The State of Asian Languages in Tasmania: Reporting on the views of teachers and students

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### List of Abbreviations

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BEd</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>BTeach</td>
<td>Bachelor of Teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>DipEd</td>
<td>Diploma of Education</td>
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<td>DoE</td>
<td>Tasmanian Department of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>GradCert</td>
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<tr>
<td>GradDip</td>
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<tr>
<td>JATNET</td>
<td>Japanese Teachers Network of Tasmania</td>
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<td>L1</td>
<td>First Language [English]</td>
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<td>L2</td>
<td>Second Language</td>
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<td>LOTE</td>
<td>Languages other than English</td>
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<tr>
<td>MLTAT</td>
<td>Modern Language Teachers Association of Tasmania</td>
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<tr>
<td>NALSSP</td>
<td>National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
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<tr>
<td>SALS</td>
<td>School of Asian Languages and Studies</td>
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<td>TCE</td>
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Introduction

This study was commissioned by the National Asian Languages Studies in School Program (NALSSP) Steering Committee Tasmania, a body that represents all school sectors in the State. The research seeks to inform program planning for the future of Asian languages, including teacher recruitment and professional learning, given the NALSSSP objective of sustainable and long-term development of Asian languages in Australian schools.

The data on teacher qualifications, practices and career intentions provided in this report highlights the imperative of workforce planning and professional development, also identified as an issue in the nationally commissioned studies in the Current State of [Asian] Language Education in Australian Schools series. de Kretser & Spence-Brown (2010) noted specifically that, nationally “There…seems to be very little data available indicating the age and qualification profile of teachers, and little central coordination of and planning for teacher supply into the future” (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010, p.63). This study also addresses the identified challenge of student demand through the analysis of college Asian language student continuation factors and perceptions of the withdrawal of their peers in high school.

Despite research indicating that the teacher is the largest source of learning variance outside of the students themselves (Hattie, 2003), major studies such as the Current State series mentioned above were hampered by the absence of clear data on teachers (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010; Kohler & Mahnken, 2010). Employment databases that categorise practitioners as “LOTE Teacher” provide insufficient information “to allow informed planning for recruitment and professional development” (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010, p.74). Fortunately, Tasmania is a small educational jurisdiction where it is possible to access all Asian language teachers personally, and to collect cross sector data through individual contact and encouragement. The interest of Asian language teachers in contributing to a profile of their profession was reflected not only in the 66.2% response rate (55 out of 83), but also by some teachers contacting the researcher separately, eager to be part of a study that might place them into a broader professional context.

Methodology

The surveys were constructed in, and administered electronically using Qualtrics online survey software. Questions were developed for Asian language teachers, and students studying Asian language at the college level throughout Tasmania. Current college Asian language students, broken into those who had access to Asian languages in high school and those without, were identified as this provided a measure of control based on recent pre-tertiary examination participation. Following approval by the Tasmanian Social Science Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC H11528), the Tasmanian Department of Education, sector organizations, and school Principals, the surveys were distributed via email to Asian language teachers, and through them to college students. This ensured complete anonymity and ethical protection of students who self selected, and whose names and email addresses remained within schools not accessible to the researcher. The data has been structured to consciously ensure that outcomes remain readily accessible to Asian language teachers as well as school authorities. This is because the study provides a rare insight for Tasmanian Asian language teachers into their profession at the conclusion of the NALSSP initiative, and prior to the implementation of the Australian curriculum. Tables have been omitted from the body of the report for ease of reading, although charts have been retained for
their visual support for some findings. The List of Tables may be found at Annex A. Annexes C to D contain the survey questions and basic results, exported in Word format from the Qualtrics program.

**Key Findings**

Caution should be used in making judgments about Asian language teachers as the cohort demonstrates some considerable differences between specific languages. For example, teachers of the relatively newly introduced to Tasmania and secondary-focused Chinese are far more likely to be younger native speakers (Tables 2, 18, 19), with longer in-country experience and full language teaching loads (Table 15). This is opposed to Indonesian, where the teachers are older and participation is declining to be largely a partial load primary subject for non-native speaker teachers (Tables 2, 14). Japanese remains the principal Asian language that permeates all educational levels (Table 14) and responses from Japanese teachers dominate survey outcomes. However, there is some suggestion that the growth of Chinese will impact upon participation in Japanese language studies in future.

The Asian language teaching force in Tasmania is overwhelmingly female (Table 1) and middle aged, with close to half over 45 years of age (Table 4). Chinese teachers tend to be newer to the profession (Table 6). Most Indonesian teachers have been teaching for 11-20 years with only one less than 10 years teacher, suggesting that opportunities for career entry are declining. Over a third of Japanese teachers are over fifty years of age (Table 4), and one quarter of them have been teaching for over twenty years (Table 6). According to stage theory, such a group is between conservatism and disengagement, and more likely will attribute a decline in numbers to negative changes in student cohorts rather than their own performance (Hubermann, 1995). They have experienced unsuccessful change attempts and are unlikely to embrace more with enthusiasm. With over two thirds of 20 year plus teachers seeing their careers as lasting less than five years (Table 8), the extra effort of implementing a national curriculum may be sufficient to encourage departure. Meanwhile, stage theory suggests that they are in the withdrawal career stage so reliance on them to increase student numbers may be misplaced.

One quarter of Japanese teachers intend to leave the profession within the next five years (Table 7). Chinese teachers see themselves in for the long haul, whilst their Indonesian (mainly primary) colleagues are indecisive. Aside from older teachers (those with over twenty years experience), the highest departure ratio is amongst those with 11-15 years experience (Table 8), a group that corresponds to the “stock taking” career stage (Hubermann, 1995). These teachers have mastered the demands of the classroom and may have attempted diversification only to be disappointed at the results. This 11-15 year group has the highest level of post-graduate completion beyond the 25+ group (Table 31), but less than a quarter see a career path as Asian language teachers (Table 9), and below 10% (1 teacher out of 13) feel adequately compensated for trips and subject promotion activities (Table 41). However, this is not the only relevant departure figure. Seventy percent of teachers in the 6-10 year experience range are unsure about their future (Table 8), whilst below 20% perceive a career path in language teaching, at exactly the time that they should be emerging from early career focus in their classroom to have a wider impact on language learning directions (Table 9). With only a quarter of all teachers seeing the policy and resource outlook as optimistic (Table 65) (as opposed to close to a half pessimistic) the potential exists for Tasmania to lose exactly those Asian language teachers (particularly Japanese - Table 7) upon whom curricular reform and future subject success will depend.

Asian language teachers are principally employed at a single school rather than at several schools (Table 12). Most have received generic LOTE training rather than that specific to Asian languages demand, such as teaching characters or tones (Table 11) (de Kretser &
Two-thirds earned post-graduate teaching qualifications (Table 10) and have taught for more than ten years (Table 6). Although most will have been teaching for their whole career, over 40% will have come from another job (Table 5). Just under half teach the L2 exclusively (Table 15). Whilst teacher gender dominance could be interpreted as a factor influencing subject selection, particularly with female students consistently outnumbering males, college students themselves did not indicate any perceived gender influence that would make Asian languages appear a “girl” subject (Table 78).

Levels of higher post-graduate qualifications (such as MEd and PhD) are low, with completion or current study coming in below 8% (Tables 27, 28). Shorter-term graduate certificates and diplomas appear to be more attractive with 22% of respondent teachers currently enrolled, most probably through the fee-free NALSSP- and UTAS-supported School of Asian Languages and Studies (SALS) Asian languages project (Table 29). The highest uptake here is the 11-15 year experience group once again (Table 32). Without the SALS program, actual long-term post-graduate learning might be less, and the conclusion of NALSSP may result in reversion to such a lower norm. Nonetheless, the benefits of the SALS program are illustrated by a greater possibility of certificate and diploma students moving to higher post-graduate study (Table 30). Meanwhile, those without any post-graduate qualifications appear less likely to pursue higher studies.

Time was voted the overwhelming reason for low post-graduate study participation (Table 33). This may seem surprising given the allowance for professional development and holidays associated with the teaching profession but may be associated with the availability of study options in the holiday period.

The significance of the proportion of female teachers involved in language teaching and the relationship to low engagement with post graduate study is highlighted by two studies published during the survey that indicated women continue to maintain responsibility for many domestic tasks and predominate in child rearing. The Australian Institute of Family Studies report, *Families in Australia 2011: Sticking together in good and tough times* concluded that:

> despite detectable shifts among fathers to increase their share of child care, mothers are still doing the lion’s share around the home, including looking after the children. It is therefore not surprising that mothers with full-time paid work and with young children are more likely than their counterparts with part-time or no paid work to experience time pressures (p.5).

Meanwhile, Dr Gwyneth Howell from the University of Western Sydney in a commercially funded study entitled *Wringing out the Future*, found that:

> Despite some Australian women working up to 70 hours a week, 45% also manage to squeeze in an average of ten hours per week of housework. Progressive women might aspire to ‘equality’ in the household, but it seems men are not pulling their weight. Almost 85% of modern women believe their partners only do half the amount of housework that they do each week.

With 90% of Asian languages teachers female, the time shortage they identify might in fact be discretionary time remaining after the domestic tasks referred to in the studies are factored in. Such tasks cover not just the daily chores within term time, but would extend to child minding in the school holidays whilst the partner is at work. Although such demands on time allocation for domestic needs may be alleviated to some extent as time passes and children grow, teachers often assume other roles within their work, home or community lives that leave little room for the substantial demands of postgraduate study, particularly if longevity in a school yields a senior position with administrative responsibilities. Such advancement
comes without any real challenge to pedagogy in the absence currently of any objective evaluation process, reducing the potential for higher learning (Kertesz, 2007). Conversely, postgraduate study comes with significant effort additional to work and home demands for no financial reward. To the contrary, other than research, or scholarship opportunities such as the NALSSP- and UTAS-funded SALS course, postgraduate coursework study can attract a debt in the non-governmental sectors. Nonetheless, this finding does validate the half-day per week time release funded under the teacher language upgrade NALSSP initiative at UTAS. The challenge for these teachers after NALSSP ceases is to maintain their commitment to ongoing professional learning rather than to await the next funding opportunity.

In the absence of higher formal postgraduate learning, it may be argued that teacher experience and attendance at professional development (PD) through their careers has facilitated pedagogical improvement. However, in the absence of validation data this is difficult to justify given the decline in Asian language student numbers in Tasmania and nationally. Rather, a recent national Asian languages study found that most PD is formulaic, and focuses more on new resources and classroom activities rather than serious consideration of teaching and learning (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010). On such occasions, issues of teacher language and pedagogical skill are avoided and a presumption of equivalence is maintained. Only one third of teachers undertake regular professional reading into language methodology developments, or use the Tasmanian teaching standards to monitor the quality of their teaching. Less than half are active members of teacher professional associations (Table 37), and just over 10% regularly take advantage of opportunities to build up their L2 fluency (Table 38). Concurrently, discussions beyond one’s school about teaching methodology that might reveal the status of programs are very occasional (Table 37).

Despite being taught by experienced teachers with years of professional development, and improved resources, student perceptions of subject difficulty remain the key factor in high school withdrawal after the compulsory years (Table 79). Teachers might work hard, but there is little evidence from the data that they are teaching differently or subjecting their practice to ongoing serious scrutiny in a search for effective measures to counter this trend (Kertesz, 2007). Meanwhile, genuine incentives to demonstrate objective teaching quality are not yet implemented, although the researcher was informed that these are being developed around the National Professional Standards for Teachers. Asian languages seem confined to the classroom rather than a force driving intercultural connections in other subject areas and permeating school life (Tables 49, 94). Certainly some teachers might participate in projects, regularly visit the L2 country (Table 21), and attend intensive workshops conducted by L2 promotion organizations (Table 37), but the evidence clearly points to no appreciable improvement in student participation and improved Asian language health in Tasmania.

Nonetheless, Asian language teacher respondents see themselves as essentially doing a good job, and college continuation student comments about high school teaching support this view (Table 97). However, most high school students will have withdrawn from Asian languages at the end of the compulsory period in Grade 7 or 8, so that the positive student responses to teacher practices in the survey represent the views of a minority whose needs are generally well catered for (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010). Meanwhile, the majority appears to disappear completely, with only a niche interest group entering at Grade 11. If, as is stated in other studies, Asian languages such as Japanese do appear initially as exotic and interesting (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010; Tables 71, 72), it seems that this expectation is undermined at some point in Grade 7 or 8 to be replaced with perceptions of difficulty for many (Table 79).

Having made a decision that Asian languages are too difficult [principally referring to Japanese or Chinese here since the Indonesian participation rate in high schools is so low], students are likely to follow their friends to more fun and interesting subjects that may be
time-tabled onto the same elective line (Tables 59, 60, 79). From this point onward the future potential of these students appears to be overlooked in high school with minimal efforts to demonstrate the relevance of Asian language learning. Close to 40% of high school teachers were unable to respond to questions about friendship group influences or student knowledge of pathways (Tables 61, 62). This suggests that there may be no systematic effort by teachers to capture the factors behind student choices, although evaluation of pedagogy and exit surveys would provide rich evidence for steps to improve practice and retention (Kertesz, 2007). Meanwhile, few schools conduct Asian festivals and celebrate important dates, or make connections between the Asian language and other learning areas (Table 94). Cross-curricular connections may be discussed and planned in schools, but only one in five students could identify them (Table 95). Without cultural connections projected beyond the classroom into the school and its community, not only do younger learners miss out on making important connections to the Asian language at the decisive time of subject choice, but also those in higher grades who have withdrawn are unlikely to be encouraged to recommence at the college level. Anecdotally, where efforts are made towards inter-cultural learning across a school, students admit to regrets that they withdrew at a younger age when they did not fully appreciate the benefits of learning an Asian language. Such students can be advised of opportunities to recommence at college or beyond, but only if they come forward in response to motivational efforts, and are provided with relevant pathways information. With over two thirds of college students seeking further information on pathways options (Table 74), and under one quarter considering pathway options well explained (Table 71), it may well be that high school students are not fully aware of the most effective options to reconnect to the Asian language. Such information is likely to be effective only when combined with promotion by the high school teacher of engagement factors other than university study (Table 71).

Not only are whole school cultural festivals or activities uncommon, few teachers interact with the L2 community or engage in language specific cultural activities in their community (Table 38). Teachers of Asian language are located across Tasmania in areas with little to no Asian language population. As one teacher respondent commented: On the NW coast of Tasmania our students are generally isolated from other cultures. Nonetheless, most teachers appear to make little effort to encourage the manifestation of Asian language in Tasmanian life, or to facilitate cross-cultural opportunities in society to reinforce the relevance and enjoyment of Asian language learning; this in that part of Australia furthest geographically from Asia and with the smallest ethnic Asian populations. This also means that few students see their teachers applying their knowledge in authentic and interesting ways beyond the classroom.

It is at this point that the major dilemma of perceived appreciation comes into play. It is difficult to see how systems and schools can expect teachers to initiate or become involved in significant Asian languages promotional activities within and beyond schools when at their current level of effort only one quarter overall, and less than 10% of the significant 11-15 year group, feel adequately compensated (Tables 39, 41), even though two thirds feel their efforts in school are acknowledged and appreciated (Table 44). Words may not be enough. Furthermore, if time is an obstacle to post-graduate learning, then time is probably also an issue in launching authentic efforts to engage and re-engage students through community involvement.

Whether or not they have had access to Asian languages at high school, travel is the overwhelming motivation among students in Tasmania, followed by the exotic and interesting allure of the culture (Tables 71, 72). This suggests that exchanges and school trips should figure as an essential part of such programs. Most trips are undertaken by teachers within one school. Expansion beyond that generally requires at least one teacher from the other school to satisfy supervision demands, raising issues of burden and responsibility sharing. However, a number of factors combine to make trips less attractive to teachers in recent times:
Smaller numbers increase costs without necessarily limiting responsibilities or the administrative burden;

- Containing costs to maximize availability demands access to home stays, and thus participation in at least an exchange activity (ideally a sister school), generating additional teacher responsibilities; and

- The legal and insurance environment has become more complex, so that teachers increasingly feel the burdens of responsibility. Many teachers have at least one bad memory of a trip experience and are sensitive to issues of personal liability.

The recognition and appreciation issue is further highlighted when teachers give up their entire holidays to run a school trip that exhausts them and then have to go straight back into another term of teaching. Preparation, marking, and reporting continue regardless.

Policy makers might find it worthwhile to consider actively supporting school trips as a sector responsibility, through measures such as time-release or the provision of facilitation resources. Not only would this alleviate the burden on individual teachers, but it also could open up Asian travel opportunities to schools without language programs. Such a move might facilitate serious discussion regarding the substantial wider learning gained from educational trips to Asia, and consideration of them being conducted within term time. Both such measures on the part of sectors would go some way to acknowledging the efforts of language teachers and relieving the demands contributing to dissatisfaction. More significantly, if travel remains a key student motivator, then school trips will remain a demand in some form on the very same teachers we are asking to make additional efforts to create a positive cycle of Asian language participation.

There is no suggestion that schools are not supportive of language learning; they do so both in the curricular and administrative areas, and this is acknowledged in both the teacher (Table 42) and student (Table 95) data. However, it is the “extras” that make up dynamic Asian language programs that are at issue, and contribute to a cycle of diminishing returns. Teachers who see schools not fully appreciating or rewarding their additional promotion activities may reduce their effort to levels commensurate with that perceived low level of acknowledgment. Reductions in highly motivational trips in school holiday time (Tables 71, 72) may contribute to falling numbers, the occasional combining of classes and levels (Table 90), increasing application of timetabling efficiencies (Table 43) and reduced Asian language teaching loads. Students denied the excitement of the relevance inspired by the promotional efforts, can start to lose confidence in the subject and look for other inspiration, taking their friends with them (Table 79). Once this degenerative cycle has set in, the effort to reverse it increases almost exponentially; and it must start with the teacher. However, the teacher must be at the right career stage, have the energy and commitment, be encouraged, and be rewarded appropriately. If sectors and schools wish to increase student numbers and re-establish viable and dynamic Asian language programs that create pathways from primary to college level, then the positives need to be maximized within high schools in particular.

The most important target for policy makers appears to be the potentially dissatisfied 11-15 year and indecisive 6-10 year experienced teacher cohorts (Tables 8, 9). Their career dissatisfaction and pessimistic policy and resource perceptions (Table 65) threaten to rob Asian language teaching of exactly those professionals who potentially can combine national curriculum implementation with revitalization of high school student numbers. However, to secure their active cooperation, the efforts of these teachers need to be appreciated, acknowledged, and lead directly to career improvements and rewards. There has been much discussion about rewarding quality teaching in Australia. The potential exists here to establish the basis for objective measurement of such quality, and to increase student Asian language numbers through improved pedagogy that is verified and validated independently across sectors.
Teachers within the 5-15 year experience range should be encouraged to continue a cross-sector program of higher postgraduate professional learning that directly links verified enhancement of Asian language pedagogy and student engagement with genuine professional rewards. They should focus on maximizing the positive factors identified in this survey, and work to overcome the spectre of difficulty in lower high school Asian language classes. Options for achieving this are listed as follows:

- The promotion individually and collectively of the exotic and interesting appeal of Asian languages throughout the school community by measures including:
  - acquisition and maintenance of sister school relationships (continuing the NALSSP efforts), and
  - engagement with the L2 community and establishing local cultural connections into their school.
- Teacher enrolment in higher postgraduate learning that exposes them to wider theoretical frameworks, facilitates the incorporation of contemporary research into practice, and increases the probability of professional reflection and the scrutiny of individual teaching against professional standards.
- The ongoing monitoring of improved practice, verification of its impact on school Asian language student numbers, and its alignment to tangible rewards.

Some enabling conditions would need to be satisfied, such as:

- reinforcement of professional links with local tertiary colleagues (Table 36) and the construction of focused teacher links through all levels aimed at Asian language improvements in Tasmania;
- the development of postgraduate units directly related to improved Asian language classroom practice and the authentic assessment of learning implementation to generate positive classroom change; and
- teachers would have to consider how they could build or improve the relationship between activities within school and those outside that support student engagement in the long term.

Such further learning, enhanced teaching practice, and improvements in student engagement and numbers should be directly aligned to and verified against the highly accomplished and lead teacher stages of the National Professional Standards for Teachers. Currently, teacher connection with professional standards is at low levels (Table 37). Achievement of standards certification through individual and collegial efforts could both define and demonstrate in unequivocal terms quality Asian language teaching practice in the Tasmanian setting, and provide both career encouragement and a model for improvement for younger practitioners and those considering an Asian language teaching career. Advanced teacher certification would provide an objective verification of teacher quality that could be acknowledged openly before principals, schools, and the teacher community. It would dispel the presumption of equivalent teacher skills and knowledge, and allow verified superior pedagogical skills and teaching success to supersede longevity as the measure of teacher credibility and financial reward. Most significantly, it would provide a vehicle for career engagement of the critical 5-15 year teacher group and establish a structure of professional leadership that would permeate the Asian language teacher cohort. For younger teachers, there would be mentoring focused on positive open practice, the satisfaction of being in a growing and dynamic curriculum area, and the prospect of career benefits.

The challenge for policy makers, Principals, and schools is to engage with a new paradigm of excellence and to continue working across sectors, such as has occurred during NALSSP, to improve the position of Asian language teaching in Tasmania in the long term, aside from Federal Government initiatives. To not do so is to watch pre-tertiary completion numbers continue to decline, competent and enthusiastic teachers become disenchanted and leave the profession, and the benefits of NALSSP initiatives dissipate. Ultimately, the challenge is to find the best teaching and teachers to maximize the positives and break through the barrier of
perceived difficulty. We need more students continuing Asian language learning and bringing their friends with them. Structural and curricular solutions have proved not to be sufficient alone. If one may borrow the words of Hattie (2003):

*I therefore suggest that we should focus on the greatest source of variance that can make the difference – the teacher (p. 3).*

**Recommendations**

Within and across sectors, it is recommended that:

1. Through financial support or continuing time release, teachers in the 5-15 year experience range be encouraged to either continue or commence higher post-graduate learning and to advance reflective practice aligned with the *highly accomplished* and *lead* stages of the National Professional Standards for Teachers.
2. Asian language teachers, who are able to validate exceptional practice that facilitates retention and engagement against national standards, be acknowledged and rewarded in real terms, be that financial or career advancement.
3. The student disengagement factor of ‘difficulty’ in lower high school be examined in greater detail by teachers in schools through class evaluations and exit surveys, so that the results can be consolidated and disseminated to determine effective teaching approaches that are aligned with professional teaching standards.
4. Sectors implement measures to facilitate L2 country engagement, in particular support measures to reduce the planning burden of overseas trips on teachers.
5. The mounting and conduct of overseas trips, even if undertaken in school holiday time, be acknowledged as workload and remunerated appropriately, and the impact of such trips on Asian language engagement and retention within each school be actively monitored and reported upon.
6. Teachers be encouraged and supported to undertake greater L2 community involvement and to establish school climates that more actively promote Asian language learning beyond the classroom, in particular to students who have withdrawn after the compulsory years.
7. Schools consider, where possible, the sharing of Asian language classes, to overcome issues of teacher supply and class viability, and to provide and maintain Asian language class access to schools currently without programs.
8. The coordination of pathway information be improved, so that high school and college teachers are able to better respond to, and support, student tertiary continuation.

**Tasmanian Asian Language Teacher Survey**

**Qualifications and Teaching Load**

Asian language teaching in Tasmanian schools is overwhelmingly dominated by females (Table 1, Chart1), with the response figure of 90.91% exceeding the 72% state female figure for all registered teachers (TRB, 2010) by over 18%.
Less than 11% are native L1 speakers (Table 2, Chart 2), and only 4% have a native speaker spouse (Table 3).

Low native speaker numbers may be due to a number of factors, including more stringent registration requirements and reduced motivation to seek educational employment in a state with minimal Asian communities. However local teacher dominance also suggests that the Asian language teaching culture in Tasmania is mature and established. In addition to acknowledging that local speakers are of sufficient standard to advance students to higher levels of L2 learning, schools might favour domestic language graduates for both pedagogical and modeling purposes: “Of course you can learn to speak fluent L2; I learned, and so can you!” Certainly with Indonesian (89.09%) and Japanese (100% in the data, but in reality probably closer to 95% as one native speaker was unable to take the survey), the two established Asian languages in Tasmania, the native speaker no longer appears a specialist by virtue of birth. Meanwhile, Chinese, Tasmania’s newer Asian language, retains a reliance (85.71%) on native speakers in a state with a very small established native speaker or L2 population, but with increasing numbers of international students (Orton, 2010). The higher reliance on locals to teach Asian language does raise a caution that future teacher needs, at
least in Japanese and Indonesian, might have to be met from domestic sources, particularly if immigration, registration, and community remain factors.

One third (32.73%) of Asian language teachers are under 35 years of age (Table 4). 45.46% are over 45, and 20% over 51, meaning that two-thirds of the whole are over 45. However, the picture varies with each language. Only one teacher of Chinese (16.67%) is older than 45, and three (50%) are below 35, an age where they have the potential for another twenty years teaching. Close to half of the Japanese teaching force (47.7%) are over 45, with less than a third under 35 (29.5%). Just over half of Indonesian teachers (55.5%) are over 45, with only two (22.2%) under 35, and none under 30. Proportionately, the Japanese and Indonesian teacher force is more mature in years.

There is a roughly even split between those who have been teaching only (57.14%) and those who came to it as a second career (42.86%) (Table 5, Chart 4). Although there appears to be a slightly increased probability for Japanese teachers to come direct from school, such a judgment is perhaps unfounded given the small numbers in other languages. Nonetheless, there are likely to be implications for future recruitment, as well as for the maintenance of LOTE methodology within postgraduate teacher education programs.
Teacher experience data (Table 6, Chart 5) illustrates the relatively new status of Chinese with four of the teachers (57.15%) with below 10 years experience as against three (42.85%) over this figure. Indonesian has only one teacher (11.11%) under 10 years experience and eight (88.88%) above. There is a wider spread of experienced teachers of Japanese, with some at career entry level (9 teachers or 20.45% under five years, as opposed to 68.18% over 10 years). It is notable that 12 out of the 44 Japanese teachers (27.27%) are in the 11-15 year experience range.

Future work intentions (Table 7, Chart 6) reveal that there will be a key loss of Asian language teachers within the next five years, the largest being in the Japanese language area; four in the next two years (9.3%), and seven within the next three to five years (6.28%), totaling 11 or a quarter of the Japanese teacher cohort (25.58%). Chinese teachers indicate that they intend staying for the long haul. Meanwhile, the data for Indonesian (55.56% undecided) indicated uncertainty felt by many Indonesian teachers in the face of the apparent declining demand for Indonesian language teaching in Tasmanian schools.

When examined by years of teaching experience (Table 8), the critical time would appear to be between 11-15 years experience; the group of well established and experienced teachers.
with 21.43% planning to exit within five years. The figures increase dramatically at the upper range with three quarters of teachers with 21-25 years experience and 62.50% of over 25 years experience also seeing their careers as extending less than five years. Of interest are the unsure figures, 71.43% of Chinese teachers and over half of Indonesian teachers (55.56%). In experience terms, the most notable unsure figure is the 71.43% of the 6-10 year teachers, those who are settled into their teaching and coming up to Hubermann’s (1995) diversification and change career stage, a time of “quest for new ideas, challenges, and engagements” (p.198).

Hubermann’s (1995) categorization is derived from stage theory. This argues that teachers are neither homogeneous nor unchanging in their professional practice. Rather “they have different attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviors at various points during their career” (Lynn, 2002, p.179). The number of stages is subject to some discussion. Hubermann (1995) refers to career entry and socialization, diversification and change, ‘stock-taking’ and interrogations at mid-career, serenity, and conservatism. Fessler (1995) extends this to a career cycle of the following:

- **Preservice.**
- **Induction** – “when the teacher is socialized into the system” (p.185).
- **Competency Building** – “striving to improve teaching skills and abilities, seeking new materials, methods, and strategies” (p.185).
- **Enthusiastic and Growing** – where teachers ‘have reached a high level of competence in their jobs but continue to progress as professionals” (p.185)
- **Career Frustration** – “Jobs satisfaction is waning...While this tends to occur most often during a midpoint in one’s career, there is an increasing incidence of such feelings among teachers in relatively early years of their careers” (p.186).
- **Career Stability** – “Stable teachers have plateaued in their careers. Some have become stagnant” (p.186).
- **Career Wind-Down.**
- **Career Exit.**

Regardless of the number of stages or when they might actually occur, stage theory provides a valuable guide to considering and treating the teaching force not as a collective whole, but a combination of individuals with different professional aspirations and needs.

The significance of the work intentions figures is revealed when years teaching is matched against career future perceptions (Table 9). Only one member (16.67%) of the 6-10 year experience group, those who might be considered at the Competency Building stage, saw a career path in Asian language teaching, as opposed to the one third who disagreed and half who were unsure. Close to a half (45.45%) of new teachers were also pessimistic, but this might be expected as they experience the challenges of everyday school reality and may feel less certain of their suitability for the profession in the longer term. Less than a quarter (23%) of the experienced 11-15 year group saw a career path, and these three positive members were almost balanced by two strongly negative responses (15.38%). It is possible that the 11-15 year experience group, within the Enthusiastic and Growing career stage where they have mastered classroom practices, developed a broader perspective, and seeking new challenges, see the way ahead blocked by older established teachers (in Career Stability or beyond) who, regardless of teaching effectiveness, remain entrenched. This “glass ceiling” of longevity overrides qualification or competence as the basis for advancement of enthusiastic and determined teachers, and probably tempts these highly qualified classroom practitioners towards other careers (de Krestre & Spence-Brown, 2010). Alternatively, they might transition to Career Frustration earlier as suggested by the literature. Neither can be to the benefit of Asian language learning in Tasmania.
Qualifications and Teaching Load

*Raising standards and retention rates depends on raising the overall quality of teaching, and support for teachers* (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010, p.71)

Teaching qualifications (Table 10) parallel teaching experience results with DipEd in the low 40% range across the three languages. Whilst there has not been a distinction in the survey of local or interstate qualifications, a quarter of Japanese and over half (57.14%) of Chinese teachers hold a more recent two year BTeach qualification [replaced by the MTeach in 2010, with first graduates in 2011]. Conversely, only one teacher of Indonesian holds a BTeach, perhaps reflecting lower entry figures in recent years. Whilst most received generic LOTE methodology training (Table 11), only a quarter responded that they had Asian language specific methodology, particularly relevant to the teaching of character based and tonal languages. Generic language training has already been judged inadequate in other studies (Sturak & Naughton, 2010; de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010; Kohler & Mahnken, 2010).

![Chart 7: At how many schools do you currently teach?](image)

Ninety-one percent of Asian language practitioners teach at a single school (Table 12, Chart 7), with Chinese exclusively so. A few teachers of Indonesian and Japanese continue to adapt to multiple locations and audiences in the one week.

Whilst one might expect that these would be mainly primary (21.74%), two high school teachers also move between more than two schools (Table 13). However all college and almost all high school teachers (93.94%) operate in one location.

The predominance of single school employment is beneficial not just for teacher work convenience. It allows the teacher to construct a positive environment for language learning, and also facilitates engagement with demanding aspects of the LOTE curriculum, such as school visits and exchanges. The permanent presence of an Asian language teacher is a testament that this is a valued and ongoing part of the learning program and school culture.
The profile of teaching levels (Table 14, Chart 8) reveals that Chinese is focused on the secondary level and above. The college and high school figures in this and other languages reflect how teachers in private schools work across these levels. The comparative presence of only one primary Chinese teacher demonstrates how this language is being introduced top down with minimal attempts to familiarize younger students with such a tonal, character based language. As demonstrated by TCE examination participation rates, Indonesian is retreating to a largely primary and occasional high school subject, probably in accordance with its original selling point of being a non-character, non-tonal Asian language that is easier for younger learners to accommodate (Kohler & Mahnken, 2010). Japanese remains the only language spread across all levels, although the compulsory year(s) in high school mean that this remains the focus in terms of full subject engagement. However, de Kretser & Spence-Brown, (2010) also found that this teaching level is the main area for withdrawal, and the key to encouraging future pre-tertiary participation. If students disengage from a language in Grade 8, it is judged unlikely that many will return.

The distribution of teachers does not represent the extent of Asian language classes as less than half (45.45%) are employed fully in the subject (Table 15, Chart 9). Around one third (36.36%) have a less than half load, and a quarter of Indonesian and Japanese teachers are under 30%. Notably, less than half of Japanese teachers have a full load (40.91%), so a second specialty seems imperative. The issue of load may be a factor in the lesser numbers of native speakers. Schools are probably more comfortable with a local teacher who can be deployed to teach a secondary specialty as student numbers vary. It would be interesting to know at what point the number of classes or students falls below the critical mass of attracting student interest and engagement. In general, the school budget probably will drive the final decision, but students may well have withdrawn some time previously.
Although, because of time allocations, one might assume that college teachers are more likely to be allocated a full time load teaching languages, only 50% teach Asian language exclusively, with 30% teaching the language less than half time (Table 16). The high school full load figure is similar (51.52%) with 21.21% at half, but it has the greatest proportion in the 50-70% range (27.27%). Primary teachers are most split with the greatest chance of a close to full load (60.87%), probably visiting all classes throughout a week, or minimal load (26.09%). The orientation of the workload figures to the earlier levels of schooling suggests the inclusion of compulsory LOTE elements in the primary and high school curriculum, with the reduced percentages in high school aligning to the drop-off after the compulsion is removed and fewer students progress through to the upper grades.

**Language Proficiency**

In fluency levels (Table 17, Chart 10), Chinese reflects the high proportion of native speakers (71.43%) whilst 77.77% of Indonesian teachers rated themselves good or very good speakers, but none considered themselves fluent. Only three Japanese teachers rated themselves as fluent, with 63.63% in the very good/good range. Overall, close to a quarter (26.79%) of all teachers considered their language ability to be adequate.
Setting aside the Chinese native speakers, the distribution of fluent to good proficiency does not appear markedly different between school levels (Table 18, Chart 11). However, one in five college (19.05%) and one in four (24.24%) high school teachers rated their proficiency as adequate only. Although the 30.43% of primary Asian language teachers who rated themselves as adequate might manage at the lower introductory level, lesser knowledge and skills at both high school and college level can impact on the ability of teachers to conceptualize alternate teaching methodologies to resolve student difficulties (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010). At worst a teacher with limited knowledge may feel inadequate and try to conceal this from students and colleagues. However, more likely is the inability to interact with native speakers such as visitors from sister schools. Whilst being able to interpret for visitors demonstrates to students a teacher’s ability to put into practice what they teach, so the converse applies, equating to a loss of confidence in the teacher by students: “She can’t speak to a real Japanese person in the language!!” Teachers in this position also might rely more on textbooks and audio support, adhering to learning progression laid down in commercial products. This does not suggest that the teaching would be poor. Rather, it could remain formulaic because the teacher lacks the rich language knowledge to strike out laterally and seize learning opportunities in response to student interests and unexpected capability changes. High school students might describe such routine approaches (and thus the language) as “boring”, to the detriment of retention and continuation rates.

Excepting the native Chinese speakers, the higher confidence levels for Indonesian and Japanese correlate roughly with the continuous time in country (Table 19, Chart 12). Over half of the Japanese speakers (55.81%) have spent a year or more in Japan, and this verifies the anecdotal evidence identified in the national study of Japanese (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010). Only one of the nine Indonesian teachers has spent a year in that country. Meanwhile the 39.53% of Japanese teachers who have spent less than three months is a sizable proportion, and these teachers may well be those less confident in their language abilities. Very noticeable from the graph is that Japanese teachers have either spent longer or shorter periods, with few in the 3-6 month range.
Comparison by teaching levels (Table 20, Chart 13) reveals that, although primary teachers have a higher proportion (52.17%) of less than three months in-country experience, around 40% of both college (42.86%) and high school teachers (40.63%) are in the same position. If these visits are short, for example one month or less, they might be beneficial from a cultural perspective, but could have a limited impact on fluency levels and language confidence as the individual is required to return home just as they feel they are starting to comprehend some of the nuances of daily communication. Once again, if this impacts on teacher confidence in their own abilities, they are more likely to adhere to process teaching that does not threaten their sense of professional efficacy. As the national study of Japanese found, “there are many teachers who do not have the literacy levels to read materials in Japanese easily and fluently, or to write materials at a high level in Japanese. They do not have the confidence to be able to assist senior students if they have difficulties” (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010. p.66). Routine is more likely to take precedence over surges of capability advancement in response to student questions or desires, and teaching to be more behaviorist than constructive in its orientation.
Most Chinese native speakers have recently visited China (Table 21, Chart 14) (Orton, 2010). However, close to three quarters of Japanese teachers (73.81%) and half of the Indonesian teachers (55.55%) had visited their respective L2 countries in the past three years (Kohler & Mahnken, 2010). That almost half of Japanese teachers (47.62%) did so in 2010 is particularly notable. Once again, this may reflect the impact of the SALS teacher learning group attending intensive in-country courses. Nonetheless, almost one quarter of all teachers (24.07%) had not visited the L2 in the past five or so years, raising potential issues of language fluency and current cultural proficiency to enthuse classroom teaching. Initiatives such as the NALSSP sponsored SALS course can provide valuable support in meeting this professional need.

Most college (71.43%) and high school teachers (83.87%) had visited the L2 country in the past three years, as had over half of primary practitioners (54.55%) (Table 22). 2010 seemed a particularly active year with half or more of secondary teachers traveling, perhaps the result of improved exchange rates. The figures for 2011 are likely to be substantially less.

The substantial majority (87.04%) of visits were of one month duration or less (Table 23, Chart 15), suggesting that these were either holidays, school trips, or intensive language courses, such as are offered by the Japan Foundation. Only teachers of Japanese (16.66%) spent longer periods in-country.
Such shorter visits are unlikely to yield major enhancement of L2 ability for less confident speakers, although additional knowledge might be gained through a language course. More significant would be the opportunity to engage daily with the Asian language, facilitating personal communicative confidence, the rejuvenation of cultural knowledge, and the revitalization of affective and professional commitment to the L2. In a way not readily available to other subject teachers, LOTE practitioners are able to immerse themselves physically and emotionally in their subject. The impact of this on L2 commitment and enthusiasm cannot be underestimated, and indeed such opportunities continue to be encouraged as rich professional development that impacts directly on classroom teacher performance. However, such outcomes are not automatic, but rather require a conscious effort to be translated into improved student learning.

Not surprisingly, primary teachers were least likely (57.14%) to have taken school trips to the L2 country (Table 24, Chart 16), although over a quarter (28.57%) have done so on multiple occasions. The multiple visits figure increases for those who teach in high school (46.66%), but then drops away (38.1%) again for college. Within those who had never taken a school trip to the L2 country, the 16.67% high school response compares favorably with the one third for college teachers with more mature students. Nonetheless, it is impressive that 61.54% of Tasmanian Asian language teachers have invested the immense amount of organizational effort and individual capital, assumed the additional responsibility, and sacrificed personal leave time to conduct a visit to the L2 country.

Despite being the newest Asian language in Tasmania, over half of Chinese teachers (57.15%) have taken trips overseas, as compared to 36.5% of Indonesian teachers (Table 25). A key factor in this difference might be that they are native speakers, capable of dealing with officialdom and trip crises more easily in the local language. The Indonesian Never response at 62.5% would seem unlikely to rise, given parental concern at security threats in that nation, and the focus of Indonesian at the primary level (Kohler & Mahnken, 2010). Japan has been the most likely destination with 40.47% of teachers taking multiple trips, rising to 71.42% for at least one trip. Quite clearly, the school trip is a significant part of this language experience, particularly in high school (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010). Parental sensitivity to seismic events in Japan could cause a slow down in the frequency of school visits to that country in the immediate future.

Professional Learning

45.29% of teachers have a post-graduate certificate or diploma (Table 26, Chart 17), with only 7.55% holding a Masters award or higher. Around half have no formal post-graduate
qualification, a figure that equates most directly with the Japanese teachers who answered in the negative (53.66%). Proportionally, teachers of Indonesian (77.77%) and of Chinese (66.67%) rated more highly, although this again focused on certificate and diploma level studies.

There appears to be no evidence of significant differences in post-graduate study between teaching qualification (Table 27). The higher proportion of GradCert in BEd and GradDip in the DipEd and BTeach could relate to teacher language enhancement or adoption of a methodology after taking a teaching degree. MEd are evenly spread evenly across languages and more recent teaching qualifications.

The absence of higher post-graduate qualifications is most notable at the college level (60%), followed by primary (52.17%) and then high school (41.94%) (Table 28). Asian language teachers with MEd (3 teachers, one in each language - 5.45%) and PhD (1 Japanese teacher - 1.89%) qualifications are scarce (combined 7.49%). Among teachers with higher qualifications GradCert and GradDip predominate; 48.39% in high schools, 39.13% in primary, and 35% at the college level.

The level of higher post-graduate study being undertaken currently (Table 29, Chart 18) remains almost the same as those who already hold such qualifications; three MEd and one PhD (7.27%). Most (70.91%) teachers are undertaking no post-graduate study.
A cross-tabulation of post-graduate learning (Table 30) reveals that 55.55% of those holding a graduate certificate and 42.87% of those with a diploma were still undertaking formal courses. Meanwhile, 88% of those without a post-graduate qualification were not studying at present.

When examined on the basis of years teaching (Table 31, Chart 19), the highest level of post-graduate awards is held by the 11-15 year experience group, principally graduate certificates or diplomas (58.33%), and one MEd (8.33%). The 16-20 year group was comparable with a total of 54.54%, once again mainly GradCert/GradDip (45.45%), and one PhD (9.09%). Although one might expect the demands on early year teachers to discourage post-graduate learning, it is reassuring to note that around a third (36.36%) had completed post-graduate certificates or diplomas.

The demands of the classroom on early career teachers is reflected by three quarters of the 1-5 year group responding negatively to current study (Table 32, Chart 20). The 6-10 year experience (42.87%) and 11-15 year experience (53.84%) groups are most involved undertaking three higher degrees (15% of the 20) and seven certificates/diplomas (35%). The figures drop significantly in the 16-20 year experience group (81.82%), with the one MEd
candidate in the small 21-25 year group. Those with over 25 years service appear to have fully withdrawn from further formal learning. The data suggest a preference among Asian language teachers for shorter certificate and diploma level courses over longer post-graduate studies.

Although stage theory is not immutable, the commencement around the 12-year experience mark of the mid career interrogation stage as suggested by Hubermann (1995) could explain the higher post-graduate study engagement in the 11-15 year experience cohort in this survey. It would thus seem that any recruitment for post-graduate learning would stand the greatest success if directed at teachers around the 10-year experience mark. Before that, they may still be adjusting to school life. Thereafter, literature and the data in this survey suggest interest declines substantially, as teachers move towards mid-career stabilization and conservatism before winding down for retirement.

Respondents overwhelmingly (87.04%) selected time as the key factor limiting post-graduate study (Table 33, Chart 21). There is no doubt that a teacher’s job is busy. However, it is difficult to assume that all of a teacher’s leave time is committed to marking and class preparation, particularly for experienced teachers, most of whom do not prepare written lesson plans. A factor that may be included, although not part of the survey, is the burden of maintaining sister school relationships and the work associated with visits both ways. Although less than half (46.43%) of the teachers admitted to an active sister school relationship, these practitioners have extra, often unofficial, tasks such as:

- finding, briefing, and supporting host families;
- preparing and maintaining activity and support plans for exchange groups; and
- planning, maintaining finances, and executing group visits to the L2 country.

Added to this may be a reduction in holiday time to undertake overseas trips, without additional salary for full time care of students or time-in-lieu for sacrificed holidays. Nonetheless, the burden is not constant with trips generally every two years and exchange visits to Australia often no more than a couple of weeks long. So, the question of time remains, and may be one of perception rather than professional availability.
The issue related to time for study might be explainable by the 90.91% female makeup of Asian language teaching cohort. Recent studies (Hayes et al., 2011; Howell, 2011) suggest that women continue to shoulder most of the domestic and child rearing tasks, some feeling particularly pressured to be “super mums”, maintaining a career whilst still excelling at domestic responsibilities. Over 85% of women surveyed recently believed they undertook the majority of laundry and shopping, with the figure rising to 91% for most of the parenting (Howell, 2011). If this is the case, then for respondents to this survey, time may refer not to study release or periods not working, but to the discretionary time available once the domestic factors have been taken into account. Therefore, time may not be the up to seven weeks available additional to the standard four weeks annual leave, but that remaining after daily and unceasing domestic factors have been taken into account. During the school term, it probably refers to the period or level of energy remaining after the children have been taken to various activities and their homework is done each day, chores are out of the way, and lesson preparation and marking are completed. The domestic demands referred to do not disappear in the school holidays but are supplemented by children’s activities, so the challenges may continue although relieved only by the absence of school for parent and child alike. Time is still at a premium for the parent female teacher, and they are unlikely to ensure an even crazier pace by adding in study. If opportunities arise, a trip to the L2 country to reimmerse into the language and culture would appear much more attractive (Kohler & Mahnken, 2010). Meanwhile, for those hardy or young enough to undertake post-graduate learning, the shorter certificate or diploma courses, particularly if they are language specific, seem more attractive than higher degrees that demand a four to five year part-time commitment. As one teacher commented:

*This is my first year of teaching a language. I am qualified to teach Jap only up to year 8 having stage 4 Jap and the LOTE component of the BEd. The school has only offered Jap to year 8 previously. I would like to further study to increase my confidence with the second language.*

Limitations on school release (27.78%) for other than certified professional development activities and no guarantee of promotion or recognition in professional terms (22.22%) appear to be further factors discouraging post-graduate study (Table 33). However, there is an inconsistency in that, whilst most see school support and PD release as a factor in post-graduate study, the majority (76.36%) considered their school as supportive of professional development, with a very small negative (3.64%) (Table 34). This response may be due to the...
question having focused on L2 professional development rather than the wider implications of post-graduate learning and major improvements in pedagogy. In addition, the professional development referred to here may well be of shorter duration, such as conferences, seminars, and workshops that demand less time away from the classroom. Although recognized as PD, seminars and workshops that focus on resources and activities tend to be fragmented, occasional, and rarely translate into real pedagogical change (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010; Kertesz, 2007). Claimed improvements in teaching are open to serious question as most PD is not linked clearly to teacher learning needs based on the evaluation of pedagogy, and changes to classroom practice are not validated (Kertesz, 2007). Recent national studies of Asian languages have commented that

Teachers are keen to learn practical ideas and techniques, and to gain access to new games, worksheets and resources that help engage their students. There is a danger, however, that professional development activities and resources may be piecemeal, and does not assist with the renewal of curriculum as a whole or with major changes in methodology and focus (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010, p.68).

Meanwhile, a study in the same national series (Sturak & Naughton, 2010) reported that the proportion of students studying Asian languages in Australian schools had declined from 24% in 2000 to 18.6%, with discontinuation particularly high between the early and senior secondary years. It is possible to question whether all the PD has been worthwhile.

The perception of the lack of career pathways (Table 35, Chart 22) may affect higher postgraduate study levels, and the absence of career rewards could undermine motivation. College teachers were rather evenly split in their responses, perhaps because some may feel they have achieved their peak in the pre-tertiary college environment. Negative responses for high school (44.83%) and primary (42.85%) teachers significantly exceeded positive responses (27.58% and 28.57% respectively). The perceived lack of career pathways and rewards could be seen to be associated with senior staff delaying retirement and thus opportunities for younger staff to progress. Meanwhile, some of the undecided teachers (26.53%) might be satisfied to remain in their current situation and may not have even investigated career pathways. Nonetheless, with only one third of the whole perceiving a career path in Asian Languages, overall motivation for post-graduate study and professional improvement would not appear significant.
The data suggest the following:

- Asian language teachers appear more likely to undertake post-graduate professional learning between their fifth and fifteenth professional years, coinciding with professional maturity and (for those females entering the profession early) their pre-child bearing years (an inevitable factor to be considered given the gender mix). This interest aligns with the growth and diversification phase as proposed by stage theory (Hubermann, 1995).

- Unless they complete even a GradCert in this career stage, Asian language teachers appear unlikely to enroll in post-graduate learning. Militating factors may be either domestic, growing children demanding attention, or professional where such courses simply become irrelevant to daily school life and career progression.

- Online courses to facilitate post-graduate study by full time workers might not appeal to this particular demographic because they are unable to either generate or identify the very discretionary time that is assumed by such course structures. This could be an area for future study.

This presents a dilemma. Greater post-graduate study would raise the professional status of this teaching group and encourage further learning amongst the teacher cohort, and benefit student outcomes and retention (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010). However, the societal demands on this highly feminized teaching force appear to work constantly against the post-graduate engagement that could facilitate the upgrade of all. Indeed, it appears more in the personal interest of these teachers not to engage in further study, but to manage well their work commitments and meet their domestic demands. When these pressures are alleviated, the motivation for post-graduate learning seems unlikely to suddenly arise.

Time was not the only issue limiting post-graduate study. Course relevance (22.22%) also figured as a factor (Table 33) and this was expanded in later survey professional behaviour responses (Table 36). Despite close to two-thirds of the teachers (62.26%) being aware of opportunities to increase their language skills, only a minority considered the School of Education (11.32%) relevant to the improvement of their pedagogy, or reported a strong professional influence from SALS (20.75%) at the University of Tasmania. The higher figure for Japanese (21.43%) possibly reflects the positive benefits of the NALSSP sponsored SALS learning initiative. However, the majority of Asian language teachers remain alienated from the very local institutions that have the potential and expertise to influence positively their content knowledge or educational practice (Kohler & Mähnken, 2010). Placing units online might provide learning flexibility for workplace learners, but differing perspectives of course/unit relevance and discretionary learning time imply Asian language teachers are unlikely to sign up in significant numbers.

In the absence of post-graduate study one might expect Asian language teachers to be engaging in other learning or activities that would result in the improvement of their pedagogy. However, only around one third of the respondents kept abreast of professional research in the learning area (37.74%), or utilized the Tasmanian Professional Teaching Standards to monitor and evaluate practice (33.96%).

Research into professional development in Tasmanian high schools (Kertesz, 2007) already has indicated an absence of needs analysis, that most teachers base their professional development choices on interest or fun rather than pedagogical need, and that there is no effective classroom validation of professional learning. For Asian language teachers any focused activities would most likely be undertaken through professional groupings, such as JATNET, MLTAT, or DoE network meetings. Such events might provide benefits of classroom focused teaching ideas and resources, but they are occasional and do not seriously engage with issues of real teacher knowledge of pedagogy (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010).
Professional learning might occur in more informal ways, such as engaging with native speaker organizations or other community activities to underpin language and cultural knowledge. However, only a minority were members of L2 community organizations (Table 38), such as the Australia-Japan Society or sister city committees (20.75%), or engaged with the local L2 community in meetings (22.64%), or participated in cultural activities (18.87%).

L2 activities were more likely to be impersonal such as Internet access (32.08%) or watching movies (43.40%), although these again remained confined to the minority. Finally, whilst teachers appeared to be happy to visit their Asian country and speak the language, and close to half had taken advantage of opportunities sponsored by the L2 government (such as Japan Foundation or Endeavour scholarships) (45.38%), very few (11.32%) embraced opportunities to maintain and improve fluency through local community engagement. This may be seen to call into question, at least as far as school teachers are concerned, the benefit of language interaction ‘salons’ or similar events organized by Asian culture associations. Japanese language teachers indicated that they were the least engaged with these types of activities (9.52%) despite the language being the most widely taught Asian language in Tasmania.

This lack of engagement with the local Asian community raises a couple of significant issues. In the first instance, by not demonstrating explicitly such a commitment, Asian language teachers are not showcasing the importance of this learning to the wider community. On the other hand, they are missing out on the social engagement with the local L2 communities that could offer cultural support and demonstrate to some degree that, even if students don’t get to travel to the Asian country whilst at school, language learning remains a valuable key to cross-cultural understanding.

The source of this low engagement could well rest with teacher perceptions of how their additional efforts are recognized and compensated. de Kretser & Spence-Brown (2010) reported that Japanese teachers across Australia saw sister school and exchange programs as “highly motivating for students and [providing] broadly enriching educational experiences. However, such programs place considerable extra demands on teachers, for which they are usually not compensated” (p.8). However, only just over a quarter (26%) of Tasmanian Asian language teacher felt that they were compensated adequately, none of them strongly (Table 39, Chart 23). Those agreeing declined substantially at the high school (16.67%) and college (15.79%) level. Half of college (52.63%) and high school (50.00%) teachers answered in the negative, with around one third undecided in both cases. One teacher felt motivated to comment in the survey that:

Our school loves the kudos teaching two Asian languages brings. It also loves the promotion that the school international trips bring. However, it does nothing practical to support any of these endeavours. Recently banning fundraising at school for trips and refusing to cover teacher relief. It is one thing to enjoy the benefits of the language teacher’s efforts however, with no practical support such activities are becoming untenable.
Teachers of Chinese (50%) and Indonesian (55.55%) were more likely to indicate that they were not adequately compensated for trips and other activities (Table 40). The former at secondary level have to work extra hard to either introduce a tonal character language or entice Australian students to undertake a very demanding pre-tertiary subject. The highest figure for Indonesian might be in response to teacher efforts in primary schools that are unlikely to lead to continuation, making the language a ‘nice to have’ but not ‘serious’ part of learning. The 42.50% of Japanese teachers aligns closely to the overall figure, and is almost double those who felt well compensated.

When examined by years teaching (Table 41), those who are most likely to disagree that they are adequately compensated form promotional efforts are teachers with 11-15 year (69.23%) and 16-20 year (60.00%) experience, mostly Japanese and Indonesian teachers. This represents the most experienced teaching cohort, who could assume long term responsibility (at least the next 10 years) for influencing the direction of Asian language learning and the implementation of curricular changes. Meanwhile the 11-15 year experience group with the highest post-graduate learning participation and thus the potential for future learning, also identified a lack of career opportunities and had the highest potential for wastage in the next 1-5 years.

**Teacher Perceptions of Schools**

The majority of teachers considered their school to be supportive (Table 42) of Asian language learning in general (73.21%), and that the school celebrated student achievement (63.64%). However, only half of the respondents felt that schools encouraged Asian language activities as part of school life (51.78%), or recognized L2 contribution to literacy learning (50%); neither of these strongly. Teacher perception of parents valuing and actively supporting L2 learning was below half (43.63%), with colleague interest at just over a third (36.36%). Once again, the strong responses were few.

Those teachers who were undecided (41.82% for the parents, and 29.63% for the literacy question) may not have engaged with parents regarding the value of Asian languages to student learning. The absence of strong disagreement seems positive as it could indicate that teachers do not feel schools are hostile to Asian language learning. Disagreement might represent teacher reaction to school attitudes that they have not actively sought to change themselves, much the same as the undecided group.

There is a perception (45.46% with 14.55% strong) that some schools have a stronger European language culture.
Some assumptions can be made about school management of Asian languages from teacher responses (Table 43) given the frequency of advanced and beginner learners combined in the same class (90% with 34.55% strong). Furthermore, mixed grade classes are common in over half of the schools (55.35%). This aligns with the findings of de Kretser & Spence-Brown (2010) that more schools “appeared unable or unwilling to support small classes at senior levels, leading to unsatisfactory combined year-level classes or the abandonment of senior programs” (p.8). One teacher commented in the survey: Teaching 3 levels in one class - year 11, accelerated, Year 12 is very demanding. This would not be accepted practice in core subjects. Half of the teachers (50%) considered timetable efficiencies overtook student needs, although the same amount saw contact hours allocation as adequate.

Two thirds (66.07%) felt that their school appreciated teacher language promotion activities (Table 44). A third (35.19%) indicated that their school had undertaken a NALSSP project to advance Asian language learning, an activity that will have required active school support. However, only one third (33.93%, with a very low 1.79% strong) verified inter-school cooperation to maintain Asian language viability. Many (42.86%) were undecided in this question, possibly indicating teachers either are uninvolved in such efforts or they do not exist. Such cooperation is essential if feeder school students are to remain engaged and enthusiastic in continuing their Asian language studies. With two thirds of Asian language teachers (66.08%) not facilitating such connections, students either might have to repeat previous learning as everyone is reverted to a basic level, or else students may be disconcerted at teachers who cannot engage with real written or spoken language (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010). Unfortunately, there is anecdotal evidence of capable and enthusiastic students dropping Asian language due to similar factors in Tasmania. This situation is not unique to Asian languages, but rather becomes noticeable by virtue of being an optional learning area, and the numbers being low at the upper high school and college levels. Furthermore, in a small state such as Tasmania, high school teachers can specifically direct students away from colleges seen as not working in the best interests of their Asian language students. Such issues are not easily raised in formal surveys.

Three quarters (74.54%) of schools support exchange activities, but fewer schools have active sister school relationships (46.43%). These are confined principally to schools teaching Chinese and Japanese. The difference between support for, and actually facilitating, exchanges may be the result of a number of factors, including activity becoming an additional unofficial responsibility of language teachers, along with the associated school trips and visits. Exchanges represent another time factor in the Asian language teacher workload, one that is duplicated in few other learning areas.

**Classroom Practices**

Classroom practice data (Table 45) was influenced throughout by:

- the small number of Chinese and Indonesian teachers,
- Indonesian being focused mainly on primary schools, and
- the relatively recent introduction of Chinese to Tasmania.

For example, 50% of Chinese teachers have a dedicated room in high school and college, compared to only 11.11% of Indonesian teachers who probably move around primary classrooms. Only around one third of Japanese teachers (36.36%) have their own room where cultural materials can be displayed to support learning transitions. One teacher made the specific comment: *I've been promised a LOTE dedicated room for years, still work in 7 different classrooms.*
Teachers of Chinese relied mainly on one textbook (83.33%) that they followed (66.67%). Textbook reliance was significantly lower in Japanese (13.64%) and Indonesian (22.22%), with Indonesian teachers least likely to be learning resource driven (11.11%). The Japanese result is contrary to national research that suggested high textbook use often formed a *de facto* curriculum in many schools (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010). When examined by levels (Table 46) textbook usage surprisingly does not differ greatly between primary and high school, with around one quarter of teachers using one textbook set. The use of workbook exercises and tests increases with levels, but not significantly. Rather than using a textbook, one could expect primary Asian language teachers to develop topics and themes that align with the home teacher’s curriculum. That the rate of textbook usage does not increase in high school is due probably to the maturity of the teaching force. They have experienced a number of different publications and are able to recognize and draw upon the strength of each for the benefit of their students.

Regular homework was reported most frequently for Chinese (100%), less so for Japanese (59.09%) and Indonesian (22.22%). Most teachers prepared their own worksheets and tests (81.82%) and adjusted lessons to meet student needs (85.45%) in classes where they felt confident teaching mixed ability students (74.55%). There was a consistent 60% level response across all languages for devising new methodologies and concepts to aid grammar learning. However, only a third of teachers (32.73%) prepared written lesson plans for every lesson. When examined by teaching level (Table 46), there is, once again, little divergence between primary (30.43%) and high school teachers (27.27%), the latter being the sector with the largest focused L2 learning cohort and the highest student withdrawal rate nationally. Only 40% of college teachers write lesson plans for classes where students with different abilities are expected to develop a wide range of skills to confront pre-tertiary examinations. If, as mentioned above, textbooks do in some cases form a *de facto* curriculum and thus become the basis for lesson planning, then the absence of lesson plans could be attributed to the teacher following the text, but only a minority of Tasmanian teachers admitted such reliance at any level. Teachers with years in the classroom and familiar with course content no doubt are able to plan in their heads the delivery of well-practised lesson sequences. However, in the absence of a systematic and verifiable lesson planning process focused on meeting individual student learning needs in each distinct class, it would seem difficult for practitioners themselves to discriminate between expert teaching that contributes to student deep learning and the habituated classroom performance behaviours that characterize the merely experienced teacher (Hattie, 2003).

Well below half of college (40%) and high schools (36.36%) have dedicated language classrooms (Table 46), with the lower primary figure (21.74%) probably reflecting the movement of the Asian language teacher between homerooms. Reliance on commercially prepared materials is low, between a quarter and one third with most teachers designing their own worksheets and tests (81.48%) and adjusting their lessons in response to student interest and motivation (85.19%). Confidence in teaching different ability levels did not vary significantly, remaining in the 70% range for both subject and level. As might be expected, setting homework increases with student level, although only just over half of responding teachers (57.14%) regularly issued and checked homework. Alternative methodologies for grammar also increase by grade for two-thirds (59.26%), of teachers, suggesting that the other third rely on text explanations or established descriptive terms that might not always be comprehensible for students. Japanese particles, for example, have no equivalent in English, and can be quite difficult to explain to students who have less detailed knowledge about grammar in their own language.

Less than a third of teachers (29.09%) used corporate computer learning programs (Table 47). Forty percent claimed to use a low-tech teaching approach, whilst a similar number (41.82%) connected the L2 with to normal computer programs, such as word processing and email.
Half of the respondents adapted computer resources to class needs (52.73%). A similar figure (49.09%) use smart boards regularly, perhaps due to focused NALSSP support for this technology. Some teachers commented specifically on their lack of ICT resources:

- I attempt to keep activities varied. Main classroom focus is on pair and group oral interactions. Use of technology is limited by access to resources.
- No classroom, no technology, no access to computer labs, and an annual budget of $500.

Other than smart boards, ICT usage is higher beyond the primary level as might be expected (Table 48). However, there is less divergence between high school and college figures, suggesting that Asian language teachers have a mature attitude to ICT, utilizing it when appropriate, and willing to adapt common programs to support learning. In this sense they might also be conscious of the benefits of ICT and yet also the disadvantages where students are ultimately expected to use handwriting in senior examinations (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010). What is not revealed in these particular figures is the level of individual teacher ICT skill and its impact in the classroom. Furthermore, access to L2 web resources could also be restricted by the teacher’s language level and confidence.

Games still figure as a key part of classroom practice (67.27%) with songs used less overall (49.09%), and very limited adaptation of traditional plays mixing L1 and L2 (29.09%) (Table 49). As expected, songs are most common in primary (73.91%), but games still figure significantly at college level (75%). The slightly more frequent indication of use of games and songs in Indonesian (77.78% and 66.67%) possibly reflects the heavier primary school weighting for this language. Native speaker access is higher in Chinese with a greater proportion of ethnic speakers (66.67%), whilst the relatively few Indonesian residents in Tasmania complicates access for teachers of that language, particularly if they are moving between schools. Less than half of Japanese teachers regularly access a native speaker (43.18%) although teacher assistant schemes offer additional opportunities. The regular presence of a native speaker offers chances not only to develop more authentic speech patterns, but it also adds veracity to the learning experience, particularly as contemporary linguistic and cultural insights help dispel clichés.

Less than half (40%) of all teachers hold cultural events in their schools, with these events held more frequently by Chinese teachers (66.67%). Whilst there is little variation across schools levels (Table 50), Japanese notably has fewer teachers holding cultural events (34.09%), revealing that two-thirds of schools offering Japanese language as a subject are unlikely to experience traditional seasonal celebrations or events that figure significantly in the culture. For schools where travel to the L2 country is limited, this relegates flower viewing and Childrens’ Day, for example, to something in books or videos rather than an opportunity to identify common human experiences. Asian language and the associated intercultural learning may remain the province of the specific classroom rather than facilitating a wider ‘Asia-wise’ atmosphere across the school and beyond. These results also call into question teacher understanding of the intercultural language learning principles that two thirds of teachers claim across all levels.

College teachers reported competition participation (65%) more frequently, along with game playing (75%), although games figured prominently for over two thirds of all teachers at all levels (Table 50). Only 40% of teachers reported holding festivals and sports days which may limit kinaesthetic learning opportunities, and omitting a culturally appropriate “fun” option for well over half of all students, most notably at the critical high school level. Similarly, the use of modified traditional plays using a mixture of both L1 and L2 are rare other than at primary level (30.43%). Such plays allow the use of drama, and the embedding of genuine L2
words and phrases supported by English within the context of timeless cross-cultural themes of empathy, compassion, kindness, and generosity. These are not commercially available, but can be written from simple traditional tales by the teacher inserting level appropriate language. Although presented at a Japanese seminar some years ago as a valuable opportunity to embed language into genuine settings, this approach does not appear to have caught on with these teachers (22.73%). The question one might ask is how the majority of teachers create opportunities for students to practice collectively the wider use of limited high school vocabulary and structures embedded in appropriate cultural settings.

Native speaker access is highest at the college level, not surprisingly given the importance of oral examinations. However, high school access (39.39%) was only marginally higher than primary (34.78%). Such access at high school, where the majority of students disengage from language studies, may well be one of the key factors affecting retention, since native speakers not only assist in the development of real communication skills beyond mere textbook or CD repetition, but they also provide direct access to the culture as a lived experience. They can be invaluable in rectifying stereotypical portrayals in textbooks and helping locate real resources such as web sites. Even an older native speaker has a unique experience of growing up in their Asian homeland, something in which students are genuinely interested. Discussions about the consumption of whale meat can reach new and interesting dimensions when related by an older Japanese person who grew up in the immediate post-war years!

**Teacher Views of Student Attitudes**

Teachers across all levels (Table 51) agreed (82.69%) that students were interested in engaging with Asia and Asian people. Whilst the highest reported interest was at college level (95%), the variation between high school (77.42%) and primary (72.73%) was minimal. Negative responses were confined to lower schooling levels where students may still have a limited perspective on the world.

Evidence of conservatism regarding Asia (Table 52) was low (15.38%) but more likely in high and primary schools. Even the 10% agreement by college teachers seems unusual given that Asian languages are a niche elective, but is possible that the teachers here are referring more broadly to students in their classes other than Asian language. Although the undecided response was close to a third across the range, one could consider this as positive as teachers do not appear to be experiencing negative or critical comments upon which to make a judgment. If this is the case, the lack of observing negative conservatism would increase to 84.62% overall. Such a result is useful to indicate that Asian language learning as a school experience may remain divorced from current debate over sensitive political issues, be it boat people or whaling, and that this may not be a significant factor currently in student withdrawal from Asian language learning at present.

Despite games being part of the repertoire of over half of the teachers, most (69.23%) disagreed that students labeled classes without games and food boring (Table 53). Although there is a slight increase in the agree response as one goes down the learning levels, the negative responses, particularly between high school (64.52%) and primary (63.64%) align fairly closely. This suggests that rather than the students not complaining at all, teachers have moved beyond creating expectations of activities and rewards that tended to characterize motivation efforts in the earlier years of Asian language teaching in schools. Sushi, noodles, and satays might be a pleasant experience, but they are not a key incentive for retention.

Around one third of the teachers (32.69%) considered students had difficulty applying themselves to learning vocabulary and grammar (Table 54), with slightly more (42.3%) disagreeing. Almost 30% of college and high school teachers neither agreed nor disagreed.
that students had difficulty applying themselves to learning vocabulary and grammar. Two teachers made specific comments about student application:

- About 20% might be interested in learning, the others basically not interested and get sick of it by grade 5.
- I try my hardest and have for 18 years, but the curriculum is simply overloaded, students are not able to sit, listen and remember, they tend to need a flashing screen in front of them to keep them amused.

A similar pattern occurs regarding the role of homework (Table 55) where the positive response follows a predictable increase with school level and thus individual student maturity and additional learning demands. Over a quarter of high school (25.81%) and college (31.58%) teachers responded neutrally to this question.

Asian language relevance is predictably greater at college level where students might be aiming for pre-tertiary outcomes (Table 56). However, it is interesting how there is only a small variation between primary (52.38%) and high school (56.66%) positive and negative responses (19.05% and 20% respectively). Close to one quarter (23.33%) of high school teachers neither agree nor disagree that their students understand the relevance of Asian languages. It could be claimed that failure to engage with this issue may contribute to withdrawal and undermine retention in Asian language study beyond the compulsory years.

No teachers felt strongly that their students were committed to subjects requiring effort such as languages (Table 57, Chart 24), with high school demonstrating the highest negative response (29.03%). The 30% undecided and 15% negative response by college teachers is notable since increased commitment is necessary for pre-tertiary success. It is not surprising that half of the primary teachers would indicate undecided to this question given the immaturity of their students. However, a comparably high school undecided figure (48.39%) is perhaps more complex. This might reflect perceptions of student motivation, which could be addressed by teacher adjustment of lessons to capitalize on student interests (87.88%), or the development of alternate explanations (61.36%) (Table 45). It is possible here to question that, if close to half of high school teachers are unaware of such student perceptions and attitudes, then how then are they able to exert and focus effective efforts on increased retention?
Almost half of high school Asian language teachers (48.39%) reported their students considered the L2 as only for the brightest students (Table 58, Chart 25). The figures are lower for college (20%) and primary (13.64%). Interestingly, three quarters of college students did not see Asian languages as only for the brightest students (Table 82). High school teachers similarly reported (54.84%) that students were attracted to “fun” subjects (Table 59, Chart 26), often referred to in high school as “bludge” subjects such as home economics (much to the chagrin of these teachers) (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010). Sixty percent of college students studying Asian languages identified this as a peer motivation not to learn Asian languages, but it came behind other factors, such as perceptions of difficulty (Tables 79 & 80).

Some college teachers (10.53%) not surprisingly agreed that students preferred the better marks they can receive in English based subjects (Table 60, Chart 27).
Teacher perception of the impact of friendship groups on subject selection (Table 61, Chart 28) is again highest in high schools (45.16%) with over a third of teachers undecided (38.71%).

Teacher views of student pathways understanding (Table 62, Chart 29) is stronger at the college level (60%), as would be expected for students making important life choices, and lower at the primary level (13.64%). Although one might similarly expect younger students to be less engaged with pathways issues, the high school negative (22.58%) and undecided (38.71%) figures are perhaps of concern. One teacher specifically commented that students "drop out of languages regardless of ability if they don’t see it as a part of their potential career pathway. A reduction in electives in Year 8, 9 and 10 has badly hurt our numbers."
Educational Context

Half of all teachers (50%) felt that curriculum frameworks were easily managed and easy to apply (Table 63, Chart 30), with one third undecided (32%). College teachers had the fewest agreeing (36.84%) and the most undecided (47.37%) at a senior teaching level where curriculum prescription is the greatest, and where one would assume the importance of such teacher knowledge. The high school teachers were more likely to disagree (23.33%) or agree (50%) that curriculum frameworks in Tasmania were well managed and easy to apply.

Thirty percent of Asian language teachers felt that policy was clear and well managed (Table 64), with 42% disagreeing and 28% undecided. At the primary level opinion was divided. Half of both college (52.63%) and high school (50%) teachers expressed disagreed that policy is clear and well managed, whilst around a third of the former (36.84%) and quarter of the latter (26.67%) were undecided.
Close to half of all teachers (46%) did not see the outlook for Asian languages policy and resources as positive (Table 65, Chart 31), with the level of pessimism greater as one moved from college (42.1%) to high school (50%), and down to the primary level (54.55%). The undecided and optimistic were reasonably evenly split. Looking at both the policy management and outlook figures together, less than one third of Asian language teachers seem satisfied or positive about the future, notably within the third year of a three year Federal Government initiative to raise Asian language profiles and participation rates. Meanwhile, around a third seem to be undecided about management and policy that will impact on the future of their subject area. Some teachers made specific comments about this area:

- *I believe the government needs to do something to make others see that language learning is important and they need to do something other than just make it compulsory, because if they do that I will opt out of language teaching because it will become unbearable.*
- *We need more funding to carry our popular program to early childhood classes.*
- *Languages get very little teaching time compared to most other comparable schools which makes it very hard to fit in the syllabus. Students have to do too much homework to replace teaching time and teachers far more marking as a result. This makes it almost impossible to increase / retain numbers. There is also not nearly enough promotion by the school as to the importance of learning languages as I am not really sure that they believe it.*

Although around 40% of primary teachers felt that their school leaders appreciated the impact of language learning on literacy (40.91%) (Table 66, Chart 32), half of all teachers disagreed overall, with some strongly (12.00%). The strongest disagreement was at the college level (63.16%), followed by high school teachers (53.34%). Only one in five high school teachers felt that their school leaders had placed language teaching into this important broader educational context.
Opinions about assessment management (Table 67, Chart 33) varied with level as might be expected, with a high primary undecided figure (54.55%) perhaps due to lesser exposure and more localized assessment. More significantly, only one fifth of college (21.05%) and high school (20%) teachers were satisfied with how assessment is conducted. Although college teacher dissatisfaction (52.63%) can be attributed more directly to scaling and exam management policies, a similar figure for high school teachers (46.66%) suggests that assessment decisions impact more widely, perhaps when issues of subject choices arise in Grade 10.

Although half (54%) overall felt that students didn’t receive a fair return for their learning efforts (Table 68, Chart 34), this was one question that did elicit a 18% strong negative response that increased to 31.58% at the college level, contributing to an overwhelming majority of those teachers (84.21%) feeling that their students deserved more return for their learning efforts. Consequently, a sizable group of college teachers and some of their high school counterparts who are ambivalent or supportive of assessment management seem to feel that their students’ efforts could be better recognized nonetheless. It could be claimed that this teacher response is influenced by the practice in Tasmania of scaling where Asian languages are treated no different to any other subject, and where in recent years student pre-tertiary
scores have been factored down influenced also by the size and demography of the cohort. In their national study de Kretser & Spence-Brown (2010) noted “Problems with senior secondary curriculum and assessment leading to student perceptions that studying Japanese will be difficult and may not be a strategic choice in terms of maximising chances for tertiary entry” (p.8). Tasmanian college level teachers have expressed concern for some time about insufficient consideration for Asian languages that indeed attract bonus university entrance points in other states, such as Victoria. Some teachers felt motivated to comment specifically that:

- **Students see the TA scaling as a disadvantage. Japanese EA does not score as highly as other subjects.**
- **Good students at College level choose Maths and other subjects that receive higher TER points than Languages.**
- **The TQA under rate Languages as pretertiary subjects. This contributes to falling numbers of language students in senior secondary.**
- **The scoring of Asian languages is a significant disincentive to Asian language learning.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart 34: Students learning Asian languages receive a fair return for their learning efforts</th>
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<td>College</td>
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- **Strongly Disagree**
- **Disagree**
- **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- **Agree**
- **Strongly Agree**

[Bar chart showing percentages for each category]
College Asian Language Student Survey

Student Numbers and Languages

72 valid responses were gained from surveyed students. If those still studying are undertaking pre-tertiary TCE examinations in 2011, this would represent a 40% response rate based on 2010 examination numbers. The surveys were broken into students who had access to Asian language learning in high school, where responses about teaching and school practices could be sought, and a shorter survey for those who had no access to Asian languages in their high school years,

Among students from schools where Asian languages were taught, females (70.77%) clearly dominated males (29.23%) (Table 69). Males predominated (58.82%) over females (41.18%), amongst respondents from schools without Asian languages. However, this was not substantial in light of the smaller number of these students overall.

In accordance with national findings (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010), Japanese is the dominant Asian language at the college level (Table 70). Japanese language students make up 80% of continuing learners in this survey, whilst those from non-Asian language high schools exclusively selected this language. Given that no Indonesian language college students responding to this survey, only five students having sat the pre-tertiary examination in 2010, and extinction of a college class in Hobart since that time, 2011 could represent the demise of Indonesian as a college level language in Tasmania (Kohler & Mahnken, 2010). The absence of any learning pathway is likely to raise questions of the value of learning Indonesian in the minds of parents as well as undermine the recruitment of future teachers for this language. Whilst lesser in numbers, Chinese appears to be growing gradually as suggested in the national NALSSP study of this language (Orton, 2010), and with one major private school in Tasmania having introduced Chinese since the statistics quoted in that national study.

Learning Motivation

Amongst students continuing Asian language studies at college level, travel is an almost unanimous motivating factor (94.74%) (Table 71). The only other key perception is that Asian languages are exotic and interesting (77.19%) (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010). Thereafter follow a number of secondary factors:

- maintenance of a successful study option (59.65%);
- motivational enthusiastic teaching (59.65%);
- attraction to modern Asian culture, such as music and fashion (57.89%);
- languages as an employability enhancer (52.63%); and
- making friends with a student from Asia (45.61%) (consistent with the findings of de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010).

Notably, only 36.84% of this group claimed intentions to study their Asian language at university, although 47.37% associated the language with future aspirations, with the difference perhaps made up of those aspiring to travel. Martial arts and history are less relevant (36.84%) than for those responding language students who had no access to Asian languages at high school.
Graphic representation of continuing students (Charts 35-37) reveals an alignment between the genders, with the only significant variation in the response to the statement Australia’s future is in Asia where the male response (52.94%) is double that of females (25.00%). Males were slightly more likely than females (58.82% to 42.50%) to indicate that motivating factors in studying an Asian language were future aspirations (58.82%) and employability enhancement (50.00%). This supports previous research (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010) that suggested the demonstration of real career opportunities in Asia might have appreciable outcomes in increasing male continuation.
The maintenance of a successful study option is interesting from the perspective of assessment reliability. As the third most significant continuation factor, it would seem essential that students truly see themselves as successful and comparable in achievement to their peers at college entry. Potentially inflated high school marks could quickly erode confidence as a student finds they are significantly behind their peers, especially in the area of script writing. Anecdotally, college teachers have said for some time that it can take up until Easter (first term in a four term system) for them to establish a base level before moving onto pre-tertiary grammatical structures. The absence of any external examination or officially moderated summative high school outcomes makes addressing such issues problematic. Meanwhile, highly motivated and enthusiastic teaching clearly can be aligned with efforts to facilitate school trips and exchanges, which satisfies the primary motivation of most students. Conversely, low continuation outcomes may reveal teacher reluctance or inability to undertake such additional responsibilities.

Travel was again the overwhelming factor (81.25%) for both sexes amongst those students opting to take up Japanese at college after no opportunities at high school (Table 72; Charts 38-40). Other influences were:

- Asian languages are exotic and interesting (62.50%) (also noted by de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010);
- interest in Asian history (56.25%); and
- martial arts (37.5%).
Among this group, girls were more likely to be influenced by employability (66.67%) and consideration of university learning (33.33%). Boys in this group were more likely to be motivated by cultural aspects such as music and fashion [and probably anime] (80%). They also saw Japanese as an opportunity they had to try (50%), and were influenced more significantly by their friends (50%). Pen friends and personal connections had minimal impact across the whole group. This suggests that appeals to Japanese popular culture and new opportunities is more likely to appeal to boys who previously had no opportunity to learn Asian languages. Meanwhile, *otaku* dressing up, and JPOPS [Japanese pop] music appear less significant in encouraging females to undertake language learning entering college than serious appeals to career aspirations and travel opportunities.
The positive influence of Asian language commencement at College level on intention to study the language at university is evidenced by close to 50% beginning language students intending tertiary language learning (Table 73). Once again, Japanese predominates. The intended retention rate of continuation students (56.92%) is not substantially greater than beginning students (47.06%). At the same time, it should be noted that high achieving students might often drop their language studies when undertaking strongly vocational tertiary options. This may be redressed by opportunities for concurrent Diploma level language learning opportunities strongly promoted by UTAS which allows for any student, including students undertaking professional courses (Engineering, Science, Business Law, for example), to concurrently study a Diploma in Language.

Few in either group identified good explanation of pathways options as influencing their Asian language decision (Table 71, Chart 37; Table 72, Chart 40). Whilst this might be expected due to a lack of specialist advice in high schools with no Asian language (6.25%), the continuation learner response was still very low (22.81%). Although there was no additional data was collected on this factor, these responses might reflect the lack of coordination between teaching levels reported in other studies (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010). Despite initiatives such as the University College Program to encourage Asian language continuation from college to tertiary level, participation levels may have already been influenced by inadequate information at high school on future language learning opportunities. This issue is emphasized by the student desire to know more about pathways options reflected by this survey. Over half of those commencing at college (56.25%) and two-thirds (68.43%) of continuation learners wanted to know more (Table 74). Whilst some were undecided, very few (around 7%) in either group indicated that they had no further interest in pathways.

Knowledge of pathways is uneven. There is a difference between knowledge of opportunities to commence or continue Asian language learning at university (91.23% and 81.25%) and opportunities for language learning concurrent with professional Degrees as mentioned earlier (57.89% and 50%) (Table 76).
**Student Perceptions of Peer Preference**

Most students overall neither agree nor disagree that their peers value Asian languages. Students coming from high schools with no Asian languages are more likely to agree that their peers value Asian languages than students who come from high schools with Asian languages. However, any interpretation here should be treated with caution because the small numbers in the no Asian language high school cohort.

There is no consensus of opinion about whether Asian languages are more attractive to girls than to boys (Table 78). Reasonably high levels of undecided compared to positive and negative responses suggest that this was either not important to, had not been considered by, or many students. Student responses do not appear to support an argument that Asian languages are more attractive to girls.

Those who had studied Asian languages at high school identified the following key factors as influencing their peers against Asian language study (Table 79):

1. Asian languages are too difficult (78.95%);
2. Japanese and Chinese characters are too difficult (76.92%);
3. They didn't expect to study languages at university (73.08%); and
4. They wanted to be in other subjects with their friends (63.46%).

Students without high school Asian language responded that their peers considered:

1. Asian languages too difficult (60%);
2. Other subjects more fun and interesting (60%);
3. Memorizing vocabulary difficult and boring (53.33%); and
4. They didn't expect to study languages at university (46.67%).

Respondent perceptions of the most significant factors influencing peer decisions not to learn Asian languages were extracted and rated by gender (Table 80). Peer perceptions of difficulty remain the most significant, followed by expectations of not studying languages at university. Among males in schools with Asian languages, wanting to be with friends (78.57%) appears to be a key factor for opting out. The slow pace of progress in Asian languages showed up amongst males in both schools with (71.43%) and without (50%) Asian languages. However, friendship comes well behind issues of difficulty in the three other categories. It is worth noting the still sizable group of continuing students (42.31%) who feel the difficulty of securing tertiary entrance points from Asian language study. This is no doubt an important factor that impacts on Grade 10 students, particularly those in schools covering both high school and college levels, where anecdotes about ATAR points apparently possible in Asian languages are shared around at subject choice time. However, responses to this survey have placed the issue well below the other considerations of difficulty and future study intentions.

The majority of females (70.00%) from high schools with Asian languages saw it as an area where it is possible to do well (Table 81). Whilst almost half of the males in this group (47.06%) agreed, close to a third (29.41%) were less convinced. Among those from high schools without Asian language, the numbers were reversed. More significant is that a solid body of around 60% in both groups felt that it was possible to do well in this learning area. Similarly, around 70% of both groups disagreed that Asian language study was only for the very best students (Table 82). Quite clearly respondents generally see Asian language as manageable learning for the average student. Therefore, the issue may not be one of real but rather perceived difficulty. This raises questions of how such a perception is allowed to thrive amongst high school students, despite evidence to the contrary (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010).

When asked about compulsory Asian language learning until Year 10, more continuing students tended to the negative (45.62%), although around one-third (31.58%) supported such
a move (Table 83). Those from schools without Asian language tended to be higher with around half (56.25%) supporting compulsory study. This response might be coloured by the desire of some to have access to an opportunity previously denied them. It would appear that students appreciate the elective option and are unconvinced that compulsion would improve participation or outcomes.

Student Views of High School Language Learning

The data hereafter relate only to those students with access to Asian languages in High School.

Most students surveyed identified that Japanese was taught at their high school (72.31%) with a quarter (24.62%) identifying Chinese (Table 84, Chart 41). Actual numbers of Chinese students may well vary with the inclusion of native speakers, although the community in Tasmania is not large. Two students had Indonesian at their high school, but either opted not to continue or they were unable to do so because of reduced college classes.

Students were fairly evenly split between those who had a choice of Asian languages (48.39%) and those who did not (45.17%) (Table 85). Three quarters (75.8%) also had a choice of a European language (Table 86). Languages do not appear competing over a limited pool of students, and the presence of a second Asian language alone might not enhance subject enrolments.

In almost all cases, classes in the language were available throughout the high school years (Table 87). Whilst a small group faced discontinuation (3.23%), a much larger proportion faced uncertainty as classes were occasionally suspended due to lack of numbers (20.97%), a phenomena also found in other studies of Asian language participation (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010).

Although the surveyed students continued through to college level, the insecurity of class continuation in just under a quarter of cases (22.58%) is likely to have affected other student perceptions of the subject area, with a consequent effect on future numbers (Table 88). Notably, only half felt confident enough to disagree with the proposition.
Most students had access to a qualified language teacher (83.87%) (Table 89). That eight students responded “sometimes” and two “never” should be of major concern, considering that Japanese is a well established subject in Tasmania, and Chinese with its tones and characters requires significant teaching skills and strategies. The source of this response might be schools unwilling to fund additional members of staff for a small subject, the reluctance of teachers to move away from the cities to schools in areas such as the northwest of Tasmania, or else a problem with supply. Whatever the case, this is again of concern in the third and final year of a NALSSP initiative that aims to promote and expand Asian language teaching. It is difficult to imagine other than the most committed students remaining with a language where the teacher, no matter how enthusiastic, is either one chapter ahead in the textbook or unable to utilize the full range of pedagogy and language knowledge to make learning exciting and enjoyable for students (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010).

Only a quarter of the students had full access to a native speaker in high school, either as a Tasmanian resident or through teaching assistants, such as the University of Tasmania’s Japanese Teaching Assistant (JAT) scheme. The occasional access most probably reflects local native speakers who are employed for intermittent speaking practice in higher grades.

A cross-tabulation of teacher and native speaker availability (Table 90) indicates that two students who lacked a qualified teacher also never had access to a native speaker, whilst those with occasional access to a qualified teacher also sometime had access to a native speaker. It should be noted that this situation took place at a time when language methodology units were not offered in local teacher training courses because of a perceived lack of demand. Although this has been rectified, with a couple of graduates expected in 2011, certainly one Japanese teacher position continues to remains vacant in northwest Tasmania, suggesting that the shortage revealed here may well continue, particularly in regional schools.

Half of all surveyed students had experienced occasional mixing of grade and ability levels, with the latter more likely (13.33% strong) (Table 91). The demands on teachers from such a practice are considerable. Not only must they consider differentiating and scaffolding instruction for one class, but concurrently deal with others at different curriculum stages. The interest of at least one group is likely to be sacrificed unless the teacher is both highly confident and competent. Asian language teachers cannot respond otherwise if they wish to maintain the language within their schools, but such arrangements might well contribute to falling numbers as students feel their needs are not catered for (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010).

Timetabling clashes affected one in five students (19.36%), with two thirds (67.74%) denying timetabling prevented their undertaking Asian language studies in high school (Table 92). The majority of students (82.26%) were aware that they could recommence Asian language learning at college, with girls particularly strong (86.37%, with 63.64%) ahead of boys (72.22% with 33.33% strong). It is probable that teachers, especially in marginal situations, would be informing students of the multiple language learning entry points in their learning lives (Table 93). Even students with limited language experience are able to appreciate and value the benefits of prior learning when re-entering into a college beginner class.

However, knowledge of options for recommencement at the university level was fairly even between boys (61.11%) and girls (60.47%) (Table 94). In addition to teachers perhaps spreading the information of university options, this figure also might suggest that well over half of college Asian language students coming from high schools select their Asian language already with a tertiary learning option in mind.

The question that cannot be answered due to lack of data is the level of knowledge about commencing Indonesian at university. If high school students, in particular females, are aware of recommencement options at college, and around 60% of students who continue to study
languages in college are already focused on pathways, then the absence of Indonesian beginner and pre-tertiary courses at the college level may well disadvantage Indonesian as an Asian language tertiary option.

**School Environment**

Exchange student visitors (77.97%) and sister school relationships (71.19%) backed by a school culture that encourages a broad world perspective (75.86%) are identified as common factors within the schools of continuing college Asian language learners (Table 95, Chart 42). This accords with teacher input to de Kretser and Spence-Brown (2010) “that school-to-school connections and exchange visits were highly significant in providing a focus and motivation for learning” (p.52). Orton (2010) similarly indicated “most schools offering Chinese have a sister school in China and arrange a 2/3 week study tour” (p.14). This is notable when matched up to the teacher concerns that such additional efforts are not properly recognized (Table 39, Chart 23). Celebration of Asian festivals or important dates such as Hiroshima Day or Childrens’ Day are less common (20.34%), and one can speculate on the potential of such events to influence students in cases where sister schools and exchanges are not available. Indeed, with exotic and interesting identified as a key factor in student continuation, the absence of cultural experiences could well explain student withdrawal. Pictures and DVDs are substantially less interesting and impressive than a cultural immersion activity involving wider elements of the school community.

![Chart 42: School Culture - Asian Perspective](chart)

Two-thirds of students (64.40%) considered their high school strongly supportive of Asian language learning (Table 96, Chart 43). There is no major difference between those who felt Asian languages were viewed as secondary to other subjects in the curriculum (38.98%), and those undecided (44.07%). One student was motivated to make the additional comment that: *Languages are simply not regarded as important in comparison with sport. Everything is about sport in this country!* Only a minority of students (20.33%) reported their high school as making cross-curricular connections between Asian languages and other subjects, with half (49.15%) disagreeing that such connections were made. If the undecided (30.51%) responses were based on no observed evidence of such connections, then the negative response soars to 79.66%. 

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The importance of this figure is revealed when one considers it from the perspective of intercultural language learning:

The ongoing interactive exchange of meanings, and the reflection on both the meanings exchanged and the process of interaction….understood not as something to be added to teaching and learning but rather something that is integral to the interactions that already (and inevitably) takes places in the classroom and beyond (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009).

In the absence of curricular connections, students are limited in their ability to establish a basis for comparison and understanding of their own culture and the place of language in the wider human experience. Asian languages become relegated to a subject alone locked in one classroom, rather than a wider alternate perspective on literature, science, art, and music and referred to by other than the Asian language teacher. Many students probably fail to appreciate the richer educational understanding that they are forgoing when they drop Asian language at the end of the compulsory period in Grades 7 or 8 (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010).

Close to three quarters of continuing students (72.42%) indicated that a positive languages culture is major influence in the success of Asian language learning (Table 97, Chart 44). This positive environment appears to apply across languages, with limited bias toward European languages (28.81%). The undecided response (44.07%) was higher than the negative (27.12%) on this question, suggesting that students were unaware of any conflict or competition, in itself a positive. Another positive factor was other teachers speaking second languages (62.71%). Namely, the use of languages other than English by other staff, regardless of their subject affiliation, supports the languages culture of a school. This can be extended to suggest that teachers of Asian languages who teach greetings and expressions to fellow teachers, and encourage their use of such phrases in the presence of students, are contributing to the wider positive perception of Asian languages in their school and supporting retention.
Teacher Influence

Teachers of high school students who continued Asian language overwhelmingly (Table 98, Chart 45) were:

- dynamic and interesting (78.95%),
- had fun and enjoyed teaching (82.45%), and
- passionate about teaching and learning (85.71%) (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010).

Specific student comments about their teachers were:

- She works us too hard.
- They were amazing.
- Fun and interesting
- I would love her to speak more Japanese in class, or conduct it all in Japanese
- My Asian language teacher is very engaging and makes it enjoyable to learn Japanese.
- She is an amazing teacher, very enthusiastic and one of the reason I continued to learn Japanese, even though I felt I should be travelling in another direction. Probably the best teacher I have ever had.
- The teachers that I've had do an amazing job and are really dedicated to what they teach.

Students also tended to agree that their language teachers had a rich subject knowledge (59.65%). Similarly students tended to agree that their Asian language teachers were more motivated or enthusiastic (54.38%) than other teachers.
Eighty percent of students agreed that their teachers taught them how to learn vocabulary and grammar effectively and this could be interpreted as a key teaching practice supporting continuation (Table 99, Chart 46). The majority (75.44%) also denied teacher excessive focus on games and cultural activities. Quite clearly, if we expect Asian language numbers to improve, teachers need to be equipped with sufficient teaching skills to support student metacognition and consistently overcome barriers to learning (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010). Students want to be successful, and are more likely to abandon areas of perceived weakness. Notably, short of the character mnemonics used to remember basic Asian language characters, textbooks tend to lack learning advice, as opposed to increasingly “cool” and attractive images.

Within the area of teaching practices, students agreed that their teachers responded to student interests, needs, and understanding (75.00%) tried alternate teaching approaches (75.44%), and set reasonable learning expectations (70.18%) and tended not to do the same things each
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year (Table 100, Chart 47). However, for the close to a third of respondents (31.57%) their teachers tended to be more routine.

![Chart 47: My Asian language teachers...](image)

**Measures to Improve Participation**

When looking at the high school teaching practices referred to in this survey, it should be borne in mind that these responses are from students who have continued the language. Yet, we know that most students drop Asian languages after the compulsory years and that pre-tertiary completions are falling steadily (Chart 48) (TQA, 2003-2010; de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010; Kohler & Mahnken, 2010).

![Chart 48: Asian Language Pre-tertiary Completions - Tasmania](image)

The problem is that there is no means for schools or sectors to analyze teaching because of the absence of any pedagogy focused evaluative process that could reflect strengths and
weaknesses in teaching practice (Kertesz, 2007). It would thus seem reasonable to assume that where numbers are falling teachers are not fulfilling one or more of the preconditions supporting continuation, and that where programs have collapsed a number of these positive teaching practices are not in place. As a consequence, this survey can only highlight factors that have impacted on student continuation, and suggest implementation of other measures not present currently, but which may improve student numbers by association with such success factors.

1. **Expand opportunities for students to interact with the L2 country.** School trips have largely been undertaken by schools individually meaning that low numbers either force cancellation, require the teacher to pay their own fare, or increase costs to students to support supervising teacher attendance. Meanwhile, as has been pointed out in the teacher survey, the additional time and effort is generally additional to the language teacher load and requires sacrifice of holiday time that is not recompensed. It would seem time for school sectors to consider sponsorship of school trips to achieve economies of scale and to alleviate the administrative burden on teachers. This might be achieved by partial secondment with time release. Issues of liability and responsibility might be overcome through memoranda of understanding, and it would be beneficial to examine the liability and insurance aspects of this. The great strength of a sector or even cross-sector approach is that opportunities to travel to Asian countries can be opened to schools with no Asian language, raising the potential for increased commencement at college level. Additionally, teachers should maintain and actively seek sister school opportunities. Over the years, successful and rich connections, particularly into Japan have been allowed in some cases to deteriorate due to insufficient effort on the part of schools and teachers. However, some schools need to appreciate that truly beneficial sister schools relationships emerge not from a business relationship, but from free exchanges of culture and friendship. If schools do not have access to connections then there should be no reason why State and other sector educational authorities cannot cooperate to facilitate connections through education authorities in Japanese prefectures or Chinese provinces which have Tasmanian connections – Kochi and Shizuoka prefectures in Japan, and Fujian Province in China being examples. Technology has significant potential in this area, particularly to establish initial contact that can develop into rich relationships and personal contact over time. Indeed, whole classes might parallel their growth and development, as well as mutual language learning, through adolescence. Such connections are supported by 82.69% of teachers who agreed that their students were interested in engaging with Asia and Asian people (Table 51).

2. **Support the interesting and exotic aspect of Asian languages.** Whilst Asian culture is interesting and exotic, it can only be so if students are exposed to it. The celebration of cultural festivals and events is one major omission from schools, identified absent by both students (57.63%) (Table 95) and teachers (60%) (Table 49). This can be achieved by means of engagement with local community organizations (currently only about 20% of teachers) and their increased involvement in school cultural activities. Taiko drumming, dragon and soran-bushi dancing, sports days and other events bring Asian language learning out of the classroom, into the wider school environment, and beyond into the school community. The support of L2 cultural organizations and engagement with the native speaker community means that students can engage with people from the L2 cultural background without necessarily traveling. In turn, such exposure supports intercultural language learning principles by illustrating to students the richness of their own multicultural society.

3. **Overcome the difficulty perceptions.** When Japanese was first introduced into Australia textbooks were exclusively in Romanized script with Hiragana introduced gradually. By the 1990’s we had realized that students were more capable than we thought, and both Hiragana and Katakana could be learned concurrently. There is no obstacle to primary
school children learning elements of all three writing systems at once in Japanese, and going straight into characters in Chinese. After so many years of experience with Asian character languages in Australia, there should be no reason why the difficulty perception remains. Students have to be supported and encouraged by high quality teaching to move beyond their initial lack of confidence, most particularly in high schools where almost half of teachers surveyed (48.39%) (Table 58) replied that their students felt LOTE was a subject only for the brightest students. Because of the different rates of learning, this means that Asian language teachers should maintain differentiated classrooms where those with background knowledge can continue to progress whilst beginners are supported. As one student respondent commented: needs to be taught to seem simple! In addition, it is essential that time be allocated for consideration and trialing of different learning strategies, as continuing students rated this as a major positive factor (75.44%) (Table 100). However, this requires an increased level of planning that might necessitate written lesson plans, something undertaken only by a minority of surveyed teachers (31.48%) (Table 46). Above all, it is imperative that teachers focus on teaching for rich understanding where students can clearly identify progress. Once the numbers of students increases slightly, the friendship issue can come into play in favour of Asian language learning. However, initially the slide must be arrested by additional teacher effort to emphasize the interesting and exotic, minimize the difficulties, and maximize both understanding and achievement. However, for them to do so, such efforts need to be acknowledged and not just overlooked. Teachers of compulsory core subjects need to make no such additional efforts.

4. **Actively establish and maintain cross-curricular connections.** Particularly with smaller numbers, Asian language that stays in the classroom remains a marginal activity, reinforcing the false images of difficulty. An emphasis on exotic interest and the illustration of Asian languages relevance beyond specific study at university should be enhanced by active cross-curricular connections. If second language pride is a positive factor, then perhaps this ought to be built on further. The manufacture of a dragon for dragon dance in Art/Craft, Chinese and Japanese poetic forms in studies of literature, and Wayang puppet plays in drama are just a few examples of connections that can be made. Such ideas are not new and are strongly promoted by the Asia Education Foundation. However, such measures take commitment and the establishment of a positive language connection with colleague teachers that brings the study of language to the surface experience of all students, whether they are in the Asian language classes or not. This means that such support needs to be established amidst the half of schools that don’t encourage Asian language activities in school life, and the 63.64% (Table 42) of colleague teachers who do not demonstrate interest in Asian language learning and connections.

**Conclusion**

Caution should be used in making judgments about Asian language teachers as the cohort demonstrates some considerable differences between specific languages. For example, teachers of the relatively newly introduced to Tasmania and secondary-focused Chinese are far more likely to be younger native speakers (Tables 2, 18, 19), with longer in-country experience and full language teaching loads (Tables 15). This is opposed to Indonesian, where the teachers are older and participation is declining to be largely a partial load primary subject for non-native speaker teachers (Tables 2, 14). Japanese remains the principal Asian language that permeates all educational levels (Table 14) and responses from Japanese teachers dominate survey outcomes. However, there is some suggestion that the growth of Chinese will impact upon participation in Japanese language studies in future.
The Asian language teaching force in Tasmania is overwhelmingly female (Table 1) and middle aged, with close to half over 45 years of age (Table 4). Chinese teachers tend to be newer to the profession (Table 6). Most Indonesian teachers have been teaching for 11-20 years with only one less than 10 years teacher, suggesting that opportunities for career entry are declining. Over a third of Japanese teachers are over fifty years of age (Table 4), and one quarter of them have been teaching for over twenty years (Table 6). According to stage theory, such a group is between conservatism and disengagement, and more likely will attribute a decline in numbers to negative changes in student cohorts rather than their own performance (Hubermann, 1995). They have experienced unsuccessful change attempts and are unlikely to embrace more with enthusiasm. With over two thirds of 20 year plus teachers seeing their careers as lasting less than five years (Table 8), the extra effort of implementing a national curriculum may be sufficient to encourage departure. Meanwhile, stage theory suggests that they are in the withdrawal career stage so reliance on them to increase student numbers may be misplaced.

One quarter of Japanese teachers intend to leave the profession within the next five years (Table 7). Chinese teachers see themselves in for the long haul, whilst their Indonesian (mainly primary) colleagues are indecisive. Aside from older teachers, those with over twenty years experience, the highest departure ratio is amongst those with 11-15 years experience (Table 8), a group that corresponds to the “stock taking” career stage (Hubermann, 1995). These teachers have mastered the demands of the classroom and may have attempted diversification only to be disappointed at the results. This 11-15 year group has the highest level of post-graduate completion beyond the 25+ group (Table 31), but less than a quarter see a career path as Asian language teachers (Table 9), and below 10% (1 teacher out of 13) feel adequately compensated for trips and subject promotion activities (Table 41). However, this is not the only relevant departure figure. Seventy percent of teachers in the 6-10 year experience range are unsure about their future (Table 8), whilst below 20% perceive a career path in language teaching, at exactly the time that they should be emerging from early career focus in their classroom to have a wider impact on language learning directions (Table 9). With only a quarter of all teachers seeing the policy and resource outlook as optimistic (Table 65) (as opposed to close to a half pessimistic) the potential exists for Tasmania to lose exactly those Asian language teachers (particularly Japanese - Table 7) upon whom curricular reform and future subject success will depend.

Asian language teachers are principally employed at a single school rather than at several schools (Table 12). Most have received generic LOTE training rather than that specific to Asian languages demand, such as teaching characters or tones (Table 11) (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010). Two-thirds earned post-graduate teaching qualifications (Table 10) and have taught for more than ten years (Table 6). Although most will have been teaching for their whole career, over 40% will have come from another job (Table 5). Just under half teach the L2 exclusively (Table 15). Whilst teacher gender dominance could be interpreted as a factor influencing subject selection, particularly with female students consistently outnumbering males, college students themselves did not indicate any perceived gender influence that would make Asian languages appear a “girl” subject (Table 78).

Levels of higher post-graduate qualifications (such as MEd and PhD) are low, with completion or current study coming in below 8% (Tables 27, 28). Shorter-term graduate certificates and diplomas appear to be more attractive with 22% of teachers currently enrolled, most probably through the fee-free NALSSP supported School of Asian Languages and Studies (SALS) Asian languages project (Table 29). The highest uptake here is the 11-15 year experience group once again (Table 32). Without the SALS program, actual long-term post-graduate learning might be less, and the conclusion of NALSSP may result in reversion to such a lower norm. Nonetheless, the benefits of the SALS program are illustrated by a greater possibility of certificate and diploma students moving to higher post-graduate study
(Table 30). Meanwhile, those without any post-graduate qualifications appear less likely to pursue higher studies.

Time was voted the overwhelming reason for low post-graduate study participation (Table 33). This may seem surprising given the allowance for professional development and holidays associated with the teaching profession but may be associated with the availability of study options in the holiday period.

The significance of the proportion of female teachers involved in language teaching and the relationship to low engagement with postgraduate study is highlighted by two studies published during the survey that indicated women continue to maintain responsibility for many domestic tasks and predominate in child rearing. The Australian Institute of Family Studies report, *Families in Australia 2011: Sticking together in good and tough times* concluded that:

> despite detectable shifts among fathers to increase their share of child care, mothers are still doing the lion’s share around the home, including looking after the children. It is therefore not surprising that mothers with full-time paid work and with young children are more likely than their counterparts with part-time or no paid work to experience time pressures (p.5).

Meanwhile, Dr Gwyneth Howell from the University of Western Sydney in a commercially funded study entitled *Wringing out the Future*, found that:

> Despite some Australian women working up to 70 hours a week, 45% also manage to squeeze in an average of ten hours per week of housework. Progressive women might aspire to ‘equality’ in the household, but it seems men are not pulling their weight. Almost 85% of modern women believe their partners only do half the amount of housework that they do each week.

Although such demands on time allocation for domestic needs may be alleviated to some extent as time passes and children grow, teachers often assume other roles within their work, home or community lives that leave little room for the substantial demands of postgraduate study, particularly if longevity in a school yields a senior position with administrative responsibilities. Such advancement comes without any real challenge to pedagogy in the absence currently of any objective evaluation process, reducing the potential for higher learning (Kertesz, 2007). Conversely, postgraduate study comes with significant effort additional to work and home demands for no financial reward. To the contrary, other than research, or scholarship opportunities such as the NALSSP funded SALS course, postgraduate coursework study can attract a debt in the non-governmental sectors. Nonetheless, this finding does validate the half-day per week time release funded under the teacher language upgrade NALSSP initiative at UTAS. The challenge for these teachers after NALSSP ceases is to maintain their commitment to ongoing professional learning rather than to await the next funding opportunity.

In the absence of higher formal postgraduate learning, it may be argued that teacher experience and attendance at professional development (PD) through their careers has facilitated pedagogical improvement. However, in the absence of validation data this is difficult to justify given the decline in Asian language student numbers in Tasmania and nationally. Rather, a recent national Asian languages study found that most PD is formulaic, and focuses more on new resources and classroom activities rather than serious consideration of teaching and learning (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010). On such occasions, issues of teacher language and pedagogical skill are avoided and a presumption of equivalence is maintained. Only one third of teachers undertake regular professional reading into language methodology developments, or use the Tasmanian teaching standards to monitor the quality of their teaching. Less than half are active members of teacher professional associations.
(Table 37), and just over 10% regularly attend fluency learning opportunities (Table 38). Concurrently, discussions beyond one’s school about teaching methodology that might reveal the status of programs are very occasional (Table 37).

Despite being taught by experienced teachers with years of professional development, and improved resources, student perceptions of subject difficulty remain the key factor in high school withdrawal after the compulsory years (Table 79). Teachers might work hard, but there is little evidence from the data that they are teaching differently or subjecting their practice to ongoing serious scrutiny in a search for effective measures to counter this trend (Kertesz, 2007). Meanwhile, genuine incentives to demonstrate objective teaching quality are not yet implemented, although the researcher was informed that these are being developed around the National Professional Standards for Teachers. Asian languages seem confined to the classroom rather than a force driving intercultural connections in other subject areas and permeating school life (Tables 49, 94). Certainly some teachers might participate in projects, regularly visit the L2 country (Table 21), and attend intensive workshops conducted by L2 promotion organizations (Table 37), but the evidence clearly points to no appreciable improvement in student participation and improved Asian language health in Tasmania.

Nonetheless, Asian language teacher respondents see themselves as essentially doing a good job, and college continuation student comments about high school teaching support this view (Table 97). However, most high school students will have withdrawn from Asian languages at the end of the compulsory period in Grade 7 or 8, so that the positive student responses to teacher practices in the survey represent the views of a minority whose needs are generally well catered for (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010). Meanwhile, the majority appears to disappear completely, with only a niche interest group entering at Grade 11. If, as is stated in other studies, Asian languages such as Japanese do appear initially as exotic and interesting (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010; Tables 71, 72), it seems that this expectation is undermined at some point in Grade 7 or 8 to be replaced with perceptions of difficulty for many (Table 79).

Having made a decision that Asian languages are too difficult [principally referring to Japanese or Chinese here since the Indonesian participation rate in high schools is so low], students are likely to follow their friends to more fun and interesting subjects that may be timetabled onto the same elective line (Tables 59, 60, 79). From this point onward the future potential of these students appears to be overlooked in high school with minimal efforts to demonstrate the relevance of Asian language learning. Close to 40% of high school teachers were unable to respond to questions about friendship group influences or student knowledge of pathways (Tables 61, 62). This suggests that there may be no systematic effort by teachers to capture the factors behind student choices, although evaluation of pedagogy and exit surveys would provide rich evidence for steps to improve practice and retention (Kertesz, 2007). Meanwhile, few schools conduct Asian festivals and celebrate important dates, or make connections between the Asian language and other learning areas (Table 94). Cross-curricular connections may be discussed and planned in schools, but only one in five students could identify them (Table 95). Without cultural connections projected beyond the classroom into the school and its community, not only do younger learners miss out on making important connections to the Asian language at the decisive time of subject choice, but also those in higher grades who have withdrawn are unlikely to be encouraged to recommence at the college level. Anecdotally, where efforts are made towards inter-cultural learning across a school, students admit to regrets that they withdrew at a younger age when they did not fully appreciate the benefits of learning an Asian language. Such students can be advised of opportunities to recommence at college or beyond, but only if they come forward in response to motivational efforts, and are provided with relevant pathways information. With over two thirds of college students seeking further information on pathways options (Table 74), and under one quarter considering pathway options well explained (Table 71), it may well be that high school students are not fully aware of the most effective options to reconnect to the
Asian language. Such information is likely to be effective only when combined with promotion by the high school teacher of engagement factors other than university study (Table 71).

Not only are whole school cultural festivals or activities uncommon, few teachers interact with the L2 community or engage in language specific cultural activities in their community (Table 38). Teachers of Asian language are located across Tasmania in areas with little to no Asian language population. As one teacher respondent commented: On the NW coast of Tas our students are generally isolated from other cultures. Nonetheless, most teachers appear to make little effort to encourage the manifestation of Asian language in Tasmanian life, or to facilitate cross-cultural opportunities in society to reinforce the relevance and enjoyment of Asian language learning; this in that part of Australia furthest geographically from Asia and with the smallest ethnic Asian populations. This also means that few students see their teachers applying their knowledge in authentic and interesting ways beyond the classroom.

It is at this point that the major dilemma of perceived appreciation comes into play. It is difficult to see how systems and schools can expect teachers to initiate or become involved in significant Asian languages promotional activities within and beyond schools when at their current level of effort only one quarter overall, and less than 10% of the significant 11-15 year group, feel adequately compensated (Tables 39, 41), even though two thirds feel their efforts in school are acknowledged and appreciated (Table 44). Words may not be enough. Furthermore, if time is an obstacle to post-graduate learning, then time is probably also an issue in launching authentic efforts to engage and re-engage students through community involvement.

Whether or not they have had access to Asian languages at high school, travel is the overwhelming motivation among students in Tasmania, followed by the exotic and interesting allure of the culture (Tables 71, 72). This suggests that exchanges and school trips should figure as an essential part of such programs. Most trips are undertaken by teachers within one school. Expansion beyond that generally requires at least one teacher from the other school to satisfy supervision demands, raising issues of burden and responsibility sharing. However, a number of factors combine to make trips less attractive to teachers in recent times:

- Smaller numbers increase costs without necessarily limiting responsibilities or the administrative burden;
- Containing costs to maximize availability demands access to home stays, and thus participation in at least an exchange activity (ideally a sister school), generating additional teacher responsibilities; and
- The legal and insurance environment has become more complex, so that teachers increasingly feel the burdens of responsibility. Many teachers have at least one bad memory of a trip experience and are sensitive to issues of personal liability.

The recognition and appreciation issue is further highlighted when teachers give up their entire holidays to run a school trip that exhausts them and then have to go straight back into another term of teaching. Preparation, marking, and reporting continue regardless.

Policy makers might find it worthwhile to consider actively supporting school trips as a sector responsibility, through measures such as time-release or the provision of facilitation resources. Not only would this alleviate the burden on individual teachers, but it also could open up Asian travel opportunities to schools without language programs. Such a move might facilitate serious discussion regarding the substantial wider learning gained from educational trips to Asia, and consideration of them being conducted within term time. Both such measures on the part of sectors would go some way to acknowledging the efforts of language teachers and relieving the demands contributing to dissatisfaction. More significantly, if travel remains a key student motivator, then school trips will remain a demand in some form on the very same teachers we are asking to make additional efforts to create a positive cycle of Asian language participation.
There is no suggestion that schools are not supportive of language learning; they do so both in the curricular and administrative areas, and this is acknowledged in both the teacher (Table 42) and student (Table 95) data. However, it is the “extras” that make up dynamic Asian language programs that are at issue, and contribute to a cycle of diminishing returns. Teachers who see schools not fully appreciating or rewarding their additional promotion activities may reduce their effort to levels commensurate with that perceived low level of acknowledgment. Reductions in highly motivational trips in school holiday time (Tables 71, 72) may contribute to falling numbers, the occasional combining of classes and levels (Table 90), increasing application of timetabling efficiencies (Table 43) and reduced Asian language teaching loads. Students denied the excitement of the relevance inspired by the promotional efforts, can start to lose confidence in the subject and look for other inspiration, taking their friends with them (Table 79). Once this degenerative cycle has set in, the effort to reverse it increases almost exponentially; and it must start with the teacher. However, the teacher must be at the right career stage, have the energy and commitment, be encouraged, and be rewarded appropriately. If sectors and schools wish to increase student numbers and re-establish viable and dynamic Asian language programs that create pathways from primary to college level, then the positives need to be maximized within high schools in particular.

The most important target for policy makers appears to be the potentially dissatisfied 11-15 year and indecisive 6-10 year experienced teacher cohorts (Tables 8, 9). Their career dissatisfaction and pessimistic policy and resource perceptions (Table 65) threaten to rob Asian language teaching of exactly those professionals who potentially can combine national curriculum implementation with revitalization of high school student numbers. However, to secure their active cooperation, the efforts of these teachers need to be appreciated, acknowledged, and lead directly to career improvements and rewards. There has been much discussion about rewarding quality teaching in Australia. The potential exists here to establish the basis for objective measurement of such quality, and to increase student Asian language numbers through improved pedagogy that is verified and validated independently across sectors.

Teachers within the 5-15 year experience range should be encouraged to continue a cross-sector program of higher post-graduate professional learning that directly links verified enhancement of Asian language pedagogy and student engagement with genuine professional rewards. They should focus on maximizing the positive factors identified in this survey, and work to overcome the spectre of difficulty in lower high school Asian language classes. Options for achieving this are listed as follows:

- The promotion individually and collectively of the exotic and interesting appeal of Asian languages throughout the school community by measures including:
  - acquisition and maintenance of sister school relationships (continuing the NALSSP efforts), and
  - engagement with the L2 community and establishing local cultural connections into their school.

- Teacher enrolment in higher post-graduate learning that exposes them to wider theoretical frameworks, facilitates the incorporation of contemporary research into practice, and increases the probability of professional reflection and the scrutiny of individual teaching against professional standards.

- The ongoing monitoring of improved practice, verification of its impact on school Asian language student numbers, and its alignment to tangible rewards.

Some enabling conditions would need to be satisfied, such as:

- reinforcement of professional links with their local tertiary colleagues (Table 36) and the construction of focused teacher links through all levels aimed at Asian language improvements in Tasmania;
The development of post-graduate units directly related to improved Asian language classroom practice and the authentic assessment of learning implementation to generate positive classroom change; and

- teachers would have to consider how they could build or improve the relationship between activities within school and those outside that support student engagement in the long term.

Such further learning, enhanced teaching practice, and improvements in student engagement and numbers should be directly aligned to and verified against the highly accomplished and lead teacher stages of the National Professional Standards for Teachers. Currently, teacher connection with professional standards is at low levels (Table 37). Achievement of standards certification through individual and collegial efforts could both define and demonstrate in unequivocal terms quality Asian language teaching practice in the Tasmanian setting, and provide both career encouragement and a model for improvement for younger practitioners and those considering an Asian language teaching career. Advanced teacher certification would provide an objective verification of teacher quality that could be acknowledged openly before principals, schools, and the teacher community. It would dispel the presumption of equivalent teacher skills and knowledge, and allow verified superior pedagogical skills and teaching success to supersede longevity as the measure of teacher credibility and financial reward. Most significantly, it would provide a vehicle for career engagement of the critical 5-15 year teacher group and establish a structure of professional leadership that would permeate the Asian language teacher cohort. For younger teachers, there would be mentoring focused on positive open practice, the satisfaction of being in a growing and dynamic curriculum area, and the prospect of career benefits.

The challenge for policy makers, Principals, and schools is to engage with a new paradigm of excellence and to continue working across sectors, such as has occurred during NALSSP, to improve the position of Asian language teaching in Tasmania in the long term, aside from Federal Government initiatives. To not do so is to watch pre-tertiary completion numbers continue to decline, competent and enthusiastic teachers become disenchanted and leave the profession, and the benefits of NALSSP initiatives dissipate. Ultimately, the challenge is to find the best teaching and teachers to maximize the positives and break through the barrier of perceived difficulty. We need more students continuing Asian language learning and bringing their friends with them. Structural and curricular solutions have proved not to be sufficient alone. If one may borrow the words of Hattie (2003):

*I therefore suggest that we should focus on the greatest source of variance that can make the difference – the teacher (p. 3).*

**Recommendations**

Within and across sectors, it is recommended that:

1. Through financial support or continuing time release, teachers in the 5-15 year experience range be encouraged to either continue or commence higher post-graduate learning and to advance reflective practice aligned with the highly accomplished and lead stages of the National Professional Standards for Teachers.

2. Asian language teachers, who are able to validate exceptional practice that facilitates retention and engagement against national standards, be acknowledged and rewarded in real terms, be that financial or career advancement.

3. The student disengagement factor of ‘difficulty’ in lower high school be examined in greater detail by teachers in schools through class evaluations and exit surveys, so that the results can be consolidated and disseminated to determine effective teaching approaches that are aligned with professional teaching standards.
4. Sectors implement measures to facilitate L2 country engagement, in particular support measures to reduce the planning burden of overseas trips on teachers.

5. The mounting and conduct of overseas trips, even if undertaken in school holiday time, be acknowledged as workload and remunerated appropriately, and the impact of such trips on Asian language engagement and retention within each school be actively monitored and reported upon.

6. Teachers be encouraged and supported to undertake greater L2 community involvement and to establish school climates that more actively promote Asian language learning beyond the classroom, in particular to students who have withdrawn after the compulsory years.

7. Schools consider, where possible, the sharing of Asian language classes, to overcome issues of teacher supply and class viability, and to provide and maintain Asian language class access to schools currently without programs.

8. The coordination of pathway information be improved, so that high school and college teachers are able to better respond to, and support, student tertiary continuation.
References


Annexes:

A. List of Tables
B. Teacher Survey Questions
C. Student Survey Questions – Asian Languages in High School
D. Student Survey Questions – No Asian Languages in High School