9 it is clear that some students are not at all interested, while others are keen to progress faster. Students are directed into one of two pathways. The first provides an ongoing language program for those who wish to continue, while the second provides revision of earlier material that has not been mastered, but also introduces more cultural content which is not language based.

Case Study 4: Advanced Entry Pathway in Year 7 for Continuing Students

While they are rare, there are a few schools which offer pathways that recognise and value prior Japanese language learning and provide students with opportunities to continue their language learning rather than start again. This may also allow students to complete their senior secondary Japanese units a year earlier than normal, providing them with greater flexibility and more choice at the senior secondary level. Two examples are given below.

A state high school in Qld has implemented many strategies to ensure a vibrant languages program which provides various pathways to students of Japanese. Due to strong collaboration with the primary feeder schools and the high school's own vertical curriculum, the high school offers students alternate pathways which allow them to complete their Japanese language studies a year early, opening opportunities for other subject study or tertiary Japanese studies. The school's strong program results in a 40 per cent retention rate to Year 12. The following points have contributed to its success.

- A secondary school working within a vertical curriculum offers Japanese at various levels.
- In theory, students can begin Japanese at any one of six different semester-based entry points.
- This system accommodates primary school learners, background speakers and any student with prior Japanese learning experience.
- Students are able to complete Year 12 in Year 11 allowing them more flexibility in subject choice.
- Students are able to do tertiary courses in Year 12, contributing to a higher potential TER.
- The school works collaboratively with two local feeder primary schools to ensure that the students can make the transition into a higher level in high school rather than starting at beginners' level.
- The schools work on curriculum to ensure that the content of learning is complementary.
- The head of the languages department organises cluster meetings with the high school and primary school teachers once per term.
- The cluster meetings provide professional development on given topics as well as networking opportunities.
- The high school and primary schools are able to share resources and teaching ideas and strategies.
- The cluster offers collegiate support to the primary school teachers, who work in isolation.

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As ILL does not promote a 'cultural syllabus', there is little agreement on the elements of culture with which students should be familiar, and they are sometimes chosen in a rather haphazard way. The emphasis on learning intercultural skills rather than cultural facts may have led teachers and students to underestimate the importance of a rounded and nuanced knowledge of a particular culture to underpin intercultural competence. It has been taken to imply, misleadingly, that the same cultural sensitivities are important in dealing with all cultures. Textbooks rarely include a truly intercultural approach, and thus teachers are often expected to design all such materials themselves. Given the limits of their own cultural knowledge, their time and expertise, and the challenging nature of designing really good ILL materials, it is not surprising that some of the materials are less than ideal.

The teaching of Japanese also provides an ideal opportunity to link with the study of Asia in other curriculum areas. However, this is rarely exploited to its full potential. In primary schools, Japanese is

- The head of language at the high school is proactive in informing the principals of the feeder primary schools about Japanese language education and the support the cluster arrangement will offer their teachers and programs.
- The high school is providing students with true alternative pathways that recognise prior learning experience.

Another example of a pathway from primary to secondary school can be found in a Vic P–12 independent school which offers three languages. In primary school, the students experience two years of each language, on a consecutive basis. In Years 5 and 6 they study Japanese.

- Students have 75 min of Japanese language instruction per week and the program is based on an academically rigorous approach focusing on cumulative language acquisition. The language content equates to that which is normally taught in the first year of high school.
- When these students enter high school they are able to continue Japanese in a class designated for 'continuing' students. Students entering the school from outside who have studied Japanese are also able to join this class, depending on their language experience and ability.
- At later year levels, students from the beginners' pathway who have shown a high degree of ability and motivation are able to transfer into this class.
- A separate continuing pathway is maintained throughout secondary school, and students tend to perform very well. Many complete Year 12 studies one year early in Year 11, allowing them greater flexibility in subject choice, and the possibility of doing another language or proceeding to the university Enhancement program.

Comment

These cases illustrate successful transition models which have benefits for the students' ultimate levels of achievement and for retention of students in the high school program. Students in primary school respond positively to knowing that they are working towards advanced entry into the secondary school program. In high school, students in the continuing program have incentives to maintain their initial advantage, due to the ability to complete a Year 12 subject early. Talented and motivated students in the beginners' pathway have the opportunity to accelerate their studies if they wish.

often the poor cousin, tolerated but not considered central to the main curriculum and Japanese teaching staff are often part-time and impermanent. They are marginalised from the process of setting the wider curriculum at the school and the potential for providing a key link into studies of Asia is often ignored. In secondary schools, despite attempts in some recent curriculum frameworks to promote cross-disciplinary approaches, subjects are generally still taught within disciplinary 'silos'.

There are some excellent materials starting to emerge relating to teaching about culture and society, for example, the 'Art speaks Japanese' materials designed by the Japan Foundation (and used in Case Study 6, page 54). However, it is clear that considerable work remains to be done on establishing the role of cultural and intercultural skills in the Japanese curriculum as a whole, and providing up-to-date and engaging materials to help teachers deliver on the full potential for sociocultural and intercultural learning presented by Japanese language learning.

Case Study 5: Transition into Secondary Using a 'Japanese Passport'

Using the Languages Innovative Schools' Project Grant from the Department of Education and Children's Services, SA, a high school teaching Japanese took the proactive step of liaising with the five local feeder schools to ensure that the students' prior learning was acknowledged and taken into account when they began their secondary schooling. Together they designed a 'Japanese passport', a document which detailed the Japanese language skills and knowledge students had acquired by the end of their primary schooling.

Issues

- Students arriving at the high school from various primary school Japanese programs had a range of knowledge, skills and abilities.
- Teachers at the high school recognised the need to better understand the learning of Japanese in the primary school program.
- The primary school teachers wanted to better understand how to help students transition to high school Japanese language education.
- All teachers wanted to maximise the benefits of students' learning.
- Teachers wanted to establish links between the primary and secondary schools.
- Teachers wanted to formalise recognition of learning and highlight the transportable nature of their Japanese language skills to students and to the wider school community.

Project Details

- Teachers from the primary and secondary schools worked together to develop a detailed curriculum that suited the needs of the student community, and detailed outcomes in the 'passport'.
- The 'Japanese passport' included details of topics, linguistic elements and script and was completed on the basis of what the students felt they actually knew for reception and production.
- Students were given the passport in the final term of their final year of primary school and worked independently on tasks to demonstrate their knowledge and skills to the teacher, who then 'stamped' their passport indicating that they had successfully mastered the basic knowledge required.

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3.5.3 New Technologies

Information and communication technologies (ICT) present new possibilities for all areas of education, but their potential is particularly important in the area of second language education, especially for English language speakers learning a character based language such as Japanese. Teachers of Japanese have been quick to take up ICT, and it is widely used in classrooms in the form of interactive whiteboards, computer-based learning programs and games.

A particular advantage for Japanese is in the opening up of the ability for students to communicate in real time with Japanese people in Japan. This is facilitated by the fact that Australia and Japan are in similar time zones and there are many established relationships such as those with sister schools that can be utilised for establishing technologically mediated communication. It is now not uncommon for a primary school class to link up with a class in its sister school two or three times a year using a computer-based video link so the students can exchange simple greetings and presentations. This can be the focal point which leads to other ongoing activities, both in preparation and follow up (see Case Study 3, page 41). The motivational power of actually using Japanese to communicate with peers in Japan is substantial. In high schools, there

- The detailed 'Japanese passport' for each student at the primary school was then passed to the secondary teachers.
- Due to the variation in time allocation at the feeder primary schools it was not possible to have agreement on the content of the primary programs. However, this was not seen as a major problem as the 'Japanese passport' was a document for individual students to use to show their competencies.

Outcomes

- Greater understanding between the primary and secondary teachers of the skills and knowledge acquired and required at both levels.
- Opportunities for discussion of curriculum and transition issues relevant to both school communities and joint curriculum development.
- The passport served as a motivating factor for some students in consolidating their knowledge as they wanted to have their skills acknowledged with a stamp in their passport.
- The 'Japanese passport' provided secondary teachers with detailed information on each student's experience and ability.
- The profile of the high school was raised and students and parents became more aware that they could continue their learning of Japanese in a meaningful way, with their prior learning being taken into consideration.
- The passport proformas are available to other schools within the government system wishing to introduce the 'Japanese passport'.

Comment

Transition is more successful when primary and secondary schools and teachers have the opportunity to work collaboratively. Greater understanding between the teachers in the primary and secondary schools can act as effective and valuable professional learning. Within a formal framework incorporating planning, execution and review, teachers can design programs to ensure positive outcomes for students, maximising Japanese language learning opportunities.

are similar examples involving more sophisticated exchanges, and other projects such as interaction between Australian students and Japanese language teachers in training who act as mentors for their writing in Japanese. The Japan Forum, a not-for-profit organisation in Japan, has set up a moderated and safe website on which Australian students can exchange messages with students in Japan and others studying Japanese around the world and this is also being utilised in schools to promote interaction. Students who visit Japan on school trips are able to maintain the relationships they establish after they return through email and other computer-mediated communication.

In addition to the expanded possibilities for communication, the internet provides exponentially expanded resources in Japanese, both those targeted at language learners, like sites for learning and practising Japanese scripts (*kana* and *kanji*), and authentic resources such as menus or weather reports in Japanese. Perhaps even more importantly, online dictionaries and web-based reading programs have revolutionised what students can read online. Word processing in Japanese similarly opens up expanded opportunities for writing in Japanese. Even beginning students find they can compose texts faster and less laboriously on a computer than by hand. Characters do not have to be reproduced

stroke by stroke, but are generated by the program from Romanised input, and while students may still need to distinguish the correct character from a list of possibilities, this is much easier than recalling a character in order to write it by hand.

The full implications of this technological revolution for literacy in Japanese are only just starting to impact on teacher practices. Equipment shortages and teachers' lack of familiarity with the new tools, combined with a certain resistance to new ways of doing things, mean that many students are still not being exposed to reading and writing using computer-based tools. As noted above, one serious impediment at present is the Year 12 written examinations in most states and territories, which are pen and paper based. However, the potential is huge and, if used creatively, will allow greater progress in literacy than in the past.

High quality resources have been one of the keys to ensuring the quality of Japanese programs, and continued investment is necessary to ensure that resources keep pace with developments in society, in language teaching curriculum, methodologies and technologies. Provision of adequate access to ICT equipment, technical support and teacher training should also be a high priority.

3.5.4 In-country Visits and School-to-school Interaction

Many of the teachers interviewed emphasised that school-to-school connections and exchange visits were highly significant in providing a focus and motivation for learning.[19] While comparative statistics are difficult to find, we believe that such connections are more prevalent for Japanese than for any other language. Most schools with substantial programs seem to have a sister school, and a very large proportion of schools across all sectors conduct exchange trips to Japan or host students from Japan. Even those schools that do not conduct their own school trip are able to recommend community organisations such as Rotary, AFS (American Field Service) and YFU (Youth for Understanding), as well as sister city programs, that organise short- (five to six week) and long-term (one year) student exchanges. There are even a significant number of primary schools organising such visits, which have enormous benefits for students and create enthusiasm and interest throughout the entire school community.

In addition to the learning that takes place on the trip, teachers report that the ambition to be part of the visit can motivate students lower down in the school to continue with Japanese. It also provides a real purpose for learning, and can be the focus of work leading up to the trip, and follow ups afterwards (see Case Study 6, page 54). Incoming exchange students from Japan also provide opportunities for students at the host school to interact with young Japanese peers, and to find out more about Japan. Where a physical exchange does not take place, ICT-based exchanges are becoming more common, even in primary schools (see Case Study 3, page 41).

The organisation of school trips and other forms of exchange is a very significant burden on teachers, and increasingly complicated as legal responsibilities (including requirements for such things as background checks on host families) become more and more onerous. They are usually given no extra compensation or support for this substantial administrative workload. There are even reports of some teachers being asked to provide their own airfares to accompany students (although this is unusual) and, in many cases, teachers give up their holiday time for school trips so that they do not interfere with students' other studies.

As a result, teachers are questioning their ability to continue supporting school trips and exchanges at present levels. It is recommended that structures be put in place to provide more support, both in organisational matters, and in time allowances to compensate for the work that is involved in organising and running these programs.

19 Interestingly, the two authors of this report both first visited Japan as high school exchange students. Such experiences can have a life-long effect on those who participate, as well as on their families and friends. Exchange opportunities both grow out of, and feed into language learning and have much wider educational benefits as well, for both the students involved and the wider community.

3.6 Non-mainstream Programs

3.6.1 International Baccalaureate

International Baccalaureate (IB) programs are growing in popularity, both at primary school and in senior secondary levels. In 2009, there were 6,705 students studying Japanese in IB programs from early childhood levels to Year 10, the bulk of whom were in Primary Year Programs (PYP). In Year 12 in 2007 and 2008, the national total was 50 and 56 (respectively) for the second language 'B' course, and 59 and 54 for the *ab initio* course, with less than four students taking the more intensive 'A' course.

3.6.2 School of Languages and Distance Programs

Some states and territories have distance education programs in Japanese, through which language is delivered to remote schools, or schools where there are not enough students to make up a class. Classes for such students are also offered in metropolitan centres after school or on weekends by specialised 'Schools of Languages' in some states and territories. Particularly noteworthy is the Victorian School of Languages, which has multiple campuses and an extensive distance program, significantly supporting Japanese provision in that state. Such programs are an important element in ensuring continuity of learning for students who are keen to continue with Japanese, but whose own school does not offer it, or does not offer it at senior levels.

3.6.3 Immersion Programs

There are three Japanese immersion primary programs in Vic, all operating with differing degrees of success and adherence to immersion principles. The most developed program is at Huntingdale Primary School. With additional funding from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), students study in and through Japanese language for seven and a half hours per week, from Years P–6. The school attracts both local students and students with a family background in Japanese, and has successfully increased numbers at the school by more than 100 per cent since the program began in 1997. In Rockhampton, Qld, Capricornia Language Immersion Program (CLIP) is provided at Crescent Lagoon State School, available to all students from any sector in the Rockhampton area. The program runs for two days per week for each level from Years 4, 5, 6 and 7. Students attend two non-consecutive days at the Japanese immersion program and return to their own school for the remainder of the school week. NSW will establish a new primary immersion program in Japanese in 2010.

There is little doubt as to the success of the well-delivered immersion programs in terms of Japanese language competency gained. But the funding required for such programs is considerably above the norm, the workload of the teaching staff is very high, and the number of teachers with the range of skills required to teach in such programs is limited. In addition, pathways in secondary school that allow students to capitalise on their advanced learning in primary school have proved to be difficult to develop, primarily due to the fact that students disperse to a range of secondary schools, and in each school are a minority of the intake.

In Qld, Robina State High School offers an immersion course in Japanese at Years 8, 9 and 10, where students study 50 per cent of the school week in Japanese, covering the curriculum areas of Japanese language, mathematics, science and digital art. This program is a significant new initiative, particularly as it was initiated by the school without large amounts of additional government grants and appears to be operating effectively, although the program is still in its infancy.

3.6.4 Community Languages Schools

The Japanese community in Australia is growing, and has reached substantial levels in some of our major cities. There are flourishing community language schools for Japanese, sometimes several, catering to different populations. Such schools were typically first established by Japanese expatriates working in Australia on a temporary basis. They include full-time schools offering a full Japanese curriculum, catering to expatriates planning to return to Japan, and after-hours community language schools.

Case Study 6: Intercultural Studies in a Secondary Program

Providing students the opportunity to connect with Japan and Japanese culture can make Japanese more relevant and help them to understand that Japanese extends beyond the textbook and the classroom. Such opportunities both engage and motivate students in their Japanese language learning. A large government secondary college succeeds in making connections through the following activities and programs.

- Intercultural units of work in Years 8, 9 and 10

  A cultural focus unit through which language studies can be continued and enhanced while students learn more about Japan through the study of art, music, plays and a research unit on living in Japan which culminates in writing a manual in Japanese for students going on exchange. These activities become the focus of LOTE week when performances, visits to the art gallery and displays of work occur. Each unit is taught in a block with an emphasis on language and cultural studies away from the textbook.
- Email exchange with a junior high school in Japan

  Concentrating on a different focus each year as well as providing opportunities to interact with Japanese students through exchange gives strength to the teaching and learning of Japanese and provides relevance and context students need to understand the significance of their Japanese language learning.
- Student exchange through sister-school visits every year
- A Japan tour every second year
- Longer-term exchange opportunities (a minimum of three months)

  A teacher in the school is responsible for the organisation of a school visit to Japan every second year and the hosting of students from Japan each year – a small group of 20 from a junior high school and in the alternate year a large group of 80 students from its sister high school.

Students therefore have the opportunity to host and interact with Japanese students in their first few years of Japanese language learning and again in the senior years of their language studies.

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As the number of longer-term sojourners and settlers increase, many schools have changed their focus to cater for students who have been born and raised in Australia. In some cases, new schools have been established. As well as providing classes focusing on Japanese itself, students often study other areas such as maths and social studies, following the Japanese curriculum and taught in Japanese. One informant pointed out that, apart from the formal study, such classes are important in establishing a sense of identity for the somewhat scattered Japanese community, and in providing a peer group with whom to speak Japanese.

While full statistics have not been collected for this report, informants reported significant increases in enrolments in the major capital cities, especially at the lower primary level. The competence of students ranges from very low to very high, albeit generally somewhat lower in terms of literacy compared to students of the same age who have been educated in Japan. Many students visit Japan regularly with their families, and are increasingly using web-based technologies to access personal networks in Japan as well as material in Japanese while they are in Australia. It is significant that opportunities to use Japanese in the community are no longer restricted only to the community physically located in Australia, but include direct links with Japan and Japanese all over the world.

The sister school arrangement also provides ongoing opportunities for students to host a student from Japan one year and be hosted by them the following year, meaning that the interaction between students can be ongoing and communication will continue after the school visit is over. In addition to the school tour of Japan, students have the opportunity in Years 10 and 11 of participating in student exchange through the sister school for a minimum of 3 months. This experience not only enhances students' language knowledge but also their cultural and intercultural literacy.

The school trip is not just a chance to visit Japan but becomes a whole learning experience in that the students are involved in the planning, information dissemination, design of a school T-shirt to be worn while travelling, the organisation of having the T-shirt made, collection and collation of photographs, the making of a tour book and a presentation to the whole school on return.

Students are required to attend extra language classes before going on the trip and to practise their speaking skills while in Japan and their writing skills through a daily diary to be written in Japanese.

Comment

A program such as the one described above takes a great deal of extra time and effort on behalf of the teacher and the school community. Organising school tours and sister school visits are extremely time consuming and recent requirements of 'Working with Children' checks and home visits add to the workload. However, such programs have a positive benefit not only for the students directly involved but for the school community in general.

School trips, exchange visits, and integrated activities can provide students with learning experiences that can affect not only their interest and ability in Japanese language but their attitudes and knowledge of a broad range of valuable skills. Taking the learning of Japanese outside of the classroom and encouraging students to not only learn but experience it is vital to their learning. Many students have access to such opportunities but equity in access is denying some students this valuable opportunity.

The curriculum used in the community schools is generally based on Japanese school curriculums. There has been no Australian curriculum suitable for home-background learners available. In addition, the Japanese community is a highly mobile one. Students go back and forth between Australia and Japan temporarily or permanently at various levels, so alignment with Japanese curriculums has been appropriate (although this may change as the numbers of long-term sojourners increase). Australia has for the first time moved to develop a senior secondary curriculum suitable for Heritage learners, and it is important that local authorities and the Japanese community are closely involved to ensure the curriculum is suitable for the community.

Community school classes following a separate curriculum typically stop at middle school level, both because the curriculum becomes more demanding and because students in senior secondary are unable to devote time to study which will not contribute to their university entrance scores. Some schools offer senior secondary classes following the standard Australian senior secondary curriculum for Japanese, both as a first and second language.

Table 5: Provision of Japanese through Schools of Languages and Distance Education 2009

State/Territory	No. of Centres	Metropolitan	Country	Distance Education	Types of courses	Number of students
New South Wales Saturday School of Community Languages	1	1	0	No	Background speakers only Years 7–12	45
SA School of Languages	1	1	0	No	Continuers Years 8–12	19
					Stage 1 & 2 Beginners	42
					Background Speakers	23
Victorian School of Languages	9	6	3	Yes	Second Language Years 1–6	55
					Second Language Years 7–12	437
					First Language Years 11–12	33
WA School of Isolated and Distance Education (SIDE)	–	–	–	Yes	Primary Years 3–7	368
					Secondary	43
Northern Territory Distance Learning Service	–	–	–	Yes	N/A	N/A
Qld Schools of Distance Education Virtual Schooling Service	–	–	–	Yes	N/A	N/A

Student numbers for NT and Qld distance education courses were unavailable. In some states and territories these numbers are counted in the total numbers of students studying Japanese.

3.7 Opportunities for Post-school Study

While the focus of this study is on school-level education, it would be remiss not to briefly draw attention to the tertiary sector which school students transition into, and which provides the training for the next generation of teachers. In Australia in recent years, there have been negligible links between policy and curriculum development across the K–tertiary continuum. This contrasts with other countries, for example, in the United States where the National Standards and Frameworks cover both school and tertiary education as one continuum. Attaining proficiency in Japanese (or in any language) to levels which allow its use at a professional level requires continuing study in the tertiary sector after completion of Year 12 and it seems that the dialogue between the school and tertiary sectors needs to be better coordinated.

Japanese is the most widely taught language in Australian universities and other post-secondary providers, and this strength in numbers allows for diversity in courses, providing a wide range of pathways for high school graduates in Japanese. In the larger states and territories and at the larger institutions, students are able to enter courses at several levels – typically beginners, post-VCE, and advanced – often with the option of intermediate entry points for those students who may have been forced

to discontinue their studies before senior secondary level, who have had a break in their studies, or who have higher levels of competence. Importantly (and unlike the situation for the primary-secondary transition), at our major institutions, the benefits of advanced entry are maintained throughout the degree, ensuring a higher exit level. Unfortunately, in smaller institutions the range of options is a little more limited.

Postgraduate coursework programs in interpreting and translation are also available in several states and territories, as are coursework and research programs in other areas of Japanese language and studies, including Japanese applied linguistics.

Japanese programs generally focus strongly on communicative skills, and associated studies of culture and society also tend to have a broader focus than in some more traditionally taught languages. Links with Japan are highly developed, and most students who major in the language travel to Japan at some point during their studies. In addition to the courses at major institutions, Japanese is also the most widely taught language at smaller institutions, and is also strongly represented in the TAFE sector.

In summary, there are excellent opportunities for students to capitalise on and extend their study of Japanese at the post-secondary level. Tertiary institutions also produce a significant cohort of Australian-trained graduates (both non-native speakers and background speakers), who form the core of the Japanese teaching profession in Australian schools.

3.8 Resources

3.8.1 Textbooks

Since the inception of Japanese language teaching in Australia, the production of textbooks written by Australian authors has flourished, partly due to the lack of suitable texts produced elsewhere in the world. Most series have comprehensive resources, including workbooks, CDs and flashcards. Successive textbooks have reflected changes in teaching paradigms, and the quality of the materials is generally high. However, most have yet to respond in more than a cursory way to the demands of intercultural language learning and the implication of recent developments in ICT. There is a need for a new generation of comprehensive materials, which take advantage of new technologies, address the literacies required for the 21st century, and incorporate the broader view of language teaching and learning reflected in more recent Australian curriculum documents.

The major textbook series target upper primary/secondary levels, and are used by most secondary programs but only a very small number of primary programs. Some of those interviewed expressed the view that Japanese teachers had become too reliant on textbooks, and should be using a wider range of materials, particularly authentic and multimedia materials. However, the availability of high quality textbooks designed for Australian conditions has ensured (at least at the secondary level) that even inexperienced teachers, or those lacking in linguistic competence, are able to provide courses of a consistent and minimally acceptable quality. They also provide a base, for both teachers and students, which can be readily supplemented. Other materials that are not packaged as fully developed programs – such as the comprehensive curriculum materials for Japanese developed by Curriculum Corporation in the mid-nineties – have often been neglected by teachers, who find them more difficult to use.

3.8.2 Other Resources Produced in Australia

Most teachers, often with the help of native speaker assistants, develop and use supplementary materials and activities, and the best of these achieve wide circulation through active teacher networking or publication in association newsletters and websites.

At various times, Education Services Australia, Departments of Education, independent and Catholic sector offices, teacher organisations and the Melbourne Centre for Japanese Language Education (MCJLE) have produced Japanese-specific resources or acted as a distribution network for teachers to share the resources they produce.

Resources for Japanese have also been produced in association with public institutions to provide topic or activity based materials, for example, the Zoo Trail materials produced in conjunction with the Melbourne Zoo, and packages produced using the Japanese art collections of the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the National Gallery of Victoria.

3.8.3 Materials from Japan

The Japan Foundation has been active for many years, both in providing resources for schools through a generous donation program and in producing numerous high quality resources suitable for schools in Australia, which are distributed internationally, both in print and through web-based interfaces. Some materials are produced in Australia specifically for Australian conditions.

There are several organisations in Japan that provide materials. The Japan Forum has produced an excellent set of photo-based resources taken by Japanese students of their lives, and also hosts a monitored and controlled social networking site to allow students in Japan and around the world to interact with each other.

3.8.4 Online and Multimedia Resources and ICT Facilities

Increasingly, both print-based and digital resources are being distributed through the web. The Japan Foundation website has an abundance of resource material for both primary and secondary levels that teachers can download. The Le@rning Federation, managed by Education Services Australia, has developed Japanese content which is available to all Australian and New Zealand schools through differing media, including online, CD and DVD. State education departments also provide online learning resources, such as Vic's Languages Online and NSW's and WA's materials for senior secondary students.

In addition to resources specifically designed for schools, there is now a wealth of material available on the web in general that is useful to teachers of Japanese and students. Use of such material, however, relies on both teachers and students having easy access to ICT facilities in their schools (and ideally at home). In addition, the ability to freely access and incorporate authentic materials, and the confidence to encourage students to explore beyond teacher-provided materials, requires a level of competence in Japanese (and in the use of technology) which many teachers do not possess. Despite the growing volume of online and computer-based resources, many teachers still complain that they are unable to access adequate facilities to use them. Another common complaint is lack of support for the use of ICT facilities, such as DVDs and games in non-standard formats, or technical support for using video links with Japan or programs such as Skype to facilitate interaction.

It is to be hoped that the Australian Government funding for language and science laboratories will go some way to making ICT facilities more accessible to more students more often. Technical support and teacher training will also need to be provided at adequate levels to ensure that computer equipment and rooms are utilised in an optimum way.

3.8.5 Resource Centres and Bookshops

In addition to the general language resource facilities operated by state education departments, there are two key resource centres which supply materials for the teaching of Japanese on loan: The Sydney Language Centre operated by the Japan Foundation, and the MCJLE Resource Collection, housed within the Monash University library. There are also several specialist bookshops with knowledgeable Japanese-speaking staff supporting teachers of Japanese in the major capital cities and they travel to most Japanese language conferences to provide service to all states and territories.

The Nihongo Tanken Japanese Language Centre is located on the grounds of Kirrawee High School in NSW. The Centre features a Japanese style room, a fully equipped technology room and a Japanese garden. The Centre runs programs for students of Japanese from all sectors catering annually for 3,500 students from Years K–12.

3.9 Sources of Support for Japanese Language Education

The following sections detail some of the organisations which have been important in supporting the establishment and continued development of Japanese language teaching in Australian schools. While there are also important organisations that support languages in general, the focus here is on those that are specific to Japanese. In the provision of support, governments and system authorities have tended to structure their efforts around languages in general, with additional financial support for Asian languages, usually treated as a homogenous group. This is very effective and efficient for certain purposes, and has served to unite those involved with different languages in ways that have strengthened the field as a whole. However, it has sometimes meant that the specific needs and circumstances of teachers and students of individual languages have not been catered for sufficiently. Japanese has been extremely fortunate in being very well served by language specific support, outside of the normal channels, and the continuation of such support remains essential to its future success.

It is also worth remarking that the provision of support outside normal education systems (government, Catholic and independent) has also been a catalyst for cooperation and unity within the field. For example, where the Japan Foundation has provided professional development activities or supplied consultants to state education authorities, there has been an expectation that they will be open to all teachers of Japanese. This has encouraged jurisdictions and teachers to work together, a situation which ultimately benefits all.

3.9.1 The Japan Foundation

The Japan Foundation is sponsored by the Japanese Government and 'aims to promote cultural exchange between Japan and other nations' (www.jpf.org.au/01_aboutus/jpf.htm). It organises a diverse range of activities focusing on Japanese culture and society (such as exhibitions, film showings, concerts, lectures and forums), supports cultural exchange activities and coordinates various programs promoting and supporting Japanese language education overseas. It has had an Australian office since 1977, and established the Japan Foundation Sydney Language Centre in 1991 to support language teaching, particularly in primary and secondary schools.

The support of the Japan Foundation has been extremely important to the establishment of Japanese language teaching in Australia at all levels. It has provided funding for an enormous range of activities over the years, both those initiated by the Foundation, and those initiated locally and funded through grant programs, including numerous conferences, forums and visits by experts. It also supports Australian teachers visiting Japan for language and methodology upgrading, and to teachers and academics conducting research and developing teaching resources. It is noteworthy that the Japan Foundation has picked up the challenge of developing resources to suit Australian conditions, recently producing materials useful for intercultural language learning and cross-curricular units (such as 'Art Speaks Japanese' developed with the Art Gallery of New South Wales). The Japan Foundation organises the national final of the Australian Japanese Speech Contest, which in 2009 celebrated its fortieth anniversary, and initiated a new video competition for students in 2009.

The Japan Foundation has also supplied personnel, seconded to state education departments. Sometimes these consultants were the only source of central language-specific support for teachers and they played a crucial role in providing advice, information and professional development, and in developing resources. While the Japan Foundation no longer fully funds such positions, they have recently entered into partnerships with several states and territories to jointly fund Japanese consultants.

Unfortunately, with the recent economic downturn, the Japan Foundation has scaled back its operations in several areas. It is also facing increasing demand from the continuing rapid expansion of Japanese

language teaching globally.

In addition, the Japan Foundation has recently indicated that it will move from a position focusing on supporting local needs to one which provides more central direction and structure. To this end, it is currently in the process of producing the Japan Foundation Standards for Japanese Language Education, modelled on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, which is now in its draft version (The Japan Foundation, 2009).

3.9.2 Other Organisations

The Embassy of Japan in Canberra and the consulates in each state and territory provide significant support for Japanese language teaching in various ways.

There are other organisations which support student exchanges and the provision of volunteer assistant teachers from Japan. The crucial importance of both these programs has been discussed elsewhere.

3.9.3 Teacher Associations and Support Networks

Japanese teachers have formed single-language associations in most states and territories, which are affiliated with the relevant Modern Language Teachers Associations (MLTA). In some states and territories, there is no separate unilingual association, but Japanese teachers may form a network or branch within the MLTA. A list of the associations is provided in Table 7, page 63.

In most states and territories, the Japanese teachers association or branch is considered to be one of the strongest and most active of the unilingual associations. They are very active in organising professional development and activities for students, and are usually characterised by a mix of new and established primary and secondary teachers, locally born and educated teachers, and newcomers. Japanese teachers are also active in the multilingual associations and many hold positions such as network coordinators.

There is no national Japanese Language Teachers Association, although individual JLTAs are affiliated with MLTAs, which are in turn affiliated with The Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations (AFMLTA Inc.).

3.9.4 Melbourne Centre for Japanese Language Education

The Melbourne Centre for Japanese Language Education (MCJLE) was established in 1996 by Monash University, through an endowment from the Nippon Foundation, with the aim of supporting Japanese language teaching in Vic, SA and Tas. Its activities include professional development seminars, resource development and individual advice to teachers and schools. It publishes a regular e-newsletter and maintains the very active 'Nihongo-Victoria Email Group' discussion list. It also provides study scholarships and small travel grants to teachers and a PhD scholarship for research into Japanese language education. The MCJLE established and maintains a Japanese resource and realia collection available for borrowing by teachers.

3.9.5 Tertiary Language Departments and Professional Associations

Many academics in Japanese Studies programs specialise in linguistics and applied linguistics and conduct research related to Japanese teaching and learning. University academics with a strong interest in language teaching were very active in the initial stages of Japanese language education in schools in Australia, and their work helped provide the sound base from which it has been able to expand so successfully. However, links with the school sector are not as strong as in the past, partly due to the abolition of language-specific curriculum committees in many states and territories in favour of general languages committees. There has been a disturbing trend for there to be very little consultation with tertiary language teachers and language experts, even for senior secondary levels, which impacts directly on students' competencies prior to entry into tertiary courses. This is highly regrettable, as smooth transition between secondary and tertiary levels is crucial to promoting optimal levels of Japanese competence, and both levels have important expertise which should be shared. The major professional organisation for Japanese Studies, the Japanese Studies Association of Australia (JSAA), has been supportive of language education, and runs

a biennial conference which is attended by some language teachers.

3.9.6 Greater Coordination and Communication

As can be seen, there are several important organisations that support Japanese language teaching, and teachers have developed strong local networks and associations. However, these have generally been region or state- or territory-based, and there has been little contact among them. The AFMLTA provides important national networking and advocacy, but by its very nature is concerned with cross-language issues, and not with those specific to individual languages. There has also been a lessening of opportunities for secondary and tertiary teachers to work together on curriculum committees, and to mix at conferences, as each sector has become stronger and more independent.

There is thus no national body specifically focused on Japanese language education, and no body that takes a broad view across the entire spectrum of education, from primary to tertiary. The JSAA has tried to fulfil this role at times, and on specific issues, but it has no formal links to other bodies such as the State-based teachers' associations.

Given the importance and extent of Japanese language teaching, the many issues that currently beset it and the move to a more centralised approach to education (for example, the national curriculum), the establishment of a national representative body is overdue. The mechanisms for doing so need further discussion, but at a minimum there should be a National Council for Japanese Language Education, with representation from the JSAA and the state-based teacher organisations, as well as participation from other organisations involved in Japanese language education in Australia. Relationships with other related bodies such as the AFMLTA would also need to be established. Such a body could provide leadership to the profession, advocacy within the community, and a central point of contact for important national developments.

4 Teachers

4.1 Ensuring the Future

It is a truism that the quality of teachers is central in determining educational outcomes, but this is perhaps even more important in languages than in other subject areas. The centrality of good teaching to ensure the health and sustainability of programs, retention of students and high standards of attainment was certainly a point made constantly during interviews for this report. The positive qualities of many teachers of Japanese, including their enthusiasm, rapport with students, strong professional networks, and provision of engaging curriculum and methodology, was seen as one of the major reasons for the resilience of Japanese over the past decade, despite other conditions that have been less favourable than in the past. However, areas of weaknesses were also acknowledged, and improvement of teaching was seen as being one of the best ways to improve student attainment and retention in future years. Paradoxically then, good teachers have been central to the past success of Japanese, but the ability to further improve the knowledge and skills of teachers will be crucial if Japanese is to continue to thrive into the future.

Table 6: Teacher Numbers by State and Territory

S/T	Government	Independent	Catholic
ACT	39	16	13
NSW	No data available	71	227
NT	22	1	1
Qld	278	164	No data available
SA	163	51	29
Tas	49	13	No data available
Vic	330	121	No data available
WA	115	No data available	26
TOTAL	996	437	296

4.2 Numbers of Teachers in Each State, Territory and Sector

The numbers of teachers are given in Table 6. The figures are for the number of teachers, not full-time equivalent (FTE). Many teachers of Japanese are part-time, however, statistics on this were unavailable. There was also insufficient data on the breakdown of primary and secondary teacher numbers to include in this report. Information about teacher background and/or qualifications was also unavailable. Information from teacher associations in Table 7 (page 63), however, provides some indication of the proportion of non-native and native speakers of Japanese (the latter ranges from 12–33 per cent), and of male and female teachers.

4.3 Teacher Supply and Employment Conditions

4.3.1 Teacher Supply

The supply of qualified and partially qualified teachers of Japanese appears to have improved considerably since the period of rapid expansion. Generally, there does not seem to be a serious problem with teacher supply in metropolitan areas (in terms of numbers, but not necessarily quality), at least for permanent teaching positions, although there are some problems with finding short-term replacement staff. Challenges remain in the recruiting of teachers to rural and remote locations, or particularly difficult school environments, and there are suggestions that more needs to be done in terms of offering incentives to encourage teachers to move to these areas. Where there were complaints about the ability to find suitable teachers in metropolitan locations, it was often apparent that the conditions being offered were not very attractive; for example, part-time contract or casual positions, or positions which involved teaching hundreds of students for 10–30 min a week, across several schools.

Table 7: Membership Figures for Japanese Language Teacher Associations

State/Territory	Association	Membership 2009
ACT	Japanese Language Teachers' Association of the Australian Capital Territory – affiliate of MLTA of the Australian Capital Territory – no website currently	**15** (70 members in the Japanese Language Teachers' Network)[20]
NSW	Japanese Teachers' Association of New South Wales (JTAN)	**195** Male: 26; Female: 169 NS: 42(21%); NNS: 153*
NT	Language Teachers' Association of the Northern Territory	N/A
Qld	Modern Language Teachers' Association of Queensland – Japanese branch	**258** Male: 24; Female: 234 NS: 57(22%); NNS: 201 (approx.)
SA	Japanese Language Teachers' Association of South Australia (JLTASA)	**150** Below are estimates only (Male: 30; Female: 120) 10% or less native speakers
Tas	JATNET Japanese Teachers' Network of Tasmania	**45** Male: 3; Female: 42 NS: 5 (12%); NNS: 40
Vic	Japanese Language Teachers Association of Victoria	**540** Male: 95; Female: 442, NA: 3; NS: 180 (33.5%); NNS: 357
WA	Japanese Language Teachers Association of Western Australia	**113** Male: 17; Female: 96 NS: 30 (26.5%); NNS: 83

* NS = native speakers of Japanese; NNS = non-native speakers of Japanese.

Despite the apparent adequacy of teacher numbers, the quality of teachers is more problematic. Interviewees indicated that while there might be several applicants for available positions, many of them were lacking in terms of expertise and other qualities. There also seems to be very little data available indicating the age and qualification profile of teachers, and little central coordination of and planning for teacher supply into the future.

There is a clear need for more data regarding the profile of the current workforce to enable better planning for current and future requirements. There is also a need for better mechanisms to ensure that graduates of high quality are trained to meet future demand, and are able to be given stable employment on graduation. Currently, some newly graduated teachers with good qualifications are being employed on insecure contracts in part-time positions, situations unlikely to encourage them to stay in the profession. This means that others are unlikely to be attracted to enter the profession in future.

20 JLTN is a free service provided by the Department for all teachers.

4.3.2 Conditions for Primary Teachers

Conditions for primary teachers are of particular concern. Language teachers incur heavy workloads, and are often marginalised from the main school community, being regarded as less than full members of staff, and having little input into decision making (see Case Study 2, page 40). A common comment was that the Japanese teacher is seen primarily as the provider of non-contact time for classroom teachers, and their contributions to the overall program are not valued. With the minimal time allotments for Japanese in many schools, some teachers are unable to find a full-time position unless they teach in another specialist area or across a number of schools. It is not uncommon for a teacher to be asked to teach across five schools, one day per week in each. Trained teachers often prefer to take other kinds of positions rather than accept language positions with those kinds of conditions. Interviewees noted that where such positions were filled, appointees were often less qualified (and therefore more desperate) or soon lost motivation faced with the difficult conditions. Principals then complained about the quality of the teacher, and the difficulty in finding a replacement, and used this as a justification for terminating the program.

Career paths for primary language teachers are not well developed, and there are many examples of successful Japanese teachers who have moved into mainstream classroom positions in order to advance their careers. It is unfortunate that such teachers often give up language teaching entirely, although some creative arrangements whereby teachers combine Japanese with classroom teaching have many advantages. Even if such arrangements are not common, they do exist, and are often used in bilingual programs. Schools should think laterally about ways of organising teaching differently in order to solve the problems of less than full-time Japanese allotments, and of teachers of Japanese who are not properly integrated into the school community and curriculum planning. Such arrangements would have many benefits for both the Japanese and general curriculum, as well as for individual teachers.

4.4 Teacher Backgrounds and Competencies

Many informants commented that there are some extremely competent and professionally active teachers of Japanese, who act as good leaders and mentors for their colleagues, and that they constitute a great resource for the language teaching field as a whole. However, there are areas where past high levels of demand have led to the recruitment of some teachers whose qualifications are less than ideal, either in terms of linguistic competence, familiarity with and preparedness for the Australian school environment, or pedagogical skills.

4.4.1 Teacher Backgrounds

In most states and territories, the majority of teachers are locally born and trained non-native speakers of Japanese. In all states and territories there is also an active but smaller group of teachers who are native speakers. Although information on teacher backgrounds is incomplete, the largest proportion of native speakers is in Vic (about one third of teachers – see Table 7, page 63) with other states and territories having a lower proportion, although this varies according to level, jurisdiction and area. There is also a very small number of teachers born and educated in other overseas countries. Most of these teachers have studied for a Bachelor or Diploma of Education in Australia, although there are still a few teachers in contract or casual positions without having completed local qualifications. Some teachers also have higher degrees and additional teaching qualifications from Japan. Two of the most significant concerns with teacher quality for teachers of Japanese are related to their status as native speakers or non-native speakers of Japanese, namely the linguistic competence of non-native speakers, and the cultural competence, and competence in English of those born and educated abroad – predominantly (although not exclusively) native speakers of Japanese.

Case Study 7: Classroom Teacher Who Teaches Japanese

In a Tasmanian primary school, the Japanese teacher is also a Year 5/6 classroom teacher. The teacher is released from his class to deliver the Japanese language program to other classes.

This example serves as a positive model for the delivery of Japanese and the job satisfaction and security of the teacher. It came about through the teacher's own initiative, not through a deliberate strategy at the school or Department of Education level. Similar strategies where classroom and language teaching are combined are found in some immersion programs.

Results

- There is greater flexibility in delivery, both in terms of timing and integration with other curriculum elements. Japanese language education can occur incidentally as well as formally, particularly with his Year 5/6 class.
- The combining of classroom and Japanese teaching means that the teacher is involved in more decision making at the school, and is better placed to integrate Japanese with other curriculum areas such as technology and literacy.
- Teacher and students know each other well.
- Teacher has better career options and working conditions than most language teachers.
- Teacher's homeroom class benefits from having another specialist deliver a segment of the curriculum.

Possible Extension

In this example, there is only one teacher of Japanese, but there are other schools where several ex-Japanese teachers have returned to classroom roles and no longer teach language. If two or three teachers in a school combined language and classroom teaching, the benefits would be even greater.

- Collegiate support to plan, develop and deliver a quality program.
- Greater stability for the program with more teachers able to ensure continuity of delivery.
- Teachers would be able to concentrate on curriculum development in fewer year levels. They could be relieved of responsibility for teaching their own class in another curriculum area.
- Flexibility of delivery as the teachers would be able to work cooperatively.
- Higher profile for the Japanese language program, and better integration with the general curriculum.

Comment

A change in thinking about models for staffing and the delivery of Japanese would provide for greater flexibility, quality, and delivery of primary school programs and better working conditions for teachers, within existing staffing budgets.

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4.4.2 Language Competence

Concerns have been raised in the past about the level of linguistic competence of teachers (for example Nicholas, 1993), particularly at a period when Japanese was expanding rapidly, and systems sought to augment supply by offering incentives for teachers of other areas to be retrained in Japanese. While this strategy produced some good teachers in terms of general teaching skills, the linguistic competence able to be attained by adult beginners in a short time was naturally more limited than was desirable. While there are exceptions, such teachers often lack confidence to use Japanese as the language of instruction, provide poor models for students and, having found the study of Japanese challenging themselves, have low expectations of their students. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this situation has improved over the last few years, and that the language competence of teachers entering the profession has improved. Many have spent some time living in Japan. It is still the case, however, that the levels of competence of most teachers who are not native speakers could be improved, and need to be maintained once they enter the workforce. In particular, there are many teachers who do not have the literacy levels to read materials in Japanese easily and fluently, or to write materials at a high level in Japanese. They do not have the confidence to be able to assist senior students if they have difficulties reading authentic material, and this sometimes prevents them from encouraging students to venture beyond the textbook and teacher-provided materials. In addition, the social and cultural knowledge of teachers is sometimes limited or out of date thus limiting their ability to teach using the intercultural learning approach now favoured. Many undergraduate teacher education programs, particularly in primary education, make it very difficult for teachers to study Japanese while completing their qualification and most postgraduate programs also fail to include language training. It is important that teachers be given the opportunity to continue to develop their linguistic and cultural knowledge and skills throughout the course of their careers.

4.4.3 Operating within the Australian Environment

There have been concerns expressed that teachers who are recruited directly from Japan, or soon after arrival, sometimes have insufficient English and understanding of the Australian education system and culture, both of which can lead to problems with classroom control and with engagement with the school community. These are issues which teachers themselves worry about especially in the first few years of teaching, even when they are judged by their peers to be doing a competent job. Teachers who are the sole Japanese teacher in the school feel particularly vulnerable, and often lack adequate support networks to help them adjust to the Australian educational environment.

There are some examples of successful mentoring and support programs run by teacher associations, and informal mentoring also frequently occurs within associations and other teacher networks. However, there are many areas where such support is not available, and the normal mechanisms for mentoring new teachers that apply in schools are insufficient to deal with either the scale or the nature of the problems some individuals face. This is an area which should be given priority in future staffing and funding decisions.

Not all teachers born overseas have these issues and if they do, many receive the support to overcome them. Several of the pioneers of Japanese language education have been first generation Japanese-Australians, and there are many talented and competent teachers born in Japan who are well respected by students and their peers. The numbers of background speakers of Japanese currently studying in schools is increasing, and they will provide a significant source of future teachers, particularly if the teaching they themselves are receiving is inspiring and effective, and develops their skills to the highest levels possible.

Some of the most effective Japanese programs employ a combination of native and non-native speaker teachers. In general, these teachers work well together, and are able to draw on each others' strengths and compensate for each other in areas of relative weakness. In most of the Japanese language teacher associations as well, native and non-native speakers work together on committees and on projects. The ability of native and non-native speakers to cooperate, the degree of mutual respect and the lack of conflict between them, was commented on by several informants as a source of strength for Japanese language teaching.

4.4.4 Japanese-specific Methodology Training

Figures for the number of teachers with specific qualifications in Japanese language teaching are generally not available. However, the proportion with some training in language pedagogy seems to have increased in comparison with earlier years, although such training is still far from universal, and the situation varies in different states and territories and sectors. The number of teachers who have recent training, and who have training specifically relating to the teaching of Japanese is even less.

4.5 Language Assistants

Japanese language teaching has benefited enormously over several decades from the contributions of a large number of native speaker 'language assistants', many of whom work on a voluntary basis. The use of assistants in association with properly trained teachers has been extremely positive. The assistants provide native speaker models for students, as well as a much needed 'second pair of hands' in the classroom. They assist in developing materials and they can also contribute to the language maintenance of non-native speaking teachers by providing opportunities for them to use Japanese.

A perhaps less recognised benefit of language assistants derives from the fact that they are often young, and recently arrived from Japan, and thus provide a direct link for students with contemporary Japanese culture and society. Assistants also often provide a link to schools and communities in Japan, both while they are in Australia and after they return, which can be the starting point for sister school programs and exchanges.

Most assistants are provided through commercial companies or private arrangements, and the quality and preparation of recruits in some programs is variable. Some states and territories have organised their own 'official' programs targeting students who have some teacher training, who generally receive better conditions and better training and support on arrival than those recruited through private organisations. Some of those in such programs are recent graduates who have majored in the teaching of Japanese as a foreign language in Japan, and bring considerable expertise to their roles. Education authorities and individual schools also employ locally recruited assistants on a paid basis, sometimes recruiting Japanese graduates from teacher education programs who have insufficient experience in Australia to find a full language teaching position immediately, but who often gain substantially from the experience and later become excellent fully fledged language teachers.

Many teachers interviewed for this project indicated that they would like to see extra funding for Asian languages invested to increase support for language assistant programs. In future, professionally organised programs should be expanded to increase the overall quality and effectiveness of assistants in schools.

4.6 Professional Development

Teachers of Japanese are regular and enthusiastic attendees at professional development sessions. The Japanese Language Teachers Associations (JLTAs) provide practical and relevant professional development seminars. Most JLTAs organise an annual or biennial Japanese language teachers' conference. In some states and territories, the various sectors and the Modern Language Teachers Associations also provide valuable professional development, as does the Japan Foundation, the MCJLE and the sectors.

In some states and territories, the various sectors work cooperatively to provide professional development by either jointly organising activities or inviting teachers from all sectors to participate in each other's seminars. This is particularly efficient in small states and territories with small numbers of teachers, but in all instances it allows for the best possible outcomes for teachers by providing access to more and varied professional development seminars and networking opportunities.

A feature of professional development that is sometimes lacking is ensuring that teachers consider how and why new ideas or strategies fit into their overall program. Teachers are keen to learn practical ideas and techniques, and to gain access to new games, worksheets and resources that help engage their students. There is a danger, however, that professional development focusing on activities and resources may be piecemeal, and does not assist with the renewal of curriculum as a whole or with major changes in methodology and focus.

4.7 Teacher Training

The number of students applying to become teachers of Japanese varies year to year and there is insufficient data available to analyse trends. However, recruitment to teacher-education programs is not primarily driven by demand for teachers in specific subject areas, and is left to individual institutions, which may make decisions on economic grounds rather than on the basis of what is best for schools and students.

Given the extent of Japanese language teaching in Australia, a consistent supply of high quality graduates from teacher training institutions is necessary, and institutions may need incentives to ensure that this occurs. There is anecdotal evidence that the quality of trainee teachers has been high in recent years, but this is likely to change unless something can be done about the poor career prospects for teachers, particularly in primary schools. Well-qualified applicants need the assurance of permanent positions and an appropriate career path in order to attract them to the teaching of Japanese, which competes with more lucrative career opportunities.

Many Japanese native speakers undertake a double method in Japanese; but this limits their employability and possible career pathways due to limited expertise and less flexibility for a prospective employer.

Tertiary teacher training institutions now only provide general languages 'methodology' classes. Language-specific sessions are not usually provided except on an irregular basis, through guest lecturers or voluntary arrangements. The lack of language-specific instruction in teacher training programs has resulted in some gaps in practical skills and theoretical knowledge. For example, acquiring literacy in Japanese is a challenge for students and trainee teachers need specific instruction in appropriate methodology in this area to be effective. Language specific methodology classes also provide an important introduction to the Japanese teaching community, resources, professional development activities, and professional associations and opportunities available.

The MCJLE has been providing such a course for trainee teachers from tertiary institutions in Vic for 12 years. In addition to their normal course, students are given 50 hours of Japanese-specific methodology training during their teacher training final year. This program is voluntary, and taken in addition to their regular courses. While it is popular with students located nearby, those in intensive programs in schools and at more distant campuses find it difficult to get to classes.

It is recommended that a program for trainee teachers of Japanese be developed and made available to training institutions in all states and territories to provide such Japanese specific training, to be delivered locally by practicing teachers, or online. To increase affordability and opportunities for professional networking, institutions could work collaboratively to provide this program.

5 Japanese Language Education Overseas

A 2006 Japan Foundation survey showed that 2.98 million people in 126 countries (not including Japan) were studying Japanese, an increase of 26.4 per cent since 2003. Of these, slightly less than 60 per cent are studying in primary and secondary schools. Australia has the second highest number of students of Japanese in the world at primary/secondary level, following Japan's nearest neighbour, Korea.

Among Western countries, Australia has been a pioneer and world leader in the provision of Japanese language education. In no other country is Japanese such a widely taught language as it is in Australia across all levels of education. Many institutions teaching Japanese in other English-speaking countries use Australian textbooks and materials, and they are generally highly regarded. Australia's leadership in this field is an advantage, as it provides a broader market and less competition for publishers, who have incentives to produce materials in Australia that are well-suited to Australian conditions.

There are interesting developments in a number of overseas countries, including immersion programs and programs for Heritage learners in the US, and language specialist schools in the UK, which can inform program development in Australia. However, in those countries Japanese is a minority rather than a mainstream language and the situation is therefore somewhat different to that in Australia. In Europe, in particular, it is noteworthy that Japanese is usually the third or fourth language studied (in addition to a language such as French in the UK, or English in the rest of Europe), and is an elective for these students. The target population is therefore, on average, more motivated, and possesses greater language learning experience and skills than is the case in Australia, particularly at lower year levels.

The teaching of Japanese is most widespread in Asian countries (61.5 per cent of learners are in East Asia) and is particularly advanced in Korea, which includes wide use of ICT in its teaching. Korean is linguistically closer to Japanese than is any other language, so Korean students usually make faster progress than do those with English-speaking backgrounds. In addition, Japanese popular culture provides many opportunities for exposure to Japanese in Korea. Learners in Chinese-speaking countries also attain high levels of competence; one reason being that literacy in Chinese is a particular advantage in acquiring the ability to read Japanese. While language teaching paradigms in these countries have until now been quite traditional, this is changing and it is likely that Australian curriculum developers and teachers can benefit from a study of recent developments in Asia.

The population of learners of Japanese worldwide is continuing to grow. One effect of this is that students increasingly have the opportunity to use Japanese as a lingua franca to communicate with other non-native speakers, as well as native speakers, in other parts of the world. This is already happening in the areas of popular culture, where Australian students participate in online communities sharing similar interests.

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6 Conclusion

In interviews across Australia, respondents generally believed that Japanese language teaching was in a relatively strong position – this view was reflected in a remark of a senior administrator who said that 'Japanese is the success story'. Japanese is the most widely taught language in Australia, and has an established infrastructure of internationally respected, locally developed materials and resources; active teacher organisations and other support services; a large number of experienced teachers attuned to local conditions; and specialists who support them. Its success is a product not only of government funding and policy decisions (other languages have benefited from these as well, with less success) or of the economic boom in Japan (economic conditions change rapidly, and are only one factor in the decisions Australians make about language learning). It is the legacy of the school and system leaders who saw the value and potential in the teaching of Japanese, and the dedicated teachers and their supporters who established courses in schools, pioneered progressive methodologies and produced materials and programs that appealed to students, parents and fellow educators. It is now at the point when a second generation of students is coming through whose parents studied Japanese – Japanese is not a 'minority language' as it is in other parts of the Western world, but is now the Australian mainstream.

However, the apparent relative strength of Japanese should not encourage complacency, and must be interpreted against the backdrop of the precarious nature of all language teaching in Australia. In fact, the statistics presented in this report demonstrate that the number of students studying Japanese has decreased sharply in the last five to eight years. At a time when the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) is calling for an increase in the number of students studying Asian languages at Year 12, the number of students coming through mainstream programs into 'continuing' Year 12 courses has fallen by 25–50 per cent in several states and territories.

These figures provide disturbing evidence that a withdrawal of support in the previous decade, both in terms of policy and resources, has resulted in many programs collapsing or being seriously undermined.

It is not only the statistics which are of concern. There is widespread agreement that the conditions in many primary schools in particular (in terms of curriculum time and the status and employment conditions of teachers) make the delivery of meaningful and substantial programs in Japanese almost impossible. Together with the lack of detailed and realistic Japanese-specific curriculum, this has contributed to a lack of shared common goals and content for Japanese at the primary level. Some teachers have adjusted to these conditions by reducing their aims, focusing on providing a positive and enjoyable experience but are unable to incorporate more serious educational goals.

Due to the large numbers of primary and secondary students studying the language, there is great potential to provide K–12 pathways in Japanese, but this has not been capitalised on. Most secondary programs are built on the assumption that all students are starting from scratch. There have been some efforts to provide continuity of language study across primary and secondary levels within local clusters. However, there are very few secondary programs that fully acknowledge what students have already achieved. The number which continue to take advantage of their head-start beyond the first few weeks is even smaller. This can create a vicious circle whereby primary teachers are not motivated to provide students with a firm foundation for future study, and secondary teachers dismiss primary programs as insubstantial. Students continuing with Japanese are forced to start again, resulting in boredom and frustration, while those commencing may feel that they are at a disadvantage.

Those who survive the discouragement of mixed classes at Year 7/8 often find little incentive to continue to study Japanese after it ceases to be compulsory (which may be as early as Year 8). Timetabling and blocking of subjects, where Japanese is often lined up against very attractive alternatives, encourage students to give it up. Learning Japanese can be hard work, and students often see little evidence that the community values the skills they are acquiring, or that they will be of benefit to them in the future (although later, with the benefit of maturity, they sometimes come to regret the lost opportunity).

At the senior levels, some curriculums and assessment instruments are based on common frameworks for languages. However, these are poorly suited to the needs of the Japanese language and learner populations. Outdated assessment regimes discourage the use of ICT. Pressures to achieve high marks turn the excitement of learning to communicate into the grind of preparing for exams. Rote-learning of stock responses was seen as the best way to succeed, even in ostensibly communicative assessment tasks. Learners with a home background in Japanese – many of whom study from early childhood in community language schools – have, until recently, been almost entirely neglected in the senior secondary years. They are not able to compete with recently arrived first language speakers and have been either excluded or inappropriately enrolled in courses for second language learners. New senior curriculums for Heritage learners are planned. However, if incentives for learners to enrol in these more challenging subjects are not put in place, these efforts are likely to be wasted.

It appears that there are two key factors in whether students will be able to continue with Japanese into their senior secondary years. Firstly, whether separate Year 11 and Year 12 classes are provided, (increasingly problematic when enrolments are low) and secondly, the number of subjects they will take overall. This number is largely determined by the structure of the school certificate program, and the calculation of the tertiary entrance score.

New structures in some states and territories which encourage a narrow curriculum with only four subjects as the norm will make it impossible for all but the most dedicated students to take Japanese, and then it will be at the expense of other important subject areas. On the other hand, structures which assume five subjects, and encourage good students to take six subjects, facilitate continuation of Japanese to Year 12 level.[21] Unless such general structural issues are addressed, other improvements to Japanese language teaching itself will be ineffective in achieving higher numbers of Year 12 graduates.

At both the primary and the secondary levels, there are instances of exemplary programs and curriculum development encompassing interaction with Japan, intercultural approaches and the strategic use of ICT. However, there are other schools failing to engage students and provide them with challenging programs leading to successful outcomes. Goals, teaching approaches and materials all need updating. Raising standards and retention rates depends on raising the overall quality of teaching, and support for teachers. Teacher training and recruitment practices need radical reform to ensure that the best candidates are trained and recruited, that all new teachers start out with high levels of skills, and are provided with reasonable employment prospects. There is a need for continued professional development to enable existing teachers to acquire and maintain high language and pedagogic skills – and the incentives and time to attend. Teachers who have not been educated in Australia, or who are working in isolation also require greater support.

21 Doing so also increases class sizes, helping to obviate the problem of unviable classes as well.

Finally, there is a need to unite the individually strong, but largely unconnected groups which support Japanese teaching in Australia, to provide leadership, information sharing, promotion within the community and a nexus for positive change. There is also a need for greater cooperation and coordination of the efforts of the various state and territory jurisdictions to minimise duplication and ensure maximum impact nationally. The Australian Government's vision for Japanese language through the NALSSP is a welcome and timely initiative, providing the resources and impetus to address many of the issues highlighted in this report. It is important that in its continuing implementation and in other programs that may follow these resources are deployed as strategically as possible, and their impact carefully monitored. A national expert body for Japanese could assist in this process, in cooperation with other bodies that are charged with this task.

In the fragmented and fragile landscape of languages education in Australia, strength of numbers provides advantages in terms of efficiency, quality of resources, depth of expertise and opportunities for transition between schools. While it is important to preserve diversity in language provision, a concentration of effort in some languages ultimately strengthens provision of all languages. Japanese is important to Australia, not only because it creates a group of Australians who are competent and/or fluent in Japanese, but because it provides significant educational benefits beyond the language itself. Neglect of Japanese teaching will have a broad impact on the readiness of a generation of Australian students to thrive in our increasingly globalised world, whether they need to use Japanese in the future or not.

The challenge now is to maximise the opportunities presented through the NALSSP to build and capitalise on the strengths of Japanese, while addressing areas of weakness, both in Japanese teaching itself, and in the educational structures and policies that support or constrain it. Due to the existing solid base for Japanese, well-targeted future investments will directly improve the quality of outcomes for large numbers of Australian students. Even a small improvement in the retention rate for Japanese achieved through such investment would dramatically increase the number of Australian students studying an Asian language to senior secondary standard, consistent with the goals of the NALSSP.

7 A Program for Change – Key Recommendations

Specific recommendations for change are designed to support a three-pronged approach: addressing structural barriers, workforce planning and development and program development and support.

1 Establishment of a National Council for Japanese Language Education

A national expert body 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 could be the development of a National Plan of Action for Japanese Language Education 2010–2020.

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

This report has identified factors which may be affecting retention of students in Japanese, but has noted a lack of information about their extent and significance. Detailed research should be conducted into the reasons students choose to continue, or not to continue with Japanese at senior secondary levels, including the impact of important structural factors relating to senior school certificates and tertiary entrance criteria (such as the number of subjects which are required for the certificate and counted towards the 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. It is recommended that education jurisdictions actively encourage and support schools to trial innovative models for staffing and delivery which would reconceptualise the role of teachers of Japanese, the generalist teacher and the way in which Japanese is provided in schools. Such models would allow a move away from the current situation, where the Japanese curriculum is provided at the margins by teachers who are isolated from core curriculum planning and from supportive peers. For example, they might involve employment of two or more qualified teachers of Japanese who would also teach in generalist areas.

4 Detailed Curriculum and Materials Development

In conjunction with the development of a national curriculum for Languages, curriculum authorities should develop a 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 should 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 the new 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 opportunities 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/work experience and travel to Japan. This should include increased financial and administrative support for sister school and travel abroad programs as well as the development of new initiatives.

Schools, governments and industry should collaborate to expand opportunities for students to apply and develop their Japanese skills in authentic situations.

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Acknowledgements

In researching this report, we have received invaluable support and advice from many people, including representatives from state and territory education jurisdictions and sectors, teacher associations, and professional organisations, teachers of Japanese and academics. We appreciate the time and effort they took to provide us with written information and data, to participate in interviews, and to answer follow-up questions, often over an extended period. Their expert knowledge, views and opinions have contributed significantly to our understanding of the current state of Japanese language education in Australia and the challenges it faces.

We are grateful to Sarah Pasfield-Neofitou for compiling the major tables and graphs included in the report and for her patient assistance over many, many revisions and iterations.

We would like to thank Kurt Mullane from the Asia Education Foundation, for his guidance throughout the project. Finally, we wish to thank the senior staff of the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, senior academics, the members of the Project Advisory Committee and senior administrators from the various education systems and the authors of the other reports in this series, who provided feedback on the draft report. However, the accuracy of the findings, the conclusions drawn and any shortcomings that might be found in this report remain the responsibility of the authors.

ISBN 978-1-74200-102-9