

Multilingual preschool children
and their families:
Perspectives from research, policy
and practice in Iceland.

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Agenda

Background in Iceland

Policy on language and diversity in
Iceland and internationally

Insights from research

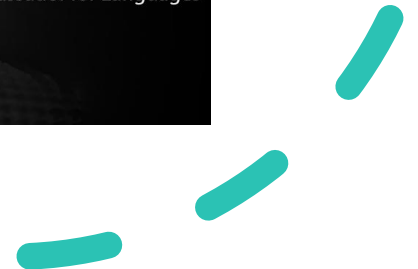
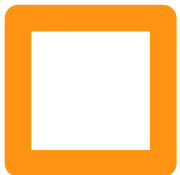
The MEMM project - *Collaboration and
coordination regarding the education of children with
diverse linguistic and cultural background in Iceland*

Vigdís Finnbogadóttir

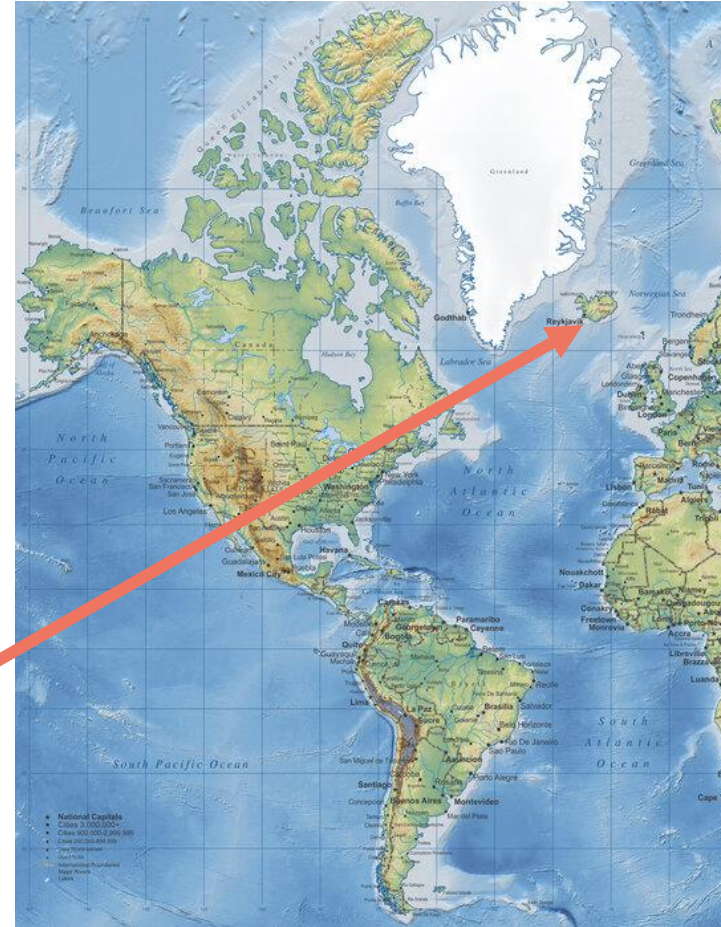
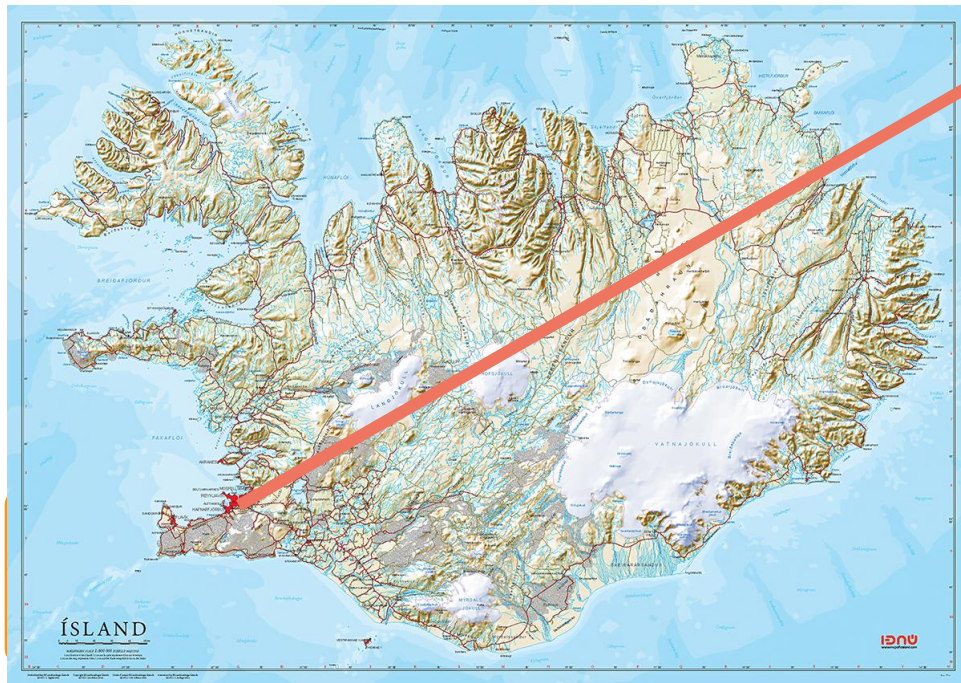
Former president of Iceland and the Unesco Goodwill Ambassador for languages.

„Everyone on Earth has a mother tongue“

- Small languages at risk because of major business languages like English
- Need to appreciate and strengthen Icelandic while respecting at the same time the mother tongue of all who move to Iceland.



Iceland

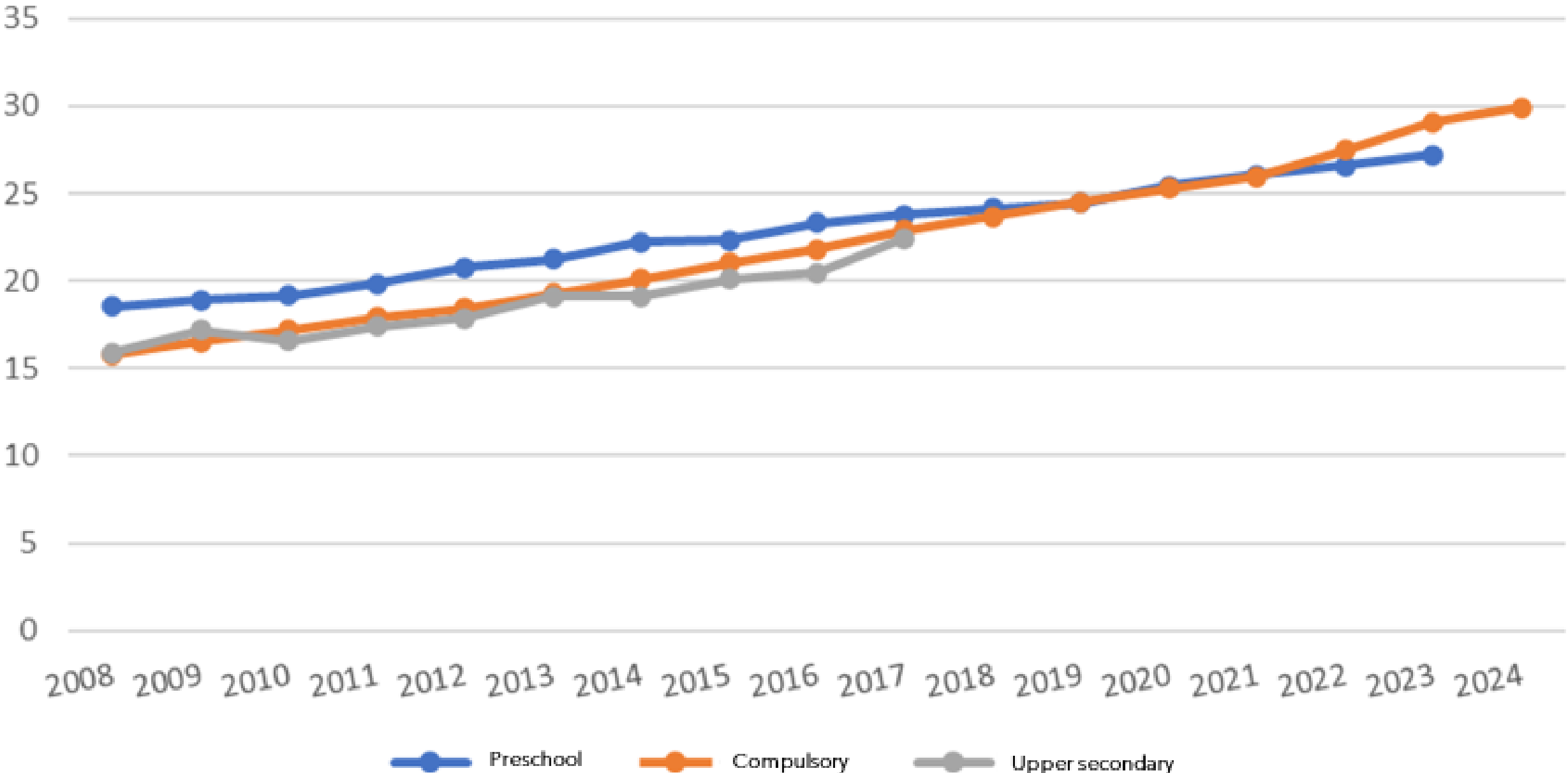


Working Together for Integration
**Skills and Labour Market
Integration of Immigrants
and their Children in Iceland**

Reykjavík city the capital
Population 390.000
Immigrant population 19%



How the percentage of children with immigrant background has developed in recent years



Insight from Research in Iceland

Marginalization and deficit view, the gap between children is wide and expectations are low



Lack of valuing the strength and background knowledge of multilingual children and their families



Biased assessment tools – monolingual perspective



Diagnoses of language and developmental issues




The believe that multilingual children need special education in preschools

Policy reform in Iceland

MENNTUN FYRIR ALLA Á ÍSLANDI
Úttekt á framkvæmd stefnu um menntun án aðgreiningar á Íslandi

EDUCATION FOR ALL IN ICELAND
External Audit of the Icelandic System for Inclusive Education

Final Report

 **OECD Education Policy Perspectives**
No. 32

Iceland Education Policy 2030 and its implementation

Education Policy 2030 (hereafter referred to as EP2030) is a ten-year education strategy document that establishes Iceland's objective to achieve a dynamic and flexible education system to drive economic and social change. It aims to contribute to shape the nation's future, give everyone the opportunity to develop, and increase their competencies (Ministry of Education, 2020...). It has the high-level vision 'to accomplish high-quality education through life'.

Iceland is a multicultural society that utilizes the resource inherent in multicultural schooling, celebrates the diversity of students, and leverages it to strengthen the community (Education policy 2030).

- **Define an actionable implementation strategy:** The processes of creating an implementation strategy will encourage Iceland to weave together various elements related to policy design, stakeholder engagement, and institutional features. It should bring together the different dimensions required for action; develop knowledge to monitor implementation; and establish it in an initial document that lays out the strategy.

OECD EDUCATION POLICY PERSPECTIVES © OECD 2021


Act on the Integration of Services in the Interest of Children's Prosperity

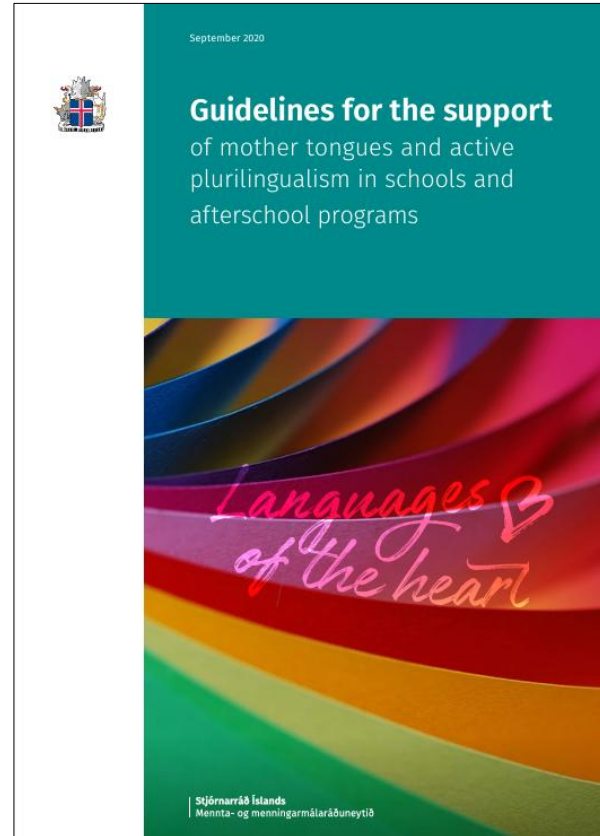


Government of Iceland
Ministry of Education and Children

Support material and the revision of the National curriculum framework for preschools



Competence framework in Icelandic for *multilingual* preschool children



National Curriculum Framework for Preschools, revision 2021 and 2023



Handbook on Play in Preschools

International and Scandinavian policy and research on language and education

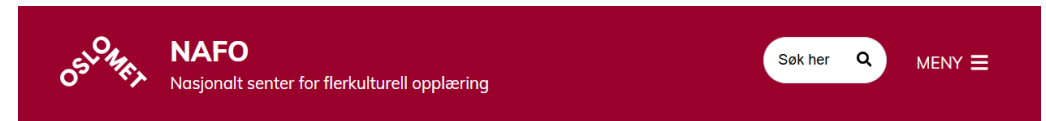


UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education

By Interarts / 05/03/2024



The language or languages we use have a huge impact on how we understand ourselves, how other people understand us, and how we understand them. Language as well as culture conveys our history



[Startside](#) > [Om NAFO](#) > [Nettverk og samarbeid](#) > [Nordic Languages as Second Languages](#)

Nordic Languages as Second Languages

Nation-wise overviews of educational policies

An important outcome of the network's activities is a cross-Nordic overview of educational policies regarding second language education across the educational system. The network has also gathered an overview of resources regarding second language education in the Nordic countries. Network participants who are responsible for authoring the nation-wise texts are listed at the top of each country's page. Please note that the nation-wise presentations are not to be regarded as comprehensive representations, but serve to highlight the most salient features of the educational policy of each country.



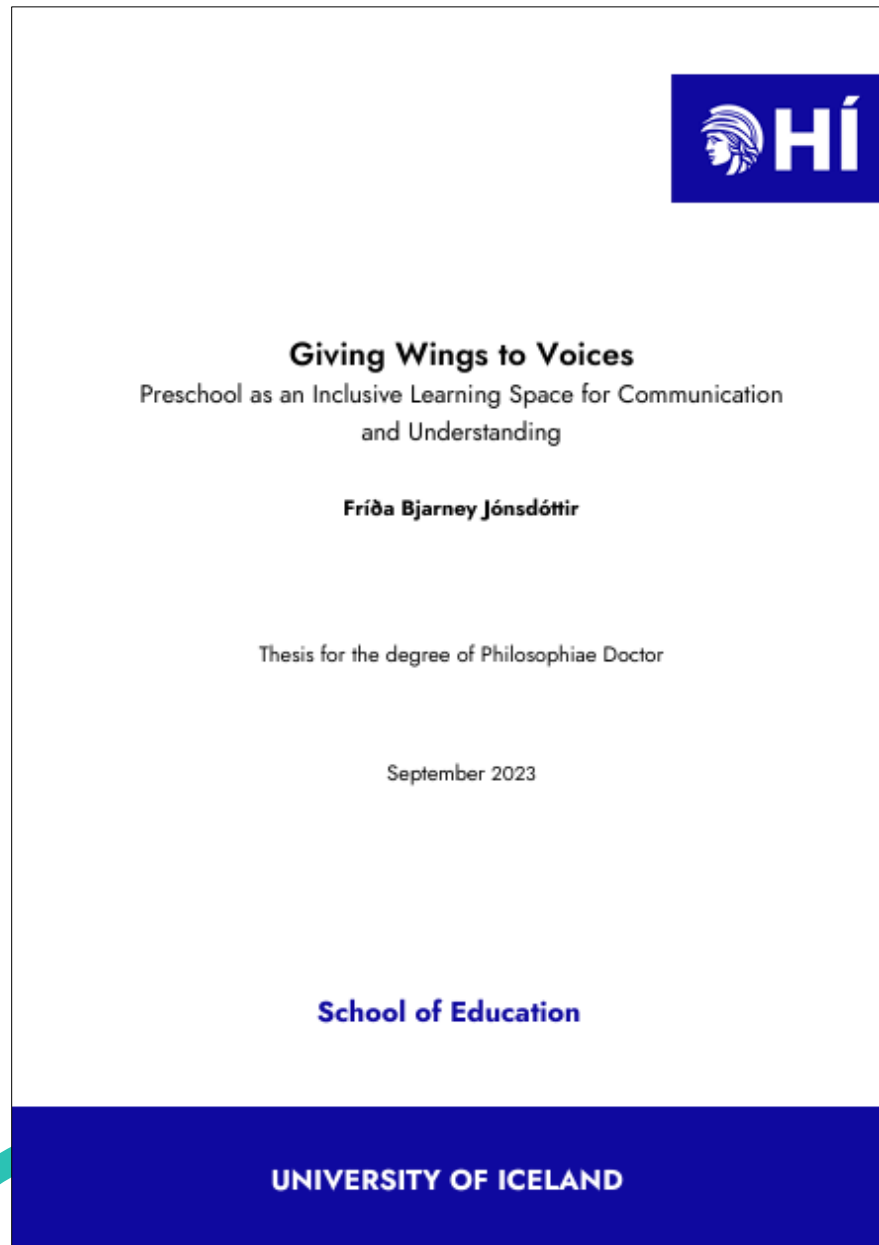
Aim and focus of the study

Aim

- Gain a deeper understanding of how the preschool can serve as an inclusive and socially just learning space for multilingual children's language and emergent literacy development, where voices and identities are affirmed and partnership with parents is enhanced.

Focus on teachers highlighting successful practices regarding:

- Language, literacy and identity
- Partnership with parents
- Communication with children and families
- Underlying values, beliefs and experiences



Theme - Spaces of Multilingualism

Practices supporting multilingualism

- Welcome greetings in different languages
- Target words from books
- Translated information for parents
- Posters with vocabulary and pictures
- Books to take home
- Singing
- Bilingual books of communication

All parents want to support multilingualism but have different views regarding the preschool's role:

- Father - our language at home, Icelandic in preschool
- Mother - we want our girl to learn Polish, preschool helps

Theme - Language Learning Opportunities through Active Participation

Icelandic the language of learning and playing

Children's understanding and linguistic participation in Icelandic supported both in child-initiated and teacher-organised activities

Collaboration of teachers, planning language learning

Newly arrived child

- Communicative acts of newly arrived child
- Active and participating -*Laughing, smiling, included, participant, capable*

Teachers were role models for the children

- Empathy and understanding of the reality of the new child

General findings, implications and contribution

Continuous, complex and multifaceted process to create inclusive learning spaces

- Challenge to sustain and systematically implement practices

Teachers build relationships and enhance language learning through connecting with children

Pedagogical choices of teachers influence children's opportunities for participation and emergent literacy

Multilingualism and dominant languages

Identity of competence and sense of belonging

Building bridges between home and preschool

Need for a comprehensive perspective

Reverse the marginalisation and deficit discourse

Highlight the need for teamwork and a learning community

- Teachers as knowledge generators

Deeper understanding of the complexity of factors that enhance sustainability in education for multilingual children

- Contributes to the need for collaboration of researchers from different research fields



MEMM – rooted in collaboration and coordination

- MEMM – Menntun, móttaka, menning (e.education, welcoming and culture)
 - The Minister of Education and Children, the Mayor of Reykjavík and the Director of the newly established Directorate for Education and School Services signed in May 2024 an agreement on a two- year development project MEMM
- The project responds to the urgent call of improving education for immigrant children at all levels of schooling based on findings from research, the lack of educational success and the voices of children, families, teachers and those working within school services
- The project is a tool for implementing action plans based on the Education Policy 2030
- The aim and purpose of the project is rooted in policy, findings from research and surveys, suggestions from external audits, consultation with major stakeholders and successful initiatives nationally and internationally

MEMM – Launched 2024

- The aim of MEMM is to:
 - Promote the inclusion and active participation of children with diverse linguistic and cultural background within the society.
 - Establish a uniform procedure for the reception and education of children with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds at the national level in preschools, compulsory schools, upper secondary schools and youth and leisure activity,
 - Develop and ensure the education community support and guidance, study materials and tools (such as assesment tools), as well as support for solving more complex situations within the Directorate of Education and School services.
- Comprehensive focus:
 - Icelandic as a second language
 - Inclusion and multicultural/multilingual education
 - Literacy counseling - language and literacy assessment, etc.
 - Parent collaboration
 - Education and professional development of teachers and staff
 - Development and distribution of learning materials and other tools



Attitudes and beliefs play a great role regardless of policy

Need for cocreation of policies and communication at the school level

All teachers are teachers of language

Teachers need to recognize student's assets such as the linguistic and cultural diversity that they bring to the classroom

Questions

- How can we cocreate the education of multilingual children in a holistic, culturally sensitive and appropriate way?
- What are the competencies that teachers of linguistically diverse group of children need to fulfill if they are to meet the demands for inclusive and socially just education?
- What are biggest challenges in developing and inclusive education for all?