# Multicultural Education in the Australian Context: An Historical Overview

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**Abstract** Australia's experience of multicultural education, in its various phases arose at the intersection of the nation-shaping circumstances of British-loyalty, Indigenous-oppression and reconciliation politics, geographic anxiety, mass settler-recruiting immigration, the US Alliance, Asia-literacy, economic crisis and rejuvenation, educational experimentation and innovation. These elements are discussed chronologically from the inception of multicultural discourses in the early 1970s to the tenuous and contentious position of the multicultural interpretation of Australia today, and can be organized under wider themes of demography, geography and economy.

Three phases of Australian 'learning from difference' in education are discussed in the chapter, a phase commonly known as multiculturalism, a replacement phase called 'Asianism' and neo-liberal based education reform called 'economism'. These are discussed in the chapter in relation to three points of reference: (i) language policy; (ii) the prevailing political ideology; (iii) the focus on Asia in public debate and in each case reference is made to questions of geography, demography and economy.

**Keywords** Multicultural education • Language policy • Literacy • Citizenship • Ethnic diversity • 'Asianism' • 'Economism' • Australia

## 1 Introduction

Each national account of educational responses to diversity, understood here mainly as the co-existence of cultural, religious, linguistic and personal kinds of difference within a given state, is particular to the national and educational characteristics of the polity concerned. These cultural, religious, linguistic and personal characteristics are typically constituted as variations from existing and privileged norms. The

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latter involve characteristics, identity and behavioral practices which derive privilege because they coincide with the characteristics and interests of dominant groups.

Demands on behalf of minority groups are therefore invariably located within a contested space, since their advance necessarily involves lessening, removal or problematizing the ready association of one set of privileged characteristics with the wider social norms. These demands for reconstituting the extant social order can be identified along a continuum of amelioration to radical change. Amelioration involves reducing levels and kinds of marginalization, exclusion or inequality, but imply minority acceptance of the extant order of social privilege.

Change premised on amelioration is often imagined to be gradual, incremental and progressive, change by process and negotiation. Demands for radical reordering of prevailing norms and practices typically takes the form of reconstitution of the entire extant social order, and its replacement with collective, neutral or hybrid norms. However, commonly we also see justice-based demands for redistribution of privilege within the wider social and economic setting.

Change premised on radical reordering is usually imagined to be disruptive, rapid, and rupturing of previous arrangements. What is notable from the above, from both kinds of change, is the absence or weakness of class-based social analysis and a failure to theorize its role within the demands for pluralization.

The last quarter of the twentieth century can be seen as the historical period during which, at least in western developed industrial and post-industrial society, the demands for recognition of difference, either for amelioration of disadvantage, or for more radical redistribution of privileges, were most insistent. As noted, such changes do not align directly or comfortably with politics of class exclusion and political theories of economic inequality. Instead, multicultural education demands tended to rely on a language of inclusion, advocating educational change by seeking "presence" or "visibility" in the curriculum (such as teaching a particular language or including the historical experience or interpretation of events in civics or history subjects, or systemic changes to the ways schools or higher education operate).

## 2   The Chapter

Australia's experience of multicultural education, in its various phases, progress and regress, arose at the intersection of the nation-shaping circumstances of British-loyalty, Indigenous-oppression and reconciliation politics, geographic anxiety, mass settler-recruiting immigration, the US Alliance, Asia-literacy, economic crisis and rejuvenation, educational experimentation and innovation. These elements are discussed in the body of this chapter which proceeds chronologically from the inception of multicultural discourses in the early 1970s to the tenuous and contentious position of the multicultural interpretation of Australia today, and can be organized under wider themes of demography, geography and economy.

Three phases of Australian 'learning from difference' in education are discussed here, a phase commonly known as multiculturalism, a replacement phase I call Asianism and neo-liberal based education reform which I call economism (see Lo Bianco 2004 for an extended discussion of the policy phases). These are discussed here in relation to three points of reference: (i) language policy; (ii) the prevailing political ideology; (iii) the focus on Asia in public debate and in each case reference is made to questions of geography, demography and economy.

## 3 Sources of Population Diversity

Australia's cultural and linguistic pluralism has two main sources, original Indigenous diversity and immigration, so that the present population is one of the world's most linguistically and ethnically diverse, as described by the data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2014, i–vi).

## 4 Immigration Context

The formal origins of multicultural education in Australia can be traced to the movement for electoral enfranchisement of recently arrived immigrants in the early 1970s via appeals to equal educational opportunity for their children, growing subsequently into a new vision for a culturally transformed nation itself absorbing and embracing change due to immigration. These moves are most strongly associated with the Whitlam Labour Government of 1972–1975, continued and extended by the Fraser Coalition Government of 1975–1983. This transition meant that a relatively bi-partisan approach emerged, and so in its Australian manifestation, multiculturalism was spared some of the bitter controversy which has characterized it in other settings. Nevertheless, immigration policy, and especially refugee and asylum seeker policy, have remained major issues of ideological dispute, as has the wider question of the purposes and extent of multiculturalism in general, and at times in the more recent past these have represented sharp political divides.

The initial policy measures of the Whitlam-Fraser era have clear functional antecedents which can be traced to the 1947 Post-war Migration Program, and specifically its adoption of the AMEP - Adult Migrant Education Program (Martin 1999). The aim of the AMEP was to teach English to all adult immigrants recruited to Australia, including large numbers of displaced persons from Eastern and Southern Europe. As such, multicultural policy was invested from its earliest manifestation with an immigration-servicing character and multicultural education was a direct outgrowth of these orientations in public policy. The overarching policy can therefore be seen as a form of *pragmatic settlement policy* since immigration in Australia was always planned with the dual objectives of increasing population and producing a larger domestic workforce and economy. Other measures to accompany

settlement lent the program an overall ethos of facilitating citizenship and social participation.

In the late 1960s research showing persisting difficulties and educational inequality among immigrant children meant that the adult focus of the AMEP was extended to children in programs teaching specialist English as a second language. From such programs focused on specialist provision of English, initially for adults and subsequently for children, emerged a more wide-ranging set of policies and programs which can properly be called multicultural education. The essential aims of this expanded understanding of the consequences of immigration produced changes to the entire society, and not just measures to enable immigrants to adapt to the new social, educational and economic environment of the host society. This move to foster widespread recognition of cultural diversity proved more controversial than measures for English teaching.

## 5   Indigenous Context

While Indigenous cultural and linguistic rights have particular circumstances and a separate historical development, there are also parallel developments with immigration-servicing policies. A critical move was the 1967 referendum which transferred responsibility for Aboriginal policy from state governments to the Federal (Commonwealth). Education to support Indigenous culture and language maintenance, while far short of any robust notion of recognition of language rights, has a long history of struggle and demands, finding support at government level for the first time under the Whitlam and Fraser administrations of the early to mid-1970s.

However, Indigenous rights recognition accelerated with a critical series of important legal cases, culminating in the landmark ruling of the High Court of Australia (HCA 1992), commonly known as Mabo Decision, recognising native or Aboriginal land title for the first time. This recognition was a consequence of the High Court's rejection of the doctrine of *terra nullius* one of the ways (others being conquest or cession of territory) in which international law recognises as '…effective ways of acquiring sovereignty' (HCA 1992, clause 33) for the British settlement of the continent. Formal acceptance that native title pre-exists British occupation of Australia through 'traditional connection' to the land, has served to make issues of unextinguished land tenure partially dependent on Indigenous language, culture and law. While linking language and land in this way suggests that Indigenous language policy might have broken through to a robust series of legal supports this has proved disappointing. The most important consequences of Mabo were in fostering legal recognition of traditional land ownership, and Australian law still offers little support for the unique languages of the continent. While never far from the news Indigenous bilingual education re-emerged from a long hiatus as a lightning rod issue on 14 October 2008 when the Northern Territory then Minister for Education and Training, Marion Scrymgour announced that all schools would

be required to devote the first 4 h of lessons for all Indigenous students exclusively in English, contravening Federal Government policies supporting Indigenous languages programming in schools.

Indigenous education and immigrant education measures are radically different in their socio-political and demographic contexts, but both represent claims to modify the mainstream curriculum of public education on behalf of the presence of domestic minority populations. Both have advanced when they have coincided with wider socio-political reformism, and have receded when countervailing pressures reasserted themselves.

## 6 Social Reformist Origins

The chronological account begins with the election on 2 December 1972 of the (short-lived) Whitlam government, the first non-Conservative Federal administration in almost three decades. Inheriting several pragmatic experiences in settlement policy, especially the AMEP and its extension in the late 1960s to children through the Child Migrant Education Program (CMEP), the Whitlam government proclaimed that it would change the national character in deep ways, legitimizing diversity and experimenting with how to represent national pluralism in the public imagining of the nation. Its new way to talk about the nation has had an enduring effect.

As a measure to foster occupational integration of newly arrived immigrant adults into the national economy the AMEP offered assistance to newcomers to acquire the national language but, as the historical record suggests, it was also intended to assuage mainstream concerns about the emergence of unassimilated minority populations. Over time, the AMEP was bolstered by evidence from labor market research that English proficiency is a predictor of social and occupational opportunity. We can consider this therefore 'pragmatic' multiculturalism in which national interest considerations prevail, where a body of policy reasoning was extended to children by Federal initiative between 1969 and 1970. However, under the Whitlam administration a new and radical aspect of pluralism emerged. This involved the first recognition that immigrants were also changing the host society, that this change was potentially positive, and that it ought to be encouraged.

Whitlam's first Minister for Immigration, Al Grassby, talked about the 'family of the nation' and introduced a discourse of both cohesion (like the AMEP had fostered) and the new element of positive recognition of diversity. This was a way to mark difference as normal and central to the newly emergent nation and extended to many policy fields (Lo Bianco and Gvozdenko 2006).

These years also saw the beginnings of the community languages movement as a central element in multicultural education and the most tangible of all policy interventions in multiculturalism. Other Whitlam innovations were the creation of telephone based professional language mediation in health and medical situations, in courts of law and in policing, and the beginnings of professionalism for community interpreters.

The Whitlam government massively boosted funding to public education under the rationale of equalization of educational opportunities, incorporating education for ethnic minority and Indigenous children within this logic, thereby supplying the first orientation in multicultural education, that of equalization and of social and educational opportunities. This essentially assumed a class analysis of society, and the place of minorities within it, based on the sense that public authorities have the responsibility to remove obstacles to equal participation in education and the social and economic opportunities it affords.

The early work of the Schools Commission, created by Whitlam to implement these new orientations in public education policy, regularly invoked the situation of language-defined urban immigrant populations and Indigenous people associated with separate language and cultural traditions, all enveloped in a discourse of social and economic opportunity. This served as a discursive preparation for what emerged in 1975 as the first political activism around notions of 'language rights'. While this was a successful project for the social reformist side of politics, the emergent political consciousness among immigrants and Aborigines, bolstered by citizenship access and compulsory voting, sparked concern among conservative political forces.

## 7   Conservative Innovation

The increasing politicization of immigrant policy and the popular success of multiculturalism pushed conservative political parties to conduct analysis of the association between the aspirations of immigrants (due to their greater numbers and urban locations than indigenous groups) and political allegiance to the Labour party (Lo Bianco 2004).

The result was an interpretation of the problems and place of immigrants in society, and also of indigenous people, which sought to substitute cultural differences for social class. Labour's stress on educational interventions for ameliorating social disadvantage came to be replaced by this conservative emphasis on cultural dissonance between home and school, and between communities and other public institutions and authorities, so that disadvantages faced by minority populations were to be sought in individual and cultural explanations and not in socio-economic positioning. This, then, was the second, and also lasting, stream of ideologizing about minority populations (Lo Bianco 2004).

For much of the next two decades multicultural debate oscillated between these two schools of thought, a class versus a culturalist analysis of minorities, their social position and aspirations. The former identified discrimination and disadvantage as the sources of inequality and advocated major social change; the reaction celebrated cultural diversity, stressed the expectation of overriding commitment to a unified polity and located disadvantage as a transitional, and marginal, experience of individuals.

During the middle of the 1970s, after the Fraser Liberal-National government replaced Whitlam, two critical developments were to shape multicultural policy.

First, Britain's entry into the European Common Market, second, Australia's admission of large numbers of Indo-Chinese refugees. In their different ways these two events shaped cultural policy and multiculturalism very deeply. The loss of the guaranteed markets for Australian raw materials and primary produce required the nation to more energetically seek market access in East Asia. The addition of historically unprecedented numbers of new Australians from Asian countries underscored how Australia was demographically turning towards Asia and away from Europe. The Fraser government sought to dissociate ethnic Australian aspirations from the antagonistic language of class and its association with Labour. So, although the Whitlam government laid the foundations of multicultural policy, the Fraser government enacted far reaching, enduring and some of the most celebrated policy measures. The key instrument for Fraser's intervention was a major national enquiry, the Galbally Report of 1981, which set the conceptual understanding of multiculturalism for many years (Moore 1996).

The conceptualization involved a transfer of initiative for pluralism policies from state to community, to 'self-help' and partnership between public authorities and minority communities in assistance and welfare, language maintenance and religious identification. Public institutions were expected only to support, not carry or implement policy. Among the Galbally innovations were extensions to multilingual public radio, the origins of multicultural and multilingual public television, integration of multicultural perspectives in school curricula, across all subject areas, and expansions in the English teaching adapted to the circumstances and needs of learners.

From its inception the national project of multiculturalism has been subjected to critique from nationalist interests. The main target of criticism has been the abandonment of the formal rhetoric of assimilation, arguing that socially divisive consequences would inevitably produce a fragmented and conflicted citizenry, (Blainey 1984; Clancy 2006) and the illegitimacy of claims within the multicultural construction of Australia that the first settlers can be considered one ethnic or immigrant group like later arrivals, rather than the core nationality of Australia (Hirst 2005). It is an interesting and unusual aspect of the Australian multicultural education experience that such repudiations of the multicultural experience are greatly attenuated in education, which has sometimes been absolved of criticism on the grounds that much of the practice of multicultural education represents a needed or useful pragmatic response to the communication needs of learners.

## 8 Scope of Multicultural Education

The Whitlam/Fraser years defined the scope of multicultural education which has come to include six areas of focus, though with different emphases over time:

1. Provision of specialist teaching programs of English as a second language for immigrants and Indigenous children and adults;
2. First language maintenance for immigrant and Indigenous children or as mother tongue mantenance;

3. Teaching of community/heritage languages;
4. Infusing culturally diverse perspectives across all subject areas of the curriculum, such as history, geography, citizenship studies;
5. Parent participation; and
6. Active combating of negative and or racist depictions of minority populations.

The first three constitute the language policy components of Australian multiculturalism. The second group of three are similar to what, writing about the United States, Sonia Nieto (2000) identifies as the seven 'basic characteristics' of education for a culturally diverse society. These are, paraphrased, that it should be 'anti-racist, basic, important for all students, pervasive, directed at social justice and that it should be a "process" and use critical pedagogy' (passim, p. 305), essentially therefore a '. . .philosophy, a way of looking at the world, not simply a programme or a class or a teacher' (2000, p. 313).

Partly because of its pragmatic origins, and partly because of the ideological investment from conservative and progressive political forces in their distinctive visions of the field, language education became the central issue and often represented a proxy indicator of how multicultural education in general was treated. As a result in the following sections of the chapter special attention is devoted to language issues.

# 9    Languages Policy

Public agitation for comprehensive language provision which had commenced in Melbourne around 1974, accelerated in response to the Galbally Report. The essential claim was for a more systematic approach to language provision and a formal adoption of language rights. From 1981 the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) launched a series of demands and spearheaded public action around language rights and multilingualism (Ozolins 1993). By convening a series of congresses which mobilized the participation of thousands of people across the country, FECCA succeeded in persuading the Fraser government to take action. In 1982 it launched a bipartisan Senate committee investigation to examine the claim for a national language policy, but was defeated at the polls in March 1983 by the Labour Party led by Bob Hawke, who inaugurated a more cautious and consensus seeking approach than the previous Labour government under Whitlam.

Nevertheless, having inherited the organized movement national language planning and the Senate enquiry, Hawke allowed the investigation into national language policy to complete its work. When the report was presented in 1984 however, the government baulked at the depth of change implied in adopting a national language policy. FECCA again mobilized public action, and strong lobbying persisted for a national approach to language policy. Eventually a new enquiry was launched and in June 1987 Federal cabinet adopted Australia's first National Policy on Languages, the NPL (Lo Bianco 1987) and the English speaking world's first multilingual national plan.

The NPL won bipartisan endorsement in parliament, representing the culmination of a long history of language planning incorporating the first national programs and principles in a wide range of immigrant, indigenous and international language and literacy measures.

In 1989 bipartisan collaboration was again in evidence with the *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia*, another watershed document in response to diversity, whose new vocabulary on cultural pluralism, dislodged the Galbally approach. The three principles of the National Agenda: *cultural diversity*, *social cohesion and economic efficiency*, encapsulated an evolving compromise that highlighted a broad political consensus about public response to cultural diversity.

In the National Agenda the rhetoric of class based disadvantage was replaced with the neutral tone of 'productive diversity'; the celebration of cultural differences as emphasized in Galbally was retained but a new element of common citizenship within a unified set of national institutions and allegiance, i.e. pluralism with social cohesion, was adopted.

Although originating together language policy and multiculturalism now had their own separate policies, with separate institutional and administrative locations. Under Hawke language policy was becoming more connected to economic efficiency arguments, through literacy, trade languages, and international English, and was entrusted to education and training ministries. Multiculturalism on the other hand was entrusted to the Prime Minister and to the Department of Immigration. These changes reflect the emergence of separate interests for these fields, and, ultimately, a fragmentation of the previously cohesive advocacy.

From the early 1990s, further specialization occurred. This was due to the extension of Anti-Racism legislation, and the creation of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, and from 1994, the Mabo Decision in the High Court's ruling on land title, and the creation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. What had been a collaborating, if not completely united alliance of constituencies around minority interests, was specializing and fragmenting, underscored by the emergence of the claim for 'Asia literacy'.

## 10   Asian Studies as a Separate Field

Public demands to orient education towards Australia's geographic, strategic and economic interests in Asia gained momentum from 1986, when a key initiative towards a more Asia-focused education system was entrusted to a specially formed advisory think tank, ASC, Asian Studies Council (Herriman 1996; Lo Bianco 2004).

The agitation for improved and deepened Asian Studies were not integrated with multicultural education being seen as externally oriented and tied to history, social studies and foreign language teaching. The ASC coined the term *Asia literacy*, to capture its demand that education respond to the geographic proximity of Asian societies, and respond to national rather than local issues. In this demand language

choice would be determined by the official languages of prominent Asian economies, and so Asian languages became closely linked with discussions of trade relations with Australia, sometimes being termed 'trade' languages.

At this time the Department of Foreign Affairs was renamed Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, with Asia literacy tied ever more closely to a discourse of foreign affairs, security, trade and diplomacy. This powerful combination of interests aligned with the highest level of public administration was reflected in arguments about language choice between 'national interest' languages versus migrant communities, multiculturalism or local 'lobbies' (Lo Bianco and Slaughter 2009). The necessary work of integration and fusion between community and international perspectives in language education and cultural perspectives in education was inadequately pursued; the longer term effect was to fragment a previously cohesive language and multicultural framework.

Asia literacy became especially closely associated with Hawke's successor Paul Keating. As Prime Minister Keating made strenuous efforts to engage Australia in regional affairs and to effect supporting changes in domestic policy, especially in trade, diplomacy and education. Asian languages and studies were given their most prominent place with the adoption in 1994 of the *National Asian Languages and Studies of Asia Strategy* (NALSAS), funded by all states and territories (COAG 1994), already the cause of concern to minority communities sensing that Asian languages construed only as foreign trade languages implied problems for their presence in the community and the number to be supported (Singh 2001).

NALSAS became the most well-funded and extensively pursued program of curriculum change in relation to languages, though its long term effects are today under considerable doubt (Lo Bianco and Slaughter 2009).

## 11   English as Literacy

The first signs of a direct backlash against multilingualism arose in the field of English and English literacy. One effect of UNESCO's International Literacy Year 1990 which aimed to consolidate action towards the 'eradication' of illiteracy, principally in developing countries, was to bring to the attention of policymakers problems of literacy attainment within the Australian population.

These dovetailed with investigations by OECD applying human capital economic theory on the impact of poor rates of literacy on national economic performance. Combined, these focused policy makers on communication, and specifically literacy, in schooling and competitive economic positioning within the Asian region. ILY also addressed adult education and was used by some to make negative comparisons about provision of 'generous' AMEP English provision for immigrants and inadequate provision of literacy for 'native' Australians (Lo Bianco 2004).

The work of integration that was not pursued between Asian studies and multicultural education was repeated in this instance. What was required was an integration of the separate domains of adult education, English for newly arrived immigrant

adults, with literacy support for locally born English speaking adults from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds, to pedagogically and socially demarcate their domains and operations. The absence of such integrative work in public policy ensured that direct labor market effects of literacy policy came to prevail over alternative conceptualizations of literacy education and its purposes. The process however underscored what is discussed below as 'economism', an emerging Federal political preference to debate new policy initiatives using the terminology of macroeconomics and conceptualizing education outlays in terms of investments promising greater returns.

A practical impact was to focus increased attention on English, and to construe levels of funding for English literacy as a mainstream investment, and, at first by implication, later more directly, other kinds of language education spending as pandering to 'ethnic' rather than to 'national' interests. Although the government's own NPL addressed both 'English literacy' and 'Asia literacy', and had initiated the research whose findings would shape the next decade of policy making in these fields (e.g. Wickert 2001) these new 'literacies' were construed as more urgent than, and antagonistic to, multi-culturally inspired language policy (Moore 1996; Herriman 1996).

The particular effect on Indigenous languages and on English as a second language teaching in general was to make 'literacy' the overarching concept organizing school intervention (Nichols 2001) accentuating pressure in schools for bilingual programs to show progress in English literacy and downgrading their achievements in first language maintenance, bilingualism and other social and cognitive aspects.

## 12   The 1990s: Progressive Retreat

By 1991, the Hawke government's new education Minister, John Dawkins, set in train this process of emphasizing English literacy and trade languages (Clyne 1991). The resultant *Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (Dawkins 1992), distanced multicultural rationales and asserted an exclusive association with the 'national interest' against 'minority interests' (Moore 1996; Ozolins 1993).

The result projected an image of Australia as an imagined uniform native English speaking community, with marginal or residual cultural diversity. This imagery dissolved the pluralist commitment of Whitlam and Fraser of the previous two decades, and paved the way for marginalization of multiculturalism as a legitimate basis for initiatives in Federal education policy. By instituting separate national advisory structures, funding schemes and programs, the new policy moves provoked loss of curriculum coherence, lack of coordination and a fragmentation of effort. However, the process of policy change that the ALLP set in train was itself destabilized rapidly, when it was replaced by NALSAS (COAG 1994). Funding under NALSAS was based on national trade statistics supplied not by any education official, research or interest, but from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, directly linking school languages study with external trade data.

Under this scheme large financial allocations were made to four languages: Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean between 1995 and 2002, and despite many concerns about quality and sustainability, the introduction of these languages in schools boomed, with Japanese rising to become the number one language in high schools. However, community based programs which had prospered under the multicultural remit, such as Arabic, Khmer or Vietnamese, received no support and local community contexts for language teaching were marginalized (Singh 2001).

A similar process occurred in English literacy, the other field identified as critical by the ALLP. Under the Howard Coalition government which replaced Keating in 1996 successive education ministers stressed a curriculum ethos of national unity and English as the national language, and directed education policy towards the introduction of a normalized national testing scheme. The wider context was of a retreat into Anglo-sphere attachments, refusal to distance itself from anti-Asian immigration sentiment (Jingjing 2008) and incorporating neo-liberal reasoning within education policy. Literacy and language testing practices expanded, and the national literacy testing program conflated English as a second language with English literacy and in the process undermined a staple of multiculturalism, the teaching of English as a specialist activity. During the late 1990s the environment for languages and multicultural education had therefore come to resemble a kind of 'anti-policy' climate (Lo Bianco 2001) and by 2002 NALSAS was itself terminated, leaving only residual programs at the Federal level for languages, multicultural education and Asian studies.

## 13   Policy Profusion and Political Turmoil

An Asian language priority funding scheme was restored in 2007 with the election of the Labour government led by Kevin Rudd, though on a much reduced scale from its 1994 incarnation. The Labour administration however proved internally unstable, Kevin Rudd was replaced by his deputy, Julia Gillard, in mid-2010, and she terminated this program in 2012. However, Rudd defeated Gillard in a further internal spill of positions in June-2013, but then lost office to a Liberal-National Party Coalition government in the Federal elections held on 7 September 2013.

In stark contrast to the Anglosphere attachments of the Howard government Rudd had defeated in 2007, he championed an Asian future for Australia. Though tied strategically to the United States the nation's cultural and linguistic directions were strongly attached to his vision of a China-centered Asian regionalism. After his defeat Prime Minister Gillard commissioned and launched a major policy document, *Australia in the Asian Century* (Australian Government 2012), which invoked nothing less than a whole-of-government reorientation of policy and practices firmly towards Asian regionalism, including India for the first time, while actually strengthening the US alliance for security and intelligence purposes.

Under Gillard's Asian Century policy the longstanding program of making Australians 'Asia-literate' was rebranded making Australians 'Asia-capable'. One

result has been what Scrimgeour (2014) has called Australia's current dose of 'Chinese fever', referring to the veritable scramble for learning, teaching and supporting Chinese language and cultural studies.

A key aim of the Asian century paper was that all students would have continuous 'access' (undefined) to a priority Asian language, viz, Chinese (Mandarin), Indonesian and Japanese, as per previous policies, but demoting Korean and replacing it with Hindi (Australian Government 2012). In June 2013 when Rudd defeated Gillard and briefly resumed as Prime Minister of the country, he promised to restore Korean to priority language status, however after his defeat all Labour policies came to an end.

The new administration has declared its interest in achieving a 40 % target of all high school students studying a foreign language within a decade, continuing the same retreat from multicultural education principles, other than for the teaching of strategic foreign languages. This return to some of the Anglosphere reasoning was expressed by Minister of Education, Christopher Pyne in 2013 when he stated: 'We speak English and that's given us a great advantage in terms of economic opportunities around the world and being much more simple to administer than, say, a country like India, which has, I think, 600 different languages' (Hurst 2013).

Within the Foreign Affairs Ministry the new administration is focused on establishing the 'New Colombo Plan' aimed at facilitating undergraduate students' opportunities for scholarships and internships/mentorships across the Indian-Pacific region. A key aim of this is to 'see study in the Indo Pacific region become a "rite of passage" for Australian undergraduate students, and as an endeavor that is highly valued across the Australian community. …two way flow of students, with an increasing number of Australian undergraduates heading to the region to complement the thousands of students from the region coming to Australia to study each year' (DFAT 2014).

The New Colombo Plan resonates with the competition between the major political forces in Australia to claim precedence for the national project of Asian engagement. In January 1950 Commonwealth foreign ministers met in Colombo, Ceylon and created a bilateral aid scheme for South and South East Asia, which came ultimately to be called the Colombo Plan, and is associated with the Liberal Party antecedents of the current Federal government. Competition between the Australian Labour Party and the Liberal Party for 'ownership' of Asian engagement history guarantees its ongoing prominence in public policy, in a similar way to how in the late 1970s and 1980s both political parties competed for ownership of the policy field of multiculturalism. In one important way the Colombo Plan, like current policies on Asian engagement that are premised on keeping the United States active in Asian affairs, is an extension of the Anglosphere attachments that remain vital to all policy prescriptions of the past 50 years.

Simultaneous with this is progress towards implementation of the Australian Curriculum, it also being reviewed by the new government, as it is being finalized by its technical provisions, with syllabi for Chinese and Italian available for implementation, of other languages, Indigenous, Asian and European, at various stages of development.

Current efforts are directed at the introduction of a national curriculum to supplement, not to ultimately replace, state curricula (Lo Bianco and Slaughter 2009), within which languages have a secure place, allowing schools a choice of European, Asian, community and Indigenous languages. The political turmoil which has characterized Australian federal government during recent years has rendered the field of multicultural policy unclear.

## 14 Discourses of Language and Cultural Planning

We can see from the above account the interaction of various policy voices or interests: (i) ethnic minority and Indigenous agitation for language and cultural rights and representation in education (ii) professionals, such as teachers, linguists and researchers, who legitimized public action for languages and multicultural education, and (iii) diplomatic and trade interests committed to integrating Australian education into Asia motivated by trade, diplomacy and security concerns (Lo Bianco 2004).

Over the three decades of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s there was both collaboration and competition among these interests. It was their interaction with government that produced a continuing stream of pluralistic and comprehensive planning for languages and cultures in schooling (Lo Bianco and Gvozdenko 2006) but their pursuit of separate agendas fragmented the coherence of early planning and introduced a range of separate programs and understandings of the role of education in meeting the needs of cultural diversity.

These voices and interests essentially advocated responses to the shared realities of demography, geography and economy, and while their collaboration was often effective it was sometimes strained and divergent. The 1970s and early 1980s belonged to the ethnic minority advocates; the late 1980s and early 1990s belonged to the Asia literacy advocates, while during the late 1990s English literacy arguments, both practical and ideological, gained primacy in schooling debates and tended to minimize the impact and presence of multicultural language policy (Lo Bianco 2004).

The vulnerabilities of Australia's geographic isolation and small size were dramatically felt during World War II, giving rise to the political slogan 'populate or perish' which bolstered public acceptance of the post-war recruited immigration program. Part of this public acceptance was the institution of mass English teaching for new arrivals, in which the AMEP was constituted as a program of 'nation building' (Martin 1999). The multicultural moment in Australian public policy is closely associated with the Whitlam and Fraser governments of 1975–1983, and the Hawke government of 1983–1991. The governing theoretical ideal of thoughtful multicultural discourse has been for a separation of the domains of the *political* from the *cultural nation*. By this logic the political nation remains a vertical structure, a unitary, English speaking, representative parliamentary democracy, governed by law, based on notions of formal legal and economic equality, and buttressed by a

single common citizenship. The cultural nation is characterized by horizontal affinities of culture, language, plural identity attachments and notions of community.

Australia's relatively liberal citizenship laws, combined with compulsory voting, have produced a large urban constituency that the political classes appealed to with cultural politics in which languages featured prominently. Multiculturalism imagined and advocated the nation as a multilingual and independent entity with attenuated connections to Britain. There were many concrete achievements of the multiculturalism phase, in which language education became the locus of claims for social reconstruction, some of which endure today (Clyne 1991; Ozolins 1993; Lo Bianco and Wickert 2001), however, by the mid-1980s advocacy of rights to the maintenance of minority languages and support for special English provisions was losing its political traction. Britain's move into European economic and political structures from the mid-1970s hastened Australia's efforts to seek a place within Asia, an essentially economic and strategic/security move, but one with important long term language and national identity consequences.

By many practical indicators, of people and institutional links, and overwhelmingly in commercial and strategic considerations, Australia is deeply linked to Asian and Pacific countries; and formal membership of Asian, and especially South East Asian, regional institutions is also extensive. Further and deeper integration into 'the region' is a shared political program and a staple of political discourse. 'The region', from its beginnings as a term to mark trade and security policy has deepened into a full re-conceptualizing of national identity, a program closely identified with the Keating Labour government in the early 1990s, which made language education a clear and important part of its strategy. This position was significantly distanced during the Howard Coalition government of 1996–2007.

While the Howard administration harbored an evident preference for Anglosphere cultural associations, it continued most elements of the broad policy of Asian integration though with less commitment to any assumption that Australian national identity should be affected by such integration. The election of the Rudd then Gillard Labour governments in 2007 and 2010 re-established Asian regionalism, in its widest form, and gave priority to pursuing economic ties and regional security links in Asia, and exploring and enacting the educational consequences of these pragmatic ties, all significantly attenuated since.

Asian languages were the boom subjects of the 1990s, often uncomfortably aligned with multiculturalism (Singh 2001) and drawing on a stream of thinking of Asia-literacy as a national capability deficiency, a missing part of needed human capital, and as such required by mainstream English-speaking Australia, not its minority populations (Lo Bianco 2005). However, by the mid-2000s it was clear (Lo Bianco and Slaughter 2009) that the states which offered the greatest range of language education provision had the greatest retention rates for language study and success rates in language learning, while those administrations that pursued more narrowly trade and Asian focused programs had the lowest retention and success rates. This underscores that in a pluralistic nation motives for language study and cultural learning are multiple, principles enshrined within the design of the national curriculum, but now subject to revision in the highly

volatile policy context that has characterized Australia's activity in this area
(Lo Bianco and Aliani 2013; Lo Bianco and Slaughter 2016).

## 15    Concluding Observations

Many initiatives in Australia's experiment with multicultural education transcended
political-ideological differences to become included into programs of pedagogical
and curriculum innovation. However, these were hampered by inconsistency of
implementation and weakness of conceptualization as well as contest and disputa-
tion around meanings, content and practice of multicultural education. While pros-
pering through the 1970s and 1980s multicultural education eventually came under
challenge during the early 1990s and has since waned as an educational focus. It is
unlikely however, in light of changes in global culture and internationalism which
will continue to impact on educational design and delivery that the demand for a
multicultural ethos in education will disappear; instead it will only intensify the
need for a pluralistic understanding of curriculum.

The sources of population and curriculum diversity in Australia are *extra-
national* (the Asian geographic setting) and *sub-national* (Indigenous and immi-
grant). These have long been defining influences on Australia's social, political and
economic development. Indeed a key defining act of the Australian nation, the polit-
ical federation of the British colonies into the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901,
was conditioned by both of these. One of the first acts of the new parliament of the
Commonwealth was the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, better known as the
White Australia Policy, which had the clear purpose of preventing the growth of
precisely the kind of culturally, linguistically, religiously and racially diverse coun-
try which Australia has since become. The extent to which different political actors
have taken up the term 'multiculturalism' and its educational derivative, have shifted
dramatically over time. Various political interests and times have interpreted multi-
culturalism as the national condition to prevent, at other times and by other interests
as the condition to produce, or to manage, or to minimize or control or embrace.

Multicultural education, as officially conceived in Australia, never fully resolved
and occasionally provoked problematic relations with cognate curriculum reform
processes aiming to incorporate difference and diversity into curriculum, and spe-
cifically Indigenous and Asian Studies. However, at the level of pedagogical prac-
tice the long period of debate, innovation and response to diversity which was
brought about by the multicultural education movement produced many innovative
practices and experiences which still enrich the public education scene. We can see
that in its various phases language policy has been central to Australian conceptions
of multiculturalism.

Contemporary transnational globalization involves forms of mobility that disrupt
demographic depictions of stable national populations, with multiple kinds of
human movement, for varying purposes and degrees of time. Over the past four
decades migration movements have not only expanded but also diversified, in

direction, duration, social categories involved (Castles and Miller 2009), so that greater numbers move than ever before. But this mobility is highly differentiated, in its legal status, the directions from which it originates and its destinations, with many diverse social configurations making up the flows of movement and for different kinds of duration and purposes. International education is a key element of this modern mobility and its cultural and educational consequences are inevitably deep and lasting.

Alongside the migration aspect of globalization, pluralization is a consequence of the dynamic new forms of community and interaction possible in the information age. The rise of the information age has been documented by Manuel Castells in a trilogy of works dedicated to mapping and describing concrete technological and organizational linkages of communication (1996, 1997, 1998). In recent work (Castells 2009), he has synthesized this mapping of information flows and their technological supports into an extended analysis of the cognitive, emotive, and identity consequences of networks, of the power and potential of this horizontal flow of information and organization. Networks are relatively difficult for state authorities to regulate and control, and therefore they develop the propensity to destabilize national authority, norms, and structures. The *Australia in the Asian Century* document contrasts sharply with the mobile, networked transnational entities that such scholarship uncovers, and is premised instead on depictions of states as autonomous bounded territories engaged in trade across their stable populations.

New kinds of diversity challenge the founding discourses of many nations, especially those that claim a single unifying and culturally authentic language and either a single faith tradition or a dominant one. Such pluralization is experienced in different ways according to the particular legal frameworks of the host society, the precise nature of the migration type and the political preparedness and cultural attitudes of the host society toward diversity.

The Australian national account of multicultural education is remarkable for the volatility of policy development and the frequent chopping and changing of frameworks. However, a closer investigation reveals questions and problems which, though reformulated and reorganized, continually recur. These are the challenge of proximity to Asia, the nation's attachment to the political culture and security arrangements available within the ambit of the Anglosphere, and the insistent, bottom-up justice-based demands for Indigenous reconciliation and non-Anglo migration. A new phase of reorganization of all of these elements is underway as a new kind of learning from difference has been launched. One characteristic of this is already clear, however, any new form of official refocused multicultural discourses will be required to correspond with the ascendant ideologies of neo-liberal imagining of human subjects as economic rationalist and socially conservative individuals, whose 'differences' will be rhetorically affirmed but in practice quarantined to the realm of private and minority status. Some kinds of utilitarian perception of cultural diversity tied up with market-oriented economic opportunities will be incorporated into maximizing national cultural dividends through diversity management strategies.

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