

# Asia Literacy and the Australian Teaching Workforce

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## Summary Report



Asia Education Foundation



Note: This is a commissioned report, not an AITSL policy paper. The views expressed in this paper are not necessarily those of AITSL or of the Australian Government.

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Summary of a report prepared by researchers from Deakin University led by Professor Christine Halse, Centre for Research in Education Futures and Innovation (CREFI)

Summarised by the Asia Education Foundation (AEF)

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The views expressed herein are solely those of the report authors and not of any other party or organisation connected with this project.

## Preamble

It is now well-established that young Australians need knowledge and understanding of Asia. The *White Paper on Australia in the Asian Century* argues that Australia needs 'to produce a step change in the understanding of Asia and the acquisition of Asia-relevant capabilities'<sup>1</sup>. The paper positions the teaching and learning of Asian languages and studies as National Objectives that are integral to national productivity:

National Objective 10: Every Australian student will have significant exposure to studies of Asia across the curriculum to increase their cultural knowledge and skills and enable them to be active in the region.

National Objective 11: All Australian students will have the opportunity, and be encouraged, to undertake a continuous course of study in an Asian language throughout their years of schooling<sup>2</sup>.

The nationally agreed goals for schooling in the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* affirm that young Australians need to be 'Asia literate' and able 'to relate to and communicate across cultures, especially the cultures and countries of Asia'<sup>3</sup>.

These are primarily educational goals. They concern the kind of learning that our young people will need to take their part in the century in which the lives of all Australians will be increasingly entwined with those of their Asian neighbours. Over the past five years, Australia's engagement with Asia has increased by 8 per cent, while engagement with the rest of the world has declined by 13.3 per cent<sup>4</sup>. Understanding and responding to this continuing change demands higher levels of Asia literacy than most Australians currently achieve.

They are also, however, economic goals. The economies of Asia are collectively the largest and fastest growing in the world and Australia's economy is increasingly linked with that growth. In 2011, for example, Australia's trade with China and Indonesia grew 10.7 and 13.7 per cent respectively<sup>5</sup>. The countries of Asia represent a major opportunity for Australian business, and capturing that opportunity will depend on an Asia capable workforce.

The key driver will be a teaching workforce that is equipped with the knowledge, understanding and skills required to deliver on the goal of Asia literacy for every young Australian. As Hattie notes, teacher quality is the single most important influence on student learning, accounting for about 30% of the variance in student achievement<sup>6</sup>. If Australian teachers are to deliver on our broad goals for an Asia literate population, they must themselves be Asia literate.

The paper summarised here provides the research basis for developing a teaching workforce that can deliver on our ambitions for an Asia literate population. It reports on a study that collected empirical, research-based evidence about the current state of play, what kinds of characteristics and experiences teachers and principals need and how such a workforce can be developed.

## What was the purpose of the study?

The research was intended to answer these questions:

- What are the features of an Asia literate teacher?
- What are the features of an Asia literate principal?
- What measures are required to build an Asia literate teaching workforce?

## What was done?

The study was commissioned by AITSL, funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workforce Relations and managed by the Asia Education Foundation (AEF). It was conducted by researchers from Deakin University, led by Professor Christine Halse, from the Centre for Research in Education Futures and Innovation (CREFI).

The study involved five components:

- A literature review examined the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the Australian Professional Standard for Principals (both developed by AITSL) in relation to the research evidence on quality teaching and quality leadership. A synthesis of the policy literature related to building the capacity of an Asia literate teaching workforce was also conducted, to identify the challenges and opportunities for the practice of Asia literacy in schools.

1 Asian Century Taskforce (2012). 2012 White Paper on Australia in the Asian Century. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia. p. 167

2 Ibid., p. 170

3 Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEEDYA), National (Melbourne) Declaration on Education Goals for Young Australians (2008). p. 9

4 Asialink (2012). PWC Melbourne Institute Asialink Index-Synopsis. Carlton: Asialink p. 8

5 Ibid., p. 9

- An online survey of over 1300 teachers developed a profile of Asia literacy in the teaching workforce. In addition to questions about teacher background and understanding, the survey also included open-ended questions, to collect teachers' views on teaching and learning for Asia literacy
- An online survey of 432 principals developed a profile of Asia literacy amongst this group. The survey was broadly similar to the teacher survey, but targeted to principals.
- Case studies of 12 teachers at different career stages of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. Each case study included an example of how the case study teacher integrated Asia related content into their practice.
- A group discussion with delegates at the AEF National Forum on 5 June 2012, in Melbourne addressed the focus questions for the research.

## What is Asia literacy?

A quarter of a century ago, Professor Stephen FitzGerald described Asia literacy as featuring:

a populace in which knowledge of an Asian language is commonplace and knowledge about Asian customs, economies and societies very widespread<sup>7</sup>.

For Australian students, Asia literacy is defined in the Melbourne Declaration as the capacity 'to relate to and communicate across cultures, especially the cultures and countries of Asia'<sup>8</sup>. This definition is reinforced in the White Paper on *Australia in the Asian Century*<sup>9</sup>.

The Australian Curriculum describes Asia literacy as teaching and learning that provides students with a knowledge of 'Asian societies, cultures, beliefs and environments, and the connections between the peoples of Asia, Australia, and the rest of the world' and 'the skills to communicate and engage with the peoples of Asia so they can effectively live, work and learn in the region'<sup>10</sup>.

The current study sought to advance our understanding of what Asia literacy means for teachers. It developed surveys for both teachers and principals aimed at defining and measuring the Asia literacy practice of primary and secondary teachers and principals. The outcomes of this study are discussed below.

7 FitzGerald, S. (1988). National Educational Policy and Asian Studies, *Current Issues in Asia Studies Series*, Number 3. South Oakleigh: Morphett Press, p. 12

8 MCEEDYA, *ibid*.

9 Asian Century Taskforce (2012)

10 ACARA (2012). The shape of the Australian Curriculum V3, May 2012. [http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/\\_resources/The\\_Shape\\_of\\_the\\_Australian\\_Curriculum\\_V3.pdf](http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/_resources/The_Shape_of_the_Australian_Curriculum_V3.pdf) (accessed 5 May 2013).

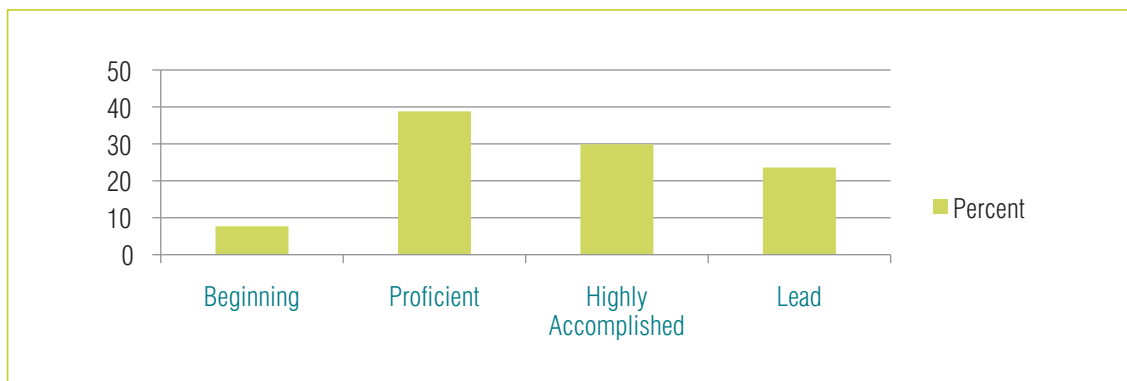
## How Asia literate are teachers now?

The online survey asked teachers to rank their own level of Asia literacy as 'Beginning', 'Proficient', 'Highly Accomplished' or 'Lead', categories based on the career stages of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. Across all teachers, the results showed that most teachers do not yet feel expert, with only a minority considering themselves 'Highly Accomplished' or 'Lead' teachers:



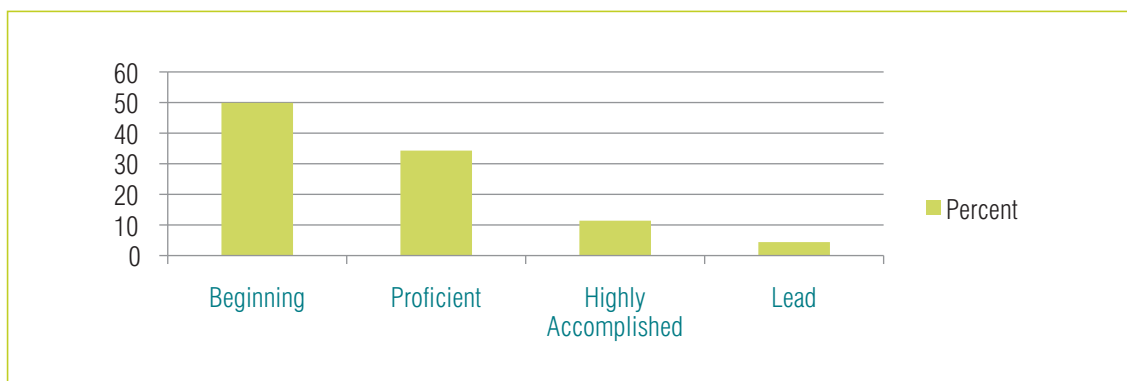
Graph 1: Teachers' self-assessed level of Asia literacy

In contrast, there were much higher levels of self-perceived Asia literacy among Asian language teachers. Few of them (about 8%) rank themselves as Beginning, compared with almost 50% of non-language teachers (see below), while about 53% of language teachers ranked themselves as 'Highly Accomplished' or 'Lead', compared with about 15% of non-language teachers:



Graph 2: Asian language teachers' assessment of their level of Asia literacy

Even among teachers of Asian languages, while they see themselves as more Asia literate, there are some who are much less confident: teaching an Asian language is not in itself a guarantee of Asia literacy. If, however, these teachers are removed from the data, the results for the remaining teachers are very striking, with well over 50% of non-language teachers assessing their Asia literacy at 'Beginning' and fewer than 5% rating themselves at 'Lead':



Graph 3: Non-Asian language teachers' assessment of their level of Asia literacy

This suggests that most teachers, and especially non-language teachers, feel they have some distance to go before they are Asia literate themselves and ready to develop Asia literacy in Australian students. This is particularly the case taking into account that the cohort of teachers surveyed in the current study were largely self-selected, and so can be assumed to have a greater interest and experience in teaching about Asia than the teaching population as a whole.

### What is an Asia literate teacher or principal?

So what are the features of an Asia literate teacher or principal? The study reviewed research literature and undertook detailed analysis of teacher and principal surveys to identify the characteristics most closely associated with high levels of Asia literacy. This is the first study to provide a reliable measure of the features of Asia literate educators.

The online survey asked teachers to respond to a number of statements about six areas related to their teaching: Professional knowledge, Teaching resources, Curriculum and assessment, School context, Student learning and Teacher beliefs. Their responses were scored to produce a measure of their Asia literacy in each of the six areas and an overall score.

On the basis of the data collected and analysed, the study argues that the Asia literate teacher:

- Possesses expert knowledge of content, assessment strategies and pedagogy for teaching Asia related curriculum;
- Demonstrates familiarity with a wide range of Asia related teaching resources;
- Actively builds intercultural understanding;
- Frequently, purposefully and seamlessly integrates Asia into the curriculum;
- Uses ICT to connect their students with students in Asia; and
- Leads Asia related learning within and beyond the school.

The findings suggest that Asia literate teachers know the curriculum content in relation to the study of Asia and are skilled in teaching about Asia. They understand how to assess and report on student learning about Asia. Asia literate teachers are familiar with and make use of a wide range of Asia related resources in their teaching. They do not restrict their teaching about Asia to specific units of work but frequently, purposefully and seamlessly integrate Asia into their everyday teaching and across disciplines.

They use ICTs and help to connect their own students with students in Asia. These teachers are effective in developing intercultural understanding among students. They also build connections with parents and the community. They lead and support colleagues within their own school and beyond and play a role promoting teaching and learning about Asia through their professional associations.

Teachers who have a high level of Asia literacy are much more likely to describe the way they include teaching and learning about Asia as frequent and purposeful, are likely to have experienced a cultural exchange or participated in a study tour, more likely to teach in a school that has received an Asian literacy grant, to teach an Asian language and to have a postgraduate qualification related to studies of Asia.

The online survey of principals asked questions about Leadership (vision and values), Teaching and learning, Knowledge of policy, Supporting teaching resources, Links to community and beliefs. As with the teacher survey, responses were scored to provide a measure of Asia literacy. The study identified key features of the Asia literate principal, who:

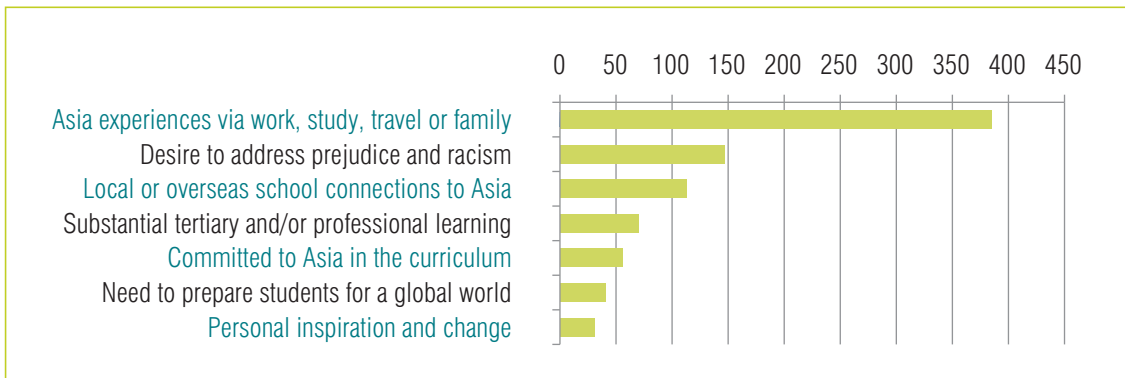
- Builds connections with local and international Asian communities;
- Facilitates Asia related teaching and learning;
- Demonstrates knowledge of the content and pedagogy required for high quality teaching and learning about Asia;
- Provides inspirational leadership that supports staff to improve outcomes in the languages and studies of Asia.

Asia literate principals are those who make strong links to the community to build partnerships, bring the Asian community into their school, influence their local community's links to Asia and take the lead on community projects. They make international connections with schools in Asia to support Australian students' learning of Asian languages and studies. Asia literate principals ensure that school policy, planning, resourcing and finances support teaching and learning about Asia, and that appropriate staffing, ICT infrastructure and teaching resources are provided. They may not be 'Asia experts' but they know the content and pedagogy for high quality teaching about Asia and are mindful that content knowledge is aligned with appropriate teaching methods to ensure effective learning. Asia literate principals also provide inspirational and focused leadership that supports staff to improve outcomes in the area of Asia literacy. They do this by demonstrating 'commitment', 'strong advocacy' and 'clear vision' that leads and inspires the school community. They monitor teachers' performance, have clear strategies and action plans, encourage teachers to integrate studies of Asia across the curriculum, and work with their staff to develop plans and policies for teaching and learning about Asia.

Principals with a high level of Asia literacy have usually participated in Asia related professional learning. Principals of schools that offer an Asian language have significantly higher levels of Asia literacy, as do principals whose schools have participated in AEF study programs or the Australian-Asia BRIDGE project.

## Why do teachers become Asia literate?

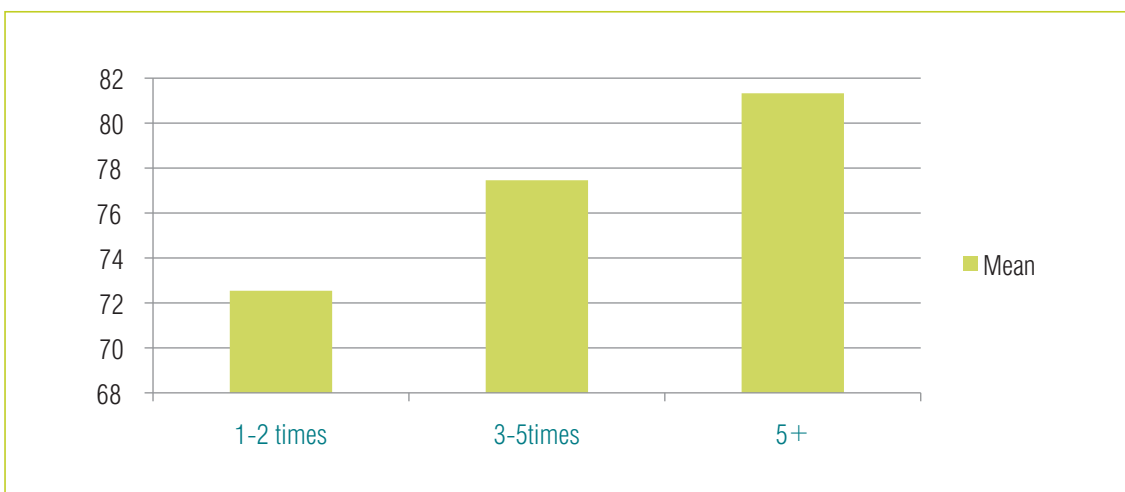
One of the survey questions asked teachers about their motivators for becoming Asia literate. Analysis of the 800 responses identified seven key motivators:



Graph 4: Motivators to become an Asia literate teacher

The first and most significant of these categories includes further study as a major component for 33% of respondents in the category. Often this involved learning a language or other study that provided ‘real experiences’ that generated ‘deeper understanding’ and much greater ‘respect’ for the different cultures. A further 9% of respondents overall cited ongoing tertiary study or professional learning as a motivator (the fourth category in the graph).

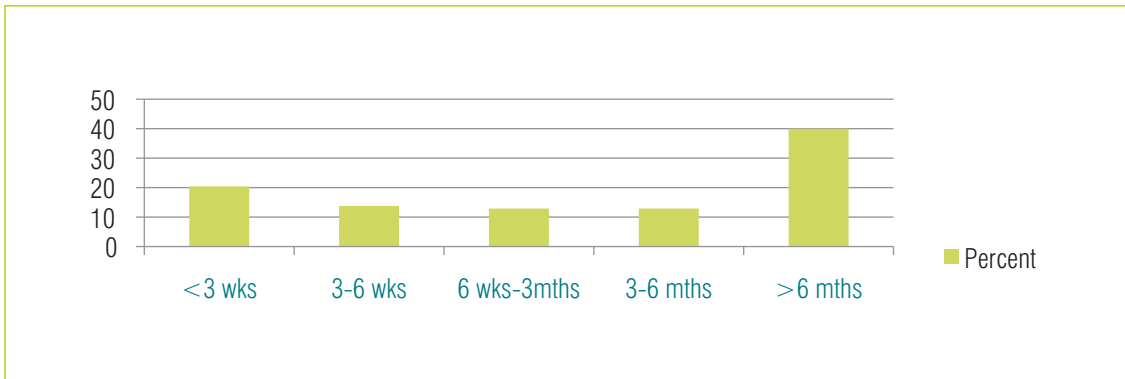
The relationship between further study, professional learning and Asia literacy was clear from the data about principals. The research shows the clear and positive relationship between frequency of professional learning and principals’ overall Asia literacy score:



Graph 5: Relationship between professional learning related to Asia and Asia literacy

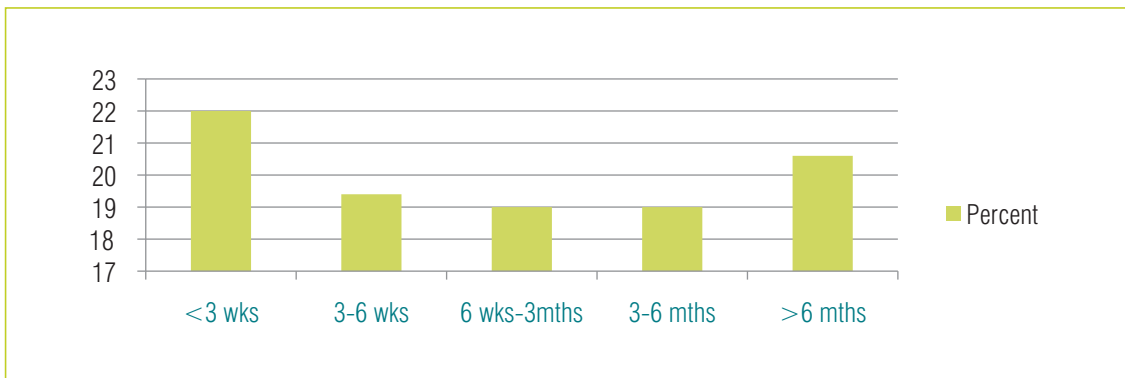


Part of the significance of the most consistently cited motivational category lies in the substantial effect on teachers of their personal experience of Asia. This suggests that person-to-person contact is a key component of a program to enhance Asia literacy. It is notable, given this key finding, that few of these teachers, who had already made some commitment to teaching about Asia, had extensive experience of Asia. Although over 90% of teachers had visited an Asian country, the amount of time spent in Asia varied widely:



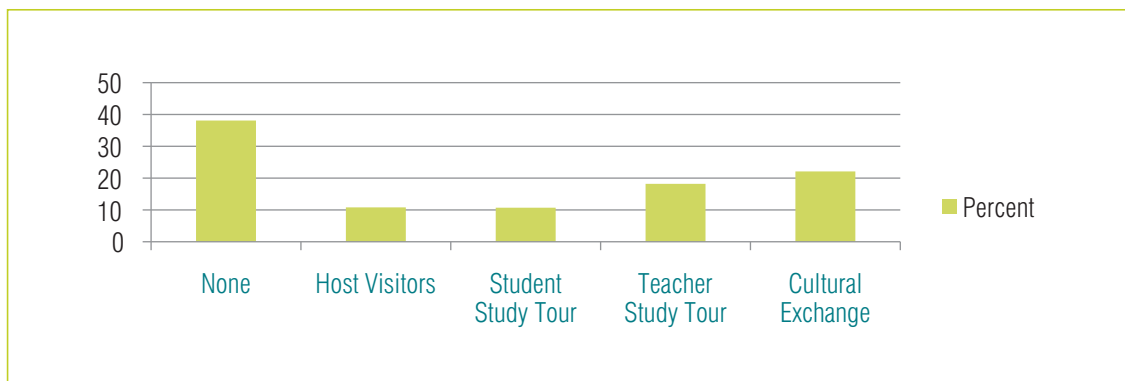
Graph 6: Teachers' estimates of time spent in Asian countries

Principals also reported variable amounts of time spent in Asia, with the largest proportion having spent less than 3 weeks in Asia:



Graph 7: Principals' estimates of time spent in Asian countries

Teachers were also asked about what Asia-related cultural experiences they had undertaken. The research showed that more frequent experiences of this kind were correlated with higher levels of Asia literacy. While some had more than one such experience, the largest group, close to 40%, reported none:



*Graph 8: Principals' frequency of participation in Asia related professional learning compared to overall Asia literacy scores*

Personal contact also lies behind the third motivation category, school connections to Asia. For some teachers this meant contact with students and families of Asian background, or with exchange students and teachers from other countries. Teachers recognised students from Asia and their families as 'invaluable resources' for non-Asian students to learn about their culture and values. Relationships with sister-schools in Asia were also cited.

Some of the other motivators are clearly also substantially personal. About 18% of respondents cited their response to incidents of prejudice and racism and their desire to build intercultural understanding. Another 4% recalled encounters with inspirational teachers or others who influenced their views about teaching and learning about Asia.

The 7% of teachers who cited their commitment to Asia in the curriculum were mostly language teachers, who noted the positive relationship between language, culture, communication and understanding. One suggested that language learning 'opens your eyes to cultural differences . . . and challenges you to better understand your own culture'.

Just over 5% of teachers said that a key motivator was their growing awareness that Asia will play a critical role in the globalised world of the 21st century. Responses noted how certain countries in Asia, especially China and India, were changing the global economy. They described these changes as 'overwhelming' and that they felt an 'obligation' to 'best equip my students for this century' in order to provide 'opportunities for students in later life'.

There are some clear lessons from this collection of data in designing programs to enhance Asia literacy in the teaching workforce. Programs must incorporate opportunities to engage in further study and professional learning. It is important to enable teachers to experience the peoples, countries and cultures of Asia first-hand. The data emphasises the important relationship between learning a language and gaining a broader understanding of the cultures and countries of Asia. It also demonstrates that Asia literacy becomes a priority when teachers gain a personal engagement and stake in the outcome.

### What do teachers and principals need to deliver the Asia priority?

The study identified five enablers that support teachers to deliver the Asia priority in the Australian Curriculum. These are important because they provide a valuable guide to what action might be most effective in developing an Asia literate teaching workforce:

#### Enablers for teachers

- Experience of Asia from work, study, travel, or family connections;
- Substantial, ongoing tertiary study and/or professional learning;
- School connections to the countries of Asia;
- Support from their school and school system;
- School teaches an Asian language.

The data analysis makes clear that first-hand experience of Asia has a highly significant and decisive effect on teachers' overall Asia literacy. Such experiences may come from work, study or travel in Asia, by hosting Asian visitors in Australia, or through family connections by birth or marriage to someone born in Asia. Most critically, however, the teachers who are most Asia literate and capable of delivering the Asia priority are those who have had some form of extended experience in an Asian country. The overwhelmingly positive effects of personal experience in Asia reinforce the value and importance of person-to-person connections outlined in the *White Paper on Australia in the Asian Century*.

The study also identified the need for substantial and ongoing tertiary study and/or professional learning. Respondents stressed the importance of further study and professional learning, including study programs to Asia, to build teachers' cultural awareness, content knowledge and professional networks. Study arrangements cited included formal graduate and postgraduate qualifications and ongoing professional learning provided by subject associations and organisations such as the AEF. Teachers also reported that they increasingly used ICT for their own professional learning, in the form of on-line study for a higher degree related to Asia, and/or the use of social networking and on-line professional forums.

School connections to the countries of Asia are critical for teachers to deliver the Asia priority. Two factors are decisive in building school connections with Asia. The first is the work of school principals in establishing formal relationships with individuals and communities from Asia in the local area, town or city, and involving them in Asia related activities at the school, such as sharing their expertise or teaching Asian languages. The second is the establishment of school connections involving personal visits and exchanges, through programs such as the 'Australia-Asia Bridge Program', which has led to the establishment of sister school relationships that are actively developed and sustained through the use of ICT.

The research demonstrated that support from the school and school system is essential in allowing teachers to deliver the Asia priority in the Australian Curriculum. Within schools, this ranged from passive support, such as encouragement from colleagues and the principal, to active support, such as designating Asia a school priority and the allocation of budget resources for staffing, purchasing resources and funding professional learning for teachers. At the system level, valued forms of support included the building of collaborative networks across clusters of schools and between schools in Australia and Asia,

and support for their ongoing learning through formal tertiary study or professional learning courses.

The teaching of an Asian language positively impacts on all areas of Asia related teaching and learning. Asian language teachers are Asia specialists and score higher on measures of Asia literacy than non-language teachers. The presence of one or more Asian language teachers in a school means that the school and the school principal have already made a firm commitment to teaching and learning about Asia. Asian language teachers are also professional advocates to encourage and support teaching and learning about Asia.

The study also identified a set of enablers that support principals in delivering the Asia priority:

#### Enablers for principals

- Personal or professional experiences in Asia;
- Tertiary study and/or professional learning;
- School connections to the countries of Asia;
- Provides support for Asia related teaching and learning;
- School teaches an Asian language.

For principals, like teachers, personal or professional experiences in Asia provide most assistance in effectively delivering the Asia priority in the Australian Curriculum. Living or travelling in, or having family connections with, Asia were important triggers for Asia literacy and provided them with a basis for understanding content and pedagogy for high quality teaching and learning about Asia.

Tertiary study and/or professional learning are key elements for principals. Such learning occurred through undergraduate, postgraduate and professional learning programs. The research showed that frequency of participation in Asia related professional learning has a highly significant, positive effect on principals' overall Asia literacy. Principals who had participated in an AEF study program, Leading 21st Century Schools or other professional learning in studies of Asia scored higher in all areas of Asia literacy and in terms of their overall Asia literacy than principals who had not.

The key enabler of the Asia literate principal is skill in building school connections to Asia. Principals who performed strongly in building links and connections between their school and Asia also had the highest overall Asia literacy score. Effective principals build

sister school relationships with schools in Asia and establish relationships with individuals or communities from Asia within their school, local area or town and involve them in Asia related activities at the school.

Asia literate principals also support Asia related teaching and learning in their schools. This includes supporting teachers to complete professional development and to take leadership roles in teaching and learning about Asia, employing specialist staff other than language teachers, and ensuring the availability of high quality ICT and other resources to support teaching and learning about Asia.

Having a school that teaches an Asian language is also a key enabler of the Asia literate principal. The research shows that the teaching of an Asian language in a school has a significant positive impact on the work of principals. Principals of schools that offer an Asian language score higher on all Asia literacy measures, including overall Asia literacy.

### What progress has been made so far?

Progress has already been made in implementing the policy agenda outlined in the White Paper on *Australia in the Asian Century* and the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians. The Australian Curriculum, which is in development by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), includes substantial commitments in the Asia languages curriculum and the cross-curriculum priority area 'Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia', which has shaped the content of every learning area in the curriculum. The curriculum also includes the general capability 'Intercultural understanding', which is directly relevant to an openness to and engagement with Asia. The Australian Curriculum is clear about the importance of Asia literacy for all young Australians, and provides a pathway to delivering on the goal.

Building an Asia literate teaching workforce is necessary to ensure that teachers and principals are able 'to develop Asia-relevant capacities for Australian students'<sup>11</sup>. This involves ensuring that the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the Australian Professional Standard for Principals align with and 'support high-quality studies of Asia'<sup>12</sup> by 'strengthening the expectations and accountability

across schools and systems so that Asia literacy is not just an optional add-on'<sup>13</sup> (AEF, 2012, p. 14).

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the Australian Professional Standard for Principals provide a framework for determining and nurturing the features and capacities of an Asia literate teaching workforce. Across all data sources, the current study confirmed that national Standards for both teachers and principals guide and support teaching and learning about Asia.

The research draws on the submission of the Asia Education Foundation to the *White Paper on Australia in the Asian Century*<sup>14</sup> to identify initiatives that are already working to meet the need. They include:

- Curriculum resource production, illustrated in the over 1000 resources cited on the AEF web portal, enabling teachers to set learning goals and plan and implement a well-structured teaching program.
- Programs supporting school leader engagement, including 'Leading 21st Century Schools: Engage with Asia' that has supported 5% of principals in leading school change to achieve Asia literacy.
- Professional learning, including study programs in Asia that have energised 3000 Australian teachers.
- Asia literacy advocacy for students and parents, including Asia Literacy Business Ambassadors that has taken business people into 287 schools and brought them into contact with 13,000 students.
- Asian languages and cultures programs such as the Australia-Asia School BRIDGE program linking 100 Australian schools with teachers and students in Asia for a mix of language and cultural studies.
- Regional planning and coordination for Asia literacy, aimed at developing networks of teachers and establishing partnerships with groups of schools in Asia.
- Grants to schools including the \$8.14 million distributed through NALSSP to schools for 'Becoming Asia Literate' in relation to China, Japan, Korea and Indonesia.

11 Asian Century Taskforce (2012), p. 169.

12 Ibid., p. 171

13 Asia Education Foundation (AEF) (2012). Submission to the Australian Government White Paper on Australia in the Asian Century. p. 14, accessed May 5, 2013 at: [http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/verve/\\_resources/AEF\\_Submission\\_to\\_White\\_Paper\\_Mar\\_2012\\_file.pdf#search=submission](http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/verve/_resources/AEF_Submission_to_White_Paper_Mar_2012_file.pdf#search=submission)

14 AEF (2012) ibid., p. 9-10

In addition, state and territory systems and sectors have taken steps to embed the teaching of Asia literacy into their practice. Jurisdictions expect teachers to engage in professional learning activities that enhance their knowledge, skills and understanding of Asia so that they can embed Asia related learning in their teaching. Jurisdictions make specific, but often different, contributions to building an Asia literate workforce, including values education with a global education focus, Asia literacy networks, courses on including studies of Asia in the curriculum and encouraging Asia engaged schools with a whole school commitment. States and territories have a common commitment to a whole-school approach to Asia related studies, embedding Asia related knowledge, skills and understanding in the curriculum, targeted professional learning and supportive partnerships.

The current study demonstrates, however, that a high proportion of those teachers likely to be most involved in teaching about Asia feel they have much to do to achieve high levels of Asia literacy.

### What action is needed to develop an Asia literate workforce?

The research demonstrates that there is an unambiguous need for a further sustained and substantial program to encourage and support the growth of Asia literacy among Australia's teachers. The pressing policy demand, the current level of Asia literacy amongst teachers and the requirements of the Australian Curriculum combine to suggest that the need is urgent.

The report proposes a number of broad areas for action if the gap is to be closed.

1. The report argues that the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the Australian Professional Standard for Principal are a key resource for Asia literacy, and the research data analysed demonstrate that the standards, across all domains, support teaching and learning about Asia. It proposes that all teachers and principals should be supported in developing a sound working knowledge of the teacher and principal standards to assist in developing their Asia literacy career paths.
2. The report itself makes a contribution to identifying levels of Asia literacy in the Australian teaching population. It is important to continue the advances made by the current research to establish a robust instrument to measure the Asia literacy of teachers and principals.
3. It is proposed that Asia relevant content knowledge and skills be included in initial teacher education, to equip all beginning teachers with a strong basis for implementing the Asia priority in the Australian Curriculum.
4. The research demonstrated that relevant professional learning, in initial teacher education, postgraduate and professional learning programs, is a key indicator for Asia literacy. The data showed a strong relationship between participation in relevant ongoing tertiary study (e.g. the Graduate Certificate or Masters of Education in Studies of Asia) or professional learning and levels of Asia literacy. The report recommends that a national strategic plan be developed and implemented to ensure that principals and teachers at all stages of the career continuum have access to Asia related professional learning, including advanced tertiary study.
5. In particular, the report notes the critical importance for both teachers and principals of direct personal or professional experience in Asia. This generates enthusiasm and commitment, helps in providing person-to-person links that lead to institutional contacts and delivers experiential knowledge to support informed judgments and leadership for teaching and learning about Asia. The report argues that provision should be made for teachers and principals to have opportunities for direct experience of Asia through exchange, travel and study programs.
6. Data demonstrates that effective teaching about Asia consistently involves the use of ICTs to link Australian students with students in schools in Asia. The report illustrates how teachers used ICT-mediated communication with partner schools in Asia to build people-to-people relationships between students and teachers, and to collaborate in teaching and learning about Asia. The report proposes that professional learning for the teaching workforce should include training in the best practice use of ICT for learning about and connecting with Asia.

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7. The research shows the important relationship between the Asia priority in the Australian Curriculum and the intercultural understanding general capability. Teachers included in the study overwhelmingly believe that the primary benefit of learning about Asia is growth in intercultural understanding to create a more tolerant and successful Australia. It argues that professional learning in intercultural understanding should be provided to all teachers and principals, particularly with regard to the implementation of the general capability in intercultural understanding through the Asia priority in the Australian Curriculum.
  8. The study noted that teachers and principals recognised the social and cultural value of teaching about Asia, but were less aware of the benefits of Asia related learning in the light of Asia's importance for future employment opportunities and economic development in Australia. It proposed further research to understand the reasons for this discrepancy and to align educators' understandings of the rationale for and benefits of teaching and learning about Asia in schools with those of public policy.



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