

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Sua le ava ae toto le ata

To follow in line in an orderly and respectful way. To acknowledge those who have come before.

Overview

The literature outlined in this chapter focuses mainly on four specific topics central to the aims and questions of the research. The topic areas are: quality and innovation; Pacific early childhood centres; transitions within and from centres, with a particular focus on transition from Pacific immersion centres to primary school; and immersion and bilingual education, and collaborative action research.

Pasifika Early Childhood Centres

There have been several waves of migration from the Pacific Islands to New Zealand, dating from the 1950s (Atiga-Anderson, 2004). By the 1980s, developments were initiated within New Zealand Pacific communities towards the maintenance of young children's Pacific languages and cultural heritages.

Many of the Pacific early childhood education centres were supported initially by churches and housed in church halls and church buildings (Ete, 1993). Several writers have outlined aspects of the emergence, within New Zealand, of Samoan early childhood centres with language-immersion programmes (the *A'oga 'Amata*) (Ete, 1993; Taouma, 1992). Pasifika early childhood centres were established initially to offer early educational benefits to children. The church has had a major role in the establishment of many of the *A'oga 'Amata* (Ete, 1993). During the late 1990s, becoming licensed and chartered was identified as a major challenge for Pasifika early childhood centres (Mara, 1998).

Quality and Innovation

Quality innovations and effective learning and teaching practices are central concerns of early childhood research and practice (Meade, 2003; Pascal, 1993, 2002; Whalley & Whitaker, 2003). The success of both the British "centres of excellence" and the

New Zealand early childhood education “centres of innovation” programmes appears dependent, to some extent, on centres’ support, leadership, collaborative research, and related continuing professional development.

Immersion and Bilingual Education

A large collection of research literature is available on the effectiveness of bilingual and immersion education (e.g., Baker, 2001; Cummins, 1993, 1996; May, Hill & Tiakiwai, 2004; McCaffery & Tuafuti, 1998, 2003; Tuafuti & McCaffery, 2005). Cummins (1993) reports that early childhood education experience in the mother tongue lays a foundation for later academic and linguistic success. Recent research on bilingual and immersion learning shows that:

Language maintenance and bilingual enrichment programmes are most effective in fostering children’s long-term bilingual fluency and literacy in both their first and second languages.
(May, Hill & Tiakiwai, 2004).

In Pasifika early years contexts, McCaffery and Tuafuti (2001) support the importance of 100% immersion education so that before they start school, children have a strong foundation of understanding, speaking, and literacy knowledge. School-based research by Tuafuti and McCaffery (2005) affirms the importance of immersion and bilingual Pasifika languages programmes for children’s self-esteem and identity, and for effective learning in their first language (L1) and then in their second language (L2).

Summary principles about immersion and bilingual education are listed below. Ene Tapusoa prepared this summary as part of an information pack on bilingualism for our staff members in a Samoan full immersion centre.

Summary prepared by Ene Tapusoa, at the A'oga Fa'a Samoa, 2006

What is bilingualism?

“Bilingualism is the ability to listen, speak, read and write in two languages. The first language (L1) is the language that you learn from your mother in infancy, and the second language (L2) is the language that a learner seeks to add or has added to his/her L1”. (Baker, 2001 p.5)

What is bilingual education?

Bilingual education is not about the teaching of languages in schools in separate language time slots. It is about the use of our home/community languages L1 and English as significant languages through which to teach other subjects of the curriculum. (McCaffery & Tuafuti, 1998)

What does bilingual have to do with A'oga, when we only use one language?

Bilingual programmes at early childhood (language nests) aim to promote full bilingualism either by using a minority group language (immersion) or by using two languages (dual medium) as the means of instruction. In other words all methods that aim to assist learners to become bilingual, including full immersion, are part of the professional field known as Bilingual Education.

Random code switching by the teacher between languages in the ECE setting is not recommended, as the child simply waits for the adult to translate for them, instead of having to learn the new language (McCaffery, 2003). (Baker & Prys-Jones, 1998, pp. 586-595).

How do we deliver this programme?

At the A'oga, most of the children come with English as their first language with varying degrees of understanding of Samoan. What we need to do is to speak Samoan 100% of the time so that the children will learn and understand the language and begin to use it for learning. This immersion approach in ECE is strongly supported by research showing that high levels of heritage language use in early immersion settings produces better academic achievement and more native-speaker-like proficiency. Hence children at the A'oga Fa'a Samoa are growing up with two first languages (Baker, 2001; Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002) (Baker & Prys-Jones, 1998, pp. 47-50).

Transitions from Pacific Early Childhood Centres

Recent research and writing on transition to school from Pasifika centres has influenced the development of this research (McNaughton, 1998; Podmore & Sauvao, 2003; Podmore, Sauvao, & Mapa, 2001a, 2001b; Sauvao, Mapa, & Podmore, 2000). Findings on transition tend to show that, when young children move from one

educational setting to another, it is important to understand the cultural context of their prior experiences, “given that children’s culture-specific experiences, and their development of language and literacy skills, are interconnected” (Podmore & Sauvao, 2003, p. 35).

One study of transition to school from Pacific Islands early childhood centres focused on children’s experiences, including language and culture-specific experiences that support the development of language and literacy skills, as they moved from Pacific Islands early childhood centres into English-language primary schools (Sauvao, Mapa, & Podmore, 2000). Five research questions on children’s transition from Pacific early childhood centres to schools were investigated: “(1) What are the similarities and differences between the contexts of home, school, and early childhood settings? (2) What are the aspirations, expectations, and views of parents, teachers, and children of these contexts? (3) How well do children make the transition between the contexts? (4) How can the information collected in (the) study assist teachers and parents to facilitate transition across the three contexts? How do schools continue to assist and support the home languages and cultures of Pacific Islands children starting primary school? (5) What is the language policy of the school (as stated in the charter)?” (Podmore, Sauvao, & Mapa, 2001a, p. 75).

The study described in detail the views and the experiences of children, parents, and teachers, drawing on interviews with families from each of 5 Pacific groups—Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa, Tokelau, and Tonga (Sauvao et al., 2000). Participants were 27 children, their parents, and their early childhood and primary school teachers. The children, aged between 5 years 0 months and 5 years 8 months, had recently moved from a Pacific early childhood centre to a primary school. Culturally sensitive interview processes were developed for each of the 5 ethnic groups and documented in detail as possible models for future research (Podmore, Sauvao, & Mapa 2001b). The main findings of the research were that parents, children, and teachers had some major concerns and made useful suggestions about transition to school. Key issues that arose included:

Continuity of Pacific Islands languages and culture
between home, early childhood centre, and school;

partnership between home and school; expectations of teachers and parents regarding children's skills at school entry; implications of the "hidden curriculum" (bullying and swearing); curriculum continuity; literacy; teacher education; and Pacific Islands representation in schools and education. (Podmore & Sauvao, 2003, p. 40).

Following on from that work, the research at the A'oga Fa'a Samoa looks in depth at the issue of continuity of Samoan language and cultural experiences as children move from a Samoan-language immersion centre to a bilingual unit in a primary school.

Collaborative, Participatory Action Research

Findings of literature reviews show important interconnections between quality early childhood education and reflective teacher practice (Podmore & Meade, with Kerslake Hendricks, 2000), and between effective professional development, "enhanced pedagogy", and children's learning (Mitchell & Cubey, 2003). Further, there is clear evidence of support for the appropriateness of action research to evaluate and document innovations and practices in early childhood education (Smith, Grima, Gaffney, Powell, Masse, & Barnett, 2000, p. 124).

It is appropriate in view of the above findings that educators and research associates at all of the centres of innovation are using action research approaches to evaluate their practice. As Cardno (2003, p. 7) points out, *classroom action research* is typically qualitative, interpretive, and practical, and "involves teachers holding discussions (often with academics acting as facilitators and advocates of "teacher knowledge" rather than theory). *Participatory action research* tends to be strongly associated with liberation and emancipation (Atweh, Kemmis, & Weeks, 1998; McTaggart, 1991).

As McTaggart (1989, 1991) writes, in a paper on "16 tenets of participatory action research", action research is collaborative, participatory, self-critical, and it goes in cycles. There are some other key points in Borgia and Schuler's (1996), "five Cs" of action research that can apply in early childhood contexts. Their five points are:

- commitment;
- collaboration;
- concern;

- consideration;
- change.

A number of McTaggart's tenets, and the "five C's", have been evident during our action research at the A'oga Fa'a Samoa. The next chapter describes how the action research at the A'oga Fa'a Samoa was developed collaboratively and carried out at the centre, and how the data were analysed and reflected upon in the light of socio-cultural theories.