

孔子学院



REVIEW OF THE MANDARIN LANGUAGE ASSISTANT PROGRAMME AT THE CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE IN AUCKLAND

ENHANCING NEW ZEALAND'S CAPACITY TO
TEACH SECOND LANGUAGES

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Executive Summary

This report was originally intended to document and review the Mandarin Language Assistant Programme delivered by the Confucius Institute in Auckland, with a view to identifying avenues for improving the Programme.

However, as this work advanced it became clear that the Programme itself and the issues it faces are in fact a subset of wider issues associated with second language learning in our schools.

Chinese language learning, teaching and teaching capacity have come into sharp focus in the past year. A key mission of the newly-established North Asia Centre for Asia Pacific Excellence (CAPE) hosted by the University of Auckland, in partnership with the Universities of Victoria, Otago and Waikato, is to advance the learning of North Asian languages and cultures in schools, including Chinese. At the same time there is increased political discourse about the need to lift student second language learning.

This focus on language learning, and in particular Chinese language learning, comes at a time when language learning in New Zealand secondary schools has been in decline over many years.

The MLA Programme was introduced in 2010 following the signing of the 2008 New Zealand-China Free Trade Agreement which provided for a maximum of 150 Mandarin Language Assistants from China to help teach Chinese in New Zealand primary and secondary schools every year.

The review found that the MLA Programme is popular and in high demand. Chinese is now the most popular language taught in New Zealand primary / intermediate schools although the depth of this language teaching is not clear.

But in examining the MLA Programme itself, the review found wider issues which need to be addressed at a strategic and systemic level. These issues include the absence of a second language learning policy in New Zealand schools, that schools are heavily reliant on the Programme and that the China-NZ Free Trade Agreement limits the number of MLAs who can work in New Zealand at any one time.

This report examines these inter-related issues.

It finds 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.

Introduction

This paper reports the key findings of a recent review of the Mandarin Language Assistant (MLA) Programme managed by the Confucius Institute in Auckland and delivered in schools in the Auckland, Waikato and Northland regions. The paper also considers the broader context of teaching Chinese as a second language in our schools and the positioning of the MLA programme as part of efforts to enhance New Zealanders' knowledge of an increasingly important language to support international engagement.

The MLA Programme is delivered by the three Confucius Institutes in New Zealand, located at Auckland, Victoria and Canterbury Universities, and is primarily funded by generous financial support of the Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban¹). The Programme was initiated and established by the Auckland Confucius Institute to support schools nationwide. Following the subsequent establishment of two Confucius Institutes at Victoria University of Wellington and the University of Canterbury, the three Confucius Institutes now share regional responsibilities. The MLA Programme, which places up to 150 Mandarin Language Assistants (MLAs) in primary and secondary schools nationwide², has been highly successful. In fact, with more and more schools commencing Chinese programmes, there has been increasing demand for MLAs from schools at all levels, so much so that the Programme is unable to meet current demand.

This review focuses on the experiences of the MLA Programme run by the Confucius Institute in Auckland based at the University of Auckland.

Background

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 a small drop in the past two years. In 2016 it sat at 17%. Only Chinese language study shows growth, especially so in primary schools.

In primary schools, Chinese language learning has been on the rise, and is now taught to 14% (52,669) of children; making Chinese the foreign language taught to the greatest number of primary school children³. The second most popular language for study is French with 27,463 primary aged students studying the language⁴.

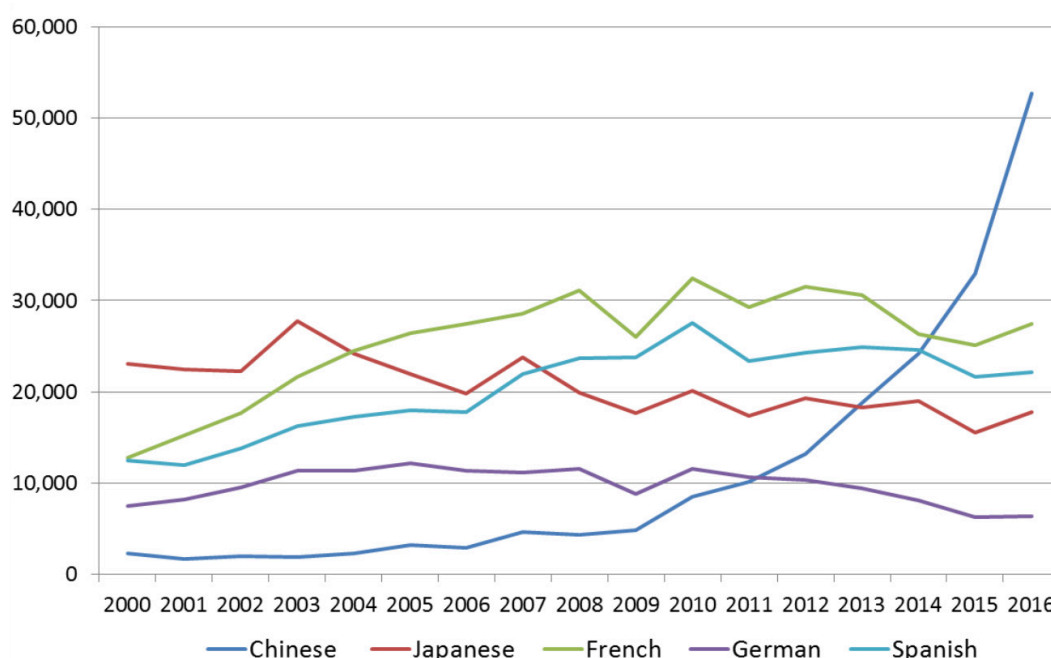
¹ Hanban was established by the Chinese government in 1987 to promote and foster the study of Chinese.

² In 2017, six MLAs worked in tertiary institutions in New Zealand, including two at the University of Auckland in the School of Cultures, Languages and Linguistics.

³ Te Reo Māori is integrated into the New Zealand primary school curriculum as one of New Zealand's official languages, and all children learn some Te Reo Māori.

⁴ Statistics obtained from Education Counts. Available: <https://educationcounts.govt.nz>.

Figure 1 Second language enrolments at New Zealand primary schools



An issue with language learning is the hours offered during a year. Ministry of Education statistics do not report the standard reached at each level with little known about student achievement, but there is some data on hours of study. Of the 52,669 primary school students studying Chinese in 2016, the majority had less than 30 hours of language learning (41% up to 15 hours, and 40% between 15 and 30 hours). This is less than one hour per week and is insufficient to build up competency in a language. Just 18% students had Chinese language teaching lasting more than 30 hours in the 2016 year.⁵

In secondary schools, Chinese language learning lags behind the other main languages taught with only 1.7% (4,752) of students learning Chinese.⁶ While numbers are rising for Chinese, more students learn Te Reo Māori,⁷ French, Spanish and Japanese although numbers are not increasing for these languages. In 2016, just 657 were studying Chinese at Year 13.⁸

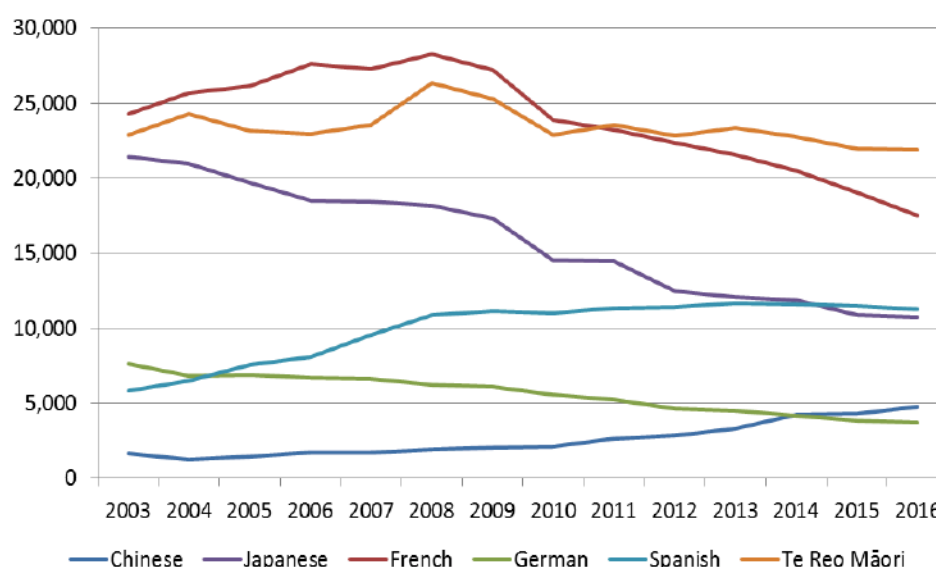
⁵ Statistics obtained from Education Counts. Available: <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/schooling/student-numbers/subject-enrolment>.

⁶ Statistics obtained from Education Counts. Available: <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/schooling/student-numbers/subject-enrolment>.

⁷ Te Reo Māori is of course one of New Zealand's official languages and has a special status as such. For many students, however, learning Te Reo Māori does constitute learning a second language. For that reason, it is included in Figure 2 showing second language enrolments.

⁸ Statistics obtained from Education Counts. Available: <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/schooling/student-numbers/subject-enrolment>.

Figure 2 Second language enrolments at New Zealand secondary schools



The proportion of New Zealand's population which is multilingual is increasing – in 2013 it was 18.6%. However, almost two thirds of those multi-linguists were born overseas.⁹ Nonetheless, there are signs that the Government and education authorities do recognise the need to increase the number of students learning Asian languages to support New Zealand's growing trade and international relationships. The establishment of the Centres for Asia-Pacific Excellence (CAPEs) in 2017, of which the University of Auckland hosts the North Asia CAPE covering China, Japan and Korea in partnership with Otago, Waikato and Victoria Universities, is one manifestation of this growing recognition, particularly given one of the CAPEs' key goals is to improve language pathways in schools. It is also notable that second language learning has been part of the political and public debate in the lead up to the 2017 Election.

New Zealand's deepening connections with China as an important trading partner is one driver of the growing recognition of the need to advance New Zealanders' knowledge of Chinese language and culture. There are also cultural and social reasons given New Zealand's increasingly diverse population. Auckland, in particular, is now one of the most diverse cities in the world, home to over 200 ethnic groups. Auckland's Chinese population has grown fast. It is the largest sub-group of Asian migrants now making up 8% of Auckland's population¹⁰; a proportion that will continue to increase assuming no major change to New Zealand immigration policy. This is another major factor to consider in the context of this paper. China is also New Zealand's second largest tourism market behind Australia, with just over 400,000 Chinese visitors coming to New Zealand in the past year, injecting about \$1.5 billion into the economy.¹¹

⁹ Statistics New Zealand, Census 2013. Available: <http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-culture-identity/languages.aspx>.

¹⁰ Asia New Zealand Foundation. Characteristics of Asian Populations of Auckland (2013 data). Available: <http://www.asianz.org.nz/reports/report/asian-auckland-the-multiple-meanings-of-diversity/characteristicsof-asian-populations-of-auckland/>.

¹¹ MBIE tourism statistics for the year ending July 2017. Available: <http://www.mbie.govt.nz/infoservices/sectors-industries/tourism/documents-image-library/key-tourism-statistics.pdf>.

The case for greater Asian language capacity in New Zealand, particularly Chinese language skills, has been stated with recurring insistence by government, by business, by public sector bodies such as the New Zealand China Council, the Asia New Zealand Foundation, by tourism operators, by municipal leaders, by surveys of New Zealanders' attitudes to the country's international priorities. But the education system is not yet able to meet the demand for teachers of Chinese. The MLA programme has provided leeway as a means of addressing that short term demand. It is not, nor should it be, a long term solution to providing greater language capacity in New Zealand schools. But as an interim measure it has been successful.

One of the primary purposes of the MLA Programme is to assist New Zealand schools in developing a capacity for teaching Chinese. Many schools (mainly primary schools), with competing demands on their resources and priorities, rely heavily on the MLA Programme to deliver their Chinese teaching, and have not yet sufficiently developed their own capacity for teaching Chinese with lead teachers supported by MLAs in the classroom. However, this needs to be considered in light of the fact that there is no mandatory requirement for students to undertake second language study at school. In fact, for primary schools, there is no requirement to provide second language teaching, and for older students in Years 7-10 (intermediate and junior secondary) the New Zealand Curriculum states that schools are "expected to offer all students the opportunity to learn a second language."¹² That is, the New Zealand curriculum does not require students to undertake second language study.

The Mandarin Language Assistant programme permits and sustains the development of Chinese language teaching across New Zealand schools at a time when there are insufficient trained teachers of Chinese to meet the growing demand for learning the language. That growth is beyond anything predicted at the time the programme was established eight years ago when 12 MLAs were spread throughout all New Zealand. This is very evident when observing the trend in Chinese enrolment numbers shown in Figure 1.

Whereas the presence of a trained Chinese language teacher is in almost all cases a pre-requisite for a secondary school to teach Chinese the availability of MLAs in primary schools, working with a class teacher who in most cases does not speak Chinese, has allowed exponential growth in the number of primary and intermediate schools where Chinese is now taught. The MLA programme has been the catalyst for Chinese now becoming the language with the largest number of New Zealand children undertaking classes in it.

A long term sustainable Chinese language programme in New Zealand schools requires a substantial increase in New Zealand's own Chinese teaching capacity.

¹² Ministry of Education (2017). Curriculum Guides: What's new or different? Available: <http://seniorsecondary.tki.org.nz/Learning-languages/What-s-new-or-different>.

Nature of the Mandarin Language Assistant Programme

The MLA Programme was introduced in 2010 following the signing of the 2008 New Zealand-China Free Trade Agreement, which provided for a maximum of 150 Mandarin language teachers from China to help to teach Chinese in New Zealand primary and secondary schools every year. The MLA Programme is designed to promote the learning of Chinese, and to raise the quality of Chinese language provision in New Zealand schools. MLAs are intended as assistants whose primary role is to provide support to classroom teachers.¹³ The MLA Programme is delivered by the Confucius Institutes¹⁴ nationally and primarily funded by generous financial support of the Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban). It is popular: more and more schools have commenced Chinese education, so much so that the Programme is unable to meet current demand for MLAs, even though there is a general time limit of three years' access to the programme for any one school, based on the selection criteria of the Confucius Institute in Auckland. This in part reflects school and caregiver awareness of the value of language learning and that the services of the MLAs are free to schools.

Two types of MLAs are involved in the MLA Programme. Most of the Mandarin Language Assistants (MLAs) come from the volunteer division within Hanban and tend to be recently graduated students or students completing related Masters degrees who are proficient in English. The Teaching Assistants (TAs) come from the teacher division within Hanban and are already teachers in China. Essentially both groups are treated the same within the Programme, although they are paid differently by Hanban. The volunteers' involvement in the MLA Programme tends to be an internship as part of their teaching degree in China. Throughout this report, when referring to MLAs, the TAs are included unless otherwise stated.

The MLAs are recruited from Confucius Institute partner universities in China, with Hanban managing the process in the first instance. Recruitment is confirmed following interviews by Confucius Institute staff. MLAs receive a six-week intensive pre-departure training programme. In 2017 and in previous years, the training included some NZ-specific input (including VUW Confucius Institute representatives and Nora Yao, Confucius Institute Director at UoA) on what to expect in New Zealand.

As managers of the Auckland MLA Programme, the Confucius Institute in Auckland organises and delivers a number of meetings and workshops throughout the year for principals, lead teachers and MLAs (refer to Appendix 1 for further details). There are several events and professional development opportunities for the MLAs. These include a welcome and orientation function, and several workshops throughout the year aimed at ensuring that the MLAs receive the upskilling and support needed to maximise their contribution to the MLA Programme, as well as their own professional gains from the Programme.

Of the 147 MLAs placed in New Zealand schools in 2017, the Confucius Institute in Auckland hosts 48, who are shared between 137 schools in the Auckland, Northland and Waikato regions. The majority of MLAs are in primary (or primary/intermediary combined), while 14 are in secondary¹⁵ and four in tertiary institutions. Some schools are part of a cluster, be it a vertical (combining primary and/or intermediate and secondary schools) or a horizontal cluster (same level schools). Both have pros and cons, with vertical clusters providing a language pathway (i.e. unbroken progression from primary to secondary), and horizontal clusters sharing resources across expanded programmes.

¹³ MLAs are not registered to work as teachers in New Zealand as per the requirements stipulated by the Education Council.

¹⁴ The Confucius Institute in Auckland was launched in 2007, as a partnership between the University of Auckland, Fudan University of Shanghai and the Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban). In 2009 a second Confucius Institute was launched at the University of Canterbury, and in 2010 a third opened at Victoria University of Wellington.

¹⁵ This was true at the beginning of 2017, but teaching arrangements would have changed throughout the year (i.e. teaching in primary) and so therefore, the end of year number may have been less.

There are two other initiatives that support the MLA programme at Auckland.

- **The annual Principals' Delegation to China** – The annual trip gives school principals (around 10 per year) an opportunity to gain an understanding of Chinese language and culture whilst helping to build an interest and commitment to supporting the development of a Chinese programme in their schools. The principals' alumni have become strong advocates for the Programme and regularly participate in Confucius Institute events.
- **The Confucius Classrooms** - These are school-based hubs that are intended to serve as centres of excellence for Chinese language teaching. Schools that host a Confucius Classroom act as lead schools for delivery of Chinese teaching and provide support for other schools. Currently there are twelve Confucius Classrooms in the Auckland region, some with a cluster of three to six schools that they support. The Confucius Institute in Auckland assesses applications to become a Confucius Classroom according to published criteria on the Confucius Institute website that include, among other things, a demonstrated commitment to the Programme from the Principal, Board and community, as well as a well-established, high quality Chinese language programme with at least one allocated teacher.

Funding for the delivery of the MLA programme is drawn from several sources:

Hanban covers most MLA funding, including international travel, accommodation (except for New Zealand Ministry of Education support, see below) and stipend for most project activities, and the Confucius Institute's Deputy-Director position (note, however, the Deputy-Director is focused more widely on the Confucius Institute operation rather than exclusively on the MLA Programme).

- The New Zealand Ministry of Education contributes to the MLA programme to cover expenses associated with 12 MLAs for management, lead teacher training and other related disbursements such as school visits, transport and staff time.
- The New Zealand Ministry of Education covers the medical insurance and part of the accommodation, training costs and management for 12 TAs (which are part of the total MLA number).
- The host schools cover their MLA's medical insurance and any supplementary accommodation funding required, if their MLA is not one of the twelve TAs.
- Significant support from the University of Auckland through its funding of the Confucius Institute which plays a large role in respect of full in-country management of the Programme – MLA selection and placement, school selection, training, mentoring, pastoral care, liaison with schools and Government.

Review methodology

The review¹⁶ investigated the MLA Programme in schools administered by the Confucius Institute in Auckland. The review identifies key benefits of the Programme, issues faced by MLAs and schools in the delivery of the programme, and outlines improvements required to position the Programme for the future. The review did not address issues of curriculum content and quality of delivery.

A variety of methods were used in the review, including a workshop with Confucius Institute staff to review the establishment and roll out of the Programme, interviews with Auckland Confucius Institute staff, stakeholders, principals, lead teachers and MLAs at six schools, and an email survey to all schools involved in the programme.

All Auckland Confucius Institute staff were invited to participate in a workshop to map the establishment and roll-out of the Programme. The collective story of the Institute was built and participants were able to write up possibilities for the future.

Twenty-eight interviews were held, with stakeholders and with six schools.

The stakeholders interviewed included:

- Chair of the Confucius Institute Advisory Board: Jenny Dixon
- Confucius Institute Director: Nora Yao
- Confucius Institute Manager: Janine Chin

And representatives from:

- University of Auckland Chinese programme
- New Zealand Ministry of Education
- International Languages Exchanges and Pathways (ILEP) Programme
- Education New Zealand (Beijing)
- Asia New Zealand Foundation
- University of Auckland Faculty of Education and Social Work (Languages).
- At each school the Principal, Lead Teacher and MLA were interviewed.
In one school the Head of School, Languages, was also interviewed.

Interviews were held with the following schools:

- St Heliers Primary School
- Henderson South Primary School
- ACG Strathallan
- Sacred Heart College
- Meadowbank Primary School
- Silverdale Normal School.

Schools were chosen to cover primary and secondary sectors, urban and rural, various deciles and to include a non-Auckland school.

¹⁶ Qualitative background research was conducted by Chard Consulting Ltd.

The questions asked of interview participants included:

- Questions pertaining to their understanding of the purpose and goals of the MLA Programme
- Questions were asked about what they rated as great about the MLA Programme
- Questions were asked about challenges that the MLAs, schools and the Auckland Confucius Institute itself faced, and how the Programme could be improved
- Questions were asked about the possibilities for the Confucius Institute in the future? What could it offer?

All lead schools participating in the MLA Programme through the Auckland Confucius Institute were sent an email survey question (n=36) in October 2016. They in turn were asked to pass it on to their cluster schools or gather feedback from their cluster schools and submit an answer. Seventeen emails were returned, with the feedback from 29 schools, answering the question,

“How can the MLA Programme be expanded or enhanced to better enable the learning of Chinese language and culture learning in schools? (Think about what could improve the quality and sustainability of the MLA programme at your school, if anything, and what further assistance or support is needed)”

All interview and email responses were thematically analysed using the qualitative analysis tool NVivo and have been collated into this report.

Key findings from interviews

The review found that the MLA Programme is a popular programme in high demand. The Programme has played a significant role in enabling schools to introduce Chinese language and culture to their students, and it is in large part thanks to the MLA Programme that Chinese is now the foreign language taught to the greatest number of primary school children in New Zealand.

The review overwhelmingly uncovered great positivity about the Programme from participants interviewed for the report. It also identified several issues and possible avenues for improvement.

Programme benefits

Support for the programme is summed up in the words of participants:

“The MLAs really help to generate a lot of enthusiasm in schools, the majority of them are really liked by the teachers, liked by the schools.....so they come and give a whole new dynamic to the language learning. And they bring that level of.....enthusiasm, they’re young, they go and do extra stuff, they get involved, they will teach dance and the kids can do a performance to the school. It’s that value add that they bring. And of course it is the language as it’s spoken and.....young people really love getting it right” – Interview respondent.

“We’re just very grateful to Hanban and the Confucius Institute, that they support schools, because we would not be anywhere near where we are without the support of the MLA Programme” - Principal, interview.

There are numerous benefits of the Programme to both schools and MLAs. Some of the benefits identified by review participants are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1:

Benefits identified by schools and MLAs
Having the resource of a native speaker significantly improves the quality of the Chinese programme
The programme offers a “good opportunity for students to learn a second language
“It allows for more effective differentiation of learning
Kids are passionate about learning Chinese
The programme “provides opportunities for students that they wouldn’t otherwise have had
The MLAs provide “support for the classroom teacher
The Lead Teacher workshops “help teachers to better engage with the MLAs
It “brings in fantastic, talented Chinese-capable teachers to support the teachers in our own classrooms
The Programme provides “access to cultural resources to enrich the Chinese programme
It “embraces cultural diversity and appreciation of cultures
The “MLA programme has brought schools closer to their cluster and feeder schools
It provides “an opportunity for MLAs to live and work in New Zealand
MLAs gain experience of teaching in countries other than China – “to open our mind as well with teaching”

Programme Issues

Several issues came up consistently through the interviews. They related to both strategic and operational dimensions of the MLA Programme. These are summarised in Table 2 and discussed in more detail below.

Table 2: Issues and Insights

Strategic
NZ Curriculum/Policy on Language Learning: Absence of a national language learning policy in NZ. The NZ Curriculum for schools states that schools with students in Years 7-10 are expected to offer all students the opportunity to learn a second language.” That is, students are not formally required to undertake second language study. At primary school level (i.e., below Year 7) there are no requirements to offer foreign language study.
Transition Programme: The MLA Programme is intended to boost Chinese teaching capacity in schools. However, 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.
Number of visas: The number of visas for MLAs is capped at 150 annually under the FTA. This number does not meet current demand. Lack of flexibility on the duration of visas does not allow sufficient time for adequate handover between MLAs.
Operational
Confucius Institute (CI) in Auckland: There was a suggestion from schools and MLAs that further support from the CI would be helpful. (See further explanation below). However, funding for CI involvement is provided by Hanban and any additional resourcing would need to be negotiated with the agency or found from elsewhere.
Schools: While MLAs are intended only as assistants to teachers, in practice they are often responsible for developing and delivering the programme, especially so in primary schools.
Greate compliance by schools on the ‘assistant only’ rule is required, along with their commitment to develop a sustainable Chinese programme.
Acceptance into the MLA Programme requires schools to submit a one year and long-term plan. However, some schools do not achieve the goals set for a range of reasons. The CI adjusts support in these instances. The CI does offer resources for teachers and classrooms, but not all schools take advantage. Given difficulties for teachers (and MLAs) to get to meetings and workshops in central Auckland because of travelling times, there is preference for meetings in regional clusters (e.g. North Shore, East Auckland).
Because schools are at different stages in the development of their Chinese programmes they would benefit from individualised support from the CI. Additionally, schools have expressed a desire for exclusive use of the MLA, that is, not having to share with other schools. Currently MLAs are placed according to full-time staff workload and the classes provided. If there are insufficient classes then schools will be asked to share their MLA with a cluster of schools – of their choosing.
Schools would like the MLAs to stay longer (e.g. 2-3 years). Some MLAs have expressed an interest in staying in New Zealand for longer. However, most would find this not easily possible, as they are required to return to their Chinese university to complete their degree or alternatively secure the support of a Chinese university to continue their stay in NZ. Most Chinese universities will not do this for their graduates.
Mandarin Language Assistants: MLAs expressed a wish for more training on the NZ education system, NZ curriculum and teaching approaches (including classroom behaviour management). Teaching in multiple schools and at different levels (primary/secondary) represents particular challenges for MLAs who, for the most part, are not formally trained teachers. Teaching styles are very different in NZ compared with China. Teaching in multiple schools also poses challenges in terms of getting from one school to another.

Discussion of key findings

It is important to keep in mind the original intent of the MLA Programme when considering the key findings and implications of this review. The MLA Programme is not a formal programme of language teaching. It is meant as an additional support for schools wishing to grow a sustained capacity for Chinese teaching. It has done that, and more, including having been instrumental in growing awareness of Chinese language and Chinese culture in New Zealand schools. On the back of the MLA Programme, New Zealand now has in place a good platform from which to grow its own programme. The Programme has shown what is possible.

It is becoming increasingly evident that the current national limit of 150 MLAs annually is not meeting current and increasing demand nationally. The FTA is undergoing a refresh and as part of that New Zealand could decide to increase the numbers. More particularly, Hanban would need to fund an increased number of places. While Hanban has expressed willingness to do so in the short-term, it is not a long-term solution. Up until recently, the cap of 150 has not been reached across the country. However, all three Confucius Institutes are reporting increased demand from schools in their regions. Similarly, up until now, it has not been necessary to determine how the 150 places should be allocated between the three Confucius Institutes. Some attention now needs to be given to this issue.

Many schools, with competing demands on their resources and priorities, rely heavily on the MLA Programme for delivering their Chinese teaching, and have not developed their own capacity for teaching Chinese independent of the MLA Programme.¹⁷ Schools are made aware of the requirements to move towards a self-sustaining basis when they are allocated a MLA. However, as the research showed, compliance with this policy is variable and needs further attention, particularly given high demand for MLAs. The “light touch” approach which has been exercised so far by the Confucius Institute in Auckland needs reviewing to determine how best to address the issue.

The MLAs have sought more training, seemingly feeling under-equipped for the MLA role. However, this needs to be viewed in context. MLAs, in many cases, end up carrying out responsibilities (planning and delivering Chinese Programme) beyond the original intent of being an assistant-only to the classroom teacher. Put simply, some MLAs are being asked to take on too much. The MLAs do receive considerable training and professional development prior to arriving in New Zealand and during their time here (see Appendix 1), and they are trained adequately for the teaching assistant role. It is unsurprising that some MLAs consider they are not adequately prepared for the tasks they are required to undertake outside the intent of the programme they signed up for.

It is tempting to conclude that the solution to the issues identified in the review is to direct further resources to the MLA Programme, whether it be to expand the Programme by lifting the number of MLAs, or to be able to offer additional support to schools, and further training and support to MLAs. Certainly the review has yielded some useful suggestions for modest improvements to the way in which expectations of the MLA programme are managed, content for professional development is prioritised and resources provided to schools.

However, an additional conclusion is perhaps more apt; namely that it is time for New Zealand to invest and grow its own Chinese language teaching workforce that can meet likely demand for language teachers in coming years. The central question focuses on how we build sustainability in New Zealand’s own Mandarin teaching capability. The MLA Programme would remain a key part of an enhanced workforce continuing to provide classroom assistance and the inspiration and authenticity to support language learning. It would serve as a platform to extend Chinese language teaching in New Zealand.

New Zealand universities are moving to provide specialist training for language teachers. For example, and in common with a range of tertiary education providers nationally, the University of Auckland’s Faculty of Education and Social Work offers a Graduate Diploma in Teaching which is a recognised teaching qualification enabling graduates to teach in schools. Graduates of such programmes can also progress, for example, to a Masters of Professional Studies in Teaching Chinese in Schools (as offered at the University of Auckland). There are other qualifications relevant for teachers but which are not a formal teaching qualification. These include, among others, the University of Auckland’s Faculty of Arts offering of a Postgraduate Diploma in Language Teaching and the University of Otago’s Graduate Diploma in Second Language Teaching.

¹⁶ The Confucius Institute in Auckland has found through surveys of lead teachers that the language classes push them out of their comfort zone, especially when their students learn faster than them.

Other initiatives aimed at fostering Chinese language development

While the MLA Programme has become a cornerstone of Chinese teaching programmes in Auckland (and other New Zealand schools), several other initiatives exist to help schools and teachers to facilitate language and culture learning in New Zealand schools (refer to Appendix 2 for further details).

The Centres for Asia-Pacific Excellence (CAPEs), newly established in 2017, have as one of their goals to improve language pathways in schools. The North Asia Centre for Asia-Pacific Excellence, hosted by the University of Auckland, is currently considering how to provide better language pathways for students to take Chinese at university, thereby building local capacity to teach Chinese in schools. Several options are under consideration, including a proposal to enable MLAs to undertake graduate diplomas in teaching at New Zealand universities alongside their role in New Zealand schools (study/work part-time), and the provision of scholarships to enable domestic students to undertake Masters degrees to prepare them to teach Chinese more effectively.

The International Languages Exchanges and Pathways Programme (ILEP), funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Education, provides support to schools and teachers to implement the Learning Languages curriculum area through the promotion of a five-stage professional learning pathway for schools and teachers in Years 7-13. Among other support and initiatives, ILEP offer national language advisors, immersion scholarships programmes in China and elsewhere, and a structured programme of learning for language teachers.

The Asian Language Learning in Schools (ALLiS) initiative, also government funded, is a \$10 million contestable fund to support the teaching of Asian languages in state and state-integrated schools. Through two rounds of applications, over 200 schools nationwide have received support for Chinese, Japanese, or Korean language teaching. Funding is due to terminate at the end of 2018, with future funding still remaining unconfirmed.

Transforming Practice in Language Teaching (TPLT) is another government-funded programme which supports the teaching and learning of a range of languages including Chinese. Formerly known as Teacher Professional Development Languages (TPDL), TPLT is an in-service year-long programme for teachers at all New Zealand schools.

The Asia New Zealand Foundation, a non-partisan and non-profit organisation supported through a mix of public, philanthropic and corporate funding, aims to grow New Zealand's knowledge and understanding about Asia. The Foundation does not offer language programmes itself but does promote what is available elsewhere and funds some professional development for teachers of Chinese. Recently it supported course fees for a student to study for a Masters of Professional Studies in Teaching Chinese in Schools. It also provides a range of Chinese education resources that can be downloaded from its website.

In other words, there are a range of initiatives in place to enhance New Zealand's Mandarin language teaching capacity. However, these initiatives are currently piecemeal, and as is evidenced by the fact that schools have become heavily reliant on the MLA Programme, much more could be done.

The way forward requires leadership. The University of Auckland is well placed to lead a discussion amongst interested parties to identify how a much more coherent approach could be developed to enhance New Zealand's capacity to teach Chinese. This could involve, for example, the country's three Confucius Institutes, ILEP and the recently formed North Asia Centre for Asia-Pacific Excellence, along with other key stakeholders.

Conclusion

The MLA Programme has provided New Zealand schools with an opportunity to introduce Chinese language and culture to their students at a time when the New Zealand government is looking for a major step-change in the engagement, knowledge and understanding of a major trading partner.

The MLA Programme is highly successful, and it is largely thanks to the MLA Programme that Chinese is the foreign language taught to the greatest number of primary school children in New Zealand. The review of the Programme has identified much positivity about the Programme, as well as possible avenues for improvement.

The review draws attention to the lack of capacity in New Zealand schools to deliver a Chinese language programme, were it not for the existence of the MLA Programme. As such, the review highlights the need to establish on-going plans for the funding, teaching and learning of Chinese language in New Zealand schools.

It is clear that the MLA Programme has raised significant awareness in schools and wider communities of the need to engage with Chinese language and Chinese culture.

The review, however, raises a more fundamental issue. There is a pressing need for New Zealand to take greater ownership of its Chinese language teaching capacity by increasing the supply of NZ-qualified Chinese teachers and thereby building long-term sustainability of Mandarin teaching capability in New Zealand. Ideally, this would require government leadership (to implement a national policy for second language learning) and the commitment to adequately resource second language learning in schools. Whatever might take shape in the next few years, the Confucius Institutes are in a position to continue their contribution to improving New Zealanders' ability to be more conversant with Chinese language and culture.

Acknowledgement: We would like to thank all interviewees for their generous time and effort in participating in the review.

Appendix 1:

MEETINGS, WORKSHOPS AND OTHER SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

The Confucius Institute in Auckland holds various meetings and workshops throughout the year for Principals, Lead Teachers and MLAs. Schools are at different stages of their MLA Programme journey and with the development of their schools' Chinese language programmes, so it is challenging to meet everyone's needs.

For local schools

Introductory meeting

Principals and Lead Teachers of new MLA Programme schools are invited to a meeting where the MLA Programme is outlined - the expectations; responsibilities; effective use of MLAs; Confucius Institute and other support and sustainability. This meeting occurs late in the year preceding the year that the school will host their first MLA.

February meeting

Lead Teacher meetings are held in Auckland and Waikato. All Lead Teachers are expected to attend this meeting so that they can be updated on their responsibilities, how to build capacity and sustainability in their schools and how best to work effectively with their MLAs.

Mid-Year meeting

At the mid-year Lead Teacher meeting, attendees are reminded of the MLA role; lead teacher responsibilities such as MLA welfare and teaching support; building sustainable programmes and support available. Survey feedback from schools and MLAs is also given to share challenges and successes from both perspectives and strategies going forward. Experienced Lead Teachers are often brought in to speak about how they utilised their MLA to the best effect. Sometimes MLAs are also invited. These meetings are held in both Auckland and, for the last two years, also in Waikato.

School visits

The MLA Programme Manager and Chinese in Schools Facilitator visit schools when they can, but are unable to do the number of visits that they would like, or the follow up visits due to resourcing constraints. Not all schools are visited each year. School visits can include MLA classroom

observations, strategic conversations with school leadership regarding their Mandarin Programme, help building capacity, and providing support in the school.

Continued support

While schools will generally only receive three years' access to an MLA, the Confucius Institute maintains contact with schools to provide ongoing support and welcomes queries that schools may have.

New Zealand Principals' Delegation to China

The Confucius Institute in Auckland has provided an annual New Zealand Principals' Delegation to China since 2007. The Principals' Delegation is for those principals, in the greater Auckland region, with or considering providing a Chinese programme in their schools. The trip to China enables principals to experience Chinese culture, schools and contemporary Chinese society.

Hanban covers all expenses while in China, including domestic travel, food and accommodation, with international airfares, visas, travel insurance and personal expenses the responsibility of the individual principals.

The Principals' Delegation complements the MLA Programme, enabling principals to gain an understanding of Chinese language and culture whilst helping to build an interest and commitment to supporting the development of a Chinese programme in their school. It also provides principals with some background knowledge of the cultural and teaching differences the MLAs will need to deal with when they are in New Zealand schools.

"It really broadens your awareness of the Chinese culture, the Chinese language and the Chinese way of doing things, and the more you know about that framework the better you can support any programmes you have at school, and the main one is the MLA Programme, even for the fact of understanding where the MLA comes from, what their needs are and how they operate" (Principal, interview).

Most principals who take part in the Principals' Delegation apply to become part of the MLA Programme to assist their Chinese programme development.

"Giving Principals the opportunity to visit China is absolutely amazing and I cannot thank the Confucius Institute enough for this wonderful privilege. This is a sure way to develop a strong programme" (Principal, email).

For MLAs

Meetings for MLAs

Prior to arriving in New Zealand, the Confucius Institute connects the new MLAs with previous MLAs to share information about school placements, students, programmes and life in general in New Zealand.

Orientation

The Confucius Institute in Auckland runs an Orientation Week in February each year for MLAs when they first arrive in New Zealand. Orientation Week includes:

- An introduction to New Zealand life;
- An overview of the New Zealand Curriculum;
- An overview of the New Zealand education system and how it is different to China;
- Visits to schools; and
- Classroom teaching observations.

MLAs receive a certificate from the Confucius Institute in Auckland at the completion of their orientation at the welcome function.

Welcome function

At the end of orientation week MLAs are formally welcomed in a special ceremony organised by the Confucius Institute in Auckland. They are welcomed by Institute staff, government representatives from China and New Zealand, Confucius Institute Board members, principals and teachers from their host schools and their homestay families.

March workshop

All MLAs come together again one month after orientation (in March), once they have spent some time in their schools and had a chance to observe lessons and become familiar with what is required of them. No teaching is required during this time. In March all MLAs return to revisit the New Zealand education system and how to teach Chinese. These workshops are split into primary and secondary sectors, so they are targeted to the areas the MLAs teach in, allowing them to raise relevant issues and seek appropriate support.

Mid-year workshop

All MLAs are brought together again and given the opportunity to ask questions in the middle of the year. **Generally, the MLAs want to discuss:**

- Classroom management;
- How to deal with heritage and non-native speakers;
- Working with students at different levels;
- Group work;
- Resources and
- How to make learning fun.

"We have training and sharing our experiences. We go to our workshops and we share our experience and talk about what we have done and what our questions about teaching are or we share some good activities of teaching and some cultural activities we can do at school" (MLA, interview).

“Last year I attended several workshops which is really beneficial for us. I can learn a lot in lectures, they invite a lot of professional specialists, like in language or in teaching language. That really helps me to build up; first the confidence and then the knowledge” (MLA, interview).

National MLA professional development workshop

In 2016 Hanban asked the Confucius Institute in Auckland to run a national workshop for Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch MLAs. This was held over three-days in July. An MLA National Professional Development workshop has been held again in 2017 hosted by the Confucius Institute at the University of Victoria in Wellington and supported by Hanban.

Farewell function

The Confucius Institute in Auckland host a farewell function for the MLAs at the end of their stay in New Zealand. Representatives from the New Zealand and Chinese governments, New Zealand Ministry of Education and ILEP and other agencies, principals, teaching staff and homestay families are invited to celebrate and acknowledge the year that the MLAs have shared with them. MLA representatives also share reflections on their time in New Zealand. The MLAs are presented with a certificate recognising their contribution.

Regional cluster meetings

MLAs have the opportunity to participate in Regional Cluster Meetings for networking, sharing their successes and challenges and talking about games and resources that they have been using. The clusters include; North Shore, West Auckland, East Auckland, South Auckland, Central Auckland and Out of Auckland. The Confucius Institute in Auckland facilitates the first cluster meeting, in Term 2, and MLAs are expected to organise their own Regional Cluster Meetings in Terms 3 and 4. There has been feedback from the MLAs that they would like the Confucius Institute to facilitate the subsequent meetings and more frequently, but there is not enough current resourcing to enable this.

A Chinese language framework for New Zealand schools

In response to teacher need, the Confucius Institute in Auckland facilitated the development of a framework to support and assist primary schools and teachers to implement an effective Chinese language programme.

The Framework covers Foundation levels 1 to 4 to be used predominantly at the primary level in Years 1 to 8. These foundation levels have been established by the Confucius Institute as there is currently no standard for primary level achievement. The Framework is being trialled by teachers and MLAs in the Confucius Institute network of Auckland schools. The Framework can be found on the Confucius Institute in Auckland's website http://ci.ac.nz/images/uploads/resources/Final_Shared_framework_for_Chinese.pdf.

Online resource database

The Confucius Institute in Auckland has set up an online resource database for MLAs to access and is establishing one for teachers as well.

Cultural resources

The Confucius Institute in Auckland has a library of cultural items that can be borrowed by schools in the Auckland region to support Chinese language and cultural programmes. The resources include clothing, dance props, festival decorations and calligraphy tools.

The Institute also provides schools in the Confucius Institute in Auckland network with a free set of textbooks for young Chinese language learners entitled Chinese Paradise.

“We can borrow from the library at the Confucius Institute and they provide some things that we can use for our cultural activities or perform with some costumes, some traditional things” (MLA).

“Cultural resources, like mask painting, the tea ceremony, all the resources come from the Confucius Institute” (MLA).

Thesis workshop

The Confucius Institute organises thesis workshops to support MLAs who are preparing or writing their MA thesis during their time in NZ. This is part of the agreement under the joint graduate training centres established between the Confucius Institute in Auckland and its Chinese partner universities.

Appendix 2

INITIATIVES AND ORGANISATIONS

The Confucius Institute and the MLA Programme exist alongside a number of other initiatives and organisations in New Zealand that help schools and teachers to facilitate Chinese language and culture learning in schools. Other initiatives and organisations are outlined below.

Centres for Asia-Pacific Excellence (CAPEs)

In early 2017, the Government announced that the University of Auckland would host one of three new Centres for Asia-Pacific Excellence. The University of Auckland is hosting the North Asia CAPE, which covers China, Japan, and Korea, in partnership with the University of Otago, the University of Waikato and Victoria University of Wellington.

The CAPEs are a Government initiative to develop New Zealanders' Asia-Pacific knowledge and language skills, with the aim of enhancing our economic, trade, political, and cultural relationships with the region. The funding has been allocated initially for four years. The North Asia CAPE officially started on July 1 and detailed planning is now under way for the CAPE's first six months.

One of the key goals of the CAPE is to improve language teaching in schools and facilitate language pathways to universities. Work is now underway to explore how the CAPE might provide professional development support for the MLA programme and offer post graduate scholarships to build teaching capacity in Chinese.

International Languages Exchanges and Pathways (ILEP)

ILEP is funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Education and provides support to schools and teachers to implement the Learning Languages curriculum area through the promotion of a five-stage professional learning pathway for schools and teachers in Years 7-13. Along with Mandarin, ILEP supports schools that teach Japanese, French, German, Spanish, Korean and some Pasifika languages. These advisers, through workshops and school visits, give practical advice on classroom management, lesson design, teaching techniques, intercultural communicative language teaching, task-based learning and more. The Confucius Institute in Auckland works with the Chinese national language adviser to provide teachers

with professional development and ongoing language learning. The Confucius Institute invites ILEP to lead teacher workshops each year to share support.

National Language Advisors

To ensure pedagogical assistance for international languages supported by the New Zealand Ministry of Education, ILEP provides language and cultural expertise through National Language Advisers for Chinese, French, German, Japanese and Spanish.

Asian Language Learning in Schools (ALLiS)

In 2014, the New Zealand government established ALLiS, a \$10 million contestable fund to support the teaching of Asian languages in state and state-integrated schools.

Through two rounds of applications, over 200 schools from Southland to Tai Tokerau have received support for Mandarin, Japanese or Korean Language teaching. Many are working within clusters (combined primary / secondary school groups), and have established links with language and cultural organisations to get the most out of their language programmes.

As part of supporting ALLiS schools, ILEP (see 4.2.2) have set up an online platform where ALLiS-funded schools can ask questions, find and share resources, discuss topics with peers and find out about scheduled events, workshops and webinars. Many of the ALLiS supported schools are part of the Confucius Institute network.

Asia New Zealand Foundation

The Asia New Zealand Foundation, a non-partisan and non-profit organisation supported through a mix of public, philanthropic and corporate funding, was set up to grow New Zealand's knowledge and understanding about Asia. The organisation has staff in both Auckland and Wellington.

The Foundation does not offer language programmes itself but does promote what is available elsewhere and funds some professional development for Chinese teaching. It also provides a range of Chinese education resources that can be downloaded from its website and provides grants to support cultural events and school trips to Asia.

New Zealand Chinese Language Teachers' Association (NZCLTA)

NZCLTA is a non-profit organisation set up to connect and support Chinese language teachers at primary and secondary levels. It provides and promotes professional network and development opportunities, to support effective Chinese learning in schools.

Affiliated to NZALT, NZCLTA works closely with a host of academic, education and policy related organisations including teachers, Chinese community groups, translators, interpreters and government bodies. It also works within the area of foreign economics and trade, advising cultural and political bodies.

As a membership organisation, NZCLTA has members from the primary, secondary and tertiary education sector. Since 2016 it has held the annual Oceania Conference for teachers of Chinese in schools, an event supported by the Confucius Institute in Auckland and ILEP.

Transforming Practice in Language Teaching (TPLT)

Funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Education, TPLT supports the teaching and learning of Chinese, French, Japanese, German, Spanish, Samoan, Niuean, Cook Islands Maori, Tongan and Tokelauan.

Formerly known as Teacher Professional Development Languages (TPDL), TPLT is an in-service year-long programme for teachers at all New Zealand schools. It supports teachers to improve their own language capabilities, with teachers able to learn at a level and through a method appropriate to their needs and situations (e.g. attending regular language classes, study by distance or through customised language lessons).

Through the TPLT programme, teachers also complete a 15 point 300 level course entitled "Teaching Languages in Schools". This is a University of Auckland course that focuses on deepening understanding of second language acquisition, research and practice, the New Zealand Curriculum and effective classroom pedagogy.

A TPLT In-School Support Facilitator visits each teacher participating in the programme once a term to observe a lesson and facilitate an evidence-based learning conversation.

The Confucius Institute has invited staff from TPLT to lead teacher workshops and to assist with preparing teachers to sit HSK Chinese proficiency exams that is part of TPLT's programme.

Immersion Scholarships

ILEP currently runs yearly immersion scholarship programmes, for New Zealand teachers, in China, New Caledonia, Japan and Spain.

Through the ILEP China Scholarship Programme, the Chinese and New Zealand Ministries of Education offer up to twelve scholarships per year to New Zealand teachers of Chinese to attend a three-week intensive language and culture programme at the Beijing Language and Culture University, China. ILEP also provides support for Asian Language Learning in Schools (ALLiS) funded schools, through a dedicated team.

New Zealand Association of Language Teachers (NZALT)

NZALT is a professional network of language teachers, with over 500 members. The national organisation is organised into six regional groups, and has a number of initiatives designed to support teachers in the classroom including competitions, awards and professional development opportunities, including a biennial conference which is scheduled for Auckland in July 2018 and will be held at the University of Auckland.

AFS Intercultural Programs (AFS)

AFS is an inter-culture global education organisation. Through the AFS Teacher Exchange Programme, AFS New Zealand is contracted by the New Zealand Ministry of Education to deliver the Language Immersion Awards (LIA), which allow teachers learning languages to travel, live and study overseas. Fully funded by the Ministry, these awards aim to improve language teaching and learning in New Zealand schools. Award applications are open to all language teachers currently teaching a second language within the New Zealand curriculum, including Mandarin.

