

The *Including Studies of Asia in Curriculum* Professional Development Program: Who's doing it and why?

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This paper aims to provide a general overview of the cohort of teachers who undertook a major professional development program Including Studies of Asia in Curriculum in South Australia in 2000. As the program was the principal vehicle for introducing South Australian teachers to Studies of Asia, ensuring its ongoing relevance was critical. The only source of data about the program itself was an earlier national evaluation based on the 1995 deliveries of the primary version in most states and territories. What was needed, therefore, was an up-to-date picture, based specifically on the contexts and needs of South Australian teachers.

Accordingly, participants were invited to complete a 'Participant Profile'. This study examines participants' responses, including their motivations in undertaking the program. Based on the responses, the course was able to be adapted for subsequent delivery, and advanced training courses were developed in line with the needs of the target group.

Studies of Asia, professional development, teacher motivation, curriculum in South Australia

INTRODUCTION: KNOW YOUR ELEPHANT

In a study examining the use of image and metaphor by teachers and teacher leaders in relation to professional development, a number of respondents drew on the image of an elephant (Groundwater-Smith, 1998). On the one hand, a teacher conceived the professional development product as an elephant, explaining that "... you don't know exactly what it will do when you get hold of it. You hope it will be a good experience and will yield positive results, but you can't be certain". On the other hand, a professional development provider saw the elephant as a metaphor for professional development participants, suggesting that "moving teachers is like trying to shift an elephant with one hand. You touch the tough outer skin, it makes a small dent, but basically the elephant only moves when it wants to!". In terms of ensuring engaging and productive professional development, the underlying message was to know your elephant in all its forms.

This paper focuses on a substantial professional development program, *Including Studies of Asia in Curriculum* and the teachers who undertook the program in 2000. Echoing the metaphor of the elephant, the study examined what lay beneath the 'outer skin' of the teachers who participated in the program, what had made them decide to 'move' and participate in the program and what they thought they were 'getting hold of' in participating.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ismat (1996) sees the implementation of more effective professional development as involving a struggle against a situation where decisions are usually made by state, district and building administrators. Accordingly, a central consideration is what teachers consider important for engaging and valuable professional development. In looking at what staff developers need to know, take into account and do in order to provide effective professional development, Killion and Harrison (1997) stress that an appreciation of the individual participant element is critical and that professional development cannot be effective without the cooperation and goodwill of teachers. Bents and Howey (1981, p.31) also make this point very clearly; “individuals are members of an organisation, yet, they remain individuals ... what is happening to the individual specifically and collectively must be taken into account”. They identify a range of needs and interests that participants are likely to bring to professional development, such as the quest for knowledge, desire for new experiences, new skills and understandings to apply to their classrooms, personal goals, and the need for recognition and confirmation. It therefore seemed important to seek information from *Including Studies of Asia in Curriculum* participants, which would enable the individual element to become apparent.

The general professional development literature provides some insights into particular types of information it would be useful to obtain. Bents and Howey, for example, raise the concept of adult development as a continuous process and examine developmental age theories and developmental stage theories about how adult development occurs. They argue that adult development levels have implications for participants' motivation to undertake particular kinds of professional development and their receptivity to such programs, summing up with “staff development programs must be responsive not only in the context of curriculum issues or teaching approaches, but also in terms of the personal and professional development of the teacher”. Goodson (1993) suggests that so-called, ‘critical incidents’, involving either planned or unanticipated events in a teacher’s life and career, can also influence teachers’ decision making and practice.

Sikes, Measor and Woods (1985) identify career phases, paralleling in many ways the adult age development theories, as well as reiterating the importance of critical incidents. In *Teacher Careers*, Sikes, Measor and Woods differentiate between ‘bureaucratic’ notions of career, progressing in an orderly way through a succession of jobs of increasing prestige, and an ‘individual’ viewpoint, a so-called moving perspective, in which people see and interpret their lives and the things that happen to them. In either case, the view is subjective and involves a picture over time. In considering their careers, individuals may have an altruistic outlook, an instrumentalist one, or some combination of the two. The implications for professional development are that “as a result of meeting new circumstances, certain interests may be reformulated, certain aspects of the self changed ... and ... new directions envisaged”.

In compiling a list of elements considered by teachers to be integral to effective professional development, the American Federation of Teachers (2002) highlights the need for an emphasis on deepening and broadening both knowledge and pedagogy. Natalicio, Hereford and Martin (1973), identify other factors likely to have a bearing on teachers’ decisions to undertake particular professional development programs. These include teachers’ openness to new experience, their attitudes to change and their perceptions of themselves as both resources and modellers of learning, all of which are connected to teachers’ perceptions of what it is to be a teacher. In terms of teacher motivation, Ellis (1984) suggests that teachers are “primarily motivated by intrinsic rewards”, such as a sense of accomplishment and opportunity for learning, rather than by extrinsic factors, such as monetary reward.

In terms of literature specifically pertaining to the *Including Studies of Asia in Curriculum* professional development program, *Changing Teachers: Including Studies of Asia in Primary Curriculum* (Halse, 1996) reports on a national evaluation of the eight primary courses delivered across Australia in 1995-96 (one in each state and territory). The national evaluation had a much wider focus than this study, in that it collectively looked at what occurred during the courses and the effects on the teacher participants as a result of undertaking the courses. However, there were a number of areas that invited comparison or further investigation. Among other aspects, the evaluation included a section that provided a range of insights into the nature of the teacher cohort undertaking the program.

The teachers participating in the 1995-96 course are portrayed as learners on the one hand, but the importance of the “knowledge and understandings, skills, attitudes, values and beliefs” they bring to the course is also recognised (Halse, 1996, p.5). A number of questions in the pre-course questionnaire aimed at establishing what that knowledge and understanding and those skills, values and beliefs might be. As Halse (1996, p.6) points out, however, the likelihood of any given teacher embracing a new experience or practice is dependent on “the perceived benefits compared with the effort and potential risks involved”; on their motivation level, in other words.

Given the particular focus of the evaluation, only one question touched on what it was that motivated participants to take part in the course in the first place, and the responses to that question are not developed in the report. The question of motivation to undertake the course was addressed more fully in the subsequent qualitative study *Cultures of Change: teachers' stories of implementing studies of Asia* (Halse, 1996). Through case studies of seven teachers, it drew on the literature relating to teachers as people to elicit both the personal and professional reasons that motivated participants to undertake the *Including Studies of Asia in Curriculum* course. From the teachers' stories, one interesting thread which emerged consistently and which seemed well worthwhile to pursue, was that many of them had previously had

favourable personal experience with Asian cultures and societies at various points in their lives and the resonances of such encounters were central in shaping their decision to participate in the course (Halse, 1996, p.22).

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The *Including Studies of Asia in Curriculum* program was developed initially under the auspices of the Asia Education Foundation. Its explicit aim was to encourage and support practising teachers to incorporate studies of Asia into their teaching and learning programs. The program was delivered for the first time in South Australia in August 1995, with 65 primary school teachers participating. Trial deliveries of the program had already occurred in Tasmania and New South Wales in late 1994, early 1995 and, in late 1995, early 1996, in addition to South Australia, subsequent deliveries occurred in Queensland, Australian Capital Territory, Victoria, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. These deliveries were the focus of the national evaluation referred to above. In early 1996 a program for secondary teachers was developed, and a version of that program was first delivered in South Australia later that year. As delivered in South Australia, both the primary and secondary programs commenced with a three-day intensive course, followed by two in-school meetings and then a final two-day intensive course. The intensive courses comprised a blend of core sessions and elective workshops. By the end of 1999, the *Including Studies of Asia in Curriculum* course designed for primary teachers had been delivered in South Australia on five occasions, involving 435 participants, while the course designed for secondary teachers had been delivered on four occasions, involving 302 participants.

My own interest in the *Including Studies of Asia in Curriculum* program stemmed from my role at that time as the Asia Education Foundation State Advisor for South Australia. I was involved in

the national development of the program, participated in the trial deliveries in Tasmania and New South Wales and coordinated the initial and subsequent deliveries of the program in South Australia. At the beginning of 2000, the delivery of all major Studies of Asia professional development in South Australia was entrusted to Flinders University under a formal agreement with the Department of Education and Children's Services and I was appointed to Flinders University as Manager of the new program, including responsibility for the ongoing delivery of *Including Studies of Asia in Curriculum*.

Having been responsible in my former advisory role for the development, delivery and evaluation of a wide range of professional development programs, large scale and small scale, I had become increasingly convinced that, as the 1989 OECD Report averred, "teachers are at the heart of the educational process" (cited in Day, 1999, p.2) and that, accordingly, any successful educational change hinged strongly upon the opportunities available to teachers to acquire the motivation, skills and knowledge to implement that change. Likewise, I was becoming increasingly intrigued by the individual teacher dimension of professional development, especially in relation to some of the literature relating to teachers' lives and careers, such as Goodson (1992) and Day (1999). Thus, the *Including Studies of Asia in Curriculum* program was of interest as a particular entity, and also in regard to its relationship to teacher professional development in a broader sense.

However, the only hard data available about who it was that was undertaking the program remained the 1996 study. It seemed timely, therefore, to conduct a study to determine whether various findings of that research, based on a national context and limited to primary teachers only, remained applicable some five years later to a specifically South Australian context, comprising both primary and secondary teachers. It also provided an opportunity to investigate some dimensions raised in the general professional development literature but not forming part of the earlier study.

OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT STUDY

The study was intended to provide information in regard to aligning future delivery of this particular program to the client group, an issue that was particularly relevant given the South Australian context at the time. Whereas in most other states and territories the *Including Studies of Asia in Curriculum* program had ceased to be delivered after only one or two years, in South Australia the program had established a strong track record and this momentum needed to be maintained, especially in the light of the decision to outsource all major Studies of Asia professional development in the state to Flinders University.

The study was also intended to provide more general insights into the attitudes and expectations of teachers in regard to professional development and their own careers. Such understanding was particularly relevant at the time, as the Department for Education and Children's Services had introduced a requirement that all teachers in government schools must complete 37.5 hours of professional development in their own time during each year. One implication of this requirement was that an increasing number of teachers without a specific prior interest in studies of Asia could be seeking professional development opportunities that offered both a quality experience and a substantial number of professional development hours. The study also had the potential to be of assistance in devising other studies of Asia related courses and pathways for teachers who had completed the *Including Studies of Asia in Curriculum* program, in keeping with recommendations for advanced courses and the like made in *Changing Teachers* (Halse, 1996).

The focus of the study was on the cohort of teachers who undertook the primary and secondary *Including Studies of Asia in Curriculum* professional development courses conducted in South

Australia in 2000. For the primary course there were 108 participants and for the secondary course there were 80 participants.

The principal instrument used for acquiring data was a 'Participant Profile', seeking brief written responses answers to the following questions.

1. What was the general profile of the participants, in terms of gender and age?
2. What was the general profile of participants' teaching background, in terms of length of service, sector, type of school, qualifications and perceived specialisations?
3. What was participants' prior knowledge of Asian societies and cultures, and how was it acquired, including: pre-service and in-service studies; in-country experience; the main sources of their perceptions of Asia and Asian peoples; and their main contacts in Australia with people of Asian background?
4. What was the current level of inclusion of Asia-related elements in participants' own teaching and learning programs?
5. How did the participants become aware of the *Including Studies of Asia in Curriculum* course?
6. Why did the participants decide to undertake the course?

As a basis for comparison between national and South Australia specific contexts and to see whether changes were apparent over the five-year intervening period, Questions 1 to 4 were similar in many respects to those covered in the section 'Who are the Participants' in the 1996 national report. However, elements of Questions 1 and 2 such as those relating to participants' age and length of teaching service were also included as a basis for considering the possible relevance of developmental age and career phase concepts (Bents and Howey, 1981; Sikes, Measor and Woods, 1985). Questions 3 and 4 aimed to establish the levels of existing relevant knowledge and pedagogical skills which participants brought to the program and were incorporated in recognition of the importance attributed to these elements in professional development related literature such as *Professional Development Guidelines* (American Federation of Teachers, 2002). While the information obtained was largely of a quantitative nature, some of the questions sought personal insights, in line with Killion and Harrison's (1996) emphasis on taking cognisance of the individual participant element. This particularly applied to the question asking participants to explain their reasons for undertaking the course, whereby ideas about teacher motivation such as those of Ellis (1984) could be considered.

The request for information for the 'Profile' was issued to participants when they registered on the first day of their respective courses and they were asked to complete it later that morning. Of the 188 teachers who undertook the courses, 164 (87%) completed and submitted a 'Profile'. Participant responses were collated and entered into an Excel spreadsheet, and SPSS (Version 10) was used to examine the data. Responses to some questions were further distilled into categories.

THE STUDY

In this section, the results of the study are examined and explanations for the patterns are suggested, together with possible implications for the design and delivery of the course in South Australia given the profile of the South Australian participants.

As Table 1 indicates, while the overall gender distribution was identical to that of the 1995 national cohort, there was an even higher ratio of females to males in the primary teacher group. For the secondary group, the predominance of females was still considerable, although less

pronounced. In terms of age, although the percentages of participants in the 21 to 30 year and 41 to 50 year age groups are almost identical, in the 2000 cohort there were significantly fewer in the 31 to 40 year age group and significantly more in the 51 to 60 year age group. Overall, the teacher cohort undertaking the course in South Australia in 2000 was actually an older one than the 1995 national cohort. This situation was particularly in evidence in relation to the secondary component, where the average age of participants was about three years above the average age for the primary participants. These findings are consistent with the report *Australia's Teachers: Australia's Future* (DEST, 2003) where the continuing trend to an increasingly aging teaching force is confirmed and South Australia is identified as having the highest percentage of teachers aged 45 years or over. In the short term, at least, the implications for future Studies of Asia professional development programs in South Australia are that additional research into appropriate ways of attuning program subject matter, activities and delivery to suit the particular age and gender profile of the participant group would be beneficial.

Table 1. General Profile of Participants

Profile		2000 SA Cohort	1995 national cohort
		%	%
Gender	Primary – Female	85	NA
	Secondary - Female	74	NA
	All - Female	80	80
	Primary - Male	15	NA
	Secondary - Male	26	NA
	All - Male	20	20
Age	21 – 30 years	19	20
	31 – 40 years	20	32
	41 – 50 years	39	39
	51 – 60 years	22	9
Type of School	Primary	60	87
	Secondary	20	9
	Combined Prim/Sec	20	4
Sector	State	57	NA
	Catholic	21	NA
	Independent	22	NA
Teaching Experience	0 – 5 years	14	13
	6 – 10 years	15	19
	11 – 20 years	35	46
	21 – 30 years	28	21
	31 – 40 years	8	1
Years at Current School	1 – 5 years	64	NA
	6 – 10 years	21	NA
	11 – 15 years	10	NA
	16 – 20 years	4	NA
	21 + years	1	NA
Teaching Specialisation (s)	Society and Environment	29	NA
	Primary (junior, middle, or upper)	25	NA
	LOTE	19	NA
	English	17	NA
	Arts	10	NA
	Science	7	NA
	Technology	7	NA
	Literacy	6	NA
	None	13	NA

Given the fact that the earlier national report was based on courses designed for primary teachers, it was to be expected that there would be a higher representation of secondary teachers in the 2000 cohort. Of interest was the much higher percentage of teachers from combined primary and

secondary schools. This may be attributed to the prevalence in South Australia of Area Schools catering for students from Reception to Year 12 in many country districts, as well as an increasing number of combined primary and secondary schools in the Adelaide metropolitan area. Future Studies of Asia courses therefore need to cater for teachers from such schools.

Figures for sector representation were not available in the national report, so the data from this study provided a reminder of the cross-sectoral appeal of the program and the importance of continuing to try to include participants from all sectors. For this course, through an arranged allocation of funded places, the spread was consistent with the overall size of the respective sectors, raising the question of what was likely to occur in a non-funded environment.

The participants had quite a range of teaching experience, from seven participants who were in their first year of teaching, to two participants who had been teaching for 37 years. While the figures for participants who had been teaching ten years or less were very similar in both studies, as might be anticipated from the age distribution a significantly greater proportion of teachers in the 2000 cohort had been teaching for more than 20 years. Future deliveries of Studies of Asia programs therefore need to take cognisance of the fact that the majority of participants are likely to be very experienced teachers, with the implication that, while some may be coasting or experiencing burn out, many are likely to be confident of their own teaching ability.

A question about length of service in current school was included in this study to provide an indication of continuity. In a South Australian context this was important, as teachers in state schools are forcibly transferred after ten years at a particular school. Around 25 per cent of the respondents were in their first year of teaching at the same school, with 64 per cent having been at their school for from 1 to 5 years. The maximum period any participant had been in their current school was 27 years and that was in a non-government school. Accordingly, these data suggested that professional development programs for Studies of Asia teachers need to provide participants with a range of ideas for implementing Studies of Asia programs in schools, to allow for the fact that in many cases the participants will be coming to terms with operating in new or relatively new school contexts.

Most participants responded to the question about their perceived teaching specialisations in terms of curriculum learning areas, although primary participants were just as likely to indicate a particular level of primary teaching. Around a third of all respondents considered themselves to have a single specialisation, while around half considered that they were specialists in two areas. Primary teachers were the most likely to indicate no particular specialisation. The most common learning areas identified were largely to be expected given the emphasis on those areas in the Commonwealth-funded National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) strategy. A number of so-called 'specialisations' related to across curriculum perspectives (concepts which could apply across a number of learning areas) rather to key learning areas, but there was little commonality here, except for the area of literacy. Only two participants saw themselves as being Asian Studies specialists (that is, teachers whose main area of knowledge and skill was Asian societies and cultures) and they were both in the primary group. This suggested the need for elective workshops to be offered in subsequent courses, catering for the most commonly identified areas of specialisation and illustrating ways in which studies of Asian societies and cultures can be incorporated into those specialisations. Table 2 presents information on academic qualifications for the total group that is also subdivided into primary and secondary sub-groups.

As can be seen from Table 2, a four year pattern was the most common at undergraduate level, although this was much more prevalent among the secondary group, where four year training courses have been the norm for a longer period. Where a degree was held, in the case of primary

respondents, it was almost universally in Education or Teaching, while for the secondary respondents, it was most commonly in Arts, with some in Education and a few in Science. A significant number of respondents, mostly primary, were three year trained only. While around one in five secondary participants had an Honours degree, very few of them had a Masters degree. In the case of primary participants the incidence of Honours or Masters degrees was negligible. Although not indicated in the Table, a range of Graduate Diplomas or Certificates was held across the group, the most common being in TESOL, Counselling, Library Studies and Theology. The fact that many three year trained teachers had not upgraded their initial qualifications and that few teachers had Honours or Masters degrees is likely to reflect the lack of incentives to do so in the South Australian education system. Teachers who obtain higher-level degrees are not rewarded with higher salaries, for example, nor is such a qualification a specific requirement for leadership positions. It may also arise because such degrees in the past have been research rather than coursework degrees, involving a more sustained commitment in terms of time. In terms of establishing a Studies of Asia professional development pathway involving accredited postgraduate courses, an implication of the study was that attention would need to be paid to convincing teachers of the worth of the courses and making the course manageable for them to study.

Table 2. Academic Qualifications

	Primary	Secondary	All
	%	%	%
GENERAL			
Undergraduate Level			
3 year trained – Diploma of Teaching only	32	14	24
4 year trained – B Ed or B Teach	18	14	16
– Degree + Diploma	26	62	40
Honours/Postgraduate Level			
Honours degree	5	17	10
Masters degree	5	6	5
ASIA-RELATED			
Asia-related content in undergraduate training			
	Some – 20	Some – 33	Some – 26
	None – 80	None – 67	None – 74
Formal Asia-related study since commencing teaching			
	Some – 17	Some – 20	Some – 18
	None – 83	None – 80	None – 82
Specific Asia-related qualification			
	2	3	2

The term ‘Asia’ may be defined in various ways (Asia Education Foundation, 2000). In the interests of consistency for this study, participants were asked to treat the term in accordance with the definition of Asia provided in *Studies of Asia: A Statement for Australian Schools* (Curriculum Corporation, 2000, p.7); that is, the area encompassing the regions of North East Asia, South East Asia and South Asia. Asia-related aspects encountered in participants’ undergraduate studies were very limited indeed. Of those who had studied something, it was an aspect of Asian history in about two-thirds of the cases, with the history of China, India and Japan being the most common, in that order. Apart from history, there were a few respondents who had studied an Asian language (about 10% of the total cohort), while a limited number had had some experience in Asian religions or philosophies, Asian arts, or Asian cultural studies. A similarly limited picture emerged in relation to Asia-related study since commencing teaching. Where some such study had been undertaken, it was most commonly an Asian language, frequently Indonesian or Japanese, with a smattering of studies of historical, cultural or religious topics. A few misunderstood the question and referred to their involvement in professional development activities, such as those delivered through the Access Asia schools program. Specific Asia-related undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications were virtually non-existent. In terms of future deliveries of Studies of Asia professional development programs, a strong need is thus apparent in the area of knowledge of Asian societies and cultures.

Formal learning is not the only way of acquiring knowledge, informal learning is equally important (Hara, 2001). Connor (2003, p.26) describes informal learning as a “lifelong process whereby individuals acquire attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences in his or her environment...”. In order to establish what participants had already learned informally about Asia and Asian peoples, participants were first asked whether they had visited or lived in the Asian region. Given the lack of formal study of Asia it was pleasantly surprising to find that around two thirds of respondents had visited or lived in at least one Asian country, as presented in Table 3. Collectively, over 23 Asian countries had been visited with South East Asian destinations the most common. Participants often stated a particular city or island in these countries rather than the country itself; for example, Bali rather than Indonesia, Bangkok rather than Thailand and Penang rather than Malaysia, indicating a fairly strong tourist orientation to the visits. Japan had not been widely visited, perhaps a reflection of the higher cost of travel there. Five countries had not been visited by anyone in the group, those being, Bangla Desh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Laos and North Korea, possibly due to the perceived difficulties of accessibility and issues of security.

Table 3. Asia In-Country Experience

	Primary %	Secondary %	All %
Never visited/lived in an Asian country	43	26	36
Visited/lived in at least one Asian country	57	74	64
Visited/lived in more than one Asian country	42	47	44
Most frequently visited countries			
Singapore	31	26	29
Indonesia	28	17	23
Malaysia	22	18	21
Thailand	21	15	19
China	17	8	13
India	15	11	13
Hongkong	13	11	12
Japan	0	9	8
Average number of Asian countries visited/lived in	2		
Average length of stay per visit	20 days		
Average number of days spent in Asia	40 days		
Recency of Visits		% of Total Visits	
1 – 5 years ago	30		
6 – 10 years ago	24		
11 – 20 years ago	28		
21 – 30 years ago	11		
31 + years ago	4		
Unspecified	3		

Around 6 per cent of the total group had lived in Asia for long periods, ranging from four years to 49 years. This group was removed from the calculation of average length of stay in Asia to avoid distorting the result. While around a third of visits had occurred within the previous five years, in a large number of cases respondents’ impressions of particular countries were likely to have been dated, as the visits had been made many years ago. Nonetheless, given the value of in-country experience in motivating teachers to know and teach more about societies and cultures of Asia (Halse, 1999), the in-country experience of participants would appear to offer a foundation on which to build in terms of Studies of Asia professional development.

In order to ascertain other insights into the sources from which participants had derived their perceptions of Asia and Asian peoples, participants were asked to choose from a list, the source that they considered to have had the greatest impact on them. Table 4 presents the sources of influence and shows that the most frequently indicated source was ‘Personal experience’, namely,

direct contact with Asian countries and Asian people, followed by ‘Television and films’, and then ‘Magazines and newspapers’. Books did not appear to have a wide influence. It would seem important therefore to provide opportunities for participants in Studies of Asia professional development courses to share and build on their personal experiences as well as to undertake activities developing their skills of critical literacy.

As a further way of identifying participants’ prior informal knowledge of Asian societies and cultures, participants were asked to indicate the nature of their main contacts in Australia with people of Asian background. The strength of the response to the ‘School community’ category reflects the presence of students of Asian background in many schools, while the response to the ‘Visitors and exchange students’ category showed that ‘Sister school’ relations were quite widespread, particularly at secondary level. Around one fifth of participants had mainly superficial contact, as the ‘General community’ category was a broad one, which could include such locations for social interaction as Asian restaurants and Asian shops. One strategy to help overcome this would be to ensure the inclusion of presenters of Asian background in future professional development delivery teams.

Table 4. Sources of Perceptions and Contact

Source		%
Principal Source of Perceptions of Asia and Asian people	Personal Experience	58
	Television and Films	17
	Magazines and Newspapers	12
	Stories told by others	7
	Books	6
	Other	1
Main Source of Contact in Australia with People of Asian Background	School Community	38
	Family and Friends	31
	General Community	17
	Visitors and Exchange Students	11
	Other	3

When asked what aspects of Asia participants were already including in their own teaching and learning programs, 68 per cent of respondents claimed to be including something, while 32 per cent were not yet including anything about Asia whatsoever. Table 5 presents the extent to which participants were already teaching aspects of Asia. When the responses were grouped by learning area, the heaviest concentration was in the SOSE learning area, with a considerable gap to English and The Arts, and a further gap to Health and Physical Education. A number of Asian language teachers also referred to ‘cultural elements’ within their language programs. The range of topics listed was quite disparate, reflecting on the one hand a lack of specific guidelines about the inclusion of Asia-related content in the South Australian curriculum and on the other hand the provision of a specific range of what might best be described as entry level topics and approaches, such as Festivals, Folk Tales, Asian cooking and the ‘study of an Asian country’. The dearth of Asia-related historical and geographical studies at primary level appeared to be an area that could benefit from attention in subsequent Studies of Asia professional development.

In relation to how they found out about the program, a majority of respondents (63%) identified sources within their own school. In about one third of these cases the response was non-specific, but where respondents were specific, the two most common in-school sources were ‘colleagues’ and ‘the principal’. About 20 per cent of the total group identified their schooling sector as the source of their information, usually referring to a letter or fax sent to the school and sometimes to the sector newsletter. Apart from these two major sources, participants also referred to professional networks, such as a language teacher association, an Access Asia Schools network or an ESL teacher network, or to personal networks, such as family, friends or previous participants (from another school). The most enterprising response came from the teacher who had ‘initiated

my own enquiry'. The strong implication from this was a continued need to develop effective strategies for disseminating information about Studies of Asia courses through multiple avenues.

Table 5. Asia-related elements included in teaching program

		Primary	Secondary	All
		%	%	%
Already including something		64	74	68
Not currently including anything		36	26	31
By Learning Area	Society and Environment	44	89	68
	English	29	33	30
	The Arts	22	23	23
	LOTE	20	12	17
	Health	12	8	10
By Topic	Asian culture	16	18	17
	Study of an Asian country	11	14	12
	History	1	20	9
	Folk Tales	9	6	8
	Asian cooking/food	8	6	7
	Geography	4	11	7
	Festivals	14	2	9

At first sight, responses to the open-ended question seeking participants' reasons for undertaking the course seemed widely varied. Table 6 presents the participants' reasons for undertaking the course. On further sorting it became apparent that despite different wording, there were similarities between a number of the responses. As can be seen from Table 6, participants' reasons fell into three major categories; professional, personal and what I have termed 'pragmatic'. Within each category a number of sub-categories were able to be distinguished and they have been listed in order of frequency of responses.

Table 6. Participants' reasons for undertaking the course

	% of responses
1. Professional	34
1.1 Improve own teaching (either particular learning area or 'integrated')	
1.2 Help other teachers	
1.3 Develop own school's curriculum (introduce a new area or broaden an existing one, such as 'multiculturalism')	
1.4 Understand/assist students better (especially students of Asian background, residents or exchange students)	
2. Personal	48
2.1 Improve own knowledge (acquire new knowledge or expand existing knowledge)	
2.2 Gain an academic qualification in the field	
2.3 Pursue/further develop an interest	
2.4 Belief in the importance of studies of Asia for Australian students	
2.5 Family connections	
2.6 Other people's recommendations made the course sound really worthwhile	
3. Pragmatic	18
3.1 Further own career	
3.2 Part of school's commitment in order to obtain a grant	
3.3 To build up professional development hours, in line with employer requirements	
3.4 No fees charged	

The strongest area of response occurred in the personal category, especially 2.1 (improve own knowledge). As one respondent put it, he or she participated because of "a passion to learn about other cultures". Professional reasons closely followed the personal ones, with a fairly even split, although 1.1 (improve own teaching) was most consistently expressed in this category. One teacher's concern to meet the needs of the clientele was evident from the comment that he or she wanted "to understand where our community is at". Pragmatic reasons were not advanced as frequently and, when they were, it was often in addition to a personal or professional reason. The most frequent response in this category was 3.1 (further own career). Some comments in this area

were forthright, such as a desire to “open new areas of opportunity”, while other comments were more ambiguous, such as, “a persuasive principal”.

CONCLUSION

In terms of the existing literature relating to the *Including Studies of Asia in Curriculum* program, this study contributed updated insights as well as a range of new dimensions. These insights and dimensions were able to inform subsequent deliveries of the program and other Studies of Asia professional development programs. Some of the updated insights included an even stronger female to male gender imbalance for the South Australian primary cohort in 2000 when compared to the earlier national primary cohort recorded in *Changing Teachers* (Halse, 1996). The average age of participants was higher and participants had generally been teaching longer. There was a much higher representation from combined primary and secondary schools, reflecting a higher proportion of such schools in South Australia.

Another area where some direct comparison was possible between the 1996 study and this study was in relation to Asia in-country experience. In *Changing Teachers* (Halse, 1996), one of the findings was that only a minority of teachers had visited Asia and therefore, teachers lacked the intimate experience of Asia gained through in-country experience. However, as indicated earlier in this paper, almost two-thirds of participants in the 2000 cohort had visited or lived in at least one Asian country, with over two-fifths having visited more than one country. The average length of stay in each country visited was around three weeks. Collectively, therefore, the 2000 cohort appeared to have a higher level of direct in-country experience in Asia than their 1995 counterparts. In *Cultures of Change* (Halse, 1996, p.14), the importance of prior favourable Asia-related experiences was highlighted as a “strong factor motivating people to undertake the course”. This study reinforced that finding. Sometimes the favourable experience involved visits to Asian countries, sometimes it was family related and sometimes it involved meeting or hosting guests from Asian countries in Australia. But in all cases it was apparent that the experiences had proved to be highly motivating for the participants concerned.

In terms of new dimensions, information specifically relating to secondary participants became available for the first time. While there were some similarities to the primary cohort, the secondary cohort was different in a number of respects. For example, the gender imbalance was not quite as stark, the secondary participants were older on average than the primary participants, and they were more likely to be four-year trained and to consider themselves particular learning area specialists.

Both *Changing Teachers* (Halse, 1996) and *Cultures of Change* (Halse, 1996) stressed the importance of recognising that teachers come to professional development courses as learners on the one hand and bearers of knowledge, skills, attitudes and the like on the other. This study clearly illustrated that in the main participants coming to the 2000 *Including Studies of Asia in Curriculum* program were highly experienced in terms of teaching as a craft. They were not undertaking the program, therefore, to learn how to teach, but rather how to add a further element to their teaching.

What the majority of participants did **not** bring to the program was up-to-date, in-depth knowledge of Asian societies and cultures, certainly not in any formal sense and often not in a general sense either. While many participants had acquired some degree of knowledge of Asian societies and cultures from personal experience, such as a visit to an Asian country, it was also apparent that in many cases their existing knowledge and perceptions were limited and derived largely from media sources. It was also apparent that in many instances the topics teachers were already including in their teaching and learning programs tended to be entry level, focussing on

exotic or stereotypical elements of the societies and cultures concerned. Participants generally recognised their current limitations in regard to specific knowledge and identified the desire to acquire such knowledge as a primary motive for their decision to participate.

In relation to general literature on professional development, this study also provided some interesting contributions. The view of Bents and Howey (1981, p.57) that “individuals are members of an organisation, yet, they remain individuals” was very evident in the responses made by participants about their reasons for undertaking the course. It was the personal reason of, “improve own knowledge”, which was most commonly advanced, closely followed by the professional reason of, “improve own teaching”, both of these reasons having an individual, rather than an organisational, dimension.

Some of the responses given by participants to the question of motivation to undertake the course appeared to be consistent with developmental age and stage theories and concepts of teacher careers, within the limitations of the data, while others did not. Some participants in the 21 to 30 year age range, for example, were looking to “improve their own teaching”, in line with attributes ascribed to early career teachers, while some teachers in the 41 to 50 year range were more intent on “building up their professional development hours”, which could be interpreted as being consistent with notions of coasting. However, reflecting the somewhat tentative nature of such theories, there was insufficient evidence to draw definitive conclusions.

A further area to provide pause for thought related to the issue of teachers’ ability or otherwise to see themselves as individuals on the one hand and professional teachers on the other. In Sikes, Measor and Woods (1985, p.227), reference is made to the concept of ‘true identity’ and the question is raised as to whether the ‘real me’ is different from or the same as the ‘teacher me’. Participant responses in this study demonstrated that it would appear to be quite difficult for teachers to distinguish between the two. For as quickly as an observation was made which might be considered personal, another which was clearly professional followed. At the level of actual practice, as a result of this study changes were made relating to both the primary and secondary versions of the *Including Studies of Asia in Curriculum* course and to the professional development pathway available as a part of the Flinders University Studies of Asia Professional Development Program.

The findings of the study indicated that the nature of the target group was remaining relatively consistent, and that there appeared to be a continuing market for the *Including Studies of Asia in Curriculum* program. A decision was thus taken to maintain delivery of the program for the foreseeable future. However, in order to meet the needs of the large number of teachers from combined primary and secondary schools, it was decided to rename the ‘Secondary’ course as an ‘R to 12’ course. The main change resulting from this broadening of emphasis was the inclusion of additional elective workshops suitable for both primary and middle school contexts, such as ‘Integrating Japanese Cultural Aspects in a range of Learning Areas’ and ‘Using Picture Books as part of a Literature Program’.

The fact that the vast majority of participants had little to no prior academic background in the societies and cultures of Asia, reaffirmed the suitability of the introductory level thrust of the current course. The emphasis placed by respondents on furthering their knowledge of Asian societies and cultures led to a decision to strengthen the knowledge component of the courses and to remove or revise sessions that had a general curriculum focus rather than a specifically Asia-related focus. This enabled the first two days of Intensive Course A to be reduced to a single long day, virtually constituting an Asian societies and cultures immersion process, comprising sessions such as a keynote address by a noted Asian Studies scholar, discussions on ‘Why Study Asia?’ and ‘What is Asia?’, a cultural performance and a guest speaker.

Given the fact that participants appeared to have been attracted to the course largely by a closely interconnected mix of personal and professional reasons it was decided that future delivery of the program and associated marketing would therefore focus on these needs, rather than on more pragmatic aspects or system needs. A key strategy to achieve this was to involve more directly practising teachers in the core sessions as well as the elective workshops. So, for example, a session which had previously focussed on educational change in general and been delivered by an Education Department officer was revamped to deal specifically with Studies of Asia, as an example of change process in schools, and was delivered by a team of experienced Studies of Asia school coordinators. Similarly, it was decided to build on participants' in-country experience and the enthusiasm generated by such experience through the inclusion of a session entitled 'Teacher In-Country Experience: Some Reflections', led by teachers who had previously been on study tours to Asia. An elective workshop 'Cross-Cultural Understanding' was also added to the elective workshop offerings.

To enable participants to bring to bear their generally well-developed teaching skills, it was also decided to incorporate additional sessions introducing Asia-related resources and sharing ways of using them effectively in classroom contexts. Thus, a different bookseller was invited to mount a resources display for each day of the intensive courses and a new core session 'Studies of Asia: Critical Literacy' was introduced.

The responses to the study also revealed that, while sector level advertising had a place in promoting the program, it was the in-school distribution and interpersonal referral networks, including recommendations of colleagues, which were of particular importance. Accordingly, it was decided to ask all future participants to supply their email addresses so that details of subsequent Studies of Asia professional development programs could be sent to them for their own information and further dissemination.

In terms of a professional development pathway, the lack of formal studies of Asia qualifications by participants on the one hand and their thirst for new knowledge and understandings seemed to augur well for the possibility of attracting clientele into relevant postgraduate programs. A Graduate Certificate of Education (Studies of Asia) program was thus established, offering a selection of professional development modules relating to the Society and Environment, English and Arts learning areas and with a strong emphasis on the acquisition of social and cultural knowledge. It was also decided to investigate the possibility of introducing an additional level, which would enable participants to complete a Master of Education (Studies of Asia). Considering the level of uptake of formal postgraduate courses in studies of Asia in South Australia since 2000, this conclusion has shown to be well founded.

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