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Introduction of a Wapishana-English bilingual education programme: an evaluation of the early stages

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Introduction of a Wapishana-English
Bilingual Education Programme



Introduction of a Wapishana-English Bilingual Education Programme

An evaluation of the early stages

This dissertation evaluates a Wapishana-English bilingual education programme that has been advocated for by the Wapishana community and approved by the Ministry of Education, currently piloted in three nursery schools in Guyana, beginning September 2018. This evaluation strives to determine what practices promote biliterate, bilingual, intercultural and academically oriented education for bilingual children, with an eye to improving existing practices of the above-mentioned programme.

The programme seems to have progressed satisfactorily, as evinced in/evidenced by the increased use of the Wapishana language by the children and their growing interest in and interaction with culturally-relevant materials. Although the children's native language together with their cultural context is incorporated into the curriculum, the initial teaching of literacy seems to employ the simultaneous use of Wapishana and English as languages of instruction. Given the fact that the first (and therefore stronger) language of the children is Wapishana, a sequential rather than a simultaneous approach should be followed, whereby education should first immerse the students in their mother tongue and only later complement it with English. Another reason for the sequential approach is that the teaching of oral English (their second language) should be treated as a separate component in the stages of the programme. The study also proposes a five-part instructional approach that is likely to accelerate second language learners' academic development. This study offers a conceptual model and some recommendations to improve existing practices so that the Wapishana-English bilingual education programme is meaningfully integrated into the mainstream curriculum.

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