

## Book Review

## **Teachers voyaging in plurilingual seas: Young children learning through more than one language.**

### **Edited by Valerie N. Podmore, Helen Hedges, Peter J. Keegan and Nola Harvey**

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Highlighting the importance of bi/multilingual use of children's home languages in early childhood settings, the book consists of eight chapters, with the first focussing on policies and curricula that support children's bi/multilingual use of language. The second chapter highlights the literature on bi/multilingual languages, the third discusses the research design for the study, while the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh chapters outline the research contexts, findings and pedagogical implications for each case study presented. The concluding chapter reflects on the implications for teachers, families, researchers and policy makers, drawing strong connections to theoretical perspectives.

The work was undertaken as a research project funded by Teaching and Learning Research Initiatives (TLRI) documenting children's bi /multilingual experiences associated with use of home languages, family concerns about future trajectories and educational implications for early childhood settings. The book further illustrates how the study aimed to provide a wider perspective for learning in more than one language and to empower diverse families to engage in a more gratifying participation in early childhood centres. Over the two - year project which involved four diverse early childhood settings in the Auckland region, the following three questions were key components of the research:

1. *What languages do children from participating early childhood education centres use in their learning in the centre and at home?*
2. *What experiences and outcomes for children who learn in more than one language in the early years are valued by parents, teachers and children?*
3. *How might the opportunities and challenges for children who learn in more than one language be addressed in educational practice?*

The four centres in the study were different in their use of languages, however all the centres engaged in the use of te reo at different levels. Two centres used home languages extensively as part of their centre philosophies while the other two centres used English as the main medium of communication. However, of the latter, one centre demonstrated a multilingual approach due to their centre philosophy which acknowledged immigrant families, while the other had monolingual, English speaking teachers who used the outcomes of the research to review their practices.

The book further presents the findings of the study which acknowledge parents' aspirations towards the use of home languages in centres in order to retain the home languages as demonstrated by parents' reflections. Moreover, the book discusses through the findings that children value their home languages, as this helped them in transitioning, and in settling-in processes. For example, there was evidence of tuakana/teina relationships between children speaking languages in common and children communicating in home languages in quiet spaces, away from adults.

The challenges for centres in being bilingual or multilingual in their practice are also outlined. For example, one of the centres identified the presence of 26 languages within their setting which was initially regarded as a mammoth task

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to be incorporated in practice. However, the research was the catalyst for change, which enabled teachers to engage in self-review.

The underlying message of the study, as the book highlights, is that language is a tool for learning in early childhood centres, rather than the focus being on learning the language itself.

## Reference

Podmore, V. N., Hedges, H., Keegan, P. J., & Harvey, N. (Eds). (2016). *Teachers voyaging in plurilingual seas: Young children learning through more than one language*. Wellington, New Zealand: NZCER Press.