



Asia Education Foundation

A submission from the Asia Education
Foundation at The University of
Melbourne to The Review to Achieve
Excellence in Australian Schools

*Global competence and Asia capabilities for all
young Australians – an urgent priority for a
prosperous and secure Australia*

Executive Summary

Australian students' future success has never been so dependent on their proficiency in negotiating rapidly shifting domestic and global contexts. Our schools must address the new reality because the skills required of previous generations are no longer sufficient. The deceleration of Australia's economic growth has generated a new urgency for Asia engagement to ensure future prosperity. Now, more than ever, Australia must foster global competence by opening up our classrooms to Asia and the wider world.

Asia Capability, Global Competence and Languages are essential skills for success in contemporary global environments. The submission draws attention to the significant gaps in these competencies evident in Australian schools. The success of our students' global readiness requires a deeper response from our educational leaders.

Our research reveals that new mechanisms are required to ensure that intercultural understanding and a focus on Asia is integrated successfully into Australian classrooms. Studies of Asia must be incorporated beyond the humanities - exposure to the Asia region can be achieved across all curriculum areas. Moreover, Australian students should be assessed on their preparedness for the globalised world.

Over 20 years, the AEF has promoted and supported Asia literacy in Australian education. AEF in collaboration with Asialink and Asialink Business, offer multiple programs which can be implemented nationally to meet the Global Competency and Asia Capability goals outlined in this submission.

The AEF recommends building on existing foundations to:

1. *Develop* a bi-partisan national plan for Global Competence and Asia Capability, which looks beyond short-term solutions;
2. *Strengthen* the Asia Capability and Global Competency of Australia's education workforce;
3. *Build* an evidence base to monitor and assess student and school performance against Asia Capability and intercultural understanding;
4. *Increase* the value of Global Competency, Asia Capability and Asian Languages within the education community.

What should educational success for Australian students and schools look like?

Young Australians need to be globally competent, equipped to understand, engage with and shape a rapidly changing world.¹

Globalization of jobs and markets, new digital technologies, and increasingly culturally diverse societies provide new opportunities and challenges for our students. Increasing numbers of us work in a wide range of occupations with and across Asia, for instance our farmers' produce fills supermarket shelves from Singapore to Seoul.² At the same time, our young people's well-being is threatened by complex environmental, economic, political, social, and health issues that transcend national boundaries and cannot be solved by one nation alone.

¹ *Global Competency for an Inclusive World, OECD 2016*
<https://www.oecd.org/education/Global-competency-for-an-inclusive-world.pdf>

² *New Work Order*, Foundation for Young Australians 2015-16. <http://www.fya.org.au/our-research/>

Australia must ensure that young people are equipped with the skills, knowledge and understandings to effectively collaborate and innovate across cultures and borders.

“Australians at all levels require the ability to conceptualise, design, and execute strategies with Asian colleagues. Future generations will not mark us kindly if we do not get this right.”³

The OECD maintains that our children need to be equipped with global competency including:

- “bringing judgment and action to difficult situations in which people’s beliefs and perspectives are at odds
- identifying cultural traits and biases and to recognise that their own understanding of the world is inevitably partial
- analysing global and intercultural issues critically and from multiple perspectives
- understanding how differences affect perceptions, judgments, and ideas of self and others, and,
- engaging in open, appropriate and effective interactions with others from different backgrounds on the basis of a shared respect for human dignity “⁴

Australia and the New World Order

The global economic power shift away from the established advanced economies in North America, and Western Europe to Asia is gaining momentum. China overtook the US in 2014 to become the largest economy in purchasing power parity and 7 of Australia’s top 10 export partners are now in Asia, representing 60 % of our total exports. By 2030, four out of five of the world’s biggest economies will be in Asia.

If the last 25 years have been shipping commodities to Asia, coming decades will be a story of services and consumption fueled by a rapidly expanding Asian middle-class. Australian education needs to invest in developing the capabilities and the talent that are essential for this new success.

Increasingly, Australia’s neighbours are playing a significant role in accelerating the creation and adoption of new ideas. In the 2015 Global Innovation Index, Singapore, Hong Kong and The Republic of Korea ranked ahead of Australia, followed closely by Japan and China.

Chinese universities are quickly rising in the global rankings (with two institutions in the Times Higher Education top 30 for the first time in 2017). We have much to learn from Asia on innovation. Innovation requires us to collaborate and learn from each other to drive improvement and productivity across all sectors. The ability to build trusted and mutually beneficial relationships with the rising stars in the Asian region are fundamental to building a competitive edge in areas as diverse as trade, science, education, the arts and health.

Within Australia, schools, families, communities and workplaces are more culturally diverse than ever before. China and India are the largest source of Australia’s new migrants, with Hinduism and Buddhism our fastest growing religions⁵. Fostering open and flexible attitudes, building appreciation of our common humanity and the need to preserve universal human dignity are vital areas for student learning. The ability to co-exist and successfully interact with people from many faiths and countries is fundamental to Australia’s ongoing domestic cohesion and security.

³ Andrew Parker PwC Asia Practice Leader, 2017

⁴ *Global Competency for an Inclusive World, OECD 2016* <https://www.oecd.org/education/Global-competency-for-an-inclusive-world.pdf>

⁵ Australian Census, 2016

What does this look like for schools?

Success for schools must be equated with developing students who demonstrate global competence and Asia capability. *Asia Literacy and the Australian Teaching Workforce*, a report commissioned by the Commonwealth Government and undertaken by AITSL, Asia Education Foundation (AEF) and Deakin University in 2013, identified the following school attributes:

- *The school's curriculum* will integrate a focus on Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia across all subject areas and ensure that the General Capability of Intercultural understanding is achieved by every student by the time they leave school. Curriculum focus on Asia will be explicit, planned and monitored. High quality Asia focused curriculum resources and international school partner programs will be the norm. Languages, with a priority on Asian languages, will be offered to all students as essential core learning.
- *School policies* will include global competence and Asia capability for all students as core outcomes. Strategies to achieve these goals will be embedded in the school's strategic and operational plans to ensure adequate resourcing.
- *School leaders* will deepen their knowledge of changing global economic, social and cultural contexts and Australia's positioning in the Asia region to ensure ongoing relevance of their school's education offering.
- *Teachers* will be encouraged to normalize studies of Asia in classrooms and to bring global competencies to the fore. They will be sufficiently resourced to continually build their own knowledge of Asia and the world and explore new pedagogies to develop relevant knowledge and competencies.
- *International partnerships* will be part of every school, with the majority partnering schools in Asia. All students and teachers will learn to collaborate with their peers globally by utilising readily accessible technology platforms that open their classrooms to the world.
- *Every student* will develop foundational and deep knowledge of Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia, including through learning another language. Every student will have opportunities to build intercultural understanding through real time and virtual engagement. Students with Asian heritage would be viewed as positive school resources with their experiences and knowledge providing bridges to the region's cultural traditions and contemporary life.
- *School communities* will be informed by evidence-based assessments of their students' progress. Community cultural diversity will be embraced and enlisted as support for international linkages and the development of student's international awareness and intercultural understanding.

What capabilities, skills and knowledge should students learn at school to prepare them for the future?

Global competence

To respond to global opportunities, STEM, creativity and enterprise skills are receiving greater priority in schools. Our students must also have cultural knowledge, language skills and deep intercultural understanding to be successful.

The OECD's Education 2030 strategy identifies the capabilities required by all young people

to become active and informed global citizens ready for the world and ready for work.⁶

Global Competence now stands alongside Literacy, Numeracy and Science as essential capabilities for all students. In 2018 the OECD will assess Global Competence for the first time as part of the Program for International Student Assessments (PISA) and Australian school students will be assessed for their global readiness.

The OECD's Global Competency assessment focuses on:

- **skills** of analytical and critical thinking; ability to interact respectfully, appropriately and effectively; empathy and flexibility
- **knowledge** and understanding of global issues; intercultural knowledge and understanding
- **attitudes** of openness towards people from other cultures; respect for cultural otherness; global-mindedness; responsibility and
- **valuing** human dignity and cultural diversity.⁷

Intercultural understanding

Intercultural understanding is identified as one of seven *General Capabilities* in the Australian Curriculum, expected to be achieved by all students by the time they leave school. A cornerstone of positive citizenship and an essential capability in contemporary workplaces, intercultural understanding helps safeguard students against social exclusion, racism and prejudice. The Australian Curriculum says that, "Intercultural understanding involves students learning about and engaging with diverse cultures in ways that recognise commonalities and differences, creates connections with others and cultivates mutual respect... it involves students learning to value and view critically their own cultural perspectives and practices and those of others through their interactions with people, texts and contexts across the curriculum."

Asia Capabilities

Asia Capabilities expand and enrich students' intellectual, personal and creative development and are essential tools to build economic prosperity for our nation and positive bilateral relationships in other areas.

In 2011, Asialink and the Australian Industry Group surveyed 380 businesses on factors that most support success in Asia and the correlation between capability and businesses' success. As a result, Asialink with the Boston Consulting Group, developed 11 individual and organisational capabilities required for businesses to enable them to thrive in the Asian century. At least three of these capabilities have high relevance to school curriculum development:

- Knowledge of contemporary Asian cultural and societal norms to enable the building of long – term trusted relationships with Asian colleagues
- Knowledge of contemporary Asian political, economic and social systems to enable the ability to adapt to different Asian cultural contexts
- A useful level of proficiency in one or more Asian languages for better communication and to demonstrate cultural sensitivity.

With 4.3 billion inhabitants - accounting for 60 % of world population - it follows that a school education that largely ignores the diverse belief systems, philosophies, arts, literature, histories, languages and popular cultures of Asia puts our students at great disadvantage.

⁶ www.oecd.org/edu/school/education-2030.htm

⁷ *Global Competency for an Inclusive World, OECD 2016, P 8*

Accordingly, the Australian Curriculum has a cross-curriculum priority of Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia.

Students will:

- “learn about and recognise the diversity within and between the countries of the Asia region
- develop knowledge and understanding of Asian societies, cultures, beliefs and environments, and the connections between the peoples of Asia, Australia, and the rest of the world
- be equipped with the skills to communicate and engage with the peoples of Asia so they can effectively live, work and learn in the region.”⁸

Research undertaken by ACER shows that only a very small proportion of Year 12 students study any content at all related to Asia⁹. An audit of the Australian Curriculum undertaken by the AEF for the Australian Curriculum Review (2014) indicates that only a very small proportion of the curriculum explicitly mentions content related to the Asia region:

- History has 16 % of its total content descriptions focused on Asia. However, 96 % of these are elective
- Geography has 6 % of its content descriptions focused on Asia
- English has less than 1 %
- Science and Mathematics have none
- Other subjects have fewer than 10 % of their total elaborations that mention Asia.

Languages

Speaking more than one language is a valuable asset for young Australians. In an audit of 4.3 million job ads in Australia over the past 4 years, the basic skills most in demand by employers showed the sharpest increase in digital capability, bi-lingual skills and creativity in that order.¹⁰ Close to 100 % of students exit schooling with a second language in most high-performing education systems. In Australia, by comparison, only 11 % of senior secondary students choose to study a language in addition to English – fewer than 6 % of these students study an Asian language. Languages have by far the lowest enrolments of any learning area nationally. This has not changed for 25 years.

How should school quality and educational success be measured?

Global trends in measurement and assessment

Nations are examining new forms of assessment which acknowledge the rise in importance of competencies or capabilities. OECD's PISA has introduced a series of innovative assessments including measures for global competence and team work. However, there is little evidence of measures introduced in Australia designed to track the development or progress of the General Capabilities for Australian school students.

Global competence

A nation's PISA scores are a globally accepted indicator of the effectiveness of that country's education system. In 2018 the question will be: how globally competent are young Australians when

⁸ Australian Curriculum <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/>

⁹ Studies of Asia in Year 12, Australian Council for Educational Research, 2011

¹⁰ *The new basics: big data reveals the skills young people need for the new work order*, FYA, 2016

PISA introduces an international assessment of the global competence of students, schools and education systems. According to OECD, the results of the Global Competence PISA could help answer policy questions including:

- “How well are students prepared for life and employment in culturally diverse societies and in a globalised world?
- How much are students exposed to global news and how do they understand and critically analyse intercultural and global issues?
- What are the salient divides in the population in terms of global competence? “¹¹

Asia Capabilities

Currently there is no data collected in Australia to indicate levels of Australian students’ Asia capability. Despite being included as priorities in the Australian curriculum, there are no mechanisms to ensure that schools and teachers *do* actually include intercultural understanding and a focus on Asia in their implementation of Australian Curriculum.

Languages

Despite Languages being included in Australian Curriculum as one of eight core learning areas, a national policy review undertaken by the AEF in 2015 (as part of a study for the Commonwealth Government on Languages in the Senior Secondary Curriculum) indicates that the status of Languages varies considerably across Australian states and territories. In most states languages are elective post Year 8.¹²

National data on student participation in Languages has not been collected since 2011 (with the exception of Year 12 data), making it almost impossible to assess progress against other nations or gauge trends and deficiencies to inform future evidence-based policy making.

What can we do to improve and how can we support ongoing improvement over time?

It is a matter of equity that *all* schools ensure that *all* students are ‘globally ready’ and ‘Asia capable’ with skills, understandings & knowledge that equip them to fully participate and thrive professionally and personally.

Structural impediments such as education workforce capacity, lack of appropriate monitoring and assessment, and the absence of an evidence base, seriously inhibit the ability of schools and jurisdictions to make judicious policy and implement reform.

Promising programs designed to address these issues have disappointingly been discontinued. A serious investment at all levels of government can achieve Global Competence and Asia Capabilities for all young Australians at scale. This would include;

- the development of effective pedagogies for Intercultural understanding and Languages
- building growth in student and parent demand and,
- skilling a competent teaching workforce,.

¹¹ *Global Competency for an Inclusive World*, OECD 2016, P 5

¹² http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/docs/default-source/research-and-policy-pdfs/senior_secondary_languages_education_research_project_final.pdf Pages 33-42

A bi-partisan, long-term, national action plan for Global Competence and Asia Capability is urgently required to be implemented and monitored by all Education Ministers.

We recommend that such a plan include four strategic interventions:

1. *Facilitating national coordination and collaboration* taking into account that jurisdictions and schools have prime responsibility for planning and delivery of Australian Curriculum. Activities could include: national forums for jurisdictions to share best practices; high level roundtables to reach consensus on ways to best monitor student participation and outcomes; building a national evidence base; resourcing innovative solutions to previously intractable problems; supporting technology platforms that allow full participation of regional and remote Australian communities; and expanding the national digital resource bank of curriculum resources.
2. *Build an evidence base* to monitor and measure student and school performance and reliably inform future policy and practice. The 2018 PISA assessment of Global Competency will provide some baseline data. However, it will not provide baseline data on Asia Capabilities or the development of Intercultural understanding, K-12. A clear road map is needed that has a pragmatic and unified approach to define, track and assess student learning in these domains. This would include collection of quality data and its analysis, and guidance on ways these can be used for policymaking, school and classroom practice, community advocacy and future funding investment.
3. *Strengthen the Asia capability of Australia's education workforce* to meet Global Competency and Asia Capability goals specified in Australian Curriculum and required to meet the needs of the National Professional Standards for Teachers and School Leaders. Activities here would include: equip every school principal to lead a globally competent and Asia capable school; provide all teachers with access to targeted professional learning programs; ensure all graduate teachers enter the workforce with Asia knowledge and skills relevant to their teaching qualification; focus on provision of curriculum resources; and build an evidence base to support classroom implementation of Australian Curriculum.
4. *Increase the value students, parents and the community place on global competence, Asia capability and Asian languages.* Activities here would include: link every Australian school with a school in Asia; support school, business and community partnerships; engage community in the development of the evidence base; communicate the evidence base through public education strategies; and provide incentives to students to continue Asian languages study.

What works best for whom and in what circumstances?

AEF has played a key role for twenty years in promoting and supporting Asia literacy in Australian schooling, advising on policy and implementation and facilitating educators' engagement in program innovations with the support of our founding parent bodies, Asialink at The University of Melbourne and Education Services Australia.

Over that time, an indicator of Asia capability and cultural competency has been the level of engagement of principals, teachers and students with peers from the region. The impact of this is

demonstrated in the internationally awarded Australia-Asia School BRIDGE program which has proven to be transformative in developing intercultural understanding and knowledge of the world for both students and their teachers.¹³ A range of technology platforms has made meaningful peer-to-peer engagement accessible for all Australian schools.

Building education workforce capacity to deliver Asia focused curriculum has been a key AEF role. The delivery of accessible global competence and intercultural frameworks and appropriate tools for school and classroom use requires investment and evidence based materials.

Asialink Business is Australia's leading centre for building Asia capability, established in 2013 with a mandate from the Commonwealth Government to develop an Asia capable workforce in Australia. Its capability development programs, research products and initiatives allow educational institutions, corporates, businesses and organisations to develop the essential knowledge of Asian markets and business environments, cultures and political landscapes to engage more effectively with Asia.

Asialink Business and AEF have collaborated to develop a customised Cross-Cultural Intelligence Training Program that seeks to build cultural competency skills to strengthen teacher and school leader awareness of their own cultural predispositions, to build understandings of cultural similarities and differences, and to create positive classroom environments.

The AEF is positioned to provide a national platform to implement strategies and programs outlined above. The AEF and its Advisory Board, representing key stakeholders across the country, provides mechanisms for accountability and sharing of best practice.

¹³ www.asiaeducation.edu.au/programmes/school-partnerships