The Skills in Question

Report on the Professional Learning Strengths and Needs of Teachers in the NSW Community Languages Schools

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A Report to the NSW Community Languages Schools Advisory Board
1. Introduction

This report presents findings from a study of teachers in the government-funded NSW Community Languages Schools Program. The study, undertaken by the University of Sydney and funded by the NSW Department of Education through the NSW Community Languages Schools Board, aimed to explore the professional learning strengths and needs of the 2,707 volunteer teachers in these schools and to investigate the reasons for teacher continuation/attrition in the schools.

The first section of the report provides an executive summary of the key findings and recommendations. The Background reviews the growing body of research literature into Community Languages Schools and overseas-trained teachers in particular. Section 3 provides an overview of the methodology of the study. The findings are presented in two sections: firstly, the results from an online survey of all teachers (n=854) secondly, an analysis of interview data from online and face-to-face interviews with 47 teachers. The final section makes recommendations for the future for the teachers, for the schools and for the funding bodies. We thank the NSW Department of Education and the Community Languages Schools Board for their support for this study.
Community Languages Schools are a major provider of languages education across Australia with over 100,000 students and 7,000 volunteer teachers. In NSW, 34,804 students are learning one of 54 community languages taught by 2,707 teachers (NSW DOE 2018). This report presents findings on the professional learning that teachers bring to their role, the support they receive, the role this support plays in their staying or leaving the schools, and their perceptions of their short- and longer-term professional learning needs. The study is based on an online survey of teachers (n=856, 31%) and semi-formal interviews (n=47).

Findings

- The majority of volunteer teachers are women (87%) who have been in Australia for more than 10 years (59.5%). There is a spread of ages with roughly one third under 40, a third aged 40-49 and the remaining third over 50. The picture emerging is one of women after raising their families taking the step into this teaching as a pathway into further study or paid employment.
- Teachers have high levels of qualifications. 87% have tertiary qualifications, the majority with undergraduate degrees and postgraduate qualifications. Just under half of the teachers have qualifications in education (44.3%) and just over half (54.9%) have international teaching experience.
- The overwhelming majority of teachers (79%) want to become accredited for teaching in mainstream education schools and contexts but only 3% report having gained this accreditation. A large number of respondents without backgrounds in education had decided to switch to education because of their experiences in the schools. Overseas-trained teachers are often seen as a problem group in Australia (Reid, et.al, 2010) but we calculate an economic benefit to Australia of $182 million in terms of qualifications gained overseas based on domestic costs of educating graduates.
- Teacher attrition is not high: 42% have been in CL schools for over five years and only a third less than two years. The main reasons for teacher attrition relate to lack of support from principal/colleagues, lack of access to host school facilities, lack of teaching resources and professional learning. Being in a supportive environment and enjoying teaching and students was the main reason for staying. These findings indicate the central importance of school context and capacity for teachers. Interview data indicated the key role played by strong school leadership, teacher networks and resources.
- Key requests for professional learning related to using technology and curriculum development. Beginning teachers wanted behaviour management. Teachers also took advantage of professional learning with the majority having completed recent professional learning (66%) and the Certificate in Language Teaching (63%). Older teachers were also more likely to have undertaken professional learning.
- A majority of teachers wanted support in improving their classroom English (86%) and most (80%) also wanted support in studying their community language. Being a native speaker does not mean that teaching the language is easy!
- Only four per cent of teachers are Australian-born. In some schools there is a majority of older teachers and so succession-planning and having pathways for second-generation students to become teachers is a key issue.
- There are many variations within and between specific language groups in areas such as teacher attrition, teacher age profile and English language competency. Evidently, dynamic factors of community relations, social and educational resources differentials, pedagogical cultures and history and patterns of community settlement, for instance, produce meaningful variation and prompt a more nuanced understanding.
Recommendations

Role of the Board
1. That the NSW Community Languages Schools Board (Re)develop a Board Strategic Plan addressing the findings of this study.
2. Specifically, as part of its Strategic Plan the NSW Community Languages Schools Board should develop a coherent Professional Learning strategy for community language schools' teachers. This strategy should guide the Board to provide direction and receive reports on principal and teacher recruitment, retention, development and capacity with teaching quality as a central concern.
3. Additionally, and immediately, the Board should:
   3.1. provide support for the establishment of umbrella community language teacher organisations and teacher networks;
   3.2. support the NSW DoE in having up-to-date website information for teachers on opportunities for professional learning;
   3.3. work with and request that the New South Wales Education Standards Authority:
       3.3.1. provide face-to-face information and advice to teachers with overseas-training and to help them navigate the NESA online portal applying for teacher accreditation;
       3.3.2. change the requirement for teachers to have two or three years' tertiary study overseas of their language to two/ three years' tertiary study in their language where teachers complete their study in contexts where the language is the language of instruction;
       3.3.3. To review and consider alternative HSC pathways for students who have community language background but do not speak the language at home;
4. provide advice to the Minister for Education to communicate to schools the importance of providing access to mainstream school resources such as whiteboards and suitable classrooms for community languages schools.

School Capacity and Resources
The following recommendations relate to the November 2017 agreement between the NSW DoE and the University of Sydney to undertake research and development for the NSW Department of Education. It is recommended:
1. That a proposed scoping study of school resources ascertain how widespread the lack of access to whiteboard, IWB and basic schools resources is;
2. That online access and resource platforms are developed and supported for languages and schools most in need and that schools be supported in the sharing of resources;
3. That priority is given to the development of appropriate K-10 syllabuses, support materials and professional learning to support these;
4. That assessment tools and frameworks be developed from curriculum/ syllabus to credit and support student learning across schools and languages.
5. That priority be given to requesting tertiary institutions to mount appropriate upgrading programs for CL teachers with overseas qualifications which accredit their qualifications/ experience and provide culturally and linguistically appropriate support;
6. That TAFE NSW be approached to mount appropriate pathway programs for CL teachers wishing to gain access to further training;
7. That programs be developed and offered for CL teachers to improve their classroom English and teachers be provided with information on how to access existing courses;
8. That pathways be explored for teachers for accredited study of their community language;
9. That pathways be explored for students in Community Languages schools to work as teachers’ aides and to be supported in becoming teachers in Community languages Schools.
10. That schools be supported in having teacher aides in their schools enabling ex-students to be mentored into becoming teachers.
3. Background: Existing Professional Learning

3.1 Project Officers


These three officers play a key role in supporting professional learning in NSW CL schools. The main areas of Professional Learning are:

- **Resource Development**: e.g., Designing a unit of work, Making and using Flashcards, Games and activities for the language classroom, Different dictation for teaching language
- **Teacher support**: e.g., Planning for multilevel classroom, Behaviour Management, Scope and Sequencing, Lesson Planning, Computer literacy including How to make a worksheet with Microsoft word, using iPads
- **Principal support**: e.g., syllabus and programming, excel for bookkeeping

Three types of short courses are run: courses advertised and open to all Community Languages schools teachers; language-specific courses targeting identified needs; online teacher support where teachers can choose individual need. A range of online course modules have been developed over the past five years. Participation in courses is strong and evaluations have been positive. Education Officers meet regularly and are documenting and putting their short courses into modular formats.

Education Officers also stay in regular contact with the CLS, conducting visits to schools and finding out the school and teacher needs. These visits occur mostly on weekends. Education Officers also provide support to individual schools. They assist new schools in establishing themselves, finding locations for classes, gaining insurance and Fair Trading registration and developing grant applications and completing CLSP registration. They also provide support with programming.

3.2 Certificate in Language Teaching

The Certificate in Language Teaching is a professional learning course for community languages teachers, developed and delivered by the University of Sydney and funded by the NSW Department of Education. It is organised in eight classes as a series of weeknight/weekend, intensive weekday or online sessions. The course balances research and theory with classroom practice, building on teachers’ own experiences and their work in the classroom. Over 2,200 teachers have completed the course since 2007. The sixty-hour program comprised three interrelated modules: Language Teaching, Teaching and Learning K-6, Language Development. Other components of the program included field experience: observations in mainstream day school classes; observations of other school community languages classes; language specific sessions for key language groups; and professional development survey and advice on future pathways.

Assessment tasks include interviewing, assessing and planning for student learning, trialling and evaluating behaviour management plans, developing online/hard copy resources and accompanying lesson plans/unit of work and lesson reports. Evaluation has been consistently positive with 95%+ agree/strongly agree with the value of all aspects of the course.
3.3 Diploma in Language Teaching

In 2017 the Diploma in Language Teaching was developed and trialled with two classes of 63 teachers. This 60-hour mixed-mode program involves a focus on advanced teaching skills, program/unit evaluation and development, reflective teaching and mentoring of other teachers. Participants undertake research and development of negotiated topics in their schools: these include researching/developing new teacher induction programs, student engagement programs, parental support projects, digital storytelling and embedding ICT in programs. The program will continue in future with ongoing evaluation of its impact.

3.4 Other Programs

In 2017, a Certificate in Leadership and Management for Principals/Executive of Community Languages Schools was developed based on collaboration and interviews with experienced CL principals. The program, supported by a range of online video content, will be run in 2018 for a group of 60 new principals. There are three strands to the program: academic leadership (recent developments in teaching and learning), people management, and financial/administrative management of schools.

In 2017, a DOE funded Certificate IV in Community Language Teaching was run in conjunction with TAFENSW. This course gave those with the Certificate in Language Teaching RPL and an accredited TAFE Certificate. Reflection and summary evaluation by TAFE and University personnel running the Cert IV indicate the need for more relevant and targeted VET qualifications and ‘skills sets’ of specific units tailored to the specific needs of teachers. These would provide pathways into a range of areas such as early childhood, adult education and classroom teaching and disability support.

3.5 Language Teaching Conferences

In 2017, University of Sydney researchers conducted one-day language specific conferences the following groups:

- Arabic Language Teachers’ Conference (April 22nd, 180 attendees)
- Armenian Conference (May 21st, 72 attendees)
- Vietnamese Conference (June 11th, 190 attendees)
- Khmer, Lao, Thai and Burmese (September 24th, 80 attendees)
- Korean Conference (October 28th, 160 attendees)
- Persian and Dari Conference (November 19th, 120 attendees)

All conferences were developed in close collaboration with community members and teachers to explore the importance of language, sharing the theme of “My language: My identity.” Each conference included academic presentations, youth panels and workshops and keynote presentations which explored research and a range of innovative and effective teaching strategies. Observation of conference participation revealed that sessions on apps, digital storytelling, filmmaking and language specific issues were particularly popular. Hearing the voices of students and former students from their schools was also a key feature of the sessions.

An exit-evaluation of the conferences returned a high satisfaction score. One reason underpinning the success was the sense of ownership and the level of engagement of communities with the planning and delivery of their conferences. Teachers reported in evaluations that this was the first time they had got together as language group/s and they saw the conferences as a way to develop stronger language teacher networks.
4. Literature Review

4.1 Terminology

The term ‘community languages’ is used widely to denote languages other than English and other than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages spoken in the community (lo Bianco, 1987; Clyne 1991). The term gained appreciation in the 1980s and is used in preference to terms such as ‘immigrant’ or ‘ethnic’ languages to highlight the fact that these languages have become part of the Australian community. Meanwhile, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages revival and growth has also occurred. These languages are also associated inextricably with their communities and the term ‘community’ has gained political and social salience for different claimants in multiple ways.

The history and use of term highlights the fact that diasporic/immigrant languages are a regular part of Australian life and are central to the communicative needs and cognitive, social, and emotional development of a large proportion of the Australian community. Although the term ‘immigrant languages’ is used in Europe and the term ‘heritage languages’ is used in North America (and is gaining international currency), this report keeps to ‘community' because of the connotations that these languages are part of the changing fabric of the national life (Hornberger, 2005).

The term ‘Community Languages Schools’ replaced the term ‘ethnic schools’ in the late 1990s. Again, the term ‘heritage language schools’ is used in North America and ‘complementary schools’ in the UK for the same system of typically extra-curricular languages education.

4.2 Research into Community Languages Schools

Community languages and community languages school systems exist in most parts of the world with the rapid increase in global migration. There have been key studies of community languages in Australia (see Rubino, 2010 for overview), North America (Wiley et al, 2014) and Europe (Extra & Yagmur, 2012). Recent publications have brought together international research into the schools (Kagan, Carreira & Hitchins Chik, 2017). In the past two decades over 200 books, reports and journal articles have been published on community languages education. The following section reviews the research in Australia, North America, UK and Europe.

Heritage language teaching in the U.S. occurs mainly at tertiary level for adults; the research into Spanish at school levels tends to come under the category of ‘bilingual’ education. The study of the voluntary community languages schools has had a rapid growth, with national conferences and an international journal from UCLA (http://international.ucla.edu/nhlc). North American studies initially focused on student ‘ethnic’ identity with a strong emphasis on Chinese-, Korean- and Japanese-American students. This has subsequently expanded to a broader view of the dynamics and diversity of schools and their relative marginalisation especially in global cities such as New York (Garcia, Zakharia & Otcu, 2012).

Research in the UK centred on groups of researchers who studied ‘complementary’ schools in key British cities (Archer & Francis, 2006, 2007; Blackledge & Creese, 2010a & b; Creese et al 2008; Li Wei, 2008, 2011, 2014; Lytra & Martin, 2010). Their work focused on all aspects of the schools: the students’ use of their languages, classroom teaching, parental attitudes, identity development. The UK research has been the key international development in moving beyond seeing the schools as forces of linguistic and cultural conservatism but rather as places where issues of language and cultural diversity are contested and negotiated (Creese & Blackledge, 2011).
Australian research into community languages includes pioneering work undertaken in the early 1980s by Norst (1982a & b). That work is remarkable for its scale: Norst conducted the first national survey of Australian Ethnic Schools, carrying out in-depth interviews with many hundreds of teachers around Australia highlighting community resilience through language learning; gained increasing attention following The work of Michael Clyne and colleagues (Clyne, 1991, 2005; Clyne & Kipp 1999; Pauwels, 2005) is widely recognised as influential for establishing the importance of language learning as a community concern, as well as of identity formation and bilingualism in Australia. Community Languages schools were the focus of specific reports (Baldauf, 1997; Cardona, Noble & di Biase, 2008) and were also included in national studies of languages education (Liddicoat et al, 2007; Io Bianco, 2009; Nicholas, 1993; Ozolins, 1993). This may have been because there was national funding through the Ethnic Schools Program but also because of the greater academic and political profile of community languages in Australia.

There have been studies of community languages schools teaching Chinese (Mu 2014, 2015), Greek (Tsolidis & Kostogriz, 2008), Hungarian (Hatoss, 2006), Japanese (Oriyama, 2010), Maltese (Borland, 2005), Swedish (Nordstrom, 2015, 2016, 2017), Persian (Mokhatebi-Arkadani & Moloney, 2017) and Vietnamese (Reath Warren, 2017). One issue present in all of these studies is the changing nature of the schools in terms of continuing international and national migration. The key findings of the national and international research relevant to this report are as follows:

- The student population in the schools is diverse; their senses of identity are multiple and dynamic; language use is flexible with mixing and shifting between language resources;
- Schools provide a valuable ‘third space’ where sense of belonging, community and culture are negotiated and developed;
- Community languages schools constitute a long-standing and growing sector in languages education;

### 4.3 Studies of Teachers in Community Languages Schools

There is a notable absence of research into teachers in community languages schools: only ten studies (one report, three research theses and six journal publications) were located after extensive library searching. The reason for the lack of research is intriguing when this is compared with the focus on teachers in mainstream educational research. Research into teachers in the formal education system is self-evidently large and ongoing; governments invest substantial sums into education and rely on formalised and increasingly professionalised education to reproduce workforces; this relates to instrumental thinking that certain subjects or curriculum areas such as maths and the language of instruction (typically English) define formal schooling and education. The compulsory nature of schooling also compels public interest, as does persistent unequal access to educational resources. In this scenario, language teaching even in formal schooling competes for attention. Teachers in community language schools are almost invisible adjuncts, their lack of recognition reflected in the limited research literature. Correspondingly, there is also a dearth of research into assessment and educational outcomes of community languages schools.

Kim (2017) in a study of Korean teachers found that teachers who could adjust to and understand their students were able to engage and motivate their students; they reported more autonomy and fulfilment as teachers and also developed this in students. Other teachers relied on past teaching experiences, in particular cultural contexts. This finding had been confirmed in previous studies (Cheung, 2015; Gindidis, 2013; Pantazi, 2010). Gindidis (2013) in a study of overseas-trained teachers and those who had attended schools in Australia, found that the overseas-trained teachers were more traditional; the younger local teachers were more flexible but tended to focus more on cultural issues rather than language teaching. Cruickshank (2015) researched Greek and Thai community languages schools in Sydney and found great diversity in the teaching staff. Although teachers reported feeling marginalised from mainstream schools and lacking in resources, they also had high levels of commitment to and engagement with their teaching; teachers had established support from institutions and networks in the wider community and overseas. They were responsive to changing student enrolments and their communities.
Minty et al. (2008) surveyed and interviewed teachers and head teachers in London supplementary schools of whom 65% were teaching community languages. They found that most teachers (80%) had degree level qualifications from overseas and two-thirds had teaching experience outside the UK (average 7.25 years). The overwhelming majority wanted to gain QTS (Qualified Teacher Status) to teach in mainstream schools. The study found that although 37% had obtained QTS in the UK, most lacked information on pathways to gain accreditation and upgrading. They were unaware of requirements needed to teach in mainstream schools. Most teachers wanted to teach in secondary (53%), primary (37%) further education (40%) or preschools (19%). Secondary teachers wanted to teach languages plus another subject (generally mathematics). The main barrier to gaining accreditation was the cost and time factor for teachers in full-time work with families to support. The need for increased proficiency in English was a key concern; teachers also mentioned the need for ICT skills and skills in curriculum, planning and classroom engagement and management.

The average age of the teachers was 30-44 and a slight majority were women (54%). They had been teaching in supplementary schools for an average of four years. The main reasons for teacher attrition were ‘leaving because of other commitments’ and ‘heavy workload discouraging teachers from staying’. No schools reported teachers leaving because they had gained positions in mainstream schools. The study also identified a trend in schools expanding from ‘mother tongue only’ teaching to providing support for students in a range of curriculum and activity areas. Their key conclusion was:

> Our research has revealed a vibrant, enthusiastic and committed group of … teachers, eager to contribute to teaching of language and national curriculum subjects in mainstream schools (2008:44).

### 4.4 Research into Overseas-Trained Teachers

The second key field of research has been into teachers who have training overseas. In the research they are generally referred to as ‘overseas-trained teachers (OTTs)’ or ‘internationally-educated teachers (IETs)’. With the mobility of teachers across national borders being a growing feature of global society, there is an expanding body of research into this phenomenon in Canada (Beynon, Llieva & Dichupa, 2004; Chassels, 2010; Faez, 2012; Pollock, 2010; Schmidt, 2010; Schmidt & Block, 2010), the UK (Macnamara, Lewis & Howson, 2007; Maylor, Hutchings, James, Menter & Smart, 2006; Miller 2008, Miller, Ochs & Mulvaney, 2008; Warner, 2010) Israel (Epstein, 2000; Remennick, 2002), Europe (Boyd, 2003; Grantham, McCarthy & Pegg, 2007), and Australia (Collins & Reid, 2012; Guo & Singh, 2009; Peeler & Jane, 2003; Reid, 2005; Robertson, 2007).

None of the studies specifically addresses the teachers working in community languages schools although over 60% of teachers in CL schools fall into this category.

The majority of studies in this area focus on overseas-trained teachers either trying to re-enter the profession or already in teaching positions. We know, for example, that the present teaching workforce in Australia does not reflect the diversity in the community: in NSW 33% of students in government schools come from language backgrounds other than English (DET 2016). Only 11% of teachers, however, come from a language background other than English and less than 3% have tertiary qualifications gained in non-English speaking countries (NSW DET 2005). One earlier study estimated over 15,000 internationally-educated teachers unable to gain or upgrade to get accreditation to teach in Australia (Inglis & Philips 1995). The problem of having a predominantly Anglo-Australian profession and the implications of this for curriculum, resources and teaching in schools was identified more than decades ago (Iredale & Fox 1997).

A related finding of prior research is a lack of information and advice for overseas-trained teachers; it is difficult for teachers to find pathways into gaining accreditation and also to gain a realistic idea of their...
needs in negotiating these pathways (Cruickshank 2004; Inglis & Philps 1995). The structure of many pre-service teacher education programs works against overseas-trained teachers. There is little recognition of prior learning (RPL) impacting to exclude primary teachers in particular as primary preservice education is generally a four year Bachelor of Education with no evidence of credit. Overseas-trained teachers generally have work and family responsibilities while many teacher education programs are inflexible (Cruickshank 2004). Overseas-trained teachers who manage to gain accreditation can often be caught in diminishing spirals of gaining casual work; even if they gain full-time positions they have higher attrition rates because of the difficulties of adjustment, reported lack of support and being placed in hard-to-staff schools (Bartlett 2013; Schmidt 2010). An implication explored in recent research is the impact of not having a culturally and linguistically diverse teaching profession on the education of young people (Santoro 2007; Schmidt & Block 2010). What the present study has to offer in bringing these two fields of research together is highlighting the key role of community languages schools for teachers’ professional growth and the pathways and availability of quality professional development.
5. Methodology

The aim of this study was to find out the professional learning strengths and needs of teachers in NSW Community Languages Schools and to also explore the reasons for the attrition or continuity of teachers in these voluntary roles. This information was needed in order to inform and develop appropriate professional learning and support for teachers funded by the NSW government and the NSW Community Languages Schools Board.

There were few models to follow. The only Australian study was that of Norst (1982) where she spent 18 months travelling Australia and interviewing many hundreds of Community Languages teachers. A more recent study collected data on 73 teachers/ head teachers in supplementary schools in London (Minty et al, 2008). Of these an estimated 60% were community languages teachers (n=49). Despite the prevalence of community/ heritage language school systems in North America, UK and Europe we could find no other example of any teacher survey or study.

5.1 Survey Design

We decided on a combination of online survey and interviews. Minty et al (2008) had used hard copy survey and distributed packs to school principals. They achieved only a 5 to 10% response from this. The problem is that school principal/ head teacher addresses and emails are often out of date; teachers often only teach once a week and often do not have time to meet for information to be passed on. Our experience over the past ten years in delivering the Certificate in Language Teaching has been that most teachers now have access to computers and internet. For this reason, we decided on an online survey with an option for teachers to telephone or email their responses to a support person.

Simplicity was a guiding principle for the survey. This was because of the time pressure on teachers and variable levels of proficiency in English demonstrated among cohorts of teachers enrolled in previous professional learning courses. We employed a mix of drop down choices and a few open comments. We gained ethics approval from the Sydney University HREC and developed the survey in collaboration with community members and Department of Education officers.

Initial demographic questions in the survey established age, gender, country of birth and length of time in Australia. The survey then asked about teachers’ ‘best’, ‘second best’ and other languages. Only three respondents reported equal fluency in community language and English. This question was limiting but we chose self-assessment of proficiency (‘best’) in preference to other terms such as ‘mother tongue’ and ‘home language’. We also asked which language/s teachers taught and which school they taught in. The school list was a drop-down menu and only allowed one answer. However, it emerged that many teachers teach across schools and this is something that must be accounted for in future surveys.

A series of questions then asked teachers how long they had been teaching in CL schools, on which day/s they taught and for how many hours. Teachers were asked if they taught any other languages which could also indicate that teachers were teaching in multiple schools. Questions about family and work commitments were included to get an idea of the outside pressures that teachers have.

To gain a picture of teachers’ qualifications and training we asked about years of secondary education (drop down menu), the field (if any) of post-school education (drop-down menu), the type of qualification (open), if/what they were currently studying.

We then asked detailed questions about any teaching experience in Australia or overseas. Questions on qualifications and experience included asking ‘Are your qualifications approved for teaching in Australia?’
31% answered ‘yes’. This turned out to be a misrepresentation because teachers did not understand what constituted accreditation to teach in Australia. Upon examination of other item responses by teachers, we calculated the figure to be closer to 3%.

The final section of the survey focused on professional learning needs: if teachers wanted to become accredited mainstream school teachers in Australia; if they wanted professional learning in English and their community language. Respondents also had a list of topics for professional learning with strongly agree/ agree/ not important options. A copy of the survey is included in the appendices.

Information about the survey was sent to all Community Languages Schools principals on March 28th with a ‘closing date’ of July 30th. There were 903 responses which provided samples of 850 once responses were ‘cleaned’ excluding incomplete and doubled-up responses. We thus managed to gain a representative sample of teacher responses in terms of languages with responses from teachers of 47 of the 53 languages offered in the schools. The sample represents a 32.4% response rate (n=2,642, 2016 teacher data).

The table below provides the numbers of teacher responses compared with school enrolments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Student Enrolments in CL schools*</th>
<th>Percentage of total student enrolment</th>
<th>Teacher survey respondents</th>
<th>Percentage of total responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese (Mandarin, Cantonese)</td>
<td>8,482</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>Arabic</td>
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Teachers completing the survey came from 110 of the 274 CL schools listed. In many cases there was just one respondent, perhaps the principal alone. In the case of the languages with large numbers of respondents, and particularly in numbers disproportionate to their share of total student numbers (e.g. Tibetan, Polish), it appears all such teachers were encouraged or motivated to complete the survey. A further 29 teachers of 12 different languages did not indicate the name of their school.

The main non-response in relative terms was from teachers of Arabic and Turkish language schools. We made special efforts to gain a good sample of Arabic language teachers in the interview component of the study and employed an Arabic-speaking Research Assistant for this purpose.

5.2 Interviews

We decided on interviews for several reasons. To answer our second question, ‘What are the reasons for teacher continuity/attrition in NSW Community Languages Schools’ interviews allowed for authentic
responses to context-dependent conditions and personal experiences. Interviews also allowed us to gain more depth in responses to the first question on ‘What are the main professional learning strengths and needs of teachers in NSW Community Languages Schools?’.

Self-reporting of qualifications is a difficult area. Firstly, the nomenclature of qualifications between countries varies as does the structure of post school education. Secondly, teachers tend to undervalue their qualifications from overseas and place any Australian certificates above these. Finally, teachers often do not fully understand the complexity of the Australian system, for example with certificates (i.e. professional learning courses), TAFE certificates and graduate certificates.

In spite of over 400 teachers indicating willingness to be interviewed, only 47 in total were reached. Repeated emails to make contact did not elicit a strong response. Sending the questions by email and offering written response in reply as an alternative, elicited 21 responses, most of which were comprehensive.

We then employed four research assistants to organise and help conduct face-to-face interviews. The employment of an Arabic-speaking RA was important to achieve a representativeness of teachers. The final concerted effort led to 26 face-to-face interviews. There were at least five additional willing teachers unable to be met due to inability to rendezvous or impossibility of travelling to regional areas, for example, Goulburn or Gosford, on suitable days. Nada, the Arabic-speaking student RA, organised two interviews that Marjory conducted and interviewed 10 teachers of Arabic herself. The language breakdown of interviews was as follows:

- Arabic (12), Armenian (1), Chinese (2), Japanese (5), Korean (3), Tamil (3)

Interviews were done in a range of areas of Sydney (and two in Newcastle) and this involved a lot of driving or public transport. For example, Arabic teachers were interviewed in Punchbowl, Bankstown, Yagoona, Blacktown and Artarmon. One interview could take up most of a day as teachers preferred to meet at lunchtime if during the week or at their community schools at the weekend. The logistics of travelling to places from Blacktown to Newcastle and in finding suitable coinciding times and places also restricted the number of interviews. All interviews were recorded, then transcribed and answers summarised. Interviews by Nada were in Arabic, recorded then summarised in English. Answers to questions in interviews with more than one respondent were individualised on transcription.

The interviews ranged from semi-formal to informal with questions as below:

**Q1:** How did you come to start teaching in your Community Languages School? What was it like when you began your teaching? What have you learned about teaching?

**Q2:** Tell me about your qualifications overseas. What study/courses have you done in Australia? (detail-places and years. Needs to include TAFE and other courses)

**Q3:** What is your aim in Australia? What are you doing now? What do you want to do in future? What have you done to achieve this? Have you had your qualifications assessed? Where/When? What information have you got about getting qualified? (Re-accreditation in Australia)

**Q4:** Discuss future options- for example if they want to be a primary or preschool, find out why- offer options. Find out if they can retrain and what courses would be useful when and where.

**Q5:** Professional development. In your survey you said you really wanted to do xxxxx. Can you tell me more? Ask about what sort of professional development and curriculum support they personally would like, or feel is needed within the CLS context, both personally and for the school.

**Q6:** Volunteer teaching in CLS is not easy and many teachers stop after a year or two. From your experience, what are the main reasons they stop teaching? What support might help them stay teaching in the schools?
6. Findings – Online Survey

This section presents findings from the online survey of all teachers in the NSW Community Languages Schools. Section one of this chapter presents the skills, experiences and qualifications Community Languages Schools teachers bring to their voluntary work. It presents a profile of teacher diversity gained from the survey. The second section presents the professional learning needs identified in the survey.

6.1 Gender and Community Languages Teachers

Teachers in Community Languages schools are overwhelmingly female (87%). This runs counter to national studies of voluntary work where figures for gender show a gender balance (Erlinghagen & Hank, 2006). In 2010, 38% of women and 34% of adult men volunteered although this is based on the average of 60 hours volunteering per year (Volunteering Australia, 2015).

The gender balance in Community Languages Schools mirrors to some extent the situation in mainstream schools. In government schools, 74% of all teachers are female and 81% of primary school teachers are female (NSW DET 2016). There were differences between languages: there was a large percentage of male teachers in newer and emerging languages (45.1%) and also in Tamil and other Indian subcontinent languages (20.4%).

The picture is different with Community Languages school executive: 52% of those in CL school leadership positions are male. There is, however, great diversity between language groups. Japanese schools, for example, have 100% of women in principal/head teacher positions as do 78% of Eastern European and Scandinavian language schools. Chinese schools, however, have 54% males in leadership positions. Males constitute 65% of principals/co-ordinators in Arabic language schools, 81% in Greek language schools and 88% in Indian subcontinent language schools. This indicates a difference with mainstream schools where women constitute 56% of government primary and 38% of secondary school principal positions (NSW DET 2012). The reasons for the differences could be factors such as existing cultural and religious group structures in the community.

6.2 What we Know about the Teachers

Our profile of teachers runs counter to common assumptions of teachers in the schools: that teachers are either retired grandparents and or recent migrants. Firstly, we found a spread of ages of the teachers: 33.1% are under 40, 27.5% are aged 40-49 and 34.6% are aged over 50.

![Figure 1. Age range of teachers](image-url)
Secondly, most teachers have been in Australia a long time: 59.5% of the teachers have been in Australia for more than 10 years; 19.4% for between five and nine years; and only 14.6% for 4 years or less. This age spread goes across length of residence. These figures thus indicate that teachers bring a long-term experience of living in Australia to their teaching.

![Figure 2. length of time in Australia](image)

There are many differences within and between language groups. 57.5% (43% average) of Arabic teachers are under 40 but the marked majority (67.5% cf. 59% average) have been in Australia more than 10 years or were born here. These significant differences, together with the higher percentage of female teachers of Arabic (90%) could indicate that teaching in community languages schools provides a pathway for women after childrearing in Arabic-language and other schools.

The profile of Greek-language teachers differs: 36.4% of teachers have been in Australia for less than four years (survey average 17%). These teachers are female and generally aged under 40. Our interview data indicates that many have migrated as a result of the financial crisis in Europe. In the Greek language schools, typical of many schools, there are also many teachers aged over 50: retirees and grandparents who have a long record of teaching in the schools. The teacher profile thus reflects the migration history of the community.

Several other communities have had different waves of migration, such as Polish and Assyrian language groups, and the profile of teachers reflects these patterns. The majority of teachers of Polish (48%) have been in Australia for more than ten years but a sizeable number (36%) has been in Australia less than four years. In the Assyrian languages schools, all teachers have been in Australia for more than ten years even though the student enrolment includes many recent arrivals. There is a spread of ages in Polish and Assyrian schools.

The profile of new and emerging languages such as Tibetan, Dari and Bangla is quite specific. Over half of the Tibetan teachers are aged under 40 and have been in Australia for less than four years. Nearly all are male, indicating the role of the monks in establishing the schools. Most teachers of Dari are female but have been in Australia for more than 10 years; only one has been in Australia for less than four years. This shows the role of established migrants supporting the schools’ newer arrivals where there are different waves of migration. Teachers of Bangla are younger (all under 50) and have been in Australia for a shorter time; there are equal numbers of male and female teachers: a profile which is common with new and emerging languages.

### 6.3 What Qualifications Teachers Bring

Our key finding is that the teaching force in Community Languages Schools is highly qualified. Survey responses indicate that 87.7% of teachers have post-school qualifications. Just under 40% report undergraduate degrees and 12.7% have postgraduate qualifications; the remainder have college/TAFE level
The groups with the highest percentage of tertiary qualifications (graduate/postgraduate) are teachers of Tamil (26% postgrad), Greek (66.7% graduates) and Indian subcontinent languages (66%). These qualifications are not just something in the teachers’ backgrounds: 49% are currently studying in a range of fields, including education. These findings align with the UK study (Minty et al. 2008) in which 81% of teachers report tertiary qualifications.

Of those with tertiary qualifications, 44.3% had majors in education. This was the main field of study for graduates in all community languages schools. The groups with the highest percentage with majors in education were Japanese (63%), Greek (57.6%), Polish (60%), Swedish (70%) and Macedonian language teachers (71%).

In addition to qualifications, teachers also brought much experience in terms of education. In response to questions about teaching experience, 54.9% of teachers reported teaching experience overseas. This is a more accurate picture of those with a teaching background as in many countries a major in education is not the prerequisite to be a secondary teacher. For example, although only 26.8% of teachers of Indian languages reported a major in education (average 44.3%), 65.1% of the teachers reported teaching experience in India. 43.8% of teachers of Chinese had majors in education but 59.8% had teaching experience overseas.

- The overall picture is one of teachers with high levels of qualifications and extensive teaching experience in Australia and overseas. This level of qualifications should not be underestimated. It represents an economic benefit to Australia in terms of the cost of pre-service teacher education of more than $182 million based on domestic costs of educating graduates.

In response to the question ‘Are your qualifications approved for teaching in Australia?’ 33% of teachers stated that they were approved. However, a more realistic figure, based on responses to other questions, is 3.9% (n=33). This is because some teachers were teaching in non-government schools where NESA accreditation was not required and many had counted volunteer work such as teaching Scripture or Ethics as having accreditation. Twenty were accredited K-6 teachers, 11 secondary teachers and two were teaching in the government Saturday School of Community Languages. Seven of the teachers also indicated they had only gained casual teaching work.

6.4 What Professional Learning Teachers had done

The majority of teachers (66.1%) had attended professional learning workshops. This included school-run professional learning or workshops and programs provided by NSW DoE-funded project officers and other bodies. Participation was significantly higher for teachers of Vietnamese (78.3%), Tamil (74.1%) and lowest for teachers of Indian languages (44.4%). A majority (63%) had completed the University of Sydney Certificate in Language Teaching. We analysed whether age was a factor in participation: Are older teachers less likely to attend professional learning? The contrary is true. 68.8% of teachers over 50 had completed the Certificate in Language Teaching and 69.87% had undertaken Professional Learning in the previous year. Vietnamese language schools which have a large percentage of teachers aged over 50, had the highest rates of participation for these teachers: 90.35% had completed the Certificate and 80.7% had attended recent professional learning. Deeper analysis is needed to understand any variables affecting teacher participation in professional learning.

6.5 Other experience, skills and Abilities

Teachers reported fluency in more than 90 languages. Many were also fluent in different dialects or varieties of their languages. Over 47% of teachers were multilingual, speaking more than two languages. The main third language was French (n=66). Many teachers were teaching languages in other contexts. 39 were teaching languages in mainstream government or non-government primary schools; 23 were teaching languages in mainstream secondary schools and 22 at university, TAFE or community colleges. There was also a growing number of teachers teaching across community languages schools, especially for Chinese and Arabic.
Most teachers had full-time commitments outside their teaching in community languages schools: 43% had responsibility for children and 52% reported being in employment. Teachers reported a wide range of jobs including solicitor, translator, architect, musician, process worker, train driver, biomedical engineer, artist and doctor. The most common occupations were in childcare/early childhood and disability/aged care (n=75), accountancy/finance/admin/IT (n=62), teacher/teacher's aide or school support (n=42). Many teachers reported juggling their teaching in community languages schools with family responsibilities and several part-time jobs.

The findings also dispel the myth that Community Languages teachers have no experience of mainstream education in Australia. Two hundred teachers (23.4%) reported Australian teaching outside the Community Languages Schools. The highest percentages of those teaching outside the CL schools were teachers of Japanese (57%) and Greek (42.4%). Some were employed full-time in preschools (n=17) and also as teachers' aides or liaison officers in mainstream schools (n=22). Of the 37 who reported teaching in mainstream schools, the main subjects (other than languages) were Mathematics, Science, TESOL, Computer Science, Geography, History and Visual Arts. Of the 35 who reported teaching adults, the main areas (other than languages) were IT, TESOL and Business Studies.

The profile of the teachers is one of breadth of experience, qualifications and skills gained both in Australia and overseas.

6.6 Schools: Continuity, Attrition and Retirement

There are common complaints of high teacher turnover in schools but our data presents a different finding. Over 42% of teachers had been teaching for more than five years; 30% for two to five years and 34% for less than two years. For voluntary work, this length of service is unusual. This was most marked in Vietnamese schools with 67% having taught for more than five years.

There were also high retention rates with teachers having taught for more than five years in Tamil (76%), Armenian (73%), Khmer (66%), Dutch (66%) and Portuguese (66%) language schools. On the other hand, there were higher turnover rates in Arabic (53% less than two years) and Korean language schools (40% less than two years). This issue is explored more in interviews.

The age profile in some communities also raises interesting issues. 44.5% of teachers of Chinese were over 50 as were 55.7% of teachers of Vietnamese and 57% of Armenian. Only 3.5% of Vietnamese and 0.6% of Chinese teachers were Australian born. Overall, very few teachers are Australian-born (only 4.2%). This presents a problem for Community Languages schools in coming years as older teachers retire. The issue of attrition and succession planning is a key one and is explored more in the interview findings and discussion section.
6.7 Wanting to be Teachers

The overwhelming majority of teachers expressed the wish to become accredited teachers in Australia (79.1%). This was highest for teachers of Greek (100%), Indian languages (92.9%), Arabic (89.1%) and Chinese (87.4%). Teachers who had been in Australia less than four years were also those who most wanted to gain accreditation (91.4%). This is the key finding of this study and confirms smaller scale studies of teachers in Community Languages schools (Minty et al., 2008; Cardona, Noble & di Biase 2008). The picture is of a group of highly-skilled and highly-trained teachers who have not been able to gain accreditation as teachers in mainstream educational institutions.

Many teachers wanted to be accredited as primary school teachers: 278 (32.5% of all respondents) wanted to become primary languages teachers and 166 (19.4%) wanted to be generalist grade teachers. 153 teachers (17.9%) wanted to teach languages in secondary school but 172 (20.1%) opted to teach other subjects in secondary. The main subjects were Mathematics and Science areas in which there are shortages. Additionally, 149 teachers expressed interest in gaining accreditation as teachers in TAFE or Adult Education. This aligns with the findings of the smaller-scale study of Minty et al. (2008).

When asked if they were prepared to undertake more study to gain these qualifications 416 replied ‘yes’ and an additional 148 ‘maybe’. This constitutes 66% of teachers, a significant majority, when the numbers of those who are retired and those who are already teachers are taken into account.

Figure 4. Career goal

The number of teachers wanting to gain accreditation is interesting considering that 44.3% of teachers have majors in education and only 54.9% of teachers reported teaching overseas. This indicates that many teachers who had degrees in other fields such as Management and Commerce (8.8%), Information Technology (5.3%), Health (3.9%) and Engineering (3.4%) had decided to switch careers to teaching because of their experiences in the Community Languages Schools. Overall the finding is that 677 teachers in this sample and, therefore, 2,141 teachers in the NSW Community Languages Schools want to gain accreditation as teachers in mainstream schools. Many of these teachers would, with advice and guidance, be able to gain accreditation; others, with upgrading, would also be eligible. This finding is explored more in the following chapter and the discussion section. This aspiration should not be taken as a threat to the staffing of Community Languages Schools. Minty et al. (2008) found that once teachers gained this accreditation, they continued teaching in complementary schools.

6.8 Wanting Support in Languages

Teacher needs in improving their knowledge of English are often overlooked. In most schools, students are dominant in English, being 2nd, 3rd and 4th generation Australians. If teachers are not confident in English their classroom management and teaching can be hindered. In response to the question on whether they would like support in improving their English, 86% of teachers stated ‘yes’. The numbers were highest in the largest language groups. Nearly all teachers of Chinese (95.2%), Vietnamese (98.3%) and Korea (98.15%) requested support in improving classroom English. Even 71.6% of Arabic teachers who were
longer-term residents of Australia also requested support in classroom English. Only 7.1% of teachers reported that they were more fluent in English than in their community language. This finding points to an important unmet need: to provide support for teachers in the use of English for classroom purposes and communication with students.

It is also assumed that teachers do not need support in improving their community languages; many workshops focus on aspects of language specific teaching such as teaching tone in tonal languages or teaching different grammatical aspects. However, our findings indicate that only a small percentage of teachers have tertiary study of the language they teach. The assumption that because a teacher is fluent in their spoken and written language, they therefore have complete knowledge of that language, is not an accurate one. Over 80% of teachers indicated that they wanted professional learning in understanding and knowing their community language better.

### 6.9 Teaching-Related Professional Learning Needs

Teachers were given a list of ten professional topics to respond to. All topics received high responses. The main areas of interest were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very interested</th>
<th>Some interest</th>
<th>No interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using technology in classroom</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum development</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed level classes</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lessons planning</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-age classes</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching beginner</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural issues</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Length of time teaching in the schools was a significant variable in indicating needs. Teachers who had been teaching for less than four years were more likely to want PL in classroom management (75%), curriculum development (68%), groupwork (68%) and lesson planning (67%). Teaching beginners also figured highly for this group of teachers (59%) indicating that newer teachers are often placed with beginner students. Teachers who had been teaching for more than ten years were more interested in using technology in the classroom and had less need for behaviour management.

In the open response section, the most common request was learning ways to engage students. The terms ‘motivate’ and ‘engage’ were used in the majority of responses. These themes underpinned many of the responses in the table above.

Special needs was mentioned in the open responses by several teachers (n=11). This area requires further investigation to understand how schools and teachers can and do accommodate special needs of children including having teachers skilled in special and inclusive education.

Other open comments centred around the expanding focus of community languages schools, referred to as the shift to a ‘lifespan perspective’ (Kagan, Carreira & Hitchins Chik, 2017). Firstly, many schools have introduced pre-school and kindergarten groups; others have started classes for adults. Neither of these qualify for government funding, but they are playing an emerging role in the schools and teachers’ needs for professional learning. This has been accompanied by the growing diversity in students. Many schools now teach non-background students: many Chinese language schools are taking students wanting to learn
Chinese; other schools have non-background parents in mixed-marriages or others wanting to travel and work overseas. The third shift has been in the growing flexibility of schools. Many schools have started classes in Art, Music and Craft to engage older students; other schools have begun tutoring/coaching classes (separate from the language teaching) in order to address the ‘selective school drop-out’ in Grades 4 to 6. For these reasons there were requests in the open comments section for professional learning in ‘teaching adults’, ‘young learners’, ‘travel and tourism’, HSC, Art, music, film studies, creative writing and ‘social issues’. These requests will expand as the schools become more flexible.

6.10 Language Specific Profiles

The following section provides short overviews of two of the languages and their schools.

Tamil language schools

Tamil schools have the sixth largest enrolment of students in the NSW Community Languages Schools Program and are among the best organised. NSW has the largest concentration of Tamil speakers, 29,681, 40% of the national total (ABS 2016). There are seven schools on 12 different locations funded by the NSW CLSP. The number of students has increased steadily from 1025 in 2013 to 1213 in 2016. The number of teachers has also increased from 128 to 166. Four fifths of Tamil teachers are female and there is a spread of ages with one third under 40, a third between 40 and 50 and 35% over 50. The length of time in Australia reflects the different waves of migration: half of the teachers have been in Australia for more than ten years but 30% have arrived in the past two years. Similarly, 48% have been teaching in the schools for over ten years but 31% for less than two years. The profile is one of a settled community but with recent migration.

The teachers are highly qualified: 45% have Bachelors, Master of PhD qualifications, mainly from overseas and the majority of teachers (82%) have post-secondary qualifications. Just under half (42%) have qualifications in education and have teaching experience (44%) outside Australia in Sri Lanka, India or Singapore. Teachers bring experience in secondary and primary school (17% each), tertiary and pre-school. Many (31%) have experience teaching Science and Mathematics, areas of great demand in Australia. Only 3% are accredited to teach in Australian primary or secondary schools.

As with other schools, teacher continuity will be an issue. No Tamil teachers are Australian born. There is an HSC course but only 34 students took it for the HSC in 2016. No tertiary institutions offer Tamil and so the pathways for Australian-born students are limited.

There is an active Tamil Teachers’ Association which runs annual conferences and workshops for teachers. The schools work closely together. They developed a Tamil Syllabus (2003) based on the BOSTES K-6 Framework in 2003. The schools run cross-school competitions for students. They have recently developed assessment tools for reading and writing which are now being trialled in the seven schools.

Our data indicates a high level of teacher satisfaction with their teaching particularly because of the support provided by the schools and association. The schools provide a model for other schools to follow.

Korean Language Schools

Korean schools constitute the fifth largest group of students in NSW schools, increasing from 1967 (2013) to 2003 students (2017). There are 20 schools teaching on 26 different locations with 204 volunteer teachers. The profile is similar to other schools with 65% having been in Australia for more than 10 years; 77% having tertiary qualifications and 47% having qualifications in education. Teachers are overwhelmingly female (90%) although only half of the principals are female. Few of the teachers had managed to gain accreditation in Australia (1.5%) although the majority wanted to (71%).

In Korea I was a middle school teacher and also trained in Art. When I came to Australia I trained as a receptionist because my English was not good. Then I started teaching in the Korean school and realised how much I missed teaching. But what can I do? Where can I go to become a teacher in Australia? My friends told me it is not possible. I paid an agent who sent my qualification to NOOSR in Canberra but the letter they sent me is not worth anything. (YM, Korean teacher)
Teacher attrition in Korean schools is higher than average with 39.7% teaching for less than two years. Student attrition in Korean language schools was also high. Just over 40% of Korean background students attend Korean language schools in Grades K-3. By Grades 5 and 6 this drops to 25% and 20%. In secondary school the numbers are under 10% down to 1.2% for the HSC. The ‘selective-school dropout’ is common in Korean as in other schools where parents and students find the pressures of coaching and sport commitments too much to continue.

John is 21 and studying at university. He learned Korean for seven years but said he was not a good student because of dropping out three times. The main reason he learned was because parents pushed him and he wanted to make them happy. In Grade 4, he stopped because of classes preparing for the OC exam. He later returned to Korean but he was back in beginners’ class and hated not being with other students his age. He finally used the reason of selective school coaching and persuaded his parents to let him stop Korean school. He returned in Year 8 but it was too late to catch up with the others because of lost confidence and time conflict with other learning. He stopped for good. He liked going to Korean school when he had good teachers and learned about culture. He thinks that many students leave CLS for similar reasons. He wishes CLS would teach more interesting cultural things rather than just language in the CL class. (HJ, former student in Korean schools)

The levels of English of Korean teachers on the general seem lower than other groups. 3.4% are Australian born and 95.6% of teachers requested help in improving English.

We have all done the Certificate course and it was very good but quite difficult for those who speak mainly Korean. We would like more of the course explained in Korean. (AC, Korean teacher)

Lectures are too hard for many Korean teachers because of the language barrier. Classes run by Hae Ryun were great. Would be good if she could come to Community Languages schools and run classes for Korean teachers... Conferences in Korean would be good. (YN, Korean Teacher)

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**TEACHER STORY**

They told me my qualifications were no good

Anna migrated to Australia in the 1990s. She was an Early Childhood teacher in Poland for 12 years and had a Master’s of Education. When she started looking for work in Australia she was sent by the government office to an agency.

“I showed them my qualifications and asked about teaching Early Childhood. The man pushed them back to me across the table and told me they were not worth anything in Australia. He told me I could do cleaning or work as a nurses aide in aged care or be an assistant in pre-school. He told me that if I wasn’t prepared to work hard in Australia I should go back to where I came from. I went home and cried but I gave up ever wanting to be a teacher.”

Anna worked in aged care but also started teaching in the polish language school four years ago when her eldest started high school. The school had just started a preschool group and she was their teacher. She said she had mixed emotions when she started teaching. She loved getting back to working with children. Her students were second or third generation Australians and she was teaching through songs and games. She said she also felt sad at the different turn in her life, taking her away from teaching. When we told her that her qualifications would always have been accepted in Australia and that she had been given the wrong information, tears came to her eyes, but she replied that the past was the past and that her teaching now was giving her happiness.
7. Findings – Interview

7.1 Introduction

This section presents findings from interviews with 47 teachers. Though over 400 teachers of the 903 who responded to the initial survey indicated they were ‘willing to be interviewed’ and provided an email contact address, various requests for face-to-face interview were unsuccessful. Twenty-one teachers responded by email and 26 were interviewed face-to-face. The aim of the interviews was to explore in more depth what professional support within the Community Languages Schools Program and outside the Program they would like to access; what factors in their schools support their professional development and what factors impact on the retention/attrition of teachers in the schools. We attempted to interview more teachers of Arabic, because of their underrepresentation in the online survey. The spread of languages was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinhala</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macedonian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finnish</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maltese</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: languages of teachers interviewed

The age range, gender and country of birth were representative of the overall teacher demographic. Three teachers of Tamil and one of Japanese are male; the other teachers are female. Only two teachers were born in Australia. All but four were educated overseas at tertiary level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>20-29</th>
<th>30-39</th>
<th>40-49</th>
<th>50-59</th>
<th>60+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Age range of teachers interviewed

Continuity in Community Languages Schools is high when compared with data from other voluntary work, with only 34% teaching for less than two years. The following section presents findings on how they came to work in schools, why they continue and why they leave.

7.2 How Teachers Started Teaching

There is a wide variety of reasons for teachers undertaking work in Community Languages Schools. The most common reason was that as overseas-trained teachers they sought teaching work in Australia. Teachers also reported that they were invited to teach by friends or family already working in the school or were asked when they enrolled their own children in Community Language classes. In the latter case, the teachers were usually targeted because they had teaching experience and/or teaching or higher education qualifications from overseas.

I became a teacher [of Sinhala] at the community language school when I enrolled my kids in 2010. The school was in need of teaching staff and I liked working with children. I also felt the need to contribute to the community. (MA, medical practitioner)
I was approached by my sister, vice principal at a Chinese community language school. They needed a teacher who could speak English well because of a number of students with English as a first language. (KG, Maths teacher, now with local M Teach)

I was always waiting for my son while he was in Tamil school. I was interested in teaching. I used to run tuition in India. I asked to find out what qualifications I needed and was told ‘as long as you know Tamil and have a passion for teaching’. They let me start as a support teacher for one year. I have been teaching for 3 years now. (RP, IT graduate, software programmer)

Some schools recruited through advertising on social media or via SBS. A lot of schools use classroom assistants as a way to recruit new teachers, develop their skills and judge whether they are suitable to become teachers in their own right.

I heard about the Vietnamese school through the SBS radio. I contacted them about a teaching position and considering my teaching experience in Viet Nam, I was offered a position. (HB, teacher in Vietnam)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have teaching qualifications/experience teaching overseas</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invited/encouraged by a friend/colleague/family member</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love teaching/teaching children/teaching my language</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Began as volunteer/assistant teacher/relief teacher at the school</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I enrolled my own children</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied in response to ad/vacancy</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to contribute to the community</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needed a job</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Responses to questions about starting teaching in Community Languages Schools.

7.3 Why teachers continue

All teachers interviewed felt that teaching had enhanced their lives and made their connections to community even greater. The positive attitude to teaching in Community Languages Schools can be summed up by the comment of a teacher of Maltese.

Well whether it has changed me or not I cannot tell but all I know is that at first when I was asked to take the class I refused and now I cannot stay away from it. (PL Maltese).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part of a dedicated team/supportive principal/admin</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoying teaching/have a passion for teaching</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student enthusiasm/learning from the students</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being part of the community</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pride in my country; in my language; my culture</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing students learn their language and their culture</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 Responses to questions about why teachers stay?

They nearly all expressed a desire to stay as long as possible while personal and career circumstances allowed them to do so. Passion and commitment to the students were common reasons for staying.

This job needs real enthusiasm to do. You have to really love the language, children and your community to do this job well. (CL, Chinese)
It is composed of dedicated teachers. I like that I’m not only teaching a language but a culture, heritage, and identity. (AP, Korean)

The curious students, who really want to learn the language. The fun, energy and knowledge I am getting through the teaching. The most fantastic team we do have. (SU, Hindi)

Structured support and induction into the school emerged as a finding as did the existence of a collegial supportive staff.

We don’t have high turnover… Most teachers have been here since the school opened. New teachers take the younger children then move with them to more advanced classes. We also have teachers for music, sport and dance… Some teachers leave when their children leave but usually take a break and come back. (CA, Armenian)

The positive aspects of teaching in my school are that I have a good team of teachers which support one another and can communicate queries to each other. (HG, Modern Greek)

Two factors which emerged were the teaching and learning support: regular meetings and shared online materials; and system of employing classroom assistants before appointing them as teachers. Both were reported as leading to a more stable teaching team.

All schools, Sri Lankan and Indian, follow the same syllabus and have joint committees. We have our own textbooks made for Australian students... We have our syllabus continuum document, then drill down from skills that are generic in nature, from this to outcomes of what we really need to do in the classroom… we have links to book ... units of work/lesson plans/worksheets... We’re giving you very detailed lesson plans. This is the basis to meet the outcomes of a particular unit but if you want to reach the outcomes in a different way, that is OK too. You can change but if you don’t know what to do at least you have some guidelines. (SR, Tamil)

All my teachers get together for study sessions. We do in service in the school. Teachers request this and I provide everything: food, materials that I prepare. Everything is free. We share… My teachers usually stay but the younger ones leave when they get married and have babies. (YC, Japanese)

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**TEACHER STORY**

We have to keep up with the times

Lily has been teaching in the Chinese language school for five years. She graduated as a teacher in China but works in a travel agency in Sydney. She teaches kindergarten, high school and a class of adults on Saturdays each week. She explained how her teaching has to be different in the Chinese school.

In China we were probably the same as you (to ‘older’ interviewer). Children would just sit there and the teachers did all the chalk and they just answer questions given by teacher. I think activity- based learning or activity is better for them. The best way is to put all teaching methods together: this time use this, next time others. If you use the same teaching method forever students feel bored.

She explained that their student enrolment had changed in the 30 years the school had been running. From overseas-born Cantonese students, the majority were now ABC (Australian-born Chinese) with 20% overseas-born and another 10% non-background Australians learning Chinese. Chinese is the students’ second language. The school had shifted from teaching Cantonese to 50/50 Mandarin/Cantonese. There were no textbooks, but materials were made by the school and the teachers.
I drew some cartoon books for my entry-level class. Kids’ thinking has changed and we can’t be restricted by the teaching materials. We teach them some nursery rhymes I collected these songs from Youtube. There is a foreigner teacher on Youtube teaching Chinese language. It is the era of computers so we have to keep pace with the times. This has been a break-through for my older students. I let students use their computers to finish their Chinese homework. They do have an app like a dictionary on their mobile. They can look up the dictionary, when they have words that they don’t know or they don’t remember how to write it. They use computers better than me. The principal is an IT expert. We give students a topic. They search information, make discussion, conversations and presentations. I have to download my materials.

A theme in the interviews with Lily was the need to be flexible. The school teaches Chinese through painting, calligraphy, dance and music for the older beginner students to keep up their interest. She explained that with the rise in prestige of Chinese, students were much more willing to come to class. She recounted how the principal had told them that the main thing was for students to be interested in learning Chinese, not just passing tests. In her adult class she had a women who wanted to be a flight attendant along with an electrician who wanted to use some Chinese with clients.

A 24-year-old girl, she was going to take exams to apply the flight attendants, so I taught her some oral Chinese which used in flight. She only needed to learn how to speak and read. This guy was an electrician and needed Chinese for the workplace. I only taught him speaking and listening.

Lily said that she stayed in the school because of the students and the other teachers. It was not weekend voluntary work for her but her ‘second job’.

7.4 Why teachers leave

The reasons teachers gave for leaving varied within schools and from language to language. Some report there are teachers leaving after as little as one year, most often 3 to 5 years, others 10, others say never!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health/personal/stage of life</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No or limited access to host school facilities</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low/no payment for effort required</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of or poor teaching resources</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy workload at CL school/Student issues</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of professional support/training</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of support from principal/supervisor</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work commitments/ better paid/new job</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues with parents</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher not passionate/poor teacher</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of support from colleagues</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave when their children leave the school</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No class to teach/losing students</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travelling too far</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Responses to questions about why teachers leave
The most common reasons related to outside commitments: work and family.

From my school, reasons include opening their own Chinese school, the pay being too low, not completing tasks/incorrect teaching styles, health issues, other work commitments and maternity leave. (LP, Chinese)

7.5 Access to school resources

A second finding was the feeling of being marginalised by the day school and the lack of access to school resources such as whiteboard. Many teachers had accounts of not being able to use any resources in the classroom.

The day school that community languages use on Saturday is not supportive for the teacher to use the facilities in the school. (HP, Chinese)

We don’t even have access to the internet or anything else in the building we use. We just have the room. The school has smart boards and all kinds of wonderful resources but we are not allowed to use them. (MV, Finnish)

If we had more class rooms, it would make my teaching role more enjoyable. It would mean that a reasonable number of children would be in a class, which makes it easier to teach. This would mean that the teachers can concentrate on all the students and find their strengths, weaknesses and interests and compose a suitable teaching plan and appropriate teaching strategies so the children can learn as much as possible while being confident and active. (JQ, Tamil)

The problem is I do not have my own classroom. We rent out the school, so I cannot change the learning environment to suit my teaching. (PC, Vietnamese)

We hire a public school. We want to use the whiteboard or even wifi but school says ‘no’ as we are not Department of Education. Even though … Public School is a bilingual … school. We wrote a letter requesting access but it was rejected and the principal even asked us for a donation! But we want to keep good relationship with the school so please don’t mention the school’s name. (AC, Korean)

Most teachers raised issues of their working conditions without being asked. There was a common theme of having no access to resources. For many teachers this was a shock when they began teaching. Even though they have access to mainstream schools, many of the teachers reported feeling like unwelcome guests.

We get blamed for things that are not our fault. We are not allowed to write on the whiteboard so we bring our own. The principal has never come to meet us at the Japanese School. We would like to have access to wifi and IWB and somewhere to store our materials. And a library where we can keep our books. (MM, Japanese)

The principal is trying hard to get access to the school internet. We bring our own paper to stick to the wall because the whiteboards are full of stuff and we can’t use them. I use my own data plan to show videos, etc. (RD, Tamil)

We have no classrooms. We are only allowed in the hall. 70 students in one space. It is very cramped. Little ones and parents coming in, friends in other classes as distraction, some teachers are very loud. Sometimes the school forgets to leave the tables and chairs out for the classes so the students have to go outside and use playground seating. This is very negative for students who feel that learning Arabic is not a priority. (NW, Arabic)

The photos below were supplied by a teacher whose school used four classrooms in a government primary school every Saturday. He explained that on many weekends they had no access to any whiteboard in any room as class teachers had left the whiteboards full of work on Friday afternoon for students on Monday.
Many teachers interviewed reported that they had little interaction with other teachers in their school and little access to resources. One teacher of Japanese commented:

_We have a book room but it is only open between 8.30 and 12.30 on Saturday when we are teaching, so none of us use the resources._

Teachers gave a range of reasons that others leave. In some cases the workload; in other cases teachers transferred their teaching styles from overseas and were unable to adjust. The nature of unpaid voluntary work was also an issue.

_We don’t have money to adequately compensate teachers for the amount of work that is put in. We do it for the good of the school and also the good of our own children. We get petrol money and parents pay fees._ (AF, Japanese)

_Some are very harsh with students so principals ask them to fix their attitude. Please realise you are not in Lebanon, not in Syria. After a couple of times the principal will ask them to leave or they leave because they’ve had enough. But at the end of the day we come for nothing and they prefer to do private tutoring for money. 4 hours for nothing but one hour of tutoring paid._

_Schools ask for so much. I need to have a program. I need exams, teaching from 10 to 2pm. And so much is asked of me. Don’t put all these extra demand on me. I quit from my school and I really loved the community there._ (AA, Arabic)

### 7.5 Information Gap

The teachers interviewed came from a wide variety of professions, about half of which were teaching. Most who had overseas teaching qualifications were not teachers outside the Community Languages Schools Program, even those who had reported that their qualifications were approved in Australia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications and experience</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overseas teaching experience/qualifications?</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications approved for teaching in Australia?</td>
<td>12*</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching experience in Australian schools?</td>
<td>9 **</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not approved but want approval?</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Again the term approved was ambiguous. In the online survey many ‘scripture’ teachers reported that they were approved.*

**Only four of these were languages teachers, 3 Japanese and 1 Russian. The others were 1 pre-school, 2 Maths, 1 Scripture, and 1 teacher of Business.*
The experience of teaching in Community Languages Schools and undertaking professional learning programs such as the Certificate in Language Teaching had led to many deciding to become day school teachers. The importance of learning on the job and developing a teacher identity through working in the schools is an area that requires more exploration.

It has motivated me to take on further studies in Master of Teaching (Primary) (AP, Korean)

I moved to Australia 5 years ago. I never studied to be a teacher but I am a social worker who started teaching ‘health’ at a high school in the Netherlands due to lack of teachers ...My life is now filled with teaching at the school and people privately at home... I also started a PhD at the University of Sydney focusing on bilingualism because of my experiences. (MJ, Dutch)

There was a general lack of information on how to become accredited in Australia. Few teachers had sought information or know where to locate it.

Can you find a way for me to become an English teacher here in Australia? ... I taught English for 13 years in Korea and majored in English at university. Now I'm supervisor in a childcare centre. The qualifications for primary and secondary school are too hard for me to do. I'm not 20 years old anymore. (AC, Korean)

I was a high school teacher in India. I had 8 years of experience in teaching Hindi language to high school children from year 6 to year 10. So when I moved to Australia in 2009, I was eagerly looking for job and at that time I applied for community language teacher position in all the community schools at Sydney... I was very happy at that time to get that job and teach Hindi in Australia... I heard that in some NSW public schools Hindi language is going to be introduced in the curriculum. So I want to teach the language at schools. If you think I am suitable and eligible would like to definitely take part of it. (SU, Hindi)

We want to continue working in either primary or high school, but I don’t know what to do – what courses or how to get to them. (NG, Arabic)

7.6 Pathways to Teaching

Those who wanted to become teachers often expressed the desire to teach their language in mainstream primary schools but had no information of job prospects and had often not considered being grade or subject teachers. Many were deterred by problems such as the English level expected, their age and their other work and family commitments. There was a need for careers counselling.

I was a high school English teacher [in Japan]. I'm not working here as an English teacher because I would have to do the PEAT test and classes for that are on Saturday when Community Languages school is on. Also it is very expensive and I don't think this is a fair test so I haven't done it. Some friends have moved to Melbourne because they don't have to do the PEAT test there and they are teaching Japanese in Victorian high schools. (YC, Japanese)

MC was been a teacher of English and Japanese for many years but she found that she could not become an accredited teacher of Japanese in Australia because she did not have two years undergraduate study of the language.

In Japan I was teaching ESL. I have a bachelor degree from America where I grew up. In Japan I taught a lot of English. I lived there for 12 years and started an English school with my husband in Japan. I also taught in high schools in Japan... Since I arrived in Australia I have a lot of opportunities to teach Japanese. I teach Japanese in a pre-school in Tamilba once a month... I have been trying out find out how to get a job casual teaching but it's quite hard to get a foot in the door. Seems ridiculous to have to do two years Japanese at university level if you are a background speaker. (MC Japanese)

NESA in NSW changed the requirement for teachers of languages in secondary schools requiring all teachers to have evidence of two/ three years' tertiary study of their language; in other words, evidence
of studying literature and language courses in their degree. Previously teachers who had completed their tertiary studies in countries where their language was the language of instruction (i.e. they had studied through the language) were recognised if they could provide evidence of their level of proficiency. NSW is the only Australian state with this requirement. This requirement excludes community languages teachers from teaching their language in mainstream schools. Firstly, only a small number of community languages are taught in universities: how are teachers expected to gain this qualification. Secondly, it seems unfair to expect teachers such as MC above to return to university and complete three years of undergraduate Japanese when she is fluent in the language and has acceptable tertiary qualifications.

Many teachers wanted to become qualified in Early Childhood or Primary education but the reasons for this were mixed. Many reported enjoying teaching younger children in the Community Languages School, whom they characterise as more rewarding to teach than less enthusiastic adolescents. This also related to concerns about classroom management.

I used to be a teacher trained but for 28 years had a job in tourism but still loved education. I taught basic English in China until the 1980s and then went into tourism. I work for [a major childcare agency]. I studied the Certificate 3 course. I am interested in becoming a qualified teacher in Australia? ... It is difficult to say how much study I would be able to do to upgrade to local qualifications. I would need government support. (ML, Chinese)

For others the aspiration to study Early Childhood (and Aged Care courses) related to the high number of points applied to these courses and occupations for migration and resident status.

My major from Japan qualified me as a PE teacher and I have thought of doing a post-graduate degree when I have time... I am doing a Diploma in Children's services at the moment. There are more employment opportunities in early childhood. The government used to give international students working permits for childcare and IT. Not now. (YC, Japanese)

Other findings confirm those from the online survey. The majority of teachers were prepared to undertake further studies to gain accreditation. Most wanted to have courses to improve their English and also the language they teach.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Further study?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Maybe</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prepared to do university studies to upgrade or retrain?</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested in undertaking the Diploma course?</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested in improving your knowledge of English?</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested in further study of the language you teach?</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently studying?</td>
<td>9*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Of these, only four were studying teaching related courses, including one Early Childhood, the rest unrelated to teaching.

7.7 Pathways for students into Community Language Teaching

The lack of pathways to teaching in the Community Languages schools also emerged as an issue. Many teachers raised the problem of finding teachers who could work in their schools. There was little presence of second generation teachers in schools and the pool of new arrivals was not there for many languages.

Our main worry is to keep up the supply of teachers. We need some sort of mechanism ongoing. How can we build this network? I know of a couple of Tamils who are mainstream teachers but I don't know if I can rely on them to come on board or to call on them for their proficiency. (SR, Tamil)
I struggle to find good teachers. It would make me happy and satisfied if I can find more teachers. (MP, Maltese)

Some schools had adopted the innovative idea of having teacher’s aides in their schools. These aides were attached to classroom teachers and mentored into becoming full teachers themselves. The aides were parents or graduates of the community languages schools themselves. This strategy would benefit from systematic support and research but it offers an opportunity to address teacher supply and retention of teachers through a process of authentic induction.

Some teachers reported that students from mixed marriage families were not continuing their study of their language because they were forced into continuer/ heritage classes for the HSC.

I had two students. Only their mothers were Japanese and they did not speak Japanese at home. Even after a year at our school I consider them beginners. But when they tried to enrol for the HSC they were told they had to do the heritage or background courses because they had Japanese background. (MC Japanese)

There is significant anecdotal evidence confirming this issue uncovered in our research. This lack of appropriate pathways for students who are community language background but who do not speak the language at home needs to be addressed. Education policy with regard to differentiation of language learner ability currently does not serve learners well.

TEACHER STORY

I just love languages

Zeinab has been teaching in the Arabic language school for two years. A friend had introduced her to the principal and she has been teaching on and off, taking time off for pregnancies.

“I had never thought of becoming a teacher but I realised I like working with the young children and I look forward to it every week.”

Zeinab was born in Costa Rica of Arabic-speaking parents but with Spanish as her language of everyday life. At 17 her parents sent her to Jordan to complete her Year 12. She lived with relatives but her Arabic was very basic. ‘I thought I dreamed in Spanish, not Arabic.’ It took her two years but she struggled and developed literacy in Arabic. She gained entry to university and began a Bachelor of Arts in English. She supported herself by tutoring students in Spanish. At the end of her first year in university migrated to Australia to get married. She arrived in 2014 aged 20 and started teaching in the Arabic community language school. Zeinab then juggled teaching and having three children in three years. She also managed to complete a Diploma in Childcare at TAFE.

“Originally I wanted to be an interpreter – I just love languages. But since I am working with the young children, I have come to love teaching too. I know with my family I cannot go back to study full time but I want to end up teaching in the day schools.”

Her school uses textbooks which she feels are too difficult for the children. She complained that she was not able to make the classes more interesting as the principal insisted on her following the book.

“Arabic is a beautiful language – you understand it like a flower opening. I would like to help the children enjoy learning it like my own children do.”
7.8 Professional Learning

Responses to questions in this area were wide-ranging, diverse, often quite language specific, and difficult to categorise. Below is a table of the most frequently discussed issues, all of which have to do with supporting teachers in their role. What teachers want most is to be able to give their students the best possible learning experience, but to have that learning underpinned by a system that gives them more support for a job they do which is basically unpaid and unrecognised. They would also like their teaching supported by proper access to teaching facilities in host school classrooms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of professional development or curriculum support</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Integrating technology in teaching and access to technology in the classroom</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ongoing teacher training: classroom management, engaging students, lesson planning</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Developing more and better and Australia appropriate resources</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A common curriculum for each language at each Stage of learning: outcomes, assessment, shared resources, student achievement levels and certificates of attainment</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Better access to host school facilities to support teaching practice</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Courses to support/improve/articulate the role of principal</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Structures and time to support teacher collegiality within schools. In-school information sharing after workshops/conferences</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. More workshops conducted in the background language of the teachers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Sharing resources and programs across same language schools</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Opportunities to observe mainstream school classes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. More professional support at CL Program level to coordinate language programs and train/find new teachers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Better dissemination of information about course and conferences to individual teachers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Areas of curriculum professional support needed

Integrating technology in teaching and access to technology in the classroom emerged as in the online survey as the most important area for professional learning. This indicates that teachers were aware of their students and their needs and also of the rapid changes in technology in terms of resources for their language.

We need more introduction to IT courses. So teacher can understand how to use the new technology in classroom. (HB, Vietnamese)

I believe that computer course will be useful to support my teaching as I can easily record songs and stories with colourful pictures and animation so the lesson will be more enjoyable to the students. The students will be more motivated to learn if I record their activities and show them again and teach them from what they have done. (JQ, Tamil)

I would have preferred that students have their own iPads as there are lots of language programs and activities they can do using technology. (HG, Greek)

Ongoing teacher training in classroom management, engaging students and lesson planning was also a frequent request.

I feel that teachers in community language school should either have some teaching background when they enrol or should be made compulsory to undergo the cert of language teaching. Their lack of experience may potentially impact on the student's motivation and enthusiasm to learn. In our school we lack integration of technology in the classroom. The older students get bored and have dropped out when they start high school. It would be good to try to engage them further given they are the role models for the younger students. (MA, Sinhala)
Would like to learn more about classroom management. Easy for me now because I teach primary aged kids. But if I took a middle school class I would need more information. That is why at the Chinese teachers’ conference I chose the secondary school activities workshops. (MHL, Chinese)

We can’t keep high-quality lessons in the whole school. We need more training system constantly. We have nearly 350 students in our school and more than 20 teachers. Because we have introduced some many new teaching methods for our high school classes and I can already see the positive results among past students. But only high school is not enough, we need to change the whole school teaching methods and all teachers have to update their teaching skills. (TO, Japanese)

Teachers wanted opportunities to visit other schools and also to have site-based professional learning and visits.

I am always interested to attend workshops and courses that take place in Sydney. It is important to be up to date and meet teachers of other community schools to exchange ideas and discuss our work. (TA, Russian)

In terms of improving the way the school teaches Arabic, it would be useful to for all teachers to stay up to date and aware of teaching and training courses or workshops. If there are short courses or trained professionals that can come to the school, would be very useful. (FA, Arabic)

[Are there courses you want to do?] Yes, for my better career to going in progress more practicing and listening to different teachers. (EZ, Macedonian)

7.9 Resources and Curriculum Development

The third most common response was the need for appropriate resources and developing more and better and Australia-appropriate resources.

We shouldn’t use books that come from overseas. Our kids are Aussie and they think in the English language so we need things more explicit for how to build knowledge for these particular kids. We need local resources and units of work to draw on that suit local kids. (AA, Arabic)

Resources? There is a lack of materials in Community Languages schools. Very small space left for teachers to write on the board. Very difficult to do activities in the primary school classroom. Children don’t bring their own laptops. I would use computers and IWB if available. (DHL, Chinese)

There are no suitable teaching resources. (JA, Japanese)

There are great resources produced by the Korean Consulate education section but we can’t access them because we have no IT access in the school we use. (AC, Korean)

This was linked by teachers to the broader need for syllabus, curriculum and programs across schools. Teachers requested common curriculum for each language at each Stage of learning: outcomes, assessment, student achievement levels and certificates of attainment. These responses were interesting as they show a level of sophistication in planning and programming that runs counter to common preconceptions of the community languages schools.

We need support for other teachers to show us the main things that we need to cover so that each school has the same outcomes, share resources, etc. Should have all the same outcomes like across the different centres in the SSCL. (AA, Arabic)

Japanese students are not assessed professionally. (SA, Japanese)
We get funds from the government but we need a certificate from got to say we are a certified school. We need standardised recognition and students will stay in the school of it is ‘official’. We need common assessment across schools so there is an agreed standard across Community Language schools. (MJ, Korean)

There is a lack of guidance on achieving syllabus outcomes. Lack of a proper system to grade students in their individual achievements. (MA, Sinhala)

It would be nice for a curriculum to come from one source, not from different countries (too hard/too easy), compared to government schools, and makes it easy for students to transfer and have continuity. (OI, Arabic)

Issue of ‘different Arabic’ curriculum in different schools. It would be better if all Arabic schools followed the same curriculum, such as the NSW BOS syllabus but they follow overseas curriculums – Saudi, Egyptian, Lebanese. I would like something systematic so students who move from one school to another would have same language. Someone who is accredited should do this for the CL program. (NW, Arabic)

7.10 School Based Professional Support and Learning

Principals and Executive in Community Languages Schools do not necessarily have any background or experience in education. Many are community members who established schools in response to community needs. Some teachers complained of not being able to implement ideas they had gained from professional learning because of their principal. Others commented on the need for principals to understand professional learning and its importance. Several requested that there be programs for training principals to support the courses existing for teachers.

Some principals have education background but some are just managers. They don't realise how important conferences and workshops information is for teachers. Once they sent me to conference but never asked for feedback. It's very important for principals to learn their basic role as leaders. (KG, Chinese)

A Principals Leadership course would help have amore healthy environment between everyone, no tension. (AA, Arabic)

I wish there was a principal's course. Everything is going fine but I would like support as a principal especially in dealing with parents. What to do when parents are a bit funny and things like that. (YC, Chinese)

Many teachers comment on the lack of information getting through in their school. They did not get news of professional learning and felt isolated.

This year I didn't receive all the information about the courses or workshops that happen in Sydney. The administration of the school decides what information they send to the teachers of the school. I find it as a non-cooperative relationship between the teachers of the school. However, I do get to know about events happening in Sydney from my friends with whom I did the course and from many teachers of other community schools. (TA, Russian)

The majority of professional learning for teachers at present occurs in places away from the schools. Teachers identified difficulties implementing their ideas back at school.

Workshops for these teachers? I have tried to do this but always have discussions around ‘that's not the way to do it’. When they hear you and see you are a young teacher and think they know better. They've been teaching for 20 years and don't want to change. 'You're not gonna teach us now'. (AA, Arabic).

Teachers need a strong sense of collegiality, resource sharing, and working together to improve their practice. (NG, Arabic)
There was also a feeling of needing support from beyond their school.

*We need an Arabic coordinator and someone to come and see the conditions under which community Languages teachers teach. Is there a database of teachers of Arabic?* (AA, Arabic)

The online survey identified the need for English language support as a key demand from teachers. Interview findings were that lack of English hindered teachers’ access to professional learning. The *Certificate in Language Teaching* is delivered in English although there are nine hours of language specific workshops in Chinese, Korean, Tamil and Arabic. In 2018 there were also targeted language-specific conferences where many sessions were delivered in the community language.

*Whenever teachers go to conference or workshop they should run internal workshops at their CL school because many teachers English level is very basic so they don’t go to conferences where English is used. They are not confident to attend though they would like to because of lack of English skills.* (KG, Arabic)

*There are only 2 or 3 are long-term teachers who’ve just stayed on. They haven’t done any workshops because of their poor English Skills. A person comes out from the Education Department in Armenia and does workshops across the school, brings teachers together, but we don’t share across groups otherwise. The schools stay separate.* (CA, Armenian)

Several teachers reported, as above, that overseas governments sometimes provided professional learning support in the community language.

*We are lucky to have some training courses in teaching each year such as teaching techniques, activities and multimedia which are run and supported by the Overseas Community Affairs Council, Republic of China.* (YC, Chinese)

Interviewees also reported that the lack of English was compounded with lack of understanding of the Australian education system.

*In both Community Languages school where I teach find teachers who only have a little English are really disconnected from the reality of how teaching happened in normal schools. They have to have a connection with normal school techniques. Day school visits would be very helpful for teachers who have the disconnection. Help them to teach less as traditional knowledge transmitters or lecturers.* (KG, Chinese)

**TEACHER STORY**

*I always wanted to be a teacher*

“I always wanted to be a teacher in Greece but .. the war. At that time in Greece, they believed women must not go to school but stay home, learn to cook, make dresses and all of that. But my father was different. He wanted us to be educated.”

Dina has been teaching Greek in the community languages schools for 49 years. When she finished high school she read in the newspaper that Australia wanted people who had finished secondary school and she decided to migrate. She started learning English but did not tell her parents her plans. After a few months she met Stavros, her future husband, who agreed to go to Australia with her. When she spoke with her eldest brother he told her:

“Never, never, you are a girl. If you were married, okay but not now. You can’t go.”

She then got Stavros to ask her parents for her hand in marriage and they left for Australia. She started work and was also approached by the Greek community to teach in the schools.
“I told them I finished only high school. I don’t have anything else. They say, okay we need teachers, so can you teach? I said, of course I can.”

When she started teaching she used textbooks from Greece which worked well with children of the first generation. Then, when children of the second generation started attending there were many mixed marriages and Greek was often not spoken in the home. She started preparing her own materials; the school devised their own textbooks for the second, third and now fourth generation students. She now teaches the children of her original students and has the parents sit in on her classes. They watch her teaching basic spoken language with the children and then she asks the parents to model these at home. Her teaching approach focuses on listening and speaking but she also aims to develop their reading and writing. She did not like the Australian schools when her own children were attending and recounted stories of interaction with teachers where she was asking for more homework.

“When I asked the teacher what we could do at home she told me get him to read the newspaper. The newspaper! A third class boy! I said, what is the problem with Australian schools? We had history textbook, geography book, maths book, reading book and exercise books. Then I went to principal and I said, I don’t understand that teacher, what she is teaching my son. Now, the system is better. I see the kids. They have really maths books, reading books and it’s better.”

Her reasons for teaching Greek were not cultural but to be ‘educated’ or ‘clever’ words which she used frequently. She loved to surprise students by telling them how proud she was of her fluency in Turkish which she gained from her parents.

“They are Australian of course. But they have Greek background but their father might be Italian. I mean Greece is 10 million people, so you can communicate. If you learn Italian you can communicate with 75 million people. It makes you clever - opens your horizons. It is good, but it doesn’t matter if you speak Greek or Italian or German.”

She said she had changed her teaching approaches.

“One boy, the mother is Greek, the father is Jewish and it was Easter time. And I wanted to teach the kids to say a prayer. The father told me, he said, no he can’t make his cross. I say, don’t worry. You have to change!”
8. Discussion

Section 1: School and program capacity building

One key finding has been the differences between schools and between and within language groups. Some schools are part of a network of an umbrella organisation; many receive support from consulates or overseas governments or have links that support professional learning; many schools are well-established and have a long tradition and structures for supporting their teachers; other schools are isolated and lacking in resources. The differences in resources and capacity between schools is something that needs to be taken into account. The first issue that emerged was the differences in access to basic teaching resources such as whiteboards, desks and teaching materials. Many teachers, in interview, described how the inability to use basic teaching resources undermined their ability to teach and their engagement in and commitment to their teaching. These issues emerged most strongly in schools which used NSW government primary schools. Teachers reported that grade/classroom teachers would often fill every space on whiteboard (both fixed and moveable) in the classroom with notes saying that the boards were not to be used. Most Community Language School teachers photographed their classrooms before and after classes in case there were complaints about changes in the room.

Access to quality teaching resources is something mainstream or regular schools expect, acknowledged in state and national policy ambitions (e.g., The Melbourne Declaration, MCEETYA, 2008). NSW Government policy extending to Community Language Schools is unambiguous in this respect, stating that:

- Community use of school facilities provides benefits to both schools and their communities through (inter alia):
  - the provision of additional extracurricular learning opportunities
  - better access for communities and schools to state-of-the-art facilities

The policy also states mainstream schools should “allow free access to school facilities for community language classes during school terms” (NSW DoE, April, 2017: p7). The policy, however, is clear on the extent of resources that are allowed to be used: (analogue) whiteboards are to be provided, other equipment, storage and any internet are not. State school principals and teachers are working within guidelines when they limit the access to certain facilities. Evidently, it is the policy concerning CLS use of resources that falls short of supporting the laudable tenets of the Melbourne Declaration and of “twenty-first century learning”, a catchphrase that is typically used as a proxy to explain technology-enhanced, as well as problem-based, engaged-learning approaches (Kirkwood and Price, 2006). The challenge for policymakers and for all educators is that CLS contribute towards the language skills and educational experience that students carry with them into mainstream schools. There is an obvious ‘everyday’ pedagogical connection between CLS and mainstream schools. On the other hand, CLS and their teachers report a sense of marginalisation from mainstream education and schools.

The Community Languages School sector has been called a ‘third space’ in several studies between

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cultural and linguistic minority families and groups and mainstream education (Tsoidis & Kostogriz 2008; Cruickshank, 2015). While this Report contains a number of practical and policy recommendations, fundamentally it is the educational relationship rather than the community relationship between the community and Government-mandated schooling sectors that must be addressed.

8.1 Within school resources/ capacity

Teachers and schools were unanimous in commenting on the lack of access to IT and relatedly, to Interactive White Boards (IWB). IWBs are the learning solution of choice offered to teachers in many mainstream schools. CLS teachers, on the other hand, are left to bring their own devices, such as in iPads and laptops and even projectors. This is financially unsustainable and ad-hoc and requires set up and pack down time that could otherwise be devoted to teaching. Nevertheless, teachers and schools find ways to build technology into their lessons.

Online and digital teaching resources for languages are in abundance. Connecting learners across classrooms, cities and countries are becoming viable and authentic ways to connect speakers and learners of any given language. Providing engaging lessons depend firstly on teacher skills but also on the latest learning tools, tools that most learners are already familiar with. In this context, CLS students experience a two-tiered education: access to relevant, contemporary content and learning tools via digitally-mediated learning in mainstream schools; and in Community Language Schools mid-twentieth century learning via pen and paper, and teacher scribing on old whiteboards or poster paper. The effect on the learner undertaking extra-curricular activities presents more as a mild form of punishment than an opportunity to develop fluency and rich cultural understanding.

Relating to the issue of internet access, the main request from teachers in terms of professional learning was workshops in IT and the use of different apps, games and technology in the classroom. This training would not be useful to the majority of the 2700 teachers in CLS unless schools and teachers had some guaranteed access to internet and IWBs as noted above. Most teachers, in interview, commented on the lack of internet access and the difficulty of using technology in their teaching. Much funding has been expended training teachers in using technology in their classes, in line with recent approaches to language teaching, but few can implement their training.

Most teachers reported having no place to store resources or materials in their host schools. Nor did many have any place in which teachers could meet to have teacher meetings and workshops.

There were also many comments at the lack of contact with day school principal or staff. These links are difficult to initiate and sustain but the lack of contact added to senses of marginalisation.

Links with consulates and support from overseas governments were important for many schools in the provision of inservicing and resources. Thai schools, for example, have preservice teachers from Chulalongkorn University visiting each year to run Summer Schools for students. Italian language teachers have support from the Italian government in terms of professional development and some funding for project officers. There is little documentation of this support, its relevance to Australian language learning curriculum goals or knowledge outside the specific language community of the benefits of such links.

8.2 Between School Resources/Capacity

There are few umbrella teacher organisations: of the six major languages groups with Community Languages Schools only Tamil has an organisation representing most of the schools. Chinese has a Chinese Teachers’ Association which is formed around regular accredited teachers; CLS teachers are only a small sub group within this. Some groups, such as the six Thai schools reported only meeting each other recently at a session organised by the Thai consulate. This occurred some 25 years after the schools had been established. The network of schools is important as many language groups could run larger professional learning; they had programs and assessment tests, cultural events and competitions that ran across schools.
8.3 Curriculum, Programs and Resources

Curriculum development, lesson planning and mixed-level classes were the main requests for professional learning after IT. These areas came above behaviour management. Many teachers requested, however, not just professional learning in these areas but the supported development of curriculum and assessment procedures for their classes and schools. The Tamil language schools provided a model for the sharing of a common curriculum, programs, lesson plans, resources and collegial teacher support. It was thus the capacity in schools and between schools that emerged in teacher interviews as the key concern – not so much the provision of one-off inservices. This Tamil school model could be applied to other languages where this is lacking. Such support, including the development of syllabuses where none now exist, could be provided through professional development activities or funded special projects. For the learning of their background language to be properly valued, teachers reported they wanted students to be able to receive certificates of achievement at various levels. Shared programs, syllabus outcomes and assessment procedures would have to be developed to facilitate this. Professional development activities based around developing a sharing culture would benefit all teachers.

Assessment had emerged in Tamil and Chinese schools as a key concern. Chinese schools participate in the Hányǔ Shuǐpíng Kăoshì (HSK) designed by the Chinese PRC Hanban. Students pay for these proficiency tests that accredit different levels. The problem of this is that Taiwanese and Hong Kong oriented schools do not participate. Other schools only tend to send their best students and there is also the issue of cost. Tamil schools have developed achievement tests for all levels but these are only for reading and writing. It would be important for all such developments to be documented and developed in any work on assessment in schools. At the other end of the spectrum are schools that have no student assessment.

The present capacity and resources of schools are thus key features to be taken into account in the development of professional learning. The definition of professional learning, in fact, needs to be broadened and initiatives could concentrate on ways to build school capacity to develop and provide their own professional learning. Professional learning in community languages schools needs to be seen in a broader way, from the schools’ perspective and beyond the focus on the DoE provision. This would include information on the following aspects:

- teacher access to resources, information and support materials;
- teacher access to IT and internet resources;
- support from consulates and institutions;
- support from professional organisations and other schools;
- existing curriculum, programs and assessment;
- existing school professional learning

For the learning of their background language to be properly valued, teachers would like students to be able to receive certificates of achievement at various levels. Shared programs, syllabus outcomes and assessment procedures would have to be developed to facilitate this. The Community Languages Schools Program should develop a common format across all languages, based on shared syllabus outcomes. Professional development activities based around developing a sharing culture would benefit all teachers.

These factors need to be taken into account in the development and provision of professional learning. There should be a strategic plan to cover the short and long term professional development needs of Community Languages Schools teachers. A wide variety of teacher background requires a wide variety of professional support. The nature of workshops and conferences requires close consultation with teachers. The initial survey data provides a priority list of learning areas but the interview responses introduced the need for a more nuanced approach. For example, the need for more professional development to be conducted in the teachers’ community language, to be locally available, and for principals to be encouraged to give workshop and conference attendees time to report back to their colleagues on what they have learned.
8.4 Special Needs Inclusiveness

11 respondents reported that accommodating special needs was important. In 2016, approximately 14 per cent of students in New South Wales government schools “required personalised learning and support because of a disability” (NSW Legislative Council, 2017: 2). Figures for Community Language Schools are unclear. They may be lower because such schooling is not mandatory and there is lower participation or it may be that there is under-recognition of special needs because of lack of training and resources. The corollary to this is that Community Language Schools are not necessarily equipped to accommodate special needs. It should be noted here that the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 in terms of education only applies to Government schools. On the other hand, the nature of parental/carer involvement in Community Language Schools could mean support is more readily provided by family members who might help in a classroom. Gathering data on how Community Language Schools address special needs and on parental choice is needed to inform professional learning options for teachers.

Section 2: Pathways for Teachers

This section explores the pathways into Community Languages Schools (ie teacher supply) and the pathways for professional development of teachers in and beyond the schools.

8.5 Being and Becoming Teachers

The key finding of this study is the dead-end this highly qualified group of teachers face once they begin teaching in Community Languages Schools. Our study found that highly qualified women (and men) take up teaching in the schools, often after raising families, as a step into entering employment and further study in Australia. Almost half have teaching qualifications and experience from overseas. The experience of being teachers in the schools leads another group with tertiary qualifications to make this their goal in Australia. Overall, 75% of teachers want to gain accreditation as mainstream teachers but only 3% have done so. The first barrier is the lack of information. We found that few interviewees knew how to become accredited in Australia. The English requirements were a second hurdle, with PEAT and now IELTS 7.5 (Academic) as the goal. Teachers had few ways to reach these levels. The most important barrier was the lack of ways to upgrade qualifications. Many primary trained teachers would be recognised as two-year trained in Australia as they had completed shorter courses or had started teacher training at the equivalent of Year 10. These teachers could not gain advanced standing into four year Bachelor of Education programs. Secondary trained teachers often had recognised undergraduate degrees but lack education courses and would need a two-year Master of Teaching qualification. Both groups of teachers would find full-time study difficult with their family and work commitments. The issue of overseas-trained teachers is often seen as a ‘problem’ and this has led to all state and federal institutes developing policies. What is often forgotten is the windfall to Australia in gaining these teachers. We estimate $184 million in terms of tertiary education gained overseas. The provision of pathways for these teachers must therefore be a priority. From our data, we would estimate that less than 2% of teachers taught in both mainstream and Community Languages Schools. Other research indicates although over 30% of students in NSW schools speak a language in addition to English at home, under 13% of teachers do so. This wastage of skills and absence of this group of teachers from mainstream schools has ramifications for the education of all students.

8.6 Teaching in Community Languages Schools

We found that less than 4% of teachers are Australian-born although the numbers of 2nd, 3rd and 4th generation students in Community Languages Schools are growing rapidly. A third of teachers in Community Languages Schools are aged over 50 with much higher numbers in Chinese (45%), Vietnamese (56%), Armenian (58%) and some other schools. The questions arise: What is the succession planning? Where will future teachers come from? In most schools there is a rapid decline in enrolments in Grade 5 and 6 and in the secondary school with low numbers in all community languages for the HSC. Very few of the languages are offered at tertiary level and so there are few pathways for students to become community languages teachers themselves. This is an important issue to address as many schools are already finding it difficult to locate teachers. This shortage also applies to the K-6 NSW Community Languages Program in mainstream schools.
8.7 Pathways in Existing Professional Learning

Many teachers commented that they did not get information about existing professional learning opportunities: that with the pressures in their schools, this information was not passed on. They often heard about courses through friends.

Teachers almost unanimously speak highly of the value of the Certificate course which nearly all of our interviewees had undertaken. They also indicate that they are keen to undertake the Diploma course. If there could be a process by which some prior learning for mainstream teacher accreditation is built into these courses, teachers wishing to move to mainstream teaching would benefit greatly.

This points to the need for short-courses and longer programs, all the professional learning available, to be integrated in a coherent way that helps teachers navigating their way.

8.8 Pathways for Languages

We also found that developing English and their community languages were central concerns for teachers. The issue of ‘English’ has often been seen as a problem: that schools should not have teachers whose English is not up to a certain standard. This expectation is unrealistic given the lack of teachers for many languages. Teachers with lower levels of English proficiency cannot access most professional learning. Consideration therefore needs to be given to the provision of more L1 support.

The desire to improve English proficiency was widespread with over 80% of teachers wanting support. The main reasons were for their own classroom teaching: their students are often dominant in English and teachers need classroom English. The lack of English proficiency also prevents teachers from gaining entry to TAFE and university courses to improve their qualifications.

The finding of the need for support in their community language was unexpected but logical. Very few teachers had post secondary school study of their language although they were native speakers. Their situation is often comparable to native speakers of English being asked to teach it. Even where teachers had studied postsecondary courses in their languages, they were not prepared for the needs of second language learners in Australia. Teachers of Chinese, for example, were confronted with local students who found it difficult to acquire tones, to write and memorise Chinese characters. Background speakers generally acquire these skills naturally.
9. Recommendations

That the NSW Community Languages Schools Board:

1. (Re)develop a coherent Professional Learning Strategy as part of the Strategic Plan which addresses the findings and issues of this study;

As part of this plan, the NSW Community Languages Schools Board:

2. Provide advice to the Minister for Education to communicate to schools the importance of providing access to mainstream school resources such as whiteboards and suitable classrooms for community languages schools;
3. Plan support to build capacity in communities, schools and teachers with the establishment of umbrella community language teacher organisations and teacher networks;
4. Support the DoE in having up-to-date website information for teachers on opportunities for professional learning;

We also recommend that the NSW community Languages Schools Board approach NESA:

5. To employ officers to provide face-to-face information and advice to teachers with overseas-training and to help them navigate the NESA online portal applying for teacher accreditation;
6. To change the requirement for teachers to have two or three years’ tertiary study overseas of their language to two/three years’ tertiary study in their language where teachers complete their study in contexts where the language is the language of instruction;
7. To request NESA to reconsider the HSC pathways for students who have community language background but do not speak the language at home.

The following recommendations relate to the agreement between the NSW DoE and the University of Sydney

8. That the proposed scoping study of school resources ascertain how widespread the lack of access to whiteboard, IWB and basic schools resources is;
9. That all schools be provided with access to internet;
10. That online resource platforms are developed and supported for languages and schools most in need and that schools be supported in the sharing of resources;
11. That priority is given to the development of appropriate K-10 syllabuses, support materials and professional learning to support these;
12. That assessment tools and frameworks be developed from curriculum/syllabus to credit and support student learning across schools and languages.
13. That priority be given to requesting tertiary institutions to mount appropriate upgrading programs for CL teachers with overseas qualifications which accredit their qualifications/experience and provide culturally and linguistically appropriate support;
14. That TAFE NSW be approached to mount appropriate pathway programs for CL teachers wishing to gain access to further training;
15. That programs be developed and offered for CL teachers to improve their classroom English and teachers be provided with information on how to access existing courses;
16. That pathways be explored for teachers for accredited study of their community language;
17. That pathways be explored for students in Community Languages schools to work as teachers’ aides and to be supported in becoming teachers in Community Languages Schools.
18. That schools be supported in having teacher aides in their schools enabling ex-students to be mentored into becoming teachers.
9. References


