

# Teaching Languages in Schools:

Rationale, Potential, Constraints and Recommendations  
with particular relevance to Mandarin Chinese



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## Summary

In his role as New Zealand's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, McKinnon (1992) had argued, "[w]e really must learn to speak other languages ... New Zealand's ability to earn a living – our very future in fact – depends on young New Zealanders acquiring international language skills" (p. 1). This, among other arguments, has influenced the discourse about language learning since that time. New Zealand's revised school curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) underscores this discourse:

Learning a new language extends students' linguistic and cultural understanding and their ability to interact appropriately with other speakers. ... Through such interaction, students acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes that equip them for living in a world of diverse peoples, languages, and cultures. (p. 24).

Despite this positive rhetoric, Ward and East (2016) identified four key factors impact on the success of language programmes in schools:

1. The quality and capability of teaching staff
2. Timetabling and curriculum choices in schools
3. The lack of status for languages, compounded by an entrenched monolingualism
4. The lack of a languages policy or compulsion in the curriculum.

China's emergence as an important member of the world's economy has highlighted a growing need for other nations to "acquire proficiency in communicating in Chinese" (Seneff, 2006, p. 1). One key way of achieving this has been through Mandarin Language Assistant (MLA) programme. MLAs:

- help to raise the cultural awareness of both teachers and students in local schools, as 'cultural envoys';
- increase students' interest in learning Chinese language and culture;
- introduce cultural knowledge in class and facilitate various cultural activities;
- encourage schools to attempt to establish Chinese programmes. (Kai, 2015)

Eriksen (2018), however, argues with regard to the MLAs that "NZ schools are heavily reliant on the Programme and there is no plan as yet on the part of government for the development of increased capacity for Chinese teaching in NZ schools" (p. 12). There is, she maintains, "an urgent need for New Zealand to take greater ownership of its Chinese language teaching capacity and to establish on-going plans for funding, teaching and learning Chinese language in New Zealand schools" (p. 2). Enrolment statistics highlight that only 2% of the secondary school population was studying Chinese in 2017, thereby greatly limiting the potential for students to attain higher levels of proficiency in the language.

To address current limitations across all languages, Ward and East (2016) argue that "primary support efforts" need to be targeted at ensuring effective teaching "in terms of facilitating, and funding, quality teacher education and quality PLD opportunities" (p. 60) - more teachers are needed. They suggest that:

1. effective pedagogy is crucial;
2. teachers need to be willing to 'embrace change' - effective teacher education initiatives and on-going PLD opportunities need to support them in doing this. These require government funding;
3. the whole school ethos needs to be supportive of language learning;
4. local communities need to be educated about the value of learning an additional language;
5. a national languages policy needs to be developed.

As McKinnon (2014) maintained, "you cannot ignore China today ... the kind of relationship that we're building up is to ensure that New Zealanders can benefit by this relationship ... we deeply value this relationship, and we have got to take it seriously, and we have got to keep working at it."

## The value of language learning

“We really must learn to speak other languages.” This unequivocal declaration, in a speech entitled ‘English is not enough’, was made by Don McKinnon in 1992 in his role as New Zealand’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade. McKinnon (1992) went on to assert:

The curricula in New Zealand schools and courses available in universities must equip young people with language and cultural skills. ... New Zealand’s ability to earn a living – our very future in fact – depends on young New Zealanders acquiring international language skills. (p. 1).

Thus, at the start of the 1990s, the political message around learning languages in New Zealand was being framed in terms of the “practical and tangible benefits of being able to communicate in a language” (Sakuragi, 2006, p. 20). This message had students in mind who were “learning languages because they needed to *use* them in an ever-shrinking world” (Benson & Voller, 1997, p. 11, emphasis in original), built on the assumption that “the final justification for developing students’ proficiency in a foreign language is to make them interactionally competent on the international scene” (Kramsch, 1986, p. 367).

The above utilitarian discourse has influenced the progression of language teaching and learning in New Zealand’s schools since the early 1990s. It finds clear expression in a range of contemporary Ministry of Education documents, among them the revised *New Zealand Curriculum (NZC)* for schools (Ministry of Education, 2007) and the *International Capabilities* report (Ministry of Education, 2014).

In the context of a broader curriculum aim to “encourage students to participate more actively in New Zealand’s diverse, multicultural society and in the global community” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 4), the *NZC* learning area *Learning Languages* “puts students’ *ability to communicate*” at the centre of the language learning endeavour (p. 24). In essence, the curriculum statement argues:

Learning a new language extends students’ linguistic and cultural understanding and their ability to interact appropriately with other speakers. ... Through such interaction, students acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes that equip them for living in a world of diverse peoples, languages, and cultures. (p. 24)

*Learning Languages* is also ideally placed to help students to develop the values and key competencies that underpin the entire curriculum. Specifically, students are to be encouraged to value: *diversity*, as found in our different cultures, languages, and heritages; *equity*, through fairness and social justice; and *community and participation* for the common good (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 10). They are expected to develop key competencies such as: *relating to others* (interacting effectively with a diverse range of people in a variety of contexts), and *participating and contributing* (being actively involved in communities)(p. 12).

Furthermore, *Learning Languages* is built on the premises that language learners “learn to communicate by communicating” (Nunan, 2004, p. 8), and that “the most effective way to teach a language is by engaging learners in real language use in the classroom” (Willis & Willis, 2007, p. 1). In this light values such as *innovation, inquiry, and curiosity*, and key competencies such as *thinking* (using creative, critical, and metacognitive processes to make sense of information, experiences, and ideas), and *managing self* (with students seeing themselves as capable learners) support learner-centred and experiential communicative approaches to language learning such as task-based language teaching (East, 2012a).

The Ministry of Education commissioned *International Capabilities Report* (2014) builds on the expectations around language learning and language use that it was anticipated would be developed

through *Learning Languages*. The report argued that international capabilities are “how the *New Zealand Curriculum (NZC)* Key Competencies look when young people apply them in intercultural and international contexts” (p. 1). The report referred to such capabilities as “global competence”, “international-mindedness”, and “cross-cultural competence” (p. 4). These capabilities were considered as socially and economically important for New Zealand, and would contribute to helping young New Zealanders to achieve success (p. 6).

Seen from a relational/utilitarian perspective, therefore, acquiring an additional language provides several advantages in terms of future employability (Nuffield Languages Inquiry, 2000). It has also been established that acquiring an additional language has distinct *learning* gains, improving young learners’ cognitive abilities and enhancing their academic achievement (e.g., Barik & Swain, 1976; Bialystok, 2005; Stewart, 2005). Learner-focused communicative approaches arguably equip young language learners with the skills they need to relate successfully to others in international/intercultural contexts.

## Constraining factors

Despite positive government rhetoric right back to the early 1990s and a current context that is, theoretically at least, a strong basis for effective communicatively-oriented language learning, statistics that track take-up of languages in schools (Education Counts, n.d.) paint a less than positive picture. Tan (2015) reported a drop in the numbers of students learning an additional language to its lowest percentage in over 80 years. Eriksen (2018) noted:

In the formal educational setting of New Zealand secondary schools second language learning has been declining for several years. In 2016, 19% of secondary students were learning a second language, down from 24% in 2003. The picture is slightly different in primary schools, where over the same period, the proportion of students learning a second language remained stable at around 18%, except from [*sic*] a small drop in the past two years. In 2016 it sat at 17%. (p. 3).

Ward and East (2016) noted the decrease in student numbers in the secondary sector as leading to consequences such as “students converged into multi-level classes, and the closure of L2 [additional language] programmes in schools” (p. 45). They identified four key impacting factors:

1. The quality and capability of teaching staff (East, 2008; Gibbs & Holt, 2003)
2. Timetabling and curriculum choices in schools (Jones, 2014; Shearn, 2003)
3. The lack of status for languages, compounded by an entrenched monolingualism (e.g., McGee, Ashton, Dunn, & Taniwaki, 2013)
4. The lack of a languages policy or compulsion in the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007; Peddie, 1997).

## Teaching quality and capability

Huguet (2006) speculated that students’ attitudes and motivation towards learning an additional language may be modified through *how* their teaching and learning programmes are delivered. As Lightbown and Spada (2006) put it:

Teachers can make a positive contribution to students’ motivation to learn if classrooms are places that students enjoy coming to because the content is interesting and relevant to their age and level of ability, the learning goals are challenging yet manageable and clear, and the atmosphere is supportive. (p. 64)

Nevertheless, East (2012b) argued that “despite having real-world communication as a goal, courses have frequently been delivered in a teacher-fronted, step-by-step, hierarchical way where attention to grammatical rules has been seen as an important pre-cursor to effective communication” (p. 132). East

noted Dörnyei's (2001) argument that the "best motivational intervention" may therefore be "to improve the quality of our teaching" (p. 26).

### Time-tabling and curriculum choices

Within the NZC itself, a significant challenge for language learning is presented (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 44). Boards of Trustees are required to be *working towards* making an additional language an entitlement for all students in school Years 7 to 10 (11+ to 14+ years of age). If schools can demonstrate that they are taking steps towards offering a language programme (even if they have not yet introduced one), this is currently sufficient to fulfil the curriculum requirement. Indeed, the decentralisation of curriculum decisions (as a consequence of the 1989 policy directive known as *Tomorrow's Schools*) means that schools are free to shape their own curricula and decide *what* is taught, and *how* it is taught. Tan (2015) quoted National's Education Minister Hekia Parata on this - "students, and their parents, decide which of the many options available at school to pursue" (§ 20).

### Lack of status and entrenched monolingualism

One significant challenge at the societal level is the belief that English is the only essentially important language (Benton, 1996; East, 2000; May, 2002). Despite McKinnon's early governmental rhetoric around the importance of language learning, Kaplan (1993) drew attention to "some hostility to language issues in the population" alongside a government which, in his view, actually showed "profound disinterest" in language issues (p. 5). May (2005) mirrored Kaplan's earlier sentiment. Noting that, in the early 1990s, New Zealand was in fact "one of the most linguistically homogenous nation-states in the world" (§ 4), one "clear reflection of the English monolingual bias" was a "palpable lack of interest in language issues, among both policy makers and the wider public" in New Zealand (§ 9).

More recently, East (2008) argued that "[e]ntrenched monolingual and Anglocentric [English-only] attitudes arguably work against the successful introduction of meaningful courses in foreign languages in schools" (p. 129). He concluded (East, 2012a) that "[t]here is a very real sense in which many New Zealanders simply do not see the point of learning an additional language" (p. 31).

### Lack of a national languages policy

Allied to lack of compulsion in the curriculum as a consequence, for example, of *Tomorrow's Schools*, and entrenched monolingual-mindedness, early advocacy for a national languages policy (Waite, 1992), alongside more recent canvassing for such a policy (Royal Society of New Zealand, 2013), has failed to provide sufficient traction to see a policy established.

Building on the above constraints, Ward and East (2016) reported a study that examined factors influencing curriculum leaders in schools as they made decisions about additional language programmes. Findings from interviews with principals and leaders of languages in four schools (n = 7) and an on-line survey of teachers (n = 112) were presented against the four intersecting themes identified above. Although, overall, it was found that languages programmes can be successful, lack of status was seen as a major impacting factor. Challenges with timetabling and a crowded curriculum were also identified, alongside the emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects, lack of compulsion and the need for a national languages policy. Quality of teaching emerged as being key to success. That is, teachers spoke about the importance of having vibrant and enthusiastic teachers for languages programmes.

In essence, the situation in New Zealand with regard to student take-up of additional languages "has not been a positive one," with teachers of additional languages "frequently facing demotivated students, low enrolments and considerable attrition" (East, 2012b, p. 128).

## Chinese language learning to New Zealand

In the face of the above scenarios (communicative and utilitarian motivations for language learning alongside significant constraints in practice), the case of the teaching and learning of Mandarin Chinese (hereafter Chinese) stands out as important.

Seneff (2006) argued that China's emergence as an important member of the world's economy has highlighted a growing need for other nations to "acquire proficiency in communicating in Chinese" (p. 1). He concluded that those proficient in Chinese would be able to take advantage of this knowledge in building successful relationships with China.

Lo Bianco (2011) described the ascendance of Chinese as 'the gigantic up-and-comer'. Arguing that "[t]he underlying demand for Chinese is clearly tied to its massive economic and strategic presence in the global age, and in a consensus among observers that this power will increase rather than wane" (xxiii), Lo Bianco asserted that Chinese "will secure its presence among the priority taught languages in African, European, Australasian and wider American settings" (p. xxi). Indeed, Tsung and Cruickshank (2011) noted the increasing establishment of Chinese language programmes in US schools and universities. Orton (2010) argued that Australians need to learn to speak Chinese and understand Chinese culture in order to strengthen their relationship with China and to foster mutual economic and social benefits for both countries. Similar arguments have been presented regarding New Zealand (e.g., Bowman & Conway, 2013).

The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (n.d.) has acknowledged that China is "one of the world's fastest-growing economies and its vast population and growing middle class represent huge potential." It is noted that China is "New Zealand's largest trading partner in goods and second largest overall including trade in services." The New Zealand-China Free Trade Agreement "cements the trading relationship between our two countries, and frees up business for exporters, the service sector and investors."

Statistics recording the numbers of students studying a language in New Zealand's schools between 2008 and 2017 (Education Counts, n.d.) demonstrate that Chinese is bucking the trend of decreasing enrolments identified by Eriksen (2018). In both the primary/intermediate sector (Figure 1; Table 1) and the secondary sector (Figure 2; Table 2), the numbers of students studying Chinese, shown as a percentage of the total school roll, have increased.<sup>1</sup>

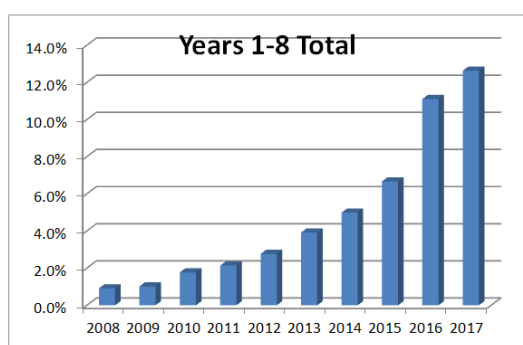


Figure 1: Chinese language students (Years 1-8) as percentages of total roll 2008 – 2017

<sup>1</sup> Statistics drawn from *Education Counts* (<https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/home>)

% Studying Chinese	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	AVG
Year 1 to Year 6	0.4%	0.4%	0.9%	1.4%	1.9%	2.4%	2.9%	4.3%	8.4%	9.9%	3.4%
Year 7 and Year 8	2.4%	2.6%	4.1%	4.1%	5.1%	8.1%	10.9%	13.6%	19.1%	20.7%	9.0%
Total Years 1-8	0.9%	1.0%	1.8%	2.1%	2.8%	3.9%	5.0%	6.7%	11.1%	12.6%	4.9%

Table 1: Chinese language students (Years 1-8) as percentages of total roll 2008 – 2017

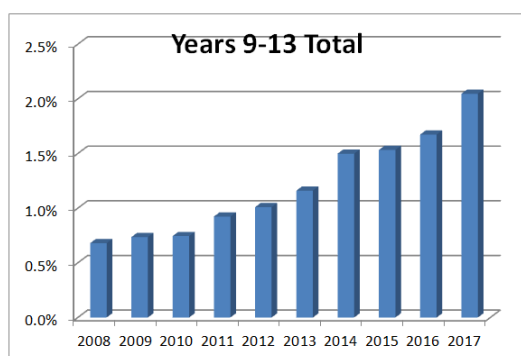


Figure 2: Chinese language students (Years 9-13) as percentages of total roll 2008 – 2017

% Studying Chinese	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	AVG
Year 9	1.1%	1.3%	1.5%	2.0%	2.2%	2.5%	3.0%	2.8%	3.2%	4.1%	2.4%
Year 10	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	0.9%	1.0%	1.1%	1.6%	1.6%	1.7%	2.2%	1.2%
Year 11	0.4%	0.5%	0.4%	0.6%	0.6%	0.7%	0.9%	1.0%	1.0%	1.1%	0.7%
Year 12	0.4%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.6%	0.8%	0.9%	1.0%	1.1%	0.7%
Year 13	0.8%	0.6%	0.6%	0.5%	0.6%	0.8%	1.1%	1.3%	1.4%	1.6%	0.9%
Total Years 9-13	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	0.9%	1.0%	1.2%	1.5%	1.5%	1.7%	2.0%	1.2%

Table 2: Chinese language students (Years 9-13) as percentages of total roll 2008 – 2017

Furthermore, as Table 3 reveals, particularly in the primary/intermediate sector the number of schools offering Chinese to students has markedly increased.

Primary Schools	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Auckland Region	20	20	24	44	55	61	72	79	103	109
Wellington Region	9	8	12	9	14	19	18	25	46	51
Canterbury Region	8	5	7	7	12	21	23	21	28	47
Otago Region	1	1	1	1	4	8	17	17	38	41
Waikato Region	3	3	4	5	5	6	15	22	35	35
Bay of Plenty Region	9	8	11	11	10	16	14	19	30	29
Other	6	9	11	12	8	14	10	15	32	33
	56	54	70	89	108	145	169	198	312	345

Secondary Schools	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Auckland Region	14	17	17	19	24	25	30	32	34	40
Wellington Region	6	5	4	5	7	7	8	10	11	12
Canterbury Region	5	5	6	5	7	9	11	12	10	11
Otago Region	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	4	4
Waikato Region					2	1		4	6	4
Bay of Plenty Region	2	3	2	4	2	2	5	6	3	6
Other	6	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	5	6
	35	34	32	37	45	47	60	70	73	83

Table 3: Number of schools teaching Chinese, 2008-2017

Overall, statistics reveal growth: considerably so in the primary/intermediate sector and more moderately in the secondary sector. Growth is evident in both the numbers of students taking Chinese and the number of schools offering Chinese. The statistics support Eriksen's (2018) assertion that "Chinese is now the most popular language taught in New Zealand primary/intermediate schools" (p. 2).



The Mandarin Language Assistant (MLA) programme represents a particularly significant mechanism to support the increase in the teaching and learning of Chinese in New Zealand's schools, particularly in the primary/intermediate sector.

## The Mandarin Language Assistant programme

According to Tsung and Cruickshank (2011), Confucius Institutes worldwide have become “an important platform for teaching Chinese as a second language” (p. 2). Specifically, the MLA programme is part of this platform and, in New Zealand, is a significant consequence of the Free Trade Agreement with China. China's Office of the Chinese Language Council International (Hanban) supports three Confucius Institutes in New Zealand. MLAs serve a term of one academic year in a school and help to promote the learning of Chinese whilst also having the opportunity to improve their English and work alongside experienced New Zealand teachers. Eriksen (2018) noted that the programme is popular and in high demand.

Two recent small-scale studies sought to identify the impact of the MLA programme in New Zealand. Lin (2013) undertook a survey to establish the perceived benefits and challenges of the programme for MLAs (n = 23). Building on Lin's work, Kai (2015), herself a one-time MLA, undertook a small-scale study into the perceived effectiveness of the MLA programme in Auckland. She focused on five Auckland schools who had engaged an MLA to work with Year 7 / 8 students for the 2014 academic year. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with school principals (one in each school) and classroom teachers (one in each school who had designated responsibility to oversee the MLA's work).

Although Kai's (2015) conclusions are not generalisable due to the small and localised sample, she asserted that her findings supported a view that “overall the MLA programme plays a positive role in promoting the development of Chinese language teaching and Chinese culture in local schools” (p. ii).

The MLAs:

- helped to raise the cultural awareness of both teachers and students in local schools, as ‘cultural envoys’;
- increased students' interest in learning Chinese language and culture;
- introduced cultural knowledge in class and facilitated various cultural activities;
- encouraged schools to attempt to establish Chinese programmes.

## Constraining factors

Notwithstanding the positive role that MLAs play in the promotion and development of Chinese in New Zealand, Lin (2013) identified several ways in which the programme might be improved, including how MLAs might be better prepared for their roles in New Zealand schools, and providing MLAs with suitable teaching materials. Several constraints also emerged from Kai's (2015) research, including:

1. too short a work term (one year) - due to the nature of the programme, the MLAs, who are enrolled as masters students in their home universities, are only allowed to be away from their on-campus study for up to 12 months, with the MLA position seen as a kind of internship within the degree;
2. preparation in China misaligned with actual work in New Zealand (in particular with regard to classroom management);
3. a tendency for schools to rely on the MLAs as ‘normal teachers’, putting them in charge of lesson planning, teaching and assessment;
4. no clear curriculum for MLAs to refer to, leading to lack of a unified approach;
5. difficulty for MLAs in adapting to the local teaching style, managing classes, and maintaining students' interest due to a teaching approach influenced by a Chinese education background.

Subsequent correspondence with key leaders within the Confucius Institutes in Auckland and Wellington confirms ways in which several constraints are being addressed. For example, in terms of

MLA preparation, professional development has been enhanced to acclimatise MLAs better for working in New Zealand's schools (Tony Browne, personal communication, 16/07/2018; Nora Yao, personal communication, 30/07/2018). With regard to Point 2 above, both Confucius Institutes have worked with Hanban to provide more NZ related input, which mainly focuses on understanding the NZ education system and how to work with a lead teacher in the classroom. Lead teacher workshops are in place to address Point 3 above and to clarify expectations. With regard to Point 4 above, the Confucius Institute in Auckland has recently produced a 'primary school framework' document for MLAs to follow; this framework has been introduced to MLAs nationwide.

Point 5 above arguably represents the most crucial barrier to the increasing success of the MLA programme, and one where lead teachers must play a leading role. When MLAs "bring with them a complete set of understandings about teaching and learning, framed by what is known as Confucian Heritage Culture (CHC), which is at points in conflict or at variance with Western notions" (Bjorning-Gyde, Doogan, & East, 2008, pp. 78-79), there is a clash between "'transmission' which relies on mastery of knowledge and rote-learning of rules and meanings" and a learner-centred model that "focuses on interactive engagement, learner autonomy and the development of communicative skills" (p. 80).

Several of Kai's (2015) identified constraints were echoed by Eriksen (2018), who noted schools' heavy reliance on the programme, including MLAs often finding themselves responsible for developing and delivering Chinese programmes even though they are intended only to be assistants to teachers. Eriksen went on to note, however, that "there is no plan as yet on the part of government for the development of increased capacity for Chinese teaching in NZ schools" (p. 12).

Lo Bianco (2011) pointed out a broader contextual problem for New Zealand, that is, "the multiple presences of Chinese as a language of heritage, a community language and a foreign language" (p. xvii). These 'multiple presences' create dilemmas for teaching Chinese in schools because the three audiences are distinct, have different learning needs and aspirations, and impact on each other when taught in combined classes. For example, the presence of international Chinese students in senior secondary Chinese classrooms can become a deterrent to enrolment for first language speakers of English. Even more broadly, and in common with constraining factors that influence all language learning in New Zealand (see earlier), other problems for Chinese, in Lo Bianco's words, will continue to be "teacher shortages, absent student motivation and insufficient curriculum time" (p. xiii).

Eriksen (2018) concluded that there was "an urgent need for New Zealand to take greater ownership of its Chinese language teaching capacity and to establish on-going plans for funding, teaching and learning Chinese language in New Zealand schools" (p. 2). This 'urgent need' must be seen against the reality that, despite positive upward trends in terms of the take-up of Chinese by students in schools, only 2% of the secondary school population was studying Chinese in 2017, thereby greatly limiting the potential for students to attain higher levels of proficiency in the language. There is scope for considerable growth. This growth needs to look at ways of supporting Chinese teaching in schools that moves beyond a reliance on the MLAs.

## Recommendations

Ward and East (2016) argued that primary support efforts need to be targeted at ensuring effective teaching "in terms of facilitating, and funding, quality teacher education and quality PLD opportunities" (p. 60). Essentially, more teachers are needed, and these teachers require adequately funded and resourced pre-service and in-service teacher education. Building on Ward and East (2016), the below recommendations are presented as means to strengthen language teaching and learning in New Zealand, with particular focus on how Chinese might be better supported:

1. Given the optional status of languages, effective pedagogy is crucial. Teachers are arguably the most important key to student enrolment, success and continuation. This may be perceived as pressurising for teachers, but its influence in student decision-making should not be downplayed.

2. Teachers need to be willing to 'embrace change' and consider more learner-centred experiential approaches to language teaching. Effective teacher education initiatives and on-going PLD opportunities need to support them in doing this. These require government funding.
3. Clearer pathways for students beyond secondary school that de-emphasise STEM subjects and promote the value of language learning might help with student recruitment and retention.
4. In schools with successful languages programmes, principals regard languages as an important part of the curriculum. The whole school ethos needs to be supportive of language learning as one of a whole range of learning opportunities.
5. Local communities need to be educated about the value of learning an additional language.
6. A national languages policy is currently lacking, and this lack should be addressed (see also Eriksen, 2018).

Ward and East (2016) asserted that enhanced opportunities for language learning could only be strengthened by "positive and supportive senior management, buy in from other colleagues, and a proficient teaching staff" (p. 60). It was also important to challenge a 'monolingual' mindset and promote the importance of multilingualism in today's world, thereby raising the status of additional language learning.

As a final conclusion, Lo Bianco (2011) warned:

Constantly hitching school language teaching to trade statistics has resulted in an almost complete absence of a rationale for languages for substantive educational, intellectual and cultural reasons. ... Basing language teaching choices exclusively on contingent economic fortunes of different economies risks chopping and changing languages when trade fortunes change. (p. xv)

Notwithstanding the pragmatic and utilitarian motivations for language learning that have been part of the discourse in New Zealand for many years (see, e.g., McKinnon, 1992), other rationales for language learning serve to guard against the vagaries of language choice determined by trade relationships. Lo Bianco (2011) argued, however, that, in the case of teaching and learning Chinese, "civilizational claims for its presence in education curricula are already sufficient" (p. xv).

Recently, and in his current role as Chair of the New Zealand China Council, McKinnon (2014) argued, "you cannot ignore China today ... the kind of relationship that we're building up is to ensure that New Zealanders can benefit by this relationship ... we deeply value this relationship, and we have got to take it seriously, and we have got to keep working at it."

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