

National Report Summary

ERO publishes evaluation reports on education issues of national importance. This is a summary of a recent national report – it captures the key points and highlights findings you may find useful.

The use of Pacific languages within New Zealand schools to enhance language learning and educational achievement of Pacific learners is still not well understood

The *New Zealand Curriculum (NZC)* positions Pacific languages as having a special place in New Zealand, in the wider learning area of learning languages.

Learning a language also contributes to children and young people taking their place in a multicultural community, and supports the wider wellbeing of the community and New Zealand.

What we did

In November 2018, ERO met with schools that currently offer some form of Pacific bilingual education and invited thirty schools to complete a survey about:

- their philosophy
- their curriculum, teaching, assessment and transition practices
- the tracking of learners' pathways and outcomes
- the support they currently receive and need.

The main purpose of the survey was to help ERO and the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) understand how Pacific bilingual education can effectively support Pacific learners' educational achievement and success.

What we found

Twenty-two of the 25 schools that completed the survey clearly identified that they provide Pacific bilingual or immersion education, overwhelmingly in Samoan.

Others stated that they offered Pacific languages as a subject only -learning the language, rather than learning *in* the language.

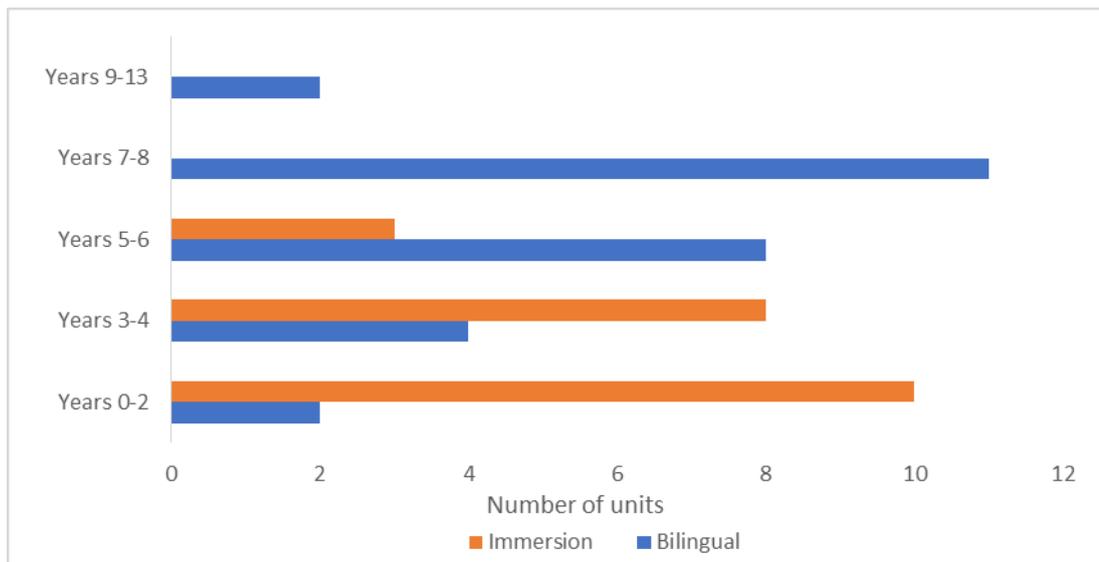
ERO found that Pacific bilingual education programmes were somewhat idiosyncratic. These programmes had:

- tended to be developed locally, and were resourced out of schools' baseline funding
- expressed a general philosophy regarding the importance of Pacific languages, culture and identity, but were less likely to have an approach focused on bilingualism and/or informed by research literature and best practice
- encountered challenges with finding appropriate resources, particularly for assessment
- varied levels of support for transitions into and out of bilingual and/or immersion education
- offered a reduced level of bilingual or immersion education as the learner got older (see Figure 1)
- an overall challenge of identifying and accessing meaningful bilingual pathways in senior secondary school and beyond.

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Figure 1: Shift from immersion to bilingual education over school years



Many schools reported other support is needed

These included:

- the need for specific and targeted professional learning and development (PLD), in particular about bilingualism, biliteracy and bilingual education
- the need for better access to resources, for example reading materials in Pacific languages
- the need for additional funding to recruit and retain bilingual education teachers
- the need for greater recognition of bilingual teachers' additional work in designing and implementing a bilingual curriculum
- the need for pathways and incentives for bilingual education teachers, similar to mainstream teachers.

Some schools highlighted the need for initial teacher education providers to be part of the discussion about bilingual education and the aims of bilingualism and biliteracy, and teacher training programmes.

ERO asked schools to provide information about the level of bilingual and/or immersion education they provide using the following definitions:

Bilingual: teaching in 50 percent of the Pacific language and 50 percent English
Immersion: teaching in more than 50 percent of the Pacific language
Other: learning the Pacific language rather than learning in the Pacific language

The argument for improving access to curriculum learning in Pacific languages as a matter of equity, and to maintain and enhance the health of Pacific languages are compelling.

ERO recommends that the Ministry of Education:

- develop an overarching strategy for supporting Pacific bilingual education
- evaluate the level of unmet demand for Pacific bilingual education
- ensure that public data about provision of Pacific bilingual education is up to date
- support development of resources, particularly Pacific language assessment tools to support those working in Pacific bilingual education.

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