

MCEETYA LANGUAGES EDUCATION WORKING PARTY

Update on activities

June 2008

MCEETYA Languages Education Working Party meetings

Since our last update in March 2007, the Working Party has met in Adelaide on five occasions. Discussion to date has focused on:

- data collection in relation to student participation and student achievement
- monitoring the progress of national projects
- the identification of priorities for future national projects
- implications of recent federal initiatives.

The Working Party will meet again in Adelaide in early July 2008.

Data collection

Student participation data collected for 2005 and 2006, as one of the national projects, shows that:

- although a large range of languages are taught in Australia, a much smaller number is widely taught
- the languages that occupy the top six places are still the same and in the same order as they were when the MCEETYA Review of 2003 was undertaken – Japanese, Italian, Indonesian, French, German and Chinese. More than 90% of language learners are studying one of these six Languages.
- the overall numbers of students studying languages as a proportion of the whole school population is just under half.

The Working Party is considering undertaking a sample assessment project, in order to gain a clear picture of what students are actually achieving, in different program types.

National Languages Projects

Since 2005, the Australian Government has allocated 5% of School Languages Programme (SLP) funds annually (approx \$1.4m) to national level projects. The national projects which have been implemented to date include:

- improving the national coordination and quality assurance of languages programmes in after-hours ethnic schools (this project is now in its second phase)
- investigating Indigenous languages programmes operating in Australian schools (this project is almost complete)
- investigating the state and nature of languages education in Australian schools (now complete – this report is available on the DEEWR website)
- developing a nationally coordinated promotion of the benefits of languages learning in schools (these materials are likely be disseminated soon)
- reviewing teacher education for languages teachers (now complete – this report is on the DEEWR website)
- developing a Guide to the Teaching, Learning and Assessing of Languages in the 21st Century for schools and teachers (to be completed later this year)

- providing professional learning for school principals (Leading Languages) and leaders in the area of languages education (now complete – the material developed as part of this project is available at <http://www.apapdc.edu.au/leadinglanguages>)
- a national seminar in 2006 and in 2007 for key stakeholders – (visit www.asiaeducation.edu.au for the reports)
- professional standards project, to develop and implement a nationally coordinated professional learning programme for languages teachers (this project, involving more than 400 teachers, will conclude at the end of this year – for further details visit www.pspl.unisa.edu.au)
- the collection and analysis of student participation data for 2005 and 2006.

Other projects are yet to be identified and announced.

The Australian Government has funded additional projects from other programmes:

- Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning in Practice, a professional learning project (June 2006–December 2007), was funded under the Australian Government Quality Teaching Programme (see www.iltlp.unisa.edu.au).
- The Endeavour Language Teaching Fellowships (ELTF) provide opportunities for teachers to enhance their linguistic proficiency in-country. Trainee teachers are also able to participate in some countries. (visit www.endeavour.deewr.gov.au for further information)
- Collaborative Structural Reform for innovative approaches to the provision of languages in higher education.

Recent Federal initiatives

The Prime Minister has announced two major initiatives which will have a major impact on Languages education.

- The \$62.4million National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP). Over four years this funding will provide:
 - additional Asian language classes in high schools
 - teacher training and support to increase the number of suitably qualified teachers
 - development of specialist curriculum for students who display advanced abilities in Asian languages and Asian studies programs.

Currently, DEEWR is engaged in an information seeking and consultation process with the jurisdictions and key stakeholders. It is expected that a forum will be held in September to inform the development of an implementation model for 2009 and beyond.

- The Australian Government has directed the National Curriculum Board (NCB) to develop National Curriculum for Languages and Geography as part of the second tranche of curriculum development.(following English, Maths, Science and History).

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