

Languages in Australian Education

Languages in Australian Education:
Problems, Prospects and Future Directions

Edited by

Anthony J. Liddicoat and Angela Scarino

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P U B L I S H I N G

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CHAPTER ONE

LANGUAGES IN AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION: AN INTRODUCTION

ANTHONY J. LIDDICOAT
AND ANGELA SCARINO

Language-in-education policy in Australia

In recent months, the area of languages education has engaged a great deal of political interest and media attention in Australia, and is generating new policy directions. Educational documents such as the Council for the Australian Federation's Federalist Paper (COAG, 2007) and the outcomes of the 2020 Summit (Australian Government, 2009) treat concepts such as "international literacy" and "intercultural understanding" as foundational dimensions of contemporary education. Such concepts signal a changing sociopolitical and educational context and imply not only a role for languages in education, but also a view of education in which the plurality of languages and cultures is a central characteristic.

As languages education becomes the focus of a number of policy initiatives at Commonwealth level, it is timely to take stock of the situation in Australia and to reconsider some of the issues around language education policy and practice. Australia has had some 20 years of language policy development, including 10 years of relative neglect from the mid-1990s at both Commonwealth and state and territory levels. During these years, language policies have sought to increase and reshape languages education in Australian schools, but have had only limited success in achieving their objectives (Clyne, 2005; Liddicoat, Scarino, Curnow, Kohler, Scrimgeour, & Morgan, 2007). Over two decades, language policies have sought to increase and reshape languages education in Australian schools, but have had only limited success in achieving their objectives (Clyne, 2005; Liddicoat, Scarino, Curnow, Kohler, Scrimgeour, & Morgan, 2007). Languages education experienced its high point at the

national level with the National Policy on Languages (1987–1991) (Lo Bianco, 1987). The most significant recent work includes the development of the *National statement and plan for languages, 2005–2008* (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 2005), *Professional standards for accomplished teaching of languages and cultures* (Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations [AFMLTA], 2005), the *National Asian languages and studies in schools program* (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2009) and the beginning stages of a national curriculum for languages. Now, new policy documents point to a new focus on Australian language education.

There has been a significant erosion of the position of languages in Australian school education from the strongly articulated position of the mid-1980s in which linguistic and cultural diversity were placed at the forefront of issues of both national identity and language education (Scarino & Papademetre, 2001). In the late 1970s, Australia's language education was placed within policies for multiculturalism and a view of diversity that regarded language education as being a part of a way of establishing social cohesion and tolerance within a pluralistic society. This view of the purpose of language education began to give way in the early 1990s to a focus on languages for economic benefit, especially for international trade (Liddicoat, 2009). The strengthening focus on economic rationales for language learning was accompanied by a narrowing focus on fewer and fewer languages. The strongly pluralist agenda of the 1980s favoured a highly diverse range of language options in education; the linguistic diversity of Australia itself was the guiding principle for the range of languages on offer. Subsequent economic rationales favoured the languages of a small number of influential trading partners in the Asian region—China, Japan, Indonesia, and Korea. The focus on Asian languages established under the Keating Labor government (1991–1996) contrasts with the Howard Liberal government's (1996–2007) comparative disengagement from Asia (Gorjão, 2003) and suspicion of the value of Australia's diversity (Liddicoat, 2009). These attitudes resulted in a general apathy at national level in languages policy and a corresponding weakening of the position of languages in schools.

Language education requires articulation between policy and practice, between the curriculum artefacts and the lived curriculum. The recent history of work in Australia has focused primarily on curriculum artefacts. At the national level this curriculum work has taken the form of the *Statement and Profile for Languages* (Australian Education Council,

1994)—an early and largely unsuccessful attempt at a national languages curriculum framework—and the new national curriculum currently under development. At the same time, the various states and territories have developed a range of new curriculum frameworks for the languages area (Liddicoat, et al., 2007). This focus on curriculum artefacts has tended to obscure the embodied nature of curriculum and, in many ways, teachers have been positioned in these recent developments as curriculum deliverers—as technicians implementing a set product—rather than as education professionals using the curriculum to design learning experiences for particular groups of students.

Professional learning for teachers in this environment has focused largely on developing understanding of the new frameworks and their assessment and reporting regimes. However, some recent professional learning activities show signs of a renewed emphasis on the teacher as an education professional constructing an embodied curriculum together with learners. In such projects the curriculum and the teachers have been positioned as “reflective practitioners” who are simultaneously teachers and learners (Liddicoat & Jansen, 1998). The Commonwealth Government has invested significant funds in large-scale professional learning projects that have involved teachers in sustained learning through investigation of their own practice. Large-scale examples of this practice-based approach to professional learning in Australia include the Asian Languages Professional Learning Project (ALPLP) (www.asiaeducation.edu.au), the Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning in Practice Project (ILTLP) (www.iltlp.unisa.edu.au), and the Professional Standards Project (PSP) (www.pspl.unisa.edu.au). A number of states and territories have begun to draw on these projects or have conducted their own professional learning programs based on these projects as a part of their own professional development activities (e.g. projects developed by the Tasmanian Department of Education, www.education.tas.gov.au/school/educators/resources/lote/cultural). Professional learning projects such as these show a significant change in the focus of professional learning for language teachers in Australia and a movement towards a more individualised and more professionalised view of teachers and teaching.

Another area of change in language education in Australia is the trend away from a generic approach to language education towards a greater consideration of language-specific issues. For a considerable period, most work in languages education—on curriculum, assessment, and teacher education—has treated all languages as essentially the same. In many cases, this has been the result of external pressures. In language teacher education, for example, there had been a movement in universities away

from teacher education courses designed for teachers of specific languages, to courses designed for teachers of all languages. The main motivation for this was economic; small, tailored language-teacher education courses are regarded as less viable and harder to staff. In professional learning, language-specific approaches were adopted only where the target was the development of language proficiency. Correspondingly, most states and territories in Australia provide only generic curricula for language during compulsory schooling, and offer language-specific curricula or syllabuses only for post-compulsory senior secondary language courses. The usual motivation for these generic curricula has been the cost involved in creating curricula for a range of languages.

Both approaches to language education have merit. Generic approaches orientate to the overall structure and nature of the field, to generalisable aspects of theory and approach that give coherence to languages as a disciplinary area in education. Language-specific approaches focus on the distinctiveness of each language as individual and independent. The question is not which of the two is appropriate, but how to balance the two. It can be argued that the heavy emphasis on the generic for reasons of economy and efficiency has led to an imbalance, and the focus on the generic has obscured the specificity of languages. But there have been recent indications of a change in emphasis in some work at the national level. For example, the *Professional standards for accomplished teaching of languages and cultures* (AFMLTA, 2005) exists as a generic document with language-specific annotations for Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish. Similarly, the Endeavour Language Teacher Fellowship scheme (http://www.endeavour.deewr.gov.au/language_teachers_fellowships/) is a nationally funded professional development program that focuses on in-country learning for teachers of a range of languages.

About this book

This book examines the current state, nature, role, and purposes of languages in Australian education as a basis for considering a viable, encompassing language education policy. Underlying the discussion is the recognition that at this particular juncture in languages education policy in Australia, it is necessary to re-examine constructs, research, evidence, and practice as the basis for renewal. The writers engage with issues around languages education through a series of chapters organised according to the core themes in Australian language education:

- The current state of policy and participation
- Engaging with diversity
- Current orientations to languages education
- Future possibilities and directions in languages education.

Part 1. The current state of policy and participation

The introductory chapters focus on the current state of languages education in Australia and trace the effects of the period of neglect over the past decade. Liddicoat argues that two decades of language policy have had only limited effect on language learning in schools, because the policy documents have not addressed key underlying needs, especially teacher supply. This means that key policy objectives have not been met and that the amount of activity at policy level belies fragility in practice. Curnow traces this fragility by examining statistics on participation in language learning in Australia. He describes a situation in which, after an initial period of growth, levels of participation stagnated and remain particularly low at higher levels of schooling. A similar pattern of stagnation and decline is revealed by Baldauf and White in their study of participation rates at universities. They demonstrate that in the tertiary sector, not only are enrolments in language study low, but the overall number of languages taught at tertiary level in Australia has also declined. Norris describes the situation in teacher education, highlighting a number of problems with the ways in which teachers are educated. She argues for a reconceptualisation of the theoretical underpinnings of languages teacher education through critical reflective practice and the use of critical pedagogies. Murray, in his discussion of the theme, emphasises the chaotic nature of policy work in Australia and the difficulties this poses for changing language education. He frames this as a chicken and egg problem involving mutually reinforcing processes that undermine the opportunities for resolving existing problems.

Part 2. Engaging with diversity

These chapters examine the issues around the diversity of languages and cultures in Australian society and in education. Lo Bianco examines what the term “diversity” has meant in the Australian context and contrasts the different ways in which the term has been understood. He also argues that there has been a movement away from a focus on diversity in Australia, and this has had an impact on languages education. Chiro continues the theme of erosion of Australia’s engagement with diversity, arguing that Australia has moved away from its earlier commitment to cultural

pluralism and is returning to a more ethnocentric integrationist approach resembling earlier periods of social policy. Adopting a different perspective, Scrimgeour discusses the issues around how native-speaker teachers of Chinese adapt to teaching in a new learning context. He demonstrates that diversity is not simply a construct found in society, but that it is part of the everyday reality of language teaching and learning in Australian classrooms. In her discussion of the theme of diversity, Heugh argues that current Australian responses to diversity represent a backwards movement from Australia's engagement with diversity in the 1970s and 1980s.

Part 3. Current orientations to languages education

These chapters discuss some of the more recent developments in the languages area. Scarino takes as her theme the relationship between “languages” as a learning area and more general understandings of “language”. She challenges the monolingual and monocultural conceptualisation of education found in education policy and argues for a plurilingual and pluricultural way of understanding the nature of education and the place of language (and hence of languages) within it. Kohler targets the interface between policy and practice in the implementation of intercultural language teaching and learning in Australian languages education. She examines aspects of the practice of intercultural language teaching and learning to show that teachers are uncertain how policy is to be implemented in practice, and that there is a need to consider the complexity of what teachers are being asked to do as part of implementation. McNamara and Elder argue that one of the biggest challenges facing languages education is the frameworks and scales that have dominated how languages have been assessed and how language education has been understood. They contend that the constructions of languages and language learning embodied in such documents need to be critiqued and resisted in order to foreground aesthetics and values in education and to promote an agenda of diversity in education over the discourses of managerial uniformity. In her discussion of these chapters, Orton argues that the development of a practical theory of learning that gives more attention to affective development would complement our understandings of cognitive development and enhance our understanding of teachers as practitioners engaging with complexity. She suggests that such a theory could be developed by scrutinising principles and theories in the light of teachers' experiences in working with them

Part 4. Future possibilities and directions

These final chapters look to what needs to be done, and what language educators can contribute to defining future possibilities and directions for languages education. Tedesco examines some of the recent work in languages education, and identifies signs of positive change and the possibility of significant future development across a number of important areas. At the same time, she acknowledges that this is not a complete revolution; a number of existing issues and orientations continue to play a role. Mercurio looks at the prospective national curriculum for languages in the light of what has happened in the first round of national curriculum development. He argues that the national curriculum process is a significant opportunity to reframe languages as an area of learning; and that the way in which this framing is articulated will have important consequences for languages education. He proposes some design features that he believes will be important in positioning languages positively in the future. In their discussion, Scarino and Liddicoat note that there is much activity in language-in-education planning in Australia, but what is needed is actually a greater emphasis on reconceptualising language education as a basis for further work. They argue for continued dialogue within the field as a basis for taking languages education in Australia into a more positive future.

Collectively, these chapters paint an image of the fragility of languages education in Australia and detail the ways in which the position of languages has been eroded over time. They also point to some emerging trends and new possibilities that indicate that aspects of the languages area have remained productive and engaged, and that there are signs of new strengths. Language-in-education planning and policy in a country such as Australia is clearly subject to changing fortunes, and that these changing fortunes have serious consequences. As Australia enters its next period of language education policy, it remains to be seen how new directions and new emphases will influence the nature and provision of languages education into the future.

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PART I

THE CURRENT STATE OF POLICY AND PARTICIPATION

CHAPTER TWO

POLICY CHANGE AND EDUCATIONAL INERTIA: LANGUAGE POLICY AND LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLING

ANTHONY J. LIDDICOAT

Introduction

Australia's history of language policy development spans more than two decades (Clyne, 1991; Liddicoat, 1996, in press; Ozolins, 1993; Scarino & Papademetre, 2001). In the area of languages education, this policy work has been driven by a central, although by no means only concern with the perception of low levels of participation by Australian school students and the need for increased participation. In the unfolding sequence of Australia's language policies, participation has been addressed repeatedly, although the policy strategies that have been adopted to address it have varied. Regardless of the strategies adopted, policies have tended to set explicit targets for language learning and it is against such targets that policy work can be measured.

After two decades of language policy in Australia, it can be observed that participation in the study of languages in schools has increased, especially at primary school level; however, these increases have not been reflected by significant changes in participation in the later years of schooling (Curnow, this volume; Liddicoat et al., 2007). In fact, levels of participation in post-compulsory schooling have remained relatively static through successive policy initiatives. This is particularly significant, as many Australian policies have articulated goals for increased participation at this level. This means that policy documents have often had little impact on those areas of language study that they have been designed to plan, and subsequent policy revisions have tended to respond to the lack of change not by revising strategies for achieving policy goals, but by changing the goals to accommodate the ongoing weakness of levels of participation. As

a result, in spite of two decades of language policy concerned with increasing participation in languages education, the situation in Australia remains fragile (Clyne, 2005; Liddicoat et al., 2007).

As Australia begins a new phase of language policy development, it is highly relevant to examine why two decades of language policy have met with such limited success. This chapter will examine elements of Australia's language policy that have attempted to deal with the issue of student participation in languages education, to trace how policy in this area has evolved since 1987 and to examine what features of Australian policy work have contributed to the fragile state of languages in education.

The evolution of participation in Commonwealth language policies

Participation in languages education was first addressed in Australia's first explicit language policy, the National Policy on Languages (NPL). The NPL formulates provision for languages education under the rubric "A language other than English for all". This framing asserts that language study would be a normal and a normative part of educational provision. This is stated unambiguously in the policy's general introduction to the discussion of languages education:

This policy explicitly declares that the study of at least one language in addition to English ought to be an expected part of the educational experience of all Australians, ideally continuously throughout the years of compulsory education (Lo Bianco, 1987, p. 120)

This formulation makes the study of one language a minimum expectation of language education for all students. Moreover, it frames an ideal that this education should be integrated as a process of continuous learning throughout compulsory education. Such a provision would mandate language study for all students at all levels, with electivity built in only at the post-compulsory level, which traditionally has had few mandated areas of study. The writers of the NPL also considered the issue of the amount of exposure that students would have to the language being learned—"[t]here ought to be several lessons per week" (p. 154)—and the duration of programs—"programs ought to be continuous throughout the schooling system" (p. 152). The policy appears to envisage that all students would achieve a level of language capability and there would be a degree of individual multilingualism.

The NPL recognised that in 1987 Australian education systems were not able to provide such an outcome and the document does not project a short-term process of implementation. In particular, the NPL recognised that the existing level of supply of language teachers would not support universal language study and argued that teacher education would be a significant site for the realisation of the policy. The policy stated that, in the first triennium of its implementation, emphasis should be placed on the inclusion of languages within generalist primary pre-service teacher education¹, with the intended outcome that “[g]raduates would ideally be able to offer the curriculum in their two languages, thereby not requiring the appointment of many specialist additional teachers” (Lo Bia, 1987, p. 135). It also argued for the active recruitment of bilinguals into primary teacher education programs and the provision of in-service programs in language upgrading and teaching methodology. That is, languages education was to be “mainstreamed” within education both at the level of learning and at the level of teaching: not only would all students be able to study a language but, also, most teachers should be able to teach a language.

The NPL represented an idea of education in which languages are embedded as part of normal educational provision and integrated within mainstream school structures. Moreover, it projected an education system characterised by linguistic diversity and with the mission of maintaining and enhancing this diversity. It provided a number of guidelines for realising these ideals. What the NPL did not provide was an implementation program through which the goals of the policy would be realised in schools. Direct implementation of educational policy is, however, outside the Commonwealth Government’s educational responsibilities, except insofar as provisions concern the tertiary sector, and the NPL was required to delegate implementation to state and territory jurisdictions:

the policy advocates strongly that all educational planners embrace this objective and aim for students in every Australian school to be offered soundly-based, continuous and serious programs for learning a second language (Lo Bianco, 1987, p. 120)

The writers of the NPL envisaged a radically different educational provision from that which existed at the time of its writing. However, it did not have the ability to ensure that its projections become reality in schools; rather, it could seek only to influence other policy makers.

Although the NPL envisaged a long-term process of educational change, this was not to be the case, and policy redevelopment began in

1990 after only three years of operation. Goals for participation in languages education were curtailed in a 1990 Green Paper and the resulting 1991 Australian language and literacy policy (ALLP) (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1991 [DEET], p. 35) This can be seen most clearly in the statement of the goal for “languages other than English”:

The learning of languages other than English must be substantially expanded and improved to enhance educational outcomes and communication within both the Australian and the international community (DEET, 1991, Vol. I, p. 14).

This text represents a substantial move away from the universal experience of language learning envisioned by the NPL. Instead, the policy has moved to expand the present level of participation in language learning, with no explicit statement of objectives, but with a focus on improving the quality of programs. The projected situation for language learning is one in which more students would study in better programs in the future, but falls short of a commitment to engage all, or even most students in language learning. The prime focus of attention in the ALLP moved away from language study during compulsory schooling to language study at the post-compulsory level, setting a target of increasing Year 12 language enrolments to 25% of all students by the year 2000. The funding tied to the policy was allocated on the basis of participation rates in languages at Year 12 level, but no specific activity was designed to develop pathways through to Year 12. Rather, the setting of targets for Year 12 was itself the mechanism for improving language learning at lower levels. It was also the mechanism for affecting participation in tertiary language learning and in teacher education, to which little attention was given in the policy itself.

The ALLP effectively removed from policy a number of aspects of the NPL that had not been acted on—most significantly, the call for languages to be embedded in teacher education. The NPL’s approach that mainstream teachers should also be teachers of languages was not continued. Instead, the capacity to teach languages became something to be taken into account, but without specific commitments:

[The Commonwealth will] take account of the continuing need to promote Asian languages and teacher education in languages other than English when identifying priority areas for allocating any additional student places which it funds in higher education and for funding projects under the National Priority (Reserve) Fund (DEET, 1991a, p. 18)

In fact, teacher education is represented in the ALLP as a problem that had begun to be resolved, rather than a real focus for policy work:

Some languages relevant to Australia's place in the world are at present not widely taught because of a lack of teaching materials and appropriately qualified staff. Work on curriculum development, teacher preparation and research into language education supported by the Commonwealth under the NPL and through the ASC [Asian Studies Council], has begun to remedy the situation (DEET, 1991a, p. 15).

Although the ALLP claimed that teacher supply was a problem that was beginning to be addressed, there was little evidence of improvement in any of the analyses commissioned by the government, which reported a worsening rather than an improving situation (e.g. Nicholas, Moore, Clyne, & Pauwels, 1993).

In the companion volume to the ALLP (DEET, 1991b), teacher supply was addressed more explicitly and was recognised as a problem in need of urgent resolution. However, even in this part of the policy document, the main provisions for teacher supply consisted of a limited set of recommendations that universities could adopt to address the shortage. Initiatives relating to teacher supply were therefore removed from the scope of Commonwealth level language policy.

The provisions of the ALLP remained in force in much the same shape for more than a decade, with adjustment for the funding regimes but little other modification. However, from 1994 a parallel language policy was introduced with a focus on Asian languages—the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) Strategy (Council of Australian Governments, 1994, p. 30). This policy maintained the 25% participation target for languages at Year 12 level but specified that 15% of these students would study one of four Asian languages—Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian, and Korean. This policy participation target maintained existing levels but placed further pressure on the diversity of languages, which would be catered for in education. Probably the most significant development coming from policy for Asian languages has been the establishment of differential qualitative targets (proficiency levels) as a policy goal:

A narrow group of highly proficient graduates capable of becoming (with further training) future interpreters with native-level fluency, a larger group of prospective university graduates capable of developing the Year 12 proficiency outcomes to the degree that their languages/cultures skills are of direct professional relevance to the university disciplines they pursue (e.g. engineering graduates with professionally useful Indonesian, Japanese

speaking lawyers, Chinese speaking commerce graduates); to a much broader group again capable of servicing requirements, say, of Australian services industries (e.g. tourism) in sales positions where some level of proficiency would be useful in dealing with clients (Council of Australian Governments, 1994, p. xi)

The NALSAS Strategy also set targets for Year 10 learning. These targets envisaged a situation in which 60% of students would study one of the four designated Asian languages and 40% would study all other languages. In establishing Year 10 targets, NALSAS restored some focus on education at levels preceding Year 12. Moreover, it appears that the NALSAS Strategy assumed that all students in Year 10 would be studying a language. The NALSAS Strategy allowed a 12-year period for these targets to be met. By setting a target date of 2006 for Year 12 language enrolments to reach 25%, the NALSAS Strategy effectively extended the timeframe for achieving the ALLP targets by six years, a revision which was made only four years after the ALLP targets had been introduced.

The series of policies guiding Commonwealth work in languages from 1987, reviewed here, shows a movement from universal language learning in the NPL to a more restricted focus on Year 12 participation, which was expected in some way to drive participation at lower levels. The NALSAS strategy did add a target at Year 10 level, but at the same time it pushed back the date for achieving the targets. The need for increasing the supply of language teachers was acknowledged, but not directly developed, through policy mechanisms that neglected the development of personnel; therefore the expansion of programs could not be effectively implemented. The Commonwealth Government's language policy focused primarily of those areas of policy over which the Commonwealth does not have direct influence—schools—but did not directly address the area that was under its direct control—teacher education. This focus meant that, while the Commonwealth set participation goals for states and territories to achieve, it did not address the bases for meeting such goals.

Evolutions in language policy: Examples from state jurisdictions

State and territory education jurisdictions have direct influence on programs in schools, but, although these jurisdictions employ teachers, they do not have direct influence over teacher education. This means that states and territories have good capacity to deal with aspects of participation, but have only limited control over teacher supply, which limits their possible effectiveness. In response to the Commonwealth

Government's weakness in implementing language policies to increase participation, there appears to have been a similar retrenchment in goals for participation at state and territory level. This can be seen most clearly in changes to policies in Queensland, South Australia, and the Northern Territory, which have explicitly moved away from mandating languages in the school curriculum.

Policies dealing with participation in Queensland began in 1991 with the Languages other than English (LOTE) initiative (Braddy, 1991). This policy document introduced compulsory language study for students in Years 6–8, with required time allocations. Students in state primary schools in Years 6 and 7 were expected to receive 90 minutes a week of language instruction, in the form of three 30-minute lessons to be given on three separate days. In state secondary schools, there was a mandated minimum time allocation in Year 8 of 90 minutes a week, with a recommendation that 120 minutes be the actual weekly provision over the full school year. For language programs offered at other year levels, time allocations were at the discretion of the school. This policy was considered the first stage of a rollout of languages provision in schools and the initial mandating would be extended to run from Year 4 to Year 10, as staff became available. That is, the achievement of the targets depended on teacher supply, over which the state government had little effective control, and because this pre-condition was never met, mandatory language study from Years 4 to 10 was never introduced. Mandated language instruction was therefore only ever applied at the minimum level of Years 6–8.

The 1991 Queensland policy was reviewed with the Regional LOTE Education Plans (RLEPs), which began to be implemented from 2008. These regional plans were designed “to provide more flexibility in how LOTE education is offered” and to “enable regions to review the current strategy of mandatory provision in Years 6 to 8” (http://www.qtu.asn.au/delivery_of_lote_review.pdf). In this review, flexibility in delivery effectively meant that languages would no longer be mandated for all students, even during Years 6–8. Instead, the language policy target shifted to increasing overall Year 12 participation rates, a reflection of earlier Commonwealth targets. The rationale for the change of policy emphasis involved moving away from participation targets in compulsory education to developing program quality within the existing limitations of teacher supply. This means that less emphasis is placed on the idea of all students having an opportunity to learn a language and more emphasis is placed on developing better programs for smaller groups of learners. In Queensland, therefore, the policy goal has moved from

ensuring that all students would study a language for most of their compulsory education to guaranteeing provision of programs for only some students.

In South Australia, the participation goal stated in *The languages other than English plan 2000–2007* (DECS, 1998), based on the review *Consolidating gains, recovering ground: Languages in South Australia* (Lo Bianco, 1995), was that all students in government schools would learn at least one language for the entire duration of their compulsory schooling. The plan required all primary schools to establish a language program by 2004 and secondary schools by 2007. Thus, by the year 2007, all students in compulsory education would be learning a language as an integral part of the curriculum. When in 2007 the *Languages statement 2007–2011* (DECS, 2007) was introduced, this target had not been met, and problems of teacher supply were invoked to explain the lack of success (Liddicoat et al., 2007). In the new statement, the explicit mandating of language study was made less explicit than in the earlier policy:

All DECS students will be engaged in quality languages programs enabling them to achieve the Outcomes and meet the Standards described in the South Australia Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework, the required curriculum for all DECS schools (DECS, 2007, p. 8).

The new statement requires all students to study a language, but does not specify when they should do this. This lack of clarity appears to have led to some confusion about whether or not languages are in fact mandated at any point in compulsory education. The confusion seems to derive from the removal of the mention of language study for the duration of compulsory schooling, with the result that the current formulation of the languages requirement does not state explicitly that languages are mandated for the whole period in the South Australian system. Such mandating is implied, however, by the goal of achieving the levels of the *South Australian curriculum, standards and accountability framework [SACSA] framework*, which are predicated on continuous study over the 11 years of compulsory schooling. The tying of language study to the *SACSA framework* implies that a similar amount of time will be allocated to language learning as was envisaged under the earlier policy, although this could be organised in ways other than in a continuous program over the whole period of compulsory education.

In 1997, the Northern Territory Policy on languages and Implementation guidelines were revised, replacing a policy first published in 1987. According to the 1997 policy, language study was mandatory, although

schools could differ to some extent in how they implemented the policy. In addition, the Northern Territory Board of Studies nominated time allocations for language study. The curriculum statement made no explicit statements about time allocations for language study up to Year 3, but recommended that there be some teaching from each of the eight learning areas each week, implying that languages should be taught. For Years 4–7, the curriculum recommended at least two hours a week for languages and for Years 8–10, rather than a weekly allocation, it recommended a total of 280 hours over the whole period, with an emphasis on continuity of learning over consecutive terms. These were recommended, not mandated times, but the inclusion of these recommendations supported an understanding that language study in the Northern Territory was mandated during compulsory schooling. In 2004 a further curriculum reform removed the mandatory time allocations for languages, creating ambiguity in the status of languages education in the Northern Territory. Some believed that languages remain mandated although without specified hours of study, and others interpreted the new policy as the removal of mandated languages study in Territory schools. The document itself does not clarify which of these interpretations should be considered the correct one. The 2004 policy revision therefore reduced the scope of languages provision in two ways: it removed recommended hours of instruction, and it moved away from the idea of languages as a mandated curriculum area. While teacher supply was not given as a reason for the policy change, it has been cited as one of the main factors limiting the development of language programs in the Northern Territory (Liddicoat, et al., 2007).

What characterises these state and territory policies is a movement away from explicit mandating of languages education in schools. This movement essentially reduces expectations that all students will study a language as a normal part of their compulsory schooling. All policies continue to emphasise the need for provision of languages and display a concern for the quality of language programs, but these programs are seen as being less widely provided. They will be a part of some, but not all students' education. In many of these contexts, teacher supply has been a significant factor in shifting the focus of language policies.

Language policy and the state of languages in schools

In the two decades of Australian language policy, no language policy, whether at Commonwealth or at state or territory level, has achieved its stated targets. The NPL was allowed only three years in which to address its long-term goal of universal study of a second language, and this was

manifestly impossible with the very low level of participation in language learning that existed in 1987. Some developments in the provision of languages in schools can be seen as resulting from the NPL, although many of these were achieved outside its actual life and had more to do with the adoption of aspects of the NPL in various state and territory policies from the late 1980s. The most notable achievement was the expansion of language learning at primary school. This was almost non-existent in 1987, but by 2006 it had come to represent the largest sector for language learning in Australia (Curnow, this volume).

The ALLP's revised participation target of 25% of students studying a language at Year 12 was introduced in 1991, and from that time language enrolments have remained static at around 14–15% of students, although not uniformly across states and territories (Curnow, this volume; Liddicoat et al., 2007). That is, in the 18 years since the introduction of ALLP targets, no progress has been made in meeting them. Similarly, the target of 15% of students studying an Asian language at Year 12 level set by the NALSAS Strategy has not been met, most significantly because the entire proportion of students studying any language has never reached 15%. Year 12 enrolments for the four NALSAS languages also remained roughly static from 1995 to 2005 (Curnow, this volume; Erebus, 2002; Liddicoat et al., 2007). Information about study of the NALSAS languages at year 10 level is less developed than for Year 12; however, the 2002 review of the NALSAS Strategy indicated that only about 9% of Year 10 students were studying these languages, well short of the 60% target set originally for 2006 (Erebus, 2002).

Essentially, then, Australia's experience of language policy is one of considerable policy development, evidenced in the number of documents and the frequent revisions of policy, but little achievement of actual policy targets. One reason for the lack of success is that Australian policies have tended to set targets and allocate funding, but have been less strong in formulating implementation plans for achievement of these targets. The policies have set goals and established curriculum frameworks, but the main implementation processes by which targets are realised and curriculum implemented have not been addressed. One of the main unaddressed implementation issues, which nevertheless has been identified repeatedly in policies since the NPL, is teacher supply.

Teacher supply is a key issue in expanding any form of educational provision. More programs require more teachers, but the teacher supply issue has never been addressed in Commonwealth implementation, despite specific recommendations in the NPL and identification of the same issues in subsequent reports considering (Liddicoat et al., 2007; Nicholas, Moore,

Clyne, & Pauwels, 1993). There have been activities related to in-service professional learning, including some (often limited) programs for developing teachers' proficiency in a particular language, but there has been very little work in pre-service education, the main source of teacher supply, other than some small-scale work done by state and territory jurisdictions (Liddicoat et al., 2007).

Where policy does address issues of teacher supply, the strategy adopted rarely links directly to increasing the supply of teachers, as the following strategies from the NALSAS Stage 2 Strategic Plan (NALSAS Taskforce, 1998) shown in Figure 2.1, indicate.

Figure 2.1 Strategies for teacher quality and supply from the NALSAS Stage 2 Strategic Plan (NALSAS Taskforce, 1998, p. 3)

Focus 2: Teacher Quality and Supply

Objective

- To support jurisdictions in teacher quality and supply issues.

Strategies

- Map teacher supply for NALSAS languages and teachers with the capacity to integrate studies of Asia in their teaching;
- Further investigate and initiate distance delivery for teacher training in identified areas of need;
- Provide a training and professional development programme for NALSAS languages teachers focussing on methodology for distance delivery to students;
- Develop language and methodology refresher programmes;
- Promote the teaching of NALSAS languages and studies of Asia.

Here, the strategies relating to teacher supply primarily involve mapping existing capacity and investigating solutions. They do not relate directly to teacher education, except with the possibility of initiating a distance delivery program—a program that was never developed.

The failure of Commonwealth policy to affect teacher supply is notable because tertiary education, including teacher education, is the only sphere of education for which the Commonwealth has direct responsibility. Nonetheless, Commonwealth language policy work has focused entirely on attempting to influence school systems and has never integrated tertiary education in any systematic way. This means that, in implementing language policy, there have been no activities specifically addressing pre-service teacher education and hence the issue of teacher supply. The failure to address teacher supply has meant that Australia has consistently

and enduringly lacked the necessary personnel resources to implement language policy goals.

Conclusion

Australian language policies have consistently failed to meet set targets and, after an initial expansion of language education, especially at primary school, have had little impact on participation rates in languages. The main reason for this lack of development over time is that little real work has been done to address the preconditions for achieving the targets set, especially in terms of teacher supply. Although the need to address these issues has frequently been acknowledged, no direct strategies have been adopted to address them. Policy goals cannot be achieved without a planned implementation process, which includes addressing teacher supply. The existing framework cannot facilitate achievement of the goals set in policy. The policy solution has been not to address supply but to revise the goals of policy in order to bring objectives closer to existing capacity. This process of policy adjustment has tended to bring policy goals closer to school realities—if not all schools can provide languages for all students under current conditions, then not all schools will be required to do so. As a result, language policy has not determined what happens in schools; instead, the school context has driven the policy goals.

Notes

1. Education at secondary level is carried out by teachers who are specialists in particular areas of the curriculum rather than by generalist teachers, and so it is only at primary school level that such a policy would be consistent with models of teachers' employment.

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