

LANGUAGES EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

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Welcome to the **Languages Education in Australia Newsletter**. Produced by the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) jointly with the Australian Parents Council (APC), this Newsletter started as a monthly publication and is rapidly evolving to be a much more frequent event through 2007 - to inform school communities and other subscribers about events, activities and initiatives around the country related to languages education.

We want this Newsletter, and our Languages Education in Australia Website (<http://www.languageseducation.com>) to become increasingly interactive, building two-way communication and providing a venue for school communities to put forward ideas, discussion topics, suggestions – and *a gallery of good news stories and photos about how your school is engaging its community around languages education*. Contact us on: info@languageseducation.com

Note: Disclaimer - Any products or services mentioned in this Newsletter or on our Website are simply noted for your information; no such mention infers or provides any recommendation, guarantee or indemnity from ACSSO, APC or any of our members or employees in respect of any member of the public who may choose to follow up with that service or product.

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UNESCO MULTICULTURAL CONVENTION

UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions 2005 comes into force

The UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression – informally dubbed in some quarters the Multiculturalist Manifesto – came into force on 18 March 2007.

The objectives of this Convention are:

- (a) to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions;
- (b) to create the conditions for cultures to flourish and to freely interact in a mutually beneficial manner;
- (c) to encourage dialogue among cultures with a view to ensuring wider and balanced cultural exchanges in the world in favour of intercultural respect and a culture of peace;
- (d) to foster interculturality in order to develop cultural interaction in the spirit of building bridges among peoples;
- (e) to promote respect for the diversity of cultural expressions and raise awareness of its value at the local, national and international levels;
- (f) to reaffirm the importance of the link between culture and development for all countries, particularly for developing countries, and to support actions undertaken nationally and internationally to secure recognition of the true value of this link;
- (g) to give recognition to the distinctive nature of cultural activities, goods and services as vehicles of identity, values and meaning;

(h) to reaffirm the sovereign rights of States to maintain, adopt and implement policies and measures that they deem appropriate for the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions on their territory;

(i) to strengthen international cooperation and solidarity in a spirit of partnership with a view, in particular, to enhancing the capacities of developing countries in order to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions.

Read more at http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=31038&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

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THE NEED FOR TURBO-CHARGING AUSTRALIA'S LANGUAGE SKILLS BASE

Australia's language crisis

By Robert McClelland MP, Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, speech to the Australia-Japan Business Association, Sydney, 11 July 2007

Australia is at present experiencing what many describe as nothing other than a 'language crisis'. Indeed, a recent report by Australia's Group of Eight (Go8) Universities is titled Languages in Crisis: A Rescue Plan for Australia. It states that:

"Urgent action is required if Australia is to avoid the serious educational, national security and economic consequences of becoming monolingual."

This has national security and economic consequences. There is probably nothing more important in Government than strong and effective public policy in these areas.

So what is the current situation? What is so serious about Australia's current language skills crisis and what does it mean for Australian business, our economic competitiveness and national security?

At present only 13.4 percent of Year 12 students undertake of a foreign language. In total, only half our school-aged population has received any form of foreign language education. By way of contrast, in Finland it is compulsory for school children to study three languages, while in the Netherlands, 99 per cent of Year 12 students are learning a second language.

Furthermore, Professor Tim Lindsey - director of the Asian Law Centre at Melbourne University - observes that Australian school students rank second last out of OECD countries in terms of time spent learning a second language. And worse still our position is declining.

The Go8 report notes that over the last decade, the number of languages offered in our universities has dropped from 66 to 29.5. Asian language study – which I wish to focus upon today – constitutes less than 3 percent of this total of 29 available at tertiary level.

The Asian Studies Association of Australia has collected data between 2001 and 2004 that shows for that period – university enrolments in Indonesian fell by more than 15 percent. They also report Australian university enrolment drops in Hindi, Korean, Thai, and Vietnamese. Indeed they observe that Japanese fell by 5 percent. Whilst the figure for Japanese language students is not as dramatic a drop as some of the others, Professor Peter Drysdale of the ANU's Japan Research Centre makes the observation that there has been a large increase in the number of international students studying in Australian universities who are undertaking Japanese language study.

It must be noted that in some major metropolitan universities overseas students are making up 70 percent of Japanese language classes. Obviously this is no criticism of the levels of international students, but it certainly dilutes the statistic mentioned previously for the purposes of assessing Australia's own long-term Japanese language skills base.

So, currently we have a situation where the global economy is extending into a wide range of new, diverse and growing international markets – many of which lie in our own immediate region of East Asia. Yet this unprecedented level of international interaction is being met by an Australian language skills capacity and diversity which has been dramatically declining.

Read more at <http://www.languageseducation.com/mcclelland070802.pdf>

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IN REVIEW

This week's guest reviewer writes on:

Publication of the Proceedings of the National Seminar on Languages Education 30-31 October 2006

At last the news we have all been awaiting with increasingly avid anticipation. The Report on the National Seminar on Languages Education which was held in Canberra on 30 – 31 October 2006. has now been published. Under the title "*Maximising the Opportunity*" the resulting volume is elegantly presented and lavishly illustrated in full glorious colour on high quality paper, a triumph of the graphic designer's art and modern techniques of photography, printing and production.

Turning now to the text. This tells us the forum brought together 140 representatives for two days of intensive discussion and workshops, aiming to translate enthusiasm for languages education into strategic priorities for action.

It notes these identified needs; to:

- Articulate a strong clear message for the value of languages learning, based on a strong educational and social rationale
- Build the capacity of the profession through investigation to attract and retain languages teachers
- Build strategic partnerships among key stakeholders at state and territory levels to take the statement and plan forward
- Explore innovative delivery mechanisms for languages education

And these priorities:

- Take the statement and plan forward at the local level with action plans developed by the state and territory teams
- Clarify what is to be achieved through the national statement and plan (sic) and translate this into initiatives advocating languages education nationally
- Strengthen strategic partnerships across the three education sectors as well as with business and the wider community
- Tailor the message about the importance of languages learning to suit various audiences in the education community and beyond
- Increase the capacity of the profession by
 - Offering leadership from national and state political levels and within the school community
 - Investigating ways to address the problems of supply and retention
 - Improving the quality of teacher education
 - Ensuring the profession adheres to its standards
- Inspire creative delivery that
 - Encourages an intercultural approach to the teaching and learning of languages
 - Takes account of students' learning styles and their demand that languages learning be real and relevant
 - Ensures languages learning is undertaken within the cultural context that is relevant to students' lives and aspirations
 - Embraces e-learning

"But," I hear you remark: "Do not all of these eminently worthy aspirational statements bear a strong family resemblance to similar points made, for example, in the 1993 National Review, the 1996 National Review, the 2002 National Review, the 2002 National Languages Forum #1, the 2003 MCEETYA review, the 2004 National Languages Forum #2 and indeed in the Statement and Plan itself – which this Forum (#3) felt a need to clarify through some unspecified future process?"

Well, yes. But an important difference here is that the document shows that each State and Territory has made a specific commitment to an Action Plan; and each of these is set out in the document itself, as follows:

Read more at <http://www.languageeducation.com/scar070802.pdf>

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OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEACHERS

Endeavour Language Teacher Fellowships

Applications Extended to 10 August 2007

The Endeavour Language Teacher Fellowships (ELTF) are an Australian Government initiative which offer practising and trainee (pre-service) language teachers an opportunity to improve their language proficiency and cultural knowledge through an intensive, short-term study programme.

In 2008, programmes will be offered for trainee teachers of Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Bahasa Indonesia in Jordan, China, Japan, and Darwin respectively.

Applications should be submitted to the Asia Education Foundation by 5pm on Friday 10th August 2007. (Please disregard the application due date on the application form.)

Access the Application Form here <http://www.languageeducation.com/endeavour070802.pdf>

Enquiries: Carla Neale - email c.neale@asialink.unimelb.edu.au or phone 03 8344 3582.

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EVENTS

Raising Children Bilingually

A free seminar for Parents, grandparents, care-givers and professionals working with children

Sidney Myer Asia Centre
Cnr Swanston Street & Monash Road
University of Melbourne

Sunday 12 August 2007
12.45 – 5.00 pm

The Victorian Multicultural Commission, Community languages Australia and the Ethnic Schools Association of Victoria, invite everyone with an interest in the concept and practice of raising children bi-lingually, are most cordially invited to participate in a free seminar to be held on Sunday 12 August 2007.

This important event is free – but registration by 6 August 2007 is essential to ensure a place as numbers are limited and quickly fill: see contact details below.

Presentations and workshops will be given by these internationally recognised experts in the field:

- Michael Clyne: a bi-lingual Australian and father of a bi-lingual Australian, Michael has researched and published for many years on bilingualism;
- Susanne Dopke: a speech pathologist and international authority – Susanne has published two leading books and numerous articles; and has raised two bi-lingual children
- Robert Debski: has many years' experience of teaching and research in computer-assisted language learning; and is father of two bi-lingual children.

This initiative is strongly supported by the National Parent representative bodies, the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) and the Australian Parents Council (APC).

We believe that if you speak another language at home or in your family, it is a good idea to help your child learn to speak and read in that language, as well as in English, from as early as possible.

Read more at <http://www.languageseducation.com/rumacc070802.pdf>

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THE VIEW FROM NEW ZEALAND

English as the Only Language in NZ

The Press (New Zealand) July 14, 2007

While officially a trilingual nation (English, Maori, and New Zealand Sign Language), New Zealand - unofficially - is regarded by some as a bastion of unapologetic monolingualists for whom the utterance of *kia ora* is a linguistic feat.

In fact, outside Maori-run organizations, you'd be hard pressed to find a government department, a national business, or an educational institution where fluency in a second language is a requirement, let alone a preferred asset on the job application.

But in its steadfast commitment to tradition and practicalities, some say New Zealand has slipped into a cultural abyss - a place where immigrants find it hard to fit in and Kiwis abroad are left fumbling for words and scrambling for the nearest bookstore.

"We've always had this Colonel Blimp attitude that if you want to talk to us, you talk to us in English - New Zealanders have a bad attitude towards second languages and tend to think of it as a waste of time or a pointless pursuit," says Alastair McLauchlan, a translator, teacher, and interpreter from Christchurch.

Read more at <http://www.languageseducation.com/nzpress070802.pdf>

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THE VIEW FROM THE USA

One New School, Three Languages

A new charter school that will teach children in three languages -- Mandarin Chinese, Spanish and English -- is scheduled to open in September in the North Sacramento School District with about 120 children in kindergarten through third grade.

Students at the Lindsay Global Language Academy, as the charter school is called, will learn all their subjects in the three languages from teachers who are native speakers. And they'll practice conversation skills by participating in video conferences with students in Beijing, Shanghai and Mexico City, said Linda Ventriglia, a former Sacramento City Unified educator who created the school.

"Kids that don't get out of Sacramento now are going to see people around the world," Ventriglia said. "We're trying to create a 21st century school."

It's an unusual program in a school district that predominantly serves children from poor families, many of whom speak little English. About 83 percent of students in North Sacramento qualify for subsidized lunches, and 39 percent are not fluent in English. About 50 percent of the district's students are Latino and 12 percent are Asian.

The Lindsay charter school is designed to teach the three languages to students who speak any one of them at home. Students will spend half the day working in English and the other half in Spanish and Mandarin.

Read more at <http://www.sacbee.com/101/story/286512.html>

High School is thinking Globally

Hoping to broaden students' knowledge of the world, one Massachusetts high school is launching a global competency program that will combine travel abroad, community service, and foreign language programs.

Under the program, students would travel abroad, perform community service involving another culture (either abroad or locally), show foreign language competency at a fourth-year level, and engage in side projects from reading books to preparing dishes from other countries. At the end of the program, students will prepare a portfolio documenting their experiences, and will earn a certificate in global competence.

"It's the right time and the right place ...to make this happen for young people," said Needham Public Schools Superintendent Daniel Gutekanst. "Citizenships, both local and global, are key values in this program and in this community."

Those who complete the requirements will earn a certificate in global competence.

Research shows that learning a second language and being exposed to other cultures improves overall academic achievement, according to April Burriss, dean of the School of International Education at Endicott College in Beverly.

"Language learners can transfer those skills to other academic subjects. They do better when they go to college," Burriss said.

"It's also a great way for students to develop new problem-solving abilities."

"This is not laying a brand-new program with a whole new level of bureaucracy or administration or staff," he said.

"We already have a foreign language program; we already require community service. What it is doing instead is refocusing and rechanneling what exists at high school level."

During a period of financial difficulties for some Massachusetts towns and public schools, Gutekanst is confident that foreign language and culture programs can be improved without detriment to any other department.

Gutekanst said programs like language, sports, community service, and after-school activities were not "extracurricular but cocurricular" -- vital to the educational process.

"These programs are not extra; they're essential to students' education overall," he said.

Read more at http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2007/07/22/high_school_is_thinking_globally/

CONFERENCES

ILC 2007 Indigenous Languages Conference

Adelaide, 25-27 September

This year's conference is being held at the University of Adelaide from the 25th to the 27th of September, in association with the Annual Conference of the Australian Linguistic Society and the 2007 conference of Australex, the Australasian Association for Lexicography.

The series of these three linguistics meetings is called LINGAD 2007.

Read more at <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/ilc2007/>

ACSSO National Education Conference

Darwin, 22-23 October

A major element will be an interactive symposium: ***Languages Education in Australia: Where should it be going - and how can we ensure it gets there?***

Discussion will reflect the context provided by the UN Proclamation of 2008 as the **International Year of Languages** – the opportunity to make real transformative and sustainable improvements to all aspects of languages education in all parts of the country.

A range of expert speakers from around the country will present, explore and lead discussion: including at this point: -

- Rob McConchie (Solved at McConchie Pty Ltd – leading international educational consultants who designed and conducted the 2006 Attitude to Languages Survey)
- Anna Dall (University of Sunshine Coast)
- Philip Mahnken (University of Sunshine Coast)
- George Quinn (College of Asia & Pacific Studies ANU)
- Carol Hayes (College of Asia & Pacific Studies ANU)
- Fiona Mueller (AHISA)
- Fiona Dingle (Regional Coordinator, DET Victoria)

Discussion will consider the learnings from the international context. And the opportunities presented by modern technology to see and use the wider world as a "limitless classroom without walls".

Other speakers and discussions will explore critical aspects of cross-cultural communication and the need for informed understanding and engagement with Asia.

A further symposium will explore the issues around Indigenous education and community engagement.

Program details will be progressively published on the ACSSO Website at <http://www.acsso.org.au> as they are finalised. Registration details are also accessible on the site

Fourth National Seminar on Languages Education

Melbourne, 29-30 November

The fourth in the sequence of National Seminars on Languages Education will be organised by the **Asia Education Foundation** (AEF) on behalf of the **Department of Education, Science & Training** (DEST) to be convened in Melbourne on 29 & 30 November 2007.

As with previous Seminars in this series (2002, 2004, 2006), participation in this event is expected to be by invitation.

Further information will be provided as it becomes available.

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What About the International Year of Languages in 2008, then...?

As the commencement of the International Year of Languages 2008 as proclaimed by the UN in May 2007 is now only some few months away, ACSSO and APC have written directly to each Minister for Education at Federal, State and Territory levels, and their CEOs to ask what their plans are for the International Year.

We will raise this again in the course of our next six-monthly full day discussion forum with the federal Minister and her Department, on Monday 13 August.

We will seek to keep you informed about developments through future editions of this Newsletter

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