How to Advance Korean Programs in Australian Schools

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1. Introduction

The aims of this discussion paper are two-fold. First, it seeks to give an overview of existing Korean language programs in New South Wales (NSW) schools. Second, by presenting key areas that require particular attention and improvement, the paper aims to respond to the Australian Federal Government's recent initiative to increase the number of students learning Australia's main Asian languages[2] through the National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP). Based on a series of intensive professional and community consultations on the NALSSP, the paper maps out a set of recommendations to improve the standards of Korean programs in NSW schools (and other States) and enhance the educational opportunities for students who might be interested in studying Korean.

In May 2008, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) released its commitment to funding the NALSSP over 2008-09 to 2010-11 (A$62.4 million)[3] and called for comment from educational authorities and language educators to develop an implementation model of the NALSSP. As a response, in early July 2008 the Korean community formed a Sydney-based consultation group ("The Korean Community Consultation Group")[4] comprising academics, teachers, government representatives, journalists and other key individuals with an interest in education. By the end of August 2008, the Group had received twenty-two submissions/proposals, which have subsequently been analysed and re-examined in the light of the aims of the NALSSP. From this process, the Group has developed projects: short and long-term projects or governmental and community projects. In addition, the Group has conducted initial consultations with key support organisations such as the Korea Foundation.

In the paper, both ongoing issues and new directions are addressed. The areas below have been identified as the most critical impediments to sustainable Korean programs in primary and secondary schools:

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[1] This is a revised version of my position paper on Korean language programs in New South Wales schools with reference to the Australian Government's National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP) and the earlier version of this paper entitled "Advance the Profile of Korean Programs in Australian Schools" was submitted to the Australian Federal and NSW State Governments in September 2008 on behalf of the Sydney-based Korean Community Consultation Group. Also presented at the NALSSP National Forum organised by the Federal Department of Education (DEEWR) and held at the Hilton Melbourne Airport Hotel on 19 September 2008.

[2] Focused on four Asian languages: Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean.

[3] The fund will be used in three areas: more Asian languages in schools, teacher training and support, and the development of specialist curriculum.

[4] The Korean Community Consultation Group members (in alphabetical order): Ms Chang, Insun; Ms Chung, Baba (Won-Hee); Mr Joh, Youngwoon; Mr Joo, Yang Joong; Dr Kwak, Ki-Sung; Dr Kim, Samoh; Dr Kim, Young-Ok; Mr Kim, Yu Chul; Mr Lawler, Peter; Dr Lee, Jane Gyungsook; Ms Lee, Sookjin; Mrs Lee, Young; Mrs McRoberts, Sook Hee; Dr Park, Duk-Soo; Dr Shin, Gi-Hyun; Dr Shin, Seong-Chul; Mrs Yoo, Jinsook. I thank the members for their advice and support.

Resource materials;
Teacher availability and training;
e-learning and strategies for delivery;
Cultural experience program; and
Demand, continuity and access.

Taking these factors into account, the paper also provides suggestions for the following key dimensions, i.e. the introduction of Korean in schools, student enrolment, resource development, and teacher training. Finally, the paper proposes a series of recommendations for the active and creative participation of various stakeholders (i.e. students, teachers, community and governmental organisations) toward developing effective Korean language (and studies) programs in schools.

The success of Korean language programs in schools will be driven by high technology, high levels of interaction with Korea and the 'glocalisation' ("think globally and act locally") of language and cultural experience, as well as a fundamental provision (solid foundation and practical support) for the teaching and learning of Korean.

This paper will certainly lead to lively debate and discussion and provide a platform for further extensive consultation and planning for developing a NALSSP model as well as a long-term model for sustainable Korean programs in Australian primary and secondary schools.[5] It is hoped that this paper will stimulate further formal discussions with a wide range of stakeholders, including education, students, community and business groups over the next few months. The five critical areas mentioned above are examined in the following sections.

2. Resource Materials

There are a number of important resource issues which have emerged from the community consultations. The most obvious one relates to teaching and learning resource materials. Nearly all the proposals in the consultations identified a need for appropriate resources. Teachers at large produce their own resources to supplement their current paltry resources. Teachers expressed a desire for user-friendly textbooks, workbooks and other teaching resources.[6] Teaching materials need to be made more interesting and attractive.

In respect of the Junior (Yr 7 – Yr 10) Program, the resource materials that urgently need to be developed or revised include: 1) a textbook for non-background students for self-study; 2) a textbook for background speakers; and 3) revision of existing textbooks with innovative audio-visual resources.

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[5] Studies on the teaching of Korean in Australian schools include Shin S-C (2000, 2002), Shin S-C and Baik G (2002), and Suh H. (2004). Shin S-C (2000) evaluates the overall success and failure of Korean language education in Australian schools while Suh H (2004) raises issues in Korean in relation with the then Australian governmental initiative on Asian languages called NALSAS and makes a number of practical proposals for improvement.

[6] Kim J-W (2002) raises problems with existing textbooks used by overseas Korean children and demonstrates with principles how to integrate linguistic and cultural components in conversational books for them. Kim G.G (2008) demonstrates how image texts can be utilised to strengthen the understanding of Korean culture by second and third generation overseas Koreans.

As for the Senior (Yr 11 – Yr 12) Program,[7] the Continuers course needs 4) supplementary and/or additional materials to accommodate themes and topics, as specified by the syllabus. The Background Speakers' course needs 5) teacher's support material by issues and text types, as specified in the syllabus, as well as 6) student's learning materials including high-quality audio-visual resources. Also, there is a need to develop 7) innovative high quality material for the Beginners course to make provision for the possible re-introduction of the course as demand arises.

The Primary (K – Yr 6) Program is also experiencing extremely limited teaching materials. At the moment the Primary Program has no appropriate course books that cover the learning requirements specified in the syllabus. The teaching resources that need to be developed include 8) textbooks that cover topics by the learning stage for both background speakers and non-background speakers. Additionally, the program needs 9) high quality audio-visual support materials as well as a variety of cultural resources for hands-on experience.

Equally important, teaching resources for the K-12 Korean programs need to be developed along with 10) IT-assisted *e*-learning resource materials. The development of a sustainable *e*-learning program is extremely valuable for Korean, for both face-to-face teaching and possible distance education, and will be further discussed later in this paper.

3. Teacher Availability and Training

The availability of competent Korean teachers is crucial to the sustainability of Korean programs. It has emerged that there is a lack of qualified Korean teachers with expertise in the language and culture who are also able to operate effectively within the Australian educational context. Also, there seems to be little or no support for accessing, training or retraining teachers in Korean.[8]

The limited linguistic knowledge of the teachers retrained through in-service programs is another problem because they are unlikely to create a language-rich environment. Even if properly trained, not all teachers are employed or fully occupied in teaching Korean due to the lack of demand or other competing priorities. All these factors are combined to adversely affect the stability and sustainability of Korean programs.

To increase the pool of appropriately trained teachers, a multi-faceted strategy is necessary. This includes a concerted effort to utilise the language skills of 1) teachers within the system, not teaching Korean, who are trained language teachers or who are fluent in Korean; 2) overseas trained and locally retrained people, many of whom are native speakers of Korean; and 3) trainee teachers who are competent in both Korean and English and who are in university teacher training programs. Ideally, multi-skilled Korean teachers, who could teach in more than one area, for example, ESL or Math as well as Korean, could solve much of the teacher shortage problem.

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[7] In New South Wales (state capital city: Sydney), there are three matriculation courses available for Year 12 students who wish to choose a second language study as part of their university entrance examination called Higher School Certificate (HSC) examination, and these are: Beginners, Continuers and Background Speaker courses.

[8] Shin S-C and Baik G (2002) presents findings of their needs analysis for teacher training program in Korean, and the essential elements regarding teacher availability and training are still the same although the present paper promotes more involvement of 1.5[th] or 2nd generation Koreans in teaching profession.

In order to conduct a thorough assessment, it is necessary to investigate ways to utilise the existing training program and mount a significant advertising campaign to identify people with language training and ascertain their interest in teaching Korean. Particular emphasis should be given to identifying "1.5" or 2nd generation migrants with appropriate qualifications in Korean.

Achieving an adequate supply of teachers will require the utilisation of all available modes of provision as well as maximum creativity and flexibility in the operation of programs. The Consultation Group proposes five strategies for the delivery of teacher training: 1) regular training of trainee teachers through university programs (called pre-service) with scholarships; 2) short-term in-service training or workshop; 3) intensive university training program during school holidays; 4) on-going distance education with audio-visual technology; and 5) in-country training and cultural experience. These training programs should be conducted concurrently or by stage depending on the demand and individual needs.

Training programs should incorporate not only essential linguistic and cultural components such as Korean grammar, contemporary society and cultural topics but also teaching methodology in Korean and IT-based teaching. Common and elective training components should be available for participants to meet their individual needs. For Korean L2 teachers, for example, the highest possible levels of competence in Korean and the cultural insight will be their priority.[9]

4. *e*-learning and Strategies for Delivery

Face-to-face teaching is still essential for sustainable language programs, particularly when the language is introduced and taught in a highly vulnerable and competitive environment. This provision can be dramatically strengthened when backed up by high quality interactive audio-visual technology. As for all other areas, the success of language teaching and learning in this new century is driven by how well the technology is incorporated or utilised in the learning/teaching process.

However, it is important to reflect on the (painful) lessons we have learned from the New South Wales Education Department's *Korean using Technology* program[10] which became defunct after 3-4 years of operation in the mid-1990s. Although the program played a certain role in facilitating the introduction of Korean programs in schools, particularly in rural areas, the large majority of views in the community have been that the program simply failed or the funds were used unwisely. It was a case of putting the cart before the horse by overestimating the capability of the technology.

The current proposal for an *e*-learning program places the focus on ways to facilitate, assist and strengthen classroom teaching and learning. This applies to both students' learning of Korean and teacher development training. Its underlying assumption is that a solid educational environment is secured through the presence of a well-qualified teacher in schools and face-to-face teaching, and that Korean programs with such a strong foundation will be strengthened by other modes of learning based on IT.

Currently *e*-learning modes are available in Korea but these are targeting adult learners. It is necessary to develop a similar *e*-learning system for students in

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[9] Kang, H-H (2002) suggests that a re-training program in Korean should ensure the following three areas: 1) inter-relation among the courses; 2) diversity of course materials; and 3) grouping by proficiency and individual needs.

[10] The Department invested more than A$1million to develop a tele-conferencing type of distance education program for Korean.

Australian primary and secondary schools by utilising the available technology, while considering the learning requirements they need to cover. The system should incorporate the essential teaching resources that are already available or will be developed in hard text, as well as additional or self-study learning kits for the whole K-12 curriculum.

Along with the development of an *e*-learning system, it is also necessary to construct a large-capacity internet portal solely for Australia's K-12 Korean programs to accumulate and share resources and exchange information. The current DET's Korean page is inadequate for this purpose. It will be much more convenient to own and operate such an online clearing house independently for the efficient management, access and support services.

There is obvious scope for high quality language teaching and learning through distance education (e.g. Open High School program) but only when the complete set of high quality learning resources supported by the *e*-learning program is available, distance education strategies can be a valuable option for further exploration. In any case the priority strategy for delivery should be based on a solid provision of teaching and learning resources backed up by IT and audio-visual technology.

5. Cultural experience program

Cultural activities are essential for sustainable language programs. Students are interested in playing games and doing 'fun' things.[11] The games and cultural activities not only develop their language skills but also bring an enjoyment of language learning. They are also a very successful way of enticing students or keeping them motivated to study Korean. One of the key reasons for such a low profile of Korean language programs in school is largely due to the extremely limited access to good cultural resources or activities. The large majority of teachers in the consultations also raised concerns about the scarce cultural resources and the difficulty of organising cultural activities.

It is nearly impossible for all schools and students involved in Korean to have access to a Korean room that is decorated with Korean furniture and other cultural objects or surrounded by a Korean garden but the enhanced provision of cultural activities is absolutely vital for the uptake of Korean.

To achieve the goal of providing an enhanced cultural experience, this paper proposes that governmental organisations and the local Korean community consider the following two suggestions: 1) the development and support of a variety of cultural resources and 2) the establishment of a 'Korean cultural centre' in a Korean-populated area of metropolitan Sydney.

There are a number of cultural resources that can be developed for class support, including traditional games such as the game of Yut (four-stick game), kite-making and flying and shuttlecock-making and kicking. Also, there are various cultural activities that students might want to try out, for example, wearing Korean costumes, Korean cooking and food, Korean classical dance, the tea ceremony, Korean calligraphy, greeting and table manners, etc. In addition, there is a strong need to develop a 'user-friendly' cultural book for general 'Korea' awareness (i.e. About Korea).

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[11]   In her survey study on Japanese and Chinese learners of Korean Kang S-H (2003) found that there were significant differences between the groups on their preference of cultural activities they wanted to learn and experience. A similar needs analysis study will be useful for Australian secondary school students.

The establishment of a 'Korean cultural centre' is necessary to provide both students and teachers, particularly those who have only limited access to Korean culture, with on-going, authentic and practical experience. Playing a role as a base centre for Korean culture, it should be a readily accessible key community centre not only for students to learn and experience the culture but also to host small cultural events. It may also play a pivotal role in developing and distributing cultural resources on an on-going basis.

Ideally, this centre should be located in a Korean suburb such as Strathfield, which has a lot of advantages including transport, geographical location and exposure to Korean venues and background speakers. Activities such as trips to restaurants and a Korean cooking and food day would be easily achieved in such places. As a temporary measure the existing Korean organisations such as the Korean Consulate-General's Office might also be utilised if such an arrangement is acceptable, but for long-term smooth operation, a separate space jointly supported by the Korean Government and the Korean community will be advantageous.

6. Demand, continuity and access

It is a common view from the consultations and the wider community that Korea has always been underrepresented despite its significant relationship with Australia and the language undervalued in general Australian society. There should be a provision of more information about the cultural and economic aspects of Korea for parents, schools and educational agencies. Korean should be strategically marketed with reference to the future economic benefits it offers to students by way of employment and international trade. This message has not been well communicated within the wider community and it would take years to increase community awareness of Korea but it is worth conducting a well organised campaign on a regular basis. At school level, the Korean program should be something that students really enjoy, find it wonderful to learn about and feel it useful for their future benefit.[12]

The continuity of language programs between feeder primary schools and their local high schools is an important factor in the implementation of language programs. In this regard, little or no continuity of Korean programs between neighbouring primary and secondary schools is the biggest concern. Ideally, this may be resolved by forming clusters of up to 20 schools, consisting of around fifteen primary and four to five high schools teaching Korean but obviously there are many obstacles including planning issues to achieve this goal.

Nevertheless, it is practically and strategically advantageous to channel the effort into 'planting' Korean in geographical areas where Korean is already being taught or has particular social and economical relevance, so that the schools eventually could form clusters in their respective area. This can be facilitated by a two-way effort, i.e. where primary Korean programs are developed, the possibility of introducing Korean at high schools in the same area can be explored, or vice versa. When school clusters are formed, the possibility of rotational arrangements for a trained teacher on a stable basis can also be explored.

The perceptions of students, teachers (particularly principals) and parents towards Korea and Korean are also an important factor in the implementation and sustenance of Korean programs. When they are very positive about Korea and Korean, and

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[12] Shin S-C (2002) addresses declining factors of Korean enrolments in Higher School Certificate (HSC) courses, and they include lack of systematic promotional activities and quality teaching and learning resources.

confident that it is of benefit to, and fun for the children, it is likely that they will start studying Korean or continue with the language. This is possible through the joint efforts of Australian and Korean educational authorities, and sponsorships from local and Korean businesses. For example, a local tourism representative could be invited to the school to talk to parents or students about potential tourism jobs. Local representatives from multinational Korean companies could also be invited to talk about their world class technology and sponsorships of major Australian sports. Subsidised exchanges to Korea and other incentives such as prizes and scholarships would also generate a lot of positive publicity for the Korean programs. Invitational trips to Korea for regional Directors, Principals and key educators would also be extremely helpful in generating positive perceptions of Korea.

In addition, there are some schools which have a high percentage of students from Korean-speaking backgrounds in the metropolitan areas, particularly in Sydney. Korean is relevant to these schools and the possibility of introducing Korean programs to the schools needs to be explored. At the same time, young Korean heritage students attending local Korean ethnic schools (mostly church-run 'Hangeul' schools) should be strongly encouraged to enrol in the Korean programs offered through school systems. For a positive outcome, the local Korean organisations and parents should not only be aware of the program at their local schools but also leave their vested interests behind and cooperate in joint efforts for a higher profile of Korean programs in the Australian education system.

However, this does not imply that the effective value of the local ethnic schools is doubtful. Ethnic schools do have significant roles to play in the community.[13] What we need to do here is to explore ways in which the two different learning opportunities can be incorporated or related. Indeed, there are a number of aspects and ways that local ethnic schools and the schools in the education system can work together to enrich educational experience and achieve the common goal.[14]

Two other important aspects that need to be addressed are the suspended Korean Beginners course and the eligibility rule set by the NSW Board of Studies. The Beginners course was suspended due to the consistent low enrolments, and again it needs strategic planning and joint efforts to create demand and attract students among potential schools. Such efforts should be able to demonstrate sufficient evidence of demand to the Board which will then consider the possibility of resuming the course. This is an area that needs medium and long-term strategic thinking and substantial groundwork by various parties including principals, governmental departments and the local community.

The eligibility rule is another critical barrier to students keen to study Korean. As it is unusually rigid, local Korean-background students who are born and bred in Australia, even if only one parent is Korean, have no choice but to take the Background speakers course where they are pushed to compete with Korean L1 international students from Korea after 10 or more years of formal education. This stringent rule has resulted in absolute disappointment, which has later translated into

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[13] A number of language policy-related studies and documents such as NALSAS Taskforce (1998), Cho H-R (2004) and Lee K-K (2008) recognise the value of ethnic schools and their importance roles in the community. Studies such as Gilhotra (1985), Kouzmin (1988), Taft and Cahill (1989), Janik (1996), Smolicz et al. (2001) and Schwartz (2008) examine ethnic groups in Australia and other parts of the world.

[14] Lee D. J. (2003) points out the urgency of recruiting heritage students in relation with the US governmental National Flagship Language Initiative and proposes that policy makers and education authorities should give more attention to Korean heritage students at secondary schools.

no language studies or a switch to other languages for the students. This has been a constant problem for Korean (and other key Asian languages) for the past 10 years or so despite the federal and state governments' promotion of Asian languages in Australian schools.

Perhaps it would be worthwhile for Australian educational departments and authorities to look at the path the United States[15] has undergone, which may hopefully lead to the change in its policy toward maximising the language potentials of ethnic students through the national flagship program. The current eligibility rule is vastly and unfairly simplified, so it must be re-worked towards providing students with due opportunities to learn the language at their level. It is a matter of access and equity that any Australian student deserves.

7. Conclusion

The evidence for this discussion paper suggests that the long-term sustainability of Korean language programs in primary and secondary schools, the quality of the learning outcomes and ultimately the success of the programs are dependent on a number of interrelated provisions and factors. The following provisions and factors that enhance or work against the sustainability of Korean programs have been identified.

- There must be sufficient and adequate teaching resources to ensure that the Korean programs have every chance of being sustainable or expansible. This means priority commitment from State and national departments in terms of providing quality teaching resources. The current lack or inadequacy of resource materials for Korean is problematic in the extreme.

- The availability of adequately qualified teachers is crucial to sustainable Korean programs. Adequacy appears to include being committed, speaking both Korean and English confidently and fluently, and being comfortable with students and the educational system. This requires strategies and commitment from State and national departments in terms of providing quality teachers and professional development for teachers.

- The current trend of language learning and teaching incorporates multi-level high technology. Korean programs have far more chance of sustainability when they are assisted or facilitated by (but NOT solely based on) web-based multimedia and interactive teaching materials, as well as a dedicated web community site for K-12 Korean programs.

- Sustainability of a language program is enhanced by cultural experience. One of the key reasons for the relative low profile of Korean programs is the extremely limited access to good cultural resources or activities. There is a strong need to develop a variety of cultural resources including general 'Korea' awareness books and to establish a 'Korean cultural centre' in a Korean-populated area.

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[15] Lee K-K (2008) gives detailed report on the current situations and issues in the teaching of Korean at tertiary, secondary and community levels.

This requires joint commitments and expertise from both Korean and Australian governments as well as the Korean community.

- The biggest concern for Korean is the low uptake by students (or schools), with a number of obstacles other than those mentioned above. The areas for further investigation and urgent improvements include continuity from primary school to secondary school Korean language, the relevance of the language for students, the learning experience, and the conditions (e.g. eligibility rules and competition) of high school learning and beyond. It is essential that the importance and benefits of Korean as a learning area are constantly and strategically promoted to students, parents, teachers and the public.

These issues indicate that the future of Korean in schools will be at risk unless efforts are made to have concerted and strategic planning at the government department and the schools levels, and unless there are similar efforts from the Korean government and the Korean community.

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