The Practice of Policy in New Zealand

Gail P. Spence
Ministry of Education, Wellington, New Zealand

He tāonga ngā reo katoa.
All languages are to be treasured.

This paper examines developments in language policy planning in New Zealand over the last 20 years. The paper begins with a description of the New Zealand educational context, the country’s changing demographics, and the uptake for learning languages as an elective in schools. The historical and sociopolitical contexts for language planning are described. The paper explores the nature of the curriculum as policy, using examples from a range of languages to support its line of argument. The paper presents curriculum reform as a site for enquiry and subsequent potential for change within changing sociocultural contexts and educational expectations. Some concluding remarks highlight the need to attend to the ‘policy carriers’ at the local level, if language policy planning, in whatever form it may take, is to be effective.

Keywords: New Zealand, languages, language policy, language planning, curriculum, Māori

Introduction

In his Keith Horwood Memorial Lecture presented at the biennial conference of the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Association (AFMLTA) in Brisbane, Australia, in July 2003, David Ingram stated:

If languages education is to survive, let alone develop, it is essential that it exists within the context of systematic language policy-making responsive to the needs of Australian society. Such needs arise from the multicultural nature of our society, from the personal needs of individuals, and from the globalisation of all human activity that has been made inevitable and irreversible by rapid transport, efficient communications, and the continual mixing of the world’s people through migration, tourism and economic necessity. (Ingram, 2003: 10)

David Ingram’s message to Australia is pertinent to the New Zealand context. New Zealand has a collaborative approach towards the expansion of language teaching as part of central policy, through key advisory and consultative mechanisms. At the heart of these processes is a renewed focus on effective teaching practice, linked to the reshaping and revitalisation of the outcomes-focused curriculum that will position and resource learning languages as an eighth learning area.

This paper describes events over the last two decades that have led to greater political support for, and growing receptivity to, learning languages in New Zealand’s primary and secondary schools, and to an increase in broader public awareness and understanding of the individual and collective benefits of being bilingual/multilingual. The paper includes:

1466-4208/04/04 0389-18 $20.00/0
©2004 G.P. Spence
CURRENT ISSUES IN LANGUAGE PLANNING
Vol. 5, No. 4, 2004

389
a description of the New Zealand educational context;
the state of language learning in primary and secondary schools;
an explanation of policy development and political considerations in the last decade, and how languages have been positioned and resourced within them;
the recent curriculum stocktake process and findings; and
how recent government decisions provide a strategic focus on foreign/second language teaching and learning in schools.

From the above, conclusions are drawn on the steps to be taken towards conceptualising and actualising a languages-in-education policy.

The Educational Context in New Zealand

Education is compulsory for all children aged between six and 16 years, and most enrol on their fifth birthday. The New Zealand Education Act (1989) provides for free education in state schools, administered by boards of trustees. Primary schools are the first level of compulsory schooling for children in Years 1–8. Children in their seventh and eighth years of schooling may either be in a separate intermediate school or part of a full primary, secondary or composite/area school. Some middle schools provide for students from Year 7 to the end of Year 10. Secondary schools cater for students from Year 9 to Year 13. Area or composite schools, usually based in rural areas, combine primary, intermediate and secondary schooling at one location. Other options include special schools, home schooling and distance education.

The main languages of instruction are English and te reo Māori, the indigenous language of Aotearoa-New Zealand. All essential learning areas have curricula in both English and te reo Māori, the latter to serve the purposes of state-provided Māori language medium education. These schools are known as kura kaupapa Māori (state schools where the teaching is in the Māori language and is based on Māori culture and values), and in 2003 catered for 3% of Māori students. A further 12% of Māori students were involved in Māori immersion for at least a third of their schooling record. The policy shift in the Ministry to making te reo Māori the centre of the learning process within whole educational institutions and their communities is described as closer to Māori people’s aspirations for education, restoring the balance after years of subtractive bilingualism (Bishop & Barr, 1999: 189).

New Zealand is one of the few countries that has made the individual school the major locus of educational administration. Accountabilities in terms of national education and administration guidelines, together with three-yearly compliance inspections by the government audit agency, the Education Review Office, ensure that schools meet their student needs and provide good quality education.

The New Zealand Population

The New Zealand population has reached 4 million and is increasingly linguistically diverse as a result of successive migrations and immigration policies. This mix is reflected in school enrolments.

From July 2002 to July 2003, the proportion of Māori students has increased
The Practice of Policy in New Zealand

marginally from 20.4% to 20.6%, and that of Pacific\^b students has increased from 8.1% to 8.2%. The number of Asian domestic students has increased by just under 14%. They now account for 7.5% of the domestic school population, an increase from 6.5% in 2002. The proportion of Pakeha (New Zealand inhabitants of European background) and other European students in the total school domestic population decreased slightly from 61.5% in 2002 to just under 60% (Ministry of Education, 2003). By 2051 it is expected that a third of all children will be Pakeha, one third Māori, and Pacific children will make up 21.2%, and Asian children will comprise 11.2% of all children (Education Review Office, 2000: 10).

Languages in Education

The numbers of students taking second languages, and the range of languages being offered by schools, have increased overall in the last decade, if the figures reflecting the growth in language learning in primary schools are included.

In the past, learning languages was predominantly seen as appropriate for secondary school students (Years 9–13), particularly those intending to proceed to tertiary education. Over the last decade the Government has supported the introduction of language learning to Years 7 and 8. The 2003 figures indicate 87,626 enrolments in language courses in Years 9–13, with 26% enrolled in te reo Māori. There were 83,570 language enrolments in Years 1–8, of which only 17.6% were studying a language for more than 30 hours a year. The numbers must be read with caution, however, as it is possible that a number of students will have been studying more than one language at the time of data collection (July of each year).

Japanese and French continue to attract the most enrolments, which Peddie (2003: 29) calls an intriguing mix, with French perceived as the traditional foreign language of culture and diplomacy, and Japanese seen as the newer language of trade, with both characterisations in his opinion open to debate. Since the peak in secondary language enrolments in 1995, overall numbers fell about 8% and have remained reasonably steady since then, hovering around the 82,000 mark (East et al., forthcoming). Ministry of Education (2004) analysis indicates the languages showing growth are Spanish, Modern Standard Chinese and Samoan.

Language Planning in Education

The last decade has seen developments in language planning at an unprecedented rate. Ironically, many national developments go unnoticed, as they do not fit the frame of a ‘rational and national’ unified policy articulation that is centrally mandated, and are thus viewed in deficit terms or ignored. I argue that we need a sense of history, a deep understanding of the political context, and the maintenance of a ‘theoretical pluralism’ (Boston, 2001: 23) that will enable a more comprehensive and perceptive evaluation of progress. Starks and Barkhuizen (2003: 248) add new voices to the New Zealand national languages policy debate when they recognise particular events as examples of language planning. For example, they cite, as do all commentators, the 1992 Waite report Aoteareo: Speaking for Ourselves, released by the Ministry of Education as a discussion document. In 1990, the Government announced its intention to explore the need...
for a coherent and comprehensive New Zealand Languages Policy to provide a framework for rational decision making about the wide range of language issues that were confronting society. In particular, the report was designed to establish a coordinated framework in which planning could take place in areas as diverse as the teaching of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), the place of the Māori language, New Zealand’s international language requirements in a changing world, and the maintenance of community languages. Priority areas identified for development included:

- Māori language revitalisation;
- second-chance adult literacy;
- learning of English as a second language together with first language maintenance;
- developing national capabilities in international languages; and
- provision of services in languages other than English and Māori.

The report also recommended that a second language be introduced in the core school curriculum. However, fiscal constraints and lack of qualified language teachers led the Minister of Education at that time to decline to make second language learning compulsory.

Language Planning and the Political Context

These important policy recommendations and decisions were shaped in a political context of educational administration reform known as Tomorrow’s Schools, stemming from the 1988 Picot Report (Department of Education, 1988). The reforms made schools self-managing, and terminated the Department of Education with its ‘interventionist policy forms’ (Gordon, 1997: 66). A new Ministry of Education was established in 1989 as a Crown agency to provide policy advice to government, as the State Sector Act (1988) changed the relations between Ministers and public servants, and altered the character of the public service (Walsh, 2001: 52). Devolving the responsibility to schools was not initially accompanied by the infrastructure that could support them (Wylie & Mitchell, 2003: 2), with reduced capacity in the new Ministry of Education, slimmed down from approximately 1000 staff to 450 between 1990 and 1994 (Butterworth & Butterworth, 1998: 195).

Policy advice that drove the public sector reforms was based on an analytical framework grounded in public choice theory, managerialism and the new economics of organisations, most notably agency theory and transaction-cost analysis. This framework made the New Zealand reforms distinctive (Boston, 2001: 2). Subsequent policy work has focused on incentive structures and contracts, avoiding interest-group and bureaucratic capture; contestability and external contracting; applying agent–principal models to a variety of relationships; minimising transaction costs and agency costs; and specifying outputs and outcomes (Boston, 2001: 23).

The pursuit of new directions in foreign policy was also having an impact. The New Zealand state was redefining its identity (Dale & Robertson, 1997: 213) in terms of a new pole of political and economic growth and power: the Asia–Pacific, evidenced in membership of Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation...
The Practice of Policy in New Zealand

(APEC) and the establishment of the 1993 Asia 2000 initiative (Kelsey, 1995: 338; cited in Dale & Robertson, 1997: 215). When unemployment rose dramatically in the 1980s, schools were called upon to respond, and the ‘vocationalism’ agenda and its business values became a driving force (Marshall, 1994: 319). Stemming the exodus of around 11,000 New Zealanders per year between 1985 and 1991, and new policies favouring Asian immigration were also important considerations.

The term ‘quasi-market’ (Gordon, 1997: 67–8) denotes a particular policy pattern evident in state service agencies in countries which have Keynesian forms of state provision, but aspirations towards a neo-liberal non-interventionist state. The level of autonomy that schools have determines the extent to which a quasi-market environment can be developed in education, and New Zealand schools have more autonomy than those in virtually any other country (OECD, 1994, cited in Gordon, 1997: 68). Hirsch (1995: 6; cited in Gordon, 1997: 67) writes: ‘This is the only country that I know of that has taken the radical step of abolishing its education system. Rather than a system, it has a series of virtually autonomous providers of education.’

That market was underpinned by a particular conception of parental choice, described as ‘exit’ (Dale & Ozga, 1993: 76; cited in Gordon, 1997: 69), that is, an individualistic, economic response, over ‘voice’ which encourages people to stay in institutions and make changes from within. This approach to choice encouraged a highly mobile population, based on a core of active ‘choosers’. A primary driving force of schools in the quasi-market environment is maintaining and improving student numbers, signalling a fundamental shift in school priorities in this policy environment.

It was within this devolutionary context that the 1992 Waite report Aotearoa: Speaking for Ourselves floundered. Yet the recommendations were not lost, as it may have appeared. The six priority areas are all receiving attention through different agency, policy and implementation streams, albeit without the overarching framework of a broad-based and nationally agreed languages policy statement.

The Curriculum as Policy

Uniquely, Starks and Barkhuizen (2003: 248) cite as language planning the New Zealand Curriculum Framework/Te Anga Marautanga o Aotearoa (NZCF) published by the Ministry of Education in 1993 as the overarching policy framework that guides the teaching and learning in Years 1–13 in schools and supported over the past decade by curriculum developments in all learning areas, in both English and Māori.

The NZCF promotes learning other languages as an area of the curriculum that is important to the country’s health and growth. The proposal that all students learn a language other than English was seen to have significant implications for secondary schools (Butterworth & Butterworth, 1998: 213). The essential learning area Language and Languages/ Ngā Reo provides the policy base for learning languages:

All students benefit from learning another language from the earliest practicable age. Such learning broadens students’ general language abilities
and brings their own language into sharper focus. It enriches them intellectually, socially, and culturally, offers an understanding of the ways in which other people think and behave, and furthers international relations and trade. Students will be able to choose from a range of Pacific, Asian, and European languages, all of which are important to New Zealand’s regional and international interests. (Ministry of Education, 1993: 10)

Other commentators have consistently ignored this clear statement of policy which has picked up on recommendations made in Aoteareo: Speaking for Ourselves, and has been deliberately supported and resourced over the last decade according to the policy intention.

Within this overarching policy statement in the NZCF, languages curricula have been progressively developed since 1995 for Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Samoan and Cook Islands Māori. Curriculum statements for Tongan, Tokelauan, Niue Language, New Zealand Sign Language and te reo Māori as a second language are in preparation. Latin and Indonesian are able to be assessed for national qualifications.

The Government’s commitment to second language learning was iterated in 1994 among the 10 aims listed for the entire education system in Education for the 21st Century (Ministry of Education, 1994), which proposed that by 2001 all students in Years 7–10 would have opportunities to learn a second language. However, promoting second language learning was identified as a fiscal challenge (see Butterworth & Butterworth, 1998: 223) by the Minister of Education at the 1994 Conference of the New Zealand Association of Language Teachers (NZALT):

> It seems unlikely that the government would move towards making all students in Forms 1 to 4 study a second language. We simply do not have sufficient teachers to allow it. What is more likely is that we would make it compulsory for all schools to offer a second language to students in Forms 1 to 4. Schools would decide whether this was to be compulsory or optional for their students. Even that step of course would have significant implications in terms of teacher education, ongoing teacher development and the provision of resources to schools. And they would need to be balanced against other demands of the education dollar. (Marshall, 1994)

However, the cabinet did agree to an allocation of NZ$4.8 million as a contestable funding pool to provide additional opportunities in second language learning over three years for students in Years 7–10. This was announced by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade when he opened the May 1995 NZALT Conference, and confirmed the NZCF as policy:

> This policy is consistent with the New Zealand Curriculum Framework, which states that all students will need to develop the opportunity to communicate confidently in English, will have the opportunity to become proficient in Māori and will be able to choose from a wide range of Pacific, Asian and European languages. (McKinnon, 1995)

This project became known as The Second Language Learning Project. In their evaluation, Peddie et al. (1999: 117) concluded that their research findings offered a
The Practice of Policy in New Zealand

number of useful lessons for the future delivery of languages to the primary sector, considered to be a matter for both individual schools and central planning.

Increasing second language learning opportunities for all students in Years 7–10 continued as a strategic aim of government. Ongoing funding of NZ$1.9 million was confirmed in 1998 as Ministry of Education baseline funding to further develop the Government’s policy of increasing the amount and quality of second language learning offered to students in Years 7–10. That much had been achieved.

Indigenous Languages

*Te reo Māori* is indigenous to Aotearoa-New Zealand. It is an official language and its status is protected under the Treaty of Waitangi (1840). Starks and Barkhuizen (2003: 248) consider the 1987 Māori Language Act an example of language planning. The Act recognised Māori as an official language and established the Māori Language Commission, for the maintenance of *te reo Māori*. The NZCF (Ministry of Education, 1993: 10) recognises the Act and states that ‘students will have the opportunity to become proficient in Māori’. Substantial policy work supports a work programme in education of increasing range and intensity, including funding and resourcing Māori language medium education and the teaching and learning of *te reo Māori* in mainstream schools.

Further, the 2003 *Te Rautakī Reo Māori / Māori Language Strategy* (Te Punī Kōkiri, 2003) is a landmark event in national policy planning. The strategy ‘draws together different strands of language revitalisation to create an overarching framework for the activities and endeavours of *whanau* [“extended family”], *hapu* [“sub-tribe”], *iwi* [“tribe”], Māori and Government’ (Te Punī Kōkiri, 2003: 5). It aims to move the Māori language to the next stage of revitalisation over the next 25 years, by focusing on greater Māori language use in communities. Government agencies will develop five-year implementation plans, with progress monitored in five-year cycles. The five goals recognise that a positive and receptive environment is important to encourage people to use their Māori language skills, and that the support of wider New Zealand society is required.

Supporters of New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL), the other indigenous language of New Zealand, have presented a Bill to Parliament in 2004 to have it recognised as an official language. The outcome is as yet unknown. Mainstreaming NZSL in education is a considerable challenge that lies ahead.

English

English remains the major language of national and international communication and of achievement. The NZCF states that all students will need to develop the ability and confidence to communicate competently in written and spoken English. Among the initiatives supporting this aim are those which relate specifically to addressing the English language needs of students from non-English-speaking backgrounds (NESB). These students include recent migrants, refugees and foreign fee-paying students. In addition, increased attention is being given to the needs of New Zealand born students of NESB heritage, to address their English literacy needs for academic purposes.
Particular initiatives, for example, the Literacy Leadership Strategy, is addressing the need for all teachers to develop inclusive teaching practices that enable all students to achieve, including those with identified English language needs. However, in their report to the Ministry of Education, Franken and McComish (2003: 157) describe the provisioning to meet the needs of NESB learners as ad hoc and inconsistent. They identify the lack of a New Zealand language policy as an important gap in systemic support for ESOL provision. Such a policy, they argue, would act as a ‘consistent point of reference for initiatives generated by various groups or sectors’ (Franken & McComish, 2003: 1 57). In their report to the Ministry on bilingual/immersion education in New Zealand, May et al. (2004: 130) propose extrapolating indicators of effective practice based on Cummins’s (2000) model of research-policy-practice as the best means of developing more widely informed educational policy.

Pacific Languages
Despite the low take-up rate noted under ‘The New Zealand Population’ above, Pacific languages are strengthening their presence. The NZCF (Ministry of Education, 1993: 10) provides the policy basis for Pacific language development in compulsory education: ‘Students whose mother tongue is a Pacific Islands language or another community language will have the opportunity to develop and use their own language as an integral part of their schooling.’ The Pasifika Education Plan 2001 (Ministry of Education, 2001) is a multi-pronged education achievement initiative that aims to increase Pasifika achievement in all areas of education, and includes aims for Pacific languages. First and second language development through immersion, bilingual and subject-centred programmes continue to develop. Samoa in the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996a) and the Samoan language version Taiala mo le Gagana Samoa i Niu Sila (Ministry of Education, 1996b) were published in 1996, with curriculum support materials in bilingual format. Native speakers of the Samoan language, who may be teachers of other subjects, are frequently called upon to teach the language. They require training to become second language teachers. Having curriculum materials in Samoan language encourages a professional discourse in Samoan relating to language learning, pedagogy and assessment issues that will contribute to teacher development and status, and give the language operational currency. Cook Islands Māori, Tongan, Niue Language and Tokelauan are receiving similar government support, in collaboration with community leaders, in early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary education. Language maintenance and revitalisation, resourcing and capacity building present significant challenges.

International Languages
In 1995–96 the Government invested NZ$700,000 in a pilot project to evaluate the use of interactive satellite television for the delivery of programmes in Māori, Spanish and Japanese. Recommendations from the evaluation were used to inform the publication in 1998 of the first languages of the International Language Series (ILS), a package of video, audio and print materials in Spanish and in Japanese designed to enable students in Years 7–8 to learn these languages at an intro-
The Practice of Policy in New Zealand

ductory level regardless of the lack of specialist teachers and geographical location. The package includes professional development support provided by regional language advisers, together with a web presence, subsequently linked to the Ministry of Education’s online resource centre Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI) (the Online Learning Centre). French and German ILS materials were published in 2000, and Modern Standard Chinese in 2003.

To support the introduction of new curriculum statements, teacher professional development programmes were offered in Spanish (1995), Chinese (1996/97), Japanese (1997/98), Korean (1997/98), Samoan (1996/97/98 and again in 2002/03), and French and German (2003/05). Materials were developed concurrently to support curriculum implementation in all these languages, with a focus on methodology and pedagogy.

The Government funds assistance to teachers through the advisory services. Seven national language advisers, principally sponsored through diplomatic arrangements, work with schools and institutions offering Chinese, French, German, Spanish, and Japanese. Regional language advisers have been in place since 1998. Their role is to assist language teachers in primary and secondary schools, with increasing emphasis on quality teaching and effective transition across the primary-secondary interface. Since 2002, support has been available to schools through the six regionally based advisory services.

Teacher education and exchange programmes exist for Chinese-, French-, German-, Japanese- and Spanish-speaking countries. These vary in duration and intensity, and mostly involve secondary teachers. Recent initiatives have involved primary teachers from countries such as Germany, New Caledonia and Japan, and signal responsiveness to the growing uptake of languages in the primary sector.

Recognising the need for a more strategic approach, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with NZALT, developed and published the 2002 Learning Languages: A Guide for New Zealand Schools (Ministry of Education, 2002a), which provides advice to schools on strategic planning for effective language courses. It is recognised that devolving administrative responsibility to schools requires cooperation at the local level, where the decisions are made, including commitment of principal (Gibbs & Holt, 2003: 29; Lilly, 2001).

Curriculum Change and Reform

In 1996, the Government suspended the development and implementation of new curriculum statements in response to widespread concern across the school sector about the pace and scale of change. New curriculum timelines were announced in July 1997, with a two-year minimum transition period between the publication of a final statement and its mandatory application. Adding to the concern were the changes in senior secondary assessment that would see the implementation of standards-based assessment beginning in 2001, and the significant challenges associated with developing, promulgating and implementing the standards. This substantial policy change in senior secondary assessment was to have a major impact on later policy development for languages.

Alongside the introduction of new curriculum timelines in 1997 came a prom-
ise that, following the publication of the full set of curriculum statements in 2000, a time of consolidation and reflection would occur. The object was to take stock of the previous decade’s developments and their implications for teaching and learning, and to consider future curriculum directions. Among a number of problems and issues that had been raised was the status of second language learning. If learning a language is optional, then it is open to interpretation as desirable but not essential for the well-being of the nation or the education of the individual student (Ellis, 2000: 46).

The Curriculum Stocktake process, operated through the Learning and Evaluation Policy (LEP) section of the Ministry of Education, took place in 2000–2002 with the threefold purpose of: (1) seeking assurance of the quality of the NZCF as policy; (2) a higher likelihood of its effective implementation and therefore of improved outcomes for students; and (3) an agreed direction and process for the ongoing development of the New Zealand Curriculum, for both English-medium and Māori-medium education.

On 17–18 September 2001, the Ministry convened a two-day meeting to discuss the implementation of the essential learning area Language and Languages. The first day addressed the curriculum statement for te reo Māori, whereas the second day brought together stakeholders with expertise in English, te reo Māori, and international and community languages.

Shearn (2003: 14) records strong feelings being expressed by those present at the meeting about the need for policy and coherent government strategy to support and fund two separate essential areas, one for languages of instruction, English and te reo Māori, and the second for all other languages. The author’s paper (Spence, 2001), drew on and connected my experience in languages assessment, primary and secondary teaching, teacher training, association representation and curriculum leadership within the Ministry, to analyse and expose pertinent issues relating to languages teaching, curricula, assessment practice and policy frameworks. These themes attracted a strong response from the meeting, strengthened the debate at the meeting and contributed to further discussion and debate that took place with policy section and curriculum representatives within the Ministry.

As stated above, the substantial policy change for standards-based assessment and the work in developing the standards has been a key driver for subsequent policy development for languages. Articulating the concerns that had arisen through the development process at this point, and in this arena, had a powerful effect.

The curriculum statements for each language differ in identification of strands; the extent to which the achievement objectives are related to text types; the ways of expressing the achievement objectives; the presence or absence of proficiency statements; and the nature, extent and importance of the sociocultural aspects.

These wide variations in language curriculum statements, formulated progressively over a decade by single language groups without the guidance of an overarching framework, had made the task of developing generic achievement standards for languages at each of the three levels of qualification extremely difficult. Particular tensions arose in the development process, through connecting the specific language groups in this way for a shared purpose for the first
time, and between the languages curricula, the work of teachers and the expectations of achievement at each of the grade levels.

With no compulsion to learn a language, schools have reduced, flexible and varied time allocations. With many schools offering taster or elective programmes in Years 7–10, and lack of sequencing across the primary-secondary interface, the potential for high achievement was reduced (ERO Report, 1994; Holt et al., 2001: 42; Shearn, 2003: 11). Setting standards consistent with the required level of each languages curriculum was a challenge. Many teachers were reducing the standard to ‘what can be achieved by students’ in their teaching and learning contexts, and avoided making the learning appear hard through the ‘option has to be fun’ syndrome to motivate students to continue their learning.

Draft French and German curricula had been informed by international proficiency levels (Council of Europe, 2001). Sector dissatisfaction related in part to the expectations for the achievement levels, considered to be too high for students. Teachers confronting a substantially changed curriculum model and perceptions of elevation of standards, together with the requirement to adapt to the changes required for standards-based assessment were outraged. This outrage in part reflected other tensions within the secondary education sector in the face of the substantial changes required by the senior secondary assessment reform.

The particular tension identified was the need to be seen to be internationally competitive in achievement and attainment levels, against the need to acknowledge the considerable constraints on the motivations and achievements of teachers and students.

To summarise, developing the language achievement standards had been made difficult because of the different assumptions and demands of each curriculum. A generic set of achievement standards had been created. However, teachers were finding it extremely difficult to establish a notion of achievement/merit/excellence for the standards. Each language was faced with determining its own level of achievement, with a high level risk of the efforts spinning out into too much differentiation.

My paper ended by framing the logical next steps in languages-in-education planning. These were two-fold: firstly, the need to seek the development of a languages curriculum framework for all languages, which sets out key competencies; secondly, a proposal that we investigate the move towards making the learning of a second language a compulsory part of the curriculum for Years 7–10, with attention given to planned steps of progression (see Spence, 2001).

The Curriculum Stocktake Report (Ministry of Education, 2002b), which synthesised information from a wide range of sources, was released in 2002. Two international critiques noted the low priority accorded to learning languages (ACER, 2002; Le Métai/NFER, 2002). The NFER Report recommended giving consideration to building on New Zealand’s bilingual culture to motivate and support students to learn further languages at school and beyond. The Curriculum Stocktake Report made the following recommendation:

The essential learning area Language and Languages/Te Kōrero me ngā Reo should be two separate learning areas – English/Te Reo Māori and
Languages. This separate area would include heritage, community and foreign languages and the learning of English and te reo Māori as second languages. Schools should be required to provide instruction in an additional language for students in Years 7–10 (except for Māori immersion settings) but it should not be mandatory for all Years 7–10 students to learn another language. Generic outcomes for students should be developed and included in the revised New Zealand Curriculum Framework and Te Anga Marautanga o Aotearoa. (Ministry of Education, 2002b: §19, Section One)

It took six months for the recommendations of the Curriculum Stocktake Report to be approved by the Government in March 2003, although the Government had been well briefed beforehand. Cabinet priorities determined the time that the Report would be read.

The Dominion Post on 23 June 2003 carried the headline ‘Learning to Speak with the Rest of the World’ and concluded:

But learning Māori, or any second language, gives the learner a concomitant insight into another culture, another frame of world reference, another view of the planet and its inhabitants. Parlez-vousing in France and sprechen-sieing [sic] in Germany cannot but force the speaker to interact and engage with another country’s people. In an increasingly globalised world, being fluent in more than one language is thus an eminently sensible idea.

The positioning of languages within the multicultural discourse is a discernible shift towards an awareness that understanding of culture and gaining a world view (Spence & Spence, 2000: 93) are deepened through language study (East, 2000: 160; Pauwels, 2000: 25; Peddie & Jackson, 1999: 45). Migration patterns and people mobility implications strengthen the need for policy parameters that conserve language resources (Watts, 2000: 34), systematise support for ESOL provision (Franken & McComish, 2003: 157) with the proviso that notions of deficit are disestablished (May et al., 2004: 134).

Expressions of political and public support for learning more than one language as ‘an eminently sensible idea’ have emerged as significant. Multilingual herself, the New Zealand Prime Minister, Helen Clark, speaking in 2001, endorsed New Zealand’s need to have more people learning languages, for commercial reasons and for building ties with the rest of the world. She pointed out that the choice of language was unimportant. The key was to make an effort to communicate in other people’s languages.

Policy as Practice

The directive to establish an eighth learning area called Learning Languages is being actioned within the strategic frame of the revitalisation of the New Zealand Curriculum/ Marautanga Project. The curriculum’s nautilus logo has been redrawn to include an additional chamber, and a separate Learning Languages community established. A key Languages Reference Group with representatives from 14 languages has been set up to work collaboratively with the Ministry to construct a generic languages curriculum as the overarching framework that will guide second language teaching and learning in New Zealand schools. The
The Practice of Policy in New Zealand

work involves writing an essence statement and developing a generic set of achievement objectives Levels 1 to 8 that will work across all languages. Broader consultation is planned. Whether the eighth learning area will become ‘essential’ remains open to question. Current work is described as strategy, not policy. The context remains political.

The requirement for all schools with students in Years 7–10 to offer instruction in a second language has been promulgated, and has aroused little negative response, either from the schools or from the communities that support them. In a devolved context, community support for language learning is essential if large-scale changes are to take place in schools and other institutions where languages are offered (Peddie, 1993: 118; Shearn, 2003: 17). As Corson (1990: 157–8) argues: ‘what is needed are grassroots arrangements equipped to translate the visions of a national policy into strategies capable of enhancing individual lives’.

Starks and Barkhuizen (2003: 248) situated the New Zealand Curriculum Framework/ Te Anga Marautanga o Aotearoa in its political context and evaluated it as a statement of policy to guide language planning at various levels of the system. They commented on its flexibility to suit the various local conditions and the needs of schools. Language planning and language policies do exist, although, as they point out, the planning is not always systematic and the policies are not always explicit.

New Zealand policy has not recentralised. The restructuring and responsibilities allocation within the new Ministry of Education has taken time to stabilise following recruitment of education specialists with a teaching background and additional expertise to lead developments in curriculum policy, pedagogy, materials and professional development. In this way, more infrastructure is centrally provided. Since the late 1990s, substantial policy changes have seen a focus on building teacher capability and providing more advisory, curriculum and professional development support. Peddie (2003: 11) identifies as critical the impact of key individuals in this process.

Language Planning

Language planning, however, takes place at various levels, from government departments to individual teachers. Within the political context described, macro-planning in New Zealand has meant devolving language planning activities to the educational institutions themselves (Corson, 1990). Although this creates problems in schools (such as appropriate expertise, motivation and resources to institute language planning as part of their work programmes) it allows them to solve their own language problems. They are able to feed back information to those making language planning decisions at higher levels. This cycle of policy planning underpins the framework for languages-in-education planning proposed by Starks and Barkhuizen (2003: 252). Bottom-up language planning, including student perceptions (Shearn, 2003; Starks & Barkhuizen, 2003), enables comprehensive fact-gathering and reporting in ways that allow for central authorities to have greater flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances and priorities and be better able to make decisions that facilitate desired learning outcomes.
Languages-in-education planning continues within the Ministry, strategically and operationally. The direction has been set. Government has the leadership role, but any strategy falls within the broad policy thrust of devolution and local control. The Ministry of Education attempts to achieve the balance between its role as a central agency and the self-management of local educational institutions through processes of contractual arrangements, co-construction strategies and working partnerships. Ongoing critique of the absence of a national languages policy, and a discourse of complaint, fail to take into account the complexities of the positioning of central agencies, the political decision-making process, the policies that do exist, and the contexts in which decisions are made.

A more realistic framing is that provided by Glynn (2003: 273–81) who points to the need for more effective school and community partnerships, for more inclusive pedagogies and bilingual competence, and for a more focused and integrated languages policy. Recent case-study research (Barnard & Glynn, 2003; Ellis, 2000) involves dealing with and learning from actual practice. This points the way to developing strategies that are comprehensive yet sufficiently flexible to take account of local conditions.

The work required to develop the eighth learning area Learning Languages needs to pick up on the point made by NZALT in their 1990 submission to the Government for a National Languages-in-Education Policy in New Zealand:

A distinction can be made between specialists’ demand for very high competency, which only a few will achieve, and the desirability for most pupils to have a sound and satisfying experience of studying a second language. (NZALT, 1990: 20)

This point is also made by Ellis (2000: 39) when he claims the purpose of a policy for second languages would be to ensure a degree of bilingualism in all students leaving New Zealand secondary schools. In this respect, the ‘policy carriers’ would be the teachers, whose role would be to inspire students to see that language learning has a real place in their lives. He asks the question (Ellis, 2000: 47) ‘How many students in New Zealand see Māori, French or Japanese not just as exam subjects but as tools of personal construction and how many view the process of learning to use these tools as pleasurable?’

David Ingram (2003) places ‘effective, well-planned and highly competent language teaching’ at the heart of developing attitudes, skills and understanding that will improve intercultural and international interaction. The work now being undertaken by the Ministry of Education on quality teaching as a vital outcome; strategically framing the infrastructure for resourcing languages-in-education, particularly in Years 7–10; and developing an ‘essence’ statement as the key policy direction for the learning area Learning Languages is addressing this key outcome.

Correspondence

Any correspondence should be directed to Gail P. Spence, Ministry of Education, PO Box 1666, Wellington, New Zealand (gail.spence@minedu.govt.nz).
Notes
1. The 101 private schools also receive some government funding.
3. Each school is governed by its own board of trustees, which includes five parent representatives elected by the school’s current parents, the principal, a staff representative selected by the school staff, and a student representative in secondary schools. The board of trustees appoints and employs the school principal and school staff, although in most schools the principal is the effective employer (Wylie & Mitchell, 2003: 3).
4. For further information, see http://www.ero.govt.nz.
6. The term ‘Pacific peoples’ describes people living in New Zealand who have migrated from the Pacific Islands or who identify with the Pacific Islands because of ancestry or heritage. It does not refer to a single ethnicity, nationality or culture, and includes both those born in New Zealand and overseas.
7. Forms 1–4 are now referred to as Years 7–10.
8. The Treaty of Waitangi is New Zealand’s founding treaty, the essential bargain that was struck between Maori and the British Crown. It set out what both sides hoped to gain by agreeing to it. Those gains continue to be explored in all areas of society.
9. In 2003, foreign fee-paying students formed 2.3% of the school population. This specifically excludes the tertiary sector.
10. For further information visit http://www.tki.org.nz/r/literacy_numeracy/lit_leadership_sec_e.php.
12. Known as School Support Services and operated through Schools/Colleges of Education.
13. This was to become the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) where Level 1 entry was designed for Year 11 students, who had been presenting for School Certificate under the previous system for their first national qualification.
14. Set at Level 6 of the curriculum (Year 11) for Level 1 qualifications on the New Zealand National Qualifications Framework, called the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA).
16. See http://www.cmp.ac.nz/ and go to Learning Languages.

References
Current Issues in Language Planning


The Practice of Policy in New Zealand


The Author

Gail Spence is a former secondary teacher of French, German, Spanish and Japanese, Head of Languages Department, and Director of International Students. A pioneer of language teaching in New Zealand primary schools, she has been an adviser, curriculum consultant, assessment leader, and learning materials developer. Twice President of the New Zealand Association of Language Teachers, and a keen contributor to languages education information and policy development, she has been honoured with life membership of the Association. She now works in the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Division of the Ministry of Education, New Zealand, and has responsibility for languages as a curriculum learning area.