Australian Literacies

Informing national policy on literacy education

(2nd Edition)

by
Joseph Lo Bianco
Peter Freebody

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For further information contact:
Language Australia Ltd
GPO Box 372F
Melbourne, VIC 3001
Australia

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Preamble

According to the popular media, there is a shared public expectation that school literacy will equip students for varied roles and literate competence in post-school life. The media reports that Australians expect that all adults will be able to comfortably handle the various forms of spoken and written language which intersect with their personal pursuits, their civic-community participation and their economic-vocational future. This book is written with the express purpose of conveying to policy makers ideas and beliefs about literacy education informed by research and teaching experience.

The speed and depth of economic, social and technological change on post-school life requires recognition in public policy of the importance of life-long learning. It ought to be an underlying assumption of any literacy policy that literacy learning in schools should be adaptable and responsive to changing societal demands on, and uses for, literacy.

Within this broader life-long learning framework the central aim of literacy policy should be to focus national attention on Australia's school literacy achievements and in so doing to raise the literacy capabilities of all Australians by directing resources towards redressing areas of persistent underperformance.

Only a broad-based response to the problem of literacy, accompanied by a sustained and focussed strategy and guided by an overarching policy, can hope to succeed.

From the very outset, however, it is important to state unambiguously that there is *no general literacy crisis* in Australia. There is, however, systematic underperformance in English literacy among some groups and many individuals. Among these are children and adults who are socio-economically and educationally disadvantaged, some children and adults of non-English speaking background, some groups of both urban and rural Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, older Australians with interrupted or disrupted schooling, some Australians who live in remote or isolated areas as well as some groups of sensorily, physically, emotionally or intellectually disabled Australians.

That these same groups and individuals are often seriously disadvantaged in their occupational and educational opportunities is sufficient cause to warrant a *targeted* policy on literacy. However, there is a wider literacy context that sustains a case for a *comprehensive* literacy policy.

Extraordinary changes are impacting on literacy practices, changes which derive from global economic, social, cultural and technological transformation. Just to keep pace

Australian literacy standards will have to be sustained for most learners and dramatically improved for many, to enable effective participation in the vastly more competitive environment which will be a characteristic of the world in the twenty-first century.

It is critical, therefore, that there be no lowering of the goal of the achievement of sophisticated literacy competence for all by arbitrarily establishing minimal standards which, though readily achievable, would certainly in the long term prove to be both inadequate and inappropriate for the more complex, technologically-saturated and culturally diverse reading and writing environments that are already upon us. Rather, it is crucial to support a broad-ranging notion of literacy as a repertoire of capabilities which comprises the various linguistic and intellectual resources which learners need to function at the highest and broadest levels of literacy. It is in this sense that the term *literacies* can be justified.[1]

The present national focus on literacy policy represents a unique opportunity to stimulate a nationally coordinated effort to secure actual literacy gains for all Australians. It is also time to systematically put in place a national agenda for cooperation in literacy education, research, teacher education and the monitoring of outcomes. This cooperation ought to involve the nation's education and training departments, the non-government and independent schools sectors, business, and professional, research and parent organisations.

The goal of enhancing literacy capability is not merely one for education. Literacy capability for all is a compact of citizenship, securing for all Australians the principal means for participation in democratic institutions and processes. Universal and broad literacy capability is also an investment in human development to strengthen Australian social and economic progress. Finally and ultimately it is an achievement of Australian civilisation and culture since literacy is the principal avenue for the enrichment, diversification and on-going development of a lively, distinctive and cohesive nation.

The improvement of literacy for all Australians seeks to respond to these personal, civic-cultural and economic needs.

Literacy is for personal pursuits

Literacy and language are fundamental to all learning, whether in school or out-of-school. Individual Australians require literacy to enjoy reading and literature in its widest sense, to benefit from recreational, further education and other life-enhancing pursuits, and to participate in producing and sharing the knowledge that frames national culture and values.

Literacy is for civic and cultural participation

For Australians as citizens and as participants in, and contributors to, national culture, literacy is indispensable. Literacy enables the full activation of democratic rights and legal protection as well as facilitating the fulfilment of the responsibilities all Australians have to the evolution and betterment of the nation.

Literacy is crucial for collaboration and effective decision making, for debate and informed discussion and for the protection of individuals, especially the most vulnerable, from exploitation and manipulation.

Literacy is for the economy

At a time of rapid technological change and pervasive internationalisation literacy skills contribute to the increased competitiveness and productivity that the national economy demands. Literacy is also crucially important for innovation, for mobility and adaptation to change.

Any literacy policy for Australia must direct major attention to the economic needs for improved literacy, and in particular to the benefits in the labour market and the implications of the rapid introduction of new technologies. However, the essentially humanistic, intellectual and cultural purposes of pursuing the highest and most active forms of literacy for all Australians must not be relegated to subordinate status.

Shared literacy traditions foster civic, citizenship and national identity and unity within the diversity and pluralism that characterise contemporary Australia. Literacy is also a personal achievement enriching the recreational, intellectual and cultural lives of Australians and facilitating the pursuit of creative, scientific and artistic ideas of personal and collective imagination and goals.

English, in the forms that it has evolved in Australia and which express the unique national context and experience of the Australian people, is Australia's national, common and unifying communication medium. The remarkable international spread and prominence of English involves Australians in an interconnected web of English varieties which, however, retain mutual intelligibility for effective communication. However, Australians know and acquire literacy in other languages, using diverse writing systems, as well as learning forms of specialised literacy appropriate to particular occupational, disciplinary, social and technological domains.

These literacies also form part of the goal of an elaborate and rich matrix, or repertoire, of literacy which must be attended to in a broadly based policy.

Recently established national literacy goals

At meetings in 1996 and early 1997 Commonwealth, State and Territory Education Ministers agreed to a national literacy and numeracy goal: *That every child leaving primary school should be numerate, and able to read, write and spell at an appropriate level.*

The Ministers also endorsed a five point National Plan. The Plan includes:

i. comprehensive assessment of all students as early as possible, to identify those students at risk of not making adequate progress towards the national numeracy and literacy goals;

ii. intervening as early as possible to address the needs of those students identified as at risk;

iii. development of national benchmarks in literacy and numeracy;

iv. assessing students against national benchmarks; and

v. progress towards towards national reporting by systems on student achievement.

The Ministers also adopted a 'sub goal': *That every child commencing school from 1998 will achieve a minimum acceptable literacy and numeracy standard within four years.*

What issues arise in giving effect to this goal?

We argue that the central purpose of literacy planning is to stimulate action so that all education and training efforts in Australia coherently and systematically aim for a broad-ranging literacy capability for all Australians. This foundational literacy for all must be embedded within a wide notion of literacy as a repertoire of capabilities that include contemporary challenges in technology, cultural diversity and an internationalising economy.

A comprehensive series of measures is needed, with specific aims:

- to stimulate and support more effective literacy education in the early years of schooling, including an articulation with preschool education;
- to encourage educational practice in which explicit literacy education is the province of all teachers, at all phases of education and training, including life-long education for adults;
- to initiate and coordinate action to redress literacy difficulties encountered throughout the population and especially the separate needs of certain disadvantaged and disabled groups at all levels of education and training; and
- to ensure that the distinctive English language and literacy needs of children and adults of immigrant or indigenous background who speak languages other than English are addressed in their own right and not subsumed under mother tongue English literacy provision; and also to support and encourage wherever possible the literate development of their first languages while supporting and encouraging the literate acquisition of second languages for other Australians.

This aim is for foundational literacy capability by all Australians. It especially seeks to assist those disadvantaged or excluded from the benefits of achieving literacy in formal schooling, for whatever reason, including disability; and combines this priority with the aim of extending an active, critical, productive and engaging literacy in the complex and mixed modes in which literacy is embedded.

1 In schooling there are entities called Language, Languages and Literacy. While few schools would name an entity called Literacies in their curriculum plans the term is growing in popularity. There seem to be four main sources for this.
   - Teachers and researchers of languages, especially those concerned with non-alphabetic literacy who see 'reading and writing' in different script forms as demanding different pedagogical approaches and tapping different learner systems.
   - The widespread adoption of the term Literacy as a sort of index of 'competent functioning' in some field (e.g. Asia literacy, Political literacy, Social literacy).
   - Anthropologically-oriented research work (influenced by such people as Shirley Brice Heath in the US and Brian Street in the UK) which sees literacy as a kind of assemblage of practices that vary according to context and purpose and not therefore well understood as a unitary capability that is transferable over time and place, and including a critical literacy dimension in which influence, ideology and positionality in texts is identified and discussed, and in which students are taught powerful registers of writing and reading.

Broad Context 1

1.1 The powers of literacy

Introduction

It is probably the case that at no previous stage in human social and economic history has the importance and complexity of literacy been greater nor at any past time has the interrelation between literacy capability and the development of Australia's full potential been closer. Mutually reinforcing changes deriving from international economic globalisation (especially in the wake of trade liberalisation), the rapid proliferation of sophisticated instantaneous communications technologies, and national and global cultural diversity have combined with the emergence of the 'information/knowledge society' as the bases for the economic advancement of nations. This conjunction of developments makes it necessary for there to be more intense and more complex literacy capabilities developed among Australians and elevates the importance of sophisticated universal literacy capabilities. Further, these changes entrench text-intensive and technology-intensive processes in employment, communication and civic life and identity. Literacy as a key capability for citizens to understand and influence changes within society becomes a critical feature of a robust, participatory democracy. Whereas formal citizenship simply requires legal recognition of a person's status within the country, a more substantive notion of citizenship asks us to extend the kinds of competencies needed for social and political participation more widely than at present.

Globalisation is advanced in practical terms by the effective dissolution of communication barriers across distances. The proliferation of new communication technologies that are instantaneous and 'multi-modal' affects, by their inherent combination of previously discrete communication systems, conventional literacy practices (New London Group 1996). These combine to dissolve previously more bounded literacy practices.

The exchange of goods and services across political and economic entities has always represented an incipient form of globalisation. However, in the last two decades it has become possible to speak of a qualitatively different and pervasive phenomenon which genuinely merits the use of the term globalisation. While globalisation proceeds at the innumerable levels of human contact, three macro-forces have produced it most strongly.

The first has been the almost universal phenomenon of *market deregulation.*

The second has been the advanced integration of international *financial markets.*

The third has been the critical facilitating force of instantaneous *communications.*

The effects of globalisation are clear at many levels. Many of the cultural and educational effects of these phenomena still await us. These may range from the rapid galvanisation of the world into gigantic trading blocs (e.g., the Asia Pacific Economic Community) to the emergence of shared communications systems and interdependence at political and economic levels. These blocs incorporate wide political, cultural and linguistic differences. While the results of these changes cannot be predicted with any certainty, we can be certain that participation in the new environments these changes will give rise to will require ever more complex literacy practices. Young Australians will encounter a more fluidly-bounded world as they leave education.

The impact of changing economic patterns.

In 1992, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) concluded that low literacy levels were a serious threat both to economic performance and social cohesion. Concerned that a lack of internationally comparable data hindered any more substantive conclusions and more appropriate policy intervention the OECD embarked on an international study of the incidence and nature of literacy problems. From this study it concluded that:

> *'In recent years, adult literacy has come to be seen as crucial to the economic performance of industrialised nations. Literacy is no longer defined merely in terms of a basic threshold of reading ability, mastered by almost all those growing up in developed countries. Rather, literacy is now seen as how adults use written information to function in society. Today, adults need a higher level of literacy to function well; society has become more complex and low-skill jobs are disappearing. Therefore, inadequate levels of literacy among a broad section of the population potentially threaten the strength of economies and the social cohesion of nations'*
> *(OECD 1995:13).*

In all sectors of industry, Australian businesses have recently faced the consequences of the introduction of new technologies, which have led to more rapid exchanges in information. These in turn call on individuals in workplaces to engage, as readers, interpreters and writers, in communication practices that are increasingly complex and evolving rapidly and on which business competitiveness increasingly depends. These practices affect work at every level of the economy.

Primary producers are currently under increasing pressure to use advanced technologies to plan their work and to predict how certain choices will affect the success of their efforts. They use these technologies to communicate directly with national and international market places to ensure they have up to date information to conduct their activities with respect to stocking, land usage, buying and selling. New collaborative ventures among primary producers and economic and agricultural advisers, often spanning nations and continents and involving both government and non-government agencies, are increasingly important and rely for their success on sophisticated literate practices.

Secondary manufacturers also confront new demands in their work. They increasingly require flexible workers able to participate in the collaborative processes which micro-economic reform has made obligatory for competitive performance. These processes demand language and literacy skills sufficient to allow new learning and the application of new procedures to plant and equipment and occupational health and safety or for environmental compliance regimes.

The *tertiary* and *services sector* similarly has embraced new forms of communication, allowing and thus demanding rapid service provision and the maximisation of human resources. Services and tourism are the fastest growing sectors of the economy, generating more employment than the traditional mainstays of Australian enterprise, but necessarily engaging with a more culturally and linguistically diverse population of potential and actual consumers and clients. Furthermore there is the internationalisation of the Australian secondary and tertiary education sectors with the emergence of the provision of English-medium education as a large and growing source of national revenue.

Quaternary industries, which, by their very nature, trade in information, deploy a wide range of literacy practices in the assembling, storage and timely transfer of clear and accessible information. The special *registers* of language demanded in these domains, which go well beyond the most obvious manifestations of jargon, require particular but structured and predictable writing *genres*. The use of these *genres* by quaternary workers demands both an 'on the job' language acquisition skills as well as a high level of transferable skill-readiness based on general literacy functioning.

The critical driving force of Australian workplace reform is the vastly more competitive global trading environment to which Australia is increasingly exposed. Australian workplaces that have succeeded in attaining international quality standards are now highly competitive; for those that fail to attain international quality standards the commercial prospects are increasingly bleak.

An important effect of such market pressures has been generalised micro-economic restructuring and various forms of 'multi-skilling'. A major part of the latter has been the widespread adoption of workteams. Workteams address productivity, efficiency and safety issues. Workteams crucially depend on communication effectiveness, often in cross-cultural settings, and therefore make more salient questions of language and literacy in both English and other languages, intercultural awareness and translation and interpreting services.

Rigid workplace environments which have dominated for most of this century (sometimes called Fordist) are being replaced by 'post-Fordist' work environments. Post-Fordist work organisation patterns make talk and written language important. Some of the organisational forms these workplaces take are quality circles, self-managing work teams, and review and feedback sessions. Among the outcomes envisaged are improved occupational health and safety, increases in productivity, enhanced product quality and the inculcation of corporate loyalty.

Optimistic readings of such transformations see economies in which individual opportunities abound and in which societies become learning societies (Senge 1991).

More problematically these changes may entrench unequal national as well as personal distribution of work (Reich 1992).

Personal and group qualities such as problem-solving capacities, preparedness to change and adapt, flexibility and initiative are encouraged. Other processes intensify these trends: the 'fast capitalism' notions of just-in-time learning and production, customer sovereignty, total quality management and high-performance workplaces. It is now commonplace in management journals to speak of the 'culture' of enterprises and the entrepreneurship of individuals.

In these developments flatter hierarchies are favoured over more traditional pyramidal structures and the attachment and loyalty of workers to vision and mission statements, and corporate identity, are brought about via processes of consultation and negotiation. Workplaces are sometimes described as learning sites and located in a knowledge-based post industrial network of interdependencies. The multiple skills required of workers are higher, greater and deeper than in Fordist workplaces where the metaphor of the production line described better the relation of employees to their work. Education and training are indispensably important for the successful realisation of these strategies. In the highly heterogenous workplaces typical of urban Australia successful participation in environments where these changes are occurring is contingent upon language and literacy and cross-cultural competencies (New London Group 1996).

Most Australian workplaces sit somewhere between the Fordist and Post-Fordist models, meaning that workers' abilities to handle text-saturated contexts is all the more important.

Such transformations mean that the 'old basics' of literacy and numeracy no longer come close to coping with the needs of Australian industry. The needs of Australian economic and industrial functioning now place qualitatively new and more complex demands on workers' literacy practices. Changes internal to writing also reflect these developments. Writing now tends to contain information coded in graphic, diagrammatic, tabular and other non-textual ways, calling for a repertoire of capabilities far beyond the typical reader and writer of decades ago (Resnick and Resnick 1977).

It is therefore a view of the multiplicity of skills required of potential members of the new-literate economy that must inform Australian literacy policies.

The impact of communication technologies

Contemporary communications systems are both quantitatively and qualitatively different from those we have been accustomed to in the past. Their widespread availability combines with their pervasive social and economic effect, *i.e.*, they are not restricted to particular enterprises nor to discrete domains of life (OECD 1988, 1992a). Their wide availability and impact across whole communities has resulted in major growth in their use: between 1988 and 1992 international telecommunications traffic grew by more than ten percent in each year (OECD 1996).

Perhaps the principal qualitative difference between present technological change and all past ones is the multiple modalities which communications technologies incorporate. Information technologies combining multiple modes of communication tend to create hybrid systems of communication. Simultaneous reading, writing, speaking and

listening skills are demanded. Voice activation and instruction of some computers, screen-based control of machines and other written language innovations blur the boundaries between previously discrete literacy and spoken language activities such as handwriting, printed text, gesture, voice, images and other symbol-laden communication systems.

Visual, audial, gestural and spatial patterns are available to interacting humans as potential 'meaning-making' tools and information and communications technologies draw on these in combinations which generate original literacies for their utilisation.

A possible indicator of the literacy effects of communication media is greater informality within writing. The use of increasingly interpersonal modes of language and increased orality in writing (oral-like writing) has also been found to extend subsequently into more traditional literacy practices. Electronic mail and Internet Relay Chat groups, or 'rooms', reduce temporal distance in writing thus producing more of the immediacy of speech in the forms of writing these given rise to (Sproull and Kaiser 1991; Kress 1995).

Multimedia technology requires of a competent and literate user receptive skills more elaborate than those of 'pen and paper' literacy and far more complex in productive use. Indeed even this distinction, already known to be somewhat forced in verbal literacy, becomes close to untenable in multimedia environments. Reading in the non-linear format of multimedia electronic 'texts' involves navigational skills far beyond those demanded of print and an evaluative and critical awareness to select and bring together relevant pieces of information in their various presentational forms from diverse parts of the 'text'. In such literacy practices 'reading' becomes a form of 'composition' as the reader becomes a manager of information sources in the different formats in which they appear.

However, we must temper any excitement about computers heralding " ... unfettered individual exploration of the far-flung realms of creativity and knowledge ... " with the equally probable possibility of '... increased social control through surveillance centralised record-keeping and software audits" (Christie, Devlin, Freebody, Luke, Martin, Threadgold and Walton, 1991: 212).

In any case the multimedia format of texts and new forms of writing and reading with computers do not mean the wholesale overthrow of past textual practices. While technology-enhanced communications do generate specific literacy practices and routines at the same time they "...carry within them discernible patterns of our textual past" (Daly 1996: 14). The specific challenge they carry for literacy education is how to impart general literacy capability which is transferable to the computer medium and the need to also address the specifics of digital text literacy.

To identify the knowledge, skills and strategies necessary for handling the convergent, digital texts in computer-mediated educational settings it is helpful to see print literacy education as an extending repertoire which now encompasses digital texts. Like print texts digital texts are *products,* which emerge from and are used in *processes* of human interaction and are integrated into wider social *practices* (Corbel 1996). Literacy in the computer age will therefore require multimedia authoring skills, multimedia critical analysis, internet exploration strategies and internet navigational skills (Lemke 1996).

These developments in communication technologies coincide with the cultural diversity

that results from globalisation and with deep organisational change in the world of work. The resultant pattern for literacy practices is the emergence of an integrated and dense web of culturally and commercially diverse modes of life each of which utilises a repertoire of communication forms.

Place and space, locality and setting, are both real and virtual as the expanding use of tele-working, tele-commuting, tele-shopping, electronic publishing and other fields testify. An interesting instance of this is the location within Ireland of very large international multilingual, instantaneous customer servicing operations for European and Asian firms (McIntosh 1996: 56).

The overall effect of new communications technologies is that literate practices are being altered in pervasive and profound ways but which still demand a transferable literacy capability from schooling.

The impact of global and national cultural diversity

The rapid internationalisation of economic life (and the emergence today of an historically unique and almost total global interdependence) and the concomitant vast movement of peoples, now at unprecedentedly high levels, have led to most societies becoming ethnically diverse (Castles and Miller 1993).

Population mobility intensifies globalisation through the interaction of unique mixes of indigenous, settler and immigrant populations. At the same time among the fastest growing 'industries' in both Australia and the world are education services and mass tourism, two forms of population mobility. Professionals and skilled workers of all types have therefore joined the movement of populations across and within borders which used more traditionally to be the preserve of the displaced, the poor and the refugee.

The acceleration of global population mobility results in the staging of career, education and retirement life patterns across countries and continents. Such multi-national staging of family and professional lives is facilitated by multiple personal identification documents, including passports. These developments challenge some traditional roles of schooling, those based on the inculcation of the heritage and traditions of the nation and an attachment to local cultural values, i.e. to a singular and permanent body of citizens.

Assumptions about what learners bring to the task of learning, from phonological patterns, to preschool writing and text awareness, to background cultural knowledge and experiences of literacy, are not the same among all Australian students. Some come to school highly literate in languages that utilise utterly different reading and writing conventions from those of English, others have orally rich systems in which some oral language functions mirror literary texts in their production and interpretation.

Four major recent changes confront Australian public institutions:

- Australia's progressive shift from relative geographic and communications isolation to full participation in globalised cultural and multinational economic relations via fast media, transportations infrastructure, and telecommunications;
- a change from exclusively British cultural and political orientations and attachments to those affiliated with North America, the Asian region and other Pacific Rim countries;

- the rapid transformation of the national economy from a resource and agriculture-based economy with protected, traditional markets to a post-industrial and internationally exposed economy that increasingly is required to compete for markets and resources, across a range of primary, manufacturing, service and information sectors; and
- finally, the peaceful and broadly successful emergence of an overtly multicultural and multilingual population. This is the result of successive waves of postwar immigration, the recognition of indigenous citizenship and entitlements, and the move away from assimilationist social policy (adapted from Green, Hodgens and Luke 1994: 7).

Although such changes are remarkable in reach and depth they interact with an enduring core of institutionalised administrative, legal, political and cultural traditions and practices. The result is a dynamic interaction between change and stability that the open democratic ethos of Australian society has facilitated. All this has major implications for Australian literacy because of the diverse content on which it draws.

First, the *topics* of materials to be read and written are more diverse in origin and form. The comparatively simple function of past literacy practices which aimed in large part to re-present the society's values and norms as secure and natural now makes space for diversity. Cultural differences are increasingly treated as acceptable, typical and productive.

Second, globalisation impacts on the *functions* of literacy. There are multiple literary forms, scripts, culturally, religiously and socially validated functions and practices to reading and writing in contemporary Australia. Text directionality is a simple instance of this. This concerns how different writing systems are presented as text on paper, in vertical or horizontal arrangement, right to left or left to right, or on the computer screen where writing 'scrolls' rather than moves left-right as it does in printed English (Corbel 1996: 10). Even simple conventions of this sort provide potential insights into the arbitrary nature of text-practices and constitute useful knowledge for Australian learners of reading and writing.

For almost two decades public policy in Australia has evolved a broadly shared consensus on the three dimensions which shape national culture:

- the continuity of Australia's British-derived legal, political and administrative arrangements, including the cohesive function of English as the national language;
- the acceptance of the value and benefits of demographic diversity produced through external immigration added to settler and indigenous populations; and
- the necessity of Australia's economic integration into the Asia-Pacific region.

1.2 How literate are Australians?

It appears that literacy has always been a topic of debate in Australia. Concerns for the low levels of literacy among adults surfaced in the Australian Army Education Service during World War Two (Nelson 1989: 4). Claims of declining literacy standards in schools reach back at least to 1909 (ALLC 1995: 18).

Since 1945, literacy debates have accelerated and what is meant by the literate person has changed. Green *et al* (1994) identify phases in literacy debates in which the 'literate subject' has changed dramatically. During the 1950s the 'ideal literate person' was construed as a *moral* subject, during the 1960s as a *technical/skilled* subject, during the 1970s the main understanding of the literate person focussed on a *deficit/disadvantaged* subject and by the 1980s the association between education and economic restructuring was strongly made and accordingly the literate person was conceived as an *economic* subject.

The first comprehensive survey of adult literacy in Australia was, significantly, entitled *No Single Measure* (Wickert 1989). This survey involved a sample the youngest of whose respondents would have left primary school in 1981-82, the oldest around the time of the First World War.

No Single Measure was an initiative funded under the *National Policy on Languages*' (Lo Bianco 1987) Adult Literacy Action Campaign. It examined prose literacy, document literacy and quantitative literacy. It found that two segments of the population had the greatest literacy problems. The first were those who had attended school for fewer than six years. The second group were people older than sixty. The overall estimate of people with literacy or numeracy difficulties was approximately one million. This figure of one million adult Australians who experience literacy difficulties featured prominently in 1990, the International Year of Literacy (DEET 1992).

In Wickert's study thirty-one percent of respondents nominated 'health problems' as the reasons for the literacy difficulties they encountered, twenty percent nominated reasons to do with socio-economic constraints, seventeen percent nominated variously caused absences from school, nineteen percent traced their literacy difficulties to 'attitudes' towards school. Various forms of disability, parental influence, English language difficulties and other factors were found to account for a variation of less than ten percent each.

Overall the survey found that the great majority of Australian adults were able to perform straightforward literacy tasks but that many were unable to complete tasks of moderate complexity.

Ten percent of the sample failed to achieve at all on quantitative literacy (numeracy), with this dimension consistently revealing poorest performance; one percent of the sample had such low literacy levels that they were not asked to continue with the assessment. The best predictor of literacy performance was found to be the current level of literacy activity; giving support to the adage: *Use it or lose it!*

In 1992 the House of Representatives' Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, issued a report entitled *The Literacy Challenge*. The Standing Committee's

report stated that " It is unacceptable that ten to twenty percent of children finish primary school with literacy problems" (p v) and later went on to state that "From the Committee's discussions and submissions, it seems that a figure of twenty five percent of students at risk may be a more accurate figure for many education districts" (House of Representatives 1992: 3). These claims were based on extrapolations from the Wickert study, from 'discussions and submissions' and from anecdotal evidence. Evidence from the education authorities follows.

The Victorian Board of Studies introduced the Learning Assessment Project (LAP) in 1995 for students in Years 3 and 5 in all government and Catholic schools and many independent schools in that state. Each year English and Mathematics are assessed together with one other Key Learning Area. The assessment tasks are based on the Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF) levels appropriate for Years 3 and 5. The CSF provides the framework for curriculum delivery in Victoria and describes learning outcomes to be achieved in the eight Key Learning Areas.

In 1996 LAP was undertaken by more than 99,000 students, ninety-three percent of eligible students. The results showed that in English about ninety percent of students were operating at or above the expected level. Girls outperformed boys, although the top ten percent of boys performed as well as the top ten percent of girls. According to the Board of Studies these results indicate that high standards in literacy are being maintained (Board of Studies, LAP Assessment Project 1996, Key Points, undated).

In 1999, of 115 000 students tested, some ninety-four percent performed at or above their year level in reading and writing, although more students had difficulty with reading and writing than with other LAP tested subjects. One in four Year 3 students were reading above the expected level for their age group. Overall, the Victorian Minister for Education felt that the results showed "a small but significant problem" (Jones, C., Tests show 6% struggle with words, *The Age*, 9 December 1999).

In New South Wales the Department of School Education conducts annual literacy and numeracy Basic Skills Testing at different year levels (see section 6.7). In 1992 and 1993 a Year Six Basic Skills Test found that more than half of all students performed so well that they were grouped into the two highest of the five available bands of performance. Less than one percent were located in the lowest group, Band 0. The then Director of Curriculum commented that "...these results are cause for great satisfaction" (Lynch, L., *Telegraph Mirror*, 7 August 1993: 7).

Over the 1989-1994 period of testing under the Basic Skills Test Program, the state-wide mean score shows a slight upward trend in literacy attainment. Ranked on a scale of 25-65 the average score of all Year 6 students who sat the test (a high percentage) was 1989: 48.5; 1990: 47.8; 1991: 48.9; 1992: 48.1; 1993: 48.3; and in 1994: 49. When grouped into skill bands these mean scores show a very positive literacy performance in NSW (NSW Department of School Education Basic Skills Testing Program).

In 1995 the test was phased out for Year 6 students and continued for Years 3 and 5, and by 1998, the results that received media attention were those for students whose outcomes had placed them in the lowest band of performance. In 1999, eleven percent of Year 3 students were in the lowest literacy band and ten percent in the lowest

numeracy band. Over 180,000 students were tested with girls outperforming boys and Aboriginal students still performing at significantly lower levels than non-Aboriginal students. And although comparison with previous years would not seem to confirm it, the Premier of New South Wales described the results as the 'best ever' (Baird, J., Skills test results best ever, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 September 1999: 4).

However, evidence from a reading comprehension survey by the Australian Council for Education Research as part of its Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth Program was far less sanguine. Reporting these findings *The Age* in a front page article stated: "A 20-year study of 14-year-olds has found that almost one-third have inadequate basic literacy skills" (Willox, I., One in Three Struggle to Read, *The Age*, 22 October 1996) while *The Australian*, also in a front page article, declared: "...one in three Year 9 students did not have basic literacy skills" (Jones, C. One in three Year 9 students lack literacy skills, *The Australian*, 22 October 1996).

The reading comprehension study surveyed 13,000 students in 1995 in all States and Territories and compared the results with a similar, though not identical, study of some 5,000 students in 1975, 1980 and 1989. It found a declining reading comprehension rate for boys compared with girls and only a miniscule improvement for students for whom English is a second language. Thirty percent of all students, thirty-five percent of all boys, twenty-seven percent of all girls and fifty-one percent of students from homes where English was not the main language spoken were considered not to have achieved a satisfactory result in reading comprehension tests (Williams, Clancy, Batten and Girling-Butcher 1980, Williams, Long, Carpenter and Hayden 1993a, and Williams et al 1993b, Kemp 1996). There is dispute however about the claims made for the survey's findings (Toohey, B., Reading and writing literacy test 'wrongs', *The Australian Financial Review*, 3 November 1996).

Results of two comprehensive surveys of literacy were reported in September 1997. *Aspects of Literacy* (ABS, 1997) is the report of a survey by the Australian Bureau of Statistics of over 13,000 Australians aged 15-74, eighty-seven percent of whom responded. In conducting this survey, Australia became part of the International Adult Literacy Survey coordinated by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and Statistics Canada.

There were two components to the survey, the first involved respondents rating their own skills and in the second, they completed a number of literacy/numeracy tasks (but not writing tasks). The tasks assessed prose literacy, document literacy and quantitative literacy, and were organised into five levels for analysis. At Level 1, people would experience considerable difficulty in using many of the printed materials encountered daily and at Level 5, respondents were seen to have very good literacy skills and could make high level inferences, use complex and process conditional information and calculate sequential multiple operations.

Results for each of the literacy types (prose, document and quantitative) were similar with nineteen percent of people having Level 1 or very poor skills, and seventeen percent having Level 4 or 5 skills. A number of socioeconomic groups performed less well than others, including people in rural areas, older people and participants from non-English speaking backgrounds. A greater level of educational attainment, generally,

indicated a higher level of literacy, and there are links between an individual's level of skill and their parents' educational level. The survey found literacy and numeracy skills inextricably linked to labour market outcomes with employment rates declining with lower literacy and numeracy skills.

Although the first comprehensive survey since Wickert's *No Single Measure*, the survey instrument and methodology were not received without criticism however, with the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL) pointing out that the survey dealt only with English and an international view of English at that. Further, since tasks were developed by Statistics Canada and Educational Testing Services Princeton, and drawn from those countries participating in the survey prior to Australia's involvement, characterisation of some of the everyday tasks may not have been consistent with the kinds of ways that these things are used and completed in Australia (ACAL View, www.acal.edu.au/acalview.html, January 1999).

The release of *Aspects of Literacy* was largely overshadowed by the publication, one week later, of the findings of the first *National Schools English Literacy Survey* (Masters and Forster, 1997). This survey assessed the progress of students in Years 3 and 5 from 379 government and non-government schools, in the domains of reading, writing, listening, speaking and viewing. The findings that received most publicity were that some seventy-two percent of students had reached an appropriate standard, whereas some thirty percent had not. The Federal Minister for Education implied that thirty percent of Australian students were illiterate and that the results were a 'national disgrace' (Kamler, B., Literacy Narratives of Crisis and Blame, *Literacy and Numeracy Studies*, 9(1), 1999).

Among a range of other findings, a wide range of literacy achievement was identified with the top ten percent and bottom ten percent of students working about five years apart. It was found that on average, boys are well behind girls, that there is a large gap between children from poorer families and children from wealthier families, and the performances of Indigenous students in remote and rural parts of the country are a major cause for concern.

The publicity surrounding the release of the findings prompted heated debate over a number of issues. The imposition on the survey data of a single cut off point to provide a 'clear performance standard', and who was involved in this process was widely questioned (for example Gill, M. Who set the benchmarks?, *English in Australia*, 121, 1998). Educationalists also discussed the levels at which the benchmarks had been set (Masters, G. Do we want high literacy standards?, *Australian Language Matters*, 5(4), 1997: 7) and more generally, the ways in which survey results could be seen to be used or misused for various purposes (Hodgens, J., The literacy crisis: Representations of literacy in the late 20th Century, *Fine Print*, 22(4), 1999: 3 and Cambourne, B., The Great Literacy Crisis Con and Other Political Assaults on Fairness, Equity and the Under Privileged, *Australian Language Matters*, 5(4), 1997: 7).

In June 2000, further findings from the International Adult Literacy Survey were released. *Literacy in the Information Age* (OECD, Paris, 2000) contrasted data from studies undertaken in OECD countries and highlighted the finding that in fourteen out of twenty countries surveyed, at least fifteen percent of all adults have literacy skills 'at

only the most rudimentary level, making it difficult for them to cope with the rising skills demands of the information age' (OECD, 2000: xiii). These countries included Australia, Canada, Switzerland, the United States and the United Kingdom. Some seventeen percent of Australians have poor literacy skills and operate at level 1 for prose literacy (the ability to read and understand texts such as newspapers, brochures and magazines). The report also highlights the link between low literacy skills and unemployment, with Australia among a number of countries where unemployment is twice as high among adults with low skills than adults with medium to high skills.

ACER is undertaking a seven-year longitudinal study of primary school students. The Longitudinal Literacy and Numeracy Study (LLANS) is following the literacy and numeracy development of students from 100 schools and commenced with a national sample of students who entered school in 1999. A major outcome of the study will be a set of scales showing typical development in literacy and numeracy from school entry to the end of primary school. Findings from this study will be published progressively; a report on findings from the first two years of the study will be available in 2001. (Stephanou, Meiers & Forster, *Constructing Scales for Reporting Growth in Numeracy: The ACER Longitudinal Literacy and Numeracy Study* in Proceedings, ACER Research Conference 2000, www.acer.edu.au and Meiers, M., A New Australian Longitudinal Literacy and Numeracy Survey, *Australian Language Matters*, 6 (4), 1997: 14.)

The completion of these studies has prompted valuable discussion over definitions of literacy, survey instruments, indicators and benchmarks, and as the annual tests for school students continue to be redesigned and adjusted, it is hoped that a base will be established against which future assessments of the outcomes from literacy education in school and post-school settings can be considered.

Evidence about the literacy capability of Australians is at best fragmentary; at worst contradictory; certainly contested. A large number of variables shape the answers to the question of the level of general literacy among Australians. The precise question asked, what definition of literacy is used, what is valued in literate practice and how literacy is construed and understood determine what is measured and how.

We can simultaneously assert with confidence that there is no *generalised literacy* crisis in Australia and state that there are *serious and consistent literacy performance problems* among some groups and many individuals.

It is overridingly the case, however, that Australians now require deeper, broader and higher literacy capabilities than at any time in the past. These two understandings frame the approach to the sort of literacy policy that we advocate.

1.3 Citizenship, social equity and competence

Australia has a solid record in many aspects of literacy education. For many years, Australian teachers, educational administrators, policy makers, and researchers have been among the world's leaders in addressing questions of literacy pedagogy. Australians purchase more books on a *per capita* basis and support more technical journals than most other nations. Australia has also produced more successful children's authors per head of population (indicating a highly literate children's culture) than most nations and every year tens of thousands of young people sufficiently literate to undertake university studies cannot be accommodated in higher education institutions because of quotas (Cambourne 1996).

While most Australians' literacy needs are well served by schools, universities and training institutions many Australians do not have their needs and aspirations met by current conventions of literacy education. Even high rates of success become harder to maintain as literacy itself comes increasingly to represent a constellation of related, but distinctive, manipulations of symbolic communications which have a relatively autonomous relationship with spoken language. This change *within the code*, as it were, coincides with the greater diversity of the users of English, the multilingualism of Australians and global economic and cultural integration as identified in previous sections, *i.e. changes external to the code.*

Moreover, some of the more recent results of assessments in schools and among adults of the literacy problems give no grounds for complacency in attending to literacy success for all students and adult Australians.

While it is essential that educational authorities seek to ensure that legitimate concerns about the foundational features of literacy – 'the old basics' of reading and writing – are addressed it is crucially important that these concerns do not obscure either the wider senses of literacy (outlined in Part II below) or the changing demands on literacy caused by advances in technology and changes in the economy and society. Reading and writing programs that combine and adapt the appropriate cultural resources of their communities with explicit attention to the *codes, modes,* and *meanings* evident in public literate exchange have the greatest potential to assist all Australians to become more fully and actively literate.

While the foundational features of literacy are essential for active literate performance and must be a central goal of schooling for all children on its own foundational literacy is an insufficient aim for national policy. Even so, *foundational* literacy is more than the 'old basics' with a new name. In addition to the 'old basics' the term foundational comprises reading comprehension, structuring and sequencing pieces of written language, making enabling and relevant inferences, a growing critical understanding of what is read or written, competence with computers, keyboards and a familiarity with multimedia texts.

No society aware of the deep and complex implications of international macro-economic transformation can accept that 'the old basics' can be sufficient. This transformation has produced a multi-polar world, one in which great centres of economic power residing in non-English, non-Western civilisations have joined Western English-speaking nations in global commercial and, increasingly, in cultural impact. This implies a vast and

inescapable cultural diversity in all parts of the globe as well as a rapid expansion in the production of new knowledge. This new knowledge is generated within fields of research and innovation that contain literacy conventions as access codes.

It is an imperative of Australian economic competitiveness that we also aim for high levels of a universal cultural and critically-aware literacy in addition to the foundational literacy capability for all. This imperative is reinforced by the traditions of participatory democracy, freedom of speech and assembly and a mixed economy which define Australia's unique place in the world and which derive from the liberal tradition of individual rights within communities unified by common political citizenship. Effective and democratic communication within this society requires shared literacy capabilities.

The literacy policy we put forward outlines the bases for re-emphasising and redefining 'the basics' in ways that aim to ensure the secure establishment and maintenance of *foundational* capabilities, but that also views them as only a foundation for the building of the literacy resources needed for effective communication in the present and as a preparation for the communication demands of the future.

These 'new foundations' of literacy are:

- the ability to understand increasingly complex language and literacy *codes*;
- the ability to use the multiple *modes* in which those codes are transmitted and put to use; and
- the capacity to understand and generate the richer and more elaborate *meanings* they convey.

The above represent the main headings for *foundational* of literacy.

By *codes* is meant the grapho-numeric designs that together make up messages: the inter-relationships among the varying conventions and formats of script, number, and diagram. These inter-relationships now entail multiple conventions and often multiple script systems, as well as computer-generated messages that offer many possible ways of reading, over and above left-to-right and word-by-word reading. From the static word on the page to the 'moving', multi-modal communication event, Australians need broad and flexible access to the diverse codes of modern literate communication.

Similarly, the book and the letter have been joined by multiple forms of communication, new *modes*, that often allow new forms of interaction with the originator of the message. Electronic mail is one of the more common forms of this, but so are the use of complex logos and signs in public spaces, along with the 'reading' of traditional and modern art forms and the media, both electronic and print (Kress 1995). The burgeoning growth of the internet and world wide web, which have generated original forms of writing with practices that would be considered inappropriate in more conventional forms, are the most evident instance of this development.

Finally, the expanding options for readers and writers presented by diverse *codes* and *modes* presents new options for making *meanings*, and places new demands on the contemporary reader and writer. A major aspect of those demands relates to interpreting messages with several possible meanings, built on diverse cultural assumptions, and thus calling for a repertoire of reading and writing capabilities, different adaptations to the task of becoming a fully participating 'reader and writer'.

Issues of citizenship and social equity are inextricably raised in connection with literacy. In encompassing these issues, however, policy must, at the same time, lead to practical action aimed at enhancing literacy capabilities and participation of all young people. A program of action will need to be based on approaches that are explicit, sound, and broadly understandable. Wholehearted educational effort aimed at the *codes*, *modes*, and *meanings* of literacy will be reinvigorated the more deeply the role of literacy in a cultural and economic future that is broadly skilled, equitable and pluralistic is recognised. One starting point for literacy policy in contemporary Australia, then, is that these efforts now take place in a world that requires more integrated, complex, and dynamic forms of communication, where literacy skills can be viewed as facilitating communication.

The languages of literacy in all societies are standardised and powerful, invoking cultural prestige but also, as a consequence of the imperative of standardisation, formal processes of codification, dissemination of the norms of codification (spelling, grammar, punctuation along with 'tolerance rules' for the violation of such norms). Personal and communal power and status derive from control of society's most powerful tools for handling knowledge. Differential access to these socially stratified and stratifying literate practices can exacerbate existing social inequalities; more equitable access can diminish them or ameliorate the depth of their effects. Foundational literacy provides for learners to acquire a repertoire of capabilities in literate practices which includes the socially and economically powerful and prestigious forms.

Indeed literacy itself, introduced into the language ecology of indigenous settings in the Pacific, including indigenous Australia, has had the effect of promoting transition from low to high information societies and to long term information storage. These deep cultural effects displace the face to face and immediate interaction required in oral societies and substitute these with more distanced and time separated modes of communication. These effects have often eroded the basis of indigenous languages, conceptually restructured communities' views of time, impacted on their sense of human agency versus structure as the causative forces in nature and in other ways deeply eroded the cultural basis for indigenous languages, often leading to a reduction in spoken language diversity and the extinction of many languages (Mühlhäusler 1996).

Spoken language diversity in Australia is nevertheless very great. It involves non-prestige forms of intergenerationally stable English, i.e., dialects of Australian English, other than the language linguists call Standard Australian English, and a very large number of distinct languages, many with complex, sophisticated and ancient literacy traditions. The use of family-inherited languages among young Australians is extremely variable.

Conceptualising literacy as a *repertoire of capabilities* appropriate to given contexts assists in reconciling the gap between popular forms of language which serve functions of identity and group solidarity on the one hand and the standardised and public norms which are required in formal settings such as schooling.

The responsibility entailed in public education in literacy relates to these two dimensions. The literacy practices and indeed the texts that are produced within the norms and conventions of the society's mandated literacy practices confirm some

groups' norms, style and practices, while marginalising others. It is important to acknowledge such issues; standardised written language is a cultural and political choice. Once it is made and affirmed, it follows that public authorities have an obligation to guarantee to all citizens equitable access to this instrument of power, knowledge and opportunity.

This is a protection for individuals against exploitation and manipulation as well as an issue of the richer and wider quality of life. The expansion of specialised and globalised knowledge in societies with detailed linguistic divisions of labour will probably ensure a persistent divide between the language of professions, trades, arts, and administration and governance on the one hand and popular usage on the other. Recent moves to Plain English might partly bridge the information and communication gulf that results, but there will remain a divide for reasons of disciplinary focus and specialist knowledge among professional and other groups.

In competition for jobs, status and information, the control of forms of language, both written and spoken, is an increasingly important determinant of success; leading to either participation or exclusion. Written representations of language closely reflect the particular cultural norms, practices and beliefs of some groups, and less closely reflect those of other groups. Some values are given salience and others are relegated to the background. Social equity requires that educators and policy makers frame literacy policy in ways that provide universal access to and competent use of the *codes, modes* and *meanings* of literate communication.

Both diversity and standardisation are deeply involved in Australia's capability to participate flexibly and take the lead in industrial and economic developments, domestically and internationally. Both are necessary for access to valued communication patterns within Australia.

Our view of literacy education is driven by a view of productive diversity, (Cope and Kalantzis 1997), i.e., making the pluralism of Australia's population work cohesively in the interests of the nation, on three fronts: the linguistic and cultural diversity of Australian students; the growing diversity of the *codes, modes* and *meanings* that literacy will call upon; and the rapidly expanding global connections for Australian culture and its economy.

What a National Policy on literacy should say 2

2.1 The policy context

Australia is unique among English speaking nations in its efforts to develop a comprehensive national policy on language (Romaine 1990: 8; Ozolins 1993). The first explicit language policy being issued in 1987.

Shaping national policy would be related policy initiatives in language and literacy, for example: *Towards Active Voice, Report of the Committee of Review of the Adult Migrant Education Program* (Campbell 1985), the *National Policy on Languages* (Lo Bianco 1987) and especially its Adult Literacy Action Campaign, initiatives which emerged from Australia's participation in International Year of Literacy 1990, *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (Dawkins 1991) and the *National Collaborative Adult English Language and Literacy Strategy.*

The *National Policy on Languages* and the *Australian Language and Literacy Policy* which succeeded it, in their different ways, comprehensively addressed language and literacy planning for Australia: English, Australian languages, Community and Foreign languages, interpreting and translating.

In developing new policies, governments need to acknowledge the on-going policy commitments to areas outside their direct brief for literacy. Any new policy framework must work in conjunction with the continuing importance of wider language questions and the on-going policy commitments to these. State and Territory and non-government and independent sector policies and initiatives are critically important as well. These are set out in chapter 6.

In addition there are collaborative policy initiatives. These have had a deep impact on language and literacy education. Especially important in adult education are the National Training Reform Agenda, the establishment of the National Training Board in 1990 and the Australian National Training Authority 1994 and, for school education, the national collaboration which emerged from the 1989 Hobart Declaration: *Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia,* which was issued by the then Australian Education Council.

From the Hobart Declaration collaboration on curriculum mapping and the writing of curriculum frameworks, the National Statement and Profiles, are especially important developments. These were developed between 1991 and 1993 and have since been

adapted and implemented in various ways according to the needs and priorities of education jurisdictions.

Eight Key Learning Area (KLA) curriculum Statements and Profiles provide a framework for curriculum development and for the enhancement of teaching and learning. In addition these encourage a 'common language' for reporting student achievement. Within each Process Strands identify 'ways of thinking and knowing' particular to the Key Learning Area while Content Strands establish the body of knowledge for each KLA. Progression in learning is represented through bands in which typical sequences are identified.

2.2 Purpose and scope

The development of new initiatives in literacy policy must be motivated by the legitimate interest of public authorities in the education of Australians for a future in which their society will be economically more competitive, culturally diverse and inter-dependent on its own internal resources and on other nations with an increasing need for more effective internal communication.

With respect to all levels of formal education the Commonwealth Government has an urgent stake in the extent and completeness of the literacy capabilities of Australians, and thus in the outcomes from and comprehensiveness of literacy education provision.

Inevitably literacy policy must also respond to concerns that standards of literacy attainment, in the broad sense set out in section 1.3 above, need to be raised, and moreover to the concern that there are predictable sections of the Australian community for whom there has been poor access to literacy achievement. The goals then are for *foundational literacy for all Australians,* i.e. a universal foundational success with literacy, as well as for *culturally rich literacy for all Australians.*

2.3 Definitions

The term *national* as we use it here has a particular meaning. The term is not synonymous with Commonwealth or Federal. Rather it refers to the Commonwealth and the States and Territories in partnership. The first partners in planning for literacy improvements are the educational and training jurisdictions which have primary carriage of schooling and training within Australia. The Commonwealth Government has a particular interest deriving from the close association of literacy competency with the economic efficiency, social justice, immigration and indigenous affairs responsibilities it uniquely carries, as well as the cultural and international consequences of literacy. Partnership is also shared with students, parents and employers who have a vital interest in the success and quality of literacy education. Finally, educational professionals (school, university and adult education teachers, trainers, teacher educators and researchers) are interested in the nature and efficacy of literacy education.

Literacy can be taken to mean the whole range of practices which surround and give effect to written language. Written language is the *grapho-numeric* representation of

sound symbols. Effective literacy draws on a repertoire of resources which allows learners to:

- to *break the code,* including what sounds are represented by what letters or groups of letters, what punctuation markers signify, and what the conventional graphic design and format of different texts signify, what graphic symbols represent in different technological texts;
- to *participate in the meanings* of text, including understanding and composing meaningful texts, using grammar conventionally to understand and build meaning, and knowing word meanings;
- to *use texts* functionally, including the different social functions of different kinds of texts and how these functions shape the ways texts are structured, their tone, degree of formality, and its sequence of components; and
- to *analyse texts critically,* including asking the questions, 'How is this text trying to influence me?', 'If I am reading it, how is positioning me with respect to the writer?' and 'If I am writing it, how am I positioning the reader with respect to me?', and, most generally, 'What does this do to me?' (Freebody and Luke, 1990).

The approach to literacy set out above acknowledges and distills research findings, reflection and the experience of teachers of literacy over the past half century in Australia. However it is crucial that we do not construe readers and writers merely as 'recipients' of texts, or generically established types of texts. Underlying all literacy theory in educational contexts must be an overriding concern for teaching and goal of active and informed democratic citizenship for all. Literacy is also for action and in the world, not merely receiving, however critically, its forms.

The framework of the four resources is seen in conjunction with the operation of literacy through the *codes*, *modes* and *meanings* (these ought to form the foundational literacy goal of national policy for literacy) and an educational aim of active and participating citizenry. This governing definition then, of a foundational literacy for all with new literacies that emerge from the codes, modes and meanings that require higher and broader public policy commitment to literacy is further developed in sections 2.4 to 2.5 below.

The term *policy* is used in two senses; the first is the more narrow program of action notion which must accompany any announced policy intention. The wider sense of the term *policy* is of a future-oriented elaboration of principles on which researchers, practitioners and policy makers may wish to include in their thinking and practice about literacy education. The immediate goal of literacy policy must be to bring about a more systematic and comprehensive literacy provision for all Australians.

The term *grammar* is often used in discussions of literacy teaching. One popular view of literacy problems is that grammar was once taught, that grammar has been abandoned, and that this is the cause of literacy problems that young people are experiencing. There are different notions and conceptions of grammar which are used by teachers and researchers to understand how language works.

There are at least three different conceptions of grammar: *traditional*, *formal* (after Noam Chomsky) and *functional* (derived from M.A.K. Halliday). Functional grammar addresses the linguistic system and structure in texts (spoken and written) and connects

these with the social purpose of the text. It is sometimes described as a social semiotics, or meaning system. Proponents of functional grammar claim that it is very useful in education and contrast its use with *progressivism*, an educational approach in which processes of immersion in rich language and literacy experiences largely substitutes for explicit teaching of the language (Gerot and Wignell 1994). Formal grammar is a system of language description undertaken by linguists which does not aim to be applied in educational contexts. Traditional grammar analyses parts of speech and describes the formal properties of language (Martin and Rothery, 1993).

When the term grammar is used in this document the meaning is specified.

2.4 Defining literacy

There are, similarly, many definitions of literacy (Harris and Hodges 1995). The Victorian Department of School Education's joint project with the Catholic Education Office of Victoria, expresses the dilemma which arises as:

> *"Definitions of literacy are notoriously difficult to compose. Literacy is a social construct, a complex idea that means different things to different cultural groups at different times. Therefore literacy is a relative term and dynamic. While literacy is popularly understood to denote the ability to read and write prose and other print texts, it is an integrated complex of language and thinking processes and skills, incorporating a range of habits, attitudes, interests and knowledge, serving a range of purposes in different contexts"* (DSE/CEOV 1994: 329).

Much energy has been expended on efforts to reach categorical and conclusive definition of literacy. Some scholars believe that "... agreement on a definition and thus on a measurement of literacy will never be reached ... " (Wickert 1992: 30).

Definitions of literacy typically range from skills-based conceptions of functional literacy through to very broad and all-encompassing definitions which integrate social and political empowerment. While definitions vary greatly it is necessary to develop some coherent understanding of literacy that reflects the many capabilities required to become a participating member of a literate society. It is important at the same time not to lose sight of the practical task that faces literacy educators and students.

Over the last thirty years, psychologists, linguists, educators, sociologists and others have all contributed to knowledge about literacy.

Definitions have differed on a number of dimensions:

- whether or not literacy refers to a set of *varied capabilities* or to a *single capability* that can be quantified (e.g., into 'levels of ability') in a straightforward and comprehensive way;
- whether or not literacy refers to capabilities distinct from other language-related activities; and
- the extent to which acquisition of certain 'basic' literacy capabilities is an insurance against all possible literacy problems.

Some prominent definitions of literacy include:

1. *(L)iteracy is a characteristic acquired by individuals in varying degrees from just above none to an indeterminate upper level. Some individuals are more literate or less literate than others, but it is really not possible to speak of literate and illiterate persons as two distinct categories.* (UNESCO 1957, cited in Oxenham 1980);
2. *A person is literate when he has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enable him to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group and community, and whose attainments in reading, writing and arithmetic make it possible for him to continue to use these skills towards his own and the community's development.* (UNESCO EWLP: cited in Oxenham 1980);
3. *The concepts 'functional literacy' and 'functional illiteracy' were introduced to distinguish the higher-order level of abilities that separates those who are barely able to read and write ('basic illiterates') from those who are able to use their skills to function fully in the workplace, the community, and at home ('functional literates)* (OECD 1992b: 18);
4. *Effective literacy is intrinsically purposeful, flexible and dynamic and involves the integration of speaking, listening and critical thinking with reading and writing* (Dawkins 1991: 5);
5. *The very notion of literacy has evolved; in addition to reading and writing and numeracy skills, people now also require technological and computer literacy, environmental literacy, and social competence. Educational institutions have a major role to play in preventing the social and economic exclusion, and cultural alienation, that can result from a lack of appropriate literacy skills.* (OECD 1996: 39).

In these definitions, literacy is portrayed variously as a quantifiable continuum of acquisitions, a set of unspecified knowledge and skill that enable 'developmental' community functioning, a hierarchy of abilities, and a mixture of language and cognitive 'integrations' in and around 'reading and writing'. The circularity built into some of these definitions is an indication of the difficulty of drawing boundaries around the things individuals and societies have come to be able to do with the technology of writing and the attitudes and knowledge associated with those activities.

Each definition gives literacy practices a distinctive part to play in personal, community, and national development. As an important instance, each has something slightly different to say about the possible positive economic and cultural gains to be had from enhanced literacy capabilities among citizens and workers. This relationship has been the object of much debate (Fuller, Edwards and Gorman 1987).

One of the main conclusions from those debates concerns the outcomes of different types of programs. The way that investment in literacy education provides a return, primarily, in enhanced economic productivity, and secondarily, to enhanced personal fulfilment and democracy in workplaces and communities, depends critically *on what type of literacy education has been provided.*

It is clear from the self-criticism of the outcomes of expensive literacy education programs, specifically the Experimental World Literacy Program (UNESCO 1976) that

narrow 'functional' approaches to literacy, which focus on the 'old basics' in isolation, or which try to give only minimal work-related competencies to workers, invariably fail. Functionality in the funded programs of EWLP was defined in such narrow ways as to make the programs of little relevance to the lives of the targeted learners.

On the one hand, the functional approach was solely linked to improving productivity in key sectors of the economy and targeted populations working in those sectors. On the other hand, programs sponsored by UNESCO or countries undergoing major social reform adopted a mass coverage approach, intended for everyone, with a clear message that wider quality of life would be improved through learning to read and write.

The frank conclusion from evaluations of these experiments is that the functional programs neither improved the well-being of the learners nor responded to their perceived needs. Work-place literacy programs, even those in developed economies, need to heed the results of these prior experiments in divorcing literacy from social and personal context (Limage, L., former UNESCO program manager, Paris, direct communication, October 28 1996).

The conclusion that can be drawn from the extensive and expensive involvement of international agencies in 'functional' literacy campaigns is that the effects of enhanced literacy education tend to be undermined when the 'functional' literacy capabilities need to be transferred into different contexts. What is critical to the transfer of acquired literacy capabilities is the precise kind of literacy that is afforded by a given educational program. This question is addressed in the following section.

Teaching of literacy

This section outlines, in a general way, some of the important ideas about the nature and effects of literacy that have been widespread in educational circles and that have therefore influenced much educational practice in Australia. It is not the intention of the document to provide a detailed or critical analysis of these schools of thought, but it is important to provide a summary of the theories and research on which each approach is based.

Initially some general background is given to the differences of opinion and practices evident among teachers, researchers and policy makers in the area of literacy education. Later sections focus the discussion on problems and opportunities facing educators at the three school-age levels and the post-compulsory and adult sectors that must be addressed in comprehensive literacy planning.

From this it follows that it is necessary to explore the collective knowledge and beliefs of literacy educators in order to develop some understanding of the relevance of each approach to the literacy demands that our current context poses. In this and following sections, we draw on the research and development work done by Australian literacy educators as documented in a number of recent research and development projects in the area of literacy education (especially, Breen, Louden, Barratt-Pugh, Rivilland, Rohl, Rhydwen, Lloyd, and Carr 1994; Christie 1990; Christie *et al*, 1991; Freebody, Ludwig and Gunn 1995; Wickert 1989; Freebody, Cumming, Falk and Muspratt 1993; Hammond, Wickert, Burns and Joyce 1993; Davison 1987; McKay and Scarino 1991, Comber 1994).

We also consider a number of recent inquiries into the state of literacy education (ALLC 1995; House of Representatives 1992).

These research papers and reports have been valuable in providing the analysis for the following summary.

Many contemporary theories of literacy stress the 'site-specificity' of literacy practices, and seriously question the idea that literacy is a single attribute or a single, specifiable set of criterial skills (Street 1994). Literacy practices that are developed in schooling contexts, therefore, amount necessarily to selections from available literacy practices. Furthermore, these selections are not accidental, but rather support the organisational needs of schooling. The question then becomes the extent to which the school-based capabilities that ensue are productive reflections of what Australians require as citizens and workers.

Teachers, curriculum writers, policy-makers and researchers have developed a range of categories for discussing ways of teaching literacy to young children. These approaches are not always in opposition nor are they categorically distinct. Some of the more prominent of these categories of pedagogy include:

- *literature-based learning:* In this approach the role of literature in literacy acquisition is emphasised. Its components are a rich engagement with good writing and personal engagement in text. Its effects are taken to be in motivating the development of capabilities, the learning and recall of story patterns and a close relationship between teacher and students. In these ways, literature is used to build a community of readers with strong motivation to read and write;
- *natural learning:* In this procedure, sometimes called holistic learning, there is an emphasis on the personal construction of meaning with skills being acquired, mostly naturalistically, within whole texts. This is a literacy gained in meaningful contexts rather than through explicit instruction and practice. There is often an effort to mirror the 'naturalness' of what is believed to pertain in children learning to speak and consequently immersion in literacy materials, along with self-monitoring by students, are favoured. Many adherents to natural learning do believe in 'modelling' what is to be learned and even in explicit teaching, but always in meaningful contexts. In its idealised position natural learning is conceived as building on the oral language proficiency and early literacy (emergent literacy) experiences that children are seen to have acquired before school;
- *experience-based learning:* The provision and recall of 'real world' experiences in and out of the classroom are seen as the basis for genuine motivation for learning and for developing the necessary mental scaffolding that facilitates learning. Topic learning drives literacy learning which is most beneficial when it is directly tied to first-hand experiences;
- *skills-based learning:* The emphasis here is on an analytic approach, breaking up the holism of reading and writing activities as they are experienced into certain teachable elements. These elements are conceived partly in terms of the components of the language system – letter-sounds, letter-clusters, syllables and so on. However, some forms of text approaches to skills-based learning emphasise explicit knowledge

of clause/sentence grammar, conventionalised components of different types of texts, and sequences of information in texts;

- *genre-based learning:* Proponents of genre-based learning deal with components and sequences of information in text. Genre approaches address the relationship between the social functions of particular texts (text-types), their structure, and the patterns of vocabulary and functional grammar that make the particular text effective for its social purpose;
- *critical literacy approaches:* These approaches emphasise the fact that being an effective reader and writer involves understanding and using the points of view expressed (and those silenced) in a text, and thinking critically about how the reader is led to accept or reject the assumptions in texts that support the positions of certain groups (related to gender, race, ideology, social class, religion, etc); and
- *cultural-practice based approaches:* This approach draws on the language and cultural patterns of the immediate surrounding community to develop texts and embed students' capabilities in the social routines as well as the appropriate language of the community.

Many literacy educators adopt 'eclectic' mixtures drawing on aspects of these approaches in their provision of literacy education for students in schools and in pre-service teacher education programs (Cairney 1995; Badger *et al* 1993; Christie *et al* 1991, Comber and Cormack 1995). It is crucially important for preservice teacher education and for on-going professional development to provide teachers with a pedagogical framework so that they can incorporate ideas from different theoretical perspectives in a principled manner.

Families of thought

It is helpful to analyse studies of literacy teachers' beliefs about the specifics of literacy's nature, purposes and effects. Studies of the teaching practices and preferences of literacy educators is also available for examination. These can be examined to identify the clusters which emerge and which are termed here: *families of thought*. This approach was adopted by the *Project of National Significance; Teaching English Literacy* (Christie *et al* 1991; following earlier work by Gilbert 1989) in its national survey of the views and practices of teacher educators working in the areas of English and literacy pre-service education. The families of thought are summarised as follows:

- *skills* approaches which emphasise the perceptual and technical procedures of decoding (for reading) and encoding (for writing);
- *growth and heritage* approaches which emphasise the private, personal, and individual ways in which people use reading and writing, and grow through reading and writing, and the significance of reading and writing as offering access to the valued literary heritage of a culture;
- *critical-cultural* approaches which emphasise the variability of everyday literacy practices from culture to culture and setting to setting, and the importance to everyday social experience of critically analysing literate communications for their underlying belief systems and their cultural consequences.

There are fundamental differences among these approaches in the definition of literacy, whether explicitly stated or implied. These differences concern what reading and writing basically are, not just about what they could or should be. These *families of thought* also differ with regard to the ways of knowing about social and educational practice. Further, these families of thought call on different kinds of support from either formal experimental or observational research, derive from or refer to different research disciplines and also differ in how the everyday experiences of educational practitioners are utilised and understood.

Psychological descriptions of human capabilities have strongly influenced the growth of literacy education. These descriptions emphasise mental processes to do with practice, perceptual accuracy and fluency, and they have become associated with direct, practice-based teaching strategies. Recently, this view has become associated with the idea of competencies, discrete, readily 'testable' aspects of literacy performance that some teachers and education and training systems have used as the bases for curriculum development.

Skills approaches have drawn heavily on psychological descriptions of human functioning, and have pointed to the need for beginning literacy learners to acquire, systematically and explicitly, the fundamental coding conventions of the written script (Byrne and Fielding-Barnsley 1989; Nicholson and Hill 1985). A related position extends the notion of explicit teaching to the complex psychological processes needed for successful reading and writing. Advocates of this position (Watson and Sinclair 1987) point to the relationship between literacy development and the increasing refinement and ramification of psychological processes, and for the importance of modelling these processes in teaching. Clay (1991) approaches literacy from developmental and cognitive psychology rather than a more behavioural paradigm.

Growth and Heritage approaches, on the other hand, have drawn on 'progressivist' ideas about childhood, schooling, and literacy which have been prominent in many countries over the last three decades. Advocates of this position (Cambourne 1992; Holdaway 1979) have stressed the need to provide 'natural', activity-based learning conditions similar to those believed to influence the early acquisition of speech. From the early 1970s until the mid- to late-1980s, the ideas underlying Growth and Heritage approaches were the mainstays of many teacher education programs and curricula generated by various education systems. Skills and Critical/Cultural approaches have to some extent arisen and gained currency precisely because of their criticisms of Growth and Heritage approaches. In particular these criticisms call for much more explicit teaching of literacy in various knowledge domains. Proponents of Skills and Critical/Cultural approaches often focus on the difficulties which face disadvantaged students; students who do not evidently meet the psychological, linguistic, social, or cultural expectations of established curricula and the organisation of regular schooling. Explicit teaching in the foundations of literacy has been extended from code-cracking at the word and letter level to whole texts in a functional-linguistic approach to reading and writing texts (Christie 1990; Martin 1985). This text-linguistic approach has led to curriculum and professional development programs that come under the heading of *Genre*, as exemplified by a section of the *Project of National Significance; Teaching English Literacy* (Christie et al 1991).

Finally, drawing on educational sociology, literacy educators have developed critical accounts of the contents of texts and their relevance to the ideological conditions in which they are produced and learned about in schools (Lankshear and Lawler 1987; Luke and Gilbert 1993). These approaches hold that much of what is learnt about public life, its organisation and the competing interests of various groups within society, is learned through literacy. It follows from this that from the beginning of their enculturation into reading and writing practices students need to understand increasingly systematic ways of critically analysing the often silent cultural assumptions on which texts are based. To the extent that these understandings are not explicitly addressed across school systems, the forms of citizenship made available through literacy education are not equally or randomly distributed by schools.

Each of these positions, with varying degrees of emphasis, has been actively promoted in Australia over recent decades, and each provides a distinctive view of the 'problem' of literacy and of its genesis while some address on-going learning in which acquired literacy is refined and honed further in particular domains. Each, furthermore, constitutes a theory about appropriate intervention to solve literacy problems. Consequently, there is persistent pressure on educators to adapt their practices for different learner groups, including the particular needs of second language learners, and to changing departmental positions and community expectations. As a result literacy teaching rarely amounts to pure forms of any of the three approaches, nor could it since the different perspectives focus on or emphasise different aspects of reading and writing processes or of the social and cultural practice of literacy.

Typically, teachers and teacher-educators hold combinations of ideas, with many explicitly characterising themselves as 'eclectic' or 'pragmatic' in their approach. This combination of perspectives is not unpredictable given the rapidly changing circumstances of literacy education in Australia in the last thirty years, the more heterogenous learner population that has become typical during the past three decades, and the visibility, hostility and complexity of the debates among the differing approaches. It is of course the case that these *families of thought* are not rigidly bounded, there are internal variations within family resemblances, and many literacy educators hold and apply combinations of ideas from the different families (Badger, Comber and Weeks 1993; Christie *et al* 1991).

A challenge to these families of thought comes in the Australian initiated New London Group with its radical reconceptualisation of literacy pedagogy via the Multiliteracies project. Basing its construct on the pervasive pluralism of contemporary society these ten Australian, US and British researchers and teachers have devised a pedagogy challenge based on three interlocking changing realities:

Domain	*Changing reality*	*Designing social futures*
Working lives	Fast capitalism/postFordism	Productive diversity
Public lives	Decline of Public Pluralism	Civic Pluralism
Private lives	Invasion of Private Space	Multilayered lifeworlds

A dynamic approach to meaning making is offered for schools in which learners are seen to have existing or already-learned designs for meaning which derive from family and cultural circumstances (which integrate visual, spatial, gestural and other modes of communication with traditional linguistic ones) which are applied in communicative processes known as designing. These designs become confirmed or rejected when successful communication occurs and so become newly available in changed form as a modification or elaboration of the original design.

Literate societies expect their citizens to function in each of the language domains centrally addressed by the *skills, growth and heritage* or *critical-cultural* families of thought. These domains are a necessary component of a curriculum and teaching program. Most debates in the field have consisted of the misleading claim that instructional attention to one domain of capability is *sufficient* for a literacy learning program.

Proponents of a particular *family of thought* have argued that attention to one or another of the necessary domains of knowledge addressed by it will ensure that the other domains 'automatically' will follow. It is sometimes assumed or stated that this will occur through implicit, indirect or incidental learning. In the light of the increasingly diverse textual *codes*, *modes* and *meanings* facing Australians in their literacy activities, a reliance on indirect learning of the significant domains of literacy capability is no longer acceptable or responsible.

Sufficient necessity

It follows that there is a need to define the specifications for teaching and the curriculum that will form the sufficient conditions for formal apprenticeship into a literate society. An acceptance of the necessary status of the domains (breaking the code, participating in the meanings of texts, using texts functionally and analysing them critically) for becoming literate leads to two significant questions about the comprehensiveness of current literacy curricula and teaching practices:

- Does any one of these domains come naturally or easily such that its learning can be left entirely to incidental, indirect or implicit processes?
- Does learning about these domains have some natural or inevitable developmental progression such that some domains can be left exclusively to instruction in later school years?

Current research and professional knowledge suggests that the answer to both questions is likely to be 'no', and that curriculum planners and teachers should therefore also devote instructional space to the explicit treatment of these domains at all levels of education adapted as required to meet the needs of different learner groups (e.g. indigenous Australians, other children from non-English speaking backgrounds, the hearing impaired, children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds) from preschool to post-compulsory education and training.

The need for explicit teaching in each of these domains means for effective literacy teaching there cannot be an 'anything goes' position. This comprehensive view of the capabilities required to take a full part in a literate society is able to incorporate the expanded view of the nature and significance of literacy in the new cultural and

economic conditions facing Australians. The issues raised are further elaborated in later sections of this document, as the early years, the middle years and later school years and the post-compulsory school sector are considered under separate headings.

The nature and importance of literacy

At this juncture some general conclusions about literacy's power and about the dimensions of literacy and its importance are warranted:

a) Literacy as coding and decoding

Literacy requires the coding of information in and out of written symbolic form: i.e. the de-coding and encoding of information in reading and writing. It also concerns resources for understanding the ways meanings are built in written and other texts, the varying functions of texts and analysing critically the cultural dimensions of texts.

b) Literacy as multi-modal

Literacy also refers to multiple ways in which meaning is built into a text. In this sense literacy is a complex communication system that involves changing practices and conventions in which written language interacts with the spoken, gestural, visual and other imagery, such that different areas of understanding are interwoven in creative and complex ways.

c) Literacy as plural

Like all communication, literacy is a plural activity, hence the increasing use of the term *literacies*, since literacy necessarily reflects the diversity of social, technological, cultural, linguistic and economic contexts of which it forms a part.

d) How readers and writers 'operate'

Readers and writers operate simultaneously at three levels. At the first level, *skilled practitioners* of the written forms of a language order intentions and retrieve them from the grapho-numeric symbols that cultures have created for their languages. A second level calls on *psychological* processes in which readers and writers interact with written text as individuals, especially during their development as learners. Finally, as part of *literate communities,* reading and writing operates within sociological domains in which diverse languages, social contexts and attitudes reshape what has been learned about literacy to produce a complex interaction of text-types, cultural evaluations of literacy and validated public and private uses of its various forms.

e) Societal functions of literacy

Society's functions are conducted, to different degrees, with and by written texts. These functions build on and create personal, social and work relationships, positioning readers and writers in particular relationships.

f) Texts as cultural products

Written texts are also cultural products and, as such, reflect the particular constellation of social, moral and political arrangements operating at any time and place, including disciplinary knowledge, common-sense understandings of the world and the purposes or intentions of individual writers and readers.

g) Literacy and identities

The identities – personal, national, economic, ethnic, political, and ideological – of citizens of literate nations are called upon and acted out through written texts, especially since one social function of writing and reading concerns the regulation and control of public knowledge, be it about health, law, trades, public safety, the economies of communities and the nation, or national culture.

h) Active literacy and public participation

In actively democratic societies such as Australia's, literacy is involved in processes of debate, contest and dissent as well as of consensus, collaboration and cooperation.

i) Literacy for international communication

In the rapidly globalising context of the latter part of the twentieth century literacy for Australians needs to also impart the kind of English that facilitates international communication, as well as in languages other than English to deepen and enrich such communication.

In the light of the important general characteristics of literacy provided above and the new cultural, economic and technological conditions that our current educational efforts confront, the discussion now turns to the role of schools and other educational institutions and authorities in meeting the literacy demands of the future.

2.5 Teaching cycles

It is acknowledged that education and training systems have definitive jurisdiction over the development of curriculum and the advocacy of particular teaching methods. In many systems this is the province of individual schools within frameworks set by school councils or other bodies. It is also the case that the process for formulating National Statements and Profiles for the Key Learning Areas has contributed to a much greater awareness among educators about the commonalities and differences across Australian education.

It is important to note that, regardless of curriculum requirements and guidelines for teaching, the efficacy of literacy education provision depends on the actual teaching methods which provide the opportunities for learning in classrooms, homes and workplaces. It is important, therefore, to examine current thinking on some of the specifications for adequate literacy teaching that arise from recent research, curriculum and professional development projects.

From within each of the *families of thought* about literacy learning, consideration has been give to the notion of a teaching cycle, at its simplest, a set of instructional phases that involve explication of the features of literacy that are to be learned, opportunities to practise and extend these features to new texts, audiences/purposes and topics, and a summary phase in which the new learning is reviewed and monitored. This cycle is endorsed, in a general sense, by advocates of *skills* approaches (Adams 1990; Andrews 1989, 1992), approaches (Boomer 1982; Holdaway 1979) and critical/cultural approaches (Derewianka 1991; Christie *et al* 1991). The International Multiliteracies Project proposes a teaching cycle which is broadly compatible, comprising situated

practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformed practice (New London Group 1996).

From these recent developments, a number of specifications of what counts as a blueprint for explicit teaching can be elaborated, again regardless of the specific teaching method preferred by school systems and individual teachers towards achieving an effective literacy teaching and learning cycle. The wider environment ought always to be one where learners are engaged in purposeful literacy events and activities.

- The clear presentation of new literacy learning, its use, value and practice.
- Clear pointers to the elements and understandings that make up and that will lead to accomplishing this new learning.
- The provision of examples and modelling of these elements and understandings, in meaningful and worthwhile contexts, that leads to the development of this new accomplishment.
- A series of meaningful tasks that apply the new literacy learning and lead to its development through practice in different settings.
- The monitoring of progress toward accomplishment by learners and by teachers.
- The correction of errors and modifications of approximations and appropriate feedback on these.
- The collective confirmation of successful accomplishment, and connections to previous and later elements to be learned.
- Opportunities to repeat the whole or part of the cycle again (adapted from Freiberg and Freebody 1995).

Teaching has many layers of activity and involves a complex set of events. In a successful teaching program, many interrelated and non-related explicit cycles will be taking place at one time, as well as meaningful and rich language/literacy immersion experiences. The specification of the elements of a cycle such as this does not lead to the advocacy of one teaching method over others, but rather is an attempt to answer the question of what might constitute the minimal structural expectations for the formal organisation of literacy learning. As with the discussion in previous sections on literacy, it is not denied that important incidental and indirect learning will take place in and out of formal learning sessions. What is emphasised here, however, is that students need to know explicitly about how classroom learning is organised so that they can take part in lessons actively and thus maximise their formal and informal learning opportunities. When skills are the explicit goal of the teaching meaningful contexts are still relevant, skills focussed on within whole texts and practised, but for purposes the learner can identify.

Australia's learners 3

3.1 Australian English speakers

English is the medium of the bulk of literacy education in Australia and most learners of literacy come to schooling as mono-lingual English speakers. For many literacy is synonymous with English.

Any policy for literacy ought to be clear about aiming to promote competence in the use of Australian English in particular. Axiomatic in this are the four broad language competencies: the ability to communicate freely in speaking and writing as well as full comprehension as readers and listeners. In developing such competence both school students and adults are supported by the use of Australian English in the wider community, in the media and in the general education system. This has the effect, subtle but powerful, of validating the use of Australian English as the target variety of English in literacy programs. It is also a critical stimulus to the promotion of Australian English for non-English speakers. Being able to speak and write like a 'local' and decode local idiom is a vital part of participation in the wider speech community. Regionally, Australian English is very homogenous across the country, though there are clear patterns of regional variation in the vocabulary. These are sufficiently marked to cause some confusion among learners of English (Bryant 1985: 55).

The emphasis on Australian English needs to be complemented, however, by the awareness that in communicating outside Australia, the local features may sometimes be a distraction. Australian is one of the smaller varieties of English in the world. A sophisticated literacy competence is called for in adapting one's variety of English in an international direction. There is therefore strategic reason for making connections with international English in the process of teaching the more advanced literacy skills, especially in writing. Fully literate students and citizens would thus be sensitised to the frontiers of Australian and international English, and be able to operate across them.

However, the national literacy endeavour takes as given the typically mixed levels of language performance in any literacy classroom. This variability relates to multiple factors of individual maturity, gender, as well as background educational experience.

Recent research into the writing performance of New South Wales high school students showed that both gender and type of school (city or country) had some bearing on the reliability of students' writing as measured by the typical expectations of schooling and

public use of the language (Style Council 1994-6). The same variability applies to reading and, possibly, to the less frequently assessed skills of listening and speaking. There is a dearth of research on the latter though adult speech and conversation data do indicate that spoken language output is highly variable in any context due to the influence of personal and institutional factors.

The lack of comparative information for students makes it more difficult to assess their speech competence appropriately. This is crucially important since spoken language competence and students' resources in speech underpin developing competence in the written mode of language, through managing larger units of discourse and in communicating arguments. Complementary development of speech and writing is thus part of the strategy for helping individuals at their point of entry into formal educatio and for advancing literacy achievements across the board.

English as a world language

English has evolved into a pluricentric language, a language with different but mutually intelligible centres each propagating national norms of correct usage (e.g., South African, Indian, Philipino, Australian, Singaporean, Nigerian).

English is becoming the principal *lingua franca* of the modern world; the *lingua mundi* (Jernudd 1992: 512). Accompanying its growth is the emergence of new 'ethnic' and national varieties of English; hybrids from its remarkable global expansion. These varieties are intergenerationally stable expansions of the older native 'Englishes' (British and American) and carry new and local attachments beyond the instrumental and communicative advantages that international English offers.

These 'new native' Englishes add an expanding circle of English users to the inner-circle of original English users (Kachru 1986; 1992). There are now two international scholarly journals, *World Englishes* and *English Today*, exclusively devoted to the analysis of English in its plural forms. There is, therefore, a multiculturalism *within* English, traditionally a combination of its originating sources within Europe and its diversity within the British Isles, but now vastly expanded by 'new native' varieties, and the older established American, Australian, New Zealand, South African and Canadian native varieties.

These national, social and even 'racial' variants of English are universally established, with such 'Englishes' reflecting the distinctive semantic and pragmatic features of the first languages and cultures of their users. Australia is richly endowed with such human linguistic resources among its population and one of the distinctive features of pluralism in public policy in this country has been to explore the interconnection between the characteristic diversity of the population and Australia's national interests.

In many Australian workplaces a dynamic, intercultural English is the lingua franca that speakers of different first languages use with each other. They bring to it pragmatic and communication norms from their first languages. The cultural expectations of communication in English often do not coincide for all its users. As the lingua franca among Australians who speak other languages dynamic forms of English are produced in Australia's workplaces and other settings where intercultural communication occurs. Native speakers are often in the minority in such communication situations and would

benefit by learning how different cultural groups communicate in English Clyne (1994:209).

Both within Australia and internationally English is therefore an interconnected matrix of spoken and written forms. It is important for intercultural communication within Australia and international intelligibility that learners gain an awareness of the variety within English and a knowledge of how to communicate with speakers of different English varieties. At the same time it is important that through public education all Australians are able to add to their repertoire of English the public and prestige forms of English through which citizenship participation, economic and cultural opportunity are enhanced.

3.2 Language diversity and English literacy

English as a second language, standard English as a second dialect

Often, and for some groups especially, spoken language has 'literate' characteristics, and written language draws heavily on general linguistic and social resources. All too frequently consideration of the early, middle and later years of schooling and the appropriate pedagogy for literacy presupposes that the learners are proficient speakers of English.

This is a problematic assumption in contemporary Australian education. The five presumed language learning years that much literacy education takes for granted is, in fact, for fifteen percent of all children in Australia, twenty percent in Victoria and almost twenty-five percent in the Northern Territory, in a language other than English, including Australian languages (Kipp, Clyne and Pauwels 1994: 25). For an unknown number it is in a stable dialect of English different from the one the speaker will encounter in school.

The deaf constitute a community with a distinctive culture and language. Among these are Auslan or Australian Sign Language, and other sign languages and communication systems. The intellectual development of such children requires bilingual and bicultural approaches so that English literacy is acquired in addition to, and not by replacing, the rich communicative system Australian deaf communities have generated.

Communicative interaction with adults results in the internalisation by children, by the age of five, on entering school, of the productive use of many features of the phonological, morphological, sign, semantic, syntactic and pragmatic rules of the mother tongue. This remarkable learning is a resource available to schooling in Australia to cultivate and value. Literacy education in the early years is invariably conceptualised (whichever *family of thought* the literacy program is based on) on the *given* of full control of spoken English by the child.

However, for ESL learners and for other language minorities, for whom a fully developed communicative medium can be equally justifiably assumed, this given is not at all given. Compounding this problem is the fact that a large minority of non-English speaking students commence schooling in Australia at ages older than five. Many have had interrupted schooling experiences and a 'diffuse' or insecure literacy in their mother tongue. For these students, literacy development needs are enduring and occur in both their first and their second languages for many years.

The last national comprehensive evaluations of ESL education in Australia are more than a decade old (Campbell and McMeniman 1985; Campbell *et al* 1984) but it is unlikely that the finding made there that the bulk of educational provision within Commonwealth and State ESL funding is for 'first phase' learners; those with minimal oral language proficiency, has changed dramatically. Since these reviews there has been growing evidence that ESL provision has lost ground, tempting one researcher to comment: " ... the nation's strategic response to the educational needs of its children from immigrant families is in significant trouble" (Cahill 1996: 89).

Many students experience 'second or third phase' English difficulties, in the middle and later years of their schooling. These difficulties are principally with decontextualised English, typically literacy activities, which are more common in the upper years. The by-then improved oral proficiency of these students may often mask their on-going need for ESL assistance. This 'disguised' English need warrants renewed examination after more than a decade since the Campbell reviews of the major administrative and language policy changes that have taken place. In her discussion of the difficulties which face ESL learners of English literacy, Wales (1990) identifies the following areas for intervention:

Reading: learning about the concept of print for those who are illiterate in the first language so that sound-symbol correspondences can be appreciated; gaining a symmetrical 'world knowledge' for children whose word meanings in the first language are culturally constrained; language-specific rhetorical organisation and syntax; hearing the written word, i.e., emulating the experience of English speaking children in listening to stories; and various language-oriented activities.

Writing: broadly the same *families of thought* which characterise literacy educational practices are encountered within ESL and are inflected for the particular needs of ESL learners although *growth and heritage* models may have less sway since ESL teachers are acutely aware of the *code* needs of the ESL student, consequently ESL practice tends to be more focussed on teaching *written* genres and language structure; there is also a strong advocacy of both intensive language focussed teaching combined with a language across the curriculum approach; textbook language teaching features prominently among ESL teachers who are usually aware that the technical discourse of post-primary subject areas is often forbiddingly excluding of ESL learners.

On the other hand it has often been observed that ESL background students gravitate to subject choices in which the language load of the subject is relatively less. Hence science and mathematics programs rather than literature or subject English are often selected in the upper years.

Specific areas of skills which Australian students from language backgrounds other than English develop and need to develop as they become more proficient in English in the school learning context have been fully documented in Australian research, curriculum development and proficiency assessment activities in recent years. The NLLIA ESL Bandscales (McKay *et al* 1993) and the ESL Scales (AECa 1994) provide detailed guidance to policy makers and teachers about intervention to support ESL learners. The intensity and type of ESL support which is required will alter in response to many variables including the educational background of the learner and the level of literate proficiency the ESL learner has in his/her first language.

Three general characterisations are possible however:

- direct ESL teaching in which English itself is the focus of learning. Direct ESL teaching may occur in intensive centres specially devoted to ESL, or as parallel English (English as subject) where ESL specialists teach ESL on the English line or as withdrawal programs where ESL follows an ESL program which is a discrete program not integrated with any subject in the regular curriculum;
- cooperative teaching which will involve various forms of joint teaching between content area teachers and ESL specialists, including integrated withdrawal in which ESL specialists offer a program linked with a regular subject but in a withdrawal setting, team teaching between subject area teachers and ESL specialists in the one class, and parallel teaching where the ESL specialist imparts the regular program along with ESL support but to a separated learning group;
- ESL-informed regular teaching, in various forms in which across-the-curriculum guidance, support and assistance is employed to ensure the special needs of ESL learners are attended to in the course of the delivery of an otherwise unaltered curriculum (McKay and Scarino 1991: 11).

For maximum effectiveness such approaches require whole-school commitment and support and to be bolstered by reinforcing policy statements at the level of educational jurisdiction. Extended and extensive ESL is called for rather than the subsuming of the English language needs of such children under the generic category of 'literacy'.

Bilingual literacy

The prevailing view about the effect of mother tongue maintenance on the acquisition of a second language has undergone radical revision in the last few decades. It is now very widely agreed, having been demonstrated and continually replicated in extensive international and Australian studies, that bilingualism is cognitively enriching, and that bilingual children outperform their monolingual peers, matched for socio-economic status and various measures of cognitive and intellectual ability (Liddicoat 1991).

Early twentieth century studies of the effect of bilingualism on cognitive performance were guilty of not tightly controlling for level of proficiency in the two languages and accordingly confounded important variables. More rigorous examination of the link between language and cognition in bilingualism, since pioneering work in Canada in the early 1960s, is virtually unanimous on the strong advantages that bilinguals exhibit over monolinguals in a large number of measures (Döpke, McNamara and Quinn 1991; Saunders 1991; Rado 1991).

A strong theoretical explanation that is widely accepted for this phenomenon is the 'linguistic interdependence hypothesis' (Cummins 2000). This posits that the abilities that underlie the use and interpretation of 'decontextualised' language, are common to both the languages of a bilingual. Invariably examples of such decontextualisation are drawn from literacy activities. Concepts and capabilities are not stored in the brain in a separate systems specific to the language in which they were initially acquired. Rather they underlie the language in which they were either acquired or through which they are ultimately realised and so sustain any number of languages. It is desirable for learners to achieve a high competence in the mother tongue, and the conceptual sophistication

this implies, to fully benefit from instruction in the second language. The crosslingual nature of such skills means that information gained in one language is, in most cases, transferred linguistically to the other languages of the bilingual learner.

It is of some concern then that bilingual ability is sometimes considered a deficit, a problem, or a handicap when it is in fact, invariably and impressively, a positive advantage, an intellectual and cultural resource. Indeed although it is certain that such bilingual intellectual benefits mostly accrue from high levels of competence of two languages, recent Australian research has identified some benefits that English speakers gain in their early literacy as they study a second language (Yelland, Pollard and Mercuri 1993). English speaking children in Melbourne primary schools studying Italian in limited duration programs were shown to have improved English word attack and word recognition skills after only one year's encounter with Italian. Far from impeding the acquisition of literacy in English it is clear that engagement with a second or additional language may provide learners with concrete cognitive and metalinguistic benefits. More research is needed however to explore whether such benefits apply when children are gaining literacy skills simultaneously in less closely related languages.

The evidence for commencing with an oral approach, or delaying the commencement of a second language to the middle years of a primary school program is mixed and ambivalent (Clyne, Jenkins, Chen, Tsokalidou and Wallner 1995). More extensive research involving a wider range of languages and teaching methods is warranted. Bilingual children are at least as creative in their reconstruction of the language input of their home environments as are monolingual children. They deal effectively with the richer, more diverse environment of mixed language and mixed script writing systems which they encounter (Baghban 1984; Janssen and Pauwels 1993).

The education of language minority children can involve any of the following 'ideal types' or some combination of these programs and objectives for programs:

- *sink or swim:* an approach characterised by neglect of the distinctive language learning needs of children from language backgrounds other than English. Some forms of what are called 'structured immersion' are essentially sink or swim since they share the fundamental view that ESL learners will acquire the academic and cognitive language required for participation in classroom activities incidentally, or by planned participation in classroom activities, but without any deliberate attention being paid to their distinctive English language needs, or their existing capacities in another language; submerging spoken English language needs under the generic heading of literacy would in effect result in a subtle but unmistakable sink or swim approach;
- *English as a second language:* ESL methodologies vary significantly along two extreme points of a continuum, at one level full withdrawal from regular classroom activities for intensive second language instruction, utilising a variety of methodologies, to full immersion in classrooms, but with language across the curriculum attention to the growing English learning needs of children so that all teachers attend to the English discourse dimensions of the particular subject matter being taught. ESL can accompany mother tongue maintenance programs of several types from teaching the spoken language as though it were a foreign language to any number of bilingual

approaches. Regrettably ESL support is often provided for beginning learners only whereas such support is warranted at key education transition points as well (e.g. primary to secondary transition and middle to senior secondary school) where students acquiring English as a second language are prone to fall back in their English development;

- *transitional bilingualism:* In programs with a transitional aim the first language is used for a strictly limited period to facilitate the acquisition by the learner of subject matter, transferring the full curriculum to English-only once a sufficient level of competence of English has been attained;
- *mono-literate bilingualism:* In programs with this kind of aim, whether explicit or implied, the learner is offered a program in which both languages are used as media of instruction but only one, the second or target language, typically English, is used to introduce literacy skills;
- *partial biliterate bilingualism:* This term describes programs in which both languages are used for all four macro-skills of language (reading, writing, listening and speaking), but in which academic subjects are divided so that the first language is reserved for 'cultural subjects' pertaining to the home-first language (arts, folklore, geography are typical examples), while the second language, English in Australia's case, is used exclusively for 'core curricula' subjects and technical domains of learning;
- *total biliterate bilingualism:* As the name implies, programs of this nature aim to achieve bilingualism by teaching in and through both languages across all areas of the curriculum and in all domains, usually operating a separation between them according to time allocations of various sorts (Hamers and Blanc 1989).

These program descriptions relate more closely to the needs of children who are acquiring English in Australian schools, whether these children are speakers of Australian indigenous languages or of immigrant-derived community languages. However, with appropriate adaptation, they also describe some 'ideal types' for deaf children many of whom have been denied the possibility of developing an intellectualised level of proficiency in a first language, Auslan, prior to commencing to learn English literacy.

For children of English mother tongue such programs are also potentially beneficial but are more likely to be referred to as second language immersion than bilingual education. Nevertheless the same cognitive, social and academic benefits which accrue to language minority children whose literate functioning is developed in two languages, is potentially available to English background children if they are able to achieve high levels of proficiency in the two languages at an early age.

In many Aboriginal languages for which writing systems acceptable to the community of users of the language have been devised similar issues arise. However it is often the case that literature production is an essential additional requirement of these languages. This is a necessary correlate of ensuring that children's initial literacy can be secured in the spoken language so that its connection to meaningful daily use can be perceived by the learner.

It must be an express goal of literacy planning to ensure that the distinctive needs of ESL

and 'public' English as a second dialect for immigrant and for indigenous children are adequately addressed in their own right and that the distinctive needs of deaf children in their acquisition of English literacy appropriately builds on their unique communications systems so that their cultural and linguistic repertoire is expanded.

Early bilingual literacy and non-roman script languages

Much of the research that has established that literacy skills gained in one language transfer to use in another language has been conducted with languages that use roman script, say Spanish and English. Orthographies for languages vary greatly however, and utilise different conceptual bases for rendering spoken language into written form (Coulmas 1989). The smallest of these differences are those within the various standardised forms of English, the spelling differences between, say, American and Australian Englishes.

Script differences may range from minor variations to romanised writing, such as the use of markers or different letters in German or Swedish, Spanish or Czech, to more substantial use of diacritics to mark intonational and other variation as in Vietnamese, to systems which are different from roman but still alphabetic (such as Cyrillic or Greek), to ideographs as used in Chinese or mixed syllabic and ideogram systems such as with Japanese. There are still other differences as well.

Two main questions arise. The first is whether children with emergent literacy in a non-roman script language, and with a growing awareness of the conventions and practices of such literacy (e.g. for routinised reading of the Koran with respectful deference) and with skilled knowledge of its conventions can readily transfer these skills to the appropriate equivalent conventions of English. The second question is whether skills from English literacy can readily transfer to these languages.

Further it is of considerable importance to examine the relationship between such systems as they evolve and the patterns of acquisition in English. Further questions relate to the complex literacy practices of some communities, in which children may well acquire more than one script in home and religious settings while they acquire English (Saxena 1994). The transfer of literacy skills between languages with radically different scripts is less clear than that between languages with similar scripts and further research is needed to examine the extent of the transfer and the processes the transfer employs. Nevertheless, recent Australian and Canadian research in progress offers encouragement that productive literate relationships will be uncovered. In well designed programs late immersion programs at junior secondary school level show promising early findings of positive effects on academic functioning, including familiarity with three scripts (Lorch, McNamara and Eisikovits 1992).

A program of research on the literacy resources within the Australian community ought to be initiated so that advice to schools and teachers may be soundly based.

3.3 Indigenous Australians

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are multilingual with a wide range of sophisticated discourses and genres in community languages as well as in distinctively Aboriginal forms of English. The forms of English spoken as a first language within Aboriginal communities differ greatly.

These various language influences have an important bearing on the language repertoire which students bring into the school literacy context, which needs to be recognised in curriculum development, programs of teacher preparation and school language policies. The grammatical structures, semantic fields and characteristics of community languages will inevitably have a considerable influence on the way in which teenagers and other community members speak and write English, as will the varieties of Aboriginal English in use.

Aboriginal English and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages structure meanings differently from the language linguists call SAE, standard Australian English, revealing semantic values closer to the source Aboriginal languages than to English. There are important regional variations however: for example, in the Northern Territory it appears that Aboriginal English is a marker of identity, and teenagers do not tend to identify with non-Aboriginal Australians speaking SAE, whereas in Western Australia, SAE appears to have higher status. Consequently, teachers need awareness of the total social and linguistic ecology of community life which greatly influences the nature of the resources and the attitudes which students bring to the formal learning of English, and the way they respond to the classroom teaching they are offered (Clayton, Barnett, Kemelfield and Mühlhäusler 1996, Wilson 1996)

The most important difference between Aboriginal English varieties and school English is that the former is a purely spoken language, the patterns of which are influenced by spoken Aboriginal languages, while the latter is both spoken and written, and its spoken mode is influenced by the written mode that has evolved. This is the key difference between the model of English to which the children are habitually exposed in the community and home, and the model of English in the classroom.

Aboriginal English tends to share, to some extent, patterns of wording and rhythm borrowed from the Aboriginal languages that are their speakers' mother tongues.

For effective literacy teaching for indigenous children, including urban children, there must be a clear understanding of the social and communicative functions of Aboriginal Englishes and pidgins, and their lexical and grammatical structures, in order that teachers understand that these language forms are a foundation on which to build in bridging to SAE rather than a source of interference into the learner's use of school English. Acknowledging the value of multilingualism and the many English dialects known by the children of Aboriginal communities, including a recognition of Aboriginal English and Kriols as languages in their own right, is a necessary part of such an approach.

English language development and literacy teaching also need to support intercultural understandings and indigenous multilingual identity.

In isolated Aboriginal communities classrooms are multilingual and multidialectal. While the language of instruction is SAE simultaneously the languages of classroom participation are Aboriginal English and community languages. The use of Aboriginal Englishes by students and Aboriginal teachers and education workers in such classrooms, reflects its use by family and respected community members as a vibrant, dynamic and powerful variety. Some community members, however, oppose their children using anything but SAE and families with SAE skills themselves often insist on its exclusive use (Clayton *et al* 1996).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities differ about how to achieve English language and literacy development in relation to the status and maintenance of the community language and Aboriginal Englishes and Kriols and there is divergence of views in relation to issues in bilingualism and bilingual education. Some communities are concerned that the only English acquired be SAE while others use an Aboriginal English as one of their community languages. Each case needs to be negotiated in its own context with the views of parents and elders needing to be sought and respected.

Literacy is a key issue in educational disadvantage pertaining to Aboriginal people however 'Western' models of literacy and education may be out of tune with crucial aspects of Aboriginal cultures, beliefs and values. Literacy education for Aboriginal peoples has a regrettable history cultural bias and deficit images, of remedial and inappropriate developmental approaches and assessment models in education resulting in damaging educational and social outcomes from schooling for indigenous people.

Moving away from deficit models involves embedding pluralism and diversity in all the structures of schooling, but also taking seriously the demands for academic achievement which parents are making. Thorough professional development opportunities and preservice for teachers in language and cross-cultural understandings and effective and trusting relationships between communities and schools are of critical importance for the attainment of English literacy. However it is important to guard against the potential intrusion of schooling into indigenous forms of education and socialisation, including through English literacy, as a 'normalising' force which may be incompatible with family and community values.

Community factors may impinge very strongly in literacy education for Aboriginal children and adults through correlation between school outcomes and school attendance patterns; mobility of family groups; community activities and kinship obligations.

Family and community health are also key factors in educational outcomes. Hearing and vision impairment have specific impact on literacy education; because of the reliance on the aural channel for language input and the role of verbalisation in transmitting knowledge. Social and education problems are most effectively tackled concurrently.

Mainly based in Central Queensland, but also with communities along the East coast, Australian South Sea Islanders, represent a category of Australians who share many of the characteristics of indigenous peoples but also of immigrant, or forcibly recruited populations, and for whom literacy in English is an enduring issue interwoven with identity, home language and wider social aspiration (Cox, Ramsden and Webb 1995).

Literacy education for Aboriginal people is particularly hampered by inadequate sensitivity and relevance to cultural differences.

> *" ... the most challenging issue of all is to ensure that education is available to all Aboriginal people in a manner that reinforces rather than suppresses their unique cultural identity ... a new approach can only succeed if the Aboriginal community is fully involved in determining the policies and programs that are intended to provide appropriate education for their community"*
> (Clayton et al vol. 3 citing Joint Policy Statement on Aboriginal Education 1993).

Changes in the world of work and technologies, even in remote communities, have profound impacts on the kinds of literacies Aboriginal people will encounter. Narrow skills-based models of literacy are highly inappropriate in an industrially and technologically advanced society. The kinds of literacies needed for active participation in complex post-industrial society match the growing complexity of social practice. This is as true for remote Aboriginal people and for Torres Strait Islanders, as it is for urban-dwelling non-Aboriginal people and for urban based indigenous learners. A command of the complex range of *codes*, *modes* and *meanings* of literacy is universally relevant. (Christie 1985; Drake 1994; Eades 1992, Harris 1990; Malcolm 1979, 1995, Wilson 1996)

3.4 Special needs

While 'disability', 'handicap' and 'impairment' are often used interchangeably, the World Health Organisation has defined these terms as follows:

impairment: this term refers to disturbances at the organ level, deriving from abnormalities in body structure,

disability arises as a result of impairments in terms of the functional performance and activity of the individual, these are disturbances at the person level; while

handicaps are the disadvantages experienced by the individual as a result of impairments and disabilities and reflect the interaction between the individual and the environment (Clunies-Ross 1991: 33).

Relatively few Australians have difficulty using print and other media to manage their learning and to conduct their post-school lives and to enjoy the experiences that print and those other media enable them to share. There are, however, some groups of Australians for whom the print medium is itself an obstacle. For these people the development of literacy skills appropriate to their individual capabilities has proved to be very difficult. We refer here to children who have relatively well defined disabilities (*disabilities* because they are often multiple).

These include children with hearing impairment or deafness (though we do not consider deafness *per se* a disability, simply in relation to the acquisition of English literacy), children who are blind or more mildly visually impaired, and children with 'post-sensory processing problems' (likely to be of neurological origin, though this is often difficult to demonstrate) who are often called the 'learning disabled' or sometimes 'dyslexic'. This last group warrants separate consideration from 'environmentally

induced' literacy problems. They are relatively small in numbers (some one to two percent of the population) and their problems are initially congenital in origin and specialised teaching skills are required to teach them.

It is important to stress that deaf Australians have a rich and full communicative repertoire that includes a full language, Australian Sign Language, and Auslan in its more colloquial form and that sign language is recognised as a significant and fundamental form of communication for deaf children (Katz 1995: 68). Deafness is also a culture in the way other community languages draw on and create a sustaining culture of shared meanings and experiences.

The only sense in which deafness is a disability is its impact on oral language development which precedes and sustains literacy in English. Spoken language and communication ability, the essential tools for learning in regular schools, are acquired through hearing. Because the deaf child misses some or all of the talk surrounding him/her, the effortless learning of the spoken language code is missed through lack of exposure to auditory satisfaction or reinforcement (Harper 1991: 92; Giorcelli 1991: 29).

Through such lack of exposure, deaf children can, for instance, be behind their hearing peers in English skills by the time they enter school and in fact often first learn English by learning to read; in contrast to hearing children who learn to read and write a language they are already using. A late start, in combination with an inability to hear language spoken around them often is the cause of deaf children falling farther and farther academically behind their hearing peers (Giorcelli 1991: 29).

Other children requiring special assistance with literacy are those with a specific learning disability, a 'hidden handicap' because it is not readily apparent, e.g., most people with a specific learning disability are of at least average intelligence but their disability is difficult to detect in 'normal' conversation.

One study has shown that at least ten per cent of the population have a specific reading disability with boys outnumbering girls in this regard by a ratio of four to one (Whiting 1991: 61). Because of the importance of effective reading in determining success in so many fields of endeavour some ten per cent of the population may be unable to reach their potential (Whiting 1991: 62).

Further research is needed for a definitive answer to what causes failure to read. What can be said is that the reasons for specific learning difficulties are varied and include an inability to comprehend the nature of the relationship between the written and the spoken word (how sounds are combined in spoken language to form words); visual problems that interfere with learning to read (e.g., the distortion of print which interferes with the ability to learn printed symbols); neurological factors such as difficulties in sequencing letters, numbers or ideas; dyslexia (impairment of the ability to visualise words) (Davis, R., Dyslectic unlocks mysteries to help others overcome disability, *The Canberra Times*, September 5 1996: 3); and attention deficit (impairment of the ability to attend) (Whiting 1991: 62-64).

While the concept of intellectual disability may be difficult to define through there being no clearly recognised symptoms which characterise it, nevertheless IQ test performance has tended to be the yardstick by which the existence and level of disability have been

determined and measured; and this in turn has led to a tendency to relate service provision more to a measured category of disability than to individuals' needs. Specifically, until relatively recently, little attempt was made in schools for students with moderate to severe ranges of intellectual disability to teach them to read, and even in schools for mildly intellectually disabled children, reading instruction was restricted to the teaching of survival reading (Clunies-Ross 1991: 34).

There is growing evidence to suggest that application of a Developmental Model, as opposed to Medical and Deficit Models of intellectual disability, is promoting positive learning outcomes for students with intellectual disabilities (Clunies-Ross 1991: 34, 35). Since the 1970s, for example, a number of studies of Down syndrome children have shown consistently positive gains in the early development of such children through implementation of early education programs with a behavioural approach to curriculum design and instruction and there are clear implications in the studies for teaching and the design of materials for language and literacy programs, viz the need to emphasise 'advancing language skills and facility towards achievement of community equivalent levels and conditions of functioning'(Clunies-Ross 1991: 37, 38, 39).

Studies of reading and Down syndrome children indicate that reading is a high priority for them in the development of spoken language and research reports indicate the use of a carefully-structured behavioural approach as being the most successful. In terms of reading and other children with intellectual disabilities, further studies are needed to determine whether reading can be used to facilitate their speech development. Overall though the value of reading in this regard should not be underestimated (Clunies-Ross 1991: 41).

Each of the groups mentioned above requires special assistance with literacy. The typical problems such learners experience are: problems in accessing literacy learning and the processing of literacy learning, or of expressing and using literacy skills, especially during the acquisition phase, which may be considerably extended for many such children. Problems in all areas need to be addressed in research programs and in regular and special educational practice.

Deaf learners of English literacy have particular problems in accessing literacy in English in ways that blind learners do not; visually impaired learners however have particular difficulties in accessing the materials of literacy in print and other written media. For these learners braille literacy is crucially necessary. Intellectually impaired learners may have no difficulties in sensorily accessing literacy learning but do have special problems in processing such learning and using literacy skills to assist them to order and take control of their lives.

Children with post-sensory processing problems have very great difficulty in either or both encoding and encoding literacy materials. Some children with physical impairments will be developing relatively normally in learning literacy skills, but, and this is especially true of severely cerebrally palsied learners, will encounter great difficulties in expressing and so using these skills.

For all these learners we expresses a strong commitment to the acquisition of appropriate and full communication forms along with English literacy.

3.5 Socio-economic disadvantage

Among its many functions two frame schooling's prime roles in contemporary Australia. It is simultaneously concerned with training excellence and uncovering merit but also with minimising inherited or prior-to-school inequalities among learners. The former may be thought of as the 'quality' agenda of schooling, the latter the 'equality' agenda of schooling (Connell, Johnston and White 1992).

'People in poverty' is a very heterogenous grouping. The extent to which material deprivation, (called different things: e.g., poverty, disadvantage, low socio-economic status, not well off and many others) intersects with schooling, and specifically here with the learning of literacy and language forms which may affect, negatively or positively, that condition of material deprivation, is a much disputed matter. Recent Australian research on literacy in and out of schools in urban communities of low socio-economic status has shown that :

> *" ... there were strong similarities between the expectations held by the parents in 'disadvantaged' and 'non-disadvantaged' communities for the schooling of their children -- the social skills, intellectual capabilities, knowledge bases, and dispositions that will stand their children in reasonable stead for life after school. What is striking is the contrast between the good will generally imputed to teachers by parents and the inadvertent ill-will generally attributed in educators' discourses to parents in 'disadvantaged' communities. ... people in poverty 'need' the institution of schooling to take for granted the substance and significance of their life experiences and aspirations, and to teach, without compromise or apology, the capabilities that they, as parents may not feel expert in imparting or even in effectively monitoring"*
>
> (Freebody et al 1995: 207).

This study reinforces many others, quoted extensively in it, that identify the collusion between material deprivation, poverty however named, the organisational and curricular life of schooling and especially the determinative role of literacy and talking, and the ways of talking about the interaction between these. This talking attributes agency, the capacity to impact and change the social and economic circumstances of the poor. The discourse of poverty and education expresses a disparity between many 'disadvantaged' parents' good will towards educational endeavours on their children's behalf and some educators' inadvertent ill-will. Some of the ways of talking about education and disadvantage lean towards construing it as an intractable problem that educational intervention over decades has failed to ameliorate.

One role of schools is acutely relevant in resolving such dilemmas. Schools' role as the primary conduit of, and dissemination agency for, the literate capabilities that powerful and opportunity-conferring social relations call on.

Schools are, at the same time, one of society's techniques for giving these socio-cultural relations the guise of naturalness and for making invisible their socially selective origins. In these circumstances the relation between pedagogical, curricular and material circumstances is crucial for the literacy outcomes of those whose 'disadvantaged' background locates them at the predicable end of the lack of success.

It is the practice of 'advantage' for some groups that must be the focus of redress. Those

students not well served by schooling do not have 'disadvantage' inhering in them. What they require are systematic efforts by all educational and training systems to build pedagogies of success, in which success is expected, talked about publicly, and resourced to ensure that it is attained.

To the extent that schooling reinforces the advantages of cultural similarity and consonance of some home practices with those of formal education they ought to impart, directly and explicitly, the reading and writing practices of power in society to learners for whom there is not a relatively seamless connection with the home.

This differential access to an advantaging literate capability as one of the principal justifications for advocating a foundational literacy for all. This must be the fundamental objective of all schools and all teachers in them. But schools and teachers have worn for decades a heavy mantle of social responsibility; to make Australians *Asia literate*, *socially literate*, *politically literate or literate as citizens*, *aesthetically literate*, *driver literate.* Many other literacies inhabit the language of claims upon schoolings' accountability and teachers' responsibilities.

Governments cannot reasonably declare connections between desired and actual outcomes without providing the means for their achievement. A foundational literacy capability underlies all other literacies society seeks and expects. It must be the paramount objective of literacy policy to contribute positively to ameliorating the correlation between socio-economic disadvantage and lack of access with powerful literacy.

The next chapter summarises some of the main lines of research and professional concern in the areas of early schooling, the middle years of school, and the later years. We are aware that the Schools Task Force of the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (June 1996) in its report Addressing Students' Literacy and Literacy Leaning Difficulties uses a slightly different system: early years: (to year 3), primary years (years 3-6), middle years (years 6-9) and the years 10-12. The brief issued to the writing team for this project uses only three levels. The terms early schooling, the middle years and the later years are therefore used in a broad and inclusive way so that typically occurring patterns of literacy teaching and learning can be described without a rigid normalisation that takes no account of individual differences. For early years we see a continuation from the preschool and home. After post-compulsory schooling we see a continuation into the world of further education, training and the world of work. In general terms the early years refers to school years to year 3/4, the middle years is from the years 4/5 to years 8/9 and the later years from 8/9 to the compulsory schooling ages. Post-compulsory schooling refers to the school years after 10/11 and to education and training programs which follow or accompany these school-based programs.

In each of these phases of schooling, the distinctive place of literacy is discussed, and the focus of a desirable national literacy policy is outlined briefly.

School literacy education 4

4.1 The early years

The early years of schooling perform the fundamental role of developing the motivation to read and write. This is best accomplished through the use of intrinsically interesting materials which are embedded in clearly-understood, purposeful and worthwhile literacy activities and in the before-school and outside of school experiences of children. Intrinsically interesting materials are likely to be culturally diverse, appropriate and locally selected.

Teachers attempt to capitalise on the active and well-developed oral language resources of young children in constructing literacy learning environments that are highly interactive and that present opportunities for collaborative learning. However for children whose oral language resources are in a language or dialect other than the style of school English the curriculum utilises additional attention is needed to oral language development in English. Ideally teachers draw on the home language and experiences of such children to develop oral and literacy skills in English.

All students are beginning to learn about how school functions. At the same time they are in a transition from a spoken to a spoken-and-literate repertoire of communication practices. This transition will have begun early in childhood when an emergent literacy can be identified. Becoming a student accelerates and sharpens the transition as students not only learn about the world around them but how language and literacy mediates understanding and representation of that world.

This transition phase entails:

- the growing comprehension by children of print conventions such as 'para-text' features: book format, the left-right print direction of English, the interaction of picture-text, character and narrator language. The stimuli for this growing comprehension is invariably diverse in the print saturated contexts of daily lives and homes and will encompass everyday texts such as food packaging labels, billboards, junk mail, computer texts, catalogues and for many students the conventions of print that are relevant to languages other than English. This 'growing comprehension' is not random but is available to children in socially stratified ways (Clay 1991; Snow and Ninio 1986; Baghban 1984);

- the increasing interaction of oral language orientations (what is meant, interactive, holistic, divergent, experience-elaborative, multi-dialectic, use-knowledge) with growing literate orientations (what is said, monologic, convergent, text-elaborative, standard dialectic, explicit knowledge) (Olson 1982);
- the important role of preschool literacy learning (Breen *et al* 1994; Cairney, Ruge, Buchanan, Lowe and Munsie 1995) and joint parent-child reading and writing sessions. 'Joint reading and writing' sessions are culturally specific practices, however, and not all children have access to them. In some cases the specific form of adult-child reading and writing differs significantly according to linguistic, religious and cultural variables, and takes place in languages other than English as well. School literacy in this and other ways is less diverse than the literacies of the community (Cairney, Lowe and Sproats 1994); and
- for children of non-English speaking background the transition phase ideally will include the important role of bilingual support personnel at school to enable successful transition to English literacy, so that bilingual children's home language is built upon and the child's growing cognitive capacities are transferred and expanded.

Before school

"Literacy is constructed by individuals and groups as part of everyday life" (Luke 1993: 4). Speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and drawing are active social practices which occur in a range of daily situations including preschool centres. Children in these settings learn what can be said or written, how these things can be stated, to whom and under what circumstances. In preschools such learning is offered through planned and clearly demonstrated experiences.

Preschool teachers who are aware of children's language experiences and the demands and expectations of schooling and who understand diversity and individual needs in the kinds of oral and literate competencies that children bring to preschools are in a very strong position to develop early literacy skills and enhance students' successful literacy learning in school settings. During these preschool years teachers offer a variety of curriculum experiences, including play, which support early literacy development.

The significance for language development of the preschool sector is therefore very great. Prior to commencing school, however, children experience and benefit differentially from preschool opportunities.

In its most general sense the preschool sector comprises kindergartens, child-care centres, creches, child-parent centres as well as preschools. Although in many ways the various preschool education experiences are formalised, they do not constitute an educational sector as such. Only in some states (e.g., in South Australia where the Department of Education and Children's Services formally incorporates the school and preschool sectors) is the continuum of learning which these preschool experiences represent constituted as an organisational and administrative whole.

The possibility of professional development and preservice education initiatives imparting a coherent, continuous and mutually reinforcing professionalism on behalf of early literacy acquisition is hampered to the extent that there is no organisational connection between the preschool and early years of school. This is a crucial transition

point where the articulation of philosophies and pedagogies is important but rarely achieved.

Many preschool children are enrolled in bilingual, or ethnic and culturally specific services. In South Australia, for example, ten preschools offered indigenous language programs in 1995: two in Pitjantjatjara, two in Adnyamathanha, four in Ngarrindjeri, one in Kaurna and one in Narungga (Lo Bianco 1995: 24).

Although preschool experiences have intrinsic value and purpose public policy for literacy cannot neglect the often decisive influence of school-preparation and familiarity that early childhood education offers and how unequal access to rich preschool learning opportunities exacerbates wider social and educational inequalities.

Family and school literacy

The relationship between family and school literacy is a major issue in the early school years. The value of family and community participation in literacy education has been well documented and found to be " ... of great value. Both formal and informal evaluation of existing programs have yielded evidence to support the belief that family and community literacy programs contribute to improved literacy outcomes for large numbers of children" (Cairney *et al* 1995, vol 1: 31; Kemp 1985 and 1987).

It is the experience of both researchers and educators that, apart from the obvious and broader differences in home background languages and English, there appears to be significant 'mismatch' between the language patterns used in some homes and those used and expected in schools.

Some research has reported that this mismatch is evident in the general language patterns used in both sites and their effects on the building of knowledge and relationships (Cairney *et al* 1995; Hasan 1987); other studies have focused on the actual procedural and content knowledge that parents, or other adult care-givers, need to have to assist students with school work in ways that are both accurate and appropriate to the routines and conventions of the classroom (e.g., Breen *et al* 1994); and still others have drawn attention to the organisation of learning routines and interactions and the differences found between home and school literacy learning (e.g., Freebody *et al* 1995).

In addition, research has found that many Australian parents (many from low socio-economic backgrounds or those from language and dialectal backgrounds different from the school's forms of English) have experienced frustration in assisting with homework and home reading sessions in English. There is often a mis-match because of unfamiliarity with the special ways of interacting and talking about reading and writing that are used in children's classrooms ('Miss Smith doesn't do it like that!'). This mis-match between home and school language and culture patterns has denied to such children the assistance other children benefit from and has had the effect of distancing some groups of parents from a more active participation in the wider educational effort which is beneficial to securing English literacy proficiency.

Along with the educational levels of parents, their economic circumstances, language and cultural and other 'mis-matches' between school and home routines and values impact directly on how readily students fit into classroom routines. Children's familiarity with the reading and writing practices that are given sanction in the school

is a critical early variable in their success with learning in the early years. Any capacity for children to attain such familiarity is influenced to a large degree by schools' capacities to utilise the linguistic and cultural resources that different groups of learners bring to the literacy classroom.

Early indicators of difficulty

This diversity of background conditions that are relevant to literacy learning presents serious challenges for teachers in the early school years. Most accounts of literacy in the school years rightly emphasise the significance of early acquisition of literacy. Often in such accounts literacy has been defined in narrow terms that focus on the *code-cracking* tasks presented to early learners (Stanovich 1986).

The problems experienced by many young (and older beginning) learners are made highly visible to teachers and parents on virtually a daily basis: problems in spelling, punctuation, sounding out of sounds and words, appropriate intonation in reading and grammar in writing and many others. Many of these 'problems' are part of the students' acquisition of literacy skills, errors as hypotheses the learner tries in implementing a growing literacy skill. Through intervention and practice these low level problems are transformed into fluent control of the underlying systems of literacy. Teachers' continual surveillance is both to allow developmental sequences to follow their course as well as to determine when to intervene for explicit instruction.

When such low level problems are in fact indicators of actual failure to learn they are often only a more obvious demonstration of school difficulties than the less visible signs of literacy problems, such as a failure to understand what is read, failure to structure or sequence written pieces, failure to make enabling or relevant inferences, or failure to nderstand critically what is read or written. An important problem arises here. The elatively high visibility of *code-cracking* is neither proof of their centrality nor an argument that they should form the exclusive core of the curriculum of the early years. Rather, it points to the necessary inclusion of systematic instruction in *code-cracking* in the early phases of learning as one important dimension of an early literacy curriculum.

Long after the code has been cracked, highly literate individuals may still exhibit signs of code problems, i.e. instances of mis-spelling or poor grammar. For early literacy cracking the code is more about understanding how the literacy system works than about the development of a permanent capability.

In summary, attention to spelling, punctuation, grammar in writing, and other *code-cracking,* is crucially important for all learners of English literacy, but must be provided alongside opportunities to engage meaningfully with the other resources which together constitute effective literacy.

The consequences of failure: The learning outcome

Schools rely heavily on reading and writing as the means of imparting knowledge. It follows that access to knowledge across the entire curriculum is obstructed to the extent that literacy capabilities are inadequate. Even when literacy capabilities are in fact adequate, in some abstract or general sense, they may be inappropriate to particular domains of knowledge. In important respects contemporary schooling is a process by

which students are inculcated into the literate ways of thinking and acting across disparate fields of knowledge and with patterns of literacy that are particular to those fields.

It is therefore a necessary priority for schooling to equip students to come to appreciate that accepted knowledge in modern societies is dependent on literacy for both its original development and its later transmission. Formalised 'ways of knowing' about the world; disciplines such as science, mathematics, history etc, are crucially dependent on reading and writing.

These disciplines could not exist in their current forms nor could they exert the influence they do in a purely oral culture.

This means that attending to the literacy development of all learners will demand long-term commitment and support, across all age ranges and all areas of the curriculum. Teaching which explicitly addresses language across all areas of the curriculum and therefore which requires a sustained commitment from the whole school is needed to achieve the acquisition of literacy capability.

However, as will be discussed later, disciplinary specialisations and the particular literacy practices these specialisations require, mean that we cannot assume that the 'foundational' aspects of literacy are quickly and

unproblematically able to be secured in the first years of school.

The consequences of failure: The cultural outcome

Considerable research evidence addresses the amount and range of reading and writing activities engaged in by those students who have developed what is considered to be effective versus inadequate education in the *codes*, *modes*, and *meanings* of literacy. The findings indicate that students who have developed effective literacy early in the school years have, by the end of their primary school education, read and written hundreds of thousands more words, across a vaster range of knowledge domains and genres than those with poorly developed capabilities.

This writing and reading represents no less than an accumulating familiarity with the cultural mores, values, practices and expectations of Australian society. This is an extraordinarily important finding since access to, and comfortable functioning in, the cultural systems of the society is a crucial determinant of the successful negotiation of its opportunities.

Essentially then, in the first eighteen months of formal schooling, young learners are already accommodating to, and developing differential competence in, the literate culture of which they are to form a part. This implication pertains most immediately to the learners' involvement with school knowledge more than to their acculturation into the school which is generally only indirectly facilitated.

Acculturation into the powerful, assumed and expected literate practices of society applies to all students. Students from home backgrounds other than the ones implied as the clientele of most Australian curricula are greatly dependent on the school to mediate access to and to deliver control over the cultural patterns of the wider society. Many of these cultural patterns are coded in language. It follows that control over the *register* of

powerful language use, both its spoken and literary forms, is a particular responsibility for schools in relation to children from minority or disadvantaged backgrounds.

The conventions of public exchange and debate, both within public institutions and within disciplinary specialisations, apply to all learners regardless of their home backgrounds. It is a clear part of the responsibility of schools, within and beyond the transmission of subject-specific knowledge, to equitably and effectively transmit control over and knowledge of the systems and practices of literacy validated by the wider national culture, to all learners.

A *foundational* approach to literacy however, acknowledges that the different linguistic and cultural resources of the learner are both a resource for the acquisition of the prestige and required forms of the curriculum but also that this background knowledge and skill ought to form part of a permanent repertoire that the school should cultivate in the intellectual and cultural interests of the individual child.

The consequences of failure: The motivational outcome

It has been frequently demonstrated that learners' sense of themselves as poor readers and writers has major implications for their engagement with educational activities.

Adult educators report that adults with a history of failure in their school years face a daunting task of overcoming their negative self-perception as readers and writers, and thus as learners. This negative definition of themselves as failures stands, independently of their *actual* capabilities, as an obstacle to their attempts to become more fully literate in their adult years (Cumming, Falk and Freebody 1992).

Such adults report consistently that a 'cascade' of motivational obstructions (Johnston 1985; Stanovich 1986) begins in the early years of schooling, and is acted out in a long-established pattern of avoidances and dependencies through the school years and into adulthood.

De-motivation becomes independent of the actual learning capabilities of some adults. This is one of the reasons why many adult literacy educators are reluctant to institute testing regimes, believing that further demonstrations of failure will serve only to exacerbate their students' negative motivation, regardless of any diagnostic value such testing may offer.

Vaccination: A flawed way to understand early literacy

Curriculum patterns and teaching attitudes reinforce these negative outcomes of early literacy failure and sometimes have the effect of entrenching them. A pedagogical sequence evident in most curricula, based on the notion that the *proper place* for explicit literacy education is the first two to three years of formal schooling, takes over.

Many educators hold the traditional and well-entrenched idea that for the majority of learners, at or about the fourth year of school, 'learning to read and write' becomes, and remains, 'reading and writing to learn'. After the first few years of school, the reading materials rapidly become more complex (in terms of their vocabulary, clause-grammar, and generic structure), lengthier, less conceptually concrete and familiar, and less supported by explanatory illustrations.

In this way the curriculum itself embodies a theory of literacy development. While this is indeed appropriate for many students, it is clearly disadvantageous for many others. The curriculum literally leaves the less capable, less appropriately-taught reader and writer behind, rapidly and comprehensively.

As a correlate, teachers' views and consequent teaching practices are often perceived to reflect and reinforce this 'abandonment'. Lessons and assessment activities increasingly assume students' ready working knowledge of the *codes*, *modes*, and *meanings* of school materials after the first few years of formal schooling. In addition, generally, the tempo, density and abstraction of the curriculum afford little time or place for what is regarded, understandably but inappropriately, as 'retrospective repair'.

Even where new literacy skills are to be learned (e.g. comparing and contrasting, new essay forms) they require extensive scaffolding by teachers. It is often assumed by content teachers, teachers of the subject areas, that imparting familiarity and control over these forms is being addressed, or should be addressed, within the subject English.

Supported by the increasing tempo and density of curricula as the school years progress, the views of many teachers of older students is that the responsibility for successful literacy acquisition, and thus for its failures, lies with the teachers of the younger grades. Even those teachers of the middle school years who believe that part of their job is literacy education, regardless of the subjects they teach, find it difficult to address literacy-related problems. This raises serious questions about the organisation of schools for maximal literacy learning and the pre- and in-service education teachers receive on the place of literacy learning in the curriculum (Christie *et al* 1991; ALLC 1995).

Many students from home backgrounds where languages other than English are spoken (among whom a large minority enter schools in Australia after the beginning of the school year or are enrolled below their chronological age or pre-migration ability level) need up to seven years to develop the academic literacy of their English mother-tongue peers (Cummins 1981; Collier 1995; McKay *et al* forthcoming). This loss of explicit literacy support can have a dramatic effect on their entire educational career.

It must be an explicit objective of literacy policy to respond to the needs of students who have not gained the literacy capability required for successful achievement of school outcomes by year four.

- First, literacy planning must aim to stimulate and support more effective literacy education in the early years of schooling; and
- Second, literacy policy and planning must strongly advocate that explicit literacy education is the province of all teachers, at all phases of the education and puts forward proposals for the enhanced and expanded preservice and professional development activities which will be required to achieve this goal.

How to teach reading and writing to young students, whatever their spoken language background or social and economic circumstances, is one of the most strongly contested and debated fields in education. Divergent positions, informed variously by direct experience, sometimes incompatible theories and philosophies of literacy and education, and long traditions of research in various disciplines, sustain coherent positions about literacy pedagogy.

Australian educators and literacy academics have long been at the international forefront of many of these debates. The great complexity of the practice of literacy education makes a diversity of approaches inevitable.

While it is not within the scope of this volume to try to 'settle' these debates, or to privilege one or other approach, it is both possible and indeed necessary to set out those areas of conclusive convergence in the research literature.

Broad generalisations about literacy pedagogy for the early years

In contrast to oral language the literacy *codes*, *modes* and *meanings* inherent in and given life by a culture are not a natural ecological evolution. These learned behaviours are the products of the selective traditions and relations within a particular society.

Even in oral language development there is substantial implicit and explicit enculturation of young members of a culture into its spoken language forms. It follows that knowledge of and facility in the literacy *codes*, *modes*, and *meanings* of a learner's society does not flow automatically from being born a member of that culture. As with other cultural practices, literacy practices are the result of the explicit and implicit experiences and presentations which parents, teachers and others undertake with students. In plural societies any assumption, however implicit, of literacy's acquisition is even more problematic.

One consequence of this belief that literacy is a *cultural accomplishment* is to reject any notion that literacy is achieved purely and simply through an immersion in naturalistic settings and activities of which literacy forms a part:

- students are best served by literacy learning experiences that make explicit the knowledge about the *codes*, *modes*, and *meanings* involved in becoming a reader and writer. When such explication becomes focused on only one or two of the sets of capabilities that need to be coordinated and learned by readers and writers, or when such explication becomes rigid and non-interactive, valuable literacy learning opportunities are lost, and literacy capabilities can become fragmented and partial. Similar consequences result when such explication is the sole pre-occupation of the literacy curriculum and is therefore 'abandoned' by the other parts of the curriculum and the teachers who are engaged in those parts of the curriculum;
- when some literacy capabilities are assumed to be acquired implicitly, automatically as part of other activities, literacy learning opportunities may be squandered and the outcomes may become distorted by the particularity of the experiences in which the learner is engaged rather than being more systematically addressed in a planned manner. This often occurs because the student has failed to pick up on the 'natural' processes of literacy acquisition. Even researchers and educators who focus on explicitness differ in the specific aspect of literacy to which they allocate most attention. Some have directed attention to the codes of literate language, in particular to the alphabetic code; others have paid most attention to the grammatical conventions of clauses and sentences; other researchers have mainly addressed the conventional structures of texts with various social functions these texts perform; others have addressed the sensitivity and clarity of responses to, and production of, literary writing; and finally some researchers who advocate explicitness in literacy

teaching have focussed on the critical analysis of reading materials;

- there is, however, a growing body of evidence that converges on the proposition that literacy education programs that rely *solely* on implicit, indirect, or discovery learning of literacy capabilities can have particularly negative effects on the progress of students whose cultural or linguistic knowledge and experiences do not closely match that of the teacher or that which is taken for granted in the curriculum; and
- there is wide agreement that students from language backgrounds other than English, whether indigenous or immigrant in origin, or who are speak a dialect of English other than that taken for granted in schooling, are best served by explicit teaching within a context of rich language experience involving bilingual and ESL or public/standard English support, in the context of regular classroom learning (McKay *et al* forthcoming; Clayton *et al*; Malcolm 1979).

Skills-based approaches to early literacy learning and teaching have long-standing support from many years of research. As long ago as 1967, for example, Chall reviewed the available research literature on skills-emphasis versus meaning-emphasis at the word level in early reading programs and concluded that the research *strongly and consistently favoured* the skills-emphasis in the early stages of literacy education, even though she conceded that teachers often had mixed orientations rather than pure or strong forms of either. Since that time, many studies have supported Chall's conclusions: Adams (1990), having reviewed more than 600 studies of early reading success and failure, itemised the following among her general conclusions:

- *"Letter recognition skills are strong predictors of reading success. It is not simply the accuracy with which children can name letters that gives them an advantage in learning to read, it is their basic familiarity with the letters;*
- *Learning to recognise and discriminate the shapes of letters is a difficult process requiring support and encouragement. Ideally, letter knowledge should be well established before children reach first grade ...*
- *Approaches in which systematic code instruction is included along with the reading of meaningful connected text result in superior reading achievement overall, for both low-readiness and better prepared students ...*
- *Programs for all children, good and poor readers alike, should strive to maintain an appropriate balance between phonics activities and the reading and appreciation of informative and engaging texts ..."* (Adams 1990: 123-128)

The consequences of preferring a skills-emphasis versus a meaning-emphasis in early instruction on different groups of school-children have been hotly debated. Stahl and Miller (1989), for example, reviewed many studies of early literacy learning and showed that skills-based, explicit instructional programs offer more opportunity for groups of students who are not traditionally well-served by schooling, particular language minority and low socio-economic groups, and that meaning-based programs can systematically disadvantage such children in school.

At the same time a rich meaning-based environment, both oral and written, is needed as a context for effective language and skills development for these children. Children from home backgrounds in which languages other than English, or varieties of English other

than the prestige form given sanction in the school, need to develop an oral English language base, one which is appropriate and adequate for the regular curriculum, to support this literacy skills base. Australian teachers, as noted in section 2.4.1, rarely use teaching methods that exclude techniques, ideas and systems that might be suitable for particular children or which are more suited to some aspect of literacy.

Even so, some caution is needed in interpreting the above results. Learners not traditionally well served by schooling are often those whose cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds are not consonant with the prevailing cultural mores and linguistic routines of schools, occasionally these background variables are even stigmatised, usually implicitly, sometimes overtly, by schools. An emphasis on meaning, in preference to isolated skills, in early instruction necessarily draws on the cultural mores and background with which the learners are able to participate and 'make meaning'. Skills approaches may be less culturally-laden and this could account for the apparently enhanced opportunities provided for disadvantaged learners with such approaches.

Optimally, skills development for all children should be an explicit and priority objective but one that is delivered richly embedded within meaningful pedagogies.

Necessity and sufficiency: Criteria for program evaluation

It is important to view these large-scale studies in the light of an assessment about necessity-and-sufficiency. The research shows unequivocally that explicit instruction is necessary for all students and most dramatically for students with experiences, understandings and skills which do not equip them well for the formal academic demands of school. However, this most emphatically does not lead to the conclusion that such learning is *sufficient* for a comprehensive early literacy program.

Central to achieving the goals of equitable and comprehensive literacy policy is the view that explicit literacy education is the province of all teachers, at all phases of the educational enterprise. This claim is based on an awareness that :

- early literacy education is not at all like a *vaccination*, offering protection against later problems. Rather literacy involves the on-going accomplishment of practices that require continual revisiting and expanding and for which whole-school and across-the curriculum approaches are needed; and
- appropriate achievement in contemporary learning settings, in and out of school, is built on continually-developing capabilities in communication. A central aspect of such communication entails reading and writing. For language minority children this means communication in English as well as support in the mother tongue wherever possible. Ideally learners ought to be able to continue the conceptual and general cognitive development which will have been initiated in the mother-tongue whilst they acquire English and as a prelude to academic English literacy.

For these propositions to be effectively implemented, individual teachers, and the school systems in which they work, need to be able to provide opportunities for on-going literacy development. Problems that may arise in acquiring and sustaining the literacy capabilities aimed for in the early school years, and in facing the literacy demands presented progressively through the middle school years, must not be relegated to the 'remedial margins'. It is both much more expensive and ultimately less successful overall

that systemic attention to literacy and language development occur across the curriculum and by all teachers. Such opportunities for on-going literacy development must recognise, however, that children learn differently, at different rates and in different ways influenced by their previous experiences of school literacy and other language, cultural and social factors as well as personal or individual characteristics.

Continual attention to children's growing literacy is therefore a responsibility shared by all teachers. Drawing on specialist input it is essential to reinforce and make literacy more effective in the early years. This specialist input will often involve one of the following categories: teachers of English as a second language; teachers trained in the special needs of learners such as those indigenous students who speak a dialect of Australian English and are therefore learning public English as a second dialect; teachers of languages other than English, and other support teachers for the schools' learner groups, such as children who are sensorily, physically, emotionally or intellectually disabled. sensorily, physically, emotionally or intellectually disabled. For many students bilingual support is highly beneficial so that their general learning can continue while they acquire English, otherwise their academic conceptual growth is slowed, or even suspended, until they have sufficient English to continue in regular curriculum provision.

It is a crucial ingredient of the success of literacy planning that systematic and non-stigmatised literacy support across the school years be encouraged. This will require focussed professional development for subject area teachers, support for cooperative and team teaching and support for and commitment to whole-school planning that makes the achievement of improved literacy a shared and paramount goal of schooling. It has been well documented in many countries that the cost of later 'remediation' of early school failure, alongside the consequences of inadequate literacy capabilities in the workplace, together present too urgent a social and economic problem to remain in the 'margins of apology' in schools.

These arguments are not new to teachers, nor do they constitute a criticism of teachers' commitments to effective literacy education provision. Rather, it is a matter of meeting the challenge of achieving higher literacy standards for all learners in the more complex literacy environment that Australian society is entering, thereby overcoming the personal and social-economic cost of failure for those students who do not achieve adequate and appropriate literacy capability.

Current infrastructure arrangements in schools, the priorities they represent, and their organisational over-reliance, in many cases, on a view of the relationship between knowledge and learning development on the one hand, and age on the other may need reform. Aiming to engage all teachers in the goal of universal foundational literacy and a wider and deeper active literacy for all requires a high level of cross-curriculum and whole-school commitment to literacy education, drawing in the specialist expertise of literacy educators and other specialist professionals.

Planning for foundational literacy for all learners in the early years is a responsibility of the whole school and school-wide planning must receive the support and encouragement of education and training systems since literacy's domain is cross-curricular and cross-sectoral.

4.2 The middle years

Introduction

There is no natural or universally accepted administrative category for the middle years of schooling. The term is used here to refer mainly to the upper years of primary school but also to the early years of junior secondary schooling. Although in most ways these middle years are an elaboration and intensification of the pattern well-established in the early years, some distinctive modalities begin to operate in the middle years.

In general the middle years are characterised by:

i) the relatively rapid separation of areas of knowledge into school subjects. which make distinctive reading and writing demands and constitute, more or less, distinctive reading and writing domains;

ii) the widespread assumption on which the secondary school years tend to operate that students can call upon literacy capabilities that are sufficiently well developed and adaptable to cope with increasing, and increasingly distinctive, demands.

The latter belief is found in all educational endeavours. This is despite the well recognised existence of literacy practices that are specific to school subjects. The knowledge transmitted by a particular subject, the acquisition of its content, requires some attention, whether explicitly or through immersion, to the language and literacy practices utilised by that subject. Some part of any new content learning involves acquiring the language and literacy conventions in which that content is codified and through which it is transmitted.

Domains of school knowledge

Each subject, through the discipline/s and traditions on which it rests, presents an orientation to knowledge using particular written, spoken, and symbolic forms. For instance the reading and writing to be done with high school science texts contrasts with the reading and writing of high school English texts, trade manuals, or primary school 'stories' or legal documents.

These differences do not simply consist of differences in specialist terminology, nor even he differe t format of written materials used by different school subjects. There are also g and systematic differences in the functions that written texts serve for different subjects, differences in their authorised and approved ways of presenting, explaining and debating information and its implications. Other differences relate to the particular grammatical features that these varying functions and conventions require for their realisation. Finall there are important differences in the ways that the non-verbal accompaniments to lan uage, such as numerical, graphical and pictorial representations of information, need to be used and integratedin to the processes of understanding and learning.

Early schooling can help to develop understanding of these impo rtant differences, but there are features of these understandings that can only be fully dealt with in the larger framework of teaching activities that constitute learning the knowledge that is specific to the particular subject. It is in this manner that subject area specialists ought to become

partners with literacy and the other language/bilingual/dialect and disability trained teachers in attending to the language and literacy aspects of the subject matter that they are imparting.

As an example of the significance of literacy practices in secondary school subjects, Wignell, Martin and Eggins (1987) studied the language features of geography textbooks (Eggins, Wignell and Martin 1987 provide similarly compelling examples from history texts and Martin 1979 from science texts).

The language of geography is distinctive in some important ways and these particular language forms help to build the knowledge base of the subject. The general purpose of *geography language* is as a disciplinary code primarily functioning to describe, order and explain the observed world. This quite explicit purpose of *geography language* generates and requires *specialist language strategies* to provide:

- *taxonomies* in which the physical objects of the world are placed in categorical relations to one another;
- *classifications* in which technical nomenclature is applied to these objects with the aim of creating groupings and distinctions;
- *orderings* in which these technical, often abstract terms can be used to relate classifications to one another;
- *explanations* where, using these orderings, classifications and taxonomies, explanations can be given about how the world is built and how it got that way.

Learning these language-based tasks does not simply grow from familiarity with the 'old basics' of spelling, decoding and traditional or sentence grammar. These are literacy capabilities that need to be tackled as tasks in themselves. Gaining control of geography entails learning how to use language appropriately to accomplish these textual tasks in the conventionalised way that competent geographical functioning demands. A learner uses geography's language requirements purposefully to acquire geographical knowledge, and ultimately, full proficiency is required to become a geographer. A students must not only learn to read like a geographer but also to use *geography language* and conventions to write like one.

These language and literacy demands are an integral part of subjects and hence central to learning that subject. Jargon is not simply an obstacle to learning. Rather, the subject-specific language and literacy demands actually constitute a significant part of the business of learning the subject geography, reflecting its particular ways of building knowledge and presenting and explaining that knowledge. "...Translating jargon into common sense is an important social responsibility of all scientists ... (but) ... scientists simply cannot do their jobs without technical discourse" (Martin, 1990: 86).

Technical discourse is both compact, and therefore efficient, and has the added function of coding an 'alternative reality to common sense'. Science organises the world into *things* and *processes*: the *things* draw on *classification* and *composition* and these depend heavily on *diagramming* to represent taxonomical and other classified or compositional relationships; whereas processes are either *classification* or *decomposing*. Science education tends to pattern instructional sequences so that 'scientific method', via inductive reasoning and experimentation, dominate the early and middle years with the

presentation of accumulated knowledge left till later in education.

The dependence on process and experimentation, sometimes called 'inquiry', mirror other curricular areas of the middle years. The results of students' inquiries are typically recounted in reports, explanations and experiments with less use of other genres such as biography and expositional writing. Though the latter are far less frequently encountered in textbooks some educational systems do permit and even encourage a wide array of writing in science, including narratives.

Learning how to integrate non-verbal materials into the comprehension of texts (such as numerical and pictorial representations of information) is a major literacy task for students in the middle years of schooling. These complex tasks require that students gain control of these information-management problems (Morris and Stewart-Dore 1984; Morris 1989). Science literacy, for example, differs radically from common sense and its effective teaching depends not simply on a focus on *field* (science knowledge) but on *genre* (the global patterns of text organisation that package this knowledge) (Martin 1990:113). The stress on *doing* practical science can be inefficient, creating an imbalance with the presentation of accumulated knowledge and the control of the technical and writing realisations required for science literacy.

Many students in the middle years of school need to read and write texts in which language, number and diagram are thoroughly intermixed and in which the meanings conveyed by the texts depend critically on students' abilities to work simultaneously with each of these symbol systems. The wider availability of multi-modal and multi-directional computer texts intensifies this need resulting in a required *technological literacy*.

Technological literacy is both a research tool in the acquisition of knowledge in subjects as well as a distinctive mode of literacy with particular codes and meanings attaching to it. The wider availability of multi-modal texts, especially those which make use of 'hypertext' features, create a need to support students to 'navigate' in a multi-directional manner through texts that are not arranged in linear order. 'Reading' becomes a form of composition as information is arranged and assembled by the user in original ways.

These literacies goes well beyond any traditional conception of the 'old basics', but are nonetheless *foundational*. It is the acquisition of these levels and layers of growing literacy that constitutes literacy success in middle school.

Motivated by this awareness is Elkins' (1989) summary of literacy performance in the middle school years:

> *'The challenge for the 1990s is to build literacy in students at all age levels, not just the lower primary school; in all students, not just those who have literacy inclination and talent; and in all curriculum areas, not just in English' (1989: 304)*

Although there are common foundations for the literacy practices developed in early school years and those called upon in the middle and later school years there are many important differences. Successful long term literacy planning will aim to secure acquisition not only of the common elements in literacy education (these certainly require attention) but also to pay due attention to the particular literacies that different subjects and domains of knowledge require.

Such an approach to literacy, which mirrors the effective management of the *codes*, *modes*, and *meanings* called for in contemporary societies, locates literacy policy at the heart of educational efforts, regardless of the nominated domain or discipline of interest. Further, such an approach locates all teachers at the forefront of literacy education.

Many teachers, however, require additional training and operate in institutional and curricular circumstances that do not allow them to tackle literacy systematically and effectively. Some need specialist training; this is particularly true of those who will be teaching indigenous students and students who are acquiring English as an additional language as well as other groups of learners with special language and literacy needs.

Capabilities across the curriculum

The preceding section argued that literacy education applies across the curriculum. The focus of much of research and debate on this question has centred around identifying and specifying those literacy characteristics that enable learners to decode, as the means of access to the knowledge embodied in all school subjects. While this attention has been warranted, it is now widely appreciated that school subjects present *on-going literacy demands*. Numerous research studies have shown that the organisation of information in subject-specific texts presents particular problems to readers and writers in the middle school years (Meyer 1985). An important survey of a large number of research projects conducted with middle-years' students examined these concerns (Beach and Appleman 1984). These studies examined many of the obstacles that students with literacy problems face and how these might be overcome. Among the conclusions were:

- across the primary and secondary school years, students improve in their ability to organise information according to the elements of story structures;
- by the beginning of secondary schooling clear differences emerge between students whose literacy is well developed and those for whom it is not; these clear differences are in students' responses to various forms of literature and expository reading materials;
- an explicit knowledge of literary and expository text patterns is significantly associated with students' abilities to pay attention to important aspects of texts and with their ability to recall those aspects and use them in later work; and
- the evidence suggests that, rather than an overall 'textual competence', students acquire competences at differing rates in differing genres of reading and writing; that is, students vary, depending on the specifics of how they have been taught, in their knowledge and use of the textual conventions of different types of texts (Beach and Appleman 1984).

An important overall conclusion from these studies is that literacy cannot be said to be secured, once and for all, and for all areas of knowledge, by attention to code-breaking capabilities alone in the early years of schooling. The research and the accumulated experiences of many educators leads to a crucial conclusion: in the middle years of school, all students require clear and direct guidance with a variety of the disciplinary contents needed for the rapidly changing literacy demands that face them.

In addition, the middle school years are characterised by the beginning of 'speculations' about future work intentions. Many students begin to form general ideas of the type of

work to which they may be suited. Influencing these 'speculations' are their interests, areas of capability, and apparent levels of success which they have experienced in school. Research conducted into adolescents' aspirations indicates that these influences occur at different rates and with differing degrees of confidence and stability for different individuals. A student's capabilities in managing the literacy demands of various aspects of the curriculum is one of the more significant factors setting the limits of those speculations and thereby influencing their future life trajectories and contributions as citizens.

The cumulative damage to individual lives and the community's collective civil, cultural, and economic well-being caused by on-going literacy difficulties is often disguised in the middle years of schooling by assessment and reporting in the terms of the individual school subjects (e.g., 'failure in science'), by modular year-based curricula, in which the pre-conditions for the subsequent year's work are not always clear, and by a general reluctance, or inability, to withhold promotion to the higher grade from students whose literacy capabilities may not be up to the standard required by that year's curriculum.

The notion of autonomous school subjects, each a domain in and of itself, can be counterproductive to coherent literacy education efforts.

To be effective literacy efforts must extend across all school subjects. In the middle years this problem is sometimes compounded by the practice of automatic progression through the school grades. In many cases this 'benevolence' is misplaced. Students usually know if they have literacy problems and are known by their teachers and fellow students to have literacy problems. Their participation in many classroom activities is hampered and the special treatment they receive is most commonly known to be a form of curricular exclusion. Usually stigma also attaches to not staying with their age-cohort. Is it in the best educational interests of students that their chronological age always takes precedence over their progression through the school curriculum at the tempo that curriculum requires? Chronological age relates only in the loosest way to physical, social and mental development. Problems arising from the stigma of repeating or receiving 'special' literacy provision are a consequence of the rigid normalising of age-grade progression. A more productive literacy policy for schools ought to tackle the deeply entrenched associated dilemmas and consequences of benevolent, but sometimes misguided, progression and promotion policies in the middle years. Together these result in a second-phase 'abandonment' for students for whom conventional literacy education efforts have not been adequate.

For students who are acquiring English as a second language this is a vexed and problematical issue. It is of vital importance that academic performance influenced by a growing English competence not be misdiagnosed as 'not performing at the expected level' according to mother tongue English expectations. ESL students may have high levels of content knowledge and literacy in their first language. For such reasons it is essential for all teachers to have core elements of their preservice training and on-going professional development which address the relation between language, learning and bilingualism.

Considerations of the extent of children's content knowledge and first language literacy must therefore be included in decisions about progression. Students from language

backgrounds other than English ought not be prevented from age-related progression and promotion solely on the basis of English language and literacy skills, rather they ought to receive specialist language support to assist their acquisition of English as they continue to learn academic content at an age-appropriate level.

Middle years' literacy: Conclusions

The major conclusions from these considerations of literacy learning in the middle-school years are now assembled together and related to the purposes of proposing what literacy policy which is likely to be effective will include:

- a separation of knowledge domains occurs in the middle school years;
- these domains bring with them distinctively new literacy demands that call on all foundational literacy resources: breaking the codes of texts, participating in the building of meaning in texts, understanding and controlling the varying functions of texts, and critically analysing their cultural content (section 2.3) ;
- in this regard, school systems need to anticipate the impact on literacy demands of the transition from primary to secondary schooling. To this end, programs involving collaboration between primary and secondary school teachers need to be developed more explicitly and as a greater priority than is now generally recognised (Cairney *et al* 1994).
- educators should not confuse capabilities in school subject areas with literacy capabilities;
- an explicit understanding of the ways in which texts work in various subject areas can enhance reading, writing and general learning;
- schools should provide literacy support as a routine aspect of daily classroom life, regardless of the school subject area;
- schools should also aim to provide routine, cross-grade additional support for literacy development, across the curriculum and explicitly supporting each curriculum area;
- as with the early years of schooling, the responsibility for literacy development across the middle years is a responsibility shared by the entire school staff;
- the specificity, uniformity and portability of middle-school literacy practices assumes greater importance when it is recognised that more Australian students are now geographically mobile than in the past. The turnover of students, and the possible disruption to sequenced learning patterns, places particular demands on teachers in the middle school years to organise cumulative sequences of literacy-learning experiences;
- with the cultural and linguistic diversity of the clientele of schools increasing, teachers cannot be as secure as they may once have been about the similarities of the language, literacy and cultural experiences of their students or of the proximity of those experiences to their own or to the more homogenously conceived 'clientele' of the school; and
- schools should supply ESL support for learners whose linguistic and conceptual development has commenced in a language other than English; and students who speak a variety of English which is different from the prestige form used in and

through the curriculum should also receive support for the acquisition of the formal registers of English in such a way that acknowledges the social and cultural validity of the home forms but seeks to widen the learner's repertoire; such support needs to be provided routinely for learners at beginning levels and, most importantly, at key school transition points as a routine aspect of regular classroom practice, and finally that the growing literate competence of those students in languages other than English programs ought to be integrated into a mutually supportive underlying literate capability; and finally the particular needs of learners with sensory, physical and intellectual disability for non-prejudicial diagnostic assessment and for literacy teaching require appropriate preservice and professional development support.

4.3. The later years and the post-schooling sector

The later years

Schooling needs to provide students with a wide and flexible set of understandings about the multiple *codes*, *modes*, and *meanings* of literacy. These understandings need to form a platform that is as transferable as possible to new settings, disciplines of study and work, and text types, but that all of these literate capabilities need to be revisited and redeveloped as textual and functional demands multiply and become more specialised through the schooling years. These demands come into prominence in the later years.

Mikulecky (1981) and Mikulecky and Ehlinger (1986) have compared the literacy demands of people in three sites: the high school, the technical school (similar to TAFE) and three kinds of workplaces, which they called professional, middle-level, and blue collar. They found that the range of texts and the range of activities that needed to be executed with, and by, those texts is much greater in workplaces than in both kinds of schools. Schools were found to demand generally longer pieces of sustained reading and writing, with their purposes more narrow and tightly bound to assessment demands within the school, than was the case in workplaces.

With respect to reading, Mikulecky concluded:

> *"Students spent less time reading in school than workers did on the job... middle-level workers (clerical/sales/service) encountered a wider variety of reading material which they read more competently and to greater depth (than students) ... workers ... saw reading as more important to their success and did considerably more reading for application than did students" (1981: 417-8).*

Literacy teaching in the later years of schooling may encompass a wide variety of literacy activities, from strictly 'school literacy' in increasingly abstracted contexts to literacy activities which approximate with various workplace contexts. Even within a securely established academic English program there is great variation. For example, English is compulsory in some but not all Year 12 programs across Australia, and what constitutes the subject English varies greatly although it would ordinarily be the only opportunity for attending to literacy development at this level. In addition the cohort group is very different since there are many 'reluctant' students whose retention at school is often a consequence of restricted labor market alternatives.

There are also transitional cases in the later years where schools offer *job-shadow* and work experience programs which involve engagement with employment-related literate practices. In the case of actual out-of-school literacy practices, the degree and nature of the use of written text is a feature that can vary greatly from site to site and job to job.

Academic school literacy, and later tertiary literacy, are characterised by growing subject abstraction and 'de-contextualisation'. School subjects, ranked along an internal hierarchy, generate highly specialised literacy demands whose characteristics represent an intensification of the literacy demands identified in sections 4.2.2 to 4.2.4 above. The National Statements and Profiles recognise this as the examples from the English, Mathematics and the Arts statements demonstrate:

> *"There are different types of literacy which teachers in all areas of learning share a responsibility for teaching. At the primary level, the classroom teacher has the opportunity to develop literacy skills across the curriculum. At the secondary level, reading and writing of the specialised language and texts in each area of learning must be taught by the subject teacher" (AEC 1994b: 4).*
>
> *"The process of developing and building up mathematical knowledge through describing, questioning, arguing, predicting and justifying almost always requires a sharing of ideas. ... Mathematical communication skills are needed in order to understand, assess and convey ideas and arguments which involve mathematical concepts, or are presented in mathematical forms." (AEC 1994c: 13)*
>
> *"Arts experiences should promote verbal language and literacy skills ... Students describe, analyse, interpret and judge arts works and acquire artistic vocabulary that enables them to take part in artistic practice and in the discourse of arts criticism, arts history and aesthetic judgement" (AEC 1994d: 9).*

Such literacy across the curriculum is as possible in the later years of secondary schooling as it is in the organisationally smoother context of the early years (Kelsall 1996).

The nationally coordinated approaches to curriculum of recent years afford an opportunity to raise the profile of literacy teaching across all Key Learning Areas, years 1-12. Apart from English and Languages other than English the remaining Key Learning Areas of the curriculum, as set out in the statements and profiles, do not " ... take specific responsibility for the acquisition and development of students' ability to speak, listen, read, view and write" (Campagna-Wildash 1994, cited in Stewart-Dore 1996: 11).

In her analysis of these Key Learning Areas Stewart-Dore (pp 12-18) groups them as follows:

Group 1: KLA statements (Arts, Studies of Society and the Environment, Health and Physical Education) *refer explicitly* to verbal and non-verbal forms of literacy both as a goal of study and as a means of supporting other learning;

Group 2: KLA statements (Science and Mathematics) which *imply* that literacy that literacy is a means of representing and communicating information; and

Group 3: the Technology statement which simply dedicates a Content Strand to *Information.*

The Writing Based Literacy Assessment (WBLA) administered by the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia consists of a portfolio of work which requires teachers to address the literacy demands of their subject area is a nationally significant initiative for making explicit literacy demands in the academic curriculum where these demands often go

unacknowledged. This is a potentially significant achievement in the light of the perceived need for literacy benchmarking to extend into secondary school levels. Dilena and van Kraayenoord's (1996) study of literacy evaluation and reporting found that the WBLA had led to an appreciable increase in the focus on literacy in secondary schools in South Australia.

However, everyday or 'functional literacy' is also of growing relevance for the later years; in discussing this it is useful to consider the distinctions drawn by Heap (1987); explored through the use of an example involving a purchaser of a new type of machinery: a new photocopier, word-processor, oven, jack-hammer, or machine of any type. The manufacturer has provided an instruction manual accompanied by an abbreviated summary set of instructions. There are many buttons on the machine with accompanying symbols and icons. The machine being replaced is of little guidance since it was of a different type.

There are at least three general approaches to making the machine operational:

Option 1: Text-grounded functioning

The purchaser or consumer studies the abbreviated summary set of instructions. They learn about the buttons, but do not know how to perform one critical step in the procedures for use. The table of contents in the manual provides information which locates the section relating to the critical step. The instructions contained in the manual are sufficient to perform that step and the machine works.

Option 2: Text-aided functioning:

The purchaser or consumer studies an abbreviated summary set of instructions. They learn about the buttons, but do not know how to perform one critical step in the procedures for use. The table of contents in the Manual does not make it clear which section is relevant. There is a section that has some ambiguous drawings showing two ways of performing the critical step. On the basis of what the consumer knows about the old machine, they select one of the ways, and press one of the icon buttons. It does not work. They choose the other way and try again, successfully this time.

This is a case of Mikulecky's 'job literacy' practices, moving back and forth from the 'problem' to the text, knowing that the text contains both more than and less than is needed to know for the particular problem at hand. To solve the problem it is necessary to know the text-machine relation.

Option 3: Text-omitted functioning

The purchaser approaches the machine, and on the basis of their (faulty) knowledge of the old machine, tries (wrongly) to make it work. Just as they are about to perform the incorrect procedure a colleague passes by, corrects their efforts; and obliges by pushing the correct button. This results in immediate success.

There are circumstances and occasions in which any of these three ways of functioning is the most rational, functional, or efficient way to behave, even though, in most classrooms in which literacy is an explicit goal of the educational program, including for literacy assessment, only option one counts.

> *'Thus the problem with definitions of literacy, with classroom materials and interactive practices, and with assessment procedures is that they tend to assume that writing and, in this case reading, are the most and only rational effective means for everyday life when written or writing materials are available' (Heap 1987: 13).*

To that extent, it is important to deal with the point that many classrooms and assessments do not reflect the everyday practical reasoning in which literacy practices are embedded in most sites except school. This is a particularly significant point when the importance that has recently been placed on enhanced literacy competencies in the 'restructured workplace' is considered, especially in relation to the cross-crediting of vocational courses in school programs.

With respect to the example above, one of the critical questions for later schooling is: Is the person who reads and understands the whole manual, and, three days later, attempts to recall all of the instructions, more or less functionally literate than the person who engages in text-aided functioning? The case of text-aided functioning shows how the task and the machine are themselves defined within certain social relations. In the particular workplace at hand: Can you ask for help? Whom would you ask? Will there be a problem if you ask?

The implications for assessing literacy in the later school years, particularly with respect to the transferring of capabilities into post-school settings are considerable. Heap (1987) outlined some aspects of mis-matches between the real task ecology and the test item. Some tasks and their putative test have a *thick*, or close, match, but most test items constitute *thin* simulations of actual tasks. This applies particularly in the case of adult literacy tests because generally these tests lay claim to a close relationship to the out-of-test context – civil, community, academic, or vocational.

This raises the issue of the necessarily embedded nature of managing literacy tasks, including in school. In the processes of assessment, each simulation entails the presentation of the institutional needs of the school or the training institution, partly by presenting an institutionalised set of literacy practices as if they were the essential or basic ones, as well as by presenting the curriculum's movement through these practices as the description of a developmental progression.

The overall question about literacy here is to what extent do the tasks and judgments made about literacy in the later school years allow some confidence that students will be prepared for some work other than school work.

The point does not apply only to lower-achieving students. In many professions that require high levels of tertiary qualifications, commentators and researchers report the need for improved literacy practices. For example, Del Mar, Lowe, Adkins and Arnold (1996) reported that doctors' handwriting and other aspects of their record-keeping following consultations needed urgent improvement:

> *"The quality of the doctors' records fell short of the standards within the discipline.*

> *General practitioners appeared to be most remiss in features that may be important in making best use of records, that is finding information readily. This validates the impression many general practitioners offered us during the recruitment phase that their records were sub-standard" (Del Mar et al 1996: 524).*

Similarly, there is widespread acknowledgment that many tertiary students need reading and writing assistance to meet the particular demands of university study and assessment. This is reflected in the burgeoning growth of tertiary literacy research within Australian universities as well as the expanded need for academic writing and study skills support for higher education students (LA: NLLIA 1997; Baldauf 1996).

The research and professional experiences of employers and post-compulsory education teachers and trainers focuses our attention on the limited preparation in literacy that comes from study in school-based subjects and the tasks and tests they entail. The diversity of text types and of what can be done with and through reading and writing needs to form an important concern of literacy education in the later school years, along with a more explicit treatment of the literacy demands of the specialist subjects themselves.

Much debate has ensued on the relationship of enhanced literacy, employment and national productivity. Literacy enhancement may not directly create employment, but it does have at least three important consequences for post-compulsory educational and work experience:

- in many cases, literacy enhances the flexibility of workers and the range of information, knowledge and procedural repertoires they can bring to bear in enhancing their work, their flexibility and range of skills, their ability to gain more work independence from access to other knowledge, and at the same time their informed interdependence with other work colleagues through enhanced understanding of other ways of working, interacting, and collaborating;
- literacy allows more equity in job access and social and economic mobility for people from minority and disadvantaged groups, and thus contributes to workplaces that are more comprehensively based on productive diversity through enhanced communication capability; and
- literacy removes an additional and powerful means of social, occupational and civic exclusion for individuals, or their dependence on others to mediate such their participation in these realms of public life.

In the later school years, the relationship between school literacy capabilities and the various post-school pathways students face is of critical importance, along with the schools need to produce students who have been able to use their literacy capabilities to develop extensive subject-based knowledge in specialist areas.

In these respects, development in the four categories of resources of literacy: code-breaking, meaning development, text functions, and critical analysis, continue to be prominent educational imperatives. As well, the explicit development of a variety of ways of using reading and writing in practical activities needs particular attention, including a broader range of assessment and monitoring procedures for gauging students' practical capabilities with texts. However in the post-compulsory sector the

issue of the transferability of school-acquired and learned literacy capability becomes more crucial.

The later and post-compulsory years comprise a continuum of literacy needs and issues; with, at one extreme, an interface with the world of work or training and at another extreme literacy demands endemic to the subject specific requirements of a hierarchy of organised learning areas. In some there is an almost total dependence on literacy and persuasive language for demonstrating acquired knowledge.

This display is principally activated via generally abstract and de-contextualised writing. It demonstrates subject knowledge, and, in the humanities subjects particularly, draws on the language of evaluation, criticism, debate and proof.

> *"The subjects which offer the greatest potential for academic excellence are those whose internal organisation as a system of reference is most complete -- subjects which have their own technical language, their own notational systems, their own problems and theories ... These are the subjects which require a mental posture of abstraction from reality in order to deal with them on their own terms, the ability -- inspired or enforced -- to enter into a self-enclosed world whose points of reference are purely internal" (Teese 1994: 83)*

Adult literacy, numeracy and ESL education 5

5.1 Adult literacy, numeracy and ESL education

It has been established that schooling needs to provide students with a wide and flexible set of understandings and capabilities in the multiple *codes, modes* and *meanings* of literacy. In the previous section it was argued that these capabilities and understandings need to be as transferable as possible to new settings, disciplines of study and work and types of texts. This latter perception is one of the major outcomes of research and thinking about literacy in industrialised and developing nations which has emerged from intensive research and evaluation activities of recent decades: the context bound nature of many literacy practices (Street 1994; 1991).

Formal schooling has an obligation to impart capability and experience for students in the dominant forms of these *codes, modes* and *meanings* of literacy as a foundation for further learning as well as an expectation that all students will have the capacity to transfer these understandings and capabilities to the new contexts and roles that they will play in their civic and work lives. Given the remarkable and accelerating rapidity of social and technological change not all these contexts and roles can be predicted.

Post-compulsory education deals with transition from school to a range of destinations all of which have specific literacy and discourse demands. These forms of education rely on lecturers, teachers, trainers and supervisors whose selection is derived from their expertise in the subject matter, or content skill, of the particular field but who are frequently unaware of the linguistic demands of the field or of the adult learners induction into it.

In recent thinking about the 'later years' and post-compulsory education there have been attempts to specify the 'social domains' in which and for which literacy capability is required. One way of providing a schema for these is as follows, adapted from the National English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Competence Framework (ACTRAC 1994):

- Procedural communication — *performing tasks*
- Technical communication — *using technology*
- Personal communication — *expressing identity*
- Cooperative communication — *interacting in groups*
- System communication — *interacting in organisation*
- Public communication — *interacting in the wider community*

This descriptive framework for understanding the communication settings and the capability and functioning typically required in each indicates the breadth and complexity of the repertoire of literacy capabilities addressed in post-compulsory education settings and underscores the importance of the transferability of the more focussed literacy practices with which schooling is concerned.

There are other ways of characterising these complex social settings and their broad impact on literacy practices. The New London Group's Multiliteracies Framework (1996) identifies three 'domains of life, the public or civic, the community and the economic. Bradshaw (1993), adapting McCormack has enumerated four: Literacy as knowledge, literacy as self-expression, literacy as public debate and literacy as procedure. This has resulted in the development of adult basic education curriculum, the Certificates in General Education for Adults (CGEA) (Kindler et al, 1996) where these four literacies are used as the basis for the reading and writing streams. This has also been extended within the CGEA to the area of adult numeracy and mathematics where there are four numeracies described along the lines of different social purposes of using mathematics: numeracy for practical purposes, for personal organisation, for interpreting society and for knowledge.

In a similar vein the development by Commonwealth and State agencies of the Key Competencies (Mayer, 1992) expresses a related interest in formulating an overarching language for considering both the particularity of given contexts and what education and training ought to aim to achieve in such contexts and settings without losing sight of the overall and wider needs. The Key Competencies represent a formal outcomes linkage between schooling and the post-school context including the world of work and draw attention to the need for the post-school sector to retain explicit attention to literacy and numeracy competence as integral and enduring goals of the training and work environments.

The Key Competencies are:

- Collecting, analysing and organising information
- Communicating ideas and information
- Planning and organising activities
- Working with others and in teams
- Using mathematical ideas and techniques
- Using technology

Any notion of Key Competencies separated from the wider cultural context in which these competencies are located and in which their performance has meaning for the participants is unlikely to be effective. Accordingly, a Cultural Understandings Competency must be seen to pervade and shape the others or to be dealt with additionally to them. Touted as the Eighth Key Competency, the Cultural Understanding competency has never been formally recognised.

There is a complex relationship between the Key Competencies and the manner of their utilisation within communication in workplaces (NBEET 1996: 29). Each of the Key Competencies is underpinned by communication patterns identified above from the National English Language Literacy and Numeracy Competence Framework (ACTRAC

1994). Neither *collecting, analysing and organising information and ideas,* nor *planning and organising of activities* and most evidently not the *communication of ideas and information* can be successfully enacted without the literacy, language and numeracy procedural, system and cooperative communication required. Indeed, the associated cultural (and in many Australian workplaces *cross*-cultural) competence also serves as a precondition of success. The Key Competencies are inconceivable without underpinning and comprehensive language competences.

Many other industrialised countries have developed statements of the competencies which all who participate in education and training programs are expected to be able to achieve. Indeed the OECD's increasing interest in the questions of literacy, numeracy and basic education and the various systematic examination of comparative literacy rates in various countries points to a growing belief in the relevance of human capital asset theorisations of education and training in the context of the emergence of post-industrial economies in which knowledge and skills education levels (all clearly sustained by literacy and numeracy capability) are considered key determinants of competitiveness, innovation and enhanced economic performance.

The links between educational level, literacy and employment have become clearer through the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) data (ABS, 1997). This shows that: "literacy and numeracy affect the likelihood of an individual participating in the labour market" and "Literacy and numeracy skills affect the type of work that is undertaken by the employed, with the better jobs going to those with higher levels of literacy and numeracy" (ABS, 1997: 79). However the linkage between education levels, literacy and economic performance is complex, and low levels of literacy proficiency don't automatically correlate with unemployment of low level jobs (Black 1996).

5.2 Life-long learning for all

The provision of adult language education in Australia is more complex and market driven than the provision of schooling. The post-compulsory sector is influenced by changes in policy in a more immediate way than are the school and University sectors. In the 1990s there was rapid growth and change in both policy and practice in the vocational education and training (VET) sector, which accompanied parallel changes in the adult literacy, numeracy and language field (Kell, 1998).

However, the growing need for 'second chance' opportunities for large numbers of school leavers and adults, through access and pre-vocational education and training and adult community and further education, so strongly correlates with labour market needs and with contemporary understandings of macro-economic performance that in the 1990s public authorities have increasingly formalised this sector.

Some key characteristics of the post-compulsory sector are:

- there is no *entitlement* to any form of post-compulsory education other than 510 hours of settlement English for immigrants. Participation in existing programs is dependent on employer promotion, personal motivation or labour market requirements or obligations to claim or become eligible for certain entitlements; and
- more than half of publicly funded vocational education and training is provided by

private industry/enterprise or community based providers through open tender arrangements. Rarely are literacy or language an explicit requirement such tenders.

The senior years of schooling, post-compulsion, leading to higher school certificates and tertiary entrance examinations of various forms as well as Technical and Further Education (TAFE) entry, with a variety of cross-credit and dual recognition arrangements normally do not address literacy/numeracy and ESL needs. Most of the educational activity at this level is geared towards students who are intending to study at tertiary level and teaching tends either to assume literacy has been 'dealt with' at earlier levels of schooling or an explicit focus on literacy and language exists it tends to focus on academic writing. Higher school certificates are often regarded as having been 'captured' by Universities as an entrance assessment mechanism rather than operating in the wider interests of general education. However recent interest in the education of youth, especially those who are not succeeding in the formal academic structures of the senior years of schooling are opening up more opportunities for addressing the issues of adult literacy/numeracy and ESL (Department of Education, Employment and Training, Victoria, 2000).

The provision of adult literacy/numeracy and ESL education falls into four types of training and education:

First, there are courses and programs which deliberately and explicitly aim to teach literacy, numeracy and ESL. These may be called 'front-end' programs. Although language and literacy are explicitly targeted in front-end courses the actual program content may vary greatly and may include general education or be tailored specifically to further education and training, or various specific purpose English programs (e.g. English for doctors, writing for scientists or some other profession or trade). Most 'stand-alone' programs that offer adult literacy, numeracy and English as a second language for adults come under this category. Many entry-level vocational certificates include integrated teaching of literacy and numeracy (e.g., certificates offered within the Food and Automotive industries) while other certificate programs cross-credit to literacy and numeracy modules in certificates specifically concerned with literacy and numeracy. In many other entry-level vocational certificates, however, the language/ numeracy/literacy capability of participants is simply assumed to be adequate and appropriate to the demands of the course, an assumption which is often unwarranted;

Second, there is the vocational education and training (VET) sector which offers Training Package qualifications and now covers traineeships and New Apprenticeships. These certificate and diploma courses are written to meet nationally endorsed industry standards. That literacy, numeracy and language skills underpin these industry standards and therefore the Training Package qualifications, is now recognised at and industry level. In some industry standards the literacy, numeracy and language skills are explicit, in others they are embedded in the standards. Where these skills are explicit, there may be an over-emphasis on literacy, numeracy and language in training causing a barrier for those with low literacy. Where literacy, numeracy and language skills are embedded in industry standards, it may be difficult for trainers to identify these skills and know how to address them in training (Wyse, 2000). Also, in practice the inclusion of literacy, numeracy and language into VET training can be dependent on the trainers,

who may not have the training and confidence to teach these skills.

Workplace based training programs. Some workplace programs (both on-the-job and off-the-job) recognise literacy and numeracy and ESL as key issues that need to be addressed. Programs can offer this support in either an integrated manner or as a parallel program. The Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) Program is one example of funded schemes along these lines.

Finally, the provision of adult literacy/numeracy and ESL education comprises schemes of unemployment support linked with labour market programs. Up to the mid 1990s, the Special Intervention Program (DEETYA) was the principal vehicle for the provision of English as a second language, adult literacy and numeracy education and training for those displaced from employment or otherwise seeking work. The SIP was phased out at the end of 1997 and was replaced in 1998 by the Literacy and Numeracy Training (LANT) program (DETYA). LANT has similar objectives and provisions but SIP appears to be more restrictive and has much more accountability requirements.

This mix of course types balances two professional considerations that research and teaching have concluded are needed for effective improvement of communication: *contextualisation* (this is essential for effective learning since language is always learned in context) with *explicitness*.

The participants in these programs are an extremely diverse group of individuals whose experiences tend to fall into three broad groups.

First, there are adults with literacy difficulties in English who have not acquired the foundation literacy normally achieved in the early to middle years of schooling. Some have successfully completed a given level of schooling but have not acquired a portable literacy, a literacy able to be transferred to the appropriate context of work, training or further education that the learner desires. There are differences between men and women, differences due to age and social position and innumerable personal characteristics and family situations which are relevant to the setting in which the learner will best acquire literacy for their needs and the type of program that will be most effective for them. Flexible delivery and localised adaptation are essential requirements for success.

Many of these adults have had disrupted education or suffered health or family trauma or problems, others are disabled sensorily, physically or intellectually in ways that have hindered literacy acquisition. Social, emotional and personal factors play a part. For many family poverty or social deprivation have contributed. Many participants in adult literacy programs attribute their lack of success with literacy to wide category of 'negative school experiences'. For these people schooling has often been a demotivating and unhappy experience.

Participants in these programs also include Australians of recent or longstanding immigrant origin. Many, including Australian-born adults, have language backgrounds other than formal public English. These learners often have not received adequate assistance to bridge the gap between their spoken forms of language and the literate practices of either their first languages or of English literacy.

Finally, a large and growing proportion of participants in these programs are adults who

have successfully completed schooling and who have attained some literate capability at school. Among these are also many who have adapted to work settings in previously adequate ways. Radical workplace and technological change place additional and more complex or sophisticated communication demands on many adults that they are unable to meet.

A survey of five hundred students in SIP courses found that virtually all participants were very positive about the language and literacy gains they made in the programs they attended. There were differences, however, between the participants in ESL programs and those in literacy programs. Demand for, and motivation to attend, adult literacy courses under the SIP was significantly lower than for the ESL programs.

Most adult literacy learners were of the view that improving their reading and writing would not assist them in gaining employment, whereas ESL learners, for the most part, were committed to acquiring English believing that their chances of attracting employment at a level comparable to the pre-migration standard depended on speaking English well. On average the literacy students had lower formal education levels compared with the ESL students.

The researchers commented that: " Those who are not motivated to participate have had poor school experiences, little or interrupted education, low occupational profiles and other personal barriers" (Plimer and Reark 1995: 2).

Whatever the reasons for communication education and training and whatever the circumstances of the participants it is clear that more systematic support is needed for all adults to attain both foundational English literacy and the specialised literacies for further education, vocational training, work and civic participation. All parts of devolved labour market training (as well as adult and continuing education, vocational and further education systems) need to operate in coordinated fashion to address these literacy/numeracy and English language needs.

In addition to the ethos of a 'second chance' education, the rights and opportunities for individuals Australian economic and social interest dictate that comprehensive and systematic adult education is urgently required.

A national research study found that significant and quantifiable gains in productivity, efficiency and economic competitiveness can be linked directly to workplace English language, literacy and numeracy training. The study was able to calculate very large cost savings to companies from an investment in workplace language, numeracy and literacy training, and found a direct correlation between participation in such training and subsequent successful entry into specific job-skills training in instances where this would not have occurred otherwise (Pearson *et al* 1996).

The Economist subsequently published the findings of a Harvard University study which confirms the above research. Improved employee productivity of 8.5 percent in manufacturing and of 13 percent in non-manufacturing industries occurred after companies raised their employees' educational level by one year. These measurements were the result of a comparison of the impact on companies' productivity by different kinds of workplace investments (*The Economist,* October 2 1996: 26)

Life-long learning is popularly seen to have a primarily recreational value. For many

adult educators and students it also has a 'second chance' ethos in which adults are able to make up for opportunities that were not available to them when they were younger.

Adults have always engaged in life-long learning for vocational purposes and for interaction in public and community activities, but these forms of learning have not often been perceived to be a consistent or necessary part of adult life. In contemporary society, however, where work, community and academic boundaries are increasingly merged it is crucial to reconceptualise life-long learning as the means through which language, literate and numerate learning occurs across a range of contexts, for a range of purposes and over an increasing chronological span (Falk 1995).

The ageing of the Australian population (ABS 1995) which itself generates population mobility, increases demand for adult and lifelong education and, ultimately, for new immigration to replenish and maintain an age distribution among the population appropriate to sustain a mixed and diverse economy.

The de-regulated adult education market of recent years has brought about a blurring of the lines between hobby-recreational education, general civics education and language and literacy training. TAFE colleges and universities now offer short courses and hobby programs while vocational language and literacy courses are taught in a range of settings by private and community providers.

On-going change in workplaces and the rapidity of technological innovation have also elevated the need for continuous, or life-long, education. These changes mean that even workers with well-developed language and literacy capability benefit from continually upgraded language and literacy education. The clearest instance is the large number of workers who have had to develop proficiency with computers and with continually changing software in the past decade.

The frequency with which career changes need to occur as well as the consequences of the general ageing of the population also bolster the need for a more articulated development of life-long learning as a systemic extension of schooling and post-school formal education and training.

State and Territory programs in literacy 6

6.1 Literacy teaching and learning in the South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE)

'Literacy is seen as the ability to understand, analyse, critically respond to and produce appropriate spoken, written, visual and multimedia communications in different contexts.' *Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2000 – 2005 DETE*

Programs in South Australian schools and centres draw on a range of approaches to literacy learning. A high emphasis has been placed on the importance of:

- focussing on literacy across all learning areas;
- addressing the needs of all students, with particular attention to students with recognised disadvantage, through school structures and processes;
- developing teachers' capacities to adapt their teaching programs and strategies to be more responsive to students' needs and abilities.

Opportunities for professional development in a variety of programs provide teachers with support to develop critical frameworks and effective assessment techniques for identifying and responding to students' literacy needs and abilities. These programs include *Reading Recovery, Cornerstones, First Steps, Stepping Out, Teaching Handwriting, Reading and Spelling Skills* (THRASS), Early Assistance planning and literacy for specific learning difficulties and perspectives. Resources include *Early Literacy: Practices and Possibilities, ECLIPSE, Paraprofessionals Literacy Professional Development program and Addressing literacy in the Arts, Society* and *Environment and Science – A Middle Years Resource* also supports the work of teachers.

New initiatives

South Australia's Department of Education, Training and Employment is committed to a renewed strategic focus on improving literacy and numeracy outcomes for all learners. To guide and support this commitment the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2000 – 2005, launched in November 2000, emphasises the importance of a coordinated approach by all educators. It therefore includes child and adult learners in care, preschools, schools, TAFE, adult community education and training programs. The

strategy highlights four key elements which build on existing good practice. These are: *Working Together, Using Data, Intervening for Success, and Adapting and Changing.* Statewide targets will be set annually and a variety of resources will be directed toward improvements at all levels of care, education and training. These resources include:

- an on-line Literacy and Numeracy Network for information, advice, referrals, programs, professional development and the sharing of excellent practice;
- teaching, learning and assessment materials and professional development for literacy and numeracy in the context of the South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework;
- research which extends and improves our understanding of literacy and numeracy teaching and learning practice;
- software to assist educators to track and report on learners' literacy and numeracy achievements;
- a focus on literacy and numeracy in planning for vocational education and training 2001 - 2003; and
- collaboration with national agencies to ensure inclusion of literacy and numeracy in nationally accredited vocational qualifications.

The *South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability (SACSA) Framework* is currently in the final stages of production and will be available to schools in 2001. The framework emphasises the need for continuity of learning throughout care and schooling, from birth to Year 12. A key aspect of this new framework is the Essential Learnings. These include Futures, Identity, Interdependence, Thinking and Communication and are interwoven throughout the scope and standards. The Essential Learning Communication includes literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology. Literacy therefore is seen as an important avenue for supporting and connecting learning across the curriculum. It provides a strong message that all educators have a responsibility to support improved literacy outcomes in all learning areas for all students.

The SACSA Framework provides for outcomes-based teaching, learning and assessment processes. In the birth to age 5 range there are broad developmental learning outcomes which describe a child's learning and development over time. From Reception to Year 12 there are performance standards, which are described at particular points in the schooling process. Literacy is evident in these standards across learning areas and will provide a common reference point for educators to use in monitoring, judging and reporting on learner achievement.

Early Years

The South Australian Government made a commitment to early childhood education in 1995. The early years has been a priority area for action since then and the Early Years Strategy was implemented to support children from birth to eight years of age. Funds are allocated to preschools and schools to assist in the identification of the literacy and numeracy learning needs of children, and the development of programs to support each child's learning including the provision of additional support. Consistent assessment

and reporting of children's progress is fundamental along with parental support and involvement in their child's progress.

Teachers are involved in planning and implementing early assistance plans in preschools and schools. They program and plan their curriculum, focussing on social and cultural practices within literacy and the need for explicit teaching, high expectations and the valuing of family and community information. Teachers record and build on learners' literacy knowledge and skills when they begin school through the application of School Entry Assessment.

School Entry Assessment – Planning for Learning, developed by the South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment, is a mandated program for all children as they enter Reception (their first year at school). Initially, the program provides a baseline for children's learning in the school setting as well as information to support planning and implementation of programs that build on children's existing knowledge and skills. It also supports ongoing processes for monitoring and charting children's learning and development. School Entry Assessment supports teachers to collect information about the knowledge, skills, and understandings children bring to school, and to use this information as they plan, implement and monitor programs which meet the needs of each child. A consistent set of assessment criteria is used as a basis to describe children's knowledge and skills in English and Mathematics. The process is based on:

- information from the preschool setting in the form of a Summative Report;
- observation of children as they operate in literate and numerate ways in the school setting;
- family community contextual information.

Teachers are then able to use their knowledge of the child in order to plan for and monitor learning and development.

Literacy Initiatives for Educationally Disadvantaged Students

DETE has a state team that is accountable for the targeting of Commonwealth funds for literacy learning for South Australian students from low socio-economic backgrounds. The focus is on understanding literacy as social and cultural practice and therefore recognising that students' funds of knowledge are different according to context, time and place. Project initiatives are being implemented in declared disadvantaged schools. Declared schools are identified through a formula that considers proportions of School Card holders (a means tested government support scheme) and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students. These schools receive grants to measurably improve the literacy and numeracy outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students. The literacy initiatives in these schools are concerned with the development of literacies that value and build on the social and cultural capital that students bring to the classroom. The initiatives also recognise that those students who are at risk of not developing the literacies required for living successfully in dynamic social and economic worlds require a curriculum that challenges normalised practices. The projects are concerned specifically with:

Multi literacies – this recognises that young people live in media-saturated cultures and need a range of literacies. Three schools are working on new ways to engage students in the development of these multiple literacies using new and older information and communication technologies. Schools are working to develop new understandings of the dynamic nature of evolving and hybrid literacies that occur within and around texts, including those on line, within consumerism, video games, data shows, etc within home, school, community and business contexts.

Acquisition of school literacies – this joint DETE and University of South Australia longitudinal study of Year 3-5 students is investigating how different primary aged students from low socio-economic backgrounds participate in and learn from the literate practices made available to them in the classroom.

Critical Literacy and Gender – this focus arose out of a small-scale review of the ways in which Commonwealth funding was being used to support literacy in disadvantaged schools. While many schools were intervening in functional literacy there was a need for students' to develop the analytical skills of interpreting texts. The project sought to identify which groups of boys and girls were achieving and how all students could be supported to critically examine texts for their gendered content. Six schools were involved in trialing and developing the approach.

Texts and Television – this looks at the multiple knowledges and ideologies with which students engage through interaction with television texts. It asks students to draw on the wealth of information available through considering the way television advertising and programming positions them as consumers through socially constructed sets of meanings.

Students as researchers approach – this focus continues to be highlighted through the adoption of this approach in schools. The website and print documents related to this approach are available to all DETE schools. The approach considers ways of engaging students in research into social issues by making explicit the ethical and strategic dimensions of research and the literate practices required to collect, analyse and report data. Students who trialed the students as researchers approach used early school leaving as a topic for investigation. Their results are available on-line at http://www.studentsasresearchers.nexus.edu.au. This approach grew out of joint research between the South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment, the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia and Flinders University into students completing schooling. This research looked at why students choose or feel they have to leave school before completion of Year 12, many of them without the literacy skills required to participate fully in broader society.

Aboriginal Education

Implementing the plan for Aboriginal education in early childhood and schooling 1999 – 2003

Aboriginal Education delivers a wide and diverse range of services and functions across South Australia and has established an intricate network of people who assist and support this process. The plan provides outcome statements specifically related to literacy and numeracy and strategies to support the achievement of those outcomes for all Aboriginal students.

Whole School Structures

The Department's Framework for Quality, Improvement and Accountability assists all department sites and services in the achievement of their strategic objectives and core business outcomes. The application of this framework in schools means that school leaders and teachers will apply quality principles and processes, engage in quality improvement processes, develop with stakeholders mutually agreed directions and plans, be accountable for and report on the performance of the school and engage in continual learning and innovation.

Gathering and analysing data at a whole school level informs planning for improved student literacy outcomes. Schools make use of data from Basic Skills Tests, the National literacy and numeracy benchmarks, School Entry Assessment, Curriculum Standards and a variety of school and classroom based assessment strategies to make decisions about resourcing, teaching and learning, appropriate intervention programs and setting new targets for improved student literacy outcomes.

6.2 *Literacy teaching and learning in the Australian Capital Territory Department of Education and Community Services schools*

Literacy and numeracy remain cornerstones of the ACT school curricula. The ACT Literacy Strategy, launched in 1998, provides a framework for programs and initiatives aimed at improving literacy outcomes in ACT schools.

The ACT Literacy Strategy includes eight initiatives to support the implementation of quality literacy programs. They are:

- the development of school literacy plans;
- the establishment of a system literacy (now including numeracy) team;
- the identification of school literacy coordinators;
- the implementation of a community based early intervention program "toying with their talking";
- the development of an early childhood literacy plan for implementation across preschools, childcare and the early years of school;
- the identification of a group of "professional development" primary and high schools to share effective models of literacy intervention;
- the development of parent/carer literacy awareness and support programs; and
- the development of a video and workshop, *Never Miss a Chance*, which highlights for parents the importance of early language development and literacy support.

Core programs for students at risk, such as Learning Assistance, Reading Recovery and English as a Second Language remain in place in ACT schools and are supported with a range of professional development offerings to teachers. In addition, Schools Equity Fund programs are in place in schools with at least 25% of their enrolment from low socio economic backgrounds.

The ACT provides a number of professional development programs and initiatives in literacy and numeracy support to schools. These include:

- *Language for Understanding Across the Curriculum* (LUAC)
- *First Steps*
- *Early Literacy and the ESL Learner*
- *Time for Talk*
- *Count Me In Too*
- *Phonemic Awareness*
- *Supportive Practices for the Enhancement of Literacy Learning* (SPELL)
- Annual conferences (in National Literacy Week)
- System Early Literacy Officers to support early years teachers
- Numeracy Across the Curriculum
- *Enhancing Numeracy OutcomeS* (ENOS) project.

The *ACT Assessment Program* (ACTAP) commenced in 1997 with a full population assessment of literacy ability in Years 3 and 5. The program has evolved to include the annual assessment of literacy and numeracy for all students in Year 3, 5, 7 and 9. These strands are assessed in Year 3 and 5: Reading; Writing including Spelling; Listening; Speaking; Viewing; Number Sense; Measurement and Data Sense; and Spatial Sense. In Year 7 and 9 the strands assessed are: Reading; Writing including Spelling; Number Sense; Measurement and Data Sense; and Spatial Sense.

For all year groups the assessment materials incorporate literacy and numeracy around a theme. Schools are encouraged to organise educational programs around these themes so that the assessment becomes part of the educational program. This provides a useful context for the assessments which are able to measure a wide range of student performance.

Student achievement in ACTAP is measured against learning outcomes and developmental levels described in the national curriculum profiles in English and Mathematics. Students receive individualised reports. Schools receive comprehensive information about group and individual achievement. Results from ACTAP are one measure a school uses to inform its planning for curriculum and pedagogy in literacy and numeracy. Parents and carers are able to discuss their child's results with teachers and are advised on ways in which they can be involved in their child's learning. Strengths and weaknesses can be identified by schools and strategies employed to address those needs. Decisions about resource allocation are assisted through rigorous data analysis.

The ACT Assessment Program, the ACT Literacy Strategy and the range of professional development and projects available, all contribute effectively to the achievement of one of the four main goals of the *ACT Government Schools Plan 1998 – 2000*, Improve Literacy and Numeracy.

6.3 Literacy teaching and learning in the Victorian Department of Education

Curriculum and Standards Framework

The Curriculum and Standards Framework II (1999), known as CSF II and distributed to schools in CD ROM and hard copy format, provides the framework for Curriculum delivery in Victoria. It describes learning outcomes to be achieved in eight key learning areas (KLAs). 'English' is one of the eight KLAs.

A further CD ROM, *curriculum@work* has been developed to provide support to schools in implementing CSF II including Teacher Support Materials on each of the KLAs. The Teacher Support Materials provide sample teaching units for students in Years P-10, including examples of good teaching practice which enable students to develop the skills and knowledge that constitute those aspects of literacy acquired through the explicit teaching of texts and language. *Curriculum@work* also provides links to a range of other resources, including CSF II, enabling schools to access relevant information quickly and easily.

Key Learning Area Networks also support schools in implementation of CSF II.

The English CSF recognises that the development of literacy involves speaking, listening, reading, writing and thinking within a cultural context and enables a user to recognise and select language appropriate to different situations. It also acknowledges that new and emerging types of literacy such as 'computer literacy' should be addressed in the classroom.

Assessment and Reporting

Support materials have been developed to assist schools to implement policies and practices that improve student learning through the assessment and reporting of student achievement against the CSF. All government schools are required to use the CSF for reporting levels of student achievement in English and Mathematics in their annual reports.

A comprehensive assessment and reporting package, the *Achievement Improvement Monitor* (AIM) has been developed. It provides schools with a range of resources and professional development to improve the quality and effectiveness of classroom assessment. This package also incorporates statewide data collection at Years 3 and 5. Sample testing of Year 7 will begin in 2001. The AIM statewide testing program provides parents and teachers with reports on progress in relation to CSF levels in English and Maths.

At the end of each year Victorian government primary schools assess the reading of all students in the first three years of schooling against benchmarks texts at four different levels using Running Records as the assessment strategy. The data is directly entered by schools on a statewide database and schools are then provided with an analysis of their own data in comparison to like schools and to the rest of the state.

Early Literacy

A major priority for the Victorian Government is early literacy. The Early Years Strategy began to be implemented in Victoria in August 1995.

The *Early Years Literacy Program* is a key part of this strategy. It has been developed to support primary schools in implementing effective literacy practices both in the classroom and at whole school level. The program provides information and resources organised around the essential components that schools need to address in order to provide a successful early literacy program. The program incorporates:

- *A structured and focused classroom literacy program.* This involves explicit teaching and continuous monitoring and assessment. Guided Reading is a key instructional strategy.
- *A process for providing additional assistance for those students who need it Reading Recovery* is the recommended one-to-one intervention program at Year One.
- *Strategies for increasing parent participation in their children's education.* These involve development and monitoring of strategic plans.
- *Teacher professional development.* This is focused on early literacy teaching and learning.

The *Early Years Literacy Program* is based on best practice in Victoria and overseas. The program, originally developed for P-2 students has now been extended to Years 3 and 4. Additional resources have been developed to assist schools in implementing the program with indigenous and ESL students and in the use of technology to support the program.

The *Early Years Literacy Program* is supported by a multilevel statewide professional development strategy and specific funding to all schools for literacy coordination and one-to-one intervention at Year 1. A requirement of the funding is that schools commit to statewide minimum standards for Reading in the first two years of schooling and school based targets.

Further information about the Early Years strategy in respect to literacy can be found at www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/eys/lit.

6.4 Literacy teaching and learning in Education Queensland schools

Education Queensland is committed to the improvement of literacy standards in Queensland schools. In 2000, Education Queensland commissioned a Literacy Review to analyse literacy programs, practices and resources and to establish a futures-orientated view of literacy for Queensland state schools.

Education Queensland has commenced implementation of selected key strategies across four priority action areas identified in the Literacy Review Report. These include the establishment of Learning and Development Centres (Literacy), training for Learning and Development Centres (Literacy) coordination and administration, literacy professional development summit and strategic plan, systemic evaluation advice to schools on the selection and use of literacy packages and standardised texts, and a pre-service teacher education summit.

Literacy activities currently being implemented in Queensland schools include the *Year 2 Diagnostic Net, the Queensland Years 5 and 7 Literacy and Numeracy Tests, and Reading Recovery*.

The *Year 2 Diagnostic Net and Years 5 and 7 Literacy and Numeracy Tests* seek to provide information on the performance of children in aspects of literacy and numeracy. These processes also help identify children who require further support in literacy and/or numeracy. Using data from the Net and Tests, Education Queensland provides additional funds to schools to develop whole of school intervention plans to be developed for children needing additional learning support in literacy and/or numeracy.

Reading Recovery is used to support students identified by the *Year 2 Diagnostic Net* as requiring additional assistance in literacy. *Reading Recovery* is an intervention program that provides individual children with daily intensive and specialised support in reading and writing. The aim of the program is to accelerate children's literacy learning to a point where they can operate successfully, independent of further assistance.

6.5 *Literacy teaching and learning in Western Australian Education Department schools*

Curriculum Council

The Curriculum Council's *Curriculum Framework* was launched in July 1998. The Framework sets out a series of outcomes agreed to be essential for all students to achieve. These outcomes describe what students should know, understand, value and be able to do as a result of their curriculum experiences. Students achieve the outcomes at increasing levels of complexity as they progress through their schooling.

The agreed outcomes form a common core of achievement. The outcomes-focused approach provides schools with more flexibility to enable teachers to develop different learning and teaching programs to help their particular students achieve the outcomes. Schools will respond to their own ethos or that of their system, the needs of their community and the situations of their students by pursuing the **common outcomes** and by developing **additional outcomes** that match the specific needs of the students.

The outcomes provide clarity of focus for students, parents, teachers and the general community and are an effective basis for monitoring and reporting to parents and others.

Another important feature of the Framework is its kindergarten to Year 12 approach. While particular stages of schooling make unique contributions and may require different approaches, the K-12 approach adopted by the Framework provides a picture of the total span of students' schooling. It encourages a developmental and integrated approach to curriculum planning, teaching and learning. It enables students to progress smoothly through their education and avoids the major disjunctions between stages of schooling evident in some previous approaches to curriculum. It provides the basis for continuity and consistency in students' education.

The Curriculum Framework contains 13 broad, overarching learning outcomes that apply across all learning areas. The overarching outcomes are developed through sixty-

six more specific outcomes which are grouped into eight broad learning areas. Each of the eight Learning Area Statements addresses cross-curriculum outcomes including literacy requirements with the English Learning Area Statement describing the special relationship between this area and literacy.

Literacy Strategy

The Education Department of Western Australia is committed to supporting all students in reaching their potential through providing high quality education in our schools. The *Plan for Government School Education 1998-2000* reflects the commitment of the system towards ensuring that all government school students develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to achieve their potential and contribute to society. The development of high levels of proficiency in literacy is of critical importance to achieving this purpose.

The shift towards an outcomes-focused approach to education for the system places emphasis on improving opportunities for learning and supporting students to be life long learners. Developing competence in all aspects of literacy is integral to this goal.

The Department's Literacy Strategy establishes the direction for literacy education for all government schools in Western Australia. The strategy aims to support schools and teachers in their crucial role of helping students to achieve competence in literacy through the use of the Curriculum Council's *Curriculum Framework*, the Education Department's *Student Outcome Statements* and the *Literacy Net*.

The Literacy Strategy identifies significant literacy targets for all students in the system. The success of the strategy is integral to the achievement of the overarching literacy goal. This goal states that every child in the government school system will develop the literacy competencies to achieve the outcomes of the *Curriculum Framework*.

The strategy has the following key features:

- it is outcomes focused with the establishment of ambitious objectives and measurable targets at both system and school level;
- it is a multi-element approach to improving literacy, based on the recognition that a combination of initiatives and techniques will be more effective than a one-off approach; and
- it is the centrepiece for curriculum improvement: without effective literacy practices students will be unable to achieve the outcomes now expected in all areas of the curriculum.

Premises on which the Strategy is Based

The premise on which the strategy is based acknowledges that the initiatives and actions that go to make up the strategy must be effective, workable and based on acknowledged best practice.

As a consequence, the Literacy Strategy focuses on:

- developing a whole school approach to literacy which establishes strong, consistent and effective literacy policies and practices across all phases of schooling;
- developing innovative work structures in schools to support effective literacy teaching;

- insisting that all teachers are teachers of literacy;
- recognising, valuing and building on the home language and experiences of students;
- using valid, reliable information to monitor student progress and to target strategies to student needs;
- targeting early intervention and additional support for students at key stages of schooling;
- sharing best practice and research findings on literacy development and effective teaching;
- promoting the value of family/community involvement in children's literacy learning;
- accepting that teachers need support to assist them to meet the diverse needs of students; and
- recognising that no single program will satisfy all literacy needs.

There are five elements to the Literacy Strategy. They are a blend of system and school responsibilities. The elements combine:

- the establishment of clear and demanding standards;
- the routine use of information to identify problems;
- targets for actions and to mark progress;
- support materials and professional development for teachers; and
- a key role for parents and the community.

The strategy is a balance between improving the accountability for literacy outcomes and providing appropriate supports for school leaders and teachers.

Statewide Literacy Assessment

The Western Australian Year 3 and Year 5 Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Program is part of the process of implementing the National Plan in this State. In 1998 schools in Western Australia began annual testing of reading, writing and spelling skills of all Year 3 students. In 1999 the program was extended to include assessment of both literacy and numeracy for all Year 3 and 5 students.

The student achievement information from the literacy and numeracy testing is linked to the Education Department's *Outcomes and Standards Framework*. It also includes information about student achievement in relation to a provisional location of the national benchmarks in the Western Australian assessment tasks.

The reporting of student performance against the agreed benchmark standard provides parents and teachers with information that assists the process of identifying students at educational risk. All Year 3 and 5 students in government schools are required to take part in the testing program, although in a few specific circumstances the principal, with parent endorsement, may grant exemptions for particular students. This includes Education Support students and students in Intensive Language Centres.

6.6 *Literacy programs: Tasmanian Department of Education*

The Department of Education in Tasmania has a strategy for the teaching of literacy outlined in *The Literacy and Numeracy Plan 2000 – 2002*. This plan sets out policy directions, coordinates and maps literacy and numeracy projects across the State, and sets goals and targets for literacy achievement across the State.

The Plan has been the subject of consultation, reflection and re-planning and links with the overall Tasmanian Government's *Tasmania Together* and *Learning Together* vision statements. The Department of Education funds and supports a wide range of literacy programs, projects, pilots and research developed to support schools to achieve literacy targets.

Website

The Department of Education has a website, *Discover*, within which is the dedicated literacy website:

http://www.discover.tased.edu.au/literacy

Here teachers can access contacts, projects, related sites and case studies. This site is a "work in progress".

Initiatives Based in Schools (I.B.I.S.)

One new process designed to meet State and National goals is *Initiatives Based in Schools* (IBIS). Schools have the opportunity to tender for programs, research, projects, or pilots in line with needs identified by the state Literacy and Numeracy Coordinating Committee. The successful 2000 IBIS grants are:

- Tasmanian Literacy Outcomes Annotated Work Samples
- Literacy Support (PASS) Years 3-6
- Partnerships in Literacy (Early Childhood)
- Tasmanian Literacy Outcomes Indicators of Achievement Years 7 & 8
- Stepping Out Trial in Years 7 & 8
- Classroom Literacy Web Site Years 7 & 8
- Online PASS Centre.

A formal *Memorandum of Understanding* is entered into with the Department of Education prior to commencement of each IBIS.

Flying Start Refocus

The Flying Start program employs about 130 FTE teachers into early childhood classrooms to provide critical small group instruction for all students Prep – Grade 2. The three main foci of the program to date have been literacy, numeracy and social skills. Now in its third year, the program has recently been the subject of a wide consultation in order to ensure it is effectively meeting the changing needs of schools. The *Flying Start* program places a very strong emphasis on teacher professional development and promoting parent participation in their child's learning.

Tasmanian Literacy Outcomes (T.L.O.s)

Reviewed and revised "Key Intended Literacy Outcomes"

The *Tasmanian Literacy Outcomes* are in the final review stage, and are revised and reviewed *Key Intended Literacy Outcomes* for Years Prep - Grade 8. The TLO's have been developed by practising classroom teachers, with a Statewide consultation taking place throughout the process. A feature of the TLO's are annotated work samples, developed largely through an *Initiatives Based in Schools* (IBIS) grant to Devonport Primary School. The materials will be supported by an interactive website where schools and school communities can share material and ideas, and student work samples can be submitted on-line so that assessments can be shared and 'moderated'.

Reading Recovery

This year *Reading Recovery* has been introduced to twelve primary schools across the State as an intensive pilot of the program. The additional training of ten school based teachers and two trainers is planned for 2001. The program focuses on students in an intensive manner, over a concentrated timeframe, to improve literacy levels. The pilot has been possible with support from Education Victoria. The pilot is undertaken with an associated longitudinal research process developed by the University of Tasmania to evaluate the efficiency of the method over time.

The Spalding Method

The Tasmanian Department of Education also offers formal training in *the Spalding Method* for teachers, parents and teacher assistants, as a part of a Statewide research trial. Schools and/or teachers across sectors, Kindergarten to Year 12, self select to participate, and are integrating the method into their literacy programs. Teachers are seeing improvements in student achievement and confidence. Many also comment on their enhanced understanding of literacy teaching and learning. Phase 1 of the research strategy this year focuses on six initial case studies to identify categories for intensive research in 2001 -2002. These will be available on the Department of Education website as they are developed.

6.7 Literacy teaching and learning in the New South Wales Department of Education and Training schools

The State Literacy Strategy encompasses a range of initiatives in training and development and curriculum support. Its features are:

- continuity in the development of students' literacy skills, knowledge and understandings;
- the identification of literacy needs at critical transition stages in students' literacy development;
- intensive training and development in literacy for all teachers;
- support for students who are experiencing difficulties with literacy;
- monitoring of progress; and

- partnerships with parents and caregivers.

All literacy activities in New South Wales are based on the K-6 English Syllabus, which is based on a social view of language. This approach emphasises the use of language to make meaning in different social, academic and cultural contexts. It stresses the need to develop students' ability to use language effectively for a range of purposes and their ability to talk about the language being used. This approach incorporates critical literacy skills and understandings.

Resources published to support the State Literacy Strategy include *Focus on literacy, Focus on literacy: writing, Focus on literacy: spelling and Teaching spelling K-6.*

Literacy initiatives to 2000

Literacy support for schools has been localised through the work of district literacy teams. Local schools benefit from strategic support provided by district teams, whose members include literacy consultants, learning difficulties coordinators and linkages consultants.

The positions of district literacy consultant and learning difficulties coordinator were established in 1996 in all 40 districts. Literacy consultants work with teachers from Kindergarten to Year 8 to ensure optimal literacy outcomes for all students.

The 25 newly appointed linkages consultants work with primary school and high school teachers to ensure that students continue to be engaged in learning in Years 5-8, especially during the transition from primary school to high school. They support students' literacy and numeracy learning in these years as well as helping teachers to address the distinct developmental needs of adolescent students.

Literacy initiatives focus on early intervention strategies to prevent reading failure. The *Reading Recovery* program expanded at the rate of 100 teachers each year from 1996 to 1999. In 2001 the program will be maintained at 400 teaching positions. This will enable more than 8000 students to reach the average level of their peers. Twenty-nine district-based tutors are currently training and supporting *Reading Recovery* teachers across NSW.

The *Early Literacy Initiative* (ELI) operates throughout NSW to support K-3 teachers in improving the literacy outcomes of students from low socio-economic status backgrounds. There are 112 ELI Networks across NSW, each of which has a trained school-based consultant who is in turn supported by ELI district consultants. Materials developed to support the program include the *ELI learning and literacy satellite* broadcast series.

The involvement of parents is supported through a number of initiatives, including *Parents as Teachers and Talk to a Literacy Learner (TTALL)*, along with publications such as Helping your child with writing from Kindergarten to Year 12 and *Helping your child with spelling from Kindergarten to Year 6.*

Assessment and testing

Literacy and Numeracy Basic Skills Testing continues in Years 3 and 5.

A Primary Writing Assessment was piloted in 1998 and continued in 1999 and 2000 on a volunteer basis. In 2001, the program will include all Year 3 and 5 students in government schools. The aim is to ensure that students are supported in writing for different purposes in the primary years.

The *English Language and Literacy Assessment* (ELLA) program aims to support teachers in ensuring students are will prepared to meet the changing literacy demands of secondary schools. ELLA was piloted in 1997 and expanded to full participation for Year 7 students in 1998. A voluntary re-test is provided for Year 8 students. ELLA assesses the literacy achievements of students in a range of key learning areas.

Kidmap is a curriculum management software package developed commercially in collaboration with the Department and provided to every school on request. The software has facilities for recording assessment against progress scales, creating classroom programs, generating reports for parents and creating profiles for analysis.

Starting with assessment K-3 is a program that provides classroom strategies for teachers to assess students at the beginning of Kindergarten, Year 1 and Year 3 with the intention of developing classroom programs based on student needs.

6.8 Literacy teaching and learning in Northern Territory Department of Education schools

The Northern Territory has a small population in a very large land area much of which is inaccessible to conventional vehicles for four to six months of the year during the Wet. Fifty-two percent of schools and nearly twenty-seven percent of students are located in remote areas. High proportions of these students are significantly disadvantaged both socio-economically and educationally. The population is multicultural and multilingual with more than fifty indigenous languages and over sixty migrant languages spoken as first languages by students in our schools. Over one third of young people between five and seventeen years have a language other than English as their first language. Nearly 40% of the total student population is indigenous. The challenge for literacy teaching and learning is to meet the needs of such diverse student and teacher groups in a wide range of educational contexts across the Territory.

Curriculum

A new outcomes-based NT Curriculum Framework T-10, in which literacy and numeracy are key components of the explicit cross-curricula learning outcomes, is currently being developed to provide a structure around which schools can build flexible education programs. The framework focuses on the early childhood, primary, middle years and secondary stages of schooling and caters for student diversity by being explicitly inclusive of the needs of ESL, special education, indigenous, gifted and talented and homeland centre students. The development process includes extensive consultation, professional development and piloting. The pilot document is to be released at the start of the 2001 school year and finalised by mid-2001.

At senior secondary levels, there is a move towards implementing South Australian Subject Frameworks and Curriculum Statements as they are developed. This will build upon the NT Curriculum Framework and reflect the desire for all students to acquire both content and process outcomes. Literacy programs include English, ESL and Vocational English.

All programs, projects, procedures and definitions will be progressively reviewed in line with the currently developing NT Curriculum Framework.

Programs

School literacy programs are supported through a range of structures which assist teachers to meet the needs of individual students.

Distance Education, through the NT Open Education Centre and the Katherine and Alice Springs Schools of the Air, provides support for students in remote areas. Assistance and inclusion support for students with special needs are provided through Student Services, School Therapy Services, and Early Intervention Centres. The Parents as Teachers program supports parents in understanding their student's literacy development and Behaviour Management for Students at Risk facilitates the participation of other students in mainstream programs.

Other programs are designed to meet the needs of specific student groups. Some examples follow.

- The *New Arrivals Program* caters for non-English-speaking-background students who arrive in the NT as part of Australia's immigration program. They are provided with ESL programs on arrival at school, which are delivered in Darwin by either the Intensive English Unit (IEU) located at Anula Primary School, or at the Secondary Intensive English Unit (SIEU) located at Darwin High School. Students living in centres outside Darwin are supported by Part Time Instructors who assist individual students to develop their speaking, reading and writing skills in English.

A series of programs has been designed to meet the literacy needs of indigenous students. These include:

- the *Two Way Learning* program which aims to support the aspirations of parents to have their children achieve oracy and literacy in English and to support the maintenance of indigenous languages and culture through a focus on developing, implementing and evaluating best educational practice in indigenous education;
- *Distance Education* which provides a low cost, highly deliverable mode of education to indigenous students in remote areas;
- *Pre-school/Before School Programs for Indigenous Children*, an across-the-board early interventionist approach in indigenous education and health through the development of a variety of models of Early Childhood programs throughout the NT;
- *Intensive English, Foundation and General Studies Courses*, bridging courses for secondary-age indigenous students which are designed to develop students' literacy and numeracy skills across all learning areas to enable access to mainstream secondary education;
- the *English as a Second Language-Indigenous Language Speaking Students* (ESL-ILSS)

program, an oral English program to facilitate school entry for indigenous students in their first year of schooling who live in communities and homes in which indigenous languages are heard and spoken, and who are assessed as being below Level 1 on the NT outcomes profile;

- the *Indigenous Hearing* project which tries to minimise the impact of conductive hearing loss on children's educational outcomes and social and emotional wellbeing;
- a range of professional development and mentoring initiatives to increase the employment opportunities for indigenous adults in education and to upgrade skills and understandings of both indigenous and non indigenous educators.

System wide projects

Support for literacy development is also provided through the implementation of system wide, cluster and individual school projects designed to meet needs at those levels. The majority of these projects incorporate a professional development strand.

The *Developing Literacy Partnerships* project operates in approximately one hundred schools (predominantly primary, but some secondary) and has had a significant impact on students' literacy development. It aims to assist schools in developing teacher, parent and community understandings of and involvement in students' literacy development. It builds on First Steps principles and practices which have been developed in schools since 1995, and focuses on whole school development through Literacy Support Team training, professional development for staff and parents, whole school and regional/cluster strategic planning, intervention and building literacy partnerships and networks across the Territory.

The *CSIRO Science Education Travelling* program demonstrates how science can be used as a vehicle for enhancing literacy and numeracy outcomes, as well as improving attendance and student participation. Science presentations and/or demonstration lessons during which students integrate speaking, listening, viewing and critical thinking with reading and writing as well as the numeracy skills of measuring, handling and interpretation of quantitative data provide the basis for professional development to teachers, parents, students and community members. The target group is essentially the middle years but also targets ESL and mainstream learners in geographically remote and isolated communities throughout the NT in all systems.

Professional development for teachers of indigenous ESL students is provided through a number of programs and projects and supported by such teacher resources as *Walking Talking Texts*, which is a programming resource.

- *ESL Coordinators* based in offices and servicing clusters of schools, provide school-based ESL professional development and support for teachers in rural and remote schools as well as some urban schools.
- The *ESL Teacher Development Program* provides teachers with rigorous and accredited professional development courses and follow up support in schools. This is implemented through a comprehensive program of workshops, seminars and school-based support to teachers of indigenous students who are learners of English as a second language, as well as to office-based advisory personnel and curriculum

developers. Shorter ESL professional development programs negotiated with schools are provided in urban and rural contexts, based on identified needs.

The *Numeracy in Schools* project focuses on identification of and intervention for students 'at risk' from the early years through to junior secondary levels; the development of numeracy strategies for ESL (indigenous and non-indigenous) students; cross-curricular numeracy; community numeracy awareness; and professional development programs for teachers. There is consultation with and involvement of some sixty schools across the NT. Close links are being developed with the Literacy Partnerships Project.

The Middle Years Forum provided an opportunity for teachers from all sectors and from schools and clusters across the NT to meet in order to address issues, develop school and cluster action plans and policies specific to the middle years, and to consolidate networks and procedures for information exchange. A specific focus was literacy and numeracy and the impact of the transition from primary to secondary school.

Teacher professional development

Literacy professional development in the NT is delivered in a range of ways. It is related to current and ongoing initiatives and also to individual school and cluster projects, which have been funded to meet specific needs.

Currently, one of the principal areas of professional development relates to outcomes based education and the development of the *NT Curriculum Framework.*

There are also several ongoing strands of professional development, which enhance teachers' literacy and numeracy teaching and assessment skills. They include:

- providing intervention for students deemed to be 'at risk';
- enabling all teachers to understand the learning outcomes levels and understand benchmarking as an integral part of the programming and assessment processes associated with outcomes-based education;
- assisting teachers in developing appropriate learning and assessment tasks related to outcomes-based education; and
- understanding the mechanics of data transmission from school to the NT Board of Studies and vice versa.

Literacy professional development is also provided through the system wide projects listed above.

Assessment

In the NT, the vehicle for assessment of primary students against the benchmarks is the *Multilevel Assessment Program* (MAP).

The MAP tests reading, writing, spelling and mathematics levels of students in Year 3 and 5 in urban schools and those aged eight and ten in schools in predominantly indigenous communities. Year 7 students will be included from 2001 and secondary students may be included in the future.

The common writing task, spelling and reading tests within the MAP testing program

contain questions designed to assess achievement against the Year 3 and 5 benchmarks.

At secondary level, Year 10 achievement is recognised through the Northern Territory Year 10 Certificate which is issued by individual schools and includes reporting on student literacy achievements.

In Year 12, students receive the Northern Territory Certificate of Education (NTCE) which must include the completion of two English or ESL units at Stage 1 and the Writing Based Literacy Assessment.

6.9 *Current practices in literacy education in the Catholic Education Sector*

Context, Commitment and Direction

Within Catholic Education there is the diversity of educational need and situation that is represented across state and territory systems in Australia. This is reflected in the various strategies and systems of support that are offered to Catholic schools as part of a general commitment to the development of literacy for all students. The concern throughout the sector is to ensure good literacy practices at all levels of schooling and within a variety of schooling experiences. In the primary schools, the focus continues to be on support for literacy learning in the early years and for early detection and intervention for those with special needs and abilities. In secondary schools there has been an increased emphasis on identifying students at risk and on supporting good literacy practices across the subject areas of the curriculum. Much has been achieved because teachers and consultants have the capacity to form working parties to address specific issues and to suggest more comprehensive approaches. Participation in government-sponsored initiatives also provides some support for the sector.

Initiatives in Catholic schools are directed by a willingness to implement the *National Literacy and Numeracy Plan and the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy*. Catholic schools support and are working towards the achievement of the National Goals for Schooling. Catholic schools support and participate in National Literacy Week initiatives and have won National Literacy Awards.

Collaborative Projects

One of the features of recent project development has been the increased capacity for the Catholic sector to form partnerships with government systems and with universities to promote the quality and relevance of professional development for teachers and the quality of outcomes for students. In recent years, teachers from Catholic schools across Australia participated in National Professional Development Program projects sponsored by their professional associations and in association with various university providers, including the Australian Catholic University. In a similar initiative, teachers will participate in the Commonwealth's Quality Teacher Program.

Collaborative projects within the Catholic sector in Victoria include The Literacy Advance Research Project (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV), Australian Council for Educational Research, and The University of Melbourne); *The*

Children's Literacy Success Strategy: CLaSS (CECV and The University of Melbourne); and *Successful Interventions: A Secondary Literacy and Numeracy Initiative* (CECV, Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, and the Department of Employment, Education and Training). In Queensland, the three education sectors collaborated on the development of two literacy resources, *Spelling – Improved Literacy Outcomes and Teachers@Work – Supporting Year 8 Literacy and Numeracy.*

Early literacy

A long-term investment has been made in some dioceses to the establishment of the First Steps program and more generally throughout the sector to programs of *Reading Recovery*. In Tasmania *First Steps* has been introduced in all schools K-6. In the bilingual school Ltyentye Apurte in the Northern Territory many of the resources have been translated into the local language. Many schools across Australia have begun with the writing component of *First Steps*, but in the ACT and Goulburn diocese Aboriginal Education Assistants have worked on the reading component in an attempt to promote reading development amongst urban and rural Aboriginal students. In Western Australia 'Collaborative Learning' projects have supported the successful implementation of *First Steps* through enhancing classroom management. Within the Victorian Quality Schools Project student attentiveness was also identified as a significant factor in student achievement and activities from technology and science have been used to motivate and support literacy development. As a result of the commitment to early intervention for students experiencing difficulties, most children throughout the sector have access to programs of *Reading Recovery* within their school or diocese.

In Queensland, the needs of students in the early years are mainly addressed through the Year 2 diagnostic net. This programme uses ongoing diagnostic processes by the class teacher and learning support teachers to identify students experiencing difficulty. In Victoria, *Literacy Advance* is a comprehensive sector-wide strategy that has been implemented by the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria to improve the literacy achievement of children in Victorian Catholic schools, with a particular focus on children in the early years. Under this program, most schools are implementing the *Children's Literacy Success Strategy* (CLaSS). CLaSS emphasises a balanced approach to the teaching of reading, writing and oral language, building especially on highly effective literacy teaching practices developed originally in New Zealand and widely adopted within Australia. The approach makes extensive use of structured teacher classroom observations to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses in order to establish starting points for teaching and to monitor student progress. CLaSS involves a three-tier model of training and professional development involving a statewide Trainer, a team of CLaSS Facilitators who work directly with teachers and principals in schools, and school-based Coordinators who work with classroom teachers. The project is informed by ongoing feedback provided by a University of Melbourne research team and by external evaluation conducted by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

ESL and Teaching English as a Second Dialect

Catholic schools are particularly active in the area of teaching literacy to speakers of other languages and to speakers of dialects of English. There is a wide variety of programs provided especially for this purpose, ranging from programs of intensive English for new arrivals through to programs which provide literacy strategies for ESL learners across the curriculum and programs that focus on the different literacy demands of the various key learning areas. In the Kimberley region of Western Australia the *Fostering English Language In Kimberley Schools* (FELIKS) approach has been used since 1992, and is concerned with improving Aboriginal students' knowledge and use of Standard Australian English (SAE). The resource book *Making the Jump* offers support for the teaching of SAE as a second language/dialect to speakers of Aboriginal English and Kriol. In schools of high multicultural enrolment in the Sydney diocese bilingual support programs in literacy exist alongside ESL programs. In the Brisbane diocese programs for ESL in the mainstream have support. In Victoria ESL is incorporated into the role of the literacy co-ordinator in schools. ESL support to schools is provided through activities such as the Primary and Secondary Literacy Networks, ESL in the Mainstream Teacher Development Course, and several Catholic Education Commission and centrally organised inservice programs in the area of ESL.

Assessment Initiatives

All Catholic systems participate in and support the state-based literacy assessment regimes aimed at measuring student achievement against the national literacy benchmarks. Catholic education authorities are concerned to work with other stakeholders to ensure that assessment instruments yield educationally meaningful and valuable information to teachers and parents about student performance. There is particular concern on the part of Catholic education authorities about how those student outcomes are publicly reported, so that unfair and inaccurate comparisons between different education sectors and individual schools are avoided.

South Australia has provided an external assessor for the Australian Literacy Federation's National Schools English Literacy Survey. In NSW schools have participated in the Basic Skills Testing program for Years 3 and 5. In the Northern Territory schools participate in the Multilevel Assessment Program for students from ages eleven to sixteen. Where the First Steps program operates there is an emphasis on the profiling of students through assessment benchmarks that characterise achievement. In Tasmania, 'Planning, Assessment, Recording and Reporting' have been the focus of one-day professional development workshops. In the area of ESL teachers use either the ESL Bandscales or the ESL scales to monitor student progress and report on achievement. Government initiatives in this area and in the area of outcomes-based curriculum support the ongoing process of connecting literacy achievement to the quality of teaching and learning interactions that characterise Catholic schooling. In Victoria all Catholic primary schools participate in statewide benchmarking assessments at Years 3 & 5. In addition, as part of Literacy Advance, Year 1 students are assessed at the beginning of the year using Marie Clay's *Observation Survey of Literacy Achievement* to assist in the early identification of students at risk. Students in schools implementing the CLaSS strategy (over two thirds) assess all students in Years Prep, 1 and 2 at the beginning and end of each year, also using the Observation Survey.

6.10 Current practices in literacy education in the Independent Schools Sector

Tasmania – Independent Schools

The Association of Independent Schools of Tasmania is committed to implementing the Commonwealth's National Literacy Plan and is implementing and promoting a number of literacy initiatives in its schools throughout the State.

It is widely acknowledged that a crucial element of any co-ordinated approach to improving literacy levels is the early identification of students who require additional support. A priority is a comprehensive assessment of all students by teachers as early as possible in the first years of schooling with the purpose of identifying those students at risk of not making adequate progress in literacy. *The First Steps Developmental Continua*, Marie Clay's *Test of Reading Concepts and Early Literacy Screen* are frameworks and screens recommended to schools.

In recent years, phonemic awareness has held a crucial place in reading research. This is because it allows teachers in kindergarten/prep to identify those students who may well experience difficulties in reading and spelling. The main intervention programs used are *Phonemic Awareness Training* (Beverley Solomons), *The Sound Way* (Elizabeth Love and Sue Reilly) and *Phonemic Awareness Training* (ARK Program).

Multilit (Making Up For Lost Time in Literacy) Reading Tutor Program has been implemented in the majority of independent schools. This program is specifically designed for teaching low progress readers in Years 2 and above (about seven years upwards) who are reading at a level considerably below what might be expected for their age and who have not acquired the basic skills needed to become functional readers. Multilit involves intensive, systematic instruction in three main areas – word attack skills, sight word recognition and supported book reading where a range of text types are included.

Providing parents with clear information about literacy outcomes strengthens the capacity of parents to support the teaching at school. Some support materials that schools use include *First Steps Parent Book*, *Good Start in Reading* (Diane Snowball), *Help Your Child to Read* (Pat Edwards), *Pause, Prompt and Praise* (video) and *Keys to Literacy* (video).

The majority of independent schools use *First Steps* and have developed school-based scope and sequence for writing forms. The teaching of spelling is gradually moving on from using a whole-class commercial spelling text to a spelling program that reflects the writing program. An individual spelling journal is the preferred option. Most of the schools are using THRASS charts (*Teaching Handwriting, Reading and Spelling Skills*) to support their spelling programs.

There has been professional development on standardised testing and the importance of reliability and validity of tests. This has been a whole school approach where staff have considered appropriate tests available and options for their schools.

Networking amongst teachers is considered one of the best opportunities for teachers to share initiatives and good practice. This is generally a cross-sectorial activity occurring three times a year.

Victoria – Independent Schools

Independent schools in Victoria represent a diverse range of educational, religious and cultural groups. Schools operate autonomously in the provision of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment and the following is essentially an overview of literacy initiatives.

Victorian Early Years Literacy Program is the major influence in Victorian independent schools and teacher professional development opportunities are very much in demand. The components of the program are *Teaching Readers Prep to Year 2, Teaching Writers Prep to Year 2, Teaching Reader Years 3 and 4* and *Teaching Speakers and Listeners.* Program materials have been distributed to each primary campus of independent schools over the last three years under the auspices of Commonwealth Targeted Programs. Reading Recovery approaches are an integral part of the program.

The Western Australia *First Steps* program is also very highly regarded and teacher training in the four components has been offered at Association of Independent Schools of Victoria for the last four years. The *First Steps* program compliments the *Victorian Early Years Literacy Program.*

There has been some interest in the new *Stepping Out* literacy program for secondary students.

The South Australian *ESL in the Mainstream* and *Early Literacy and the ESL Learner* are valued teacher development programs.

A small number of independent schools are participants in the Middle Years Literacy Research Project being conducted by Deakin University with schools from all three education sectors.

The home-school partnerships in literacy learning are features in most of the literacy initiatives.

South Australia – Independent Schools

Recent objectives and priorities of the South Australian Independent Schools Literacy Program include supporting the move to consistent and nationally comparable data against national benchmarks, and a focus on students who have not developed adequate literacy, particularly:

- Early years (K to Year 3) students
- Middle years students
- Indigenous students,
- Students from a language background other than English.

In 2000, 95% of all independent schools in South Australia participated in the Year 3 and 5 literacy benchmarks assessment. All schools that accessed Targeted Programs funding were expected to participate in the literacy benchmarks assessment. Three primary schools gained exemption from participation in assessment on the grounds of their publicly stated educational philosophy and assessment policies. Schools chose between three assessment tools: Western Australian Literacy and Numeracy Assessment; Basic Skills Test and Writing Task; and the ACER Cost Effective Instrument (now called the Literacy and Numeracy National Assessment).

Schools are encouraged to identify ***Literacy Leaders*** to develop and support their school-based programs and to provide a communication link between the Independent Schools Literacy Advisers and the schools. Professional development supports teachers in these roles.

A range of initiatives has been promoted to ensure positive outcomes for students in the area of literacy. These include programs such as *First Steps*, *Reading Recovery* and the Victorian *Early Years Literacy Program* (EYLP). Other programs have been developed within the independent sector. Some of these programs are described below.

The *Teaching Reading 3-5* builds on the EYLP *Teaching Readers in Year 3 and 4*. It involves teachers in exploring use of Guided Reading, Reciprocal teaching and managing an uninterrupted literacy block. It also includes a link with Studies of Asia.

Teacher comments:

> *"I have a much better understanding of how I can more effectively teach reading with my Year 3/4 class, especially being Junior Primary trained, and not having taught Year 4 before. I am now using guided reading groups and will move into reciprocal reading."*
>
> *"It's been a fantastic guide for me in establishing my Guided Reading groups and utilising our morning literacy block. My reading program has certainly been enhanced."*

In the ***Indigenous Literacy Links*** program, teachers undertake professional development in understanding cultural and educational issues for indigenous students. Units of work with an indigenous perspective are developed and trialed by teachers working with indigenous educators. Baseline data on the literacy and numeracy levels of the indigenous students are established and this information is used to design and implement effective and appropriate literacy programs.

The *ESL Genre Project* is a research and professional development program for ESL teachers in the middle and senior years. It involves research into the genres and text types of specific subjects at the middle years and the senior levels of schooling. It disseminates information to classroom teachers on strategies for explicitly teaching features of the text types. From samples of student work, a functional approach is taken to provide teachers with the understandings and knowledge of the literacy demands in a range of subject areas.

There has been a special focus on the development of technology skills and the curriculum understandings of teachers in the area of Information and Learning Technologies. Three-day courses have been offered to teachers that focus on understanding the potential of ***information and learning technologies***, developing skills to successfully use learning technologies and developing classroom programs that integrate learning technologies in the curriculum.

Teacher comments:

> *"The most valuable thing I experienced over the 3 days was 'time to explore'. Often we attend courses and we spend the whole day listening. To build your confidence with computers you need time to 'play'. Most teachers with low computing skills don't find time to play with new ideas. These 3 days have been fantastic for this. It would be*

great if all teachers could have the same experience..."

"...the best and most useful inservicing I've ever undertaken!"

The *Indigenous Literacy Project* is an action research project that involves documenting mainstream classroom strategies that specifically support the literacy outcomes for Aboriginal students. Teachers participate in a two-day professional development workshop on cultural and educational issues and specific classroom teaching practices. Dr Paul Hughes, of Yunggorendi at Flinders University provides a mentoring role and is the researcher engaged to undertake and document this project.

Extensive professional development opportunities are available to teachers in SA independent schools. As well as those already mentioned others include:

- *Understanding the Benchmarks*
- *School Entry Assessment in Literacy and Numeracy*
- *ESL in the Mainstream; Early Literacy and the ESL Learner*
- *Teaching Aboriginal Children and Students (TACS)*
- *Inclusive Teaching*
- *Stepping Out.*

Research projects focussing on School Entry Assessment for Literacy, and Mainstream Classroom Practices that effectively support indigenous students in literacy have been undertaken by teachers as action research projects. A video to support parents listening to their children read has also been developed and made available to all schools. The Independent Schools Targeted Programs Authority has published these resources. A book focussing on teaching literacy within studies of Asia will shortly be ready for publication. Titles are:

- *Teaching Literacy with Studies of Asia:* Units of work from Teachers in the Middle Primary Years edited by Joelie Hancock, Deirdre Travers and Suzanne Bradshaw.
- *School Entry Assessment Resource Folder For SA Independent Schools*
- *Supporting Enjoyable and Successful Reading* – Janiece Traeger (video)

Independent schools have participated in the development of the South Australian *Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework*. This framework is a cohesive framework that will provide a way of supporting better transitions between stages of children's services and schooling. The Framework is based on five *Essential Learnings* – Identity, Thinking, Interdependence, Futures and Communication. The key elements of the Communication *Essential Learning* are Literacy, Numeracy and Information & Communication Technology Literacy.

Queensland – Independent Schools

The AISQ Literacy Plan for 2000 has four elements: English as a Second Language/ Dialect (ESL/D); Disadvantaged Schools Program; Professional Development and baseline data and benchmarking. The Plan aims to provide support funding for school projects which will give maximum outcomes in literacy and numeracy and work in partnership with Education Queensland and the Queensland Catholic Education Commission to implement the National Literacy Project through professional development of teachers, parents and community members.

Initiatives across the four elements of the plan include:

1. The development of a *Working Document for a Resource Book – Assessing ESL Learners in Schools using the NLLIA (ESL) Bandscales*. This document has been prepared by practicing teachers who have developed strategies which support them in their work with ESL students in the classroom. All teachers have been trained in the use of the NLLIA (ESL) Bandscales and have used the scales for at least 12 months. The folder is reviewed, updated and additions made each year.
2. Training of tutors within schools for *ESL in the Mainstream*. These tutors inservice staff and provide support and information for the staff in the school. Training is provided every year in the use of the NLLIA (ESL) Bandscales. Tutors have been trained to inservice teachers across the three education sectors in Queensland in the FELIKS approach (*Fostering English Language in Kimberley Schools*). The authors of this approach have provided training appropriate to Queensland. Teachers working with both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students will be supported under this professional development program.
3. The *Early Years Literacy Program* has become an integral part of the program of a number of independent schools. Professional development has been provided for teachers.

   Reading Recovery programs are operating in many schools. Many parent helpers and teacher aides are trained and provide support in programs such as: Support a Reader, Support a Writer and Support a Maths Learner Number.

   Schools have been provided with a literacy audit which assists in the development, monitoring and evaluation of school intervention projects and the development of whole school plans.
4. *teachers@work supporting Years 8-10 Literacy Numeracy* – Professional Development and Teaching Resource. This resource can be used by teachers as a whole school, intra and interdepartmentally or individually. It addresses the needs of students who are experiencing difficulties with literacy and numeracy across Key Learning Areas in the Junior Secondary School.

   The first part of the program includes: Challenges in Junior Secondary Schools, Successful Learning and Teaching, Literacy and Numeracy Case Studies. The second part includes teaching resources for literacy, numeracy and technology.

   The package includes facilitation notes, video and CD.

Western Australia – Independent Schools

Literacy Plan 1998-2000

In early 1998 the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia undertook research to assist schools to develop a systematic approach to literacy assessment and teaching. This research formed the bases of a plan for the years 1998-2000.

The research was split into two phases. Phase One was designed to assist schools to identify appropriate tools to map and monitor student progress in literacy. Phase Two responded to the recommendations from Phase One and generated a number of action

research models to assist schools to set future priorities for literacy. Where possible schools selected for research projects represented five main groups of independent schools within Western Australian. These were:

- Aboriginal Schools
- Philosophically Based schools
- Commonwealth Category Low Fee Schools
- Commonwealth Category Medium Fee Schools
- Commonwealth Category High Fee Schools.

Phase One Research Projects

Students at Risk in Pre-Primary/Year One (1998)

The purpose of this project was to provide an analysis of existing early Literacy Assessment Practices in Pre-Primary and Year One.

The research recommended that schools be offered the opportunity to for Pre-Primary and Year One teachers to participate in a range of systematic professional development programs. Also that schools address a whole school systematic approach to assessment and teaching and that schools consider systematic professional development which addresses the issues related to parent participation and parent programs.

Literacy Assessment and Reporting Procedures (1998)

This project explored current literacy assessment and reporting practices in a range of Western Australian independent and government schools. It was recommended that AISWA provide central support for the independent schools who wish to review or modify their existing literacy reporting procedures and that schools explore and develop links between literacy curriculum, instruction, assessment, record keeping and reporting within a whole school approach to improving literacy.

A Review of the Establishment of Databases for Literacy Achievement (1998)

Project three reviewed the establishment of databases in literacy achievement at a systems and schools level with a view to providing resource information for schools. The purpose was to provide information to facilitate schools' ability to respond to requests for evidence of literacy achievement and for schools to plan for the Curriculum framework implementation. It was recommended that teachers be offered professional development in planning, programming, methods of data collection, assessment procedures, reporting to parents and teaching strategies and classroom activities.

Phase Two Research Projects

P-3 Assessment: Teachers Developing Effective Literacy Assessment Strategies (1999)

This project originated from recommendations from Phase 1 in the development of a Literacy Plan for the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia. These recommendations included the need for a systematic approach to literacy assessment and teaching. The current project was aimed at addressing this situation. The primary purposes of the project were: to explore how teachers can best improve outcomes for

children by understanding assessment measures more effectively; to provide time for reflection and discussion about what participating teachers find out from using the assessment procedures; to explore how this knowledge will help teachers select appropriate teaching for all children, particularly those at risk; and for teachers to record and report what they found out.

An action research model was used to provide teachers with a critical friend to help them to reflect on what they had found out from the assessments they used. Teachers used a range of assessments from *An Observation Survey* (Clay, 1993); the *New Zealand School Entry Assessment* (NZ Ministry of Education, 1997); *Assessment Resource Kit* (ACER: Foster & Masters, 1996 and Masters & Foster, 1996); and a test of phonemic segmentation (Yopp, 1995). Information from the assessments and the teachers' reflections were then used by them to plan for their teaching. Participants were assisted in making links between assessment materials and the *First Steps* Developmental Continua (EDWA, 1994), the Education Department English Student Outcomes and Standards Frameworks (EDWA, 1998) and the *Curriculum Framework* (Curriculum Council, 1998).

Initially, teachers found working from an action research model difficult, as they had not previously experienced this as a way of participating in professional development. However, as they became more and more familiar with the process, they found it most empowering in providing refined information about several issues. These included their students' learning, different assessment tasks, links between assessment and teaching, the way different skills played a critical role in enabling students to meet success, and their own teaching.

Developing a School Literacy Plan (1999-2000)

This project was developed and designed to assist schools develop a whole school literacy plan. (It is important to note that at all times throughout this school development process schools were encouraged to develop two to three year timelines to more realistically explore and develop more effective literacy plans.)

The project provided the opportunity to design a professional development process that would assist AISWA schools to develop individual school strategic plans that would provide the school with an introduction to:

- the WA Curriculum Framework document;
- the focus and content of the English Learning Area within the WA Curriculum Framework document;
- a process to assist schools develop a whole school approach to literacy through a series of professional development activities; and
- a framework for developing a school strategic plan to address the literacy needs of their students.

The project appears to have been successful in achieving the essential outcomes identified by the project. The project also was able to provide schools with professional development opportunities to begin to explore the new WA Curriculum Frameworks documents, specifically the English Learning Area Statements and Outcomes, and to

have the schools incorporate these new frameworks and outcomes into their school literacy strategic plans. In undertaking this focus, the project also assisted schools explore the school and classroom implications for implementing outcomes focused approaches to teaching and learning within a student centred learning approach to education.

Trialling of Monitoring and Testing of Students Using Monitoring Standards in Education (MSE) Model (WA) (1999)

This project focused on the trialing of monitoring and testing students using MSE materials. The purpose was two-fold. Firstly, to provide a supportive, collaborative environment in which teachers could trial the MSE test instruments, analyse results, plot student skill development and develop planning, resourcing and teaching strategies appropriate to student need. Secondly, to collect baseline literacy data resulting from the MSE materials.

The research concluded that whilst MSE testing is an external assessment that sits within the WA Education Department Student Outcome Statements framework it can be successfully implemented in the independent sector. It is an important resource for schools that want to focus on outcomes-based education. Moreover, it can provide data on the whole school population or on the progress of individuals. As it is an external assessment it can complement usual classroom assessment practices and provide additional information.

Junior Secondary Literacy Intervention Package

This research project, initiated in December 1998, was designed in three-phases and targeted 'at risk' students in the lower secondary area.

Stage 1 Involved a search, analysis and evaluation of current intervention strategies and programs, primarily within Australia but including information from North America and Europe.

Stage 2 AISWA CTP secondary schools were asked to respond to a survey designed to assess needs of 'at risk' students in order to inform the development of an intervention package.

Stage 3 Provision of professional development, using the specially designed intervention package, to teams of teachers from 7 member schools.

The survey returns (Stage 2) highlighted a number of issues. Key amongst them was that literacy was to a large extent still seen to be the core business of the English Department and that teachers did not perceive the needs of Aboriginal and ESL students to be radically different from those of other 'at risk' students.

The professional development package, specifically designed in response to the survey returns, offered teachers the theoretical understandings needed to support literacy development in the subject areas along with simple strategies for classroom use which would bring about improved literacy outcomes for their 'at risk' students.

The two booklets compiled for the project by the research team were disseminated to all AISWA CTP schools mid 2000. These booklets are entitled *Language and Production of*

Meaning and *Generic Literacy Strategies.*

Information and recommendations from this, and other projects, continue to inform research and professional development provision for AISWA CTP schools.

Northern Territory – Independent Schools

Literacy remains a priority in independent schools in the Northern Territory. Schools participated in the *Multilevel Assessment Program* (MAP). The results were used to inform Schools, teachers and parents.

All schools are actively involved in the ongoing assessment of students with a view to adopting meaningful approaches to teaching and learning. The approaches used are many and varied and are chosen as per their appropriateness for the individual and groups of students involved.

Some of the assessment and teaching approaches used include the following:

- DART (*Development and Assessment Review for Teaching*), tests developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research
- *First Steps*
- THRASS (*Teaching Handwriting, Reading and Spelling Skills*)
- The *Scaffolding Approach to Reading and Writing*

The *Scaffolding Approach* has proven to be particularly successful in its application to all students and in particular the indigenous students at Yipirinya School. A number of schools have adopted this approach to literacy with further schools intending to use the Scaffolding commencing 2001.

Approaches to literacy in the secondary school provide specific assistance to students who have not achieved age appropriate standards, including indigenous students and ESL learners.

Programs include Literacy Intervention in Years 8 and 9, THRASS, small group and individual tuition and specific literacy programs to support vocational learning.

Schools in the independent sector in the Northern Territory have been proactive in assessing students with a view to introducing programs and teaching and learning experiences to support the individual student's needs. There is regular reporting to parents and students on literacy achievement.

The Northern Territory Literacy and Numeracy Plan provides a sound basis for Literacy teaching and learning in the Northern Territory.

New South Wales- Independent Schools

The independent sector in NSW comprises a diverse number of schools with a wide range of educational, religious and cultural perspectives. Each school operates autonomously in the provision of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment within the school. It is therefore not possible to provide other than an overview of initiatives in the area of literacy and professional development.

The following provides a list of literacy activities in which teachers and schools from across the sector are actively participating.

The Early Years

The Literacy program, *Teaching Early Reading More Successfully* is of interest to an increasing number of independent schools.

This program articulates the essential components of the reading process as identified by current literature and provides teachers with the link between theory and practice. Teachers have found this program useful for providing an understanding of curriculum based assessment and program design.

Through funding made available through the Commonwealth National Plan for Literacy Program, the independent sector participated in the development and implementation of the cross-sectoral resource *Starting with Assessment: Kindergarten, Year 1 and Year 3.*

These resources are designed to assist teachers to systematically assess students early in the school to ensure the identification of students who may need extra support in the classroom. The resource uses outcomes from the NSW K-6 English and Mathematics syllabus and encourages teachers to make assessment an integral part of their teaching and learning cycle.

The Primary Years

Many independent schools have attended a professional development program called *Making Meaning with Language.* The program focuses on providing professional development support for the theoretical underpinnings of the NSW K-6 English Syllabus in the areas of reading, writing, grammar and assessment. Based on a functional view of language, the program encourages teachers to develop practical classroom activities based on sound theoretical understandings.

The Secondary Years

Many secondary English teachers have been interested in learning about how a functional approach to the teaching of language can enhance their own teaching. From their interest has grown a strong demand from their colleagues in other subjects keen to meet the literacy challenges their students face on a daily basis.

Professional development courses in a range of subject areas have been developed. These relate directly to the NSW curriculum and are increasingly focussed on information and research skills and the demands of multimodal and electronic texts. Funding made available for the New HSC in NSW and the Commonwealth Quality Teacher Program (QTP) has seen enthusiastic involvement by a number of independent schools in NSW in action research projects addressing these issues. These projects are typically undertaken by teams of classroom teachers and teacher librarians and the work of the projects is shared with all teachers on the sector website at: www.studentnet.edu.au/aispd. The QTP will also allow for the development of a Literacy Website.

Developed using Commonwealth funding made available through the Secondary School Literacy and Numeracy Initiative, the NSW independent sector has developed a resource

called *Reading Acquisition for Teenage Students.* This resource has been developed to provide systematic support to teachers working with students in the secondary years who have not yet developed essential reading skills. The resource provides an important age-appropriate addition for an often neglected group of learners.

English as a Second Language

Partly supported by funding made available through the Commonwealth Literacy program, many independent schools have undertaken the *ESL in the Mainstream* developed in South Australia. The program is undertaken by teachers from K to 12 with no specific ESL training to equip them to better meet the needs of students with a language background other than English.

The provision of Commonwealth funding through the programs such as the Literacy and the Quality Teacher Program have allowed teachers in NSW independent schools to access professional development initiatives in an on-going and meaningful way.

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Principal author:

Joseph Lo Bianco, Chief Executive, Language Australia and Professorial Fellow, Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne and Adjunct Professor and Chair of the Advisory Board, Centre for Language and Literacy, University of Technology, Sydney.

Contributing author:

Professor Peter Freebody, Professor and Director, Centre for Literacy and Language Education Research, Faculty of Education, Griffith University.

Critical readers and contributors to the First Edition:

Dr Penny McKay; Queensland University of Technology;

Laraine Morris, University of Canberra;

Chris Howell, Vice-President, Australian Council of TESOL Associations;

Jennifer Haynes, President, Australian Association for the Teaching of English;

David Howes, Vice-President, Australian Association for the Teaching of English;

Cecil Neilson, Principal Education Officer TESL, Northern Territory Department of Education, President of Australian Council of TESOL Associations Inc.,

Sally Thomson, Education Manager, Further Education Collective, Heidelberg, Victoria;

Dr Ian Falk, Sub-Dean, Adult and Vocational Education Studies Unit, University of Tasmania;

Dr Peter Wignell, Lecturer, Applied Linguistics, Northern Territory University;

Dr Barbara Comber, Language and Literacy Research Centre, Faculty of Education, University of South Australia;

Professor Desmond Power AM, Director, Centre for Deafness and Communication Studies, Faculty of Education Griffith University;

Marion Meiers, Executive Liaison Officer, Australian Literacy Federation;

Professor Trevor Cairney, University of Western Sydney, Nepean;

Professor Marie Emmit, Head, School of Social and Cultural Studies in Education, Deakin University and President, Australian Literacy Educators Association;

Dianne Dean, Coordinator, Child English as a Second Language and Literacy Research Network;

Jean Clayton, Manager, South Australian Teaching and Curriculum Centre, Language Australia;

Rosa McKenna, Coordinator, Adult Literacy Research Network;

Associate Professor Pam Peters, Style Council, Macquarie University;

Associate Professor Bill Corcoran, Head, School of Language and Literacy Education, Queensland University of Technology;

Dr Howard Nicholas, Graduate School of Education, La Trobe University;

Glenda Shopen, Lecturer in Education, Australian Catholic University;

Ann Kelly, President, Australian Council for Adult Literacy;

Christina Davidson, President, Primary English Teaching Association;

Claire Hiller, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania;

Dr Bill Cope, Centre for Workplace Communication and Culture;

Professor Mary Kalantzis, The James Cook University of North Queensland;

Dr Christina E. Van Kraayenoord, Schonell Special Education Research Centre, The University of Queensland;

Professor Allan Luke, Dean and Head, Faculty and Graduate School of Education, The University of Queensland;

Helen Moore, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto;

Dr Richard B. Baldauf, Jr., Language Australia,

Dina Guest, Assistant General Manager, LOTE, ESL and Multicultural Education Branch, Department of Education, Victoria.

The sections describing the literacy education initiatives of the State and Territory education and training systems which appear in Part 6 of this edition were contributed by the following:

South Australia
Maureen Forrest
Curriculum Policy Officer Literacy and Numeracy
Curriculum Policy Directorate
South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE)

Australian Capital Territory
Barbara Richardson
Assistant Manager
Assessment & Reporting
ACT Education & Community Services

Victoria
Gillian Essex
Senior Project Officer
Early and Middle Years of Schooling Branch
Department of Education, Employment and Training, Victoria

Queensland
Sybil Bell
Senior Education Officer
Literacy and Numeracy Unit
Education Queensland

Western Australia
Di Rees
Project Officer
Education Department of Western Australian

Tasmania
Maxine Lowry
Office of Education
Department of Education, Tasmania

New South Wales
Lindsay Wasson
Director of Curriculum Support
Department of Education and Training, NSW

Northern Territory
Connie Emslie
Manager, Literacy and Numeracy Plan, Curriculum Services
Northern Territory Department of Education.

Catholic Education Sector

David de Carvalho
Chief Executive Officer
National Catholic Education Commission

Independent School Sector

Tasmania
Rodney Tedds
Executive Director
The Association of Independent Schools of Tasmania

Victoria
Pauline Duffy
Programs Officer
Association of Independent Schools of Victoria

South Australia
Deirdre Travers, Literacy Adviser
and Helen Lambert, Targeted Programs Coordinator
South Australian Independent Schools Targeted Programs Authority
South Australian Independent Schools Board

Queensland
Lorrie Maher
Executive Officer Education Services
Association of Independent Schools of Queensland
Western Australia
Ron Gorman
Literacy Consultant
Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia

Northern Territory
Gail Barker
Manager, Educational Programs
Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory

New South Wales
Julie Thompson
Director, Professional Development
The Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales

Critical readers and contributors to the Second Edition:

Jan Hagston, Language Australia
Maryanne McKay, Language Australia
Melva Renshaw, Language Australia
Dave Tout, Language Australia