Languages Education in Australia
－ Policies, perspectives and diversity within the context of the Australian Curriculum －

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Abstract: This paper provides a snapshot of Languages Education in Australia including policy, perspectives and diversity within the context of the Australian Curriculum.

Keywords: Melbourne Declaration, Australian Curriculum, SACE, CEFR, NAPLAN

1. The Australian Curriculum

This paper provides a snapshot of Languages Education in Australia including policy, perspectives and diversity within the context of the Australian Curriculum.

The educational goals for young Australians as declared by all Australian Education Ministers in the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA 2008) (Melbourne Declaration)[1] include:

Goal 1: Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence

Goal 2: All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens.

The Melbourne Declaration provides the policy framework for the Australian Curriculum which is the national curriculum from Foundation to year10 (F-10).

The ways in which the Australian Curriculum has been designed to address these goals are detailed in *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum Version 4* (ACARA 2012)[2].

The Melbourne Declaration emphasises the importance of knowledge, understanding and skills from each learning area, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities as the basis for a curriculum designed to support 21st century learning.

The Australian Curriculum (AC)[3] is formed by these three dimensions and it is the relationship between these dimensions that provides flexibility for schools and teachers to 'promote personalised learning that aims to fulfil the diverse capabilities of each young Australian' (MCEETYA, 2009, p.7)

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[1] http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/national_declaration_on_the_educational_goals_for_young_australians.pdf

[2] https://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/The_Shape_of_the_Australian_Curriculum_v4.pdf

[3] https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au

The three dimensions of the AC include:

- three **Cross-curriculum Priorities**: Sustainability, Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures
- seven **General Capabilities**: Literacy, Numeracy, Information and Communication Technology Capability, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability, Ethical Understanding, Intercultural Understanding
- eight **Learning Areas**: English, Mathematics, Science, Humanities and Social Sciences, The Arts, Technologies, Health and Physical Education, Languages.

Figure 1 The Three Dimensions of the Australian Curriculum
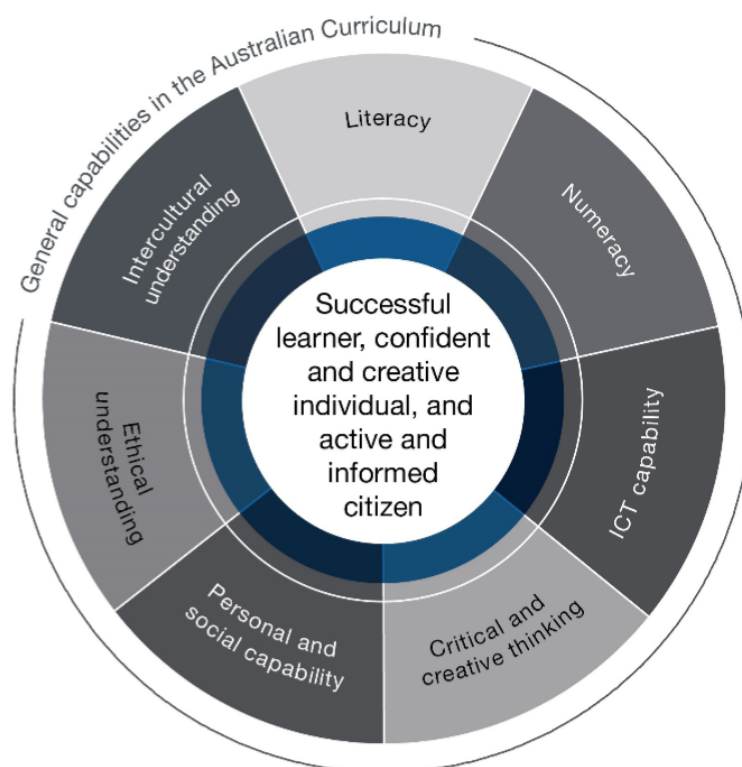
Figure 2 General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum

Educational jurisdictions in Australia oversee the implementation and delivery of the Australian Curriculum at the local level. Each jurisdiction has local policy and requirements in regards to curriculum, assessment and pedagogy. Similarly, the senior school curriculum is overseen by local assessment authorities or Boards of Study.

The Department for Education in South Australia has a number of key priorities and strategies. This includes literacy and numeracy, Aboriginal Education, International Education, Languages and STEM Learning.

The Australian Curriculum provides the 'What?' to be taught whilst the South Australian Teaching for Effective Learning framework[4] provides the pedagogical 'how'.

The focus includes:

- Learning and assessment design; collaborative moderation
- Growth mindset, student voice or student agency
- Intellectual stretch for high achievement in quality assessment task design:
  - ➢ What am I teaching?
  - ➢ Why am I teaching this?
  - ➢ How will I know my students have learnt it?

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[4] https://www.education.sa.gov.au/teaching/teaching-effective-learning/teaching-effective-learning-framework

> ➤ How will I design/re-design for high achievement?

- The pedagogic shift to **intentionally** embed literacy across the curriculum and the pedagogic shift to **intentionally** embed numeracy across the curriculum.

Nationally teachers are guided by the Australian Professional Standards for teachers[5].

2. NAPLAN, SACE, and so forth

A yearly literacy and numeracy student assessment occurs across Australia through the National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy **(NAPLAN)** for all students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. The NAPLAN test is held every year in early May and parents are provided with a report summary.

The Australian **linguistic landscape** is diverse and diversity is celebrated and embraced. The link within the Department for Education South Australia, 2019 Languages Professional Learning Program[6] provides comprehensive data on this rich diversity and the dynamic nature of languages and cultures over time.

The Australian Curriculum has been designed for a range of language offerings, including the **Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages**[7].

Each jurisdiction of Australia has local policy on languages offerings as well as a range of local specialist languages providers, including distance education and community schools.

In South Australia the broad choice of languages across the state may be found at **Languages offered at government schools**[8].

In addition to specialist languages providers, schools across some educational jurisdictions are permitted to offer the International Baccalaureate (IB). In South Australia the IB Diploma is available in a small number of government schools in addition to the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE).

Equally across Australia, educational jurisdictions have forged strong intergovernmental relationships with entities such as the Goethe-Institut, Dante Alighieri Society, Confucius Institute, Japan Foundation and the Alliance Francaise. The intergovernmental partners provide invaluable support through the provision of teacher and student scholarships, study tours, courses, language assistants, promotional and community based activities and much more to enrich the teaching and learning of languages and cultures.

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is the approved English language proficiency test for study, work and migration in Australia. International students whose native language is not English must provide evidence of language competence to be admitted to study in Australia.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages **(CEFR)** has experienced low traction

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[5] https://www.aitsl.edu.au/
[6] http://www.education.sa.gov.au/lplp (In Key Ideas: Key Idea 3 Developing Literacy through Languages (PowerPoint))
[7] https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/languages/
[8] http://www.education.sa.gov.au/teaching/curriculum-and-teaching/primary-and-secondary-curriculum/languages -offered-government-schools

in Australia and a number of research articles are available about the reception it has received.

To complement the Australian Curriculum through innovation, creativity and pedagogical shift, **Classroom Action Research in Languages** was undertaken and supported by the South Australian Association of Teachers of Italian (SAATI). SAATI is a professional volunteer based association for teachers and serves to provide advocacy and promotion for the teaching and learning of Italian.

Exploring opportunities for critical and creative thinking was undertaken through five exploratory projects (individual, pair and group) in South Australian primary and secondary school settings. The focus of each project from the cycle of design and planning, how it was implemented and what was learnt through evidence gathering, reflecting and sharing incentivized teachers to explore ideas in their own languages classroom.

The classroom action research engaged teachers in a deeper understanding of their practice and enabled them to explore new opportunities to improve student learning outcomes. It was achieved by working with experienced project leads in the field of languages to trial innovative pedagogies in the classroom. The new learning was shared and showcased through national and local conferences and workshops.
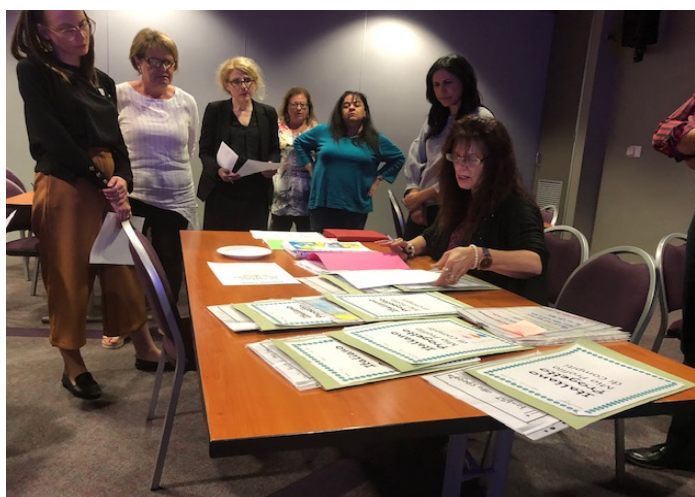
Creativity through the Arts has also been explored with students from Tokushima University working in a South Australian languages high school classroom.   What began initially as a trial has been so popular that it is now an annual project. It entails teaching Japanese art to students in Japanese and it exemplifies how international, cross institutional and interdisciplinary collaboration can enhance learning outcomes for all[9].

3. Conclusion

   In concluding, the Australian Curriculum offers many rich opportunities and the flexibility to explore, innovate and diversify teaching and learning to genuinely 'promote personalised learning that aims to fulfil the diverse capabilities of each young Australian'.

References

ACARA (2014), Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority *About the Australian Curriculum, Introduction* in https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/about-the-australian-curriculum

MCEETYA (2008), (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs) Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, archived publication in https://www.educationcouncil.edu.au/archive/Publications/Publications-archive

Department for Education South Australia, 2019 Languages Professional Learning Program in http://www.education.sa.gov.au/lplp

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[9] An account of this experience can be found at: https://repo.lib.tokushima-u.ac.jp/112205