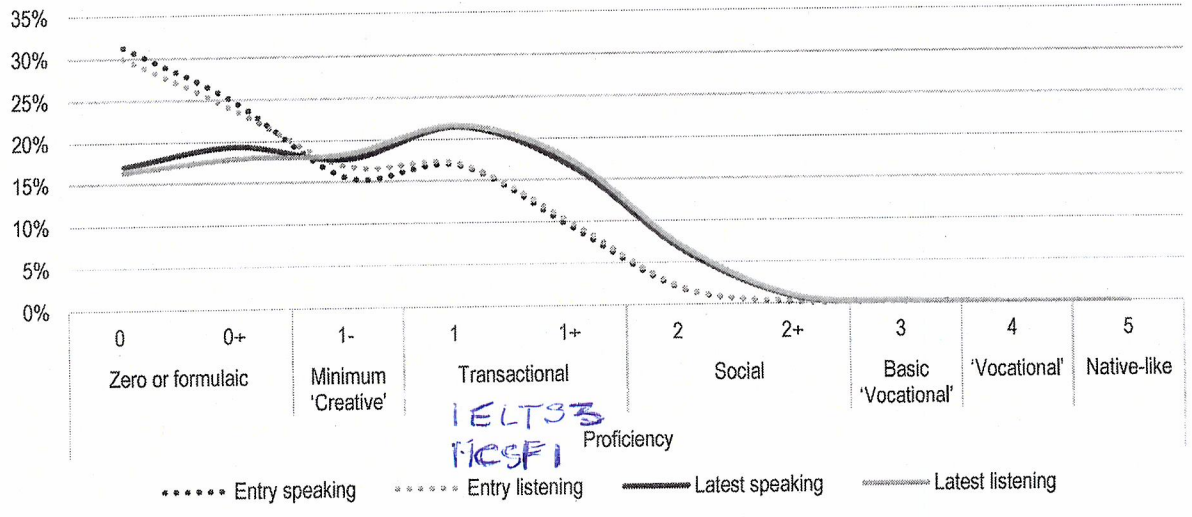


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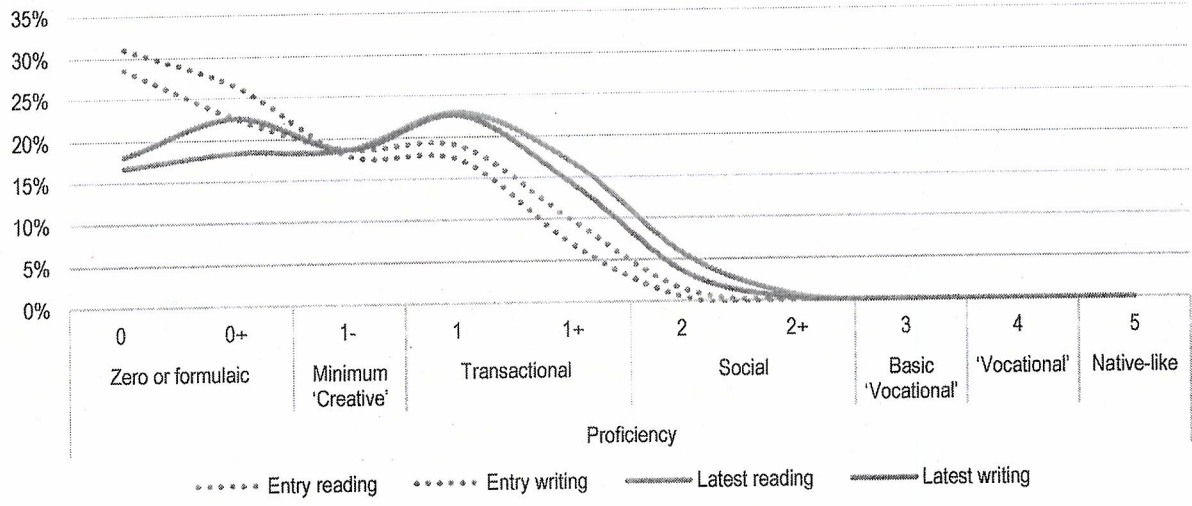
Figure 42 Speaking and listening ISLPR distribution on entry and after more than 500 hours



Note: 2004-05 to 2011-12 enrolments, clients who have completed more than 500 hours
Source: AMEP dataset

Figure 43 demonstrates how AMEP reduces the proportion of clients scoring 0 or 0+ on the reading and writing components of ISLPR, and again is shifting the curve towards the ISLPR scores.

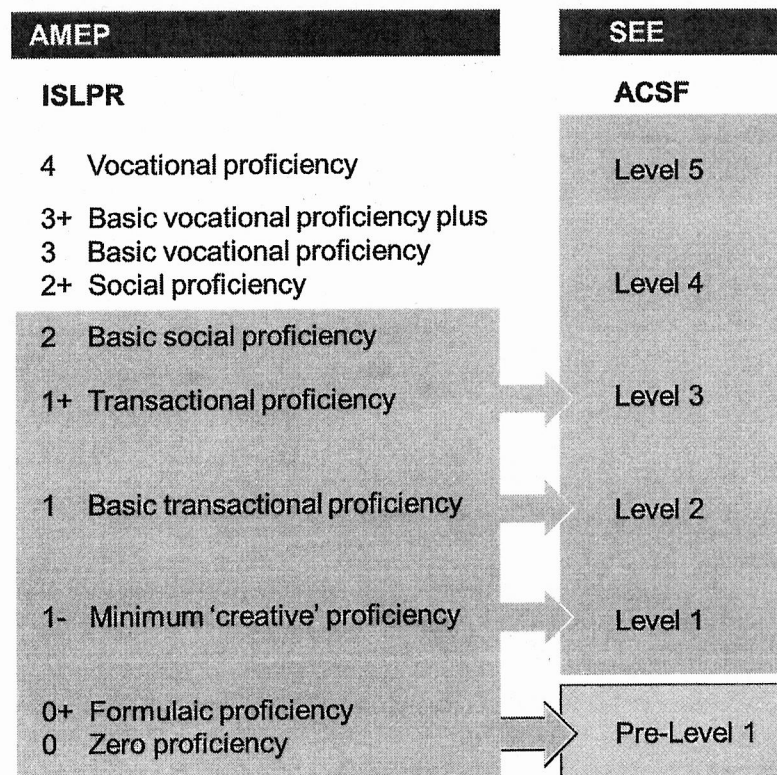
Figure 43 Reading and writing ISLPR distribution on entry and after more than 500 hours



Note: 2004-05 to 2011-12 enrolments, clients who have completed more than 500 hours
Source: AMEP dataset

While across the programme there is improvement in the four ISLPR areas, 28 per cent of AMEP clients leave the programme with 0 or 0+ on all four ISLPR elements, indicating zero

Figure 3 AMEP and SEE programme target proficiency levels



Note: Potential eligibility gap for those with very low language and literacy highlighted in red.

Source: ACIL Allen Consulting

As discussed in the SEE Programme Evaluation Report, there is some uncertainty associated with the question of whether the programme is intended to target participants with very low levels of English language proficiency. While the SEE programme does not specifically require a minimum level of LLN skills to enter the programme, the requirement to demonstrate progress in the ACSF and the inability to assess progress against pre-level 1 indicators has the effect of discouraging providers from enrolling participants with such low LLN abilities.

If it is the case that the SEE programme is *not* intended to cater to those with very low language and literacy skills, then there is a potential proficiency gap (highlighted in the figure above), whereby those who exit the AMEP but still have very limited proficiency in the English language cannot be adequately served by the SEE programme. These participants currently form a large proportion of SEE programme commencements – 15 per cent of 2013-14 SEE programme commencements scored pre-1 on all 11 performance indicators – and would need access to an alternate English language programme before they have the minimum level of proficiency and skills to participate in the SEE programme.

How the 510 hours came about:

G: The 510 hours figure was bizarre. ... Their justification was that the post-secondary ESL report came up with some figures which said, on average, people receive something like 360 hours, and on average, people reach ASLPR 1+ [that is, 'transactional proficiency', Wylie & Ingram 1995: iv]. So they mucked around with those figures and came to 510 to reach ASLPR 2 [that is, 'basic social proficiency', Wylie & Ingram 1995: iv]. But there were a few minor statistical problems with that... first of all, they were talking about an average for people who'd been in Australia from 0-5 years but this was being applied to 0-1 years. And the data was very questionable because the database was only in its early days, and there were a lot of data entry problems. In fact, six months afterwards all the data was cleaned, in the proper sense of dropping out those people whose names appeared twice and that type of thing. There were just a lot of errors basically. And yet even though that was put to them at the time, they still kept it because it would have been losing face to back down from the 510 hours figure. The reason why there was an average of 300 odd hours to get to ASLPR 1+ was because of resource restrictions, where people had been in the program for so many weeks and then pushed out. It wasn't because that's how long it took to learn. Also people had come in at different levels. So it was meaningless. But that nicely fitted the resources available.

H: Who's the 'they' who decided the 510 hours?

G: People in Immigration who had to put a figure to Finance for budgeting purposes. Now, I don't mind about figures being used for that, as long as they're accurate. Because you've got a budget, and you've got to know roughly, if you're going to get, you know, 10,000 new concessional migrants who are primarily elderly people from South East Asia, that approximately they'll need so many hours each. You've got to have some measure. Well, what they did was translated that into an entitlement. I mean it's a lovely myth. It was going backwards because they'd put up so many other barriers to people getting courses in the first place.

H: And this was in Immigration, not DEET.

G: It was within Immigration with the concurrence of DEET, and with Finance standing over both of them.

The 10 on the end sounded really quite scientific. 500 would have looked just a bit too neat. **That** was the thing. Marvellous. I mean this is how sometimes government policy — you create it, you know? Someone says something, and all of a sudden it gets a head of steam and, ah, whoops, it's blessed.

p. 112

Moore, Helen (2001) Although it wasn't broken, it certainly was fixed. In J. Lo Bianco & R. Dickes (Eds) Australian Policy Activism in Language + Literacy Language Australia Ltd 2001, pp. 93-120. ISBN 1 876768 31 2

The background:

DEET kept pulling this line that we're not interested in people as migrants as such, only with those who are out of work. But they didn't really know how many people in labour market programs were getting ESL. To force the issue, the National Plan [for 1990-92] came out. The benefit of that was that at least it provided a bit of rigour with objectives, indicators and targets, standards. It was designed to force DEET into acceptance of responsibility, saying this is the pathway for people through the AMEP and on to DEET programs. DEET claimed they were never consulted about it, which was nonsense. They were on the committee but they had a different person for every committee meeting. And so that actually led to the Post-secondary Report [1990], which quantified what the real cost of it all would be, and that obviously freaked DEET out. ...The Report, and the National Plan as well, for the first time ever worked out for different cohorts of people how long it would take to learn English, and therefore what the resource implications were. So any shifts in the immigration program, all those flow-on costs for ESL, could then be calculated. And what actually happened was that it wasn't just the ESL cost of \$362 million. That was picked up by the Department of Finance, who looked at the flow-on for Medicare, social security etc — no one had ever costed the immigration program. Now Immigration's purpose, of course, was to get more money. Finance's purpose was to say no. And so they were determined from then on, not just to cut down the immigration program, but the non-English speaking component of it, and to start reducing entitlements.²²

The consequence:

There was an expectation, as a result of the introduction of 510 hours, that our clients should all be able to get to functional English [that is, ASLPR level 2] within 510 hours, and, of course, the disappointment started to emerge, that the AMEP, as a program, is set up to fail. How could you set a benchmark of functional English and only 17 per cent of your clients get there within the entitlement that they've got?

The problem was resolved by utilising the competency-based curriculum and assessment framework that had been developed by New South Wales AMES. This move had a double advantage. It officially aligned the AMEP within the National Training Agenda. It also took the focus of accountability off the learner's gains in general English proficiency and placed it on achievement in specific AMEP courses. This was explained as follows:

What we needed to do was try and recognize the gains that people were making in the AMEP, and the only way we could do that really was to end up with a much more refined way of measuring outcomes.... My view was that we had to bring the AMEP into the 1990s, and measure client outcomes based on competency. And when you look at the structure of CSWE, and indeed other competency frameworks, it gives you the opportunity to look very closely at what clients achieve whilst they're in the program, in terms of competencies and certificates.

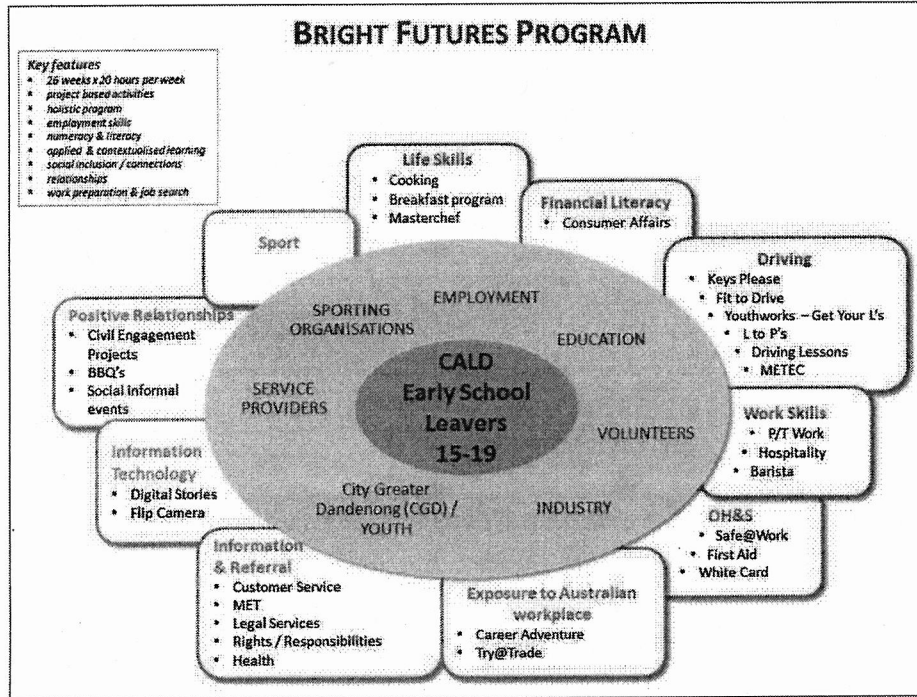


Figure 2: Example of an integrated approach to provision for refugee youth with minimal/no previous schooling

Theatre: La Mama Theatre (Carlton, Victoria) and AMES Australia (Noble Park and Dandenong, Melb): since 2006, AMES has worked collaboratively with La Mama Theatre in several projects involving AMES Youth Program participants. La Mama theatre directors work with AMES



AMES Australia youth students from Dandenong and Noble Park who created the drama 'Back to the Future' at La Mama Theatre in December 2015

young people to produce innovative theatre productions based on young refugee and migrant experiences. The young people write, act, and assist in set design, lighting, advertising and front of house for each production. There have been nine productions developed so far, each culminating in a public performance at La Mama Theatre in Carlton and other venues. This project has been an outstanding success in building confidence, team building and a sense of social inclusion for the participants.²⁶¹

Sport: The Centre for Multicultural Youth has developed sporting programs over the past 15 years.²⁶² AMES Australia Centres at St Albans and Noble Park (Melbourne) offer a course for 16-25 year olds in sport that teaches skills in Australian Rules football, cricket, lawn bowls, tennis, water safety and badminton. After AFL workshops, AMES youth have opportunity of umpire training leading to part time work – see link in footnote to SBS program; also *Youtube* video on a recent netball gala facilitated by Netball Victoria in which 200 AMES youth participated.²⁶³