



CLF Chinese Language Teachers' Meeting 12 March 2006

Chinese – A Viable Subject Choice in New Zealand Schools?

Speech by Lily Lee, CLF Trustee

I am pleased to be involved in the Chinese Language Foundation and put time and energy into developing a strategic education plan for learning a second language in New Zealand, namely Chinese.

Prior to my retirement 6 weeks ago my role in the Ministry of Education involved the learning and teaching of English as a second language. This has been a very important policy and initiative ensuring that thousands of non-English speaking background students were provided with appropriate teaching and learning.

For over 10 years I worked closely with a national ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Advisory committee members representing the different organisations: the NZ Principals Federation, the APPA, the ASPA, the Principals Centre PPTA, the Education Review Office, the School Trustees Association, Dip TESSOL lecturers, and Advisers from the University of Auckland.. Advice from this committee was a very valuable and contributed to our success in the development of ESOL policy and its implementation..

In the Ministry we set up good systems, databases and developed many initiatives in order to achieve our strategic plan. This included ongoing professional development of teachers, piloting new programmes, the development and trialling of resources, exemplar schools, assessment procedures and the development of an English Language Learning Progression Framework. In looking at resources we visited Australian schools and The New South Wales Department of Education were very generous in sharing resource materials which we modified for the NZ environment. It takes time to put all this into place and it has mainly been over the last 5 years that we have seen significant changes in ESOL teaching and learning..

This is a very brief overview of my work in the Ministry to enable you to have an understanding of the commitment required to promote the teaching and learning of Chinese and to achieve a sustainable and positive outcome,

We are now at the very exciting and challenging stage of promoting Chinese in schools. With approximately 2500 schools in New Zealand this is a huge task. Like all major initiatives a number of strands need to come together. We need to assess our capability and capacity. Resources are necessary and it is important that we start with teachers.. Schools will be more receptive to teachers who are versatile and can teach more than one subject. We should encourage clustering of schools to utilise a full time teacher. Language and culture programmes need to be imbedded within the school structure, charter and policies.

The Chinese Language Foundation wants to tackle all strands in a sustainable fashion. We want to be able to say that in New Zealand we are developing quality teachers, we are supporting quality schools which are providing quality programmes for the students.

With your contribution and expertise we can play this important role. We can together make Chinese a viable subject choice in New Zealand schools.

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