



## *Research Report*

# Success for Pacific Learners: The Impact of Tertiary Education Strategies

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and Penny Fairbrother

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## Acronyms used in this document

EFTS:	Equivalent Full Time Student
IP:	Investment Plan
ITP:	Institute of Technology and Polytechnic
KPI:	Key Performance Indicator
MOE:	Ministry of Education
NZQA:	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
NCEA:	National Certificate of Educational Achievement
PEP:	Pasifika Education Plan
PTE:	Private Training Establishment
PBRF:	Performance-Based Research Fund
SSG:	Special Supplementary Grant
STEP:	Statement of Tertiary Education Priorities
TEC:	Tertiary Education Commission
TEI:	Tertiary Education Institution
TES:	Tertiary Education Strategy

## Executive Summary

Ako Aotearoa commissioned the Wellington Institute of Technology to investigate and assess the impact of successive Tertiary Education Strategies (TES) on success for Pasifika learners. The three Strategies (2002-2007; 2007-2012 and 2010-2015), together with associated Statement of Tertiary Education Priorities (STEP), set objectives for organisational change in tertiary institutions that would promote educational achievement by Pasifika students.

The study aimed to answer two key questions:

- How have government strategy documents influenced institutional strategies and organisational change within tertiary education institutions to support the participation and success of Pasifika learners?
- What are the perceptions of tertiary education institutions on how the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and other government agencies have incentivised and supported these organisational changes?

The research team analysed the Pasifika-related Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) found in the annual reports of 18 Tertiary Education Institutions (eight universities and 10 ITPs) between the years 2002 and 2010; and interviewed key informants from each participating tertiary education institution (TEI).

TEIs typically set performance targets for three broad domains of Pasifika-related performance: Pasifika student achievement (defined in terms of participation, retention and completions); Pasifika organisational capability (defined in terms of Pasifika staff recruitment and planning); and Pasifika community engagement. When TEIs set performance indicators, they tended to do so in relation to Pasifika student achievement, rather than organisational capability or community engagement.

The evidence from annual reports, supplemented with related data from the key informant interviews, is consistent with the view that successive TES have influenced the performance management activities reported by TEIs within their annual reports. However, this influence is only one of a number of internal and external, and local and national influences. Nor is it an influence that is consistent across all TEIs, all of the time. A significant proportion of TEIs do not include Pasifika KPIs that relate to government strategy within their annual reports.

Although it was anticipated that this study would provide details of the performance outcomes of participating institutions, it has not been possible to do so. The review of annual reports suggested there were significant differences between institutions in reported performance outcomes for Pasifika learners. However, wide variation was found in the approaches TEIs take to defining performance indicators, and calculating data reported in annual reports. These differences are evident both between TEIs and within TEIs over time. This study has therefore not been able to produce a valid and reliable account of actual performance outcomes. Until TEIs adopt a more consistent approach to defining and reporting educational performance indicators in their annual reports – using the approach recommended by TEC (2011a, 2011b) for example—comparing institutional outcomes will be problematic. It would aid future analysis if all TEIs adopted the TEC definitions for defining and reporting KPIs in annual reports.

The Pasifika objectives within each of the three TES have been broadly welcomed by TEI staff responsible for Pasifika achievement. They are considered to be an important signal to TEIs that success for Pasifika learners is a significant and continuing government priority. The inclusion of Pasifika objectives are also seen as an important enabler of change. These objectives have raised the

priority for action to support Pasifika learners, unlocked resources for Pasifika initiatives and promoted the inclusion of Pasifika priorities on the strategic agendas of TEIs.

Although the three TES were considered to have considerable elements of continuity in their objectives for Pasifika, most TEI informants considered that the changes to funding arrangements associated with the third TES might have unintended consequences for Pasifika learners. Concerns were expressed about:

- the limitation placed on the length of time in which a degree can be completed
- funding based upon completion rates
- the emphasis on funding towards higher-level qualifications
- limitations on student loans for older students
- less availability for foundation courses and programmes for students transitioning from one level to another.

Some informants were of the view, for example, that the emphasis on completion rates might encourage TEIs to exclude Pasifika students from some courses in order to improve their overall results. Others were very concerned that the funding shift towards achievement at higher levels might limit the opportunities for Pasifika at levels 1 -3 and devalue learning for trades-related courses.

Informants considered that government statements of commitment to Pasifika priorities in the form of the TES were necessary but not sufficient. The influence of key individuals and groups – within and outside of the TEI – acted as facilitators or constraints on action. Many informants highlighted the role of Pasifika staff, Pasifika students and other Pasifika stakeholders (including Pasifika community groups and organisations) as vital in moving agendas forward. These moves were best conceived as initiatives by Pasifika for Pasifika.

Most informants were also of the view that change requires a whole of institution commitment. To avoid the risk of institutional planning for Pasifika people becoming a “tick box” exercise, clear objectives need to be established and people allocated the authority and accountability to progress these objectives. Having Pasifika people appointed to senior management positions with a responsibility for Pasifika priorities will assist.

In some TEIs Pasifika people are becoming increasingly “visible” and establishing a strong sense of presence. Pasifika “visibility” is associated with a number of interrelated factors: the numbers of Pasifika students and staff; a Pasifika staff presence in senior management; physical spaces and places where Pasifika culture and language are recognised, validated and celebrated; Pasifika courses and Pasifika content in mainstream courses; staff awareness of Pasifika cultural practices; Pasifika cultural events and art exhibitions; and active engagement and involvement with the local Pasifika community.

However, informants recognised that this sense of presence or visibility is harder to achieve in TEIs with lower numbers of Pasifika students. To ensure that TEIs with lower numbers of Pasifika students are able to sustain a commitment to Pasifika educational priorities the TEC needs to issue support and guidance.

Future work on the policy process for Pasifika students may benefit from current thinking on complexity theory in public policy. Case study approaches that engage directly with local TEIs, and approaches that facilitate organisational learning using strategies such as the equity scorecard may also prove beneficial.

## Introduction

This study was commissioned by Ako Aotearoa to understand how successive government strategies published between 2002 and 2010 have influenced strategic thinking to support the participation and success of Pasifika students within universities, ITPs and wānanga. The primary focus was therefore on the impact of the three TES (Associate Minister for Education, 2002; Minister for Tertiary Education, 2007; Minister for Tertiary Education, 2010) and the objectives they included to support the educational engagement and success of Pasifika learners.

The study sought to evaluate the impact of these government strategies on both institutional strategies and organisational change within tertiary institutions to support Pasifika success. It also considered the perceptions of key stakeholders within TEIs on how the TEC and other government agencies have incentivised and supported these organisational changes. The study therefore had two key evaluation questions:

- How have government strategy documents influenced institutional strategies and organisational change within tertiary education institutions to support the participation and success of Pasifika learners?
- What are the perceptions of tertiary education institutions on how the TEC and other government agencies have incentivised and supported these organisational changes?

The research brief determined that data collection would consist primarily of documentary analysis and a series of interviews with key informants in the participating institutions. There were therefore two aspects to the data collection and analysis.

- A comprehensive desk review of charters, investment plans, annual reports and related documents across the TEIs, identifying how institutions had responded at an organisational level.
- A series of informant interviews with senior staff responsible for Pasifika learners about how institutional responses have changed over time.

The following section presents a review of the three TES and their objectives for Pasifika learners, before going on to describe the research methodology and findings.



# A Review of the Three Tertiary Education Strategies

## The first Tertiary Education Strategy 2002-2007

The development of formal tertiary education strategies was the result of a government perception that New Zealand lacked a clear and shared strategic direction for tertiary education. Such a direction was seen as necessary to achieve national development goals and to link educational policies to the then Labour Government's vision for social and economic development.

The first of these strategies, *Tertiary Education Strategy 2002-2007*, was released in May 2002 (Associate Minister of Education (Tertiary Education), 2002). In line with the Government's wish that key elements should be identified that needed to change in order to advance New Zealand's development, the *Strategy* was accompanied by a formal *Statement of Educational Priorities (STEP)* (Ministry of Education, 2003).

The implementation of these priorities was overseen by the TEC, which had the function of negotiating charters with TEIs, negotiating profiles of TEIs for the purpose of funding, allocating funds and building the capacity of the TEIs (Ministry of Education, 2006). This new approach to managing New Zealand's tertiary education system for the achievement of national goals is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

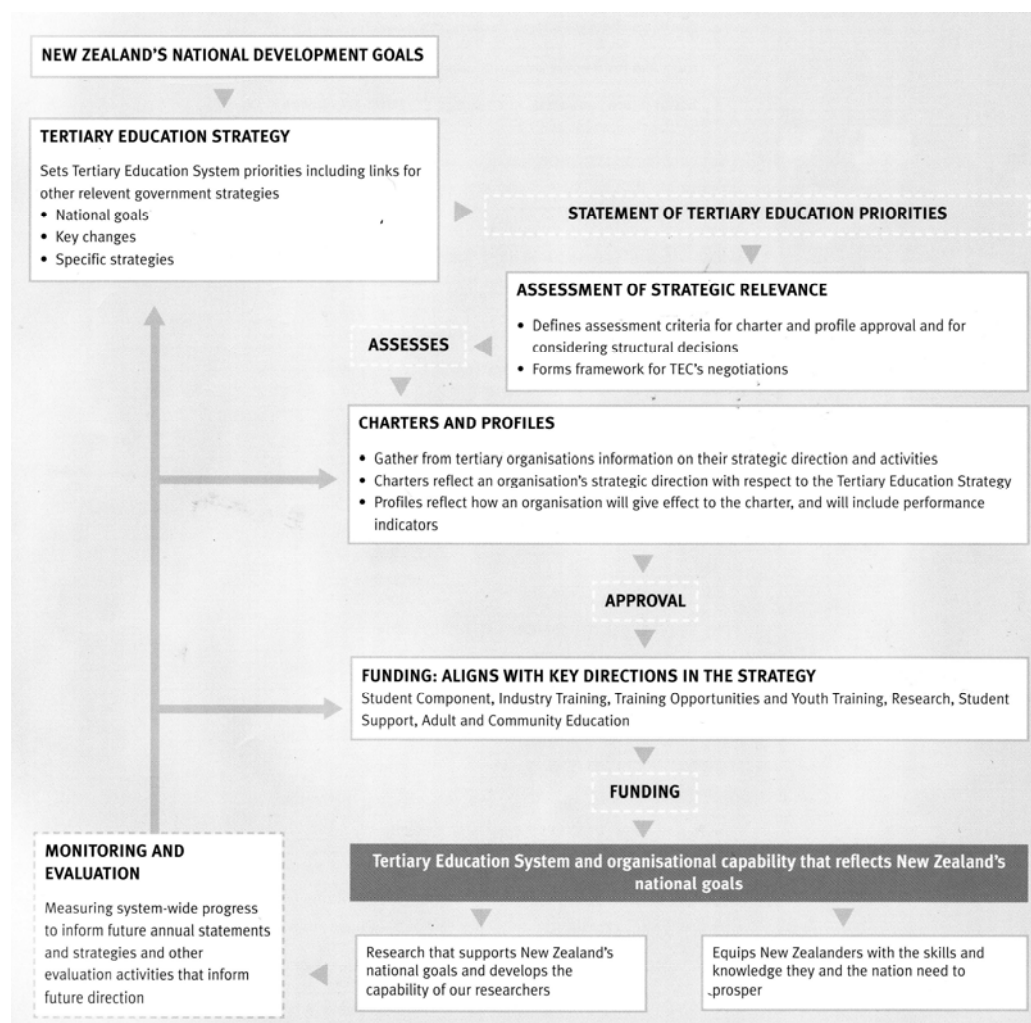


Figure 1: The new tertiary education system (Ministry of Education, 2002)

Strategies were set for six key areas in which performance needed to be lifted. The importance of developing capability needs and skill development for Pasifika was given prominence by the fact that it was one of these key areas: *Strategy Five – Educate for Pacific People’s Development and Success*.

There were four objectives designed to further this strategy:

- Objective 25: Pacific learners are encouraged and assisted to develop skills that are important to the development of both the Pacific and New Zealand.
- Objective 26: A tertiary education system that is accountable for Pacific learning outcomes and connected to Pacific economic aspirations.
- Objective 27: Pacific for Pacific education services are assisted to grow their capability and enhance Pacific peoples’ learning opportunities.
- Objective 28: An increased proportion of Pacific staff at all levels of decision making in the tertiary education system.

Though these objectives relate to Pasifika peoples in particular, any assessment of the impact of the first TES also needs to recognise the relevance for Pasifika learners of other elements of the strategy. These included, for example, calls for a lift in foundation skills and a strengthening of system capability and quality. The four Pasifika objectives in the first TES remain important statements of policy about education for Pasifika peoples, though subsequent TES have changed the focus, with less emphasis on objectives 27 and 28.

### Complexity, politics, information and personalities

Published documents provide finality in terms of the formal statement of government policy, but the development of the successive versions of the TES demonstrates that this was not a linear process of consultation followed by policy setting. Individuals could also be very important players in the process. An illustration of this comes from Shepherd (2006). He reported that a Senior Policy Advisor at the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs had to lobby to get the Ministry to push for a Pasifika-specific reference in the first TES. This component was initially absent, though it did appear in the draft TES formally circulated for comment. There was eventually a nationwide process of consultation with Pasifika people but there was a feeling among some of Shepherd’s Pasifika interviewees that Pasifika people should have been involved at a much earlier stage.

There was, in fact, an intense consultation process at the time the first TES was formulated, but this was with a small advisory group of Pasifika educators. The disquiet about consultation seems to have referred more to the later, wider consultation on the draft document. In terms of Pasifika educational policy in general, Pasifika communities and educators had been involved from the 1990s in a series of *talanoa ako*, or face-to-face meetings, about improving Pasifika educational participation and achievement. These meetings were supplemented by the work of the Ministry of Education’s Pacific Advisory Group, which reviewed six papers prepared by the Ministry of Education that provided the basis for the first *Pasifika Education Plan*. The release of this plan in 2001 was acknowledged by the Labour Government at the time to be only part of the picture, as it was clear that social and economic policies were also contributors to these educational goals (Tongati’o, 2010).

The development of recent government policy for the tertiary sector in New Zealand has been examined within the context of complexity theory (Eppel, 2009a, 2009b). Her interviews with informants in the sector reinforced the notion of interdependence—that various parts of the system interact in complex ways, while institutions themselves can have characteristics that make them like

agents. Policy formers are not just agents in a rational process of change. It is revealing that many of the approaches that attempt to describe the process of policy formation and implementation frame these processes in terms of broad metaphors such as streams, feedback loops and games. Perhaps the most problematic aspect is the sheer amount of information available throughout the policy process (Eppel, 2009b). In this study this is a significant factor, as one aim was to explore informants' perceptions about what they saw as the links between Pasifika policy and what actually happened. Even to ask this question was to assume that these informants were aware of specific policy objectives and were either responding or not responding to them.

Another element of complexity in the analysis of responses to the various versions of the TES relates to the level of courses offered by the various TEIs. This makes comparisons across the sector challenging, as polytechnics, for instance, offer many courses at levels 2–4 on the qualifications framework, while universities are focussed on qualifications at level 5 or above.

## **Pasifika initiatives before the first TES**

Even before the first TES there was a significant measure of government commitment to Pasifika objectives in the form of Special Supplementary Grants (SSGs). First introduced in 2000, these were used in many TEIs to employ Pasifika support staff, provide facilities for Pasifika students, and to offer scholarships and mentoring programmes. They were also used for research purposes such as the development in one TEI of a participation and retention database for Māori and Pasifika students (Ministry of Education, 2003a). The size of each SSG was based simply upon the number of Pasifika in a particular TEI. Examples of other Pasifika initiatives already in place before the first TES are Unitec's Pacific Student Centre and faculty-based mentoring programmes at Victoria University.

An indication of the complexity involved in blending existing funding and policy initiatives into the first TES was the status of the SSGs. These were more or less overlooked in the first round of TES funding. This was despite attempts by officials to build the processes for these grants into the profiles of the TEIs. As a result, they continued as before because no one had worked out quite how to handle them (Eppel, 2009a). A review of the SSGs by the Ministry of Education in 2003 also noted that TEIs had to work out the role of the SSGs at the time of tertiary education reforms, without a clear direction from the government about what this should be (Ministry of Education, 2003a). Some of the goals of the first TES were also being advanced under the Ministry of Education's first *Pasifika Education Plan* (PEP), released in 2001. This had set some specific targets, such as expectations during the following five years about the number of Pasifika students in TEIs and the number graduating at diploma level and above, with 6.2 percent of all students in these categories being Pasifika by 2006. It was anticipated that these goals would be met during the period of the first TES (Associate Minister of Education (Tertiary Education), 2002).

## **A multiplicity of plans, strategies, policy setters and monitoring bodies**

The PEP encompassed all educational levels, not just the tertiary sector. Successive PEPs issued by the Ministry of Education have continued to set more specific targets for Pasifika participation and achievement. The Ministry also has the role of monitoring sector performance as a whole and progress towards achievement of the TES.

Determining the direction of government policy in this area is made more complex by the existence of multiple policy setters. Among them has been the TEC itself, which issued a detailed *Pasifika Peoples Strategy 2004 to 2006* (TEC, 2004). The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) also sets goals for Pasifika achievement for courses in the tertiary sector, with a focus on ensuring that

meaningful and career-appropriate qualifications are available for Pasifika learners. It has a quality assurance role in TEIs' self-assessment procedures, while it also maintains wider links with government through a collaborative relationship with the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (NZQA, 2009). The TEC monitors individual TEI performance in relation to the TES and, since the second TES, their performance against the Investment Plans (IPs) agreed with the TEC. Monitoring and reporting requirements differ between TEIs (TEC, 2010). Given this variety of direction-setting and evaluation, there can be no simple assessment of how well TEIs have responded to government strategy.

## Responses to the first TES

The breadth of direction in the various versions of the TES can be seen as both a strength and a weakness. It raises questions about how much TEIs have felt bound by them, have seen them as giving useful direction, have merely retrofitted their policies on paper to conform with them or have found them handy as authority for desired changes in their own strategies. An analysis by the Ministry of Education (2006) reported that the awareness of the first TES in the TEIs also depended on the staff level – senior managers and those involved with planning appeared to be more aware of it than other staff.

The first Statement of Educational Priorities (STEP) that accompanied the TES did little to sharpen this direction in the case of Pasifika policy. Apart from reference to funding from SSGs and funding for NZQA for quality assurance, the STEP was very vague, with mention of “capacity-building”, “improved learning outcomes”, “consultation”, “access to information” and so forth (Ministry of Education, 2003).

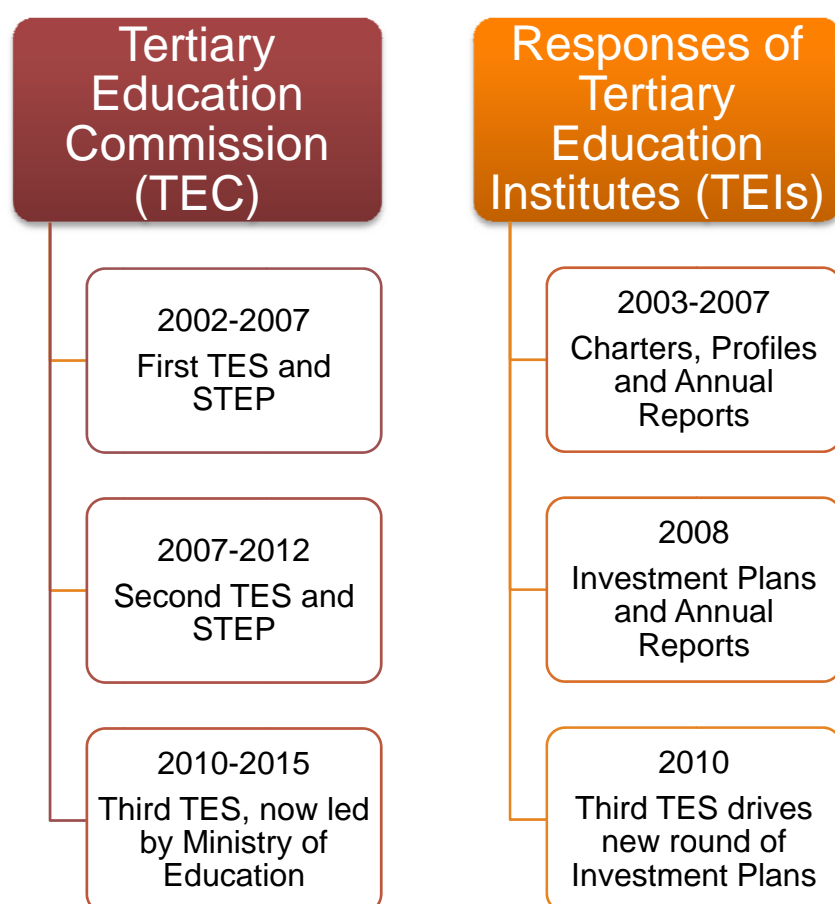


Figure 2: Tertiary Education Strategies and the responses required from TEIs

## **The first TES as a vital recognition of Pasifika needs**

An evaluation of the first TES by Shepherd (2006) found that staff and key stakeholders of tertiary institutions were mixed in their response to the breadth of the policy direction provided by the TES. While some of Shepherd's interviewees found the TES useful in that it encouraged institutions to respond to community needs, it was also seen as supporting initiatives that were already under way, rather than creating new directions. Further, there was a tendency for organisations to retrofit their documentation in response to the TES, rather than having actual decision making driven by the strategy.

The response from Pasifika interviewees was more affirmative, in that the strategy was seen as not just an educational document, but a "vital social and economic mechanism" (p. 31). It was, according to this view, a statement that Pasifika needs were recognised at the top level of government. TEIs were responding by using the TES to develop their organisational profiles and charters and this was building capacity. Shepherd also noted that one of the objectives was underway within a number of institutions, in the form of Pasifika senior management appointments.

## **Limitations for Pasifika**

In the light of the high hopes raised by the TES, there were also a number of disappointments. Though most interviewees in Shepherd's study regarded the STEP as a key driver of change, particularly through profiles and funding, the Pasifika interviewees saw a lack of connection between strategic intent and what the strategy might actually mean for TEIs and Pasifika communities.

Among their concerns was the disregard by the TEC of the views of its own Senior Pacific Advisors, limited communication of the strategy to Pasifika communities and a sense that funding – rather than consultation about community needs – was driving enrolments. Interviewees suggested that the next TES needed to continue to emphasise foundation skills to create a love of learning. Because Shepherd's work explored initial perceptions of how the TES had led to institutional change, it provides valuable comparison points with the results from the informant interviews in the current project.

## **Other research on the impact of the first TES**

Shepherd's findings were complemented by a more quantitative analysis by Earle (2006), who looked at the extent to which the TES appeared to have prompted changes in institutional objectives, as seen in their profiles. He found that by the time the 2006/08 profiles were produced, just under 60 percent of TEIs had change-focussed objectives, which could be related to this strategy. The relatively neglected areas of focus were Pasifika for Pasifika education services and increased levels of employment of Pasifika staff in decision-making positions. The institutions that had the most strategy-related objectives were those larger TEIs that also had large numbers of Pasifika students, but such objectives were not simply related to the proportion of Pasifika students at the TEI or the size of the institution itself.

Earle noted that for Pasifika there was an emphasis on monitoring and support, rather than changes to the teaching environment that might lead to Pasifika achievement. This may have reflected the impact of the SSGs available in this period, which were often used to set up Pasifika support services. In fact, funding appeared to drive some of the changes between the 2005/07 and 2006/08 profiles, particularly the refocussing of SSGs for Māori and Pasifika on higher-level qualifications and retention and completion.

## Pasifika student achievement during the period of the first TES

By the time the second TES was released in 2007, there had been some improvements in Pasifika student performance, particularly in terms of participation rates in tertiary study and the proportion of Pasifika enrolled or participating in postgraduate research. Participation in bachelor's degree studies or above increased by 21 percent between 2001 and 2006, the fastest of any ethnic group. However, the overall Pasifika participation rate, at 3.4 percent remained lower than that for Māori (3.6 percent) and European/Pakeha (4.7 percent) (Ministry of Education, 2007).

These changes, though encouraging, suggested that the goal of the 2001 PEP to close the gap between non-Pasifika and Pasifika student achievement within 20 years was an unrealistic one (Ministry of Education, 2002), so long as retention and completion rates for Pasifika students showed little advance. Some representative figures for Pasifika over the 2002-2007 period were:

- tertiary participation rates were 16.8 percent in 2002 and by 2007 were 21.2 percent
- first-year retention rates were 70.9 percent in 2002 and by 2007 were 72.2 percent
- five-year completion rates were 38.2 percent in 2002 and by 2005 were 38.4 percent
- postgraduate participation rates were 0.44 percent in 2002 and by 2007 were 0.57 percent (Ministry of Education, 2011).

## The second Tertiary Education Strategy 2007-12

The relevance of the second TES for Pasifika was twofold; it reinforced the importance of community links between TEIs and the communities they served, and, in line with the broad thrust of this TES, called for an emphasis on participation and retention in tertiary education and “achievement and progression in tertiary education at all levels, particularly at degree level and above” (Minister for Tertiary Education, 2007).

In an extension of the Pasifika strategy in the first TES, an emphasis was also to be placed on the contribution to success of lifelong learning and achievement. This, rather than participation alone, was now the goal. Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs) were also expected to focus on progressions from entry level to higher learning. As in the case of the first TES, the development of the second TES also took into account the linkages with the *Pasifika Education Plan* and the specific targets of the latter (Minister for Tertiary Education, 2006).

A number of specific priority outcomes had relevance for Pasifika students:

- a focus on more young New Zealanders achieving qualifications at level 4 or above by age 25. For Pasifika, this required that the necessary support structures be there and that TEIs work with schools and career services to ensure that Pasifika students were supported to make informed study choices
- a focus on increasing literacy and numeracy levels for the workforce. Assessment would look to evidence of increased numeracy and literacy for Pasifika students. Mention was made of the numbers of Pasifika peoples with English as a second language and how this impacted on literacy skills
- a focus on increasing the achievement of advanced trade, technical and professional qualifications to meet regional and national industry needs. It was noted that Pasifika students were concentrated in some areas, such as education, rather than others, such as health and engineering. The emphasis was put on ensuring that Pasifika people could move into a range of careers.



An example of a target to improve completion rates among Pasifika students studying courses at levels 4 or above was noted in the *Pasifika Education Plan: Monitoring Report 2008*. It was proposed that 43 percent of all Pasifika students starting a qualification in 2008 would complete this by 2012 (Ministry of Education, 2008).

## **Funding and institutional requirements in the second TES**

The second TES also incorporated the STEP and saw a change to investment-based funding. Funding in future would be based on Investment Plans (IPs) negotiated with individual institutions. These were three-year plans that outlined how institutional objectives would fulfil the priorities of the second TEC and STEP. This was an attempt to create longer-term funding perspectives and decisions. There was also a recognition that TEIs differed in character – that they provided “distinctive contributions”, which reflected the communities they served. Funding would reflect this differentiation while monitoring would assess the degree to which institutions followed government priorities and satisfied the long-term needs of stakeholders.

The practical impact for Pasifika programmes was felt most directly in the phasing out of SSGs, which were replaced in January 2008 by funding provided for equity initiatives supporting Māori, Pasifika and disabled students. The response of TEIs to this change can be seen as a key indicator of their commitment to their Pasifika students, now that this dedicated funding had been removed and rolled into equity funding. Shepherd (2006) had already noted that Pasifika interviewees questioned about the impact of the first TES were nervous that cutting SSGs might lead institutions to drop programmes started with these grants.

## **Student achievement during the period of the second TES**

The priorities for achievement during this period were increasing participation, retention and completions, and moving more Pasifika students into higher levels of qualification and further education. The time under review, 2008-2009, was too short to demonstrate any strong responses to the strategy, except for Pasifika participation. For example, the mid-term review of the PEP noted that a number of initiatives to improve performance were under way, while the proportion of Pasifika students under the age of 25 studying qualifications at level 4 and above increased from 69 percent in 2008 to 70 percent in 2009. By contrast, the comparable figures for all domestic students were 82 percent in 2008 and 83 percent in 2009 (Ministry of Education 2011b). Seen over a longer period, however, a clear trend could be seen for greater participation within this age group studying at level four and above, with an increase of 41.7 percent between 2002 and 2009 (Ministry of Education, 2011a).

In terms of overall participation in tertiary education, the increase in enrolments in 2009 for Pasifika students (men 14 percent, women 12 percent) was higher than for any other domestic group (Statistics New Zealand, 2011).

## **The third Tertiary Education Strategy 2010-2015**

The impact of this strategy falls largely outside the scope of this study, as it only came into effect in 2011 (Minister of Education, 2010). Its implications and responses to them were, however, discussed by some of the informants in the interviews.

The broad thrust of the third TES is very much towards actions that will enhance the country’s economic well-being. In terms of Pasifika achievement it requires tertiary education providers to “focus on how they can assist Pasifika students to progress to and achieve at higher levels of study”

(p. 12). There is also an emphasis on pathways into tertiary education and the development of literacy and numeracy skills. Progress towards the government's goals will be expected to be seen in the monitoring of data such as first-year retention rates and more Pasifika students achieving at higher levels.

Apart from those components that relate specifically to Pasifika, the implementation of the third TES is likely to impact on Pasifika students in a number of ways. Informants in the interviews in this study commented, in particular, on the linking of funding to completion rates for courses and the withdrawal of funding for students over 55. The emphasis on achievement at higher levels has already had the practical effect of reducing funding for courses preparing students for tertiary study. All these initiatives may impact on success for Pasifika students.

Two specific initiatives in 2010 that can be regarded as supporting the TES are the Youth Guarantee Scheme and the Trades Academies. The former has provided limited relief in terms of funding for younger students of 16 or 17. Institutions can apply for this funding through their IPs. The aims are to provide vocational training to targeted youth free of charge and improve the transitions from school to tertiary study. This funding is available to ITPs, wānanga and some Private Training Establishments (Ministry of Education, 2009b). The mid-term review of the PEP recommended that the number of places available to Pasifika learners under this plan be increased (Ministry of Education, 2011b).

The other initiative has been designed to keep students in education during the final years at school and prepare them for opportunities in trades. This is the introduction of Trades Academies in 2010, which require partnerships between schools, tertiary providers, employers and industry organisations. Students in years 11 to 13 can combine trades training with progress towards National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) at levels 1, 2 or 3. Eight such academies were operating in 2011, with more to follow in 2012 and 2013 (Ministry of Education, 2011c).

## Summary

The objectives of the successive versions of the TES have remained much the same, with the second and third versions providing refinements on the first TES. The main shift has been in emphasis – from participation, to retention and completion.

- Even the ancillary objectives around areas such as numeracy and literacy in the second TES, which might be expected to support the wider goals for Pasifika achievement, were prefigured in strategy three of the first TES – to raise foundation skills.
- One aspect that has changed is the greater emphasis on accountability, particularly in the setting of performance targets by the TEIs in their investment plans and the monitoring of performance by the TEC.
- Initiatives such as the Youth Guarantee Scheme and the Trades Academies provide recognition of the importance of the transition from school to tertiary study for Pasifika students.
- Some areas of Pasifika achievement over the period have shown substantial increases, particularly in terms of participation, engagement in postgraduate study and research. Other areas, such as five-year completion rates, have shown little change (Ministry of Education, 2011b).
- Except for participation in tertiary study, the gaps between Pasifika and non-Pasifika student achievement during the years 2002-2009 have remained substantial.



# Methodology

## Pasifika research

The goals of research into Pasifika education are very much around findings that will make a difference and using a research approach that is built on relationships – between researchers, policymakers, those who implement policy and those for whom the policy is designed, whether the students themselves or the Pasifika community. The concept of *Teu le va*<sup>1</sup> has been developed as a philosophical and methodological framework for encompassing such relationships between stakeholders and for empowering Pasifika researchers themselves. Elements of the current project that reflected these goals were:

- The project was initiated by the two Pasifika members of the research team who had expertise in Pasifika research methodology and policy formation on Pasifika matters. One researcher was also working on his own doctoral thesis on educational development for Pasifika students in the tertiary system, using a talanoa methodology (Violeti, 2006). The other Pasifika researcher had extensive experience in policy formation in government organisations, both in education and in wider strategies for supporting Pasifika.
- The project was supported by WelTec’s Pacific Advisory Group, with representation from Tongan, Cook Island, Samoan and Tokelauan members. This group met with the research team throughout the study and had access to all project material. The group also reviewed the draft of the final report (refer Appendix 2: Contributions of the Pacific Advisory Group).
- Relationships with the informants in the TEIs were managed throughout by one of the Pasifika researchers. The interviews, with one exception, were carried out by the Pasifika members of the research team, who also contributed to the final report. Both the Pasifika researchers and the Pacific Advisory Group were involved in the process of determining areas for questioning in the interviews.
- The qualitative analysis of the interviews was reviewed by the Pasifika researchers, both at the stage of developing thematic categories for the data and at the final stage of interpretation. A “give-way” rule was applied to interpretation, in which it was agreed that any differing views would be determined in favour of the Pasifika researchers<sup>2</sup>.

A draft of the report was reviewed from a Pasifika student’s perspective by Eddie Tuiavii, National Pacific Island Coordinator, New Zealand University Students Association. His comments identified potential areas of importance that may have only been touched on in the present report, as well as providing material about what might be useful for Pasifika students in terms of such things as preparation for tertiary study. His review also added significant items to the suggestions made in the report about the potential directions for future research from a student viewpoint.

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<sup>1</sup>*Teu le va* is relational in essence, with the emphasis on the concept of *vā* – defined in this context as sociospatial connection (Airini, Anae, Mila-Schaf, Coxon, Maraa & Sanga 2010, p.11). The central dimension of relationship also has implications for the research process, which is not just a matter of finding out, but should build links between the many agents that contribute to progress for Pasifika learners.

<sup>2</sup> The model for the use of this rule was the project *Success for all: Improving Māori and Pasifika student success in degree-level studies* (Airini, Brown, Curtis, Johnson, Luatua, O’Shea, Rakena, Reynolds, Sauni, Smith, Huirua, Tarawa, Townsend, Savage & Ulugia-Pua, 2010).

## Participants in the research study

All TEIs in New Zealand were invited to take part. A total of 18 institutions agreed to participate, which included all eight universities and half of the country's 20 ITPs. Although 10 ITPs and the three wānanga did not take part, the institutions that were involved were collectively responsible for 78 percent of the Pasifika students enrolled in public tertiary education in 2010.

Table 1: Proportion of Pasifika learners in TEIs in 2010 (TEC, 2011a)

	N	EFTS	% Pasifika students	% range Pasifika students	Median % Pasifika students
Universities	8	120,951	6.0%	1-14%	5.0%
Participating ITPs	10	43,377	10.3%	2-31%	7.0%
Non-participating	10	24,971	2.7%	1-8%	3.5%

Among the ITPs that took part, the Pasifika proportion of the roll ranged from 2–31 percent in 2010, with a median of 7 percent. At the universities 6 percent of the students were Pasifika, with a range between universities of 1–14 percent and a median of 5 percent (TEC, 2011a).

## Data collection

To assess how TEIs responded at an organisational level to the government's TES the study included a review of documents produced by the TEIs. An email was sent to all 18 of the participating institutions requesting relevant documents covering the time period from 2002–2010. This resulted in a number of different document types being sent to the research team including charters, profiles, investment plans, strategic plans, annual reports and a number of other documents specific to planning for Pasifika learners such as strategies for Pasifika learners and various initiatives offering mentoring or support to Pasifika learners.

Table 2: How the data sources informed the research questions

Evaluation Questions	DATA SOURCES			
	Government Documents	TEI Documents	Data Sets	Interviews
Influence of TES on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TEI Strategy</li> <li>Organisational change</li> </ul>	Describe TES goals, targets, actions and reports on these	Describe planned initiatives and responses to TES	Describe outcomes for Pasifika learners	Perceptions of government plans, incentives, supports and impacts of these, with examples
TEI perceptions of government support and incentives for TEI organisational change	Previous research commissioned by government			Perceptions of strengths and limitations of government support for organisational change

A few participants sent a complete record of the relevant documentation between 2002 and 2010, but most did not. The research team was able to identify public versions of some documents on the internet; others were located in the National Library. However, a complete record of all key documents for every participating TEI was not able to be obtained for the period of the study. In particular, some key profiles and investment plans were missing.

## Rationale for focussing on annual reports

To be able to assess changes over time it is important to use data that are comparable between institutions and that can be relied on to be reasonably consistent over the time period of the study. Earlier studies by Earle (2006, 2008) examined changes in the priorities of New Zealand universities since the first TES. Earle's first study (Earle, 2006) used annual university profiles as the main data source. However, by the time of Earle's second study (Earle, 2008) the tertiary education reforms had replaced annual profiles with three-year investment plans. His solution for the second study was to use the annual reports of universities as the key data source and to focus on an analysis of the strategic objectives contained in statements of service performance.

All TEIs are required by statute to produce an annual report that is audited by Audit New Zealand and tabled in parliament. These annual reports include:

- a financial statement (including an audit report)
- a statement of responsibility signed by the chairperson of the council
- a statement of service performance
- information on actions in relation to equal educational opportunities and equal employment opportunities.

Annual reports are key public accountability documents for reporting financial and non-financial aspects of an institution's performance. In a study of New Zealand university annual reports Dixon and Coy (2007) found that university council members considered the annual report to be a useful source of information, that they expected annual reports to include information about effectiveness and educational performance as well as financial information, and that they sought information allowing them to make comparisons between institutions. The objectives and performance indicators found in statements of service performance highlight the key priority performance areas that an institution wishes to disclose.

In the reports covering the timescale of this study the annual reports were found to frequently cross-reference to the TEIs strategic goals and to charters, profiles and investment plans. Earle (2008) points out that annual reports report on what has been achieved rather than what is planned to be achieved; and Alves, Dunmore and Dunstan (2005) argue that because the actual content and presentation of statements of service performance in annual reports are relatively lightly regulated, they offer a context in which to assess corporate level management disclosure decisions.

From the perspective of this study, the inclusion in an annual report of a specific Pasifika performance indicator was considered to be indicative of an explicit intention on the part of a TEI to manage its performance in relation to Pasifika learners, and to suggest a corporate level commitment to particular types of organisational change (for example, in relation to Pasifika participation, retention or success).

It should be noted however, that there are limitations to this approach. Firstly, the fact that an institution does not include a specific Pasifika performance indicator within an annual report does not mean that it had no performance indicator. Only that – for whatever reason – it decided not to

use the annual report to report on its performance in this domain. Secondly, even where an institution has not developed a specific Pasifika performance indicator, this does not entail that there were no plans or initiatives inside the organisation to support Pasifika learners. As well as reporting on service performance objectives, annual reports always include highlights from other aspects of academic activity during the year under review. Many reports highlighted specific Pasifika student, staff and community activity even when there were no objectives included in statements of service performance. However, these initiatives were usually reported in a narrative style and – although clearly important to the institution and their Pasifika participants – they were not reported in a way that enabled reliable analysis or comparisons between institutions or over time.

## Annual report analysis

Annual reports of all eighteen participating TEIs for the years 2002–2010 were analysed for this study (a total of 162 annual reports). A similar approach to that adopted by Earle (2008) was used but with several key differences. The study of New Zealand university objectives by Earle (2008) focussed on the objectives set out in the statements of service performance and coded and analysed these objectives according to broad domains of activity (for example, objectives related to students, stakeholders or organisational capability), and in terms of cross-cutting areas of focus (for example, Māori, Pasifika and internationalisation). Earle's study focussed on objectives within statements of service performance, and only coded an objective as Pasifika-related if there was "specific and explicit mention in the wording of the objective" (p. 14). Earle's (2008) analysis also excluded performance information since "each university reports this information in its own way, making assessment and comparison of performance problematic" (p. 14).

Whilst this approach makes sense in the context of a study analysing broad themes of annual reports, it is overly restrictive in a study that attempts to identify responses to specific attempts by an institution to manage its performance in relation to success for Pasifika learners. In particular a TEI might, and many do, include a specific Pasifika performance indicator (for example, to increase the proportion of Pasifika EFTS) in relation to a broader strategic objective such as to increase educational opportunities for under-represented groups. Therefore, the unit of analysis in this study was not the strategic objective, but the inclusion of an explicit Pasifika performance indicator. An initial review of annual reports also found that some important Pasifika-related performance indicators were included not in the statements of service performance but in a section of the annual report on equity, equal educational opportunities or equal employment opportunities. Where a performance indicator in any part of an annual report was explicitly related to Pasifika staff, students or the Pasifika community, and it set a target, then this was also included in the study.

Since the study intended to focus primarily on strategic level performance indicators a robust definition of a performance indicator was required and the following definition by Alves, Dunmore and Dunstan (2005) was adopted:

*To qualify as a performance indicator, the item must be potentially measurable over multiple years, and must actually report either a series of past information as a comparison, or set a clear and specific target. That is, the item must provide some context for it to be a useful and informative indicator. For example, an SSP might report that 96 PhDs were completed. However, without either a target or past results to compare it with, the reader has no idea whether 96 is poor, good, or average performance (p. 11).*

As Earle (2008) noted, the way in which performance is reported in the annual reports of TEIs – and the way in which indicators of performance are defined – makes comparison between institutions

and even within the same institution over time, highly problematic. This study does not, therefore, include an analysis of the reported outcomes of performance or achievement. However, the fact that a TEI has defined a performance indicator (for example, rates of participation, retention or completion) for Pasifika learners and has set a target for that performance, is considered to be indicative of an intention to manage performance for Pasifika success. We also excluded those performance indicators where targets were only expressed in terms of increasing numbers (for example, numbers of Pasifika students or Pasifika staff) rather than rates (for example, Pasifika students will form at least three percent of all student EFTS) on the grounds that the former was a much softer and less strategic approach to performance management.

The TEC has been doing considerable work with TEIs to offer consistent definitions for use as educational performance indicators (TEC, 2011) and several of the more recent annual reports make reference to the TEC definitions. Although the TEC terms are described below, for the purposes of this study the terms used by the TEIs are taken at face value. So, if an annual report describes a performance indicator as rates of Pasifika completions, this has been included as evidence of an intention to manage Pasifika completions without attempting to further define the KPI. This means that in relation to the sub-domains below it is likely that there are several types of performance indicators that may be defined inconsistently between institutions, or within institutions over time.

## Key informant interviews

The TEIs that participated were invited to nominate staff who could be interviewed for the study. The informants in these TEIs were to include a senior manager who was aware of how their institution had responded to government strategies for supporting the participation and success of Pasifika learners. Other staff with responsibility for Pasifika learners were also welcomed to take part in the interview. They were invited to do so on the understanding that any reported comments would not identify either individuals or the institution in which they worked.

A total of 34 informants took part in the interviews. Of these 14 were Pasifika, 17 European, two Māori and one Māori/ Pasifika, 19 were female and 15 male. Some of the informants had been in their roles for as long as ten years, while others were occupying newly-created roles. They held a large range of official positions, with functions that were established by their particular institution. Many of the more senior informants were responsible for the development of policies for Pasifika, and included a CEO and Deputy CEO, while other informants held positions with responsibility for Pasifika centres, research, strategy and development. The diversity of positions occupied by these informants also contributed to the results of the study, as this could sometimes be an indicator of the varying degree of attention paid to Pasifika issues at their particular TEI, and the stage of development their institution had reached.

Face-to-face interviews were carried out with the seven participating TEIs that had the largest proportion of Pasifika students enrolled in 2009. All of these TEIs had eight percent or more Pasifika students. Two further face-to-face interviews were carried out, while the other TEIs were interviewed either by telephone (seven TEIs) or videoconference (two TEIs).

The interviews were carried out by WelTec staff and members of the research team Aleki Silao and Kerese Manueli, with the exception of one interview carried out by Neil Ballantyne, which was with the WelTec informants. Most of the interviews with multiple informants were face-to-face, though the two interviews by videoconference also had more than one informant. For the majority (12) of the interviews there were two interviewers from the research team, though some of the telephone interviews and two face-to-face interviews were carried out by one interviewer.

An information sheet was sent to participants in advance to outline the general areas that would be discussed. These were:

- the impact of government policy and strategy to promote success for Pasifika learners
- the impact of institutional strategy on Pasifika learners and the communities that support them
- the way in which TEC and other agencies have incentivised and supported changes to support success for Pasifika learners.

The interview method was semi-structured. A Pasifika-appropriate methodology such as *talanoa* (Violeti, 2006) or *aua'ii le galuega* (Nakhid, Fa'alogu, Faiva, Halafihi, Pilisi, Senio, Taylor and Thomas, 2007) could not be strictly followed here because of the specificity of the research questions set out in the study brief. The semi-structured interviews ranged, however, from one to one-and-a-half hours in length. This reflected a wish to allow the informants to range beyond the specific areas to be covered and to have a broader and less structured exchange.

Completed interviews were transcribed and copies sent to participants for review.

## Interview analysis

The interviews were examined to identify key issues and themes. This was done within a Framework Analysis approach. This has been developed for use in applied policy research, but is similar to other forms of qualitative analysis of interview data. It proceeds through five steps: familiarisation; identifying a thematic framework; indexing; charting; and mapping and interpretation (Ritchie and Spencer, 1993; Srivastava and Thompson, 2009).

The construction of a thematic framework and identification of parts of the interviews that corresponded to a particular theme (indexing) was initially done with the transcripts alone. An additional step followed in which the suggested themes were then reviewed by the interviewers themselves to check whether; (a) they conformed to their experience in the interviews, and (b) they were incomplete or needed to have greater emphasis.

In the next step, charting, the data identified in the previous stage was arranged in charts of the themes, as preparation for the final stage of interpretation.

## Results

In this section we present the findings of our study based on an analysis of the annual reports of the participating TEIs from 2002–2010; and an analysis of findings from the interviews with key informants from each of the participating TEIs.

This study set out to answer two key evaluation questions:

- What has been the influence over time of government strategies for Pasifika learners on organisational strategies and organisational changes within TEIs?
- What are the perceptions of TEIs on how government agencies have incentivised and supported these organisational changes?

We report on these two questions separately in the two sections below.

### The influence of the TES on organisational strategy and change within TEIs

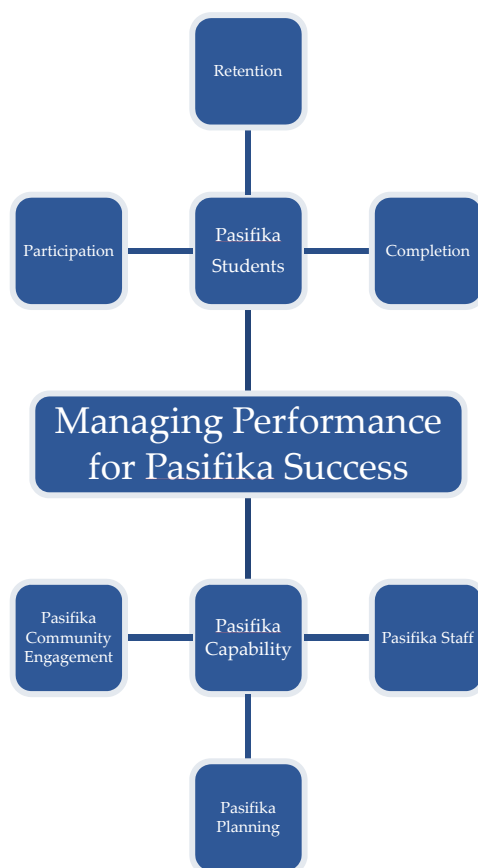
As described in the methodology section above, one way of addressing our first question is to consider the performance indicators reported by TEIs within their annual reports. Although this approach has limitations, annual reports provide a reasonably consistent dataset over time, and publicly reported performance indicators are a reasonable proxy indicator of strategic intent and institutional level commitment to organisational change. Analysis of the annual reports found that key performance indicators for Pasifika could be coded into two broad domains each of which had three sub-domains (see Figure 3) according to the objective of the performance indicators:

- KPIs that aimed to improve Pasifika students' participation and achievement (including KPIs for participation, retention and completion)
- KPIs that aimed to enhance the TEIs internal capability to support Pasifika students (including KPIs for Pasifika staff recruitment, Pasifika planning initiatives and Pasifika community engagement).

The analysis of annual reports determines the structure of this section, and the KPIs offer the primary focus. However, data from the informant interviews is included where this elaborates on organisational strategy and change in relation to Pasifika achievement or capability.

For the reasons described in the methodology section an analysis of the performance management outcomes of individual TEIs is not included. However, where national tertiary data is available (for example, in relation to rates of Pasifika participation in tertiary education) each performance area is introduced with data on the national picture before identifying the extent to which TEIs have included reporting on Pasifika performance indicators within their annual reports. To illustrate the considerable variability in the nature of TEI performance indicators, several examples from the 2010 annual reports are included.

In most domains and sub-domains of performance management there was no substantial difference between the numbers of ITPs and university participants reporting on Pasifika performance indicators, and so results are combined. In those domains where there is a difference this is noted in the relevant section.



*Figure 3: Performance domains and sub-domains*

## Pasifika Students

This section explores the performance indicators reported in annual reports that relate to Pasifika students (participation, retention and completion), and reports on data about institutional plans, strategies and initiatives gathered from interviews with the key informants.

### Pasifika Participation Rates

One of the key targets of the Pasifika Education Plan 2009–2012 was “to increase the participation rates of Pasifika people aged 18–24 at levels 4 and above, from 21 percent in 2008 to 27 percent in 2012”. Figure 4 below shows the actual tertiary participation rates between 2001 and 2009 for 18–24 year olds (Pasifika and non-Pasifika) in qualifications at levels 4 and above (Ministry of Education, 2011a). The data show a significant narrowing in the tertiary education participation rates for Pasifika and non-Pasifika over time; narrowing from 13.3 percent in 2001 to 7.8 percent in 2009.



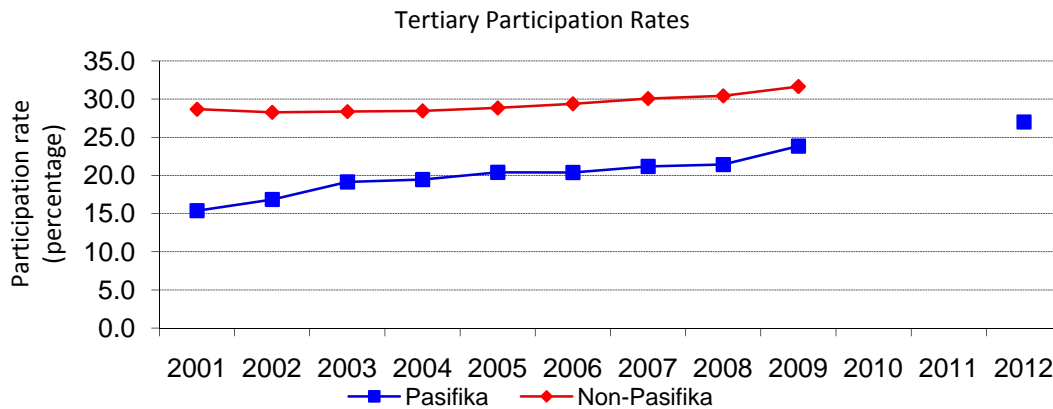


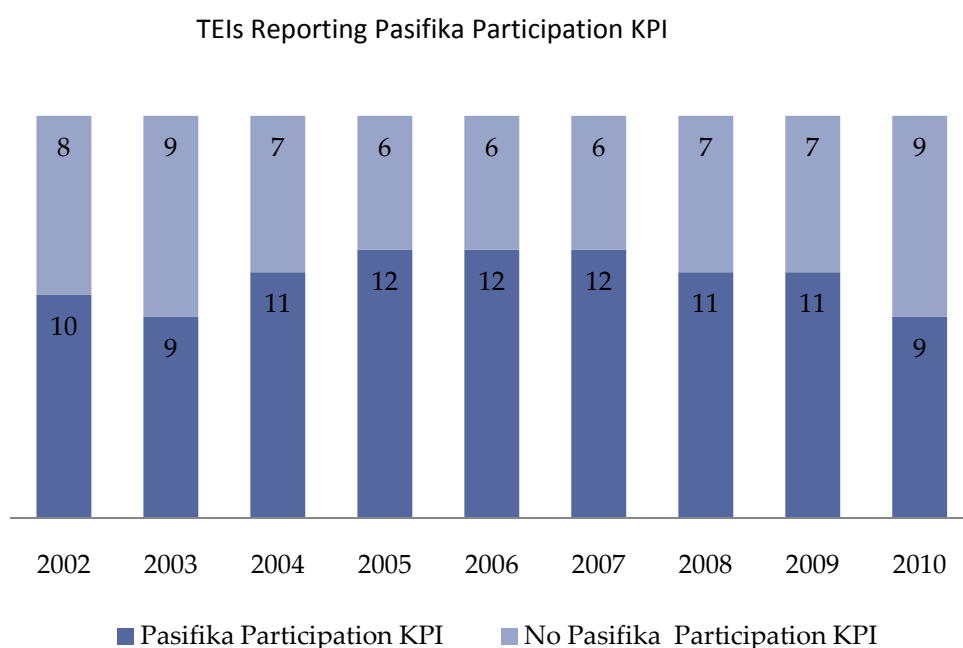
Figure 4: Tertiary participation rates: Pasifika and Non-Pasifika (Ministry of Education, 2011a)

Levels of participation in 2009 were particularly strong and the Ministry of Education (2010) reported that:

*At every qualification level, Pasifika enrolments were higher in 2009 than in 2008, except for level 1 to 3 certificates which remained stable. There were also substantially more younger Pasifika students enrolled in 2009 than in 2008 with the proportion of under 25 year olds increasing from 46 percent to 49 percent. These increases reflect government's tertiary education priority for young people – more under 25 year olds achieving qualifications at level 4 and above, particularly degrees.*

Although the quotation above attributes the changes to the government's tertiary education priorities, the same report also recognises the influence of a "weak employment market" on increases in Pasifika participation. What is clear is that in April 2009 the participation rates of Pasifika students in tertiary education increased more than any other ethnic group (Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2010).

If the TES have influenced TEIs to increase their Pasifika participation rate, we might expect this to be reflected in the target setting of the TEIs in our sample. It's not surprising then that Pasifika participation is the performance area in which TEIs have been most active in setting and reporting targets within their annual reports. In its work on defining common educational performance indicators for future use in the tertiary education sector, the TEC (2011b) states that the purpose of a participation indicator is to monitor the extent to which groups of New Zealanders such as Pasifika people are engaged in tertiary education. The TEC (2011b) defines a participation rate performance indicator as the proportion of EFTS for the group of interest in a particular year, divided by the total EFTS in that year. Although this is the definition advocated by the TEC for future use (from 2010), the way in which individual TEIs define participation rates in their historical annual reports varies over time and between TEIs. For our present purposes we are interested only in the fact that a TEI is reporting a performance indicator for managing Pasifika participation, not in the method by which the rate has been calculated.



*Figure 5: Proportion of TEIs reporting Pasifika participation KPIs in annual reports*

The number of participant TEIs reporting target Pasifika participation rates within their annual reports has been relatively constant since 2002 (Figure 5). The proportion of sample participants reporting Pasifika participation KPIs was highest between 2005 and 2007 (with 67 percent reporting participation KPIs) and lowest in 2003 and 2010 (when only 50 percent report setting a Pasifika participation KPI). The analysis of annual reports shows that different TEIs define their performance targets and measures quite differently with some setting global targets and others offering more specific goals. For example in 2010:

- one TEI set a global target for the percentage of Pasifika students (domestic EFTS) at  $\geq 10$  percent (the reported outcome was 8.5 percent )
- another TEI set a global target to increase the proportion of Pasifika EFTS to 25 percent (the reported outcome was 30 percent ). This same TEI also set a more specific target to increase the Pasifika EFTS in level 4+ programmes, reporting a target of 710 and an outcome of 1266
- A third TEI set targets in terms of both rates and numbers with the aim of increasing both the number of Pasifika students enrolled, and domestic Pasifika EFTS as a percentage of total domestic EFTS. In this case the targets were 644 enrolments and a rate of 3.2 percent of EFTS; and the outcomes were 686 enrolments and 3.3 percent of EFTS.

In addition, across the time period of the study, the targets set vary, both between and within institutions; from maintaining enrolment rates, through to increasing enrolment rates and matching the proportion of Pacific people in the local population. Although KPIs for Pasifika participation are one of the most commonly reported Pasifika-related KPIs in annual reports, at its highest (2005–2007) only two thirds of the sample report participation target rates, and in the most recent year (2010) only half report Pasifika participation target rates within their annual reports.

The key informant interviews offer a more detailed insight into the processes and activities undertaken by the sample TEIs aimed at increasing Pasifika participation. Engagement with the school sector, and the key role of schools was frequently mentioned. Initiatives included:

- Pasifika days for prospective students and their parents
- school support services such as homework centres in the community targeting schools with high volumes of Pasifika students
- open education forums for the wider community
- information booklets for prospective Pasifika students
- regular meetings with school principals
- specific programmes in schools such as one at a local high school that had a focus on health careers.

After discussing such steps, one informant summed up the most effective recruitment strategy as being “our successful graduates putting it back out there, demonstrating to families that university supports, retains, *etc.*”

Several informants commented on the key role of schools in encouraging Pasifika learners to pursue particular subject areas such as science-based subjects, health and engineering. There were comments that in the past Pasifika high school students were encouraged to take unit standards, rather than achievement standards, and were not studying the level 3 science subjects that would prepare them for entry to science-based tertiary study. Informants considered that without this focus at the entry level, many tertiary courses were closed to Pasifika students.

Although the interviewers did not ask explicitly about academic pathways or institutional choices for Pasifika students, one university informant made a very strong appeal for Pasifika to make university education their first choice. This informant considered that university education was best placed to develop Pasifika leadership, and to prepare students for active participation in the knowledge economy. In this view:

*Our problem is a resource problem. We are not dumber than the others. It is just that we don't get the resources to show people we are smart.*

For some informants, Pasifika participation was becoming secondary to other aspects of the learning experience such as academic performance and success. One university reported having a “managed/targeted” enrolment that applies to Pasifika students and a policy focus on improving academic performance rather than increasing numbers. Another senior university Pasifika staff member talked of a “distance from reality” and said that funding was too directed towards the numbers of students rather than the extent of the need. This informant was of the view that policy dealt too much with “equality not equity”.

### **Pasifika Retention Rates**

Improving the retention of Pasifika learners in tertiary education was a goal of the first PEP and of all three of the TES. The target included in the current PEP (2009–2012) is to “increase first-year retention rates for Pasifika students aged 18–24 in qualifications at levels 4 and above from 70 percent of those first enrolled in 2007, to 75 percent in 2011”.

Figure 6 below shows actual tertiary retention rates between 2001 and 2009 for 18–24 year olds (Pasifika and non-Pasifika) in qualifications at levels four and above (Ministry of Education, 2011a). The Pasifika retention rate has been on a very slightly upward trend from 68.4 percent in 2001 to 73.5 percent in 2009 and edging closer to the 2012 target of 75 percent. However, the difference between Pasifika and non-Pasifika retention rates has been stubbornly static with an 8.2 percent difference in 2001, and an 8.8 percent difference in 2009.

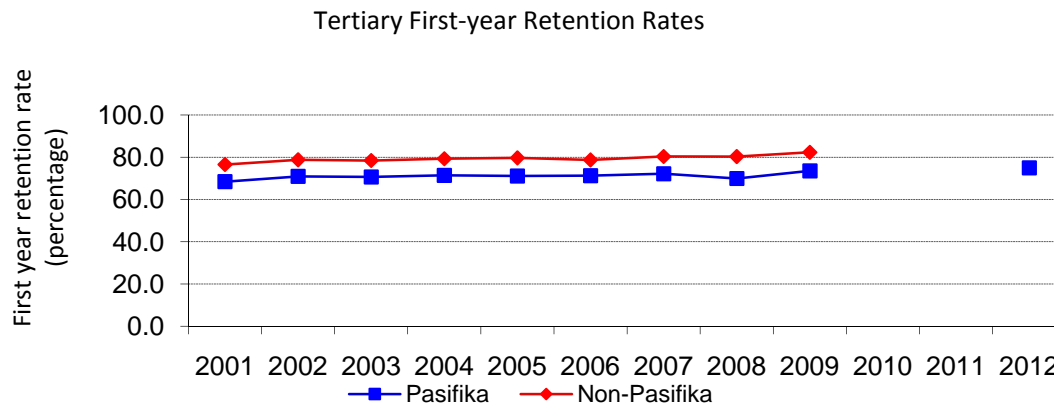


Figure 6: Tertiary first-year retention rates: Pasifika and Non-Pasifika (Ministry of Education, 2011a)

Although the Ministry of Education target described above focusses on retention during the first year of study, the educational performance indicator for student retention is defined by the TEC (2011b) as the proportion of individual students enrolled in one year who either re-enrol in any course at the same TEI in the following year, or complete their qualification. As noted above, the way in which the sample TEIs define retention may differ from that advocated by the TEC but our interest here is with TEIs' intentions to manage performance for Pasifika learners as indicated by targets reported in their annual reports.

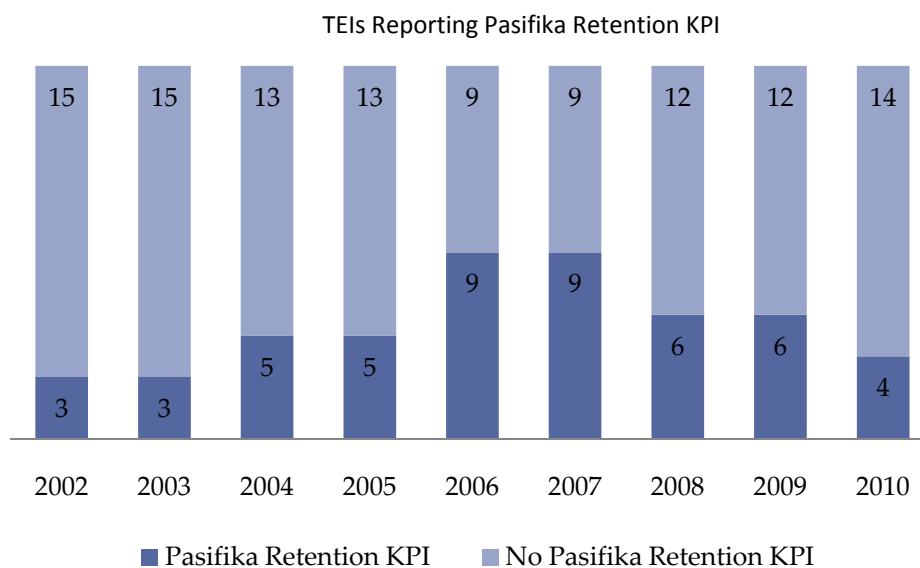


Figure 7: Proportion of TEIs reporting Pasifika retention KPI in annual reports

As can be seen from Figure 7 the number of participating TEIs who included performance indicators on Pasifika student retention rates within their annual reports peaked in 2006 and 2007 when nine TEIs (50 percent of the sample) set targets and reported Pasifika retention rate achievements. This number fell to four in 2010. The following extracts from the 2010 annual reports of three different TEIs illustrates the variance in approaches to target setting and the issues raised by the different methodologies of the TEC and the individual TEIs.

- One TEI set a global target to “develop and implement strategies to optimise student retention rates” and stated different performance indicators for different equity groups (including Māori, Pasifika and students with disabilities). The overall target retention rate set for domestic students in 2010 was 78 percent, with the actual retention rate for 2009 reported as 78 percent. The target retention rate set for Pasifika students in 2010 was 66 percent, with the actual retention rate in 2009 reported as 66 percent. The annual report also noted that, using the Educational Performance Indicator data, the TEC had cited this TEI as having an 84 percent student retention rate in 2009. The report went on to note that “discrepancies with the figures reported above relate mainly to differences in definition and methodology. These are being addressed.”
- Another TEI set targets for Pasifika retention rates from year one to year two of study with different targets set for Pasifika undergraduate students (2010 target: 48 percent, 2010 actual: 56 percent); Pasifika postgraduate students (2010 target: 71 percent, 2010 actual: 79 percent); and Pasifika students at all levels of study (2010 target: 50 percent, 2010 actual: 60 percent).
- A third TEI included targets for the retention of Pasifika student as part of their equity strategy including an objective to “improve student participation, retention and achievement in identified equity groups”. This included a performance indicator to “lower first-year qualification-level attrition for degree, graduate diploma and postgraduate qualifications for Pasifika students to 32 percent”. The actual attrition rate in 2010 was reported as 33 percent although the annual report of this TEI notes that “this target was set on a TEC methodology that (this TEI and other TEIs) are not able to replicate. This accounts for the official target being lower than the actual achieved.”

The data from the key informant interviews offers some insights into the sorts of institutional strategies used to retain Pasifika students. However, discussion about strategies for retention tended to include issues and initiatives associated with Pasifika completion. Therefore, these views will be presented together after the following section on Pasifika completion rates.

### **Pasifika Completion Rates**

As with Pasifika participation and retention rates, the goal of increasing Pasifika completion rates has been a consistent feature of all three TES. The relevant goal identified in the PEP (2009–2012) is to “increase the five-year completion rates of Pasifika people aged 18–24, in qualifications at levels 4 and above from 36 percent of those first enrolled in 2004 to 43 percent of those first enrolled in 2008”.

Figure 8 below shows current progress at a national level towards that target for Pasifika and benchmarks this against non-Pasifika completion rates (Ministry of Education, 2011a). Although the Pasifika five-year completion rates show a slight improvement from 35.6 percent in 2000 to 38.4 percent in 2005, the difference between Pasifika and non-Pasifika five-year completion rates remains fairly static with non-Pasifika having a 19.6 percent higher five-year completion rate in 2000; and an 18.2 percent higher five-year completion rate in 2005.

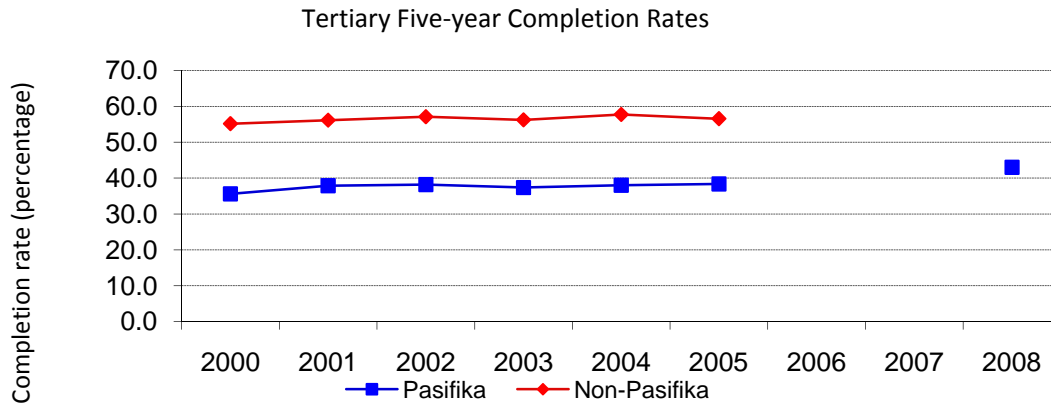


Figure 8: Tertiary five-year completion rates: Pasifika and Non-Pasifika (Ministry of Education, 2011a)

The TEC (2011b) offers two recommended definitions of completion in regard to setting educational performance indicators in the tertiary education sector each with its own formula:

- Successful course completion.
- Successful qualification completion.

Analysing the historic annual reports of participating TEIs uncovers a wide range of different definitions and many instances where completion (and whether the reference is to course or qualification completion) is left undefined.

Setting KPIs for Pasifika student completion is the second most frequent area of active performance management for Pasifika learners reported by our participants in their annual reports.

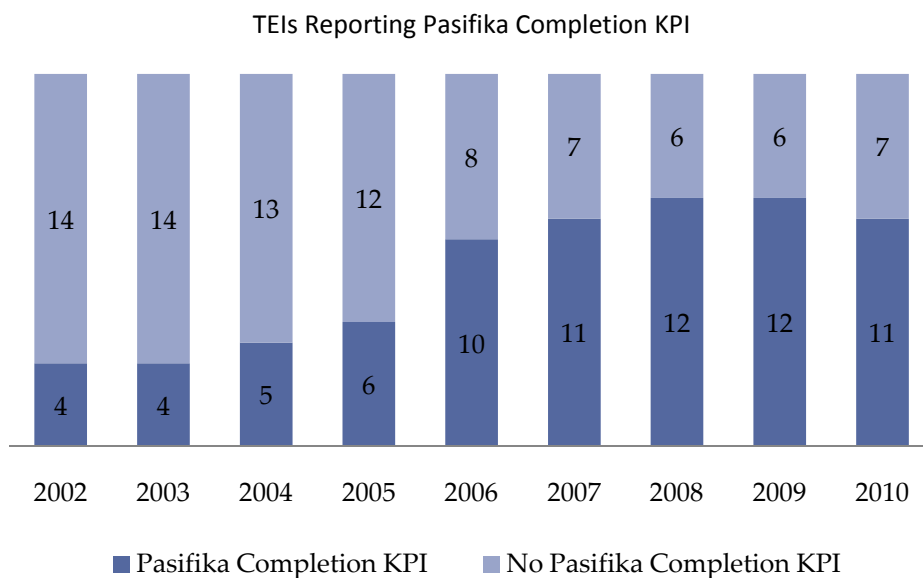


Figure 9: Proportion of TEIs reporting Pasifika completion KPIs in annual reports

As can be seen from Figure 9, the number of TEIs reporting performance targets for completion rates within annual reports grew year on year between 2002 from a low of four (24 percent) in 2002 to twelve (71 percent) in 2008 and 2009. Once again the way in which performance targets are set varies considerably in terms of both the precise target, and the level set. The following extracts from 2010 annual reports reveal some of the different approaches used:

- One TEI set a strategic objective to “improve the retention and success of students” and included a performance indicator that “qualification and course completion rates for Māori, Pasifika and students under 25 years old will be increased through effective teaching, student support and through employing appropriate staff as role models reflecting our ethnic diversity”. The annual report then reported Pasifika course completion rates of 65 percent in 2008, 69 percent in 2009 and 74 percent in 2010. Since the target was to improve the rate, rather than to achieve a specific rate, the target could be considered to be met. In the context of an overall course completion rate for all students of 81 percent this would seem to be an impressive result (although impossible to compare with the national data based on five-year completion rates). The annual report went on to refer to an investment plan target of “a minimum of 75 percent course completion rate for Pasifika by 2013”, in other words a target that would – at minimum – maintain the current rate.
- A second TEI set a strategic objective to “recruit and retain a high-quality staff and student body, striving to create equal opportunities for all those of ability to succeed in a university of high international standing”. The annual report included two Pasifika-related performance indicators: one for the “percentage of Pasifika successful undergraduate course completions” with a 2010 target rate of  $\geq 70$  percent (the 2010 actual rate was 73 percent); and the other for the “percentage of Pasifika qualification completions (domestic, five-year degree-level and above)” with a 2010 target of  $\geq 40$  percent (the 2010 actual rate was 44 percent).
- The 2010 annual report of a third TEI included four different performance indicators related to Pasifika completions:
  - Pasifika qualification-level completion rate for one EFTS and under, over two years with a 2010 target rate of 19 percent; and a 2010 actual rate of 23 percent
  - Pasifika qualification-level completion rate over five years:
    - for all levels with a 2010 target rate of 19 percent; and a 2010 actual rate of 19 percent
    - for undergraduate students with a 2010 target rate of 13 percent; and a 2010 actual rate of 13 percent
    - for postgraduate students with a 2010 target rate of 35 percent; and a 2010 actual rate of 40 percent.

As noted above, the data from interviews with key informants about institutional plans and strategies to support Pasifika student completion, tended not to differentiate these from strategies for Pasifika retention. We therefore summarise below the views of informants on strategies for both retention and completion.

The interviews uncovered considerable concern amongst the majority of informants about Pasifika retention rates. Many described particular initiatives to retain students and to help them succeed within their first year of study. The transition between undergraduate and graduate study was

highlighted as a critical point at which to intervene and informants offered examples of specific retention and success projects. One TEI used a risk assessment framework to track student performance in their first year or semester of study; another focussed on offering guidance to ensure students made the right choices at the start of their study.

Several informants reported that a balance had to be struck between discouraging students from taking on study at a particular level, and getting the level right. Some of the solutions advocated included:

- helping students prepare a learning plan
- providing one-on-one or small group support to students who were struggling
- the use of trial study period, where students could start on one or two weeks of a diploma course, review progress, and consider whether the programme and level was appropriate for them.

Changes to the teaching and learning environment, such as smaller class sizes, were mentioned by many as important, as was promoting teachers' understanding of the needs of Pasifika students. Making students aware of positive Pasifika role models in their community so they could see the value of educational success, and their potential contribution as future leaders within the Pasifika community was also highlighted by some informants. Much emphasis was given to motivational approaches, building relationships and encouraging students to believe they could succeed.

One TEI trained people from local communities to act as mentors so they could connect locally with students, explain what a course was about, introduce them to course material and support them during study. Others had a family focus, engaging with Pasifika parents to raise awareness of the implications of degree level study. One TEI set up a foundation family group for first-year students where the whole family was invited to participate, including younger children, so that "it won't be a mystery to them, what a university is and we will know at the end of the third year, how that's all gone".

In the case of older learners, some who come in at the foundational level require considerable support and an informant in one TEI noted that in this group there are often many family needs that compete with study. When students in this situation are offered a job they may drop out but they now also have a student loan to add to their financial commitments. This was a matter that was commented on by other informants – there is no qualification but there is the ongoing reality of a debt for the study.

One university-based informant observed it could be hard to motivate students to access the support services available, and added they had successfully overcome this problem by creating an area within the library for Pasifika students where learning support was provided. Many informants commented on the importance of having dedicated Pasifika spaces for Pasifika learners, such as a Pasifika Centre.

Informants described many different forms of student support although the extent to which specialist Pasifika learning support services could be provided seemed to be influenced by the number of Pasifika students within the institution. Some informants described learning support services for Pasifika students offered as part of a support service for both Māori and Pasifika students, with possible individual support from a Pasifika staff member. However, where numbers were low, even this sort of combined provision was difficult to access and one informant argued that it was better to get support people with the right attributes than always assume a Pasifika person would be best. One informant suggested that where there were only a few Pasifika students within



the institution they might be ashamed to reveal difficulties to someone who was widely-known in the Pasifika community.

In many instances institutions offered learning support through a mentoring service provided by another Pasifika student. However, informants identified issues with this sort of service, such as a reluctance from female students to accept help from male students. These considerations seemed less significant in larger TEIs, where well-established student mentoring schemes were often operating. In one university, for example, over 70 percent of Pasifika students access its learning support programme. In both large and small TEIs however, observations were made that although mentoring was valuable, it can impose an extra workload on Pasifika student mentors who had their own studies to consider. Several informants considered that mentoring by Pasifika peers should not be seen as the only response to the issue of learning support for Pasifika students.

At the broader level, many informants discussed institutional plans and strategies to “mainstream” Pasifika culture by, for example, developing Pasifika content-based courses; and in some cases, including Pasifika-related content within mainstream courses. Other initiatives described by informants included: Pasifika days as part of orientation, where both Pasifika students and their families were invited; Pasifika graduation ceremonies; and more specialist events such as Pasifika art exhibitions. Perhaps the most visible physical evidence of Pasifika culture within the TEIs has been the various Pasifika centres and buildings such as the *fale* at Auckland University and the Pacific Centre being constructed at the Manukau Institute of Technology. Several informants talked of the need to create Pasifika spaces within their institutions, such as *fono* rooms, that were perceived as places where Pasifika culture could be celebrated and Pasifika students felt comfortable and welcome.

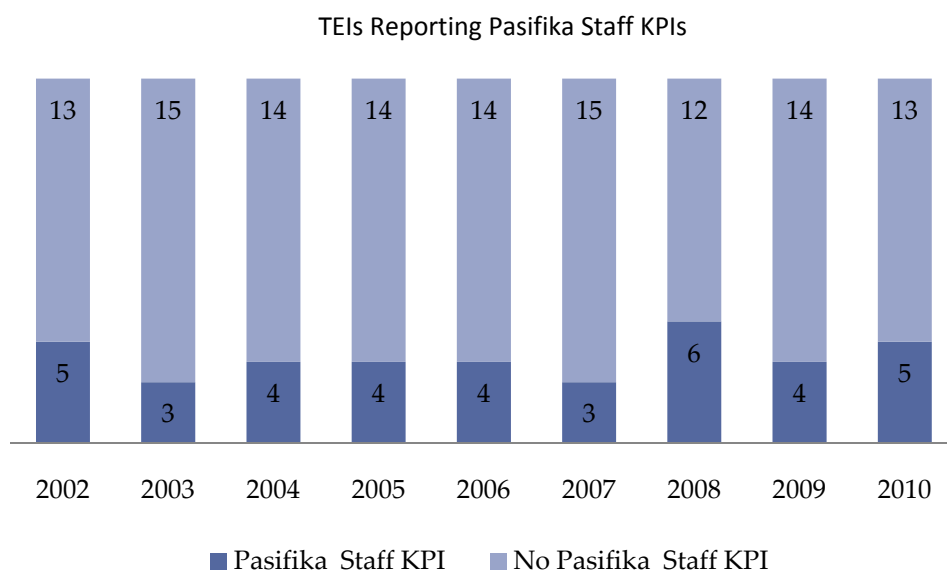
One informant argued that cultural awareness amongst teaching and support staff was a critical factor in unlocking student achievement. The use of Pasifika languages was mentioned by many as a very important aspect of cultural recognition and validation. For some informants the actual and potential contribution of staff who spoke Pasifika languages was not always properly recognised by institutions. Some informants felt that their institution didn’t always acknowledge the value of community engagement and cultural links with Pasifika communities

## Pasifika Capability

This section explores the performance indicators reported in the annual reports of TEIs that relate to the Pasifika capability of the institution. More specifically, it considers performance indicators that relate to the recruitment of Pasifika staff, those designed to improve planning for Pasifika success and those aimed at engaging with the Pasifika community outside the institution. The discussion also draws on findings from the key informant interview data that reflect on these aspects of institutional performance.

### Pasifika Staff

The first TES included an objective for “an increased proportion of Pacific staff at all levels of decision making in the tertiary education system”, with the intended outcome being an “ability to participate in governance, management and leadership roles” (Associate Minister of Education (Tertiary Education), 2002). The analysis of annual reports identified a number of TEIs reporting on the ethnicity of their staff and a few (see Figure 10 below) setting performance indicators and targets to improve the proportion of Pasifika staff.



*Figure 10: Proportion of TEIs reporting Pasifika staff KPI in annual reports*

Reporting on targets for the proportion of Pasifika staff was one area of performance where universities were more active and consistent than ITPs. Of the nine TEIs that set targets in at least one year between 2002 and 2010, five were universities. Three of the five universities set targets for each year between 2002 and 2010 and were responsible between them for 72 percent of the targets set. However, with a maximum of five TEIs in any one year setting a performance indicator, the baseline is very low and the approach to target setting is, once again, quite varied as the following examples from the 2010 annual reports illustrate.

- One TEI had an equal opportunities objective to “support equal employment opportunities for staff to enable them to provide quality teaching and support and to ensure that its organisation, structure and culture support the strategic vision”. It included a KPI on the “percentage of staff identifying themselves as Pasifika” and identified a 2010 target of 11 percent with a 2010 actual of nine percent.
- A second TEI included a statement that it aimed to become the employer of choice for Māori and Pasifika staff and included an objective to “ensure the (TEIs) staff profile better reflects the demographic mix of the region”. In this case the regional proportion of Pasifika people in the population (based on 2006 Census results) was used as the target. In 2010 the regional proportion of Pasifika was 11.2 percent whilst the actual Pasifika staff rate reported was four percent.
- A third TEI included a strategic target to continue to “set and achieve participation and retention targets for under-represented groups of staff” and included a KPI with separate targets for proportions of: Pasifika academic staff FTEs (2010 target 0.7 percent with a reported 2010 actual of 0.9 percent); Pasifika general staff FTEs (2010 target 1.3 percent with a reported 2010 actual of 1.1 percent); and Pasifika staff as a proportion of all FTEs (2010 target 1.1 percent with a reported 2010 actual of 1.0 percent).

The key informant interview data revealed that many informants were unaware of the objective of the first TES in relation to there being an increased proportion of Pasifika staff at all levels of decision

making within the tertiary sector. Informants' awareness of the current proportion and number of Pasifika staff within their own institution also varied considerably.

For some informants progress in this domain required a tactical appreciation on how to place Pasifika staff in positions of influence. One informant described how their TEI used special supplementary grants to "plant" Pasifika staff in particular departments. After the role was established, and its success had been demonstrated, funds were diverted to other departments and the process repeated. This same informant also suggested that capability was created by making sure new Pasifika positions had some direct management responsibility or management advisory responsibility, and played a part in decision making.

In terms of the recruitment of Pasifika staff some informants identified the TEIs own graduates as an obvious source, although one informant commented at some length about the difficulty of retaining highly-qualified graduates, who tended to be snapped up by their industries, such as the health sector.

### Pasifika Planning

The analysis of annual reports identified a number of objectives and performance indicators relating to strategic institutional level planning for success for Pasifika learners and realising the aspirations of Pasifika people. This area of performance was reported by a few participant TEIs from 2002 onwards with a marked spike in activity in 2004 and 2005 when almost half of TEI annual reports included targets related to planning to meet the aspirations of Pasifika. In these years, or soon after, many TEIs highlighted planning for Pasifika as a distinct strategic goal and set about establishing Pasifika advisory groups and formulating Pasifika plans and strategies. The objectives and performance indicators established were often more global and generalised than student participation and achievement data, but they were clearly seen as key strategic objectives by the TEIs. Although the number of TEIs reporting Pasifika planning performance indicators has fallen to three in 2010 it is at least possible that the development of local Pasifika plans and strategies are where the performance measures for Pasifika learners are now being expressed and may not now be reported in annual reports.

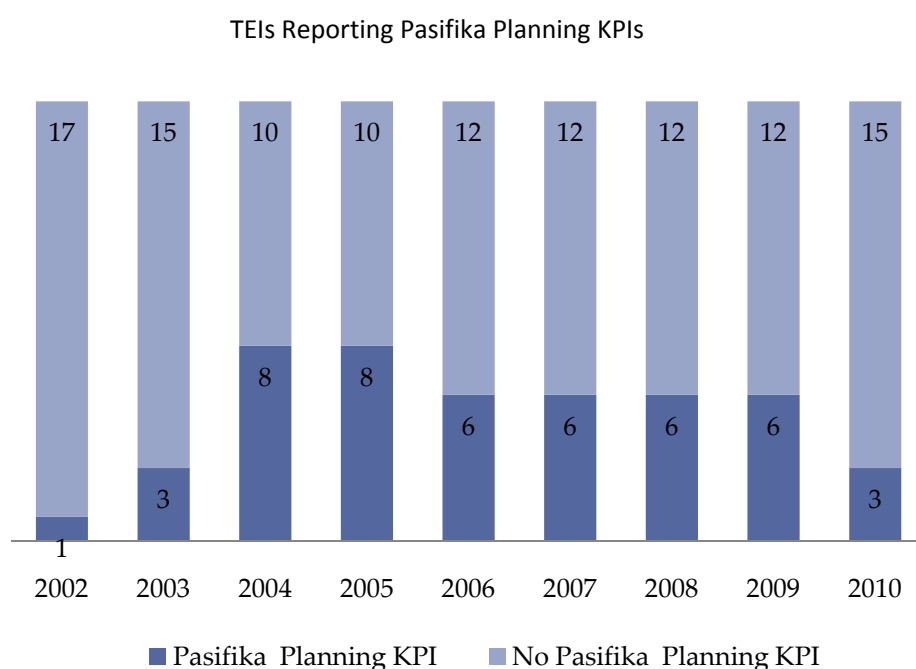


Figure 11: Proportion of TEIs reporting Pasifika planning KPIs in annual reports

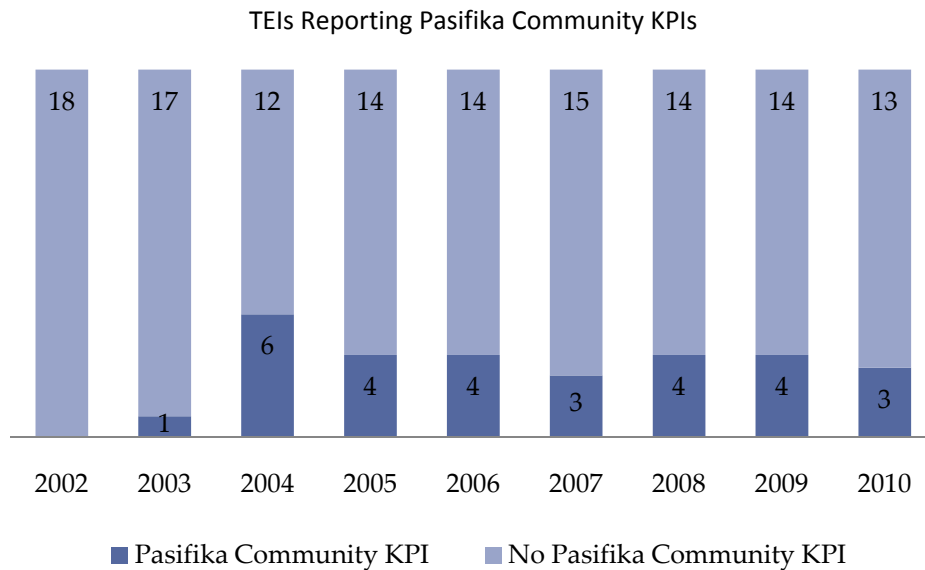
Amongst the key informants there were differing views about the value to a TEI of having a formal Pasifika strategy. One informant, whose institution was in the process of developing its Pasifika Plan, commented on the value of the process in setting into motion a rigorous debate about strategic direction, including future organisational structures. Another informant observed that, apart from direction setting, a review of strategy can also make it clear what a TEI is doing well. Another informant pointed out that a Pasifika strategy document could be used to help formulate the major Pasifika KPIs for the institutions investment plan.

However, for a few informants the mere existence of a plan was not enough. It had to be more than a “tick-box” exercise. Its success depended on whether staff were held accountable for its implementation, as well as how and by whom it was promoted within the TEI. As one informant put it, “unless they are actually built into peoples’ work plans, peoples’ key performance indicators, they are meaningless indicators”. Another informant suggested that it was a question of “developmental maturity” and a Pasifika plan or strategy might be a necessary first step to getting objectives on a document that will drive institutional performance. For most informants this sort of institutional planning was an internal matter, not something that could or should emanate from bodies such as the TEC or the Ministry of Education.

## **Pasifika Community Engagement**

The Interim Statement of Tertiary Education Priorities associated with the first TES (2002–2007) included the objective that “all TEOs should work with their Pacific stakeholders to develop measures to ensure improved connection of Pacific communities and enterprises and to ensure improved learning outcomes for Pacific peoples” (Ministry of Education, 2002).

Although they were few in number some TEIs included specific objectives and performance indicators regarding the engagement of the institution with Pasifika communities and set targets for activities such as “research projects involving consultation or collaboration with Pasifika organisations” or “opportunities for Tangata Pasifika to inform developments through appropriate governance and management advisory bodies”. These community initiatives were often reported on at length in the highlights sections of annual reports and were clearly considered by the TEIs concerned to be an important aspect of establishing the conditions for Pasifika participation and achievement. One such example is a charitable business trust set up by one TEI to increase business ownership and economic participation among Pasifika peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Many institutions reported on the establishment of Pasifika Advisory Groups including key stakeholders from the local Pasifika community. These Pasifika Advisory Groups often went on to develop specific institutional Pasifika strategies and plans.



*Figure 12: Proportion of TEIs reporting Pasifika community KPI in annual reports*

Whether they had performance indicators or not, the key informant interviews indicated that all TEI participants in this study had some vehicle for consultation with their local Pasifika community. These ranged from a Pasifika group with regional responsibilities to the institution's own advisory group. The methods of community engagement used varied considerably. In one case, where the TEI had a large Pasifika student body, the advisory group not only drew on a number of young and educated Pasifika leaders, but also had separate community forums based around education, organisations and agencies, and churches. Pasifika Liaison Officers were often engaged with key Pasifika stakeholders. One innovative and successful scheme in Auckland – designed for Pasifika people interested in becoming police officers - offered a free 14-week course, without credit value.

The course was perceived to be as much about building capacity in the Pasifika community as it was about education. Many of the community linkages depended on individual staff, some of whom were involved in what were described as Pacific personnel and leadership networks, which might also include official roles on councils or advisory panels for local bodies, government and research organisations. Comments from one informant were very direct on this:

*Our approach is not about education, our approach is about community development...so we get involved in communities and in the communities our role is promoting education.*

This promotion could take many forms: sometimes indirect, such as the involvement of staff in local cultural groups; sometimes more direct, for example, through a community talkback show. Several informants commented on the importance of providing information to the community. For some informants the community engagement process was an important goal, but one that was yet to be achieved "our heart is in the community but the community is away from where we are". This latter remark was made by an informant who was involved in finding funding for a centre for social development and economic transformation:

*These things are an honour and those are highlights of being part of...I've always been involved in the small picture...but now to be part of the big picture looking to the next 50 years is just crazy...it is crazy.*

## Perceptions of the TES

In this section of the report we focus on the evaluation question regarding TEI's perceptions of the TES and how government agencies have incentivised and supported organisational changes to improve success for Pasifika learners. To address this question we offer a detailed discussion of findings from our key informant interviews. We report these findings in two parts:

- perceptions of government strategies and their impact on organisational change
- perceptions of funding and incentives for change.

### *Government Strategies and Organisational Change within TEIs*

#### **The Tertiary Education Strategies**

Informants knew they would be asked about the impact of the TES, so were generally well-prepared and could point to the influence of government strategies on their own Pasifika plan or strategy or key performance indicators in their investment plans. Seven of the institutions who took part already had a formal Pasifika plan or strategy, while three were developing them.

In keeping with the findings of an earlier study by Shephard (2006) on the responses of TEIs to the first TES, most informants were of the view that strategies gave TEIs an important signal that success for Pasifika learners was a significant element in the government's strategic direction. Most informants were of the opinion that this signal was a key enabler of organisational changes for Pasifika success at the institutional level. However, many informants identified other significant mediating factors such as the influence of key institutional players and agencies, both inside and external to the TEI.

One informant summed up the majority view by describing the influence of the TES strategies as "huge" and went on to suggest that institutions realised they had to respond by providing support for Pasifika students, and appointing Pasifika staff. An informant from a TEI with a large Pasifika roll saw the TES as having made institutions:

*Put words together (and) think about how they were going to respond to those particular strategies and I think the smart institutions have kept that momentum going.*

This informant believed that without the strategy there would never have been the number of Pasifika postgraduate students in that TEI in the last two or three years. Another informant described the impact of the TES as "invaluable" and repeated the view that it created explicit requirements to include Pasifika-related policy and planning into institutional strategy.

The TEC strategy was also seen as having raised the profile of Pasifika interests across institutions:

*The explicit nature of referencing by TEC has raised the profile across institutions. Universities often have difficulty dealing with social/ethnic/cultural categories of students due to institutional fears about special treatment/affirmative action. The TEC strategy has helped cut through that.*

An opinion from another TEI with a substantial Pasifika roll was that the impact of the strategies in pushing Pasifika issues on to the agenda of TEI charters, regional facilitation plans and investment plans should not be underestimated. However, this same informant made the point that the policies were necessary but not sufficient. In order to translate policy into practice the TEC, like the TEIs themselves, was fundamentally dependent on the people within it. The informant added that TEC staff had been very supportive and helpful, “it has been enthusiastic and quite significant really”. On a more critical note, a few informants thought the strategies were not sufficiently stretching and that the “levers” for change were lacking. On this view the strategies were perceived as “good warm things” with which people could agree, but they lacked clear, challenging and specific targets.

*I think these strategies have too many words in them and are not sufficiently specific and they are not sufficiently demanding.*

Another informant argued that the strategies were not explicit enough about Pasifika goals, and that the risk was they were perceived as mere rhetoric.

Some confusion was also expressed about the overlapping roles of various agencies, such as the Ministry of Education and the TEC in the development of government strategy and the setting of specific performance targets:

*There is a lot of clutter and confusion. I think there's far too many strategic documents and I'm not sure what's supposed to be driving what! ...I still don't know in my mind what the Pasifika Education Plan is – where it kind of fits into, yeah, the Ministry one. The one with no funding but everyone keeps referring to the PEP and I keep thinking, what is the PEP?*

This was not the only comment about the role of the PEP and another informant noted a divergence between the areas for which the TEC required institutions to set key performance indicators in their investment plans and the goals of the latest PEP. In this respect the TEC, which oversees the investment plans of TEIs and holds them accountable for their targets, seems to be the only policy-setting body whose views actually count.

In relation to the differences between the three succeeding TES, it was clear that – in spite of the differences in details discussed above – informants tended not to distinguish between the requirements of the first two TES in promoting organisational change. The TES was, in effect, what had been set out in the original document. The third TES, however, was seen as creating new requirements that had significant implications for Pasifika, because of changes in funding arrangements. One informant commented that the third TES lacked detail and gave little new direction about what was expected for Pasifika learners. Another informant noted that the third TES had set out new initiatives for Māori, but not for Pasifika learners. Although incorrect, this comment might be seen as a reflection of the lower profile of the strategy among staff who are not actively involved in administration and policy formation. Although it does capture, to some extent, the reduced amount of Pasifika policy explicitly detailed in the strategy. Less favourable descriptions of the third strategy included a comment by one informant that the economic development aspect of the third TES was a shift towards “corporatisation”.

### **People and Policies**

Informants frequently observed that the success of institutional plans for Pasifika learners depended on who prepared and implemented the plans, and their institutional influence.

*Plans are only as good as the people who actually drive them...I've made sure that we try to stay true to what the plan says for Pasifika.*

These remarks were made by an informant who enjoyed a supportive relationship with a vice-chancellor, but still felt it important to move towards a situation where Pasifika concerns were represented directly by a seat at the management table, by a role such as an Assistant Vice-Chancellor, Pasifika. Another informant commented on the fact that the TEC itself has no specific Pasifika person at the moment responsible for strategy and, as a result, "the bureaucracy is distant from the realities of Pasifika people".

One of the strongest views expressed on the government strategies – although a minority one – was that the incentives and disincentives put in place to support the participation and success of Pasifika learners were largely immaterial. The real achievements, on this view, came from the extraordinary efforts of Pasifika staff:

*I don't think that they've (the strategies) had an impact on the institutions and hate to say it but they've said things in the documents...and the Pasifika people internally inside all these institutions were the ones that did the hard work... it's the hardest job to do and that's because the government entities have not been able to create a fair playing field for us to actually play at.*

Some informants were of the view that, when a TEI had few Pasifika students and staff, the voluntary work of the Pasifika staff in pushing forward change became critical. Even with support of senior management, staff at one such TEI looked to draw strength from their strong Pasifika community involvement to help drive Pasifika developments. This source of strength aided them to "stand up to a bureaucracy that says, 'well, it's a numbers game and you only got a couple of hundred students, why do we need to?'". These informants thought the TEC could help by providing more direction and support to institutions with smaller numbers of Pasifika students, rather than letting low numbers of Pasifika students reduce institutional commitment to Pasifika priorities.

Whilst informants highlighted the influence of key individuals – inside and outside of the organisation - in enabling organisational change, they also recognised the importance of a whole of system approach. Even if a TEI had its own Pasifika strategy in place, its successful implementation depended on acceptance by the whole institution, and on institutional systems for ensuring accountability. Otherwise, some informants suggested, it might remain a "tick-box" exercise. Two institutions gave examples of how this acceptance might be achieved. In one a Pasifika staff member in a very senior position went personally to each department to ask how the retention and completion goals for Pasifika students would be achieved. In the other, a senior Pasifika Academic Advisor had the task of checking on whether the institution's Pasifika strategy was being implemented, while Heads of Department had to report back directly to the principal Pasifika staff member in the institution.

### **Visibility and "The Right to be here"**

The position of Pasifika students within the TEIs was often remarked upon. One senior academic commented on the importance of the TES in making Pasifika success visible as a policy category, with accompanying accountability. An informant at a TEI with one of the largest number of Pasifika students said that the confidence of Pasifika learners had grown over the past 10 years and now they felt "the right to be here... and the *visibility* of that right... and the exercise of that right". This theme of visibility came up in the comments of no fewer than seven of the informants. Visibility was a term used to indicate evidence of both student success, and organisational capability. One informant stated that in "the last decade, Pasifika learners have become more visible, more



successful". For another informant having more Pasifika people in the higher echelons of the organisation meant higher Pasifika visibility, greater Pasifika influence and improved outcomes for Pasifika learners. Informants also thought it important that senior staff, whether Pasifika or not, were seen to be supporting Pasifika initiatives.

However, visibility – and the sense of place associated with it – was not guaranteed. One informant suggested that if students remained "invisible", this could reflect the fact that "being 'actively Māori' or 'actively Pasifika' in an institution is to make a *highly* political statement". Another informant suggested that some students, "think they're invisible... they just sort of disappear... they don't put their hand up if they're stuck, they just quietly fade off the scene". For Pasifika staff too, visibility could be problematic especially within the context of staff and institutional changes. As one informant put it "you will be left out and very easily done when playing with these big cats in these games because the institution is so big".

### **The Transition to Tertiary Education**

Whilst reflecting on the wider influence of the TES, informants made comments about a number of issues that might be considered systemic effects or unintended consequences of the TES. Chief amongst these was the transition to tertiary education. Several informants thought that tertiary providers were having to deal with what one called the "transitional gap" between education at levels 1 - 4 and tertiary study. These informants considered that this was being left to the providers to solve and required heavy investment in remedial work. For example, one university approached this issue by allowing Pasifika students to enrol on some courses, despite having lower NCEA credits than set out in the entry criteria. This targeted admission scheme required extra resources, sometimes in the form of help from other students acting as mentors, in order to be successful. From the student point of view this was sometimes seen as a deficit-based approach. One informant stated that it didn't feel right when students said that they did not want to be seen as "a gap to be filled – something that wasn't working".

There was also concern about government strategy directing funding towards courses at level 4 and above. One informant argued that the entry levels of tertiary education were where some Pasifika people might want to start, but these opportunities were being reduced in favour of higher levels of study:

*I actually find that TEC policy and by implication government policy actively work against the Pasifika learners at the moment because the more they put pressure on level 1 to 3 programmes...But who is picking up that low level provision?...And I'm just really concerned that it's going to become a huge education and social gap.*

In order to compensate for this lack, some TEIs were carrying on with foundational studies, bridging programmes or pathways into particular qualifications such as early childhood education. Others relied on various forms of student support to deal with the issue. One polytechnic had developed its own Pasifika Foundation Course to support young people up to level 3, so they could then move on into tertiary institutions. Other initiatives came from links with schools, or with Private Training Establishments (PTEs) such as the computer skills trainer ACE. One university even helped secondary school students in another city to reach the entry requirements for some of its courses. The overall impression was one of ingenuity and a drive to help students prepare for tertiary study, while at the same time there was concern that not enough support was being given to moving students through the "pipeline", as one informant put it. More significantly, in order to support Pasifika learners' success:

*Pasifika issues need to be in the thinking of the TEC and others, you know, people at the top. They need to think about the issues because sometimes they unintentionally formulate policies that harm us.*

This was a recurrent theme. An informant at one polytechnic echoed the call for more support for education at levels 1 - 4:

*I would actually like TEC to understand the whole issue of levels 1 to 4 education in this institution. I mean, we need to be able to have the funding to have enough of the level 1 to 4 programmes which staircase the students into the next area...unless that can grow we won't...it's going to be really hard for people to get to the next level.*

### **Pasifika Research**

Comments from informants suggested that some institutions embraced the thrust of the second and third TES towards higher levels of achievement, with the associated implication that this would be associated with more Pasifika research. This was not so evident in TEIs where the Pasifika population was small, or in some of the ITPs that had a more limited focus on research. Several of the larger TEIs, on the other hand, were actively encouraging Pasifika research through measures such as postgraduate scholarships and the publication of results in specialised monographs, as well as the usual routes like conference presentations and journals. One university had an annual conference in which Pasifika staff and students met to discuss their research projects.

Postgraduate work was seen by several informants as a steppingstone to work as Pasifika academics, an essential prerequisite for increasing the proportion of Pasifika academic staff. The phrase “grow your own” (or an equivalent expression) came up frequently in interviews. Student success was thus not seen purely as an individual matter, but also a question of institutional capacity building.

### **Relationship to Māori**

Most of our informants were emphatic about the need for plans, strategies and initiatives for Pasifika success to be viewed as distinct from those for the advancement of Māori. These informants were concerned about a misguided institutional perspective that what works for one group would work for the other. As one informant said, a reason for differentiating Māori from Pasifika was that this would reduce the risk of “stakeholders assuming that if Māori and Pasifika issues are the same, the remedy must also be alike”.

Many of the larger TEIs with higher Pasifika student numbers seemed to have learned this lesson and had created senior Pasifika management roles to drive forward their Pasifika strategy. Our informants recognised that, in the early stages, supportive senior Māori managers helped to progress Pasifika initiatives such as the development of an institutional Pasifika strategy. However, most informants considered that the establishment of a senior Pasifika management role was a precondition for a dynamic, future-oriented approach towards Pasifika issues. Where a TEI was still progressing towards this establishment of senior Pasifika managers, there was sometimes awareness that the Māori dimension of the institution had been given proper recognition, but this was still to be seen with the Pasifika dimension, particularly with respect to the student experience. One informant from a TEI with a large Pasifika roll noted that although their institution had made an early strategic commitment to the advancement of Māori, a parallel commitment to Pasifika was not evident until the point at which a senior Pasifika manager had been appointed. Even so:

- Good stuff had happened in various departments, particularly the Foundation Studies area and the employment area.

There was not always agreement about what was happening. At one TEI an informant said that things were moving more slowly for Pasifika than Māori, while a colleague thought that amazing progress had been made. An illustration of divergent goals for Pasifika and Māori set by government was that the second TES had an objective for Māori that there should be research connections and linkages to create economic opportunities for Māori, while a similar objective was not explicitly set for research for Pasifika.

In terms of conceptual frameworks, a distinct Pasifika approach could sometimes be seen, such as the *Na Kuita* (octopus) model. One institution used this as a metaphor and framework for supporting Pasifika students. When they needed support as Pasifika learners the strands or “tentacles” were already in place throughout the departments that directed support to the Pacific Centre. This model was not always obvious to the student, in that it was camouflaged to provide the support needed across a large campus.

It was notable that in several TEIs support services were provided to Māori and Pasifika learners in joint programmes. Combined initiatives at this level seemed less controversial than joint Māori /Pasifika management structures and could actually have benefits. In one TEI for example, there was a *tuakana* mentoring programme that incorporated Māori and Pasifika values. It had its own evaluation methods of monitoring and reporting but its original success had depended very much on the input and goodwill of senior students. In the process of formalising this programme there had been a realisation that it went together with whole systems of values and concepts – it was a positive part of the creation of a learning community that included both Māori and Pasifika.

### **International Students**

A discussion of Pasifika learners can overlook the fact that not all Pasifika students are domestic students. Although they may not have a significant presence, many TEIs do have a proportion of international Pasifika students. Informants described relationships with varying degrees of formality with other educational institutions in the Pacific region such as high schools and universities. Some TEIs also provided training programmes in areas such as leadership for Pasifika organisations. Where an informant’s TEI had a particularly strong link with Pacific institutions this was often considered to be a very important part of their commitment to Pasifika. As with other educational developments for Pasifika students, personal networks, connections and relationships were often pivotal. Informants mentioned examples where relationships with schools in the Pacific had been fostered by staff that have worked in New Zealand institutions, but retain contacts in the Pacific. One of the drivers behind one polytechnic’s Pasifika strategy was a move to formalise such links with partners in Tonga and the Cook Islands.

Recruitment of international students was not the only goal of these activities and informants provided several examples of the support provided to Pasifika institutions by initiatives such as staff exchanges, scholarships for employees of universities in the Pacific to enable them to study for higher degrees, fellowships for staff from Pacific universities, and even an outreach university house for one New Zealand university at the National University of Samoa.

## **Funding and Incentives to Change**

### **Changes in Funding**

In Shephard’s (2006) study, one of the emerging issues was a concern that changes to SSG funding might lead to the abandonment of Pasifika initiatives. However, although SSG funding was replaced with equity funding in 2008 this did not appear to be a major concern for our informants. One informant from a TEI with very limited support for Pasifika learners did comment on the resource

deficit that the loss of these grants represented. However, for most informants funding worries were related more to the withdrawal of support for courses below level 4, the capping of funding and the new emphasis on funding related to completion. Complex issues of funding methodology, such as the TEC's changes in the formula used for assessing completion, did not figure largely in the informants' discussions, although one university informant thought that the shift would make it easier to report back to the TEC.

The capping of funding was discussed in detail by informants from one university. Capping within this TEI resulted in "hugely decreasing" the number of pre-degree and pathway programmes that otherwise fed students without university entrance qualifications into degree programmes. However, these informants conceded that the TEI had become more careful about the quality of its enrolment processes, and that this may be having a positive effect on reducing student failure rates. From the ITP point of view, many informants considered that directing funding away from lower-level courses could seriously limit the areas in which Pasifika (and other) students could receive job training (for example, in courses such as engineering, hospitality, construction and business administration). At one polytechnic with a substantial proportion of Pasifika students, over half were studying in these areas. Although informants acknowledged the TEC's drive towards qualifications at higher levels, most were of the view that a tertiary funding strategy founded on this goal may have adverse effects on many trades' courses, and may not always be appropriate for the ITP sector.

### **Views on Funding Directions in the Third TES**

There were uncertainties about the implications of the third TES for funding and the position of Pasifika students. While informants appreciated the greater clarity of direction about the TEC's requirements, several were very conscious that the TEC's greater emphasis on student completion or finishing degrees within certain timeframes might disadvantage Pasifika students, or possibly encourage institutions to make entry into some courses more difficult. The strongest comment in this area was:

*The measure of success is very KPI driven as opposed to will they invest in this type of student to get this type of outcome as opposed to thinking about what is the actual reality and aspiration of those learners might be and who they are currently and what they look like...There will be a lot of pressure on the institution to make sure that they fit into the box because that's what is driving the funding....The latest tertiary education strategy I would say there is a whole lot more risk for Pacific in there in terms of being siphoned out, particularly at the university level.*

More than one informant, however, expressed agreement with the accountability required from the TEC. Another went further and commented on the good relationships with the TEC over investment plans:

*Talking about the paper completion rate... they have been very reasonable in dealing with me. They know that sometimes you can't solve these problems overnight and they appear to be quite satisfied if we look like we are on our game, that we are monitoring performance rate of Pasifika island students or not.*

When informants discussed funding to support Pasifika initiatives most seemed to derive from equity funding or mainstream institutional funding. A number of informants mentioned funding sources such as scholarships that were particular to their institution. These included awards for high-achieving Pasifika students, especially those for postgraduate study, and scholarships for staff from Pasifika universities to study in New Zealand. Funding was also available at times from contestable funds from the TEC, though this might be granted for initiatives that encompassed both Māori and Pasifika learners.

## Discussion

This study was designed to discover the influence of successive government strategies for tertiary education on TEIs with regard to success for Pasifika learners, and consider how these strategies impacted on institutional strategies and actual organisational changes inside the TEIs. Finally, we wanted to find out how key players inside TEIs perceived the support and incentives provided by government to support their intended strategic changes.

To track the responses of 18 different tertiary institutions to three different tertiary education strategies over a period of eight years on strategies for Pasifika learners is an ambitious goal. It would be an ambitious goal if the relationship between policy formulation and policy implementation was a simple, direct and linear process. However, as is well established, policy implementation is far from simple, direct and linear. As Hill (2005) describes it:

*The policy process is a complex political process in which there are many actors: politicians, pressure groups, civil servants, publicly employed professionals, and even sometimes those who see themselves as the passive recipients of policy.*

To understand the policy process in the real world Hill (2005) suggests we need to pay attention not only to what gets written in policy-related documents, but also to what key policy players actually do. Real world policy analysis also recognises that policy is not just a top-down process, but involves a complex web of interactions at every point in the decision-making chain.

This perspective resonates strongly with the findings of this study. Our review of the three government strategies charted shifts in the emphasis of government objectives for Pasifika learners over time. There were indeed some shifts in emphasis – especially towards learning at higher levels in the second and third strategy – but there were also continuities and a consistent focus on increasing participation. National data on the overall performance of TEIs with regard to Pasifika participation, retention and completions from 2001 to 2009 (Ministry of Education, 2011a) suggests a mixed report card; a steady improvement and a narrowing of the gap between Pasifika and non-Pasifika in terms of participation rates, but Pasifika retention and completion rates showing only a slight improvement. Completion rates are of particular concern, with five-year completion rates in 2005 still 18 percent lower than non-Pasifika completion rates.

## Annual Reports and KPIs

Our analysis of Pasifika KPIs within the annual reports of TEIs was premised on the assumption that a KPI reported within a TEI's annual report signalled a strategic level intent to manage performance in relation to that performance domain. We found that Pasifika participation was the performance domain in which our sample TEIs were most active, with between 50 percent and 67 percent of TEIs reporting on KPIs for Pasifika participation between 2002 and 2010. Given the relatively high starting point, with half of all TEIs setting participation rates in 2002, and the consistency across the years of the study, it is difficult to state with confidence that setting participation rates is a direct response to the TES. As we noted in our review of the TES above, there were precursors to the TES in the form of the SSG scheme introduced in the year 2000, and the Ministry of Education's first PEP released in 2001; both of which included expectations about the numbers of Pasifika in tertiary education. Nor should we neglect to consider the earlier influence of section 181 of the Education Act 1989 requiring TEI Councils to encourage the greatest possible participation in tertiary education by the communities they serve, and to ensure that their institution does not discriminate unfairly against any person. The influence of equity issues is supported by the fact that many of the annual reports included Pasifika KPIs within the equal opportunities section of their report, and funding to support Pasifika initiatives has moved from the SSG scheme to equity funding.

This is not to say that the successive TES have had no impact on TEIs with regard to Pasifika participation but to recognise that this policy space, with the multiplicity of policy players including the TEC, Ministry of Education and New Zealand Qualifications Authority, is a crowded one. As Hill (2005) puts it:

*Most of the policies that are likely to be studied in the modern world are changes to existing policies. Even when they seem to address a new issue or problem they will nevertheless be entering a crowded policy space, impacting on and being impacted by other policies.*

Our key informant interviews offer an insight into the range of activities undertaken by TEIs to promote Pasifika participation. Activities designed to engage with local schools – and the wider community – were mentioned frequently. These activities range from broad awareness raising for school students and parents, through to meetings with school principals, and to school-based initiatives focussed on particular programmes such as careers in the health sector. Informants commented on the pivotal role of schools in not only encouraging Pasifika students to enter tertiary education, but also to pursue particular subject areas in which Pasifika are under-represented such as science-based subjects. Recent research by the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (2010) reinforces this view highlighting that “fewer Pacific students than total domestic students were attracted to the fields of engineering (5.3 percent compared to 7.4 percent), the natural and physical sciences (3.4 percent compared to 6.1 percent), health (5.7 percent compared to 8.0 percent) and agriculture (1.1 percent compared to 4 percent)”.

The annual reports in our sample also reported on KPIs for Pasifika retention. There was greater variability across the years of the study in the number of TEIs, including a specific Pasifika retention KPI – 20 percent in 2002 and 2003, rising to 50 percent in 2006 and 2007, then falling to 22 percent in 2010. That there was a growth in the number of institutions using annual reports to report on Pasifika retention KPIs during the period of the study may well be attributable to the objectives of the TES. Especially the second TES where the emphasis moved beyond participation to provide a sharper focus on retention and completion. Even though the use of retention KPIs began to increase prior to the release of the second TES, the TEIs may well have anticipated the likely inclusion of goals for the retention of Pasifika students. The policy process is dynamic and it is likely that these KPIs emerged in response to local and or national feedback on performance. What is more difficult to explain is the fall in Pasifika retention KPIs reported in annual reports since 2007 to just four TEIs or 22 percent of participants. Of course the fact that they are not being reported in publicly accessible annual reports does not mean that there are no specific Pasifika retention rate KPIs in use. Retention rates for Pasifika continue to be a priority of the TES and will be monitored by the TEC as part of the much tighter and standardised educational performance monitoring scheme introduced in 2009. The discussion with key informants certainly highlighted retention as an ongoing issue and the first year of study was often mentioned as a key time to target interventions to support Pasifika students.

Informants described initiatives such as the use of a trial period to allow students the opportunity to test whether their subject choice and level was appropriate. However, on the whole, informants tended not to differentiate between initiatives targeted at retention from those with a focus on completion, perhaps because, from a student perspective, continuing with study and completing study are just two points on the same continuum of student achievement.

Our annual report analysis found a strong and steady growth in KPIs for Pasifika completion – even if the definition of completion varied considerably both between and within the TEIs across the years of the study. The proportion of institutions with KPIs for Pasifika completion rose from 22 percent of the sample in 2002 to 67 percent in 2008 and 2009. This may well reflect ongoing concern about an

apparently intractable problem with overall Pasifika completion rates (the national data indicating an 18 percent gap between Pasifika and non-Pasifika five-year completions in 2005 [Ministry of Education, 2011a]).

Our informants highlighted a number of initiatives to support student retention and completion within their institutions from student mentoring initiatives, to changes in the teaching and learning environment (such as using smaller class sizes), to family support initiatives involving the whole family. Many informants argued for Pasifika-focussed initiatives and against the assumption that support for Pasifika could be easily combined with support for Māori. This latter point may be connected with another issue raised by informants about cultural recognition, validation and the visibility of Pasifika within a TEI. Informants described a number of ways in which their TEI was trying to recognise and validate Pasifika culture, including: the development of Pasifika courses and Pasifika content within courses; Pasifika cultural events and exhibitions; and the establishment of Pasifika centres and cultural spaces. Staff awareness of Pasifika culture and practices and the use of Pasifika languages were also considered to be important keys to unlocking student achievement.

In addition to KPIs for student achievement our analysis of annual reports identified KPIs relating to the organisational capability of the TEI to engage with Pasifika. These included KPIs for the recruitment of Pasifika staff, Pasifika planning and Pasifika community engagement. The recruitment of Pasifika staff was highlighted in the first TES and seems such a key equity issue for Pasifika that it is surprising it doesn't feature in the KPIs of more of our sample. The proportion of TEIs setting KPIs for Pasifika staff recruitment bumps along at 16–33 percent in any one year of the study. Once again the approaches to target definition differ; some TEIs set targets for overall Pasifika staff rates, and others differentiate between academic and other staff groups. This was one area where the university sector proved to be more proactive and consistent in target setting than the ITPs. The intent of the first TES in relation to the recruitment of Pasifika staff was not repeated in the second or third TES, we can only wonder whether a restatement of the objective might have been reflected in the KPIs.

KPIs for Pasifika planning appear in the annual reports of 44 percent of the sample in 2004 and 2005, are included in 33 percent of annual reports in each year from 2006 to 2009, and then fall to 17 percent in 2010. The spike in activity in 2004 and 2005 (mirrored in the KPIs for Pasifika community engagement) may well be a response to the Interim Statement of Tertiary Education Priorities (2002–2007) that included the following objective:

*All TEOs should work with their Pacific stakeholders to develop measures to ensure improved connection of Pacific communities and enterprises and to ensure improved learning outcomes for Pacific peoples (Ministry of Education, 2002, p 19).*

It seems likely that this objective would have been given added impetus by the TECs subsequent work to develop a “Pasifika Peoples Strategy 2004 to 2006” (TEC, 2004). These KPIs tended to be around the establishment of systems, structures and processes to advance Pasifika objectives. That the number of KPIs in this area has fallen may indicate that the advisory groups have been established, the strategies developed and the processes are in place rather than a lack of interest in this aspect of performance.

The data from informant interviews offered a very mixed view of TEIs planning for Pasifika and of Pasifika strategic plans. For some informants this represented an opportunity to review and evaluate activities for Pasifika students, to debate future strategic direction setting and to inform the Pasifika aspects of the investment planning process. Other informants cautioned against the plan becoming

an empty “tick-box” exercise and argued that to be effective, responsibility needed to be allocated to key individuals with the authority and accountability to ensure progress.

Like KPIs for Pasifika planning, KPIs for Pasifika community engagement also peaked in 2004 (probably for the same reasons) and continue to appear in the KPIs of a few TEIs since that time. We can’t be certain but, because of the nature of the community engagement process, it seems reasonable that this is one area where the number of KPIs appearing in annual reports does not reflect the actual level of activity. Individual departments and programmes often have relationships with local people, organisations and employers whether or not there is a strategic level KPI. This does not, however, diminish the importance of a corporate level commitment to engage with the local Pasifika community, which can only help address the issues of visibility and cultural recognition we describe below.

The evidence from the annual reports, supplemented with related data from the key informant interviews, is consistent with the view that successive TES have influenced the performance management activities reported by TEIs within their annual reports. However, this influence is only one of a number of internal and external, local and national influences. Nor is it an influence that is consistent across all TEIs, all of the time. A significant proportion of TEIs do not include Pasifika KPIs that relate to government strategy within their annual reports. Of course this doesn’t mean that they do not have KPIs that are reported elsewhere, but is a curious omission in what has been a key public accountability document.

The national data suggests that the outcomes in relation to Pasifika participation are moving in the right direction. However, whilst some progress is being made in relation to Pasifika retention and completion rates – this is proving to be more intractable. The national picture also masks a great deal of local variation in outcomes between individual TEIs. Progress appears to be very marked in some TEIs, and less so in others. Unfortunately, because of the wide variation in the way this data is defined and calculated, both between TEIs and within TEIs over time, we have not been able to produce a valid and reliable account of performance outcomes. The work of the TEC in relation to definitions of educational performance indicators and their standardised reporting formats should be able to produce more reliable data in time. It would aid future analysis if all TEIs adopted the TEC definitions for defining and reporting their KPIs in annual reports.

## Key Informant Interviews

The key informant interviews helped us to uncover the views of TEIs on successive government TES, the impact on institutional strategies and organisational changes, and perceptions of how the TEC and other government agencies have incentivised and supported these organisational changes. It was quite clear that our informants broadly welcomed the Pasifika objectives within each of the three TES and considered them to be an important signal to TEIs that success for Pasifika learners was a key government priority.

The inclusion of Pasifika objectives within successive TES was seen as an important enabler of change. The TES had raised the priority for action to support Pasifika learners, unlocked resources for Pasifika initiatives and included Pasifika priorities on the strategic agendas of TEIs. A minority of our informants wanted the TES to go further with clearer, more challenging and more specific targets for Pasifika.

In spite of the actual differences in detail our informants tended to see the second TES as an elaboration of the first and not to distinguish between their requirements in terms of institutional strategies or organisational change. Although the third TES didn’t introduce significantly new



changes in strategic direction, most informants perceived it differently from the earlier TES because of changes to funding arrangements. In particular, many informants expressed doubts and fears that these might actually disadvantage Pasifika learners. Among their concerns were:

- the limitation placed on the length of time in which a degree can be completed
- funding based upon completion rates
- the emphasis on funding towards higher-level qualifications
- limitations on student loans for older students
- less availability for foundation courses and programmes for students transitioning from one level to another.
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Some informants were of the view, for example, that the emphasis on completion rates might encourage TEIs to exclude Pasifika students from some courses, in order to improve their overall results. Others were very concerned that the funding shift towards achievement at higher levels might limit the opportunities for Pasifika to achieve at levels 1–3 and devalue learning for trades.

Although the Pasifika objectives with the TES were welcomed, the informants were quite clear that government statements of commitment to Pasifika priorities were necessary but not sufficient. The influence of key individuals and groups both within and outside of the TEI could act as facilitators or constraints on action. Many informants highlighted the role of Pasifika staff, Pasifika students and other Pasifika stakeholders – including Pasifika community groups and organisations – in moving agendas forward. These moves were best conceived as initiatives by Pasifika for Pasifika and were likely to put TEIs with larger number of Pasifika students, Pasifika staff and Pasifika community connections in a stronger position with regard to Pasifika student achievement. Related to this, and raised repeatedly by informants, was the issue of how to progress Pasifika priorities in TEIs with low numbers of Pasifika students. Many informants suggested the TEC needed to provide direction and support to TEIs with low numbers of Pasifika students to ensure that low numbers did not entail a reduced commitment to Pasifika educational priorities.

Informants were of the view that change requires a whole of institution commitment, and that there was a risk that institutional planning for Pasifika people might become a “tick-box” exercise. These informants argued that clear objectives needed to be established and people allocated with the authority and accountability to progress these objectives. This latter point was related to a discussion about Pasifika people appointed to senior management positions having a responsibility for Pasifika priorities. In a similar vein several informants commented on the current lack of a Pasifika person in the role of Pasifika Advisory Officer within the TEC itself.

An important thread throughout the interviews was the role and presence of Pasifika staff. This related to one of the key objectives of the first TES – to achieve an increased proportion of Pacific staff at all levels of decision making in the tertiary education system. The accounts offered by informants in this study suggested a career developmental pathway where Pasifika staff were reenlisted in student support roles, before moving into more senior management positions. This was described as a “home-grown” process in which some TEIs adopted a deliberate policy of developing staff through their own postgraduate qualifications. If the views of our informants are correct then this may well be where the greatest impact of Pasifika staff seems likely to be – as student role models and key players in progressing Pasifika priorities with TEIs. However, informants also noted the strong competition for Pasifika graduates from other industries.

An encouraging indication of change was related to what several informants called the “visibility” or sense of presence of Pasifika people within the student and staff group of some TEIs. Informants associated Pasifika “visibility” with a number of interrelated factors: the numbers of Pasifika

students and staff; a Pasifika staff presence in senior management; physical spaces and places (such as *fono* rooms and Pasifika centres) where Pasifika culture and language were recognised, validated and celebrated; Pasifika courses and Pasifika content in mainstream courses; non-Pasifika staff awareness of Pasifika cultural practices; Pasifika cultural events and art exhibitions; and active engagement and involvement with the local Pasifika community. These views are supported by an unpublished literature review prepared by the Ministry of Pacific and Island Affairs and referred to in a report by Statistics New Zealand (2011). The literature review identified a sense of academic isolation as the most common barrier to success for Pasifika students. Described there as “integration” rather than “visibility”, a number of contributing factors were identified, among them a lack of student networks and a “critical mass” of students from similar backgrounds (Statistics NZ, 2011). The most frequent comments about “visibility” in this study came from three TEIs that had the largest proportions of Pasifika students.

## Pasifika Policy Development through a Complexity Lens

We would like to conclude by suggesting that the findings of this study are consistent with recent work in New Zealand using complexity theory to analyse public policy (Eppel, 2009a; Eppel, 2009b; Eppel, Matheson & Walton, 2011). Thinking about the issue of success for Pasifika learners through the lens of complexity theory is instructive. We believe that it helps to highlight the inbuilt limitations of this study, connects with some of the issues and insights offered by our informants, and might suggest a useful direction for future research into success for Pasifika learners. Eppel has offered a complexity analysis of the policy development process of the first two TES (Eppel, 2009a), and has also used it to examine some issues in relation to Māori and the TES (Eppel, 2009b).

Although we don’t intend to offer a full complexity analysis of our findings we want to illustrate the value of this perspective with three concepts: complex systems; attractors; and initial conditions and system history.

Firstly, Eppel considers that complexity theory has a good fit with tertiary education strategy because educational policy processes involve interactions between several complex systems. From the point of view of an individual TEI the external systems environment includes the TEC, Ministry of Education, other TEIs and the Pasifika community. The internal environment includes senior managers, non-Pasifika staff, Pasifika staff and Pasifika students. In any particular TEI there may be many more individuals and groups who directly or indirectly influence decision making and responses to strategy.

As Eppel *et al.* (2011) argue:

*Complex systems are self-organising and interdependent – each individual (re)acts to their own interpretation of events as they unfold, and to what they think will happen next, while adapting to the actions of others around them...the action of individuals will also be influenced by individuals’ understandings of context, available resources, system history and interacting systems.*

The key informant interviews were full of comments on the complex relationship between key players in the system from individual senior managers, to officers in the TEC, to Pasifika staff and the wider Pasifika community. One of the implications of complexity theory for this study is that no one individual can possibly have a complete holistic overview of even the local system of which they are a part. On this view the insights of the informants can offer important glimpses into the operation of the local system, but only a partial view of the whole policy process.

Secondly, complexity theory includes the concept of attractors to explain patterns of action within complex systems. According to complexity theory, attractors contribute to the maintenance or change in patterns of behaviour in complex system-like organisations. Attractors are considered to be passive states not active forces, and form part of the conditions of the system. Battram (1999) describes attractors as:

*More like the drifting of a boat in a slow current in a wide river than a magnet pulling filings to itself.*

Attractors bring people together to influence action and they can include values, goals, theories and leaders. In the context of tertiary educational policy for Pasifika people the concept of attractors helps us to see that although the objectives of the TES for Pasifika learners function as a powerful attractor for change, this happens in the context of other significant influences including competing policy goals and priorities, the influence of leaders, and the values, aspirations and visibility of Pasifika people.

The third concept we want to consider is the idea of initial conditions and system history – in other words, the recognition that all systems have unique starting points and trajectories that have powerful influences on new information or strategic goals emanating from outside (or inside) the system. This implies that local conditions and system history – including resources, local systems, leadership, relationships with stakeholders, etc. – will have a significant influence on the way in which TEIs respond to an external stimulus like government strategies for Pasifika learners. It is no surprise that our informants offered a wide variety of ways in which they were responding to the objectives of the TES for Pasifika learners. It's likely that these approaches evolved from the unique circumstances of each TEI and its relationships with other systems. This is not to argue for relativism or suggest that any approach is as good as any other, but to acknowledge that some approaches will have a better fit with the particular circumstances of a TEI and that one size is unlikely to fit all.

Eppel *et al.* (2011) recommend developing a portfolio of possible interventions and suggest that the role of the public manager using a complexity framework is to:

*Facilitate a process that gives rise to a coherent, self-reinforcing web of reactions that move the overall system in the desired direction.*

Eppel *et al.* (2011) also argue that policy evaluation should be an ongoing, reflexive, “real-time” practice, and should be used to support the implementation-learning-development process. This implies a closer relationship between the evaluators and the evaluated than we were able to achieve in this project and probably implies a case study approach.

## The Equity Scorecard

One approach that supports organisational learning to promote equitable educational outcomes is the equity scorecard developed by staff at the Centre for Urban Education at the University of California. The approach uses an adaptation of the balanced scorecard for performance management applied in the context of promoting equity in tertiary education. It involves a high-level group of managers within an institution forming an evidence team who starts the process by creating equity measures using a framework for self-assessment called the equity scorecard. The equity scorecard offers a framework of four dimensions or perspectives against which an institution can set equity indicators and measure their performance. The four perspectives reflect the priorities of the tertiary education strategies for Pasifika learners and include:

- Access perspective: Including indicators which indicate the extent to which under-

represented students gain access to institutional programs and resources.

- Retention perspective: Including indicators on retention rates for under-represented groups by course.
- Institutional receptivity perspective: Including indicators for dimensions of institutional support for under-represented groups including staff ethnicity.
- Excellence perspective: Including completion rates and academic excellence amongst under-represented groups.

The data collected by evidence teams is not just about promoting institutional awareness and accountability for equity performance issues, but enabling proactive engagement, organisational learning and change (Bauman, 2005; Bensimon, 2005). The approach explicitly rejects a deficit model for the underachievement of under-represented groups (a criticism levelled at the SSG funded initiatives [Ministry of Education, 2003]) and argues that institutions must take responsibility for improving equity outcomes. As Bensimon (2004) states:

*Our efforts in the Diversity Scorecard<sup>3</sup> project have turned the act of data analysis into an intervention tool – a catalyst for change – that specifically seeks to alter individual perceptions and mind-sets. Individuals change because they learn something that they do not know. For those in a position to directly affect student outcomes, the Diversity Scorecard tries to develop a deeper understanding of the inequities that are built into their institutions.*

Reviewing the data from 2010 annual reports, and based on the KPIs and targets reported, only four of the participating institutions (two universities and two ITPs) could be said to be taking a balanced approach to setting at least one target in each of the four areas. We cannot tell from annual report data alone to what extent this corporate level target setting was being used to facilitate more fine-grained analysis and learning for the purposes of organisational change.

Over time, the investment planning process, combined with a shared approach to data definitions, might increase the appetite of institutions to manage performance for Pasifika success, and – at the same time - enable a more robust way to benchmark and compare performance. However, developing the organisational capability of TEIs to improve equity outcomes for Pasifika learners (and other under-represented groups) is likely to require an institutional commitment to learning and change facilitated by a process that looks something like the Equity Scorecard approach.

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<sup>3</sup>The name of the Diversity Scorecard was later changed to the Equity Scorecard but the perspective and the organisational learning process remain the same.

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## Appendix 1: Contributions of the Pacific Advisory Group

### *Pacific Advisory Group*

Tupu Araitī (Cook Islands), Aiono Mino Cleverley (Samoa), Vei Lotaki (Tonga), Filipo Lui (Tokelau).

WelTec's Pacific Advisory Group formed an important part of the research project and met at several points during the research process:

- at the beginning of the project
- after letters had been sent out to the TEIs inviting them to take part in the study
- before the interviews, to review the interview approaches to be used
- after the interviews, to discuss a sample transcript
- after reviewing the draft report.

It was intended from the start that the project should build capacity. This was partly fulfilled in providing an opportunity for wider research collaboration and review by Pasifika community members with experience, interest and expertise in tertiary education. For example, Advisory Group members commented on the research design and interview questions, and were very helpful in providing suggested revisions to the draft report on government strategy and Pasifika education.

As the project developed and the research findings emerged the Advisory Group became particularly active in highlighting questions and issues raised by the study that could usefully be addressed in future research. It would be fair to say that for some members of the Advisory Group these additional questions were considered to be of greater importance to the Pasifika community and for Pasifika learners and their families, than the policy issues that were at the heart of this project. The issues and questions raised by the Advisory Group for future enquiry include:

- robust quantitative analysis of the outcomes for Pasifika learners in terms of participation, retention and achievement rates presented in a manner that would allow fair comparisons between institutions
- studies that focus on the best ways of offering career advice to Pasifika students and their families on entering tertiary study, as well as help with the transition to work after getting a qualification. Although this issue was not specifically canvassed in the interviews for this project, the researchers did note that at least one TEI had outlined its methods for getting families involved in the choice of study
- research into the assessment of Pasifika learners and the development of appropriate assessment models for Pasifika students.

Every research project is constrained by the research questions asked, by the resources available to conduct the research and by the limitations of the methods selected. In the case of this project it may be that a study which included *Success for Pasifika learners* in the title raised expectations that were beyond the actual scope of the project. However, based on the findings of this study, the research team agree with the Advisory Group that much remains to be done to achieve success and equity for Pasifika learners, and that all players in the policy network – especially tertiary education institutions – need to make a renewed commitment to achieving the aspirations of Pasifika people.