

Book reviews

Reviewed by Kiri Jaquery &
Jacoba Matapo

**Loader, M., & Christie, T. (2016).
Rituals: Making the everyday
extraordinary in early childhood.
Wellington, New Zealand:
Childspace Early Childhood
Institute.**

Rituals: Making the everyday extraordinary in early childhood by Memory Loader and Toni Christie found its way to me at interesting time. I was currently on maternity leave at home with my 6 month old and struggling to create meaningful, peaceful mealtimes. The plastic sticky mat I had bought for my independent, deeply curious and explorative daughter, along with my desire to 'get things done' through meal

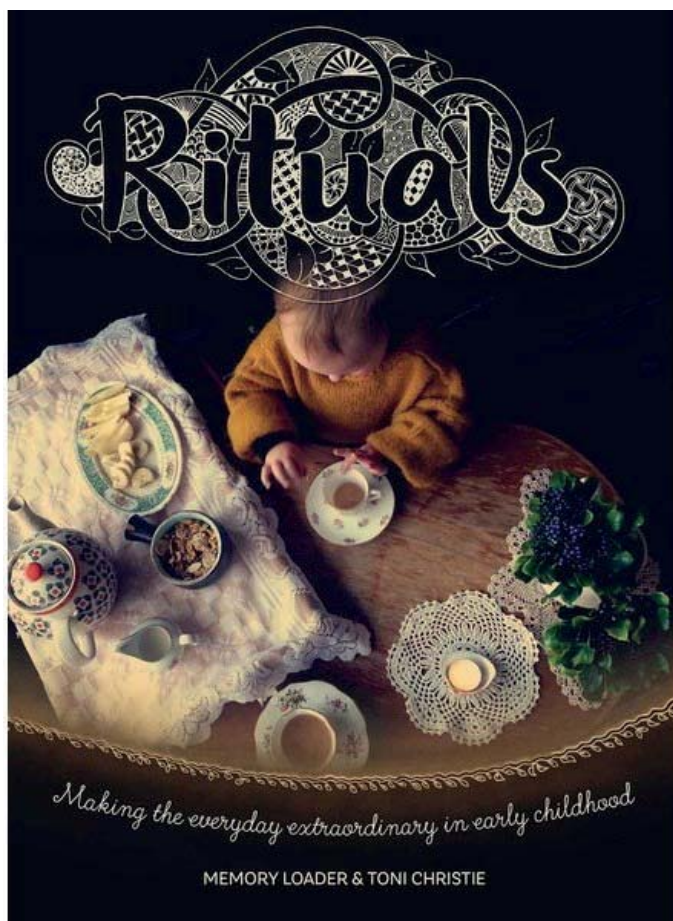
time had taken this stressful time into overdrive!

Rituals is a practitioner, parent and student teacher friendly read, offering a grounded perspective, strategies, and reflective questions that encourage the reader to take a close, calm, and considered look at the way routines, events, and celebrations can be conducted in early childhood or home environments. The ethos of having calm, beautiful, child centre rituals, where children are considered capable, worthy and active participants, is echoed throughout the book, leaving the reader to consider what is really possible when conducting what can be highly stressful, busy and chaotic times and events with

young children. Attention is also given to the place of self-care, reflection and a team approach to creating these extraordinary times within early childhood spaces, making sure that the reader is left considering the philosophy which sits behind their own meaningful rituals, rather than simply replicating these in their own environment.

Rituals provides a beautiful invitation to readers to redefine and consider what *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2017) is asking of us when we conduct routines within our settings. Throughout the book the idea of creating an irresistible invitation for children to engage in meal and rest times, community events, and celebrations is emphasised, connecting to *Te Whāriki's* idea that children grow up as competent and confident learners in mind, body and spirit, through their sense of contribution to society (MOE, 2017). Loader and Christie emphasise that through beautiful, considered, child centred rituals, all children gain a true sense of belonging and contribution to their environment. Striking images depict young infants actively engaging in beautiful, calmly presented morning teas, and young children taking ownership of their need for rest and sleep in the permanent sanctuary spaces provided. These ideas may both challenge and inspire readers' expectations of children and of how busy centre environments can be offered.

Loader and Christie provide a timely reminder it is up to teachers and families to provide opportunities for children to learn self regulation, and to learn to read the cues of their own bodies. Readers are challenged to consider how as adults we support children to develop a calmly focused, yet alert sense of arousal- a state in



which allows children and adults alike to engage and learn in an active, yet peaceful state. The book's chapters outline that in order to do this, we first must consider the presence of the adult, and secondly the experiences children are exposed to. As a reader questions which arose for me were; "is my environment a current place of calm and active exploration, or is it a chaotic, bustling environment"? "Do my routines allow for trial and error based learning, where children actively contribute, or are they about 'getting through the day'?"

While a brief glance at the book could leave some believing it simply offers beautiful images, depicting an idyllic image of childhood education, Loader and Christie make no qualms about addressing the importance and key role of a healthy, collegial, reflective, professional teaching team and address the investment that must be made into teams, in order for meaningful, contextual rituals to be created and implemented in the early childhood context. Focus is placed on the importance of self-care for parents and teachers alike, in order to create meaningful learning opportunities for children. The authors unpack the role of a present adult, one who is available to children on a physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual level, emphasising that self care is critical to release this. The importance of a team approach is discussed, one which a shared philosophy and vision paves the way for ideas and plans to come to life. It is clear in the later chapters of the book that the authors believe placing the same values of respect, honour, trust and creativity towards teachers, as well as towards children, is the foundation to creating extraordinary moments in the early childhood environment. The concluding chapters focus on unpacking a shared philosophy and vision as the foundation for all practices, as well as the role of reflection in order to support teachers to think beyond what is possible in early childhood education. The book argues that investment in teachers and their sense of belonging, is an investment in children, teaching, and learning.

To conclude: for parents, teachers, student teachers, leaders or centre

owners wanting to look deeply at the way in which they engage children in what can be seen as 'mundane moments' of the day, or are wanting to redefine the way engagement with routines and celebrations are conducted in the home or early childhood environment, *Rituals* is going to provide practical steps to inspire, challenge and reform thinking. *Rituals* is a suitable text for parents at home, home based carers or teachers who are engaging with the youngest infant to the preschool-aged child. It is a practical text that has the potential to provoke critical discussion and professional learning to teaching teams searching for a more meaningful programme, and strongly aligns with the vision of *Te Whāriki* in which children are seen as holistic learners and active, contributing members of society (MOE, 2017).

By the time I had finished reading the book, the plastic sticky mat had been replaced by small, real dining plates. Warm cloths were being offered in little ramekins for my daughter to explore and 'wipe' herself clean, and a small sized water glass was being provided for her to learn how to use. But more importantly, I began creating time and space for us to sit and chat, and enjoy this time of connection. Peace has now fallen and my daughter's sense of self has increased exponentially. We now have a very meaningful, heartfelt ritual of our own.

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Ministry of Education. (2017). *Te Whāriki. He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early childhood curriculum*. Wellington, New Zealand: Author.

Kiri Jaquierey



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

From the very metaphor used in the title of the book, my attention is drawn to the imagery of rough choppy seas and the skilled and attuned navigator responsible for the sea voyage. So, here I ask of the significance to voyaging plurilingual seas? I would like to speak on this metaphor from a Polynesian perspective; as for Polynesian peoples, the art of navigation is highly regarded and locates historical, cultural knowledge in embodied forms, connecting land, skies, waters, cosmos, forces and flows (Lewis, 1994). How might such a metaphor help us to rethink the complexities of traversing multiple languages in early childhood education? How is this metaphor particularly pertinent to our early childhood education contexts in Aotearoa New Zealand?

This book invites the reader to engage with the politics of education and the role and significance of language in our early childhood education (ECE) settings. It draws specific attention to policy, curriculum, and the rights of the child to engage in learning that is inclusive of heritage language(s), cultural knowledge, concepts, and values. This commitment to the rights of the child is echoed throughout the chapters of the book and notably situates the place of language for children and families together in a network of relations, with centre, with teacher, culture (metalinguistics) and belonging. For early childhood teachers, the book also introduces key definitions of terms, which may help to distinguish the dynamic linguistic opportunities and challenges many early childhood teachers must navigate. In this regard, the book identifies pragmatic and critical insights to teaching and learning with bi/plurilingual children and families.

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As I work with the metaphor of navigation, I will attempt to provide a process of way-finding; mapping the chapters presented in the book. The first three chapters present the reader with important issues (social, political, cultural) regarding research of language diversity and establishes how the Teaching Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) project from January 2013 – June 2015 encouraged a deeper understanding of practice in supporting children who learn in more than one language (p. xiii). What is unique about this research is that it is conducted locally - with and for early childhood teachers. It also draws upon the unique socio-cultural contexts, histories and philosophies pertinent for all New Zealand early childhood contexts.

The four early childhood centre contexts presented in this book share diverse perspectives of how children’s bilingual and plurilingual experiences are lived and expressed in daily interactions. The text allows the reader to enter the discourse of bilingual and multilingual education theories, to question and negotiate meanings and implications for practice. The various forms of teacher/child/parent narratives provide insights into children’s own funds of knowledge and the significance of language and culture for migrant and linguistically diverse families.

From the outset, the focus for research is underpinned by transformative and emancipatory paradigms utilising a mixed methods approach (p. 31). In this light, the findings are presented by way of credit-based analysis, which encourages holistic insights to the complexity of learning in more than one language for young children 0-5. At the same time, there is careful consideration of the implications and challenges for practice. At the start of each section, a whakatauki foregrounds the significance of the particular research journey and the emancipatory impact upon child, family and teacher “Toku

Reo, toku akatika, toku akaaraana. Apii ia, tamou ia, o’oraia kite ao. Kia kore e ngaro. My language, my reality, my awakening. Learn a language, nurture it, share it with the world to keep it from extinction” (p. 79).

With the current shifts in linguistic diversity in New Zealand, I question how early childhood education with its deep histories in advocating for the presence of indigenous Māori world views in education, can possibly sustain Te Reo Māori and kaupapa Māori with the increasing presence of super-diversity? The journey and aspirations of one Māori-medium early childhood centre is shared in chapter 4. The engagement of their philosophy in their research and vision for sustaining cultural knowledge, beliefs and practice are explored. Concepts of whanaungatanga (relationships), kaitiakitanga (guardianship), manaakitanga (to support, take care of), wairuatanga (spirituality), tangata whenuatanga (indigeneity, belongingness), and tuakana teina (mentorship) demonstrate the holistic transfer of intergenerational knowledge and spirituality by way of Te Reo Māori (p. 49). What could be a challenge here, for many early childhood education contexts, are the ways in which Te Reo Māori is lived and expressed, connecting present, future to past. Here the complexity of language is transversal, moving through ways of being, knowing and becoming.

Chapter 5 includes another distinctive cultural context, an Aoga fa’a Samoa; a Samoan-language immersion centre that began operating in 1984 (and was one of the first Pasifika language based ECE services in New Zealand). Currently, Pasifika early childhood services in Aotearoa only make up 2.2% of the entire ECE sector (Ministry of Education, 2014) – so services like this offer a unique perspective in its commitment to cultural pedagogy, knowledge and values. Again, the use of Samoan language in this centre context is

underpinned by the centre’s philosophy and commitment to promoting language and culture. The overarching values for the project include alofa (love), fa’aaloalo (respect) and tau-tua (service and responsibility). The connections between centre context and home are explored with the sharing of parent and child narratives. The loss of language for families were highlighted in their own personal struggles to engage in English-dominant schooling. In light of the findings, I ask how specific pedagogical practices for infants and toddlers may be reconceptualised, to move beyond basic phrases, songs, and greetings. How can heritage languages and cultural concepts be woven into relational infant and toddler pedagogy? For parents with children attending the Aoga fa’a Samoa, it is as much about sustaining language as it is affirming and valuing cultural identity and knowledge. Included in the findings are the benefits of bilingualism and metalinguistic awareness as well as further opportunities to strengthen language in the centre and home. These insights into the holistic nature of language and cultural understandings would prove beneficial to early childhood teachers engaged with Pasifika learners and families.

New Zealand as a super-diverse nation has become, to a greater extent linguistically diverse and for many learners, there are possibilities that more than one language is spoken in the early childhood setting (Jones Diaz, 2016, as cited in Podmore, Hedges, Keegan, & Harvey, 2016). This brings us to the central focus of chapters 6 and 7. Presented are two mainstream ECE centres experiencing and engaging in diverse languages in curriculum and pedagogy where children, families, and teachers are multilingual. Highlighted, are the inter-relational capacities of language when teachers, families, and children collaboratively engage in bi/plurilingual research and education. At



the heart of the research, deficit views of bilingual/multilingual education are contested, again opening up for complexity in approaches to additive bilingualism and fostering children's funds of knowledge. The realisation of the responsibility to encourage heritage languages was expressed by teachers involved in the project demonstrating a renewed conviction to the strengthening of multilingual pedagogy. "Teachers realised more strongly than previously that they had a responsibility and a part to play in the children's future as bilingual or multilingual members of society" (p. 113). Podmore et al. (2016) argue that multilingual pedagogy is relational and must be considered for infants, toddlers, and young children to ensure that language (verbal, non-verbal, and visual) strengthens children's expressive capacities.

The final chapter opens with this whakatauki; "He pukepuke maunga e pikitia e te tangata, he pukepuke moana e ekea e te waka. A steep mountain can be climbed by a person; a steep sea can be ridden by a canoe" (p. 116). This whakatauki invites the reader to draw upon the challenges explored in the various chapters as a catalyst for change, to encourage a centre culture, ethos and pedagogy that foster empowering additive bilingualism in teaching and learning. Significant approaches to additive bilingualism practised in the research included engagement of the whole community as a wider resource, whereby educational aspirations are shared and culture and languages valued. This book is a must for all early childhood education teachers and leaders, including teacher education as it attends to the unique socio-cultural contexts of Aotearoa/New Zealand, sharing significant insights to plurilingualism and relevance of additive bilingualism in education for children and families.

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Jacoba Matapo

