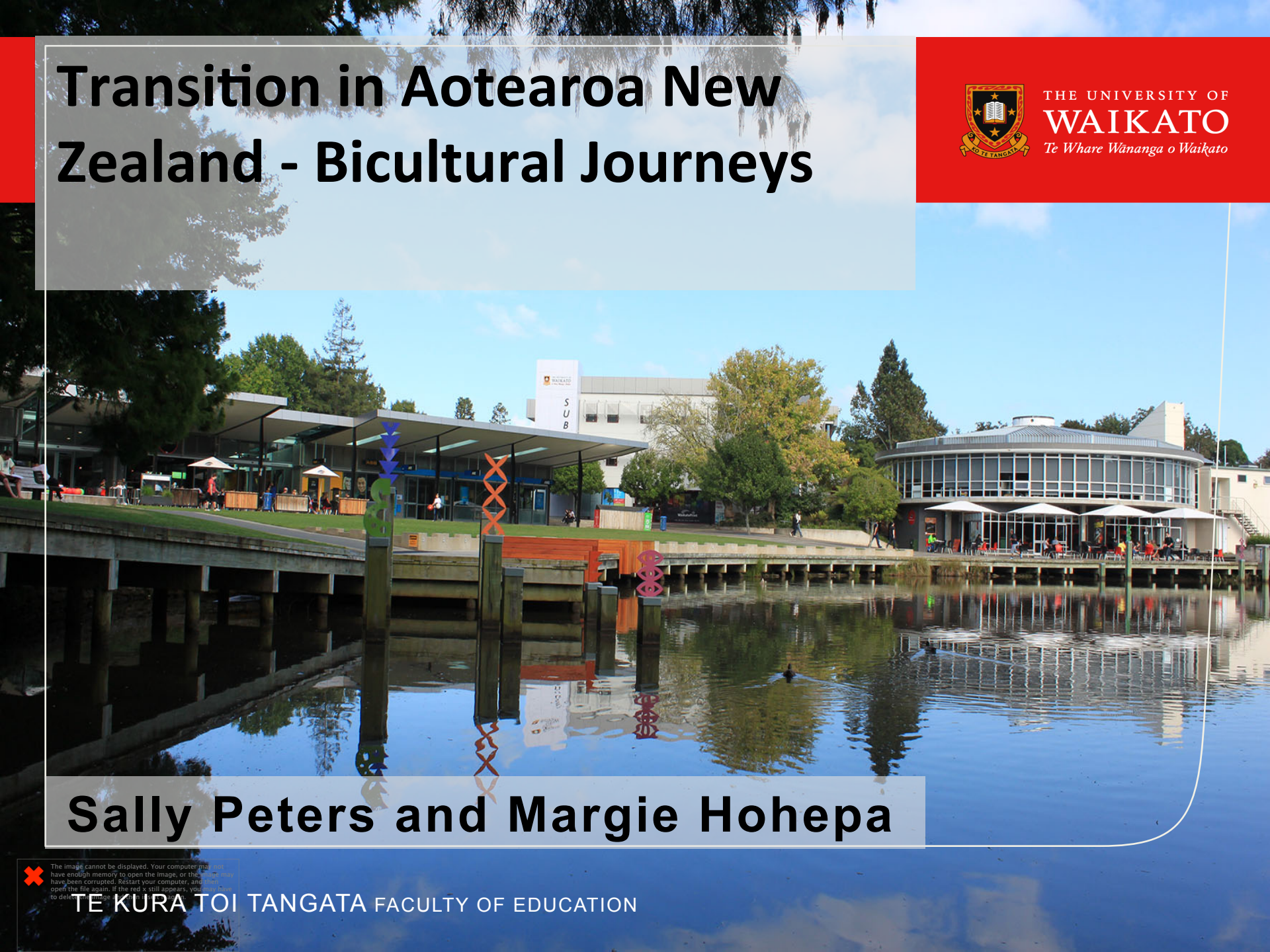
Transition in Aotearoa New Zealand - Bicultural Journeys



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Sally Peters and Margie Hohepa

TE KURA TOI TANGATA FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Summary and overview

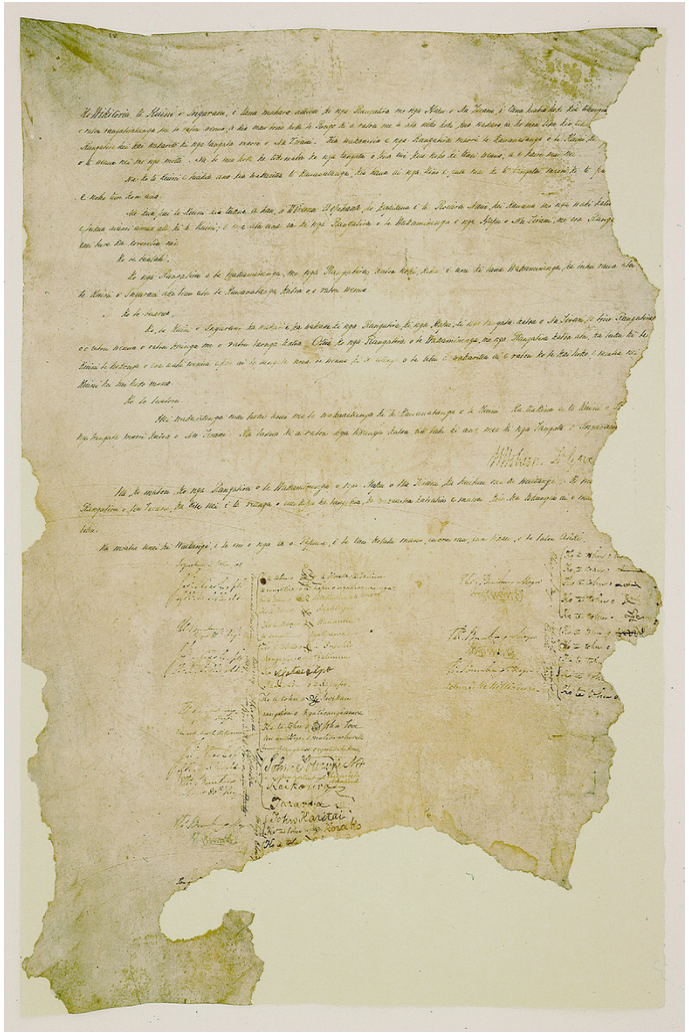
- Brief introduction to Aotearoa New Zealand
- Key findings from two of our POET projects
- What are some of the issues we are still considering?
- Reflections for policy and practice

Aotearoa New Zealand context

Multicultural society with bicultural foundations

> *"The Treaty provides a context for the relationship between the Crown, iwi and Māori. Ensuring Māori students enjoy and achieve education success as Māori is a joint responsibility of the Crown and iwi, hapū and whānau."*

(Ministry of Education, 2013, p.14)



New Zealand Curriculum

One of the curriculum visions for learners is for young people…

who will work to create an Aotearoa New Zealand in which Māori and Pākehā recognise each other as full Treaty partners, and in which all cultures are valued for the contributions they bring
(Ministry of Education, 2007, p.8)

Reported ethnicity of our new entrant children

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Ethnicity	%
Pākeha	50
Māori	26
Pasifika	10
Asian	11
MELAA Middle Eastern, Latin American & African	2
Other ethnicities	1

Recent percentages based on Ministry of Education figures for 5-year-old children (Education Counts, 2014).

https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/schooling/student-numbers/6028

ECEC and School in Aotearoa

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Early Childhood

Birth to school entry

There are many different kinds of early childhood services

- Parent led
- Teacher led

School

Ages 5-19 years

Compulsory 6-16 years

Although not compulsory until age 6, children usually start school on or just after their 5th birthday

Participation rates in ECEC are generally high, with overall figures being 97.6% of four-year-olds.

16.1% of under one-year-olds (Ministry of Education, 2014).

These figures do not indicate how long children have attended ECEC for.

Teaching qualifications

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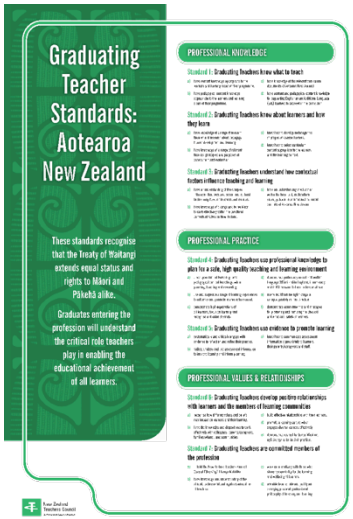
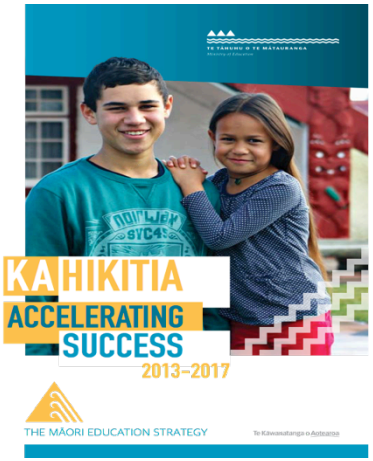
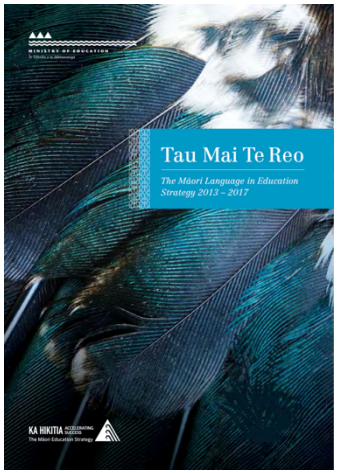
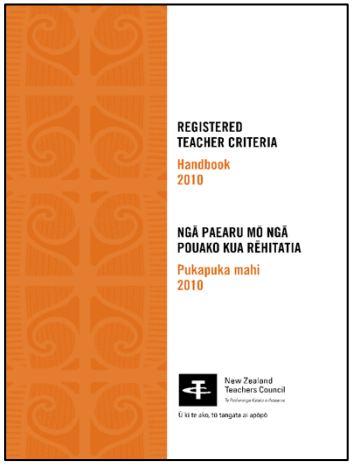
- For all teacher-led centre-based services, at least 50% of the staff must have an early childhood education teaching qualification that is recognised by the New Zealand Teachers Council.

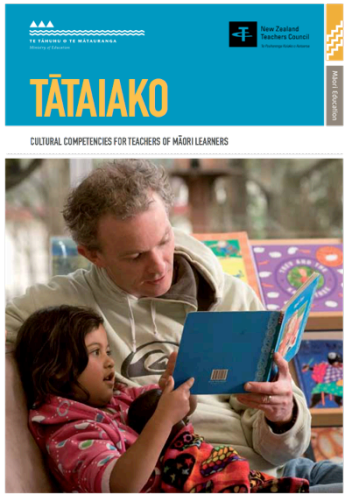
Policy context











Curriculum context

The early childhood curriculum covers birth to school entry.
(Bicultural and bilingual document)

The national curriculum covers the school years.
(Bicultural and bilingual: comprising two documents - English Medium and Maori Medium)

Sally Peters, Vanessa Paki
Keryn Davis, Maretta Taylor
Teacher researchers from the ECE and schools involved

Learning Links
Te Totara School
Te Awamutu Primary School
Rewi Street
Apakura Te Kakano

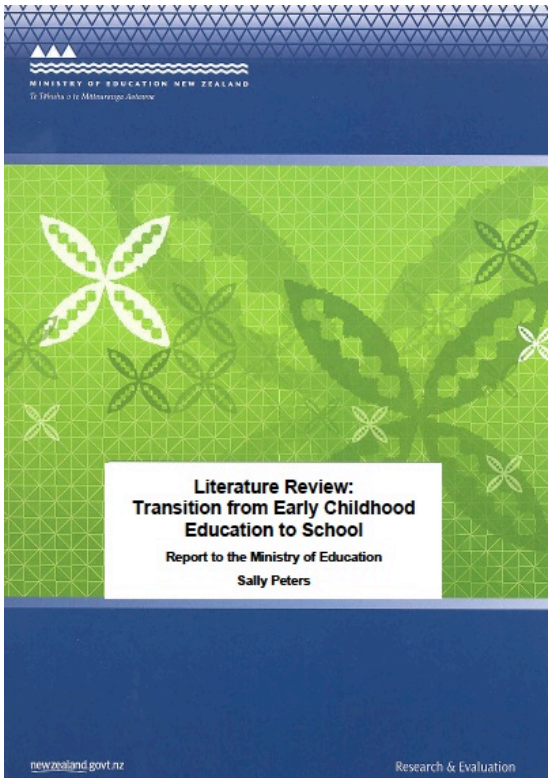
We are very grateful to the TLRI for the funding to support this project

www.tlri.org.nz

Themes in the literature regarding successful transitions to school

- *Belonging, wellbeing and feeling 'suitable' at school*
- *Recognition and acknowledgement of culture*
- *Engagement in learning*
- *Identity as a learner*
- *Positive teacher expectations*
- *Building on funds of knowledge from early childhood education and home*
- *Respectful, reciprocal relationships*

(Peters, 2010)



Interestingly these are consistent with the Early Years Learning Framework

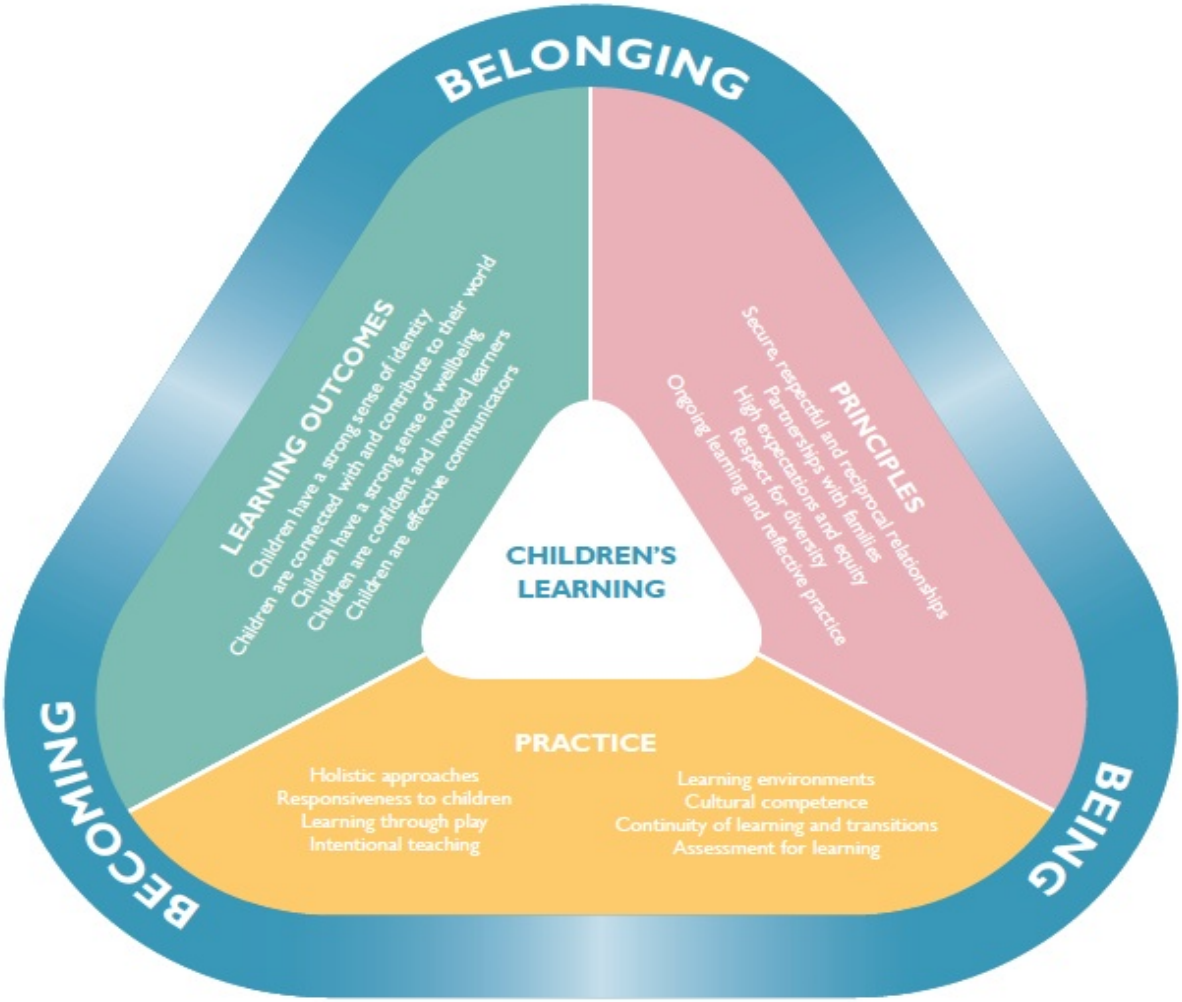


Figure 1: Elements of the Early Years Learning Framework

Literature Review	Early Year Learning Framework
Belonging, wellbeing and feeling 'suitable' at school	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing (LO)
Recognition and acknowledgement of culture	Children are connected with and contribute to their world (LO)
Engagement in learning	Children are confident and involved learners (LO)
Identity as a learner	Children have a strong sense of identity (LO)
Positive teacher expectations	High expectations and equity (P)
Building on funds of knowledge from early childhood education and home	The educators' decisions and actions that build on children's existing knowledge and skills to enhance their learning (Practice)
Respectful, reciprocal relationships	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships (P) Partnerships (P)
	Children are effective communicators (LO)

Research Questions

1. How can children's learning journeys be enhanced as they move from early childhood education into school?
2. What do 'successful' transitions look like for Māori children?
3. Key competencies are culturally situated. How are these competencies enacted in different communities?
4. What is needed to build and strengthen a bridge between sectors so that children's learning is supported?
5. How do children's working theories, learning dispositions and key competencies support their learning journeys from ECE to school?
6. What are the longer-term implications for children of the transition practices undertaken in their early childhood and school settings?

The Ministry of Education (2012) concluded:

> One of the main challenges of the first *Ka Hikitia* was that the strategy did not translate into real gains for **many** Māori learners and their whānau. Many members of the education community agreed with the intent behind the strategy, but didn't know **what to do with it** or **how to put it into action**. They were unsure **where to go for help** [bold in the original]. (p. 16)

‘Listening to culture’ is key in thinking about children’s experiences of starting school (Macfarlane, 2014)

While our project focussed primarily on understanding and supporting children’s learning journeys, we were also interested in ways of developing connections between the cultures of ECE and school, so that the children’s learning was supported.

Moving between cultures

Boundaries, by definition, constitute lines of separation or contact. This may occur in real or virtual space, horizontally between territories, or vertically between groups and/ or individuals. The point of contact or separation usually creates an `us' and an `Other' identity (Newman & Paasi, 1998, p. 191).

How does a bicultural approach reframe this?

Examples of success

His mother noted “He comes home very excited about his achievements…. He’s progressing really well… He seems to enjoy school… He’s socially secure and everything out of that will follow. That belonging and stability and acceptance.”

The case studies highlighted the importance of:

- school practices and resources
- finding something of interest
- connecting to and developing working theories
- friends and sibling support
- learning dispositions and key competencies
- language and communication.

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Key question

How well does the education system perform for Māori students?

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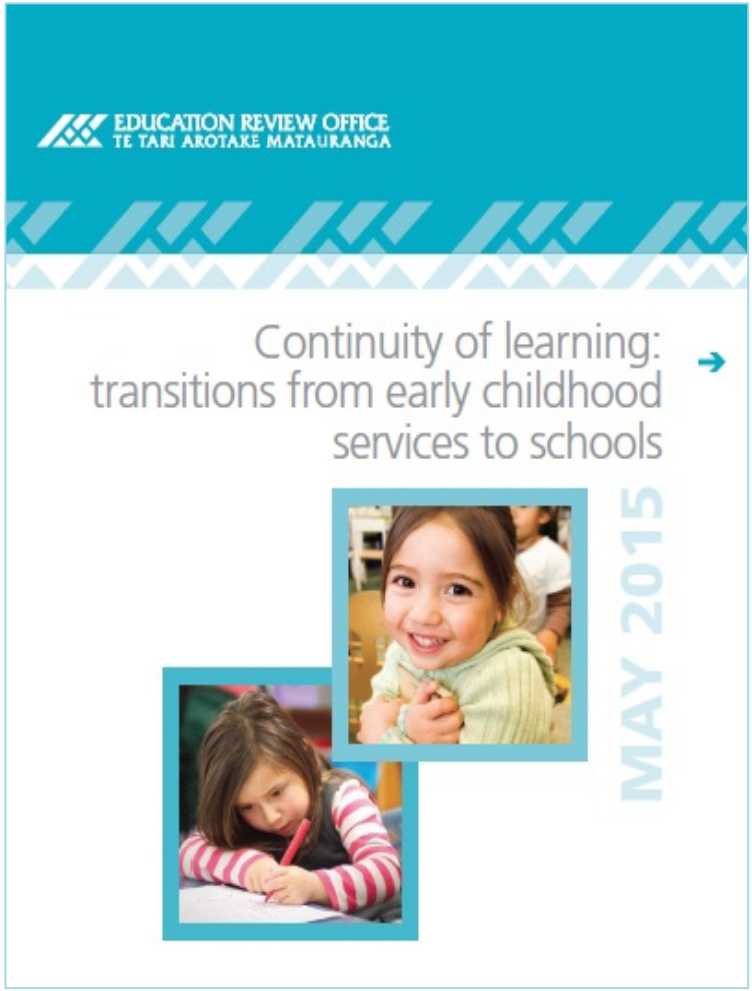
There is still work to be done



374 centres
100 schools
English medium

"Māori and Pacific children were more likely to be in services that were less supportive" (Education Review Office, 2015, p.12).

Clear guidance provided for ECEC settings and schools.

Reflections on key findings

- We know a lot about what supports the transition to school, both nationally and internationally
- Despite this many challenges still exist
- In New Zealand although there is a supportive policy context and examples of excellent practice, overall change is slow
- A more integrated policy approach would draw the threads together
- All levels of the ecological system and the are relevant when seeking to enhance practice

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The first project looked at bicultural journeys in mainstream

Our focus turns now to Māori medium pathways

Māori language in education - policy context

"The Ministry of Education and education sector agencies play a critical role in supporting Māori language acquisition and revitalisation in early learning, primary, secondary and tertiary education sectors. Māori language in education includes both Māori medium education and 'Māori as a subject' in English medium education settings." (Ministry of Education, 2013, p.4)

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Te reo Māori in ECEC

In 2014

- Māori a language of communication in 93.4% of licensed ECEC services
- Māori used more than 50% time in 12.3% of services (51-100% = Māori medium education)
- Over 20% of Māori children in ECEC are in Māori medium services
- Around 60% continued to Māori medium schooling

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Transition in Māori medium education

Riariakina ō Rongo Hirikapo: Mai i te kōhanga reo ki te kura

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TEACHING & LEARNING RESEARCH INITIATIVE
NĀU I WHATU TE KĀKAHU, HE TĀNIKO TAKU

- 2-year TLRI collaborative project (2014-2016)
- Initiated by the Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori
- *What do effective transitions from kōhanga to kura look like, feel like, and sound like, for children, families, teachers and the community?*

He Kuaka mārangaranga
kotahi i tau ki te tāhuna
tau atu, tau atu, tau atu

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TŌKU MĀPIHI MAUREA
KURA KAUPAPA MĀORI

Cultural knowledge, values and practices are fundamental to transition in Māori medium education

Findings

- Transition practices are understood and interpreted through cultural lenses

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Pōwhiri – rituals of welcome

Kāre au i tino whai wā ki te hokihoki ki te kāinga, ko te pōwhiri he mea āhua tauhou ki a rātou. I tae atu ki te pōwhiri kātahi ka rongo i te karanga, ka kī a [tamaiti] kua mate tētahi? (katakata) I mōhio ai i te tangihanga ēngari kāre anō kia waia ki ērā atu momo nā reira koinā tētahi o ngā āhua pai o te pōwhiri kia waia ngā tamariki ki ērā whakatau… I āhei au ki te tono atu ki te whānau kia haramai ahakoa kāre taku whānau i kōnei …he pai hoki kia tae mai te kōhanga hei tautoko.

[I'm not able to return home regularly so the pōwhiri was somewhat new for them. We arrived and heard the call, [son] asked has someone died? (laughter). They understand [pōwhiri] at bereavements but aren't as familiar with other sorts, so one of the good things about the pōwhiri is that it familiarises children with those kind of welcomes… I was able to ask other family to come, but I don't have family here, its good that the kōhanga comes along as support.] (Mother, Dec 2014)

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- Effective Māori medium transitions support educational and language and cultural regeneration aspirations

Reflections for policy and practice

- Significance of language, culture and culturally lived experiences to transition
- Critical examination of the relevance and applicability of what 'we know' across different settings
- Policy implementation through different cultural lenses

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