Toward Quality ESL Education

Hieu Van Ngo

This article draws on the results from 18 round-table discussions and a symposium that involved community, education, and government stakeholders in building a vision for quality, equitable ESL education. The findings suggest six pillars of effective ESL education: comprehensive programming; responsive funding allocation; cultural competence; networking, collaboration, and coordination; capacity-building and advocacy; and effective leadership. Also examined in this article are the notion of the educational entitlement of ESL learners and the roles of community, education, and government stakeholders in building effective ESL education.

Cet article s'appuie sur les résultats de 18 tours de table et d'un colloque impliquant des intervenants de la communauté, du domaine de l'éducation et du gouvernement, et visant l'établissement d'une éducation équitable et de qualité supérieure en ALS. Les résultats révèlent six piliers d'une éducation efficace en ALS : une programmation d'ensemble; une répartition des subventions adaptée aux besoins; une compétence culturelle; du réseautage, de la collaboration et de la coordination; le renforcement des capacités et la promotion et la défense de la cause; et un leadership efficace. Cet article discute également de la notion du droit à l'éducation des apprenants en ALS et des rôles que jouent les intervenants communautaires, éducatifs et gouvernementaux dans la création d'une éducation ALS efficace.

Introduction

ESL learners have established a strong presence in Canadian education. Of the 1.8 million immigrants who arrived during the 1990s, 17% were school-aged children between 5 and 16 (Statistics Canada, 2003). Further, many Canadian-born children and youths are raised in immigrant households, contributing to the 10.5% of the population with home languages other than English or French (Statistics Canada, 2002). As immigrants tend to concentrate in large urban areas, with 94% living in metropolitan centers (Statistics Canada, 2003), major urban school jurisdictions have experienced drastic increases in their populations of students with an ESL background. For example, between 1986 and 1996, ESL enrollment in British Columbia schools soared 334% (Dwyer & Steel, 1997). In the Calgary Board of Education, the number of identified ESL students has accelerated from 6,803 in the 1998-1999 school year to 17,613 in the 2005-2006 school year, marking an

increase of 259% (Calgary Board of Education, 1998, 2005). What is more, the reported figures are in all likelihood conservative, because there are no standardized procedures for identifying and assessing ESL learners in schools (see Table 2).

Despite the increased ESL student population in Canadian schools, school boards have not provided adequately systematic responses to the need for quality ESL services. Through the media, ethnocultural communities and advocates have consistently expressed their concerns about the failure of school boards to provide explicit, structured ESL instruction, and about jurisdictional buck-passing among the various levels of government ("Language Funding Misses Mark," 2003; Crowson, 2000; Duffy, 2003; Nikiforuk, 2004; O'Connor, 2004; Paul, 1999; Simons, 2002; Tsang, 2003; Editorial, 1996). Several studies have also warned of such concerns as marginalization (Sinclair & Ghory, 1987), high dropout rates (Derwing, DeCorby, Ichikawa, & Jamieson, 1999; Gunderson, 2004; Watt & Roessingh, 1994, 2001), and poor academic performance of ESL learners (Grayson, 2004; Latimer, 2000; Ngo, 2001).

In response to the challenges of educating ESL learners, the Coalition for Equal Access to Education[1]—a Calgary-based umbrella organization of community agencies, groups, and individuals—initiated the *Toward Innovative Vision for Quality, Equitable ESL Education* project (the *Innovative ESL Education* project). Supported by the project coordinator, the lead consultant and the advisory committee, a team of facilitators consulted parents; community members; service-providers; educators, trustees, and administrators from school boards; and provincial and federal officials in 18 round-table discussions and a symposium in the 2002-2003 school year. This collaborative effort aimed (a) to engage relevant stakeholders from the community, education, and government sectors in ESL issues; (b) to facilitate in-depth, focused learning and discussion of ESL challenges and strategies in specific jurisdictions; and (c) to promote cross-sectoral dialogue and collaboration to articulate a common vision for ESL learners and to develop strategies for effective ESL education. Drawing on the results of the *Innovative ESL Education* project, this article offers a framework for effective K-12 ESL education. Rather than focusing on classroom strategies to support ESL learners, this article addresses macro-spheres of influence that affect the availability and quality of ESL instruction and services.

Background

Learners with an ESL background are often confronted by unique linguistic, acculturative, and social challenges at home, at school, and in the community. The complex process of second-language acquisition requires ESL learners to receive up to two years of English instruction to develop basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS), and between five and seven years

or longer to reach cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP, Cummins, 1994; Collier, 1989). Development of CALP is essential for success in high school and postsecondary education. Skills and abilities that contribute to CALP include the acquisition of English language proficiency, learning strategies, and understanding of underlying concepts and background knowledge relevant to academic subject curricula (Roessingh, 1995, 1999).

In addition, ESL learners with an immigrant background have diverse sociocultural needs. They often struggle with acculturative issues, including stress, confusion about cultural identity, intergenerational conflict, and discrimination (Anisef & Kilbride, 2003; Canadian Council on Social Development, 2000; Ma, 2002). Socioeconomically, as many as 51% of immigrants under the age of 15 and 41% of those aged 15-24 live in poverty (Statistics Canada, 1995). Those who arrived in Canada as refugees face higher risks for alcohol abuse, drug addiction, depression, posttraumatic stress disorders, and psychopathological problems (Jacob & Blais, 1991; Williams & Berry, 1991).

There is a widening incongruence between the complexity of the needs of ESL learners and the availability of ESL services in Canadian schools. Although ESL learners generally attract ESL supplementary funding beyond the basic instruction grant for all students (Duffy, 2003; Ngo, 2001), school boards across Canada have steadily reduced ESL services over the years (Calgary Board of Education, 1996; Climenhaga, 1992; Jaimet, 2000; Johnson, 2004; O'Connor, 2004; Simons, 2002). Stringent resource allocations for ESL services has resulted in limited language instruction and support services for ESL learners. In the Calgary Board of Education, for example, in the 2002-2003 school year, each certified ESL teacher was responsible for at least 115 ESL learners (Ngo). The 2004 survey of elementary schools in Ontario found that although 88% of schools in the Greater Toronto Area reported ESL learners, only 62% of the schools had ESL teachers and that the number of schools with ESL teachers has declined by 24% across the province whereas the number of ESL learners has increased by 10% (People for Education, 2004).

Unique linguistic and sociocultural challenges, compounded by the lack of responsive support in the education system, have contributed to limited educational success among ESL learners. Cummins (1981) suggested that ESL learners are two or more years behind their native-English-speaking counterparts by the time they reach grade 6. Watt and Roessingh (1994, 2001) tracked educational outcomes among ESL youth in a single, large urban school for 10 years. They found that the drop-out rate for ESL learners remained unchanged at 74%. In their study of the academic achievement of ESL high school students in one urban school board, Derwing et al. (1999) reported that nearly 46% of high school ESL learners did not complete their studies in the K-12 system compared with a 70% completion rate for all

learners in Alberta. Recently, Gunderson (2004) compared the test scores of 2,213 immigrant students with a similar-sized sample of Canadian-born students in the Vancouver School District; the researcher found a *disappearing rate* of more than 60% among immigrant high school students. Gunderson coined the term *disappearing rate* rather than referring to the drop-out rate because he was unable to distinguish between students who transferred out of the district and those who left school permanently. He also discovered that although 1,576 immigrant students were recorded in grade 8 math, only 498 or 31% were enrolled in grade 12 math. Latimer (2000) examined the 1996-1999 provincial achievement test scores of students in the Calgary Board of Education and found that ESL learners in grades 3, 6, and 9 were between 16 and 28 percentage points behind other students in the language arts. Grayson (2004) provided glimpses into the future awaiting many ESL learners at the university level: the researcher suggested that, independent of length of time in Canada, the communication skills of university students who were sons and daughters of immigrants were not as high as those of native-born English-speaking Canadians. Grayson further asserted that all else being equal, and independent of time in the country, the university GPAs of immigrant students of non-European origin were generally lower than those of native-born Canadians.

In summary, it is plainly apparent that ESL learners have significantly changed the landscape of the student population. The incongruence between their unique linguistic, sociocultural needs and the apparent lack of systemic, coordinated ESL-service responses among Canadian schools has challenged education, government, and community stakeholders to work together in order to build more effective K-12 ESL education.

Method

Procedure

The *Innovative ESL Education* project used a community-development process to engage a wide range of community stakeholders in dialogue and strategizing (Flo & Smith, 1999; Jason, Keys, Suarez-Balcazar, Taylor, & Davis, 2002). It incorporated the key elements of action research: namely, education and analysis, investigation, and action (Clark et al., 2003). Attuned to the need for capacity-building among jurisdictions and to the political context in which government, education, and community stakeholders often "pass the buck" to one another in their discussion of ESL issues, this project was implemented in three phases. The first focused on preparation and community engagement. During the preparation stage, the project coordinator worked with Coalition members to identify local and regional government, education, and community representatives who either already had

or should have had active roles in shaping effective ESL education for immigrant children and youth.

Building on earlier research activities by the Coalition and on the existing literature, the project coordinator prepared an invitation package that presented research-based background information about the current state of ESL education for children and youth and explained the nature and scope of the project. Once official invitation packages were sent to stakeholders, Coalition members and influential members of the community telephoned or met with prospective participants to further clarify project intents and issues and the involvement of stakeholders.

In the second phase, stakeholders participated in round-table discussions in their specific sectors: community (parents of ESL learners, members of community groups, service-providers); education-providers (trustees, system and school administrators, front line educators, school personnel); representatives of provincial jurisdictions (various provincial departments including the ministry of education, human rights, employment and human resource development, professional associations); and representatives of federal jurisdictions (various federal departments including Canadian Heritage, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and Human Resource Development Canada). A total of 18 round-table discussions were organized in Calgary and Edmonton. Each two-hour sector-specific round-table discussion focused on four topics: a vision for the future of ESL learners, strengths and challenges in dealing with ESL issues, recommendations for future directions in the participants' own specific sectors, and preliminary ideas for cross-sector collaboration. Inputs were recorded on flip charts and in facilitators' notes. Participants had opportunities to clarify and further elaborate on their ideas throughout the discussions.

After the completion of the round-table discussions, the research team used *ATLAS.ti*, an analytic software program, to manage, extract, compare, explore, and reassemble meaningful segments from large amounts of data in a flexible and systematic way (Muhr, 1997). Several community members reviewed the findings to ensure accuracy and consistency. The analysis identified six common areas of focus that emerged from the sessions in all four sectors: comprehensive, effective programming; responsive funding allocation; cultural competence; networking, collaboration, and coordination; capacity-building and advocacy; and effective leadership. All participants then received the interim document *Toward Innovative Vision for Quality, Equitable ESL Education: Results of Round-table Discussions.*

Building on the results of the round-table discussions, the third phase, which was the symposium process, engaged stakeholders in cross-sector dialogue and strategizing to establish a common vision for ESL learners and to further elaborate on the six common areas of focus. Again, the research team used *ATLAS.ti* to identify, organize, and refine themes. Several mem-

bers also reviewed the findings to ensure accuracy. All participants received copies of the final report. The findings were presented to relevant decision-makers, including school boards, government departments, and the Standing Policy Committee on Learning and Employment of the Government of Alberta. They were also incorporated into all aspects of the work of the Coalition for Equal Access to Education in the areas of awareness-building, institutional development, capacity-building, and partnership-building (Coalition for Equal Access to Education, 2004).

Participants

The project was based on the premise that community members, school boards, and provincial and federal government entities all have roles in shaping effective ESL education (Ngo, 2001). A total of 215 individuals and representatives of diverse communities, parents, agencies, schools and school boards, and provincial and federal departments participated in the 18 round-table discussions. Further, 155 individuals and representatives committed to participate in the all-day cross-sector symposium in Calgary. Table 1 details the composition of representatives from the various sectors.

Results

During the round-table process, stakeholders articulated their common vision for ESL learners: acquisition of academic language proficiency; equitable educational outcomes; increased sense of empowerment and belonging; full realization of potential; and overall positive integration and contribution to Canadian society. In their collective view, effective ESL education must include not only English-language instruction, but also support services that help ESL learners achieve academic language proficiency and sociocultural well-being. Data analysis suggested six pillars of effective ESL education: effective, comprehensive programming; responsive funding allocation; cultural competence; networking, collaboration, and coordination; capacity-building and advocacy; and effective leadership. Table 2 provides an overview of the six areas of focus and a summary of strategies for effective ESL education.

Effective, Comprehensive ESL Programming

ESL education needs to focus on the whole-person experience of students. It has to teach students the language, but also validate their experiences, emotions, spirituality, and culture.

There was consensus among stakeholders that effective ESL programming must facilitate communicative, academic, and social competence. Stakeholders advocated that ESL programs should integrate sound pedagogical research on second-language acquisition and effective practices. They identified development of ESL curricula for all levels, with detailed descrip-

Table 1
Numbers of Participants

Sector	*Round-Table Discussions*	*Symposium*
Community		
Parents	31	30
Ethnocultural and immigrant serving agencies	30	16
Mainstream service agencies	36	17
General public	7	2
Subtotals	104	75
Education		
Trustees	6	6
District leadership	13	15
District specialists (ESL, special needs, etc.)	15	14
School personnel	28	17
Postsecondary institutions	13	6
Subtotals	75	58
Provincial jurisdiction		
Ministry of Education (Alberta Learning)	8	5
Other provincial departments	4	2
Provincial councils and associations	6	5
Subtotals	18	12
Federal jurisdiction		
Human Resource Development Canada	4	2
Canadian Heritage	3	2
Citizenship and Immigration Canada	4	2
National groups	7	4
Subtotals	18	10
Totals	215	155

tions and standards for explicit ESL instruction, as an alternative to the prevalent ad-hoc ESL programs in schools. In addressing issues of under-identification of ESL learners and lack of accountability of ESL services, stakeholders suggested that professionally trained personnel create standardized benchmarks and procedures for identification of ESL learners, assessment of first- and second-language proficiency, guidelines for methods of ESL instruction in both dedicated ESL and integrated settings, and ongoing tracking of the progress of ESL learners.

Stakeholders recognized that effective ESL programming should have strong connections with ESL learners' bank of knowledge in their first language. They validated existing studies that have established strong, positive

Table 2
Overview of Strategies for Effective ESL Education

Areas of Focus	*Strategies*
Effective, comprehensive programming	• Integrate pedagogical research on second-language acquisition and effective practices into programming • Develop ESL curricula for all levels • Establish standardized benchmarks and procedures for identification, assessment, instruction, and tracking of progress • Incorporate culture and first language • Extend ESL instruction to pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children • Provide choices and alternative learning pathways that facilitate successful transition of older learners into upgrading placement, postsecondary education, vocational training, and employment
Responsive funding allocation	• Recruit, hire, and deploy certified professionals with ESL specialization and cultural competence skills • Develop a needs-based funding framework • Establish multiple count dates and adjust resources throughout the school year • Develop accountability measures • Link ESL education to federal funding related to the Official Languages Act and resettlement/integration services
Cultural competence	• Develop district-wide cultural competence policy • Integrate cultural competence in school development plan and activities • Ensure personnel at all levels are reflective of community demographics • Provide mandated, accessible professional development opportunities • Integrate cultural competence in all preservice and continuing education courses • Provide specialized language instruction and support services to ESL learners • Involve cultural brokers and parents in school activities
Networking, collaboration and coordination	• Provide opportunities for relationship-building and exchange of information and services among individuals, groups, and schools • Create a city-wide strategy to review, plan, and implement services for ESL learners • Establish partnerships to share expertise, resources, and support systems • Provide city-wide coordination of services • Develop communication and procedures among service providers and schools to refer ESL learners to responsive services

Table 2 (continued)

Capacity-building and advocacy	• Raise public profile of ESL education • Educate and influence decision-makers at all levels • Involve parents to advocate for their children • Support schools to develop capacity to deal with ESL issues • Coordinate community-school advocacy efforts to influence greater resource allocation to ESL instruction and services
Effective leadership	• Develop a national ESL strategy • Ensure provincial ESL curricula for all levels, research-based funding formulas, and accountability measures • Establish district-wide ESL policies and regulations that set standards for identification, assessment, instruction, resource allocation, cultural competence, professional development, and tracking of progress

effects for first-language cognitive and academic development on second-language development (Cummins, 1991; Collier, 1989). Several parents and educators affirmed the view of language as social practice and hence teaching as an introduction of ESL learners to social and cultural meanings (Kramsch, 1994). They asserted that curricula and teaching practices need to embrace cultural diversity and capture cultural nuances in order to cultivate and encourage cultural pride and exchange among students.

In recognition of the uniqueness of individual schools in terms of their sociodemographic characteristics and student needs, stakeholders recommended flexibility, differentiation, and individualization of instructional content and methods.

However, they unequivocally stressed that the implementation of ESL programs must always include standards of achievement and explicit, direct instruction and support for ESL learners.

Several participants directed attention either to preschoolers or to older ESL learners. They stressed the importance of an early start for non-English-speaking children in the development of English and literacy skills. They pointed out the well-documented benefits of Head Start programs for children, which include achievement of significantly higher scores on vocabulary, reading, writing, and cognitive development tests; use of grammatically complex sentences; development of positive social skills; and achievement of school readiness (Abbott-Shim, Lambert, & McCarty, 2003; Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, 2001a, 2001b; Lee, Brooks-Gunn, & Schnur, 1988; Nystrom, 1988). Stakeholders agreed that ESL instruction should be extended to pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children. For older ESL learners with various levels of English language proficiency and academic achievement, many participants recommended that programming take into account choices and alternative learning pathways to ensure their

successful transition into upgrading placements, postsecondary education, vocational training, and employment.

Responsive Funding Allocation

Participants were acutely aware that more resources needed to be invested in ESL education. They contended that ESL learners were entitled to pedagogically sound ESL instruction, as well as professional support to deal with a wide range of psychosocial factors such as trauma, illiteracy, low self-esteem, social alienation, and challenges to cultural identity. They called for recruitment, hiring, and deployment of certified professionals with ESL specialization and cultural competence skills.

According to stakeholders, responsive resource allocation to ESL education must be results-oriented, comprehensive, accountable, consistent, stable, and long term. Several members of diverse sectors asserted that the central premise for resource allocation to ESL instruction and support services was the question, What resources are needed to facilitate equitable educational outcomes of ESL learners? Stakeholders called for a needs-based framework that would differentiate funding with respect to levels of academic English proficiency and complexity of needs (such as ESL learners with limited schooling, posttraumatic stress, or special needs). They noted that the funding framework should support the provision of meaningful ESL instruction and services in schools with both high and low concentrations of ESL learners. Recognizing that foreign-born ESL learners arrive in Canada throughout the year, stakeholders supported multiple count dates and adjustments in resource allocation throughout the school year to reflect the current numbers of ESL learners in schools. They further recommended the development of provincial accountability mechanisms to ensure financial reporting from schools and school boards with respect to ESL instruction and support services.

Moving beyond the jurisdictional responsibility of provincial governments to finance education, stakeholders delineated ways to generate additional resources for ESL instruction and services. At the federal level, they recommended linkage of ESL education to funding activities in support of the Official Languages Act. They identified the opportunity for Citizenship and Immigration Canada to support integration of immigrant children and families through school-based initiatives. Acknowledging the role of ESL learners in the future of Canada, stakeholders suggested that both the federal and provincial governments provide tax credits and incentives to businesses to invest resources in language instruction and services for ESL learners and families.

Cultural Competence

Pointing to the changing demographics of Canadian society and the unique sociocultural contributions and needs of ESL learners, stakeholders identified cultural competence as one of the key ingredients for effective ESL education and for education in general. In accord with the literature (Campinha-Bacote, 1999; Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989; Ngo, 2000; University of Michigan Health System, 2006), they conceptualized cultural competence as a set of congruent behaviors, skills, knowledge, and attitudes encompassing awareness and acceptance of difference, awareness of one's own cultural values, understanding of the dynamics of difference, development of cultural knowledge, and ability to develop the skills to work effectively with various racial, ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups.

There was a consensus among stakeholders that rather than relying on tokenism or the add-on approach, cultural competence must be integrated into all structures and functions of Canadian schools. At the district level, stakeholders recommended development of a system-wide cultural competence policy that would set guidelines for personnel practices; integration of cultural diversity in curriculum development, instructional services, and school support services; procedures to deal with culturally biased incidents; resource allocation; staff development; communication; involvement of culturally diverse communities; and evaluation of staff performance. In schools, stakeholders encouraged an overall school climate that would value ESL learners and diversity through celebration of languages and cultural practices, opportunities for learning and dialogue on diversity issues, and repositioning of ESL education from a deficit (language barrier) to an asset (acquisition of language) position. They supported school development plans to address cultural competence explicitly in their vision and mission statement, and to carry this perspective through into a review of curriculum alignment and instruction, a professional development plan, resource allocation for ESL instruction, multicultural liaison and interpretation, communication with and support for culturally diverse families, and partnership with diverse communities.

A critical issue for stakeholders, particularly parents of ESL learners and members of ethnocultural communities, is the need for a stronger presence of culturally diverse personnel. Many participants urged school boards and schools to ensure that personnel at all levels reflect their community demographics. They further called for mandated training, incentives, and easy access to professional development opportunities to enable all staff to work effectively in cross-cultural contexts. Stakeholders highlighted opportunities for the K-12 education system to work closely with universities to integrate cultural competence in all courses and for universities to promote ESL specialization in their undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education programs.

In terms of services for ESL learners, stakeholders maintained that schools must provide specialized language instruction and support services to meet the unique linguistic and sociocultural needs of ESL learners. At the same time, they encouraged opportunities for social mixing among all learners. Many participants suggested that schools use cultural brokers and resources in ethnocultural communities to address the needs of ESL learners. They also urged that greater support be given to culturally diverse parents so that they could participate in decision-making in such matters as school council activities and help shape programs and services for learners.

Networking, Collaboration, and Coordination

Through dialogue, stakeholders arrived at an understanding that effective ESL education, with its emphases both on English-language proficiency and on the sociocultural well-being of children and youth, is indeed everyone's business. This unprecedented buy-in on the part of so diverse a group of stakeholders led participants to welcome opportunities for networking to build relationships and to exchange information on services and effective practices among individuals, groups, and institutions. Many people highlighted community forums, interagency networks, resource fairs, community gatherings, and information centers as natural settings for mutual learning and dialogue.

Following their analysis of jurisdictional responsibilities and the availability of resources for ESL education, stakeholders agreed that the education, government, business, and community sectors needed to work together to promote greater collaboration in order comprehensively and meaningfully to address the linguistic and sociocultural needs of ESL learners. Discussion about the invisibility of ESL learners in public consciousness led stakeholders to urge orchestrated efforts to promote ESL as an investment. One popular suggestion was to create a city-wide strategy to bring diverse groups in all sectors together to review, plan, and implement services for ESL learners. There was consensus that schools and community groups should form partnerships to share expertise, resources. and support systems to assist ESL learners. Most participants favored the idea of transforming schools into community hubs where diverse stakeholders could have specific roles in instruction and support services for ESL learners.

There was a common understanding that parents, service-providers, and schools generally lacked in-depth knowledge about the availability and scope of services for ESL learners. Most stakeholders favored the suggestion of a city-wide coordination of services that would take into account the diverse, complex needs of ESL learners and the necessity for ESL learners to access comprehensive and quality services. Such a collaborative effort, as argued by several participants, would require thoughtful analysis of the issues facing ESL learners and of the roles of schools, service-providers, and

various levels of government in addressing their needs. Many people called for a broad-based committee with representatives from all levels of government, school boards, businesses, community groups, parents, and ESL learners to help coordinate and guide the planning and delivery of programs and services for ESL learners. They also recommended clear communication and procedures among service-providers and schools so that ESL learners could be referred to responsive services.

Capacity-Building and Advocacy

Collective reflection on the history of funding cuts and underservicing of ESL learners led stakeholders to agree that effective ESL education could not be dependent on the judgment of individual school administrators or the political will of decision-makers in governments and school boards. In their view, effective ESL education beyond classroom service delivery must involve collective ownership among community, education, and government stakeholders. In the public arena, stakeholders suggested that concerned groups and individuals organize forums and media campaigns to alert the public to the urgency of ESL issues and their effect on the socioeconomic well-being of Canadian society. They called for coordinated political efforts to educate and assert influence over government and education bodies in order to raise the profile of ESL education and enhance resources for ESL services. Many people favored the strategy of building and mobilizing ESL blocs among supportive politicians at all levels of government to address ESL issues in their jurisdictions.

There was considerable discussion about the importance of involvement of the parents of ESL learners to advocate for their children. As pointed out by many participants, parents of ESL learners as legitimate partners in the education system and constituents of politicians could play an important role in exercising their electoral clout and in advocating for change. Stakeholders suggested that community groups empower parents to increase their knowledge about Canadian education and ESL issues and to develop practical skills for active citizenship and participation. They welcomed community and school-based programs emphasizing outreach, empowerment, dissemination of multilingual information, multilingual and cross-cultural workshop training, field trips to schools and school boards, advocacy tools, and community mentorship to support parents.

Stakeholders further called for community support of the education system to increase its capacity in dealing with ESL challenges. Identified areas of support included: development and implementation of ESL; antiracism and anti-discrimination policies; recruitment of certified ESL professionals of diverse backgrounds; access to support services such as cultural brokerage, specialized resettlement and integration support, and translation and interpretation; preservice training; and professional development. Stakeholders

recommended greater collaboration with ethnocultural communities to expand cultural resources in schools and to assert political influence to ensure both adequate resource allocation to ESL instruction and services and appropriate accountability procedures for the use of ESL funds.

Effective Leadership

In the light of the predictability of immigration patterns and the importance of ESL learners for the future of Canada, stakeholders asserted that effective ESL education must involve systemic responses at all levels. At the national level, they looked for leadership in the federal government to spearhead a national ESL strategy that would address national benchmarks, reach agreement on allocation of transfer payments to ESL education and services, and determine an explicit role for federal departments in the integration of immigrant children and youth into Canadian society. Provincially, stakeholders proposed that the departments of education develop provincial ESL curricula for all levels. They recommended a research-based funding formula, removal of funding caps, and creation of accountability measures for resource allocation to ESL education. At the local level, stakeholders suggested that school boards needed to develop sound policy statements that outlined values and principles with respect to ESL education. They urged the development of ESL policies and regulations that would set standards for identification, assessment, explicit and structured ESL instruction, differentiation and modification of teaching among subjects, resource allocation, cultural competence, professional development, and tracking of the progress of ESL learners.

Discussion

The comprehensiveness of the strategies outlined in this article speaks of the stakeholders' recognition of the complex linguistic and sociocultural needs facing ESL learners. The six areas of focus—namely, comprehensive programming, responsive resource allocation, cultural competence, networking, collaboration and coordination, and effective leadership—support the assertion that effective ESL education must bring about simultaneous academic achievement, English-language development and acculturation or social integration (Simons & Connelly, 2000). The findings further reinforce the documented variables necessary for effective ESL programs: administrative support, school and community support, collaborative professional effort, time, direct and explicit language instruction, and advocacy on improved learner outcomes (Kouritzin, 2004; Roessingh, 2004).

There is incongruence between the emphasis on a systematic, accountable, and collaborative approach to ESL issues as presented in this study and the current reality of ad-hoc, fragmented services for ESL learners in schools. This discrepancy prompts examination of the philosophical underpinnings

of the suggested strategies for effective ESL education. Moving beyond subjective judgment of individual schools and of the political will of decision-makers, stakeholders have clearly brought to the forefront the rightful notion of ESL learners' entitlement to equitable, quality ESL education. The paradigm of entitlement is in fact supported by various elements of provincial, federal, and international legislation. In Alberta, for example, the School Act of 1988 grants every school-aged child the right to receive school instruction in English or French. For the child whose first language is neither English nor French, the appropriate form of English instruction would be English as a second language. At the federal level, section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms of 1982 (hereafter the Charter) guarantees every individual the right to equality before and under the law and equal protection and benefits of the law without discrimination. According to the Charter, law covers legislation, regulations, policies, curricula, ministerial decisions, and decision of statutory boards. It can be argued that in order for a child who lacks English-language proficiency to derive equal benefits from the law that grants every child the right to an education, the child must be provided with ESL instruction. Bernhard (1999) eloquently elaborates on the implication of section 15 of the Charter:

> The right to equal benefits … goes beyond freedom from overt discrimination. Section 15(2) clearly recognizes the limitations of a narrow focus on non-discrimination. It allows special measures to be taken to ameliorate the conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups. We argue further, that "equal benefit of the law" includes the right of individuals and communities to *equitable outcomes* within the operation of the mainstream system, particularly education. (p. 241, emphasis added)

Internationally, both the United Nations *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1976) and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) recognize the right of every child to free education provided by the state and indicate that education must enable the child to participate effectively in a free society. Canada has ratified both conventions.

In addition to legislative mandates, advancement of the notion of the entitlement of ESL learners must take into consideration the financial contribution of ESL learners to school boards and the subsequent need for board accountability for resources generated by ESL learners. As to instructional monies, ESL learners typically generate millions of dollars in both basic instruction grants (for all students) and ESL supplementary grants (for identified ESL learners). In Alberta, for example, as of the 2004-2005 school year, every ESL learner brought to the local school board a basic instruction grant of $4,963 and an ESL supplementary grant of $1,020 (Alberta Learning, 2004). The funding framework also grants those born outside Canada an additional

amount of $357 per student for enhanced ESL and support services. Ideally, funding to which ESL learners are entitled would be allocated to instructional services, including ESL courses, and would address the needs of ESL learners for explicit and structured ESL instruction, adjunct support, and other instructional services in mainstream subjects. Unfortunately, school boards have generally interpreted ESL supplementary funding as the only source of money for ESL instruction and support services. It is crucial that while school boards advocate for additional funding from provincial and federal governments, they also develop a clear funding allocation formula through which the resources generated by ESL learners will be assured to address their needs and follow them to their classrooms.

The findings have identified the federal, provincial, and local spheres of influence that affect the availability and quality of ESL instruction and support services in schools. However, both provincial and federal governments are currently reluctant to take on greater leadership in the education and integration of ESL learners. This challenge is reflected in the disproportionate participation among stakeholders in the *Innovative ESL Education* project. Though there was adequate representation of government, education, and community stakeholders to permit meaningful inter-sector dialogue and planning, the disproportionately small number of representatives from the provincial and federal jurisdictions—compared with the number of parents, service-providers, and representatives of schools and school boards—is indicative of the need to advocate for greater involvement, leadership, and collaboration in ESL education among governments at all levels. Advocacy efforts, therefore, should build the capacity of local, provincial, and federal decision-makers. Further, they should empower and mobilize grassroots communities, particularly ethnocultural communities, to assert political influence at all levels and to create a greater sense of urgency to address ESL issues.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This article provides a framework for effective ESL education to promote the academic achievement, English-language development, and social integration of ESL learners. If implemented with a paradigmatic focus on the entitlement of ESL learners and in the spirit of responsibility and collaboration among jurisdictions, the strategies hold the promise of removing systemic discrimination in Canadian public education and realizing the potential of ESL learners.

Collectively, community, education, and government stakeholders must act with vision to create a better future for our ESL learners. On the basis of the strategies suggested by participants in the *Innovative ESL Education* project, there are opportunities for involvement for all levels of jurisdiction in shaping effective ESL education. At the local level, community groups and

schools need to work with the parents of ESL learners to gain knowledge of ESL issues and to foster empowerment and participation in advocacy and decision-making. They also need to support schools to develop cultural competence and to provide sociocultural services to ESL learners. Leadership in schools and school boards can play an important role in developing policies, regulations, and programs to promote pedagogically sound instruction, equitable allocation of resources, staff development, accountability measures, and the tracking of students' progress. At the provincial level, ministries of education need to ensure the development of ESL curricula for all levels. They need to establish research-based funding formulas with built-in accountability measures and remove unjustifiable funding restrictions such as fiscally driven three- or five-year funding caps. Due to the extraordinary circumstances of many ESL learners with refugee backgrounds, ministries may consider extending age caps to accommodate learners with delayed or disrupted schooling. At the national level, the federal government needs to work with provincial governments to examine the effect of jurisdictional responsibilities (federal responsibility for immigration and provincial responsibility for education) on ESL learners with immigrant backgrounds. In the confines of jurisdiction, federal departments, particularly Citizenship and Immigration Canada, can play a role in supporting schools and communities to facilitate the sociocultural well-being of immigrant children and their integration into Canadian society. In the face of what has been termed a language crisis (Duffy, 2003), where ESL services have been severely underfunded across the country and where in most jurisdictions accountability for the delivery of ESL services has been lacking, the federal government needs to take a leadership role in developing a national strategy for ESL education. Among areas of national focus are a national definition of ESL learners, K-12 ESL benchmarks, linkages between ESL education and the Official Languages Act, and the use of federal transfer payments for the teaching of English.

Statistics Canada (2005) has estimated that immigrants will make up 22% of Canada's population in 2017 and that from 21% to 25% of the total population will speak a non-official language: neither French nor English. Citizens and leaders at all levels cannot afford to miss the opportunity to invest in ESL learners in order to benefit from their dynamic linguistic, sociocultural, and economic contributions. More important, they cannot risk being part of the development of a subculture of defeat and marginalization, in which children and youth with ESL needs, denied their right to language instruction and support services, face lifelong underuse of human potential.

Note

[1]The Coalition for Equal Access to Education is a Calgary-based umbrella organization of community agencies, groups, and individuals. Its mandate is to work with parents, communities, service-providers, education, and government stakeholders to promote access to

quality, equitable education and services for ESL children and youth. Its activities include awareness-building, institutional development, capacity-building and partnership-building. For more information, visit www.eslaction.com or contact ceae@telus.net

Acknowledgments

I thank Beth Chatten, Rona Altrows, David Este, Hetty Roessingh, and Amal Umar for their support and thoughtful feedback. I appreciate the thorough reviews and valuable feedback from the anonymous reviewers. The *Toward Innovative Vision for Quality, Equitable ESL Education* project was funded by the Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Education Fund, the Calgary Foundation, Canadian Heritage, and the Community Initiatives Program.

The Author

Hieu Van Ngo is the Executive Director of the Coalition for Equal Access to Education, a community organization advocating for quality, equitable services for ethnocultural children and youth in public education. He is also pursuing doctoral studies in the Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary.

References

Abbott-Shim, M., Lambert, R., & McCarty, F. (2003). A comparison of school readiness outcomes for children randomly assigned to a Head Start program and the program's wait list. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 8*(2), 191-214.

Administration on Children, Youth, and Families. (2001a). *Building their futures: How early Head Start programs are enhancing the lives of infants and toddlers in low-income families*. Washington, DC: Author.

Administration on Children, Youth, and Families. (2001b). *Head Start FACES: Longitudinal findings on program performance*. Washington, DC: Author.

Alberta Learning. (2004). *2004-2005 funding manual for school authorities*. Edmonton, AB: Author. Retrieved March 14, 2005, from: http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/funding/FundingManual/pdf/7_1.pdf

Anisef, P., & Kilbride, K. (Eds.). (2003). *Managing two worlds: The experiences and concerns of immigrant youth in Ontario*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholar's Press.

Bernhard, J. (1999, December). *Institutionalized disadvantage in education and the right to equal benefits of the law: The next step after non-discrimination*. Paper presented at Revue Quebecoise de Droit International Seminar on Intercultural and Multicultural Education.

Calgary Board of Education. (1996). *Moving forward: An ESL review*. Calgary, AB: Author.

Calgary Board of Education. (1998). *Approved budget 1998/1999*. Calgary, AB: Author.

Calgary Board of Education. (2005). *Approved budget 2005/2006*. Calgary, AB: Author.

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. (1982). Retrieved February 14, 2007, from: http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/charter/index.html

Canadian Council on Social Development. (2000). *Immigrant youth in Canada*. Ottawa: Author.

Campinha-Bacote, J. (1999). A model and instrument for addressing cultural competence in health care. *Journal of Nursing Education, 38*(5), 203-207.

Clark, J.M., Cary, S., Diemert, G., Ceballos, R., Sifuentes, M., Atteberry, I., Vue, F. & Trieu, T. (2003). Involving communities in community assessment. *Public Health Nursing, 20*(6), 456-463.

Climenhaga, D. (1992, October 4). Immigrant parents fear budget cuts in ESL. *Calgary Herald*, A3.

Coalition for Equal Access to Education. (2004). *Strategic plan*. Calgary, AB: Author.

Collier, V. (1989). How long? A synthesis of research on academic achievement in a second language. *TESOL Quarterly, 23*, 509-531.

Convention on the Rights of the Child. (1989). Retrieved 14 February, 2007, from: http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm
Cross, T.L., Bazron, B.J., Dennis, K.W., & Isaacs, M.R. (1989). *Towards a culturally competent system of care*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Child Development Center.
Crowson, S. (2000, March 4). ESL students lose out in city schools, panel told. *Calgary Herald*, B5.
Cummins, J. (1981). Age on arrival and immigrant second language learning in Canada: A reassessment. *Applied Linguistics, 2*(2), 132-149.
Cummins, J. (1991). Independence of first and second language proficiency in bilingual children. In E. Bialystok (Ed.), *Language processing in bilingual children* (pp. 70-89). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
Cummins, J. (1994). The acquisition of English as a second language. In K. Spangenberg-Urbschat & R. Pritchard (Eds.), *Kids come in all languages* (pp. 36-62). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
Derwing, M.T., DeCorby, E., Ichikawa, J., & Jamieson, K. (1999). Some factors that affect the success of ESL high school students. *Canadian Modern Language Review, 55*, 532-547.
Duffy, A. (2003). *Class struggles: Public education and the new Canadian*. Toronto, ON: Atkinson Fellowship in Public Policy.
Dwyer, V., & Steele, S. (1997). Who should pay for ESL? *Maclean's, 110*(15), pp. 54-56.
Editorial: ESL, not flags: Ottawa skirts its responsibility by not investing in language training. (1996, October 25). *Vancouver Sun*. A22.
Flo, F., & Smith, A. (1999). *The community development handbook: A tool to build community capacity*. Ottawa, ON: Human Resource Development Canada.
Grayson, J.P. (2004). *ESL, Ethno-racial origin, and academic achievement of university students*. Unpublished manuscript.
Gunderson, L. (2004). The language, literacy, achievement, and social consequences of English-only programs for immigrant students. In J. Hoffman (Ed.), *The 53rd annual yearbook of the national reading conference* (pp. 1-27). Milwaukee, MN: National Reading Conference.
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. (1976). Retrieved 14 February, 2007, from: http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_cescr.htm
Jacob, A.G., & Blais, D. (1991). Social interaction of Salvadoran refugees. *Journal of the National Association of Social Workers, 39*, 307-312.
Jaimet, K. (2000, March 21). Special education, ESL fight for funding. *Ottawa Citizen*, D1.
Jason, L.A, Keys, C.B., Suarez-Balcazar, C.B., Taylor, R.R., & Davies, M.I. (Eds.). (2002). *Participatory community research: Theories and methods in action*. Chicago, IL: Loyola University of Chicago.
Johnson, G. (2004, January 26). ESL teachers feel the crunch. *Vancouver Sun*, A7.
Kouritzin, G.S. (2004). Programs, plans, and practices in schools with reputations for ESL student success. *Canadian Modern Language Review, 60*, 481-499.
Kramsch, C. (1994). *Context and culture in language teaching*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
Language funding misses mark. (2003, March 17). *Barrie Examiner*, A4.
Latimer, J. (2000). *Demographic information: ESL review task force*. Calgary, AB: Calgary Board of Education.
Lee, V., Brooks-Gunn, J., & Schnur, E. (1988). Does Head Start work? A 1-year follow-up comparison of disadvantaged children attending Head Start, no preschool, and other preschool programs. *Developmental Psychology, 24*, 210-222.
Ma, X. (2002). The first ten years in Canada: A multi-level assessment of behavioural and emotional problems of immigrant children. *Canadian Public Policy, 28*, 395-419.
Muhr, T. (1997). *ATLAS/ti.: Visual qualitative data analysis management model building*. Berlin: Scientific Software Development.

Ngo, H. (2000). *Cultural competence: A self-assessment guide for human service organizations*. Calgary, AB: Cultural Diversity Institute/Canadian Heritage.
Ngo, H. (2001). *English as a second language education: Context, current responses and recommendations for new directions*. Calgary, AB: Coalition for Equal Access to Education.
Nikiforuk, A. (2004). The sad state of ESL: How we're short-changing our newcomers and ourselves. *Tree House Canadian Family*, May/June, pp. 22-24.
Nystrom, P. (1988). A longitudinal study to determine the effects of Head Start participation on reading achievement in grades kindergarten through six in Troy public schools. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 50*, 02A, 0353 (UMI No. 8970359).
O'Connor, E. (2004, September 26). More need to learn English but resources are shrinking. *The Province*, A12.
Paul, R. (1999, January 29). Province sets limit on ESL funding. *Nanaimo Daily News*, A2.
People for Education. (2004). *The 2004 elementary tracking report*. Toronto, ON: Author.
Roessingh, H. (1995). Teaching to diversity: Meaningful inclusion of ESL students in high school mainstream settings. *Exceptionality Education Canada, 5*(1), 65-83.
Roessingh, H. (1999). Adjunct support for high school ESL learners in mainstream English classes: Ensuring success. *TESL Canada Journal, 17*(1), 72-85.
Roessingh, H. (2004). Effective high school ESL programs: A synthesis and meta-analysis. *Canadian Modern Language Review, 60*, 611-636.
Simons, J., & Connelly, M. (2000). *Quality ESL program: An administrator's guide*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.
Simons, P. (2002, March 11). Immigrant children challenge for schools: They are yet another reason why public schools need funds. *Edmonton Journal*, B1.
Sinclair, R.L., & Ghory, W.J. (1987). Becoming marginal. In H.T. Trueba (Ed.), *Success or failure? Learning and the language minority student* (pp. 169-184). Cambridge, MA: Newbury House.
Statistics Canada. (1995). *Immigrants in Canada*. Ottawa, ON: Industry Canada.
Statistics Canada. (2002). *Profile of languages in Canada: English, French and many others*. Ottawa, ON: Industry Canada.
Statistics Canada. (2003). *Canada's ethnocultural portrait: The changing mosaic*. Ottawa, ON: Industry Canada.
Statistics Canada. (2005). *Population projections of visible minority groups, Canada, provinces and regions: 2001-2017*. Ottawa: Industry Canada.
Tsang, P. (2003, May 24). English language funds inadequate, says group. *Calgary Herald*, B3.
University of Michigan Health System. (2006). *Basic concepts and definitions*. Retrieved April 14, 2006, from: http://www.med.umich.edu/multicultural/ccp/basic.htm#terms
Watt, D., & Roessingh, H. (1994). Some you win, most you lose: Tracking ESL dropout in high school (1998-1993). *English Quarterly, 26*(3), 5-7.
Watt, D., & Roessingh, H. (2001). The dynamics of ESL drop-out: Plus ça change … *Canadian Modern Language Review, 58*, 203-223.
Williams, C.L., & Berry, J.W. (1991). Primary prevention of acculturative stress among refugees: Application of psychological theory and practice. *American Psychologist, 46*, 632-641.

LIDEC
4350, avenue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Montréal (Québec) H2W 2H5
Téléphone : 514-843-5991
Télécopie : 514-843-5252
Sans frais : 1 800 350-5991
Site Internet :
http://www.lidec.qc.ca
Courriel : lidec@lidec.qc.ca

DES LIVRES ÉDUCATIFS POUR L'ENSEIGNEMENT DE L'ANGLAIS

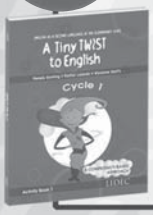
RIGHT ON!

1re année du 2e cycle du secondaire

Par un collectif
Student Book 1 (224 p.)
Teacher's Guide 1
Activity Book 1
Compact Discs

A Tiny TWIST to English

1re année du 1er cycle du primaire
*Approuvés par le MÉLS



Par un collectif
*Student Book 1 (96 p.)
*Teacher's Guide 1 (510 p.)
*Compact Discs (2)
Activity Book 1 (112 p.)

Class Kit
Picture Cards, Mini Picture Cards, Posters (2), Reflection Kit, Strategy Cards, Puppet

HIGH 5

1re et 2e années du 1er cycle du secondaire
*Approuvés par le MÉLS

Par un collectif
*Student Book 1 (224 p.)
*Teacher's Guide 1 (779 p.)
*Compact Disc 1
*Audiocassette 1
Activity Book 1 (160 p.)
*Student Book 2 (208 p.)
*Teacher's Guide 2 (804 p.)
*Compact Disc 2
Activity Book 2 (144 p.)

A new TWIST to English

*Approuvés par le MÉLS

Pamela Gunning,
Rachel Lalonde,
Micheline Schinck,
Wynanne Watts

2e cycle du primaire
*Student's Book 1 (128 p.)
*Teacher's Guide 1 (700 p.)
Activity Book 1 (120 p.)
*Audiocassettes (2)
*Compact Discs (2)
*Student's Book 2 (144 p.)
*Teacher's Guide 2 including End-of-cycle Evaluation Task with audiocassette or CD (736 p.)
Activity Book 2 (120 p.)
*Audiocassettes (2)
*Compact Discs (2)

Strategy Kit
End-of-cycle Evaluation Task Booklets (Pack of 10) (32 p.)

3e cycle du primaire
*Student's Book 1 (152 p.)
*Teacher's Guide 1 (792 p.)
Activity Book 1 (128 p.)
*Audiocassette (1)
*Compact Discs (2)
*Student's Book 2 (160 p.)
*Teacher's Guide 2 (854 p.)
Activity Book 2 (152 p.)
*Audiocassettes (2)
*Compact Discs (2)

Strategy Kit
End-of-cycle Evaluation Task (52 p.)

Dictionnaire français/anglais

Marcel Séguin et Alice Amyot

Les termes et les expressions que renferme cet ouvrage ont été glanés quotidiennement dans la presse de langue anglaise du Canada et dans la littérature canadienne-anglaise ou entendus à la radio, à la télévision et dans les milieux de langue anglaise. (608 p.)

MY FIRST ENGLISH DICTIONARY

Jacques Beauchesne

Un nouveau concept de dictionnaire qui apportera aux jeunes utilisateurs qui apprennent l'anglais comme langue seconde des définitions claires et brèves accompagnées d'exemples. (608 p.)

Guérin Montréal Toronto
4501, rue Drolet
Montréal (Québec) H2T 2G2 Canada
Téléphone : 514-842-3481
Télécopie : 514-842-4923
Courriel : francel@guerin-editeur.qc.ca
Site Internet : http://www.guerin-editeur.qc.ca

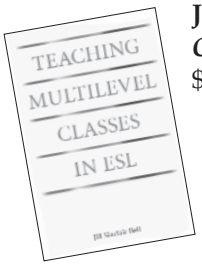
PIPPIN

THE REASON FOR PIPPIN'S REMARKABLE SUCCESS?

OUR REMARKABLE AUTHORS!

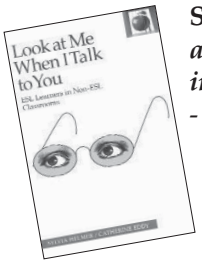
Elizabeth Coelho: ***Adding English: A Guide to Teaching in Multilingual Classrooms*** **-** $49.95. ISBN 978-088751-0953

Vesna Nikolic & Hanna Cabaj*:* ***Am I Teaching Well? Self-Evaluation Strategies for Effective Teachers*** - $35.00. ISBN 978-088751-0878



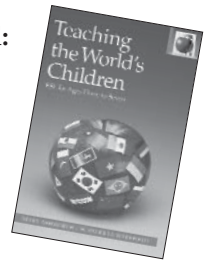
Jill Sinclair Bell*:* ***Teaching Multilevel Classes in ESL*** (2nd. ed. ©2004) - $25.00. ISBN 978-088751-0939

Terry Piper: ***And Then There Were Two: Children and Second Language Learning*** (2nd. ed. ©2001) - $17.95. ISBN 978-088751-1004



Sylvia Helmer & Catherine Eddy: ***Look at Me When I Talk to You: ESL Learners in Non-ESL Classrooms*** (2nd. ed. ©2003) - $18.00. ISBN 978-088751-1080

Mary Ashworth & H. Patricia Wakefield: ***Teaching the World's Children: ESL for Ages Three to Seven*** (2nd. ed. ©2004) - $18.00. ISBN 978-088751-1127



Get to know our full range of exciting books by visiting us at www.pippinpub.com, or by requesting a catalogue.