ESOL provision for adult immigrants and refugees in New Zealand: Policy, practice and research

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ABSTRACT

The provision of English-language programs to adult immigrants and refugees in New Zealand, as is the case elsewhere, cannot be divorced from the larger political context. Consequently, the examination of such provision benefits from being situated in the discourse surrounding immigration policy, languages policy and concerns related to settlement outcomes. Furthermore, this analysis is enhanced by a concomitant examination of the impact of recent policies surrounding foundation literacy. While the intersection of these areas has clearly resulted in improved provision, it is argued that delivery and funding arrangements remain characterised by considerable complexity and that the lack of a national languages policy and coordinated research program has implications for the effective delivery of adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in the longer term.

Introduction

This article discusses the provision of English-language programs for adult immigrants and refugees in New Zealand through the three lenses of policy, practice and research (Burns 2006). The first section provides a brief background to the national context. This is followed by an examination of the context surrounding immigration. It is argued that until the recent adoption of a coherent settlement strategy, and, equally, of language-in-education strategies directed both at ESOL\(^1\) and foundation literacy, the provision of adult immigrant ESOL had been marked by fragmentation, lack of coordinated funding and the absence of long-term planning. The third section provides a current overview of adult ESOL programs and it is argued that despite many positive initiatives, provision remains characterised by considerable complexity. This is followed by a summary of the limited research in the field. The paper concludes by highlighting key issues and noting some future directions.
The national context

We begin with a snapshot of New Zealand’s current population. New Zealand has an increasingly diverse population compared to that of 20 years ago. Data from the 2006 Census shows just over 9% of the population of 4,027,000 identified with the Asian ethnicity category (854,552 people) and 7% with the Pacific Islander category. The Asian ethnic group was New Zealand’s fourth largest group (after European, Maori and Other) and was the fastest-growing group between the 2001 and 2006 censuses. Within the Asian ethnic group, the largest group are Chinese\(^2\) (147,570 compared to 26,616 in 1986), followed by Indian (104,580) and Korean (30,000). The Middle Eastern ethnic group numbered some 17,500, while 10,800 identified with the African category (Statistics New Zealand 2007). The numbers and proportions of people born overseas have also continued both to increase and to diversify. In 2006 one-in-five of New Zealand’s population was born overseas, with those from the People’s Republic of China being the second highest group (after England), more than doubling since 2001.

Since 1979 New Zealand has also accepted more than 19,000 refugees for permanent resettlement through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Quota Program, a policy that reflects the government’s ongoing commitment to fulfilling its international humanitarian obligations and responsibilities under the United Nations 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. From July 2000 to June 2006, 4,034 UNHCR quota refugees from over 20 countries were settled, with Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Myanmar, Iran and Ethiopia being the main source countries (Immigration New Zealand 2007). In addition to the average annual quota of 750 UNHCR refugees, New Zealand also accepts Convention refugees (former asylum seekers whose refugee status has been approved by the New Zealand Immigration Service Refugee Status Branch or on appeal by the Refugee Status Appeals Authority). There is also an annual family reunification intake (Refugee Family Quota) and, in 2006, 300 refugees were accepted under the International/Humanitarian immigration category.

Reflecting the increasing ethnic and linguistic diversity in New Zealand, the 2006 Census revealed that about 88,000 people do not speak English well enough to carry on a conversation about everyday matters. The Adult ESOL Strategy, a key policy document published by the Ministry of Education in 2003, estimated about 200,000 adults ‘can speak English but not as well as they could’ (Ministry of Education 2003: 2).
Policy dimensions

As the preceding comments indicate, the provision of adult immigrant ESOL programs in New Zealand necessarily needs to be situated in the processes of globalisation and international immigration (Bedford 2005) and in the related discourse surrounding settlement outcomes (Fletcher 1999; Ho et al 2000; Gray and Elliott 2001; White, Watts and Trlin 2002; Henderson 2004; inter alia). In addition, an understanding of the fragmented provision and complex funding arrangements in New Zealand benefits from an examination of the historical failure to adopt an explicit national languages policy and, in particular, a language-in-education policy for adult ESOL (Shackleford 1997; Hoffman 1998). However, an understanding of how current policy influences provision would not be complete without recognition of more recent government initiatives that have attempted to redress issues surrounding settlement outcomes and social cohesion (NZ Immigration Service 2004a, 2004b, 2004c) and concerns related to adult literacy, language and numeracy (Ministry of Education 2001, 2003).

In regard to globalisation and immigration, Bedford (2005) offers a useful framework for understanding cross-border population movements since 1960, identifying three periods. The first of these, 1960–85, saw significant new immigration from Polynesia to provide unskilled and semi-skilled workers in New Zealand’s expanding urban manufacturing sector, and the ongoing arrival of Indo-Chinese refugees. Although Pacific Island people made up the majority of these new immigrants, it has been noted that they were not well represented in newly established adult ESOL programs ‘for the simple reason they were at work’ (Lewis 2004: 12). Even today, despite ongoing immigration from the Pacific, such learners remain under-represented in immigrant second-language programs, yet constitute one of the groups identified by the 1996 International Adult Literacy Survey as most in need of adult literacy provision (Ministry of Education 2001). This observation lends support to the claim that the provision of adult ESOL is inherently ideological and is ‘rarely, if ever available equally to all groups in a “developing” society’ (Tollefson 1991: 96).

Changes to immigration policy, first in 1986 and subsequently in 1991 (with the removal of the traditional source country preference and the adoption of a points-based system), are ‘generally seen to be a watershed in the history of international migration in New Zealand’ (Bedford 2005: 134). These changes – linked to the intentions of opening up the New Zealand economy, increasing domestic human capital and promoting economic growth – effectively saw unprecedented immigration from Asian
countries, particularly Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan and the People’s Republic of China. While many of these new Asian immigrants were entrepreneurs in search of business opportunities, lifestyle changes and educational opportunities for their children, they were not a homogeneous group. Those from China, for example, were young, highly qualified and usually experienced professionals who ‘were rich in qualifications and work experience, but not in money’ (Henderson and Trlin 1999: 46).

Although seen at the time as the ‘years of optimism’ (Bedford 2005: 135), the period 1986–95 was, to a significant extent, years of failure in terms of ensuring positive settlement outcomes, not only in regard to facilitating pathways to employment commensurate with identified skills, but also in ensuring sufficient English-language skills for successful settlement (White, Watts and Trlin 2002). New settlers with English-language needs were virtually left to ‘sink or swim’ (Cooke 2001: 73) in a frequently discriminatory cultural environment in which ESOL provision was, for many, inaccessible, unaffordable and of variable quality (Altinkaya 1998).

Successful outcomes for refugees were even more precarious (Altinkaya and Omundsen 1999; Gray and Elliott 2001; Chile 2002). Although it was acknowledged that many refugees, in particular, would initially have only minimal English-language competence, it was assumed that most would learn enough English post-arrival through existing community-run classes, polytechnic programs (where a limited number of free places were available in Training Opportunities programs), or through voluntary agencies such as the ESOL Home Tutors Scheme, which had been established in the 1970s to assist the resettlement of refugees from Vietnam and Cambodia.

Under the then current neo-liberal, market-based ideology, and a certain degree of ignorance concerning the complexities of second-language (and literacy) acquisition, government agencies saw little point in providing comprehensive, post-arrival English language support to new settlers. One naive view, inherited from an earlier political generation, was that the language difficulties of new settlers with English-language needs were often ‘exaggerated’ and that most would ‘pick up the language quickly and easily … with the help of fellow countrymen and the friendly tolerance of initial problems by New Zealanders’ (Brooker, cited in Lewis 2004: 10).

In recognition of the lack of political will and coordination, numerous practitioners and applied linguists alike called for the establishment of both an explicit national languages policy and a national settlement policy that would lead to a coordinated ESOL strategy that would ‘offer hope, help and fast outcomes’ (Coghill and Gubbay, cited in Altinkaya 1998: 186).
The third period, 1996–2004, can be categorised as the ‘years of reflection’ in which immigration policy shifted from a focus on ‘targets’ to ‘successful outcomes’ (Bedford 2005). Although immigration policy during this period was subject to ongoing ‘tinkering’ (Henderson et al 1997), particularly surrounding entry English-language requirements and the establishment of a pre-paid bond to cover English-language tuition upon arrival (see also Read 2001), there was also evidence of a growing commitment to improved settlement outcomes, as well as an increasing dialogue between government ministries. This dialogue, which has continued to the present, appears to have its genesis in two related concerns: first, those related to social cohesion (NZ Immigration Service 2004c; Butcher and Hall 2007) and, second, those related to wider educational concerns about foundation skills and levels of adult literacy, language and numeracy (Ministry of Education 2001, 2002). Several policies/strategies are worthy of note.

**Adult Literacy Strategy**

The results of the 1996 International Adult Literacy Survey, which showed that some 20% of New Zealand’s adult population had inadequate literacy skills, had a significant impact on the development of an adult literacy strategy for New Zealand. In 2001 *More than words/Kei tua atu i te kupu: The Adult Literacy Strategy* was launched, with implications for adult ESOL provision; the government recognised the need for programs targeting adult English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners, in order to improve ‘the extent to which these groups come to fully participate in social and economic activity’ (Ministry of Education 2001: 27).

**Adult ESOL Strategy**

Following on from and closely linked to *The Adult Literacy Strategy*, the *Adult ESOL Strategy* was launched in May 2003, with its vision that ‘all New Zealand residents from non-English-speaking backgrounds have opportunities to gain English language skills so they can participate in all aspects of life in New Zealand, whether in the workplace, further education, family or the community’ (Ministry of Education 2003: 3). The strategy provided, for the first time, explicit policy aimed at enhancing access and affordability, expanding provision and increasing the quality of adult ESOL. Funding rapidly followed policy and 125 additional Training Opportunities places were allocated to refugees nationwide for an 18-month period. The funding was increased for the 2005/06 funding period for the provision of Refugee Study Grants and has allowed about 400 refugees annually to
enrol in Equivalent Full Time Student (EFTS)-funded programs with zero fees. In 2005 the Adult ESOL Strategy was further implemented with the allocation of Study Grants for Migrants (now called Academic Migrant Grants), which allow free access to EFTS-funded, employment-focused programs. Strict eligibility criteria apply, however: immigrants must have EAL, be unemployed or under-employed, and have tertiary qualifications that are linked to the Department of Labour Skills Shortage Lists.

**Tertiary education strategies**

Also of relevance is the Tertiary Education Strategy 2002–2007, which clearly articulated the need for the development of foundation skills so that people could participate in the ‘knowledge economy’ (Ministry of Education 2002). Adult foundation skills remain a priority in the current Tertiary Education Strategy 2007–12 (Ministry of Education 2006). As part of the government’s foundation learning work program (titled ‘Learning for living’), a range of exploratory projects in adult literacy, numeracy and language (including ESOL) were funded with the aim of informing policy development. Funding for literacy, language and numeracy initiatives is provided by the Tertiary Education Commission through several channels including Adult and Community Education, the Workplace Literacy Fund, Training Opportunities and the Foundation Learning Pool. Although the majority of projects funded through the Foundation Learning Pool are for literacy and numeracy initiatives, some adult ESOL provision has also been funded; for example, bilingual literacy classes for the Somali and Ethiopian communities in Auckland, and enhanced writing skills for EAL learners in tertiary institutions.

**National settlement strategy**

The commitment to immigrants and refugees has been further strengthened by the development of both national and regional settlement strategies, a call that had echoed through all of the settlement-orientated research. A result of cross-government collaboration, in 2004 the New Zealand Settlement Strategy was launched with a significant budget. Among its six goals, it identified the need for immigrants, refugees and their families to be ‘confident using English in a New Zealand setting, or [to] access appropriate language support to bridge the gap’ (NZ Immigration Service 2004c: 11). In December 2006 the Auckland Regional Settlement Strategy was also launched, signalling both central and local governments’ intention ‘to be responsive to the needs of people who have come to live permanently in New Zealand’ (NZ Immigration Service 2006: 4).
New Zealand’s ad hoc immigration policy in the 1980s and 1990s, together with a lack of commitment towards adult ESOL provision, has resulted in negative settlement outcomes for a significant number of new settlers. Recent policy initiatives, however, with corresponding allocations of funding, show an increasing and clear commitment to immigrants and refugees with English-language needs. The *Adult ESOL Strategy*, as one example, has been in existence now for more than four years. With its recognition that English language is essential for successful settlement, and its commitment to enhanced access to affordable and expanded provision, the strategy has had considerable impact on the lives of many adult refugees and a smaller group of tertiary-qualified immigrants. However, although there have been considerable funding gains, there have also been some frustrations. Criteria around the grants have been tightened, which has led to the exclusion of some groups from accessing provision; refugees, for example, must be able to study a minimum of eight hours a week. This has served to deny English-language classes to a sizeable and often vulnerable cohort: those who need to care for children or elderly relatives, as well as those in part-time employment wanting to improve their English to improve their future prospects.

It is against this background of policy complexity that English-language programs for adult immigrants and refugees are currently provided.

**Provision of programs**

A number of options are currently available to adult EAL immigrants and refugees, including a variety of tertiary and community-based programs, private language schools, informal tuition through local church and community groups, and home-based tuition offered through the ESOL Home Tutor Scheme. Increased funding has improved accessibility and affordability, while increased professionalisation of the field (Lewis 2004) has undoubtedly contributed to the provision of higher quality programs. However, in New Zealand, unlike Australia, there is no national curriculum framework for adult ESOL, and individual providers have the autonomy to design their own programs providing they meet either internal validation and/or accountability procedures required by funding agencies.

**COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS**

Community-based programs exist in a wide range of settings, including classes held in local schools and community halls. Programs delivered through Adult and Community Education are government subsidised and, accordingly, providers must align their programs to the five national
priorities first outlined in the 2002 Tertiary Education Strategy: targeting learners whose initial learning was not successful, raising foundation skills, strengthening communities by meeting identified community learning needs, encouraging lifelong learning and strengthening social cohesion (Tertiary Education Commission 2005). While community-based programs are affordable and in larger cities are easily accessed, where programs at different levels are not able to be offered, classes are frequently characterised by diversity in both proficiency and student goals (see, for example, Lewis 1996).

New Zealand’s largest community-based provider is the ESOL Home Tutor Scheme, which provides free one-to-one tuition by trained volunteers in the homes of EAL immigrants and refugees, in addition to social English groups (Matthews 2006). In terms of both funding and activity, it is the country’s largest non-government organisation dealing with refugee and immigrant issues, with 25 member schemes nationwide currently providing English-language and support services to some 5700 people (including 3700 one-to-one tuition), predominately female homemakers unable to easily access formal instruction (ESOL Home Tutors 2007a). Also, with the introduction of The Adult Literacy Strategy, additional funding was obtained to develop programs for learners with the greatest literacy needs: pre-literate refugees (Shameem et al 2002; Hope 2003). As these programs have continued to attract funding, additional literacy tutors (including bilingual tutors and assistants) have been trained, and in 2006 bilingual classes had grown to 28 nationwide with over 500 learners.

In addition, some larger refugee communities have also been able to access funding from the Tertiary Education Commission to run their own community-based, bilingual programs (McDermott 2004, 2006). Characterised by learner-driven, process-type curriculums and culturally specific methodologies, these programs, as with those offered by the ESOL Home Tutors Scheme, provide many refugees with the confidence to progress into mainstream programs. Evaluating the Auckland Somali Community School of Adult Literacy program, McDermott (2006: 353) identified a number of significant outcomes, including gains in language and literacy, improved social interaction in everyday life and in accessing services, improved self-confidence, self-reliance and motivation, improved computer literacy, access to vocational and learning pathways, and enhanced community cohesion. McDermott concluded that the delivery of collaborative, small-scale, local responses:

had many positive outcomes for adult refugees in New Zealand, many of whom would have hitherto remained on the margins of the society. The shift
in the locus of power hopefully represents a move towards more resources being made available for refugees to facilitate their own integration whilst also supporting the education of their children, community capacity building and leadership development.  

(McDermott 2006: 353)

**Tertiary-based programs**

Tertiary educational institutions (universities, polytechnics and *wananga*), as well as private training establishments, also offer a variety of options for adult EAL immigrants and refugees. While many learners do attend ESOL programs with a strong focus on language development and general settlement goals, others are enrolled in Ministry of Social Development-funded programs with employment outcomes, or may attend Training Opportunities and Youth Training programs where, especially away from main centres where ESOL provision may not exist, they could sit side-by-side with foundation literacy, numeracy and language learners (Benseman, Sutton and Lander 2005).

In terms of ESOL provision, a large tertiary institution such as Auckland University of Technology (AUT), for example, offers a variety of internally accredited ESOL programs and these are differentiated by focus, level and by funding source. The largest program is the 300-hour Certificate in English Language, which was adapted in the early 1990s from an earlier version of the Australian Certificate in Written and Spoken English (Hagan et al 1993). The program is thus informed by a competency-based curriculum framework and adopts a learning-centred approach in which instruction is purposively directed at the achievement of language-related outcomes. Lecturers, however, have considerable freedom within this prescriptive framework to develop their own courses based on students’ assessed needs and wants (see Wette in press). The Certificate in English Language provides a progression of six proficiency levels, from beginner to advanced, and facilitates learning pathways from and into other programs in the school, one being the Certificate in English for Academic Study, which prepares EAL learners for mainstream university studies.

Also offered at AUT is the Certificate in Employment Skills English, an employment-focused program consisting of five proficiency levels and four distinct student cohorts. One stream (Training Opportunities) caters primarily for refugees, some of whom have little or no first-language literacy, and attempts to integrate the four language macro-skills within a student-centred environment. Students can progress through four levels; at the two higher levels, instruction is highly contextualised around employment and students are expected to undertake a period of voluntary work experience
organised by the class lecturer. Funding is dependent to a significant extent on the achievement of destinalional outcomes: 60% of learners exiting the program are expected to move into employment or further training within two months.

Employment-focused ESOL is also taught in the Work and Income-funded stream, with the target group being unemployed EAL learners who have completed high school education. Learners generally have some English-language proficiency. Key outcomes required include the improvement of clients’ English-language skills relevant to employment or further training, work experience, and improved success at job interviews and, to this end, the syllabus, as much as possible, is based on the communicative demands of the workplace. Criteria attached to funding require a minimum of 65% of students to be on a pathway into employment by the end of the program.

The third stream, English for Professional Employment, is designed to meet the needs of tertiary-qualified EAL immigrants with advanced levels of English. Most students are unemployed (or under-employed in part-time or casual work) and have goals of finding professional employment in their respective fields. Again, voluntary work experience forms a core component of the course. The fourth student cohort under the Certificate in Employment Skills English is comprised of those enrolled in English for Medical Professionals, a part-time program aimed at immigrant health professionals with high levels of English-language proficiency wanting to enter the New Zealand medical workforce.

AUT also teaches ESOL in a six-week on-arrival program to newly arrived quota refugees at the Centre for Refugee Education located at the New Zealand Immigration Service’s Refugee Resettlement Centre. It is of interest to note that over the past four years, just over 28% (some 420 refugees) had less than four years of previous formal education (personal communication, Senior Lecturer, Centre for Refugee Education, July 23, 2007).

The range of learners in the above AUT programs is diverse: culturally, linguistically, educationally (in terms of previous formal education), in occupations prior to immigration, in learner goals and in length of time in New Zealand. Considerable diversity not only marks program and learner characteristics but also funding arrangements. At AUT, for example, the Certificate in English Language is a user-pays, EFTS-funded program with the majority of students paying full fees, or accessing government-assisted student loans, or using pre-purchased ESOL tuition. Refugees with higher language proficiency are able to access Refugee Study Grants, a result of
the 2003 *Adult ESOL Strategy*. In addition, some students with ‘spiky’ profiles (that is, an oracy–literacy mismatch) have additional literacy/writing support funded through the Foundation Learning Pool, a result of the 2001 *Adult Literacy Strategy*.

The four programs under the Certificate in Employment Skills English are equally complex. Funding for the Training Opportunities and Work and Income Employment English streams, which provide free tuition for students, is allocated on an annual contractual basis by the Ministry of Social Development. English for Professional Employment and English for Medical Professionals are EFTS-funded and thus attract course fees. However, students meeting criteria are able to apply for Refugee or Academic Migrant Study Grants.

The complexity of funding arrangements for programs at AUT reflects the complexity nationally in tertiary institutions (and indeed for community providers). Although for many EAL immigrants and refugees finding English-language tuition remains subject to market forces, undoubtedly the funding of adult ESOL has substantially increased over the past four years and more learners are participating in funded provision than ever before. However, the variety and complexity of funding arrangements, with their various eligibility rules, outcome targets, reporting requirements and sometimes varying quality control measures, is bewildering (as in the United Kingdom also). Inevitably this fragmentation ‘produces confusion for both providers and learners and produces substantial management and administrative overheads for providers’ (NIACE 2006: 78).

**Research**

Discussing adult ESOL internationally, Burns (2006: 97) argues that funded research in the field ‘typically consists of short-term, localised and fragmented projects’. Similarly, Murray (2005: 65) notes that in contexts where policies surrounding EAL immigrants and refugees are not made explicit, research on ESOL programs ‘is almost invisible on the agenda of academic researchers – because of the lack of funding’. Both comments are applicable to the New Zealand context.

As indicated in our paper, settlement issues have received considerable attention from both independent and commissioned research, in particular the New Settlers Program at Massey University. This work has highlighted the crucial role of English in facilitating social contacts, enhancing employment and educational opportunities, and providing the basis for productive involvement in the economic, social and cultural life of New Zealand. Much of the New Settlers work has focused specifically on the
provision of ESOL services (for example, White, Watts and Trlin 2002; Watts and White 2004). Concurrently, considerable evidence has been amassed regarding the resettlement needs of adult refugees, many of whom on a number of criteria have additional needs including the provision of basic literacy and numeracy instruction and access to health services, in particular mental health services (Gray and Elliott 2001; NZ Immigration Service 2004b). Taken together, this substantial body of work has helped inform the development of recent policies aimed at facilitating improved social and human capital outcomes.

Also of note is the Language in the Workplace project conducted at the Victoria University of Wellington, one of the aims of which is to explore practical applications for New Zealand workplaces. While much of this research (for example, Newton 2004; Holmes 2005; Riddiford and Jo 2005), together with smaller-scale practitioner studies with a similar sociolinguistic focus (for example, Grant 1996), has relevance for the provision of adult ESOL programs, few instructional materials have been published to date.

Although resettlement needs (including ESOL provision) have attracted considerable research funding, much less funding has been allocated to the actual delivery of adult ESOL programs, curriculum development or the investigation of classroom processes. Our search of the literature uncovered very little pedagogically orientated research other than the evaluative reports on the provision of bilingual refugee programs mentioned previously, a recent study of the effectiveness of one-to-one provision in the ESOL Home Tutor Scheme (ESOL Home Tutors 2007b) and our own recent study (Strauss et al 2007), funded by the Learning for Living project, which looked at the impact of curriculum and funding arrangements on EAL learner pathways. The main finding of this study was that for many learners, individual pathways were not sufficiently recognised and, in particular, the goals of predominately female refugees with limited education and/or prior work experience were constrained by restrictive funding criteria. The finding accords with research from the United Kingdom that has found ‘what is funded and what is not funded can have a significant impact on possibilities for engaging in learning’ (Barton et al 2006: 8), a poignant reminder that in all areas of adult education ‘funding affects learners in seemingly random ways; often the most vulnerable learners end up with the most insecure provision’ (ibid).

While there is a paucity of funded research that is pedagogically orientated, there is a growing body of practitioner research. Surveying articles published in the fifteen issues of Many Voices during its ten-year
history (1991–2000), Lewis (2000) notes that research-related contributions doubled between 1991 and 2000, a trend that has continued with the establishment of other local journals such as the TESOLANZ Journal and New Zealand Studies in Applied Linguistics. Although space prevents a comprehensive review of this research, one strand focusing on bridging the gap between the classroom and the personal is worthy of note (for example, Couper 2002; Neville-Barton 2002; Wright 2006). Collectively, these studies, some of them action research projects, have focused on student goals and motivation and issues of social identity and acculturation. One theme running through this strand of practitioner research is the importance EAL learners place on acquiring spoken English and the frequently problematic nature of gaining opportunities for authentic language use in the community. One further practitioner study of significance, in that it focuses specifically on curriculum processes, is Wette (in press), who examined expert teachers’ construction of the instructional curriculum, adding to the argument that the particular and dynamic nature of teachers’ decision-making lacks recognition in theoretical discourses on the ESOL curriculum.

However, despite the dedicated efforts of those in the field, practitioner research of any kind is not an easy undertaking in an environment where funding is not easily accessed, as Denny’s (2005) study of university-based ESOL lecturers involved in action research has argued. Finally, although dissemination of this body of practitioner-research is possible through a number of national and international journals and through local conference venues, such as the biannual Community Languages and ESOL Conference, what is crucially absent in New Zealand is a national research agenda for adult ESOL and, equally important, the establishment of a national research centre to coordinate such research.

**Issues arising and future directions**

Shortages in both skilled and unskilled labour constraining economic growth (Bedford 2005: 148) are likely to see the continuation of targeted immigration strategies. It is also likely that New Zealand’s commitment to UNHCR refugees will continue, and with both immigrants and refugees able to apply for family members to join them, diversity will continue to be a feature of New Zealand’s population. Correspondingly, the need for adult ESOL provision is likely to be ongoing. A settlement strategy, in particular the need for English language, has both recognition and support at a governmental level, boding well for the future.

There are, however, a number of issues that remain pertinent. First, a
strong recommendation found in much of the settlement research has been the establishment of an explicit national languages policy to coordinate the present fragmented system. While recent strategies have been of considerable benefit in making adult ESOL provision more affordable and more accessible, the articulation of an explicit national languages policy would lead to the development of more systematically funded provision. Second, as mentioned earlier, there is a corresponding and crucial need for a coordinated and funded research program. Successful overseas models exist, such as the National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research at Macquarie University in Australia (see Brindley 1990). Finally, there needs to be a clearly articulated recognition that the needs of adult ESOL learners differ in significant ways from those of adult literacy learners. Reflecting the complexity in both recent policy and funded provision, there are increasing numbers of adult EAL learners currently in mainstream literacy, numeracy and language programs, a strategy that may not offer the best learning outcomes for those with EAL needs. In this regard, Benseman, Sutton and Lander (2005: 72) caution:

With the advent of the concept of foundation learning, language and literacy are increasingly seen to be related parts of the whole and have become important components in the general tertiary sector. However, while ESOL and literacy provision are related, they are not the same and there are important differences between the fields that should not be overlooked.

NOTES

1 In New Zealand the term ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) is commonly used both in the field and in policy statements.

2 ‘Ethnicity is a measure of cultural affiliation, as opposed to race, ancestry, nationality or citizenship. Ethnicity is self-perceived and people can belong to more than one ethnic group’ (Statistics New Zealand 2006).

3 Training Opportunities are funded by the Ministry of Social Development; they assist all adults ‘with low qualifications and/or limited skills to gain recognised qualifications’ (Ministry of Social Development and Tertiary Education Commission nd: 4). The program is outcome-focused, with participants expected to develop their foundation skills in order to achieve both education and employment or further training.

4 EAL is an alternative term to ESOL favoured by tertiary institutions in New Zealand; it is a more inclusive term recognising the significant cultural capital adult immigrants and refugees possess.

5 The EFTS system is the method used to count tertiary student numbers and is based on a student undertaking a year’s full-time program as one EFTS unit. Part-time students are fractions of one EFTS.
‘The Tertiary Education Commission … is responsible for leading the government’s relationship with the tertiary education sector, and for policy development and implementation’ (Tertiary Education Commission nd a).

Wananga is the Maori-language term used to refer to Maori tertiary education institutions.

Work and Income is described as a ‘service of the Ministry of Social Development’ and has responsibility for assisting job seekers and paying income support on behalf of the government (Work and Income nd).

Foundation Learning Pool funding was established to ‘provide funding for the delivery of high quality and intensive foundation learning opportunities’ (Tertiary Education Commission nd b).

See http://newsettlers.massey.ac.nz for further information.


The relatively small population of New Zealand generally prevents the commercial viability of locally produced ESOL materials, but one successful publication with a current distribution of around 2000 copies is Password, a national quarterly magazine for adult immigrants and refugees produced and used by adult ESOL practitioners (see Sachtleben 2000).


REFERENCES


