

# **Towards an Asia-Literate Society**

Papers by Stephen FitzGerald,  
Garth Boomer and Joseph Lo Bianco

Edited by Elaine M. McKay

Current Issues in Asian Studies Series: Number 3

General Editor: Elaine M. McKay.

Published by:  
Asian Studies Association of Australia

Assisted by:  
Asian Studies Council

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Published by the Asian Studies Association of Australia, 1988

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National Library of Australia card number and ISBN 0 908 055 07 2

Typeset by Morphet Press Pty. Ltd.  
17-21 Carinish Road  
Oakleigh South, 3167, Victoria, Australia

Printed and bound by Morphet Press Pty. Ltd.  
17-21 Carinish Road  
Oakleigh South, 3167, Victoria, Australia

Other titles in the Current Issues in Asian Studies Series are

Number 1 Trade and Cultural Values : Australia and the  
Four Dragons - Wang Gungwu, 1988

Number 2 Challenges and Opportunities: Our Future in Asia  
Speeches by the Prime Minister and the Minister  
for Employment, Education and Training, 1988.

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## Preface

The Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA) has over 600 members drawn mostly from tertiary institutions but also from schools, journalism, the public service and business.

In 1978 because of its grave concern about the state of Asian studies in Australia, ASAA sponsored an Enquiry under the chairmanship of Dr. Stephen FitzGerald. The first recommendation of that Enquiry was that the government should establish an Asian Studies Council. This was finally achieved in 1986. Further surveys and enquiries have been conducted by the Council which reveal that while there has been considerable growth in teaching and research in Asian subjects in universities, there has been a falling away in colleges and schools. The sole exception to this picture has been in Japanese language learning which has recently attracted greatly increased numbers of students.

Australian society is in an exciting and confusing state of change. It is being challenged by powerful international forces and a world economy whose centre of gravity is shifting to our region of the world. Informed and open discussion of the implications of these changes will help young Australians to look to the future with confidence and to make career choices in their own and our society's best interests.

The Asian Studies Council has provided ASAA with seed funds to launch this series of booklets on Current Issues in Asian Studies. The two organizations hope that the booklets will take the issues to as wide an audience as possible and will promote and inform discussion about them.

The Asian Studies Association of Australia can be contacted through The ASAA Secretary, Department of Social and Policy Studies in Education, University of Sydney, NSW, 2006.

The Asian Studies Council can be contacted through The Executive Secretary, Asian Studies Council, P.O. Box 826, Woden, ACT, 2606.

## Introduction

The Asian Studies Council has coined a new term: it wants the Australian population to become "Asia-literate". This is defined as

a populace in which knowledge of an Asian language is commonplace and knowledge about Asian customs, economies and societies very widespread. (FitzGerald)

By the year 2000, the Council wants 25% of the total primary, secondary and TAFE students and 10% of higher education students to be studying Asian languages. It wants Asian culture studies to be an inescapable part of all school children's education and it recognizes therefore that Asian content must be part of all primary and secondary teacher training programs.

These changes aim to broaden Australia's cultural perspective, not to deny a European and aboriginal heritage, but to recognize both an Asian heritage and an Asian geopolitical and economic reality. There is no denying that the dynamo for this view is found in economic considerations. However much many of us in the past have argued for the importance of Asian studies for their cultural worth, it is now, when most of our trade is conducted with Asian countries, that the rationale has been accepted by leading decision-makers in politics, business and the public service (see Asian Studies Council Survey of Key Decision-Makers, 1987).

The relationship between the economy and education is a complex one. In many government statements the degree of social engineering implied is crude and is not likely to succeed. Every three years politicians want to be able to point to concrete achievements but between them and the teacher in the classroom there are many points of resistance. Educationalists, but not always policy-makers, know a good deal about the conditions which are necessary to achieve genuine, long-lasting educational change. In this Issue Number 3 of our Series, we bring together two papers, those by Garth Boomer and Joseph Lo Bianco, which distil some of the accumulated wisdom in the field.

Using Garth Boomer's points as a check-list, it is clear that policy support for the promotion of Asian studies has been achieved. This can be found in the speeches of the Prime Minister and the Minister for Employment, Education and Training published in Issue Number 2 of this Series, and from Stephen FitzGerald's paper and the Resolutions passed at the Darwin Conference of the Australian Education Council in this Issue of our Series. Resource support is beginning to flow through the budget for the National Language Policy and teacher development programs are currently being discussed. This is a start but development is not a one-off item, it is a process. It is therefore essential that all the necessary features of the process are put in place. It is essential that the programs be on-going and that the teachers who are implementing the new curriculum in schools receive the professional support they will need. This is fundamentally a new enterprise and the teachers who are the agents of the change do not have the systematic and cultural

support available to traditional areas of the curriculum. It is not yet clear that the full realization of what this means has been appreciated by those who determine policy and control resources. All of us who care about the adoption of this policy must press upon governments the understandings represented in the papers of Boomer and Lo Bianco. Without this full realization, we are in danger of seeing the enthusiasm for this third wave of Asian studies dissipate as the previous waves have done in the 1950s and the 1970s.

There are a number of tensions inherent in the Asian studies debate. The first lies in the instrumentalist approach being adopted at the present time unlike the approaches adopted in earlier decades when cultural learning was emphasised. The totality of educational considerations is too complex to be explored in a mere Introduction. There is plenty of evidence however that students will take up studies which increase their employment prospects. The recent increase in Japanese language studies as a result of media attention to the needs of the tourist industry is but one example. But as Lo Bianco points out, it is not at all clear how many students of Japanese will get jobs. Are we in danger of creating a generation of disappointed young people and in turn a back-lash against Asian language learning?

A second tension lies in the relationship between Asian studies and multicultural education. The new wave of Asian studies is, as has been said, instrumentalist. It has also been argued that it is in the national interest to learn more about Asia. Multicultural education found its rationale in social justice considerations. At least two Asian communities have significant numbers within the Australian community. Many others are represented. Valuing the special skills represented in these communities will give their members a place, a purpose and status. Is equal employment opportunity a sufficient policy to tap these skills? To what degree do Asian studies and multiculturalism overlap in the education process?

A third tension lies in the degree of attention we give to Asian languages as opposed to Asian studies. It is very much easier statistically to quantify students of languages. Asian studies, on the other hand, may be undertaken under a number of disciplines - history, politics, economics, literature, art, etc. Competence in language will be achieved by only a minority of students, though a limited competence may be very useful, say, in the tourist industry. Asian studies, on the other hand, can reach every individual in our population.

The development of a National Policy on Languages - all languages - has pre-dated a National Strategy on Asian Studies and has already had considerable resources devoted to it. Tertiary teaching and research in Asian studies has already been identified as a priority area for funding under the National Board for Employment, Education and Training. Asian studies curriculum developers, teacher educators and teachers in schools should ensure that the resources needed to support their work in schools reach their hands. The Asian Studies Council, as Stephen FitzGerald says in his paper, needs

to tap a variety of networks. He invites contact from interested organizations and individuals, even "to bully us a little", he says.

As FitzGerald points out, it is difficult for the Commonwealth to act without the thorough endorsement of the States. Herein lies a fourth tension in developing educational policies for the nation as a whole. Thus all of us who are concerned for the development of Asian studies in Australia welcome the resolutions passed at the Darwin conference of the Australian Education Council (AEC). This Council consists of all Ministers for Education in Commonwealth, States and Territories and we include their resolutions with regard to Asian studies so that teacher and subject organizations can refer to them in promoting Asian studies at the level of the states and territories.

We are making these papers available to as wide an audience as possible in the interests of promoting discussion on the issues they contain. In particular we hope that well-informed educators throughout schools, colleges, universities and in the bureaucracies will develop realistic policies towards the process of educational change and devote adequate resources to that process.

I wish to thank John D. Legge and Bee Tan for help in the production of Issue Number 3 in this Series.

Elaine M. McKay  
August 1988.

## NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY AND ASIAN STUDIES

Dr Stephen FitzGerald, Chairman, Asian Studies Council\*

You will all have seen recent press coverage of statements by Mr Dawkins and Mr Keating about the link between Asian studies and Australia's economic performance in Asia.

You might be excused for treating such statements with a degree of scepticism: the battle for Asian studies is one which most here have waged by one means or another for years, in many cases in an environment of dwindling resources and seeming official indifference.

Inquiries have come and gone; statements have been issued; the bandwagon - or should I say juggernaut - trundles on. Why, you might ask, should the latest flurry prove any different, especially in the current climate of fiscal stringency?

In this talk I want to discuss Asian studies in the context of national education policy. In so doing I will give reasons why I think we have grounds for optimism that things may actually change, that Asian studies may cease to be a neglected child of the academic family and emerge as - if not the spoilt darling - at least an important member of the family.

In the process I also want to describe what it is that I think will emerge: and it might not be entirely the type of adult some would hope for, that is, refined, intellectual and withdrawn. It might, rather, be eclectic, somewhat utilitarian, even a little brash and "streetwise": the kind of person to whom you would only marry your daughter to save the family fortune.

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To the extent that we have had a "national" education policy, it has been expressed mainly through tertiary education: it is in this sector that the Commonwealth holds most sway because it provides directly 85% of funding, while for schools it provides directly only about 10%.

But even in tertiary education, policy has been reasonably static for the last two decades. We have had the so called "binary" system and restricted access by institutions to non-government sources of funding for purposes other than research. At the same time, the fiction if not the fact of institutional independence has been maintained. Education has been regarded as a public good rather than a private gain and in consequence privately funded tertiary institutions have been largely excluded.

In schools, control over syllabuses and curriculum has become ever more decentralised and the range of subjects has increased. Language in general

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\*Ed: This paper was delivered at the 1988 ASAA Bicentennial Conference by Dr. Sandy Gordon, Executive Director, Asian Studies Council.

In schools, control over syllabuses and curriculum has become ever more decentralised and the range of subjects has increased. Language in general and Asian languages in particular have suffered a retreat as part of this process and tertiary institutions no longer insist on them as pre-requisites for some faculties.

The third Hawke Ministry is intent upon sharpening Australia's competitive edge by pursuing a range of what it refers to as "micro-economic" changes. Central to its strategy is the belief that institutions must become more flexible and effective if Australia is to benefit from the macro-economic changes which are taking place.

Australia's performance in education and training has been identified as a key area for change in this process, as illustrated by the creation of the new "super-ministry" under Mr Dawkins. At the heart of the new policy in education and training is the belief by Government that our competitors are out-performing us precisely because their record in education and training is superior both in quality and quantity.

Perhaps because it has greater capacity to create change in higher education, this is the area on which the Government has decided to focus its efforts in the first instance.

It is now some months since the "Green Paper" on higher education set coffee cups rattling in common rooms around the nation. In essence, the Government's proposals amount to:

- a new system of higher education, the broad objective of which would be to create a stronger and more responsive relationship between tertiary education and Australia's international competitive needs through
- fewer, larger institutions which can offer students wider study choices;
  - competitive tendering between institutions for new places;
  - better targeting of research funds;
  - more flexible staffing arrangements;
  - better credit transfer arrangements to enable students to move freely between institutions and from TAFE into higher education;
  - an end to the so called binary system; and
  - encouragement of institutions to seek funding outside the traditional government sources in order to provide for higher participation rates at no extra cost to government and to make institutions more responsive to market demand.

While the proposition that a primary role for education should be to meet the immediate needs of trade and industry has generated considerable debate, the fact is that government clearly wants it to play such a role. This fact in itself has important implications for Asian studies. For example, it appears to me obvious that there is a close relationship between Mr Dawkins' concern about and interest in Asian studies and his concern to make education in general more responsive to Australia's international competi-

tive needs. The subject of Asian studies in the context of the wider education reform proposals is not seen as something to be by-passed as esoteric, or not important to our international performance, or a 'soft option'.

This point is given some substance by the funding provisions made for Asian studies. Not only has the government established the Asian Studies Council and provided it with a core budget, but it has also specified that \$1.85 million be allocated to Asian studies under the National Policy on Languages funding provisions. Moreover, in providing over \$15 million for the total National Policy on Languages Program, the Government emphasised the importance of languages of economic significance, which would include Asian languages.

And if there are any further doubts about the importance the Government ascribes to Asian studies, they will surely be dispelled by the Prime Minister's speech in opening this Conference.

While we can conclude from the above that Asian studies may at long last be about to assume a more central role than previously, we must also assume that the Government will be expecting from practitioners of Asian studies a more responsive and flexible approach.

So far as the Asian Studies Council is concerned, I think it would be fair to say that my eight colleagues and I welcome any attempts by the Government to make Asian studies more responsive to Australia's marketplace requirements in Asia, a region in which growth is occurring far more rapidly than elsewhere in the world. It would also be fair to say that this concern with what might be called the more functional aspects of Asian studies dates to before the inception of the Council and well before the current debate generated by the Green Paper.

In my own case, it derives from nearly twenty years of business and official experience in Asia, during which time I have had the opportunity to see at first hand the consequences of our failure to produce in sufficient numbers people competent to operate there.

And lest it be thought that this view is held in isolation, let me cite the results of two surveys conducted by the Asian Studies Council. The first was a survey of 2,500 key decision makers in politics, the bureaucracy and industry. Sixty five percent of them felt that a high to very high priority should be given to Asian studies. The second survey was of industry requirements in Asian studies. Although the Asian Studies Council has some reservations about the data and would like more work done on them, it would appear that over the next five years business will require 100,000 new recruits with Asia-related skills. If this is so, it behoves us all in the field of Asian studies to be ready to deliver. I should add, if further evidence was needed, that it was only in last week's Financial Review that our Senior Trade Commissioner in Tokyo, a person who is fluent in Japanese and is surely in a position to know, slammed the present employment practices of Australian firms which attempt to approach Asian markets totally unprepared.

It is traditional at this point for the speaker to pull a number of caveats out of his sleeve in order to give a sense of balance to the proceedings. Well, here they are.

*It is not my intention to say that Asian studies should become entirely practical in orientation or to imply that all our efforts should centre on taking care of industry. I am of the view, and I believe that my fellow Council members would support me, that there is a need and intellectual justification for Asian studies professionals to contain a stratum of people who are Asianists qua Asianists. It is from this stratum that academics and teachers would be drawn. These people would also revise and refine our perceptions of Asia through their research. They would ensure the continuing intellectual health of Asian studies and would have a vital role to play as the guardians of quality.*

Nor is it the view of the Council that nothing has happened in Asian studies, that Australia has no 'runs on the board'. Indeed, I can think of a number of departments in which highly innovative work is being done right now.

*But it is the Council's view that what Australia requires is that we achieve considerable depth in the study of Asia, both in terms of quality and quantity, and that we are not even set on the right path to achieve such depth.*

It is only through having such depth that we will ever as a nation feel comfortable in our Asian environment and make full use of the economic and other benefits which that environment provides. Our main asset in Asia is not that we are in it or close to it. Mere proximity has little to offer in the world of the telefax, 747 and high value hi-tech products, except at the margins. Our being proximate to Asia can only work to our advantage if our closeness persuades us that we must as a nation become "Asia-literate"; that is, have a populace in which knowledge of an Asian language is commonplace and knowledge about Asian customs, economies and societies very widespread. Such knowledge will not help our performance just at the margins. It will be central to our ability to perform.

One has only to look at the situation in schools to make the point that we have not achieved anything like this depth. Asian studies in schools were recently surveyed on behalf of the Asian Studies Council by the Centre for Education at the University of Tasmania. The survey found that for Asian languages.

- In primary schools, only 0.7% of children studied an Asian language, compared with 6.3% for languages in total. That is: eight times as many children study non-Asian as Asian languages and less than 1 in 100 study an Asian language.
- In secondary schools 3.2% study an Asian language, compared with 27.5% for languages in total. By Year 12 only 2.2% study an Asian language.

The survey further found that it is very rare for an Australian school student to have the opportunity to study Asian society, culture, politics, economics and literature in a systematic fashion.

The view of the Council is that it is in schools that the seeds of the kind of in-depth knowledge about Asia which I have referred to above must be sown.

The schools will be crucial on three counts:

- First, it must be through the schools that people acquire their interest in Asian studies and languages. It is only as a result of a push factor from schools into universities and colleges that Asian studies will be taken up by students in significant numbers. But it should be noted also that there will need to be a commensurate demand for Asia related skills in industry for students to want to take up the study of Asia at any level of education.
- Secondly, while tertiary institutions will be vital on several fronts such as "catch-up" provisions for Asian studies and production of teachers and academics, they will never be able to provide the in-depth cover of Asia throughout society favoured by the Council. Only a comparatively small percentage of the student population is actually covered by them, and those people are also required to work intensively acquiring professional and other skills.
- The third reason for concerted action in schools relates particularly to the study of language and to the fact that some Asian languages - especially the character-based ones of North Asia - take up to 8 times longer to acquire than European languages. The Survey on Asia-related Skills in Industry commissioned by the Asian Studies Council and carried out by the TAFE Centre found that employers were most interested in employing people for their functional skills - whether they be in business, law, engineering or economics - and that Asian studies must be an adjunct to these skills. Given the difficulty of acquiring language skills and also developing first-rate professional qualifications in tertiary education, it would be far preferable for students to enter tertiary education with a headstart by having acquired a sound basis for further language development in school.

It is this concern with Asian studies in the national context which has led the Asian Studies Council to conclude, for instance in its draft National Strategy for the Study of Asia in Australia, that Asian studies in this country is in a parlous state. This is not in any way to downgrade the work of those toiling in the vineyard; it is, rather, an assessment of what we have still to achieve as a community in the light of our very great need.

Perhaps this is a convenient point to move from the wider issues to a discussion of the work of the Asian Studies Council, both current and planned.



But before doing so, may I briefly digress in order to say something about how the Council and its Secretariat functions and how organisations such as the Asian Studies Association can most usefully become involved.

From the outset the Council determined that it did not wish to create yet another large, self-perpetuating bureaucracy. It therefore decided to function with a very small Secretariat. Lest what I have just said be taken as "gilding the lily", I should also add that necessity in the current difficult budget circumstances also played a part. What this means for the way the Council operates is that it is unable to establish the kinds of networks it would like to establish. It is important for organisations such as ASAA to understand this and to come to us rather than assuming that we are necessarily in a position to come to you. Provided that you are willing to bully us a little, we are certainly willing to listen; and in fact keen to use the important network which ASAA is able to provide.

As we have seen, it is in the schools that a Commonwealth agency such as the Asian Studies Council has most difficulty in operating. National education objectives are not easily pursued in such a decentralised system, and the states are wary of attempts by the Commonwealth to make them follow the lure of money. In confronting the problem of Asian studies in schools, it was therefore necessary for the Council to seek the support of the States at the highest level. This has involved what I would refer to as "quiet work" - discussions behind the scenes with state ministers and other key people in the States' education hierarchy. Then we needed to get the states to agree between them on a common and co-ordinated approach to the problem. In this we were greatly assisted by the common forum already provided by the Curriculum Development Centre.

The States are now agreed to share curriculum and materials development efforts between them as follows:

- Chinese language will be co-ordinated by Victoria;
- Japanese by Queensland and Western Australia;
- Indonesian by the Northern Territory and South Australia;
- and
- the study of Asia by Tasmania.

We are also working towards a co-ordinated approach to the extremely difficult and costly task of ensuring that we have enough trained and competent teachers.

The agreement of the States to co-operate in this way, while not unique in Australian education history, is certainly a significant development which augers well for Asian studies in schools.

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While it is all very well to pursue our Asian studies goals through schools, we must also be aware that the effects of such activities will not be felt for

many years. Meanwhile, we have an enormous and urgent task ahead of us in providing catch-up courses for people already in the workplace.

Tertiary institutions have a vital role to play here. The kind of courses which they might be able to provide are new and innovative language courses; intensive language courses designed for special purposes, such as workers in the finance and tourism industries and businessmen; and courses designed to teach people about business practice, cultures, politics and religion in neighbouring Asian countries.

The changes currently under consideration within higher education are likely to be directly relevant in terms of the ability of institutions to provide such courses. Some of the proposals now on the table through the Green Paper<sup>1</sup> may well lend themselves to a more responsive approach to the study of Asia on the part of tertiary institutions. I am thinking here particularly of provisions which would allow institutions greater flexibility in conducting shorter courses on a cost-recovery basis and the proposal for more flexible credit transfer arrangements.

I referred earlier to a desired balance between what might be called the practical or functional aspects of Asian studies and the need to ensure its continuing intellectual health. How that balance should be achieved and maintained is a highly complex question. It is one which the Council would not presume to answer without initiating a process of inquiry, to be conducted by leading practitioners in the field of Asian studies, university and college administrators and businessmen.

The Council has therefore proposed to Mr Dawkins, and he has accepted, that there be a review of Asian studies in tertiary education.

The review will commence in March this year and run for 8 months. It will be conducted by a seven person steering committee, to be chaired by Professor Malcolm Nairn, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Murdoch University. Research will be undertaken by a full-time research directorate, under the direction of Professor John Ingleson, who will also be a member of the steering committee. Other members of the committee will be Professor Nancy Viviani, Professor Alan Rix, Dr Michael Sawyer and Professor Jiri Neustupny. A seventh member, to be drawn from the ranks of industry, is still to be chosen. Draft terms of reference for the inquiry are available for those who wish to see them.

The review will be a seminal one. Not only will it provide valuable advice to the Council in the way it does its work, but it will also provide a blueprint for the broad structure of Asian studies in tertiary education well into the next century.

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1. The Green Paper has now been published as a White Paper titled *Higher Education: A Policy Statement*, July, 1988.

In conclusion, I would say that it is my belief and the Asian Studies Council's belief that we now have the opportunity to create tremendous change in the way Australians learn about Asia and operate in it. We are not concerned with changes at the margin - the statistics alone show that this has not worked.

The opportunity I refer to derives from the Government's current concern to use education and training much more actively than hitherto as a means of sharpening Australia's competitive edge, combined with the fact that certain key Ministers regard Asian studies as very important to our competitive position in Asia.

I believe we must seize that opportunity and exploit it: but in so doing, we must be conscious of exactly what it is the Government wants from Asian studies in practical terms while at the same time retaining a balance which permits Asian studies to maintain its integrity and fulfill its analytical and research role.

## Innovation and Reform in Language Education\*

Weaving with Imagination or Pulling Levers  
With No-one at the Other End?

Garth Boomer Chairman, Commonwealth Schools Commission

I am really not terribly well qualified to speak to this symposium on Languages in Education so I had better put my language qualifications on the table at the outset. I majored in Latin which means that I have a great interest in language and I am continually fascinated by it and with it but I do not, I regret, speak a living second language.

I have given myself the sub-title today of "Weaving with Imagination or Pulling Levers with No-one at the Other End?" I am really posing a couple of alternatives to those who are now speaking with a good deal of rhetoric, and backed by a good number of policy statements about the need for improved and extended language services in Australia. Are we, as a nation, going to weave with imagination in bringing about this change or are we going to let imagination slide and try to get into some sort of "bully pulpit" method of change? I borrow the term "bully pulpit" from the USA where it is used to describe Federal haranguing. While the federal government in the United States is not putting a great deal of funding into education, compared with the States, they have a few officials in education who are really good rhetoricians. These people get to the pulpits and say, for instance, that every grade 10 student in the USA should study Silas Marner because, like epsom salts, it's good for you. By such methods, and the good will of the States they hope, then, to engender curriculum and cultural cohesion across the States.

There is a tendency at the moment, particularly in the school area in Australia, for us to be generalising with a lot of good statements but not necessarily having the funded long term strategies to go with the words. If our imagining how to bring about change is lacking we will get what we deserve. I would like to think that some of the things that I say might be of interest to the Asian Studies Council and other change agents at the federal level before they get too far down the road in implementing their policies.

There are some preconditions or major features which must accompany change if it is to be long lasting. There have been many, many studies now of curriculum change and innovation. I recall one lovely study, for example, about how new farm implements get to be taken up in the United States. When the new farm implements come out, a few high fliers or high risk farmers buy these new implements and try them, but it is not until a good, plodding,

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\*Edited transcript of a panel address, ASAA Bicentennial Conference, Canberra, February 1988.

safe, middle of the road farmer, who never has backed a loser, adopts that farm machinery that it suddenly takes off and is then implemented across the whole of the United States. Similar studies about the uptake of pharmaceutical drugs show that there are a few who will get out there and try them early but it is not until the generally perceived no-risk doctors start to prescribe that they actually take off and are made more universal. So it is with many educational changes.

The Rand Report in the United States, around 1975, is worth having a look at in regard to curriculum change. If a system wishes to secure a curriculum change, as we are trying to do in the language area, it will need to work at all levels of the system and ensure some of the following:

First of all, of course, there needs to be policy support.

In this regard, in Australia, it is worth noting that while we have broad guidelines, we do not have strong measures in most cases, to ensure that things are actually done. Nevertheless the policy still is important and that policy should have within it, as we have at the moment, a rationale, some goals and some targets.

I do not think we are far advanced in targeting the percentage of students who will be studying Asian languages by, say, the year 2000, but that is something we need to look at. We need this policy support not just from the systems, from Head Office and Education Departments, but we need also support for those policies from the unions because unions do have ways of ensuring that there is no-one at the other end of the lever if they don't like the policy. I do not know to what extent the Australian Teachers' Federation and the ACTU, support the national languages policy but their strong support is essential. I think that they would generally say it is a good thing but how far they would go down the road on Asian languages with a strong economic instrumentalist rationale attached, I do not know.

There also needs to be structural support. This is a very strong part of the Rand Report findings. This includes having the change institutionalised through official appointments to positions. There is nothing like having actual official positions where people have titles such as "Language Co-ordinator". If you have a senior master or mistress in a school with the title of "Languages", there is much more chance of that being a lasting thing in those schools than if you do not have them. It is interesting to note that I learnt two days ago that in Tasmania there are only four senior masters or mistresses now in the language area. At a basic level, systems need to put in leaders in schools and also, of course, language consultants, in the system. They need committees looking at implementation of these things, specialist language schools, accompanied by flexible zoning deregulations to allow access to offerings.

If you are going to set up a school that teaches Japanese and you want to open it up to all students in the ACT, for instance, you need regulations

which will allow people to move across the city to do that work. So there area whole range of structural supports and I believe these are very, very important. The real signs that our Languages policy is working will be people on the ground, structurally and administratively, to demonstrate concretely that it exists.

Of course you also need, as with anything, resource support, and salaries for these extra people. You need curriculum development units or specialist teams to produce your guidelines and your text books. You need a supply of teachers who are qualified to teach in these areas. Most of this is self-evident. I am running through these just to show you that it is a complex business. I am trying to underline that, if our leaders say that we must have Asian languages in Australian schools, there will need to be consequential actions and support.

Professional development is needed clearly, at both the pre-service and in-service level, through out-of-school courses, and teacher exchanges, but most of all there needs to be time for teachers within schools to work up new curricula. All of these things are very, very important indeed and carry a big bill.

The kind of money that we are injecting at the Commonwealth level to stimulate language development, important and significant though it is, is relatively small compared with what will be needed when States actually get to put classes on the ground. That is why there will tend to be some resistance or caution from the States because they know that in accepting some of this seed money, there are hidden costs in these areas of professional development, resource support and so on. So if we think that the initial sum that is being put into the languages policy, for example, will do it, it will not. It will require enormous goodwill, motivation and additional money from the States themselves.

We also need a climate within which these changes are supported. We need a groundswell of public opinion from business and industry, from parents and from the media. We need understanding and support as to why we should do these things. It is all very well at the moment to say this is a good thing, but it now needs to come down to the hard argument. At the moment we have an overcrowded curriculum and there are fierce fights within schools just as within the existing faculties. If we are to add further languages or argue that Asian languages should supplant Australian history or technical and vocational subjects that are also economically important, we will have arguments. Parents and the community will argue rightly about what curriculum diet their children should have, not to mention teachers.

In these debates we will not get far unless we have a good strong community support. The media seems to be supporting at the moment but when it gets down to the arguments about time spent on English teaching or the basics in mathematics versus time spent in language learning you will understand the kinds of complexities I foresee.

There is also of course, a need for what I would call "valuing" support. One valuing support is the perception of the community, students and parents about the prestige and rewards that apply. Here students are fairly canny. They know which subject choices lead to the high prestige jobs and financial reward. If learning Asian languages over time does not lead to high paying jobs then there will be a tendency for people, the high fliers at least, not to participate.

There is also "examination status". Some subjects, we know, are weighted to give them more worth. There is a lot of confusion and obfuscation about this but most people sense that you have a better chance of getting into Universities if you get high grades in mathematics and science than if you get reasonably high grades in say social studies or biology. It will be very interesting to see what kind of examination status and weighting is given to languages study.

Why did I major in Latin? Well, in 1956, it had high status examination weighting. I had to do a foreign language to get into an Arts degree and Latin was the only language available. Note that making something a University pre-requisite already lifts its value considerably. If you don't have those sorts of pre-requisites and forces coming down from the tertiary sector, you could be in trouble in securing languages on the ground.

I have already mentioned the question of room on the curriculum and it is an issue that will be debated fiercely when it gets to the school level.

You also need, of course, systemic links. I was talking to the President of the Australian Primary Principals' Association recently about this and the talk I am now giving to you and he said: "Make sure to tell them not to get off half-cocked on this. There have been so many cases of a primary school offering a language which is not offered at the secondary level, or where, once the teacher who taught a language left, the students were left high and dry."

Parents who have an expectation that a language was going to be taught long term then experience a sell out on what they saw as an understanding. There will be trouble for sure, if there are no systemic links between the preparation and demand for teachers, and proper articulation of primary schools with secondary schools who can take up and continue the language. With regard to teachers, we need a strong pool. We need reserves, not just one teacher. Without reserves, schools become vulnerable and precarious. There is a strong possibility that we will be educating parents for disillusionment. People will feel betrayed when the school can no longer offer the language.

I do not wish to be a repressant here. I am trying to point out that it is complicated.

Finally, if you haven't got good teaching then you will produce half-hearted students who go through the motions, who give the illusion of knowing but, in fact, are severely limited and constrained.

In Australia there is too much language teaching already, I submit, where, despite many, many hours of instruction a functional capacity in the language is not achieved. The language operates only in formulaic situations, under close guidance, akin to living within an iron lung.

I think that there may be something wrong generally in Australia with the teaching of languages, all languages, not just Asian languages. We badly need reform in languages teaching towards what I call the "engaged" or "applied" model of language teaching, where language is taught in use for real purposes, as opposed to a kind of academic code cracking. Timid and relatively disengaged language teaching may help to explain why languages are almost now a quaint vestigial tail on the curriculum, as Latin became.

We need to examine long and hard, why language teaching is not working well in this country. We need to specify what constitutes good, dynamic, effective teaching and then prepare people to teach in this way.

One last thing. Along with all these other preconditions, for the seeding of this innovation, we need to look at very strong processes of negotiation and involvement at all levels particularly with the teachers. At the moment the high level rhetoric we are hearing has not, I think, engaged teachers. There is a tendency, because of the need to spend the funds quickly, for our leaders at Commonwealth level to get into the "quick fix" syndrome - a shoot from the hip kind of approach.

I am predicting that if we don't get into some negotiation with the teachers and involve them and get them committed to this work, we will find that the federal monies may go up like crackers on bonfire night, spectacular for a moment, but rather grim the next day when you look at the ashes.

There is a public awareness process to be gone through. We need to accentuate the benefits and be able to argue them very, very strongly at all levels to explain why we are doing what we are doing.

Having said all that, I am not necessarily pessimistic. I am saying that I reckon we ought to get a twenty year perspective and if we don't have that twenty year perspective and follow through on it, we are likely to go the way of curriculum innovation in the past. We can ripple the waters but there are amazing forces out there that quickly smooth them over. Those of you who have been in schools know about some of those forces. So my message today is that we need to know as much about the loom as possible and then weave with imagination.

## THE NATIONAL POLICY ON LANGUAGES AND ASIAN STUDIES

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Asian languages and studies are one element, a crucially important element, of the National Policy on Languages. Initiatives in Asian studies will be supported from four sources of effort under the National Policy on Languages.

The first is the specifically targeted program on Asian studies. This is worth almost \$2m in each of two years and will stimulate very substantial growth and improvements in this area. This program is administered by the Asian Studies Council.

The second is the Australian Second Language Learning Program. Initial signs from the responses by States are that the bulk of the funds under this program will be directed towards Asian languages.

The third source of initiatives will be from the bodies which exist to provide policy advice in these areas. In addition to the Asian Studies Council whose main role is the promotion of Asian studies, there is the AACLAME. AACLAME's brief is to monitor the implementation of the National Policy on Languages and to further develop it. It will be issuing a journal - Vox - and regularly addressing the wide spectrum of language needs in Australia. You will see from the first edition of Vox, and from AACLAME's submissions to government and its work generally, that it will address Asian studies seriously.

The fourth will be the possible establishment of key centres for teaching and research in Asian studies by the Australian Research Council. I know many bids were put forward and the process of adjudication is about to commence.

For a long time now senior Australian politicians have been gaining headline prominence with calls for language learning to be seen as an important national goal.

During 1987 a series of statements was issued from the Commonwealth government about languages in education. On 26 April at a public meeting in Melbourne the Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, declared the Commonwealth's endorsement of the National Policy on Languages.

On 4 May the then Minister for Education, Senator Susan Ryan, tabled the report in the Senate and there ensued a long debate during which a large

number of Senators of all parties opined on language questions (literacy, "standards", trade and language, "mental discipline and languages", government "neglect", government "commitment" and so on). On 18 June a Press Release was issued by the Prime Minister and Senator Ryan in which a range of programs was described and funding of \$15m for 1987-1988 and \$28m for 1988-1989 was promised to implement the national policy on languages.

After the July Federal election there was a long period of quiet - publicly that is - about the languages policy. On 15 December a press release issued by the (then) Ministers for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs (Mr Mick Young) and Employment Services and Youth Affairs (Mr Clyde Holding) "announced" the national policy on languages and specified the programs to be funded (with only some small differences from the 18 June press release and the pre-July 11 election material).

In addition the categories of membership of the Australian Advisory Council on Languages and Multicultural Education were also mentioned. On 27 March, Mr Dawkins, Minister for Employment, Education and Training, issued a press release announcing the composition and terms of reference of AACLAME.

During this same period many public speeches were made by senior Ministers calling for major attention to be paid to the teaching of languages of economic importance, especially Asian languages. The two most significant were the Australia Day 1988 statement issued by Mr Dawkins and the address given by the Prime Minister to the Asian Studies Association on 11 February 1988. Both these speeches justify languages in terms of economics. Both speak in terms of the historical inevitability of the integration of Australia, in the economic and geo-political senses, with "the region". A great degree of attention is devoted to arguing that education and the economy, especially the labour market are inextricably linked and that education must contribute more and quickly to the restructuring underway in the economy, to the development of a "productive culture" and to Australia's export competitiveness. Language teaching is a recurring theme. The Australian newspaper (in both its editorials and in regular articles by Greg Sheridan) advocates similar points of view. One effect of this linking of economic imperatives with language teaching is the enormous growth in enrolments for Japanese at Australian universities and colleges. This appears to be true across the country (see Australian Financial Review, 8 March 1988, p.6).

The huge enrolment growths have outstripped the planning for infrastructure provision (teacher training, materials development, curriculum reform, even accommodation in some cases). There are voices being raised that either the quality of provision will be diminished or the drop-out rate and subsequent disillusionment rate will increase greatly - or both. That more students are taking Japanese is marvellous but what are the longer term prospects?

In the UK during 1982 a co-ordinated media campaign recruiting students to adult literacy courses coincided with official ministerial support and "pump-

priming finance" (Stock A UNESCO, Quarterly Review of Education, No 21982). My discussions with adult literacy educators in Australia who were present in the UK at this time and involved in adult literacy education confirm my fears. A demand far greater than the provided resources was generated; the longer term effect was a contraction of adult literacy education, an unhappy experience for many students and annoyance for many tutors. Too much was promised, too little provided. I acknowledge a serious moral dilemma, however. Without publicity a major problem can remain unaddressed and hidden but with inadequately resourced promises many students will experience frustration. We risk promising too much to Australian students as we tie closely vocational and occupational outcomes to language courses. I argued in the national policy on languages that justifications for language teaching were a combination of enrichment for individuals and the society (both culturally and intellectually); economics (vocational and trade aspects); the external geopolitical needs of the society (internationalism) and equality (for many Australians questions of language inhibit or bar equality of access to social and economic opportunities). Unless a broad set of justifications is retained for languages I fear that the attempt to gain for language learning a prominence in Australian education - or at least to restore previous levels of study (for example in 1967 44% of HSC students took a second language among their subjects but in 1986, despite the greater choice of languages and the improved knowledge we have about designing syllabuses which are communicative, the HSC candidature for languages is only 12%) - will be riding on too narrow a base of justifications.

It's a two edged sword this economic stuff - it certainly concentrates the mind and has an impact on student's preparedness to take languages. Equally, and potentially disastrously, if it cannot deliver (for many reasons I believe it will not) the longer term effect will be to devastate language learning. A more immediate effect will be to deplete language teaching and learning of the essentially mind-broadening and enriching aspects which are, after all, at least one of the reasons why we compel students by law to be schooled.

So Asian languages and cultures have come of age in Australia's policy making. I am pleased that the National Policy on Languages has been a major stimulus to this. But this stress on Asian languages is neither new nor is it guaranteed to succeed. This is at least the second, possibly the third, concerted attempt to upgrade the teaching of Asian languages. We must learn from past failures to prevent their recurrence.

Externally derived appeals to students to learn almost anything have rarely worked in the past and are unlikely to again. It is instructive to compare and contrast the HSC candidature in language in Victoria. Modern Greek has exceeded French as the language with the largest candidature. But whereas 207 high schools in the State teach French (a strong base) only 40 high schools teach Greek (a weak base).

The structural problems for Greek are insufficient to stop the large number of students who, in their own time at weekends, take the language with which they over whelmingly have a strong familiar connection. We can pre-

dict successful learning of Greek by these students for reasons of integrative motivations. How else can second language learning be gauged?

Three clusters or groups of factors have been studied. The first group comprises individual characteristics such as aptitude for languages, different forms of motivation (eg integrative or instrumental); various affective factors (eg "ego-permeability"); inebriation (one martini does wonders for correct pronunciation by lowering inhibitions, two martinis destroys your skill in the paralinguistic areas); classroom behaviour (eg "input generation").

The second group has to do with social factors: socio-political, social psychological and sociolinguistic factors. A key part of this is the area of intergroup relations - how do individuals who identify with one group learn an outgroup's language. This is especially pertinent in multilingual societies.

The third group is the one over which we can have most control. This refers to pedagogical, methodological and programmatic factors. This refers to such things as the relative merits of using the target language as the medium of instruction vs teaching the language as the object of instruction; time frequency and duration requirements, methodology; materials etc.

To design Asian language programs which work, i.e. which genuinely impart good levels of proficiency, we must draw knowledge from these three sources. We need to induce motivations that are both instrumental and integrative, we must not neglect the fact that attitudes about the target language speakers can have major effects on learning and, importantly, we need to design programs which start early, use competent (desirably bilingual) teachers, which are communicative and adopt bilingual techniques, and which offer frequent and extensive contact with authentic texts (spoken and written) of the target language.

The US Foreign Services Institute after decades of research has calculated that "average" adults taking Italian, Spanish or French require about 960 hours of frequent encounters to reach the halfway point in proficiency between minimal communicative competency and minimal professional competency. For adults learning Japanese, Korean or Arabic, the time required to achieve a comparable result is between 1600 and 1800 hours.

If we exclude Asian languages taught as community languages or mother tongue education (since these programs will be necessarily different in nature from second language programs) then the implications of these considerations are profound. For Mandarin, Japanese and Korean as well as for Arabic we will need, ideally, native-like proficiency in teachers since we will need to assume that the students can have only limited access to texts and also because with Japanese (and Indonesian) there will be greatly reduced opportunities for students to encounter the target language "naturally" in Australia reducing, thereby, their prospects for inductive learning of the language, in the way students of other languages can. The classroom becomes the only foreign language opportunity for the students. Foreign lan-

guage classrooms succeed best when they simulate the real world but provide targeted language input, i.e. language structures, functions and communication strategies directed at the learners' needs and just a little beyond their present level of skill.

It is possible to modify the third of the groups of factors, i.e. the pedagogical and program characteristics, more easily than the other two. Teachers can affect individual characteristics or rather exploit or neglect the particular one at their disposal. The society at large, and activist individuals and groups, can attempt to act on the social factors which also are important. Motivations are hard to engender and sustain if society's messages are contrary. Both instrumental and integrative motivations are important - many studies have found instrumentalist motivations the best predictors of successful learning of English in the Philippines whereas integrative motivations are the best predictors of learning French successfully in Canada.

Unfortunately, there is a yawning gulf between the present loud pronouncements and the realities of Asian language teaching but the prospects are more hopeful they have been for a long time.

To gain the prominence they deserve in Australian education it will be crucial for Asian languages to add to the external (geopolitical and economic) justifications and advocacy, the intrinsic cultural and intellectual enrichment justifications for non-Asian Australians and the community ones too (the learning by Asian Australians of the languages which are used in their homes with which they identify).

Upgrading the position of Asian languages is part of the broader task of upgrading languages other than English teaching and learning, which is in serious crisis. We cannot treat Asian languages as though learning them is not second language learning - with no lessons to draw from what works and what doesn't for any language learning.

The same is true of Asian studies. There is a reluctance among some advocates of Asian studies to ask about the other "studies" movements and how they fared and why. I would urge a serious examination of Aboriginal studies, multicultural studies, Australian studies. All these movements sought and seek that a particular perspective be infused throughout curricula and some explicit teaching of content as well. All must have recourse to the principles and practices of social education before they can hope to achieve any lasting presence in curricula - not to mention some prospect of being embraced by students. So too must Asian studies.

No matter how important Asian languages and Asian cultural studies are for Australia and its economic future, they won't be taught well or learned well as long as the general culture in Australia continues to devalue bilingualism, second language proficiency and biculturalism - and certainly not until we spend at least as much attention discussing education as we do economics, politics and trade.

**RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT THE CONFERENCE  
OF THE AUSTRALIAN  
EDUCATION COUNCIL, DARWIN, JULY 1988**

1. This Conference accepts the importance of Asia as a region of the world which will significantly affect the long-term future of Australians.
2. This Conference recognises the initiatives taken by states and territories in the development of Asian studies and in particular, the study of Asian languages and acknowledges the financial assistance provided by the Commonwealth through the Asian Studies Council for various initiatives to enhance the study of Asia in Australian schools.
3. It is the responsibility of the states to develop programmes and curriculum and to develop appropriate policies in this area. State and territory ministers undertake to introduce/support appropriate initiatives which promote the teaching of Asian languages and studies within their school systems.
4. The ministers recognise that, as part of teacher/student development, regular, widespread teacher/student exchange could be fostered.
5. Ministers accept that there should be collaboration between state and territory education systems, with the support of the Asian Studies Council, to develop flexible guidelines for the inclusion of Asian perspectives across appropriate curricula in the compulsory years of schooling.
6. The ministers accept that there is a need to consider a co-ordinated approach, through the conference of Directors-General, to the teaching of Asian languages and studies, including the development of curriculum materials and structures, inservice and preservice teacher training and supply.
7. The ministers request the conference of Directors-General to prepare options for such an approach in consultation with the Asian Studies Council and report to the next meeting of the AEC.