



Towards the development of a position statement and strategy

**Advice to the Minister of Education and Child Development
from the Multicultural Education and Languages Committee (MELC)**

November 2016



**Government of
South Australia**

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Purpose of this paper

The purpose of this paper is to provide advice on the development of a position statement and related strategy that sets out a way forward for three interrelated areas of work in education in South Australia: multicultural education, languages education¹ and the internationalisation of education. These three areas are important to the learning, educational achievement and well-being of all children, young people, families and communities of South Australia and their participation and engagement with ease in a global world. They are also crucial to the future prosperity of our state.

Specifically, the paper considers:

- the need for a position statement and strategy
- the scope of the development of a position statement and strategy
- the process of development.

The need for a position statement and strategy

The development of a position statement and strategy for multicultural education, languages education and the internationalisation of education through a meaningful, collaborative process is an opportunity to construct a *new narrative for education in linguistic and cultural diversity*. A new narrative is needed because of unprecedented changes brought about by globalisation, the increased mobility of people, and changing technologies of communication. It is this new narrative that would underpin action.

The transformation of economies and technologies has accelerated the movement of people and ideas across the globe and expanded the range and diversity of communities in which people operate. Linguistic and cultural diversity has become a characteristic of local communities and workplaces, a characteristic that is also evident in the learner profile of early childhood centres and schools. Twenty-first century education needs to engage with, and be responsive to, the reality of linguistic and cultural diversity and the complex and sophisticated communication that this environment requires. It needs to develop in learners the knowledge, understanding and dispositions necessary for successful participation and engagement within and across local, regional and global communities, and in all spheres of activity. Developing their language/s, communication, learning and intercultural capabilities is central to the educational achievements and prosperity of individuals, communities and the state. These capabilities enable learners to live and work successfully as linguistically and culturally aware citizens of the world.

Contemporary education needs to focus on developing these capabilities in all students. They need to be developed across all learning areas of the curriculum through ‘multicultural education’ and through the internationalisation of education. Within these two areas of focus, there is a need to understand learning itself as ‘intercultural’. Understanding learning in this way means that the

¹ The term ‘languages education’ includes all languages including Aboriginal languages, languages described as ‘foreign’, ‘modern’, ‘world’ or ‘community’, and English as an Additional Language. It also includes all learners — those who are learning a language of their heritage as well as those who are learning an additional language.

diversity of knowledges, perspectives, worldviews and values that diverse learners bring to all mainstream classrooms and beyond is recognised and developed in a way that includes all learners. It involves learning to negotiate difference — not just linguistic and cultural differences, but different ways of thinking about and seeing and being in the world. Understanding learning this way represents a *paradigm shift* that needs to be made in multicultural and international education in order to prepare students to live and work successfully in a globally interdependent world.

Languages education has a particular role to play in developing intercultural capabilities, because it provides direct access to the culture, systems of values, and knowledge of other peoples, and to diverse ways of seeing the world. Intercultural language learning is an orientation to language learning that brings learners to know and understand the world around them, and to understand commonality and difference, connections and new perspectives as they learn to communicate, interact and negotiate within and across languages and cultures. This orientation to language learning has been incorporated in the Australian Curriculum – Languages, but remains to be implemented in schools. For learners of English as an Additional Language the challenge remains to ensure that their English language literacy is developed to a level that is sufficient for them to participate successfully in the mainstream curriculum *and* to do so within a bi/multilingual orientation.

In summary:

- Globalisation has brought increasingly complex linguistic and cultural diversity in all contexts of education, work and life. It has expanded the opportunity to share and exchange diverse knowledges, perspectives, world views and values. Layered with this complex linguistic and cultural diversity is the use of internet and mobile technologies and the networked society, where people connect in sophisticated ways that transcend national and cultural borders.
- Both these areas of change are profound and demand changes in education that ensure that students learn to operate successfully and with ease in contexts of linguistic and cultural diversity.
- Specifically, education systems need to provide for:
 - the sustained learning of Languages in early childhood, at primary, secondary and tertiary levels
 - the development of English as an Additional Language for non-English-speaking language learners
 - multicultural education and the internationalisation of education to develop intercultural capabilities across the curriculum for all learners.

Although this need has been recognised to some extent in the Australian Curriculum, these areas of learning and capabilities in learning remain to be implemented *in a systematic and sustained way* that also recognises the *diversity of learner needs*.

It must be recognised that at the present time in all three educational sectors these three areas have lost ground substantially in the development of the educational vision, policies, planning and practices, and in the structures that support this work. A major effort of renewal and innovation is needed in all areas of educational planning and practice.

The scope of the position statement and strategy

Three areas of work

The work of MELC encompasses three areas that are both distinctive and interdependent:

1. Multicultural education
2. Languages and English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D)
3. Internationalisation of education

Both multicultural education and internationalisation in education address concepts and processes for working with linguistic and cultural diversity and, as such, the educational dimensions are similar at a fundamental level. However, some differences need to be considered, particularly in relation to equity and opportunities to learn, because of the different histories of these areas in education (i.e. the links between multicultural education and migration, and between internationalisation and the increasing presence of 'international' students in education) and the different students and communities that are perceived to be involved in these areas. Further, these histories have tended to remain focused on specific learner groups e.g. 'non-English-speaking background' students and international students), when multicultural education and the internationalisation of education pertain to all in mainstream educational settings.

In Languages education there is a need to fully implement an intercultural orientation and to expand the goals of language/s learning as reflected in the Australian Curriculum - Languages. This is an essential discussion in consolidating provision (specifically time-on-task in language learning at primary level and pathways for retention to senior secondary levels) and strengthening the quality of and innovation in learning.

For Aboriginal communities across South Australia, there are critical language and learning challenges that confront Aboriginal children, parents and individual communities. These are aligned to Languages and working with linguistic and cultural diversity but, again, the history is very different and this needs to be taken into account. Reconciliation, Sorry Day and NAIDOC Week all play a significant role in how Aboriginal languages and cultures exist and how these concepts shape the identity, values, well-being and dispositions of children and people in and across communities, and their relationship with the land and physical environment. The linguistic and cultural challenges need to be addressed in a sustained way.

Literacy in English is crucial for all learners; it is fundamental to both their learning and achievement. Although not specifically named as a focus area for the MELC, the language and literacy development of students who bring an additional language to their learning is a crucial area of work for the MELC. The successful development of literacy in English for these learners depends to a significant extent on the way in which their first/home language is incorporated into learning. Literacy is a transferable skill, and valuing and drawing upon first language literacies enables students to make connections between languages. Because this correlates strongly with successful English outcomes, the goal of developing bi- or multilingual literacies should be achievable for these students. Research shows that

it takes 8–10 years for students of English as an Additional Language to fully bridge the gap towards learning in English.

For all learners, the learning of Languages interacts with their English. As they enter into the space for learning an additional language they begin to make interlinguistic and intercultural comparisons in learning, and they also benefit from the general cognitive benefits of multilingualism. Through this, they expand their language, communication and learning repertoires more generally.

The scope of work across the three areas of focus encompasses early childhood education, schools, additional providers of languages education (School of Languages, Open Access College, Ethnic Schools), community programs and universities. A better coordination of provision should be developed and sustained for the state as a whole.

A vision of what could be ...

The position statement needs to reaffirm, for all learners, the crucial role of language/s multicultural education and the internationalisation of education understood as a mainstream endeavour. A vision needs to be articulated for South Australian education that enables:

1. development of multilingual and intercultural capabilities of children and young people so that they engage with ease and naturally in linguistic and cultural diversity in their formal educational experience and in their social and working lives
2. enhanced social cohesion
3. prosperity for all, arising from successful participation in work and life in the context of linguistic and cultural diversity, in a way that is of value to the individual and to the development of the state.

The vision should include, in no particular order:

- communicating to exchange meanings within and across languages and cultures
- a recognition of the role of language and culture in all learning and exchange in communication
- preparing young people for active present and future participation in a global world
- a focus on intercultural learning and learning improvement for all
- attentiveness to equity and opportunity to learn
- attentiveness to language, culture and identity-formation
- attentiveness to issues of discrimination
- pedagogies that are linguistically and culturally conscious and responsive
- assessment practices that are responsive to multilingual and intercultural learning
- educational leadership that enables the vision to be enacted
- prosperity and well-being for the individual and the State.

Some specific issues related to particular areas

In each of the three areas there are specific issues that will need to be addressed. Some of these are as follows:

1. Multicultural education

- Ensuring that multicultural education is understood as pertaining to all learners and mainstream education as a whole (not only for students from home backgrounds other than English)
- Strengthening its visibility within educational structures
- Reconceptualising what it means and how it is understood
- Considering the place of Aboriginal knowledges and learning, in partnership with Aboriginal communities
- Reconsidering the focus on Asia only, rather than on Asia–Australia and Australia–world relationships

2. Languages and English as an Additional Language/Dialect

Broadly:

- Increasing retention through to Year 12
- Expanding Aboriginal language learning – including revival, reclamation and revitalisation, in partnership with Aboriginal communities
- Strengthening overall student engagement and participation in languages learning, including involving them in the design of courses
- Increasing time available for language learning and continuity [see, for example, Scarino, Liddicoat & Kohler (2016): *Maximising intensivity and continuity in language learning: developing, implementing and evaluating models of provision* report] and, in particular, removing the nexus between language learning in primary schools and Non-Instructional Time (NIT)
- Enacting the intercultural orientation to language learning as specified in the Australian Curriculum—Languages
- Strengthening student engagement and achievements, AND recognising the broader range of achievements that can be achieved by participating in a multilingual and multicultural world
- Improving the quality of programs through a personalised, experiential focus on language learning, so that they are responsive to student needs
- Addressing teacher recruitment and ongoing professional development
- Building partnerships with parents/caregivers/families, communities, organisations and schools in diverse locations
- Considering and mapping the relationship among the various providers of languages and mainstream education (School of Languages, Open Access College, Ethnic Schools)

Within English as an Additional Language/Dialect:

- Developing consistent models for the teaching of English as an Additional Language, recognising that it is a bi/multilingual undertaking
- Addressing the reduced and fragile provision at a time of intensified needs
- Addressing the more complex learning needs of 'new' communities
- Extending English language and literacy development for Aboriginal students
- Moving from a monolingual orientation to a multilingual orientation that recognises and develops learners' bi/multilingual capabilities, including translanguaging practices
- Maintaining program support for schools
- Conducting teacher professional development and building mainstream teacher capacity
- Addressing settlement needs

3. The internationalisation of education:

- Addressing the perception that international education is achieved by focusing on international students rather than on all students
- Addressing the confusion about what internationalisation means in relation to learning that can be characterised as intercultural, and what it entails (evidenced in the proliferation of terms, e.g. 'international-mindedness', 'global-mindedness', 'interculturalism')
- Considering the place of CIS internationally-accredited schools.

In *all of these areas* there is a need to:

- map issues based on an understanding of linguistic and cultural diversity in education as
 - including *all* students and their participation in and engagement with diversity
 - focused on intercultural learning
 - focused on learning achievements, social transformation, creativity, prosperity and well-being.

This mapping should involve students, educational leaders, teachers, parents, associations, and the wider community:

- recognise the needs, desires, expectations and affiliations of diverse students. In the context of increasing diversity, students will necessarily have diverse needs
- ensure that the whole school community contributes to multicultural education, languages education and the internationalisation, rather than seeing it as the work of the languages teachers alone
- recognise the impact and consequences of particular provisions
- promote innovative, rigorous and sustained approaches that address persistent issues within a culture that rewards experimentation with alternative ways.

Developing a position statement and strategy

The development of a position statement and an integrated strategy for multicultural education, languages education and the internationalisation of education needs to:

- explain why the three areas of work are important and how they are interrelated
- set out a case for change and improvement that supports innovation while building and flowing from a rigorous and comprehensive analysis of the current situation, capturing strengths, challenges and opportunities for the future
- re-examine the thinking that has driven our approach to multicultural education, languages education and more recently, the internationalisation of education, since Professor Smolicz launched South Australia as a national and international leader in this field
- test our current thinking and practice against the best thinking and practice, locally, nationally and internationally, to spell out a clear, collaboratively developed strategy for the future, and identify specific initiatives that will seed innovation
- ensure a whole-of-school approach that engages all members of school communities
- support innovation in practice and networking to share practices.

Developing a position statement and an integrated strategy will involve:

Phase 1: Analysis

An analysis of:

1. current provisions, programs, projects, initiatives in the three areas in the three educational sectors and additional providers
2. national and international policies and provision. *Specifically it needs to address:*
 - i. What is happening nationally and internationally in relation to:
 - policies (languages, literacy, multicultural, international)
 - target setting?
 - strategic planning – curriculum, teaching/learning, assessment, recruitment → differentiated by sector, teacher development
 - administrative/structures, etc.
 - key data gathered
 - promotion
 - incentives
 - quality assurance
 - innovation
 - ii. Systematic analysis of *current policies, planning and provision*; consideration alignment with languages literacy, multicultural and international education
 - iii. Consultation processes/workshops/roundtables
 - Education Directors
 - SACE Board
 - Principals

- Professional associations
 - HR
 - early childhood education
 - universities
 - key providers
 - students
- iv. Communication throughout the process of analysis leading to a report on the analysis

Phase 2: A contemporary conceptualisation of the three areas.

Phase 3: A strategy development phase, in which strategies are developed specifically for:

- *program development* to address issues particular to birth/early childhood, primary, junior secondary and senior secondary
- *teaching and learning* based on the implementation of the Australian Curriculum and incorporating its intercultural and experiential learning orientations
- *teacher development*
- *workforce planning*
- *quality assurance provisions*
- *special initiatives or innovations* to ensure the development of cutting-edge programs/initiatives/projects in particular sites
- *communications and engagement* within the sector and school communities, with wider communities, with international partners

Phase 4: An implementation phase

Phase 5: A monitoring and evaluation phase.

The development of the position statement and strategy should be undertaken with maximum consultation so as to initiate a process of embracing the proposed new narrative.

Considerations related to the process of development

The development of the position statement and strategy should be based on the following set of principles:

1. That development is focused on *learning* for all and on language/s, culture/s and their role in learning, identity-formation and belonging.
2. That the development is *participatory*, giving primacy to the student voice, leadership, parents/caregivers/families, and community (re)-engagement.
3. That the development is *collaborative* of all stakeholders, including the three education sectors, SACE Board, universities, parents, professional associations, community organisations and communities – in a non-superficial way.
4. That the development is *informed* by current research and innovative practices.

Options for development

Diverse options for development of the position statement and strategy include that it is developed:

1. by the sectors collaboratively through the establishment of a secretariat with staff from all three sectors – in consultation with MELC, and with processes that encompass the principles outlined above, *or*
2. by each individual sector, in consultation with MELC, and with processes that encompass the principles outlined above *or*
3. through outsourcing to specialists with oversight by MELC, sectors and with processes that encompass the principles outlined above, *or*
4. by MELC, with appropriate resourcing, and processes that encompass the principles outlined above.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to explain the case for the development of a position statement and strategy for multicultural education, languages education, and the internationalisation of education through a re-conceptualisation of these areas as an integral part of education *for all students*. It has mapped some of the issues and considerations that need to be addressed. Decisions will need to be made about the process of development, and matters of governance across the three educational sectors.

