



Summary Report

Educational practices that benefit Pacific learners in tertiary education

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EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES THAT BENEFIT PACIFIC LEARNERS IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

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The full research report is available at www.akooteaoroa.ac.nz/pasifika-learners-success

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Introduction

Pacific Peoples are defined as New Zealand residents belonging to the seven Pacific nations of Samoa, Cook Islands, Tonga, Niue, Fiji, Tokelau and Tuvalu (Statistics New Zealand, 2006a). There are 265,974 people identified in this ethnic grouping, which represents 6.9 percent of the country's total population (Statistics New Zealand, 2006b). The educational progress and academic achievement of Pacific students have improved over time, but the reality remains that the education system in New Zealand still fails to deliver equitable outcomes for Pacific Peoples (Statistics New Zealand, 2010). This is in spite of three successive tertiary education strategies relating to Pacific success. (For a review of the impact of these strategies see Horrocks *et al.*, 2012.)

Various research projects have been conducted to understand how the educational outcomes of Pacific students might be improved (e.g. Chu, 2009, 2010; Petelo, 2003; Benseman, Coxon, Anderson, & Anae, 2006; Mara & Marsters, 2009; Nakhid *et al.*, 2007; Penn, 2010; Rio & Stephenson, 2010). However, little of this research has been framed from a strengths-based or success case perspective; most research has been framed in terms of a deficit approach.

To understand and appreciate what tertiary institutions are doing well for Pacific students, attention needs to focus on good practice and benefits for students. This research sought to understand what educational practices are most effective for Pacific students. ♥

To see the full report go to: www.akoatearora.ac.nz/pasifika-learners-success



Summary of what this study shows: Approaches that work

1. The appreciative inquiry pedagogy incorporates the motivational factors and contextual influences in the lives of Pacific students. Its application can build confident students that leads to success in education by:
 - recognising and encouraging the strengths in students' talent, skills and knowledge
 - showing interest and incorporating the identified strengths in the practice of learning and teaching
 - inquiring with appreciation: *"What do you perceive as your key strengths?"* or *"How can I help you to achieve/succeed?"*
 - understanding the enabling factors for Pacific students that are related to prior learning through their cultures, family context and background, personal values, and church experiences
 - understanding the learner's context or internal motivation, *i.e.* what drives students? and external motivation factors, *i.e.* what external influences do they have in their lives?
 - starting with what works well in Pacific students' lives and building from that point.
2. Teaching and learning for Pacific success embraces several factors. Talanoa is an unstructured discussion process used in Samoan, Tongan and Fijian cultures, in which the focus is on developing relationships between people. It is a process where people share their stories, realities and aspirations. Based on the talanoa, students and staff have identified the following as recommendations that would benefit Pacific students:
 - Give high expectations on your students' academic performance. It could be through formative feedback on assignments or in an informal conversation after class. High expectations produce great results.
 - Connect teaching with learning. Ask a reflective question: Is my teaching practice connecting the learner? Pacific students appreciate that lecturers relate the lecture to Pacific experience and examples.
 - Motivate students with challenging assessments. Assignments are the source of academic challenge and personal push for students. They enjoy the progress through each assignment and setting goals for finishing it becomes a tool for success.
 - Conduct lectures in small rooms. The intimacy of being in a small room gets students to know and to connect with other students in class. Thus, they can easily work together in groups and get to know their lecturers better.
 - Cater for students' learning needs. Examples of these needs are: elaboration on course content, extra time to debate an issue, and utilising small group discussions to work on assignments.
 - Support students through peer support. Students believed that it enhanced their success through the process of sharing challenges involved in the assignments,

sharing of ideas and generally being able to talk through their work. This could be within a buddy-peer system or via a study group.

- Provide a comfortable atmosphere and interactive teaching in classroom. A comfortable state means that students can talk more easily to the lecturers. Interactive learning is the involvement of students in discussions or debate, or by providing small group activities.
 - Be passionate, committed, and creative educators. Students are stimulated to learn when teachers are passionate and creative in their craft. These traits are revealed when teachers:
 - become interactive and they get students to talk
 - make learning personal, fun and real
 - have balance in their lectures, which can be exploratory, dialogue, debates
 - pose issues and look at it at from 360 degrees
 - use metaphor, pictures, simple words, concrete and current examples, or life experiences to clarify ideas for students
 - repeat the main ideas or important processes that students need to know several times until they are able to grasp them
 - give different options for assignments other than a paper and pencil test or research paper
- provide various avenues for teaching and learning outside the four walls of the classroom
 - try to connect the curriculum and learning to the identities or ethnicities of the students.
- Incorporate Pacific culture, identity and language in the classroom. Including Pacific culture helps the student to understand and learn the lesson because they can relate to it and see themselves within the context.
3. Institutional commitment starts with knowing the skills and knowledge of the learner and understanding their context. From this background institutions can build on policies and programmes that would target the needs of the students. Academic services, mentoring, innovative teaching strategies, peer support and celebration of students' success are just some of the commitments that institutions can have in order to engage and encourage students' success. Hence, institutional commitment towards Pacific success is about:
- engaging Pacific families and communities in their students' education
 - observing students' success along the course of their study through shared celebration
 - upholding the collective nature of Pacific people
 - affirming the students' connection to their community
 - having an active, on-going and long-term engagement between the institution and the Pacific community.

Research overview

This research was guided by both the Kakala Research Framework (Thaman, 2003) and Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

In Tonga kakala are fragrant flowers, fruits and leaves, which have mythical origins, strung or woven together into garlands and worn at special events or presented to honourable and distinguished people as a sign of love and respect. Thaman (2003) uses the process of kakala making, which is inherently valued in Tongan culture, as a basis for the research framework.

This project sought to identify, understand, and share educational practices in tertiary institutions that benefit Pacific students. The research identifies stories of success that will help to inform theory and practice by shifting attention from negative and deficit explanations of Pacific student achievement to a focus on exemplars of success. As a result, we hope that organisations can be inspired to improve and strengthen their own policy frameworks, actions and practices in ways that benefits students.

The overarching research question was: What educational practices work best in achieving, sustaining and reproducing Pacific student success in tertiary education?

The sub-questions were:

- What perceptions do Pacific students hold about success in tertiary education?
- What are the enabling factors that contribute to Pacific success and achievement?
- How do tertiary institutions engage in supporting Pacific student success?

Data were gathered through talanoa. As a research tool, talanoa:

- is a conversation
- can be formal or informal in nature
- can be used for different purposes – to teach a skill or to teach ideas
- is context-specific with different purposes and forms. Language and behaviour may be used differently to reflect the context
- is a skill and embedded in values and attitude. The context of talanoa sets the knowledge, values and attitude.

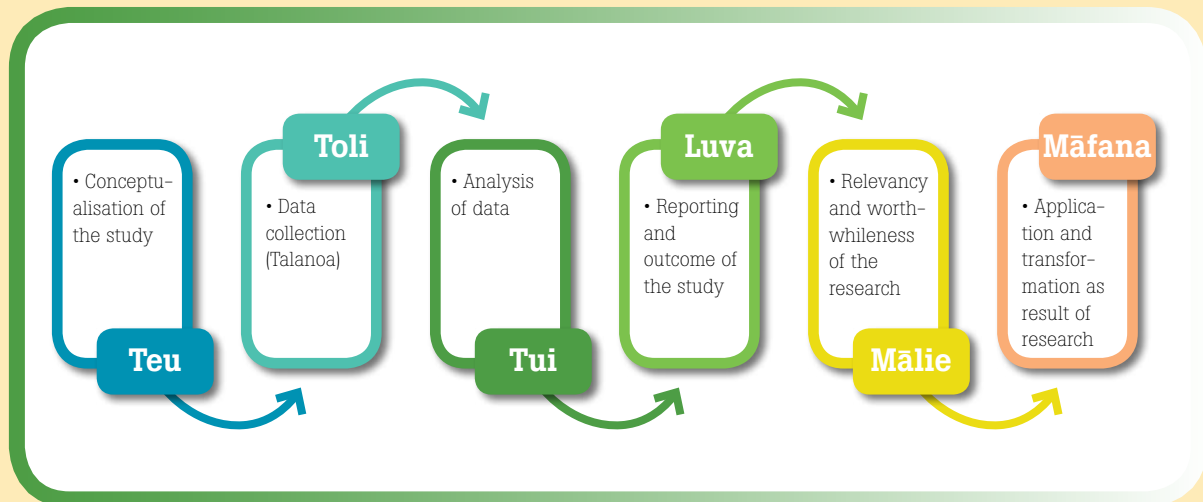
In all, 119 students and 51 staff from five institutions (University of Otago, Victoria University of Wellington, Whitireia New Zealand, Manukau Institute of Technology and Pacific Training Institute) participated in the group talanoa sessions. These institutions were selected because of the high rates of successful completion in selected programmes and the various innovations in Pacific learner initiatives (see Table 1 opposite). The accessibility of the institutes (via Association of Pacific Staff in Tertiary Education linkages) and the availability of key people were also considered. ▀

Table 1: Initial criteria for selection of institutions

Tertiary institute	Area of focus	Background reasons for research	General Pacific information	Overall Population
Victoria University of Wellington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty of Education • Student Services Group Pacific Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International post-graduate Pacific students' experiences (research capability and sustainability, leadership development) • Evidence of Māori and Pacific collaborations and partnerships • Evidence of general support programme entrenched in academic teaching • Demonstrated provision of evidence of past Pacific student success • Subject areas: education, humanities and science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5% Pacific population • 77% completion of qualifications • 88% student progression to higher degrees • 81% students retained in study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15,578 student population (EFTS) • 85% course completion • 77% qualification completion • 81% student retention • 88% student progression
University of Otago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pacific student support programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy implementation of Pacific development and impacts/outcomes on/of students • Evidence of purposeful engagement with Pacific communities • Academic advancement development, research capability, collaborative partnerships • Institution has not been extensively researched previously • International student experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3% Pacific population • 81% completion of qualifications • 88% students retained in study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17,653 student population (EFTS) • 89% course completion • 81% qualification completion • 88% student retention • 89% student progression
Manukau Institute of Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pasifika Development Plan • Pacific Community Plan • Pacific student development and support programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy implementation of Pacific development and impact/outcomes on/of students • Evidence of purposeful engagement with Pacific communities • Successful Pacific student achievement that reflects demographic responsibility • A framework for Pacific leadership at all levels • Institution has not been extensively researched previously • Subject areas: management, society and culture, engineering and health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33% Pacific population • 61% completion of qualifications • 44% student progression to higher degrees • 61% students retained in study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6,124 student population (EFTS) • 82% course completion • 61% qualification completion • 61% student retention • 44% student progression
Whitireia New Zealand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pacific student support • Innovative Pacific student support and learning programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community engagement • Teaching and learning support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11% Pacific population • 91% completion of qualifications • 16% student progression to higher degrees • 84% students retained in study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,275 student population (EFTS) • 80% course completion • 68% qualification completion • 64% student retention • 35% student progression
Pacific Training Institute (Wellington)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative Pacific student support programme (home away from home) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of progression to higher learning (100%) • Students transition to other forms of tertiary education • Demonstrated provision of evidence of past Pacific student success • Subjects: education, management and commerce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 43% Pacific population • 98% completion of qualifications • 60% student progression to higher degrees • 75% students retained in study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 student population (EFTS) • 86% course completion • 98% qualification completion • 75% student retention • 60% student progression

(Source: Tertiary Education Commission, 2011)

The Kakala Research Framework



The Kakala Research Framework (Thaman, 2003), combined with an Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005) philosophy, guided the research process. The Kakala Research Framework is both culturally meaningful and inclusive, for it provides a sense of ownership in the process and development of Pacific education (Thaman, 2003). The three different processes are *toli*, *tui* and *luva*. Each step in making the kakala represents the stages in conducting research. Thaman's Kakala framework was further enhanced by adding three new phases: *teu*, *mālie* and *māfana* (Taufe'ulungaki and Johansson Fua, 2009 as cited in Johansson Fua, 2009; Manu'atu, 2009).

Teu refers to the preparation phase in the making of kakala. Decisions are made as to the purpose of the kakala, on whom it shall be bestowed, what flowers, leaves, or fruits shall be used *etc.* In research, the *teu* stage pertains to the conceptualisation of the study (Johansson Fua, 2009). It looks into the

perceptions, beliefs and philosophies surrounding the research.

Toli pertains to the selection and collection of flowers, fruits and leaves, which are ranked depending on their cultural importance, essential in making the kakala. Details regarding the type of occasion and the person who is expected to wear the kakala are also considered in making it. In research, the *toli* phase is associated with data-collection methodologies. It refers to the 'doing' of research: how to do it, who does what, and when (Chu, 2009).

Tui refers to the actual making or weaving of the garland. Certain features of the weavers and the weaving process are regarded as important to ensure quality, presentation and art in the arrangement and completion of the kakala garland such as time, knowledge, skill and practice. The *tui* phase represents the analysis stage. It reflects on words, actions, metaphors, meanings, insights, discoveries, *etc.* elicited from the analytical questions posed at this stage.

Luva is the giving of the kakala to the intended recipient, and in return the latter is expected to pass on his/her kakala to someone else. This gesture symbolises the value of sharing and the importance of relationship for the people in the Pacific. In terms of research, the *luva* phase is the reporting and outcomes stage (Johansson Fua, 2009). It is giving back to the people (stakeholders and communities), who are the source of knowledge, the findings of the study in various modes of presentation.

Mālie is the reflection by kakala makers, receivers and observers after the kakala garland has been presented. It represents the relevance and worthwhileness of the research as reflected by the research team.

Following the gifting of kakala is **māfana**, which is expressed through further gifting and celebration. Usually, the recipient of the kakala garland will pass on the garland to someone else as a sign of appreciation. This is the application and transformation as the result of the research.

Appreciative inquiry (AI) as a philosophy was used as a lens in working with participants, particularly in the framing of questions within the talanoa. AI provides a strengths-based approach to understanding the strengths of programmes, people, institutions and communities. It revolves around qualitative, narrative analysis, focusing on stories and their generative potential (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 166). AI focuses on the life-giving forces or goodness in the system that generates a collective positive image of a new and better future, which is meaningful to the active members of that system (Chen, 2003; Norum, Wells, Hoadley, & Geary, 2002).

Key findings

Overall, three broad themes were identified as factors that lead to success for Pacific students in tertiary settings. Each of these three themes is discussed in turn on the following pages.

STUDENT SUCCESS

Appreciative pedagogy

which includes:

- family support in education
- personal commitment to success
- the *Learning Village* at the Institution

Teaching and learning relationships

which include:

- respectful and nurturing relationships between teach and student
- recognition and implementation of cultural identity, values and aspirations
- the creation of 'Pacific' physical spaces
- incorporation of students' learning needs
- insistence on high standards
- opportunities for students to pursue higher education
- learning relationships between students
- mentorship as a learning relationship

Institutional commitment

which includes:

- a firm level of support from the institution
- active institutional engagement with the Pacific community
- strong and supportive leadership
- significant Pacific role models.

Appreciative
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Appreciative pedagogy

Appreciative pedagogy draws out the strength of talents, skills, relationships, experiences, practices and knowledge of students that have largely been undiscovered in education (Chapman & Giles, 2009; Doveston & Keenaghan, 2006; Giles & Alderson, 2008; Kozik, *et al.*, 2009; O'Connor & Yballe, 2007). The three sub-themes identified through this research are described below.

Family support in education

Families that provided a constant and meaningful level of support to Pacific students leading to academic success were apparent in the research. Family support in education manifests itself through approaches such as praise, encouragement, giving students time to study, and support towards advancement to higher levels of education. Moreover, families who are increasingly familiar with the notion of tertiary learning increased their own appreciation of the realities of post-secondary school study. This led to further support of Pacific students. According to one student,

"My whānau is my guiding force. They are my support system; they fuel the fire in my belly; they keep it burning."

Family support was integral to their educational experiences and many of the students had received regular weekly phone calls, Facebook messages and e-mail messages from family members who were proudly cheering them on.

I came to uni with my family and my extended family, my community. So there was a lot riding on me to perform and succeed. What about me made it important? Well, my cultural roots; I was taught how to work hard – no pain, no gain. I was also taught about the importance of education. I also saw the struggles my parents went through raising us and I turned this into positive energy thus deeply motivated me to succeed.

Personal commitment to success

From this study, success for a Pacific learner was primarily centred on completing their studies. Students are motivated to succeed for several reasons, such as:

I am committed to being the best doctor I can be when I graduate; I want to serve my people when I return to my community.

Being driven to succeed came from personal goals and also from the external motivation of Pacific determination for a better life.

Coming from a broken home, seeing that this is not what we want to be, taking the initiative, getting support from our cousins who had come through university to be like them, and doing something for our parents. We do not want to be cleaners, we don't want to be working odd jobs. These are the drivers for me.

Under the current government, it is getting harder for Pacific people to do well. It is clear to me that education is a key – for me and my family. Education will provide me a good life and better wages.

I don't want to be on any benefit or welfare system. The news tells people that we Pacific people are on the benefit. But that's not true. Not all of us are like that and I am not going to be like that.

The students would also like to use tertiary education as an enabling tool to break down stereotypes about Pacific students being underachievers. One student identified one of the common stereotypes as

the white people will get high education and will have more money, while the brown people will work in low-income jobs and low-cost housing.

The Learning Village at the institution

The essence of a positive learning experience for Pacific students at any institution can be summed up in one student's description of “the learning village”, a safe, culturally strengthening place that appreciates the great range of Pacific ethnicities. Within the village, all fundamental academic services are evident and the academic services are taken to the student. The village is a mirror of their own communities, imbued with Pacific values and beliefs. The village is a place where Pacific students will be confident as *Pacific*.

The experience of “the learning village” in their tertiary education led some students to use their learning as a way to understand the cultural challenges beyond the tertiary institution. For example, some students noted that the mainstream system of health care lacked cultural knowledge and sensitivity in caring for Pacific elders. As one student shared,

coming to a rest home setting, I witnessed that there was no cultural safety, no cultural identity and I felt the Palagi system failed to care for my grandmother appropriately.

For example, when being given a bath, her grandmother felt that her privacy was invaded because she was exposed without her permission first being sought. This act is culturally improper for Pacific people, who are accustomed to being covered up. 🍀

On the “*Learning Village*” at the institution:

Whitireia’s Bachelor of Nursing Pacific

The Bachelor of Nursing Pacific offered by Whitireia is the first of its kind and was developed in New Zealand (Falepau & van Peer, 2010). Students described their Centre as a ‘home away from home’.

One student remarked, “If it wasn't for this Centre, we would not have a place to study together and be Pacific people. Through the Bachelor of Nursing Pacific, the Pacific approach to, and elements of, learning are incorporated in the programme, making it more connected to Pasifika students and in touch with their own culture. This Centre helps us to come together and study.”

On the “*Learning Village*” at the institution:

Pacific Training Institute and the incorporation of Samoan culture and language

Early Childhood Education students started their day with praying and singing in the Samoan language, which depicted their culture and values. Both Samoan and English languages were used for instruction in class. However, the Samoan language dominated lectures and class discussions since all students in the class could speak the language, which made it more effective for both Samoan-speaking international students and Samoan-descent students to clearly understand and learn the lessons easily.

One student said, “I chose [Pacific Training Institute] because the teaching is in Samoan language that helps out a lot unlike English, which is a bit complicated.”

By using their own native language, students can freely voice their ideas spontaneously and confidently.

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Teaching and learning relationships

Teaching and learning relationships that are built on solid foundations of shared values are important. Some of these values are: respect, compassion, humility, honesty, integrity, trustworthiness and reciprocity. These values can be integrated into teaching and learning practices and policies for Pacific students in education.

Respectful and nurturing relationships between teacher and learner

Teachers and non-teaching staff who developed respectful and nurturing relationships with students greatly enhanced the students' learning experience. One student commented, "It's funny, huh. Everyone contributes to our success – even the security guards and cleaners. We can ask them questions about places on the campus, if we are lost, for example. They have a vested interest in our development." As a result, expertise was shared and learning from one another occurred.

Teachers who consistently went out of their way to get to know the students and were approachable were regarded highly by students. Pacific students placed great value on relationships and specifically stated that strong relationships with staff were prominent in their success. One student described their teacher as:

...someone who I can relate to. If I can't relate to that, I can't relate to learning. So, I wouldn't remember what someone taught me, but I'd remember how they made me feel. I could relate to one Palagi lecturer, and that's because he understood the way we learn. Learning for me needs to make sense. If it doesn't make sense to my world, the more difficult it became.



One student noted,

I like the learning that takes place especially if you get a lecturer who is passionate and able to connect with students. Once again it helps to have a lecturer whom you can connect with but more importantly a lecturer that cares about you and your learning.

Recognition and implementation of cultural identity, values and aspirations

Teaching strategies that facilitated Pacific students' cultural identities, values and languages further contributed to overall student confidence and motivation. Such recognition allowed Pacific students to maintain their sense of Pacific identity and cultural capital. One student stated,

Well, everyone has different learning needs. But when the teacher knows how you learn – well, that's great for our success

because he or she can change the way they teach...it helps if they are open to this change though.

This recognition can be translated into an implementation strategy, for example teachers may:

- become interactive and get students to talk
- make learning personal, fun and real
- show balance in their lectures, which can be exploratory, dialogue and debates
- pose issues and look at them from a broad perspective
- use metaphor, pictures, simple words, concrete and current examples, or life experiences to clarify ideas for students
- repeat the main ideas or important processes that students need to know several times until they are able to grasp them
- give different options for assignments other than a paper and pencil test or research paper
- provide various avenues for teaching and learning aside from within the four walls of the classroom

I was interested in paper topics that had a Pacific element. I don't know why. But to my surprise, I actually found out more about Pacific in the university, as people, their histories – this was part of what made me intrigued and engaged in higher learning. I suppose it was because everything about me, my culture, my people were not part of the curriculum in high school so I took an immediate interest in Pacific, and the rest was history.

- try to connect the curriculum and learning to the identities or ethnicities of the students.

Teachers who used their own knowledge of Pacific concepts and used them well were instrumental in facilitating the acquisition of knowledge. Students' own knowledge was validated and they were able to use this as a strength not a deficiency.

The creation of “Pacific” physical spaces

The creation of and access to culturally thoughtful and nurturing teaching and learning spaces are vital to the learning experience of students. Spaces that nurture specific cultural values such as collectivity, relationships, identity and togetherness are beneficial in enhancing the Pacific students' journey to success. Students described Pacific space as a space that would support their learning . It provided them with a space that nurtures their identity; where they can be Pacific, eat, share ideas and talk in their own way. It is:

Having a home away from home – spaces where I could go and hang out or even study would help me immensely just because it provided me with an area I could go to. That's why we spent so much time at Education or even Pacific Studies because it was a space we could connect with. This is not just hanging tapa or mats around the institution and leaving them hanging but actually creating a space around the mats or the tapa etc.

Connections between people are important, particularly in tertiary institutions where Pacific students have come to study as individuals from various Pacific Islands or local communities.

Pacific students generally come from communal cultures, so it is important to connect them quickly to other people in order to avoid isolation within the university. This is even more critical for postgraduate students because of the nature of independent study.

Incorporation of students' learning needs

What students bring with them in their learning experiences is as important as what the teachers bring to the classroom. Students described a range of deliberate learning strategies to enhance their own learning and for students to support one another. The teacher who could clearly see the specific learning strengths of Pacific students was perceived as a good teacher. Creative and innovative teaching and learning approaches that captured the talents of students was fundamental in teaching practices. Small-sized classes and small-group learning in courses were considered essential to the success of learning. Teachers who actively engaged and mentored students outside formal teaching contributed to further learning and student success. According to one teacher,

Interactive strategies in teaching are really important. They engage the student with the material. There is more interest and more discussion. Small-group work has

been a key factor in my courses – the students' grades increase as they work together.

Insistence on high standards

The teacher who outwardly and constantly instilled high expectations for Pacific students greatly contributed to Pacific student motivation to do well in their studies. As one teacher shared,

High expectations produce great results in my experience, especially for Pacific. Day one of teaching – I start by saying that we are all going to do well in this course and I keep that message going through my course. I make sure my tutors express it in feedback on assignments too.

Ongoing and consistent insistence was regarded as meaningful and genuine to students. Furthermore, expectations need to be transferred into practice and into a context for ensuring Pacific student success is a priority.

Opportunities for students to pursue higher education

Staff who encouraged and provided opportunities for students to pursue higher education greatly increased students' outcomes. For a staff member to see students' potential and to offer encouraging words and the relevant directions was important in students' decisions to further their studies and educational journey; for example, the Pacific support groups that assist students both academically and non-academically were identified as instrumental to achievement. Ms. A was commended by the students because of her presence, dedication and service to the students, which sometimes went beyond the call of duty. She helped students in checking and discussing their assignments. Her presence as a Pacific person, who knows the culture and ways of being Pacific, appealed to the students. A student affirmed the idea of having a Pacific person who,

...understands where we are as Pacific People and knows our needs as well as a person who understands the culture, values and protocols.

Identifying with others who are like me – Pacific, means that I have a connection with my community. It motivates me. I feel reaffirmed as a Pacific person.

One student valued the efforts made by Ms. A, noting,

I don't know where I would be if it wasn't for her." Another student said that Ms. A is ... "a special lady, who is always ready to help and is honest with her comments and points of view.

Ms. A was also regarded well for coming up with study groups, where she would discuss hard assignments by breaking down the questions to their simplest form so students could understand them. This was critical, particularly for first-year students who were new to the academic system. Similarly, another student recalled,

My Palagi English teacher was awesome. She constantly encouraged me through my years at school. She told me I could make it to university.

Learning relationships between students

Students' talanoa repeated a key message in their learning. They valued learning relationships with fellow students to share their expertise and knowledge. They learned from one another in a comfortable way based on their own cultural routine. Cultural associations for students included the groupings of Samoans and Tongans. In these associations, the students located themselves within a culture motivated to do well. They felt empowered by their cultural links with other students.

For instance, the Tongan Students' Association members supported one another when they studied in groups. Sometimes they had to stay at the library at night and so they looked after one another when this happened. They 'stuck together' during the hard times of studying. Being alone was not an option for these students. One student said,

If it wasn't for my Tongan Association, I don't know how I would cope with my study. They provide support to me as a Tongan student.

Students found ways to facilitate their own learning communities. Teachers who created learning communities between students in their courses also contributed to learner success.

Mentorship as a learning relationship

When people (Pacific and non-Pacific) in the institution become long-term mentors to students, it can create positive outcomes. The mentors have provided learning beyond the text book and facilitated pathways for learner development. In many cases, students have gone on to pursue higher degrees and obtain influential positions. Lives can change for the better and many students have returned to serve their Pacific communities. Mentoring relationships extend further than academic development. They permeate into pastoral, personal and professional development when mentorship fully encompasses Pacific values.

One student said,

Mentoring from lecturers is key to my success. Lecturers have this amazing knowledge which they can share and aid my learning beyond the lecture room. 🍀

On the creation of Pacific physical spaces:

University of Otago and the Pacific Islands Centre

Pacific students studying at the University of Otago expressed that the Pacific Islands Centre was salient to their connection and relationship to the university. They believed that the Centre at the university provided them with a 'home away from home' and a place to be 'Pacific people'. "This is the heart of the Pacific students," claimed one student. The Centre is a house on campus grounds and it is central, rather than being located on the periphery of the grounds. The house features a kitchen, study areas, computers, tutorial rooms and the office spaces of the staff of the Centre. At the Centre, there is food readily available for the students. This is important in bringing students together and if they have study groups, they can meet over food. It is a common practice at home, and students feel that this is significant in their sense of belonging at the university.

The Centre supports my well-being. When I am happy, have eaten and I am warm – this helps me to study better, to pass my assignments.

Their cultural identities (especially languages) are nurtured and they are able to meet other Pacific students (from the Pacific and within New Zealand). Students said they can speak their own languages freely and there is evidence of the use of many Pacific languages being displayed on the walls of the Centre. All Pacific cultures are embraced, even Melanesian cultures which are usually left out of many Pacific discussions and practices in New Zealand. If there are special functions, the various Pacific cultures are well represented and utilised in a customary manner.

Identifying with others who are like me – Pacific, means that I have a connection with my community. It motivated me. I feel reaffirmed as a Pacific person.

Appreciative
pedagogyTeaching
and learning
relationshipsInstitutional
commitment

Institutional commitment

Institutional support varied across the sites but when it was evident, it demonstrated the commitment and responsibility towards Pacific students, their families and the wider community.

A firm level of support from the institution

The level of support received impacted on the extent to which Pacific students enjoyed their course of study and valued their programme. It had an influence on how Pacific students perceived their programme and connection to the institution. The degree of integration and inclusion of community support and engagement is connected to the institution's performance and sincerity of its relationship within and outside the community.

The Pasifika Education Strategy (Manukau Institute of Technology, 2012) was highlighted by staff as a significant development for Pacific staff, students and their communities. The strategy was viewed as an approach to lift the aspirations of Pacific people. The support from non-Pacific staff was also recognised as valuable for underpinning the goals and vision for Pacific student success. One of the staff members spoke about the belief and ownership of the strategy and the goals by staff.

A firm level of support from the institution also affects the development (including resources) of programmes and practices for Pacific students and the ability of a support programme to provide a physical space for students. Clear and comprehensive goals and strategies are outlined in *Whitireia*

New Zealand's Pacific Education Strategy that aims for the improvement of educational outcomes for Pacific students. Four strategic developmental goal areas were identified: improved educational outcomes, effective learning environment, foster Pacific identity and leadership, and develop collaborative partnerships (Falepau & van Peer, 2010). These provide direction for the institution as it fulfills its commitment to supporting Pacific students in their education.

Active institutional engagement with the Pacific community

Institutions should actively engage and intentionally involve themselves with their Pacific community. They can go out into the communities to *talanoa* on educational matters, to learn about Pacific life, and to support Pacific development. Institutions are seen as a focal influence on Pacific success in education. Staff believed that when academic institutions are committed to Pacific students and their communities, it leads to excellent academic outcomes for students. For instance, at some Pacific student celebrations and functions with the community it was common to see managers of the university in attendance and in support. This visible presence was important because it showed that the university cared about the students. Staff believed that a 'more present' university contributed to the students' and staff motivation to perform well in their studies. It was about a relationship between the institution and everyone Pacific. When the university was committed to Pacific development

Institutional strategy supports Pacific students and their communities:

Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT)

The Pasifika Education Strategy was highlighted as a significant development for Pasifika staff, students and their communities. The strategy was viewed as an approach to lift the aspirations of Pacific people. The support from non-Pacific staff was also recognised as valuable to the goals and visions for Pacific student success. One of the staff members spoke about the belief and ownership of the strategy and the goals. MIT's expansion into the Pacific community was seen a positive factor. However, this was not solely about the recruitment of students; it was a way of engaging effectively with the community and to operate a more holistic organisation.

Yes, this is an important strategy. It engages people from our community very well.

Staff members explained that Pacific people exist and live in two worlds: family and church. Thus engaging in these worlds of the student led to a stronger community engagement for the institution. MIT holds regular forums with churches in South Auckland. As many of the MIT staff were parishioners of the churches and members of the surrounding community, they facilitated the connections between the institution and the community. Forums with Pacific teachers in the early childhood centres, primary schools and secondary schools were held as well as forums with community leaders. These forums were also held twice a year. The external forums include:

- Pasifika Churches Forum
- Pasifika Teachers Forum
- Pasifika Community Organisation Forum.

Members of the forums are drawn from various Pacific cultures including academics, politicians, educators, community workers, church representatives and highly respected community leaders. This two-way process also ensures that the wider Pacific communities in Counties Manukau and MIT's Pacific staff are kept informed of ongoing developments at MIT and are able to participate in decision-making processes that help to shape the future of MIT (Manukau Institute of Technology, 2012).

in terms of its resources and overall strategic policy, mood was enhanced and staff felt that they could support students better. This manifested in the University of Otago's Strategic Direction to 2012, stating its obligation towards national good, particularly on the aspirations of the Pacific community. Otago is committed to strengthen the links with Pacific communities both within New Zealand and in the Pacific region. It will take steps to increase the recruitment, retention and achievement of Pacific students, and to support the development of higher education in the Pacific (University of Otago, 2011).

Strong and supportive leadership

Pacific and non-Pacific individuals (academic and non-academic) across the institutions were perceived as leaders when they truly valued and cared for their students. At MIT, the staff knew of each other's roles across the many departments. Working together meant that they were united in the cause to help Pacific students achieve in their studies. They knew of each other's skills and knowledge and

could send students to see a particular staff member if the student required advice or support. One staff member affirmed that MIT valued Pacific people, and that MIT had values that he instilled in his life. This was salient for him in his decision to work at the institution. Many of the staff members saw their roles as positive within the wider Pacific community and they could promote tertiary education to people around them. They always went out of their way for students and provided consistent encouragement, even in their 'busy' times. These leaders provided specific learning opportunities that were above and beyond the typical student experience. However, these leaders should be supported by the institution or provide a succession plan in case they leave the organisation and someone else takes over.

I love working here. This place reflects me, my Pacific values. I enjoy how the institution promotes success for Pacific people. It's community-oriented.



Significant Pacific role models

Positive role models of varying Pacific ethnicities in the institution increased students' motivation to succeed. For them to see academic role models around them was an indirect influence on their success and in some cases, this was not known to the role models themselves. However, role modelling is an important feature for students as they looked up to them and they saw that they could also achieve as well. One student remarked,

I don't know if my teacher knows he had an influence on me, but he did, and it is the best influence. He was my role model. One day I will tell him.” 🌿

MIT's expansion into the Pacific community was seen as a positive factor. But this was not solely about recruitment of students. It was a way of engaging effectively with the community and operating as more of a holistic organisation.

Yes, this is an important strategy. It engages people from our community very well.

Many of the staff members saw their roles as positive within the wider Pacific community and they could promote tertiary education to people around them. They always went out of their way for students and provided consistent encouragement, even in their 'busy' times.

On strong and supportive leadership:

Victoria University of Wellington and the leadership cluster

Victoria University developed a leadership cluster to provide support and development for emerging leaders. This group comprises of students and academic mentors who meet to:

- share personal stories, experiences, and challenges
- maintain a positive attitude towards challenges
- support one another
- partake in shared meals together.

Student descriptions of the leadership cluster:

A very encouraging environment and strong relationships with people that last for a lifetime. It helps make the everyday grind of work and study a lot more interesting and motivating.

The cluster became an 'enabling tool' as opposed to a 'making you do it tool'. The cluster enabled me to move towards finishing postgraduate studies because they focussed on my strengths and really grew me from that and ensured I applied those strengths. I was given responsibilities to teach, lecture and research. You know the times and learnings in the cluster were really priceless. I feel very privileged and honoured and also humbled that much of my academic learning was learnt while with cluster members and also being in the cluster.

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 www.akoatearoa.ac.nz/pasifika-learners-success



