Engaging Pacific Migrant Workers in Literacy, Numeracy & Financial Literacy Training: Reflections on the Research Process

Figure 1. Pacific adult learners: Learning to make scrambled eggs (Taylor, 2010)

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Acknowledgements

"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change. The courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference"

Executive Summary

This report has a twofold purpose. First, it highlights teaching and learning practices, understandings and experiences that have impacted positively on a group of Pacific migrant workers who attended a pilot training programme named Vakameasina in the Bay of Plenty. Second, it provides a complementary critical appraisal of the research process itself.

Research is not always a sure-fire bet. Questions do not always lead to the answers we expect; sometimes it is not until we hear the answers that we understand what the questions should have been. Qualitative education research has been described as being particularly vulnerable to design flaws and less-than-optimal outcomes, due to the wide range of variables which are frequently involved, including learner characteristics, instructional method and environmental context (Conger, 2005). Yet participation in a project which perhaps falls short of the researchers' aspirations can still deliver positive learning outcomes. It provides the research team and their wider learning community a chance to reflect on the project's limitations, and lessens the risks of similar misjudgements in the future (Nulden & Scheepers, 2002).

In the present case, hindsight has shown that the original aim for the project - discovering new and innovative teaching strategies which might inform understanding of a wider population of all Pacific learners – was unrealistic, given the size of the study. While aspects of the programme and delivery *were* innovative, in fact, much of what was found to work well is already comprehensively documented in the literature about Pacific students' learning preferences in particular, and about Adult Learners in general. However, there remains considerable value, for those delivering future Vakameasina programmes, and for others involved in similar training work with newly arrived migrant groups, in "testing" the assertions and the practical application of theory in a real-world context. There is also value, we hope, in sharing our learning as emerging researchers about the complications we encountered, and how we feel we would address these differently, were we to carry out this research again. Each section of this report therefore includes a segment titled "Limitations" in which we seek to reflect on our own learning and discoveries.

The report describes a 10 week English literacy, numeracy and financial literacy training programme attended by 146 Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) workers from Kiribati, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Tonga during their time in the Bay of Plenty region of New Zealand between 2009-2010. This study sought to identify specific learning and teaching strategies that promote and support learner engagement for improved learning and achievement in workplace literacy and numeracy programmes.

Six methods were used to gather data. First, a Literature Review of key studies related to the enablers, barriers and strategies for engagement and learning for Pacific students was conducted. Second, focus

group interviews were used to explore the experiences and perceptions of 21 Vakameasina participants. Third, the four tutors involved in delivering the programme provided written feedback about content, teaching techniques and class response. Fourth, six employers of the migrant workers were interviewed to gather information about how they felt about the programme and suggestions for improvement. Fifth, learners were asked to complete an anonymous student programme evaluation covering their views of teacher organisation, course content, and usefulness of the content and timing of the programme; 77 students participated in this phase. Finally, the intention was to gather insights from classroom observations, and to this end, with the students' consent, many of the classes were video-recorded although much of this material was subsequently not used.

The data was grouped into four categories: teaching practices, teacher qualities, learning environment and learner achievement outcomes. The main findings revealed that a majority of learners believed the teachers were friendly, patient and understanding. Most learners achieved significant learning outcomes around improving their English, particularly through the use of computers which many participants had never used before. Most learners overwhelmingly believed the programme was useful and beneficial to them and their family and friends back home, and expressed a strong desire to continue their learning around English and using computers. However, well over a third of learners struggled with the timetabling of classes that were held after work when workers were too tired to fully participate.

Comments from students, tutors and employers all supported key concepts within the literature: that group learning plans and lesson design, creating a Pacific place of learning, tutor team work, reports and record keeping can be effective strategies to engage Pacific learners in workplace literacy and numeracy programmes. Tutors must collaboratively work with Pacific learners and employers to create a group learning plan around learning objectives and activities that are relevant to their workplace and education needs. Teaching approaches must be underpinned by the learning objectives and where possible lessons should be delivered using real life scenarios whereby the learners can practice a skill. Therefore, empowering learners with some control over their learning can promote effective learning. The report includes a number of specific recommendations about how this can be effected.

External validation of the strengths of the programme and the conclusions drawn about what enabled the learning of this first group of RSE learners can be found in an independent evaluation of the Vakameasina pilot, conducted by Mathea Roorda (2011), discussed later in this report.

Limitations of the research process discussed in the critical appraisal commentary of "Limitations" relate to selection of literature, difficulties with implementing the methodology, ethics, data management and access, a lack of "hard" evidence, data analysis and specificity of outcomes, and the role of external project mentors.

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1. Introduction

Background to Vakameasina

The Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) policy was introduced in 2007 to allow for the temporary entry of offshore workers to work in the New Zealand horticulture industry. In 2008 the first group of unskilled and low-skilled workers were recruited from six Pacific countries: approximately 50% from Vanuatu, 23% from Tonga, 18% from Samoa, 7% from the Solomon Islands and around 2% from each of Tuvalu and Kiribati. When reviewing the first year of RSE, the Ministry of Immigration and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade identified a number of strategies for enhancing development gains. Among these was the decision to fund a pilot training scheme to lift the literacy, numeracy and financial literacy of RSE adult migrant workers, who often had relatively limited formal education (Roorda, 2011).

An open tender process to design and deliver the training programme was held: the successful applicants were Fruition Horticulture (a horticultural consultancy company) in partnership with McGirr Associates (a provider of Workplace training programmes). The programme they designed was named "Vakameasina – Learning for Pacific Growth", incorporating the word "Vaka" which is a boat or canoe, and "measina", a Samoan word meaning "valuables", thus a boat of valuables for the family (Roorda, 2011).

The pilot programme was delivered in twenty-five classes, with 312 enrolments, between November 2009 and September 2010. Slightly over half these students were in Hawke's Bay; just under half (47%, or 146 students) attended classes in Te Puke and Katikati in the Bay of Plenty. The research discussed in this report relates to the Bay of Plenty groups. Fruition recognised that the pilot provided an opportunity to research teaching and learning that occurred with migrant worker groups from a range of Pacific nations, and submitted a successful application to Ako Aotearoa's Northern Hub to fund the project.

Prior to the delivery of the pilot, wide consultation occurred regarding the topics that should be taught. This consultation identified that the engagement of the learner and the support of the employer would be greater if the topics taught were topics that had some relevance either to the workplace or directly impacted on improving the experience that the workers had during their stay in New Zealand. Five priority areas were identified by the industry as being relevant training modules for the workers. The five modules were:
1.   Financial and Personal Goal Setting
2.   Budgeting in New Zealand

3.   Payslips, Deductions and Employee Rights and Responsibilities

4.   Remittances

5.   Health and Safety.

Literacy, numeracy and financial literacy learning was embedded in these topics. Tutors were also given an amount of flexibility to work into the programme topics of specific interest to the learner group. However, decisions on these topic areas were made at a time when there were no RSE workers in New Zealand to consult, adding a further justification for the research described in this report.

Vakameasina Delivery

With the programme developed, employers of seasonal workers were approached to identify those who were willing and supportive of their workers engaging in after-hours learning. In consultation with employers, groups of workers were identified who might benefit from the learning. A presentation by Fruition and McGirr Associates was given to these workers to determine their interest. Those who were keen to participate were assessed to identify their level of literacy and numeracy. The assessment matched the individual's level of speaking, listening, reading and numeracy to the Tertiary Education Commission's Learning Progressions.

These assessments were used to inform the tutor of the relative needs of the group. In some situations the assessments were also used to exclude from the programme those whose English language and numeracy skills were relatively high (Step 3 or above) or those whose English language skills, particularly listening were so low that they were unlikely to benefit from such a short course.

The programme was delivered outside work hours over 10 weeks, with classes scheduled to run for 2 hours per week. The classes were generally groups of no more than 13 participants per tutor. There were classes of up to 20 participants but these classes were facilitated by 2 tutors. No post programme assessment was undertaken on the participants relative to the TEC progressions as it was acknowledged that insufficient time had elapsed for there to be a measureable shift in terms of progressions steps.

Innovations

The designers of Vakameasina, Fruition and McGirr Associates, believe several aspects of the programme were innovative:

- The design and delivery of the programme was driven by the needs of the industry and, once in the classroom, the aspirations of the students. Unlike traditional curriculum development

processes, the growers, learners, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Department of Labour and participating Pacific countries joined forces to set up the programme.

- Unlike traditional education practices, the classes were scheduled around the workers' work schedule. Dayshift workers attended class in the evening and night shift workers attended class in the afternoon.

- Food was provided, transport to class was subsidized and the programme was free to the RSE learners.

- Learners were encouraged to speak their language or translate English into their language.

- Learners were encouraged to share personal stories which helped the tutors to understand their context and alleviate misconceptions about Pacific migrant learners.

2. Literature review

Literature relevant to this project discusses the characteristics of engagement that contribute towards effective teaching and learning practices, issues that impact on Pacific learners, Pacific learning styles and Pacific theories of learning and positive teaching practices.

What is engagement?

Although their study was about students in the middle years of schooling in New Zealand (Years 7-10), Poskitt and Gibbs (2010) highlight significant teaching and learning practices that reflect Pacific theories of learning and teaching. Poskitt and Gibbs completed a literature review of student engagement in the middle years and they found that there are a multitude of definitions which have made it difficult to achieve a common understanding of what engagement is. Further, such a variety of definitions have not made it easy to identify what could be done to help support students to learn (Poskitt & Gibbs, 2010). However, they offer the following definition of engagement as a starting point:

> Engagement is a multifaceted construct that encompasses students' sense of belonging and connectedness to their school, teachers and peers; their sense of agency, self-efficacy and orientation to achieve within their classrooms and in their broader extra-curricular endeavors; their involvement, effort, levels of concentration and interest in subjects and learning in general; and the extent to which learning is enjoyed for its own sake, or seen as something that must be endured to receive a reward or avoid sanction. Further, engagement is a variable state of being that is influenced by a range of internal and external factors including the perceived value or relevance of the learning and the presence of opportunities for students to experience appropriately-pitched challenge and success in their learning. As such, engagement is malleable by the action of teachers (Poskitt & Gibbs, 2010, p. 10).

Features that contribute to engagement

Poskitt and Gibbs reported that the presence of the following features stimulated engagement:

- connectedness/sense of self belonging
- sense of agency
- involvement, effort, commitment, and concentration
- motivation and interest in learning
- sense of self efficacy
- orientation of achievement and performance

- self-regulatory processes and skills (Poskitt & Gibbs, 2010, p. 10)

Furthermore, the following factors are known to help students engage in their learning:

- nurturing trusting relationships
    - caring about them
    - knowing them well
    - being fair
- making learning fun
    - viewing learning from a learner perspective
    - cooperative learning
    - peer tutoring
    - problem based learning
    - hands on work
    - demonstrations
    - use of video games and technology
- making learning meaningful
- indicating why learning something is important and relating content to learners' lives
- enabling learners to learn better and helping them to take responsibility for their own learning.

Also, Poskitt and Gibbs (2010) suggest that facilitators need to draw on a range of other strategies to accommodate individuals or groups of learners than others to promote and support learner engagement.

Issues that impact on Pacific learners

In a study by Pasikale (1996) about exploring issues impacting on Pacific learners, half of the participants reported that the teacher's personal qualities were significant in helping them to achieve the learning outcomes. These personal qualities were based around believing in the learner, putting time and energy into the learner, being friendly and sharing their experiences with the learner, being patient with the learner, encouraging the learner to attend learning sessions and making the students feel valued and important (Pasikale, 1996). In the same study, participants revealed that the teaching approach taken by the teacher was instrumental in the student achieving the learning outcomes. Successful teaching approaches included providing extra tuition, explaining key concepts repeatedly to promote information recall and retention, promoting a learning environment where making mistakes in class was a part of the learning process, giving lots of examples, checking for understanding and not limiting learning to the classroom (Pasikale, 1996).

Pacific learners' learning styles

Pasikale (1996) found that Pacific learners preferred a range of teaching approaches and to focus on one would negatively impact on the learning needs of a diverse group of learners. Teacher-centred approaches, group processes, self-directed or one to one approaches and providing opportunities for learners to apply the knowledge or skill were found to be the most effective teaching approaches to engaging Pacific learners.

Pacific theories of learning

Based on existing studies, engagement practices which achieve the greatest success among Pacific learners in the workplace embrace both traditional and non-traditional approaches to learning (Anae, Anderson, & Benseman, 2002; Pasikale, Yaw & Apa, 1998; Pasikale, 1996; Thaman, 1996; Tofi, Flett, Timutimu-Thorpe, 1996).

A study by Helu Thaman (1996) posited the idea that Pacific peoples' perceptions of learning and teaching are different to western assumptions of learning and teaching. Thaman argued that Pacific notions of learning and teaching were more concerned with enabling learning compared with the western model of teaching knowledge. Pasikale points out that for too long the emphasis of education has been on the acquisition of knowledge measured through the passing of exams which is considered to be the most important achievement at compulsory and post-secondary school (Thaman, 1996; Pasikale and Yaw, 1998). On the other hand, a Pacific notion of learning and teaching is one based on support and encouragement (Pasikale, 1996). That is, the outcome of education should be viewed as a continuous, dynamic and a lifelong learning process for an individual (Pasikale, 1996). As Pasikale says: "The measure of success goes beyond the passing of examinations" (p. 113). Furthermore, recent studies show that the types of learning environments and teaching practices that enable learning are those that cater for the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual elements of the learner (Pasikale & Yaw, 1998).

Positive teaching and learning practices

Based on a study about Pacific learners and effective literacy strategies, McDonald and Thornley (2006) reported that students were most likely to respond positively to learning that incorporates a holistic approach to learning and teaching. McDonald and Thornley claim that teachers who have a positive impact on students are those who:

- are culturally engaging, sensitive, open and thoughtful about Pacific ways of knowing

- are friendly and caring to support their learners to manage fear and anxiety associated with learning, particularly first time or second chance adult learners
- are respectful of their students' values and beliefs about learning
- understand what it is like to be a learner and implement ways to demystify common misconceptions about education i.e. to deconstruct Western notion of education
- consult with students to identify their learning needs and aspirations
- can use assessment data to identify the literacy and numeracy needs of their learners effectively
- can understand the literacy and numeracy needs of their specific curriculum areas
- can understand the literacy and numeracy needs that are relevant to the learner and their workplace

Further, McDonald and Thornley's (2006) study shows that the key to successful learning, as mentioned previously, is to provide a safe and supportive environment for learning. Students are most likely to succeed in their learning if:

- they have learned about the nature of the programme including assessment requirements to complete the programme successfully
- they have experienced a number of opportunities to practice a skill and apply their knowledge in the workplace or everyday living
- they have become increasingly independent in their learning
- they have developed a sense of connection with teachers who sincerely support them in their learning

Lastly, McDonald and Thornley's (2006) study indicates that teachers could better meet the needs of Pacific learners by undertaking professional development opportunities to:

- explore and challenge their biases and beliefs that might impact on their ability to connect with Pacific learners
- identify practices that positively impact on the learning of Pacific students
- explore barriers that impact on the learning of Pacific students or make it difficult for students to participate in literacy and numeracy training

Summary

The review of literature shows that Pacific notions of learning and teaching are often described as distinctly different to Western theories of learning and teaching. A Pacific approach to learning and teaching emphasises enabling learning whereby learning is viewed as continuous, on-going and a lifelong process. Further, the measure of success goes beyond the passing of exams to providing an

environment that accommodates the needs of the whole learner: physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. Recent studies show that there is a strong correlation between particular teaching and learning practices around nurturing trusting relationships, making learning fun, making learning meaningful, indicating why learning something is important and relating content to learners' lives, and enabling learners to learn better and helping them to take responsibility for their own learning. It is generally accepted that for any meaningful learning to occur, the learner initially must want to learn. Therefore an important starting point for providers working with Pacific learners is to validate the learner and their life experiences. As Pasikale and Yaw (1998) point out:

> This is done by accepting and valuing the person for who and what they are, and to appreciate the strengths and assets they bring to the group as a result of their identity and life experiences. Essentially, what these organisations have done is to prepare the individual for learning by resolving any baggage or personal problems the individual may have. Then she or he is made aware that they are in a safe and supportive environment where learning occurs through doing. Students' self-confidence is built up, they are given "you can succeed" messages, and are encouraged to set achievable goals. With each milestone reached, the individual is more able to develop a love of learning (p. 113).

Limitations

The Literature Review was conducted prior to the data collection from primary sources and included a range of studies of Pacific learners. The assumption (which we now recognise as inherently flawed) was made that identified characteristics and attributes of this broad population would be largely generalizable across the range of Pacific Island nationalities represented in the research sample. Further, the Review, and indeed many of the studies cited, made little distinction between learner contexts, in particular whether the learners were studying in their home country or in New Zealand; whether short term visitors or permanent migrants in New Zealand; how recent their arrival; and how proficient their English language levels. Clearly all these factors will impact on responses to learning and readiness to engage in education and/or training.

With hindsight, the Review would have been more useful had it employed tighter criteria around Pacific migrant experiences. However, it could also have been broadened to include studies on migrant worker or refugee groups of other ethnicities, including culture shock and alienation/assimilation discourse, as well as literature on international students, particularly those from Pacific countries and for whom English is a second language. Comparing and contrasting factors identified as enablers or barriers for different groups of learners might have helped create more specificity when discussing whether there are, in fact, differences in the way Pacific students learn.

Finally, a more calculated Literature Review would have looked at wider discussions of Adult Learning. Many of the elements identified by the authors of Pacific learner literature as being essential for this group of learners are, in fact, widespread across the literature of teaching and learning as being important for learners of all cultures. To argue a divide between Pacific and "western" ways of learning needs to examine the work of current commentators from both fields of research. Consequently, one learning for the research team as a result of these observations, is that a Literature Review should perhaps be considered as on-going throughout the project, rather than created and completed as a stand-alone phase of the process, which will then limit the scope of theory and findings discussion.

3. Method

This research project comprised both qualitative and quantitative study, drawing on five separate data collection tools in addition to the Literature Review already described.

Focus group and individual interviews with learners

Focus group and individual interviews were used to explore the meaning of, barriers to and potential strategies for promoting engagement practices among Pacific migrant workers in the workplace. The researcher facilitated a series of focus group interviews with individual learners and groups of learners who completed the Vakameasina programme. The participants were based in Te Puke and Katikati in the Bay of Plenty. The focus groups comprised three groups from Vanuatu, Tonga and the Solomon Islands and one individual interview with a participant from Vanuatu. The participants were given an information sheet about the project (Appendix A), a consent form (Appendix B) and a demographic questionnaire (Appendix C) to complete.

At the beginning of the interview, the participants were told that their responses would be used only for the purpose of the project and their names would not be used in the report without their consent. Also, participants were told that participating in the interview was voluntary and that they could withdraw before or during the interview or choose not to answer a question. Following the preamble, the participants were invited to ask the interviewer questions about the project or interview. The interviews were held at the participants' New Zealand 'home base' and the interviews lasted between 20 minutes and 30 minutes. The interviews were recorded using a voice recorder. To promote equal opportunities for all the participants to take part in the interview, the participants were invited to respond in their first language but someone else in the group had to translate the response in English. In addition, a set of laminated copies of the interview questions in English were distributed randomly to those members of the group (about 6 to 8 participants) who indicated that they could read to understand more successfully than listen to understand (Appendix D). Most participants communicated their responses in English, but a few chose to respond in their native language. These recordings were later translated.

The interviews contained the views of three categories of students:

- *successful achievers* – participants who have participated in the programme and have completed the modules
- *partial achievers* - participants who have participated in the programme and have not completed the modules
- *non-participants* - participants who chose not to engage in the programme

Twenty-one learners participated in this phase of the research, as shown in Table One below:

Table One: Focus group and individual interviews participants

Ethnicity	20-25 years		26-35 years		36-45 years		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male		
Solomon Islands	1	3	1	1			6
Tonga		1	1		1		3
Vanuatu	6		3		3		12
Total	7	4	5	1	4		21

A total of 20 participants attended the focus group interviews and one individual interview was completed. A majority of the participants were from Vanuatu (57%) followed by Solomon Islands (29%) and Tonga (14%). However, most participants in the Vanuatu focus group were too shy to share their comments and subsequently the responses were limited to about 3 or 4 people. The majority of participants were aged between 26 and 35 years (43%) followed by 20-25 years (33%) and 36-45 years (24%). By gender, there were more male (76%) than female (24%) participants interviewed.

Focus group discussion covered: the participants' understanding and perception of literacy, numeracy and financial literacy, and the types of literacy and numeracy they are familiar with; the barriers limiting their participation in the training scheme; and development of potential strategies that they believed could promote and engage participation among Pacific peoples.

Tutor reflections

Four tutors, including the lead researcher and author of this report, provided written feedback about the content of Vakameasina, the teaching techniques they were using, and the level of student engagement they observed at different stages of the programme.

Employer interviews

Six employers of RSE learners participating in the Vakameasina programme were visited at their workplaces in Te Puke and Katikati. Face to face interviews were used to gather information about how they felt about the training programme with a view to suggesting ways that the programme delivery and/or content could be improved in the future (Appendix E).

Programme evaluation questionnaire

A programme evaluation form was used to gather data about the teaching practices used in the Vakameasina programme (Appendix F). The participants were asked to rate how they felt about the programme around teacher organisation, materials and handouts, programme structure, timing, learning and teaching resources, self confidence in speaking and listening to understand, usefulness of the knowledge back home, workplace knowledge and understanding, and increase in knowledge and understanding over time from the start to the end of the programme. The participants were asked to choose the most appropriate response to a statement using a three scale rating system: 'I disagree strongly', 'I'm not sure how I feel about this' and 'I agree with this'. Also, illustrations were included in the rating scale to help participants choose the most suitable response to a statement (Appendix F). The forms were completed by 77 participants from Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Kiribati. The evaluations took approximately 30 minutes to complete. To ensure that all participants could complete the evaluation successfully, the facilitator explained the purpose of the evaluation clearly in plain English and read each statement aloud in English. Leaders in the respective groups were invited or asked to translate the questions into their native language for their peers with lower levels of English. Further, the facilitator used examples to help the participants understand the intent of the statements.

Classroom observations

With the students' agreement, video footage was used to gather data in the classroom. The purpose of the observation was to identify characteristics and qualities of the teacher that were instrumental in promoting and supporting the learner to engage in their learning. Around 20 to 25 sessions or between 40 and 50 hours of classroom observations were captured on video. Four groups from Vanuatu, Kiribati, Tonga and Solomon Islands participated in the study. In particular, video footage was captured of two groups at almost every session in the 10 week programme. At the start of the session, the video camera was usually set up on a tripod at the back of the room, focused on the centre of the room and facing the teacher at the front of the room. Occasionally, the video camera was set up at the front of the room in a corner, facing the learners. After the initial discomfort at seeing a video camera in the room, over time, it was largely ignored by everyone in the room. Every session was captured on video from the start to the end of the session.

Analysis

The data was grouped in four categories: teaching practices; teacher qualities; learning environment; and learner achievement outcomes. Comments including video and photo still images that described teaching approaches were classified as teaching practices. Comments about relationships or that

described the teacher's innate qualities were labelled as teacher qualities. Comments that described the environment were clustered as learning environment determinants. Comments that described learner achievements were classified as learner achievement outcomes.

Limitations

Three important limitations to this phase of the research must be acknowledged: difficulties with implementing the methodology; data management and access; and some ethical considerations.

First, the methods selected for data collection comprised five separate sources of information, involving fairly comprehensive sampling of all immediate stakeholders in the programme. While this approach certainly provided a good "helicopter" view of the experiences and perspectives of learners, both as personal and anonymous informants, tutors and employers alongside a more objective recording of the classroom sessions, it finally yielded an unwieldy quantity of raw material. Within the time and resourcing constraints of the research project, it soon became apparent that not all of the data could be subjected to the detailed analysis originally envisaged. As a consequence, no transcribing, mapping or analysis of the classroom video footage has occurred; some has not yet been viewed, meaning the contribution this source of information makes to the report has been minimal.

Data management and access has also been a source of unforeseen frustration for the research team, with some issues arising from mistakes we have made, and some from developments beyond our control. First, the video footage of the classroom sessions was shot using equipment owned by McGirr Associates, one of the partner organisations contracted to deliver the Vakameasina programme. They also provided the software to view and edit the video files. The company has since been sold, and some original material has been untraceable. The research team has copies of some of the files, but not the equipment for easy management. In addition, we have ourselves contributed to a situation of reduced availability of the raw data by deleting the audio recordings and notes from focus group interviews. This was done in accordance with our assurance to students that their comments would be kept confidential and only used for the purposes of this research project. Unfortunately we were a bit trigger-happy; we had not anticipated feedback from the report, originally submitted in 2010, which asked for more direct quotations to be included in a final version. We have been able to provide some examples of student voice from comments offered in the programme evaluation questionnaire, but regret the loss of a much larger collation of comments about a wider range of topics. A key learning here is about the length of time the academic review, feedback and publication process takes, and that a project is not complete at the time a first report is submitted!

While we were attentive to all the usual ethical considerations such as voluntary participation, anonymity, confidentiality, we have realised since the project's completion that there were further issues that we might have addressed directly. First, with a newly arrived minority ethnic group such as these RSE workers, there was clearly an unequal distribution of power throughout the research process. While the research was conducted by one of their tutors whom they knew, and who is also a Pacific Islander, so that there was a level of shared cultural understanding, they were still recipients of a free Government funded training package, delivered in a foreign institution, in a foreign language, in a foreign country. As noted elsewhere in this report, Pacific people in this situation are inherently polite and shy, and may have felt obligated to offer positive feedback. This observation in turn undermines the conclusions researchers can draw from this type of data. The extent to which the issue of power affected the research reported here, if at all, is unknown, however a learning for colleagues researching similar populations would be to investigate the literature and build strategies to address potential concerns during the research design phase.

4. Findings

This section of the report collates the findings gathered from the different methods of data collection under the four headings: teaching practices; teacher qualities; learning environment; and learner achievement outcomes. Student comments included under these headings have been drawn from the programme evaluation questionnaire and are either reproduced as written, indicating participants' differing levels of English, preference for using Pidgin, or have been translated from the first language.

A preliminary snapshot of student responses across these four groupings is offered by Table Two, which presents the responses of the 77 students who completed the programme evaluation. The results overwhelmingly indicate that the facilitators used appropriate teaching practices to promote and support their students to learn. On average, 73 of the 77 respondents believed that the teacher was well prepared and well organised, the course was well planned and organised, the handouts and materials were tidy and useful, and the teacher explained things clearly. Interestingly, almost 18% of learners believed that there was not enough time to learn all the subjects compared with 62% who agreed that there was enough time to learn all the subjects and 19% who were not sure.

Table Two. Student Programme Evaluation Summary

Vakameasina course evaluation results	n = 77			
Statements	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	No Response
The teacher was well prepared and well-organised.	74	2	1	
Learning materials and handouts were tidy and useful.	76		1	
The course was well planned and well organised.	72	4	1	
I understood most of what the tutor said in each lesson. They were good at explaining things.	70	4	3	
There was enough time in the course to learn all the subjects I thought we would learn.	48	15	14	
The classroom was well equipped, clean and comfortable.	76			1
The course made me feel confident about speaking and listening in English.	70	6		1
Some of the things I learned will be useful to me when I go back to my home country.	74	2	1	
I now understand something I did not understand	72	4		1

before about what my employer wants or expects.			
I now understand something I did not understand before about my rights as a worker here.	74	2	1
I now understand something I did not understand before which helped me with living in New Zealand.	73	3	1

Teaching practices

According to written feedback that was received from four tutors who taught on the Vakameasina programme, tutors felt that they had used effective teaching practices to engage their students in learning around remittances, computers, solar panels, kiwi expressions, humour and creative writing to promote a positive learning environment. As one tutor points out:

> *I guess the highlights would be those fantastic teaching aha moments during doing remittances (and Internet Banking) and also when I had in the solar panel and computer experts to give them advice on what to look for when purchasing. They were just big sponges and truly, truly grateful.* (Tutor)

A strong example of effective practice was that tutors responded to student interest by arranging computer laboratory sessions for their students to learn and use email, Internet and word processing. Both tutors and students saw these classes as highly valuable:

> *The memorable moment would be the computer class last Friday – the delight on the faces of...and others. They are very pleased with themselves and want to do more computer(s).* (Tutor)

> *Thank you so much for your father teaching and learning about English computer etc...I hope and believe that this will be a great pleasure to me when I go back to my own country Vanuatu.* (Student)

Tutor feedback and a brief overview of some of the video footage shows that teaching staff used a variety of teaching practices and approaches to promote and support learning around using a mixture of learner and teacher centred learning, self-directed learning and collaborative teaching, drawing on examples familiar to the learners' culture to explain key concepts, reinforcing the learners' sense of identity through the use of language, music and history specific to their country and reinforcing the learners' spiritual connection with education through song and prayer.

The tutors adopted and reinforced cultural practices in the programme. For instance, one tutor used You Tube to access video and audio files related to the group's culture to show in class at the beginning of a session. This practice was adopted to acknowledge the unique aspects of their culture and develop a positive relationship between the teacher and learner. All tutors often began and closed

their session with a prayer and a song to recognise the connection between spirituality and learning, which was extremely important to the class:

> *I'm happy to this class start from the day 1 start until this last day and I wanna thank you to both of Jane & Joy for everything that you 2 done to me and I will pray to God to bless you and your family.* (Student)

An early activity used was the construction of a group poster in the form of a tapa cloth. This activity broke with traditional teaching practices experienced previously by the learners, created positive cultural images and connected their New Zealand learning experience to their Pacific home. This poster was put on the classroom wall so became a part of the Pacific adornment of the teaching room.

The tutors delivered the content clearly and appropriately by using a variety of teaching and learning practices. Most tutors explained key concepts in plain English and used examples to help the student understand key terms and instructions clearly. Tutors provided opportunities for learners to apply their knowledge and practice their skills such as learning and using the computer key pad and mouse to create an email account and surf the Internet. A majority of tutors used a mixture of teaching approaches around tutor centred learning to explain concepts and give instructions, learner centred learning to practise a skill such as making scrambled eggs and sending each other email messages, self-directed learning related to learning and using the literacy and numeracy programmes by using the computers that were installed in their homes, group processes such as practising their English speaking skills by introducing each other to the group, and using a one to one approach to gauge student progress and address learner concerns about a task. A collaborative teaching approach was implemented to facilitate the learning, particularly with larger groups of up to 20 people. This approach allowed the team to capitalise on each other's strengths to achieve the teaching outcomes efficiently and effectively. As noted in the literature, we found that collaborative teaching works well when tutors respect and support each other.

Most tutors drew on their learners' ideas and experiences to inform the nature and delivery of the sessions. Learners were invited to help develop the programme by suggesting ways to improve the course in the future, and to suggest things that tutors could cover at the next session. In response, a group leader asked for more oral language activities particularly for the boys with low levels of English speaking skills. Other requests were for more English speaking activities that they could do in their own time, and for a copy of an audio file that was used in class. The tutor was accessible after class to assist learners with their learning or address other personal, social or workplace needs. Students clearly valued this practical assistance:

> *English improved a lot. I just know now cause I have a rights to fight if have problem.* (Student)

> *Speaking English, I'm understand of my payslip.* (Student)

However, to balance this wealth of positive feedback, there were some aspects of the student experience related to our teaching practices which were less successful. Feedback from two tutors noted that their learners struggled with issues related to attendance and motivation which led to the dissolution of one of the classes. The tutors tried valiantly to engage their learners with rewards and other innovative approaches:

> *They did not turn up, we waited, we rang and they didn't come – In the end four students came...We went to their house, we woke them up, we paid the driver extra petrol money, we grumped at them. Later we rewarded their attendance with yummy morning teas. We varied our teaching approaches to try to capture all of the learners...* (Tutor)

Further investigations revealed that poor attendance and attitude to the programme were linked to leadership issues in the group, timetable clashes and transport problems. This incident highlighted the need to ensure that an appropriate leader or champion support and promote the needs of their group to participate successfully in the programme.

Teacher qualities

Overall, most participants spoke positively about the teaching staff. In particular one participant described their teacher as friendly, patient and understanding which was vital to their learning. Three other representative comments follow, the first two have been translated:

> *The teachers gave examples and explained things clearly which made it easier for me to participate.* (Student)
>
> *All the teachers worked together with us. They gave time to listen to us. They were very patient with us even though we were struggling.* (Student)
>
> *It my great pleasure to apresiet you, for teaching me abut your knowledge for ten weeks, and I have learn alot from you about every subject that you have touch me about and I will never forget you in my pray weven I go back to Vanuatu.* (Student)

In their feedback, and from a brief overview of some recorded teaching sessions, tutors saw themselves as building a caring relationship with their learners. For instance, in the computer literacy classes, in particular creating email accounts, the tutors used a mixture of teacher and learner centred learning approaches to achieve this learning outcome. The tutor provided all learners with instructional handouts written in plain language, including images, to assist them to use email to create and send a message. The tutors ensured that most learners understood the content and instructions by asking clarifying questions, using relevant examples and inviting the learners to give feedback. To create a meaningful context, the tutor explained the benefit of email to communicate with family and friends back home as a cheap form of communication compared with using a phone to make toll calls. The tutor enabled learners to learn at a suitable pace and work with their peers in group to achieve the learning outcomes, such as by asking the most able learners to help other

classmates to send a message. Comments showed that students valued the learning, and the relationships tutors had developed with the class:

> *Tank you teacher Clark for everything that you learn us to undastanding more English or computing God pless yu.* (Student)

> *I really appreciate want we have been through throughout the past ten week ... Thanks for everything that you've done to us and sharing your relationship with us may the lord be with you and give you more knowledge.* (Student)

> *A student came and asked for my postal address so that she could continue learning English (I had offered to help her).* (Tutor)

Learning environment

Collaborative programme planning and tutor feedback established a number of deliberate approaches to create an effective working environment. The tutors arrived prior to the start of the session to prepare the learning environment: setting up the laptop and data projector to present a slideshow, arranging the seating plan by setting up the tables and chairs and organising snacks and refreshments for the group. The tutor explained the session schedule at the start and provided an opportunity for students to ask questions about the session.

On a number of occasions, at the beginning of a session, the tutor reminded the group that it was okay to make mistakes in class and that learning was a shared experience. Therefore the tutor attempted to provide a safe learning environment. Students clearly felt comfortable to express themselves, despite knowing that their English was still a work-in-progress:

> *Mi wantem talem thakyu long yu long vakameasina program we yu bin tijim mi long hem olsem 1. Learn to speak English 2. lean to more about budgeting and ect... Thankyu tumas* (Student)

The tutor welcomed learners as they arrived for class by greeting them in their respective language to acknowledge and recognise the significance of their identity and promote a sense of belonging. Students responded positively to these overtures, with almost 100% of learners agreeing in the questionnaire that the learning environment was well equipped, comfortable and clean.

However, it must also be acknowledged that a small, but significant number of participants with poor or low literacy skills struggled to participate in class discussions and group activities during the sessions, despite tutor efforts. Some of these students told us (their comments have been translated):

> *I don't understand English clearly and it makes it difficult to participate in the programme.* (Student)

> *I found it very difficult to participate in class because of a lack of English and because the class was only for two hours, I did not want to ask questions and disrupt the learning.* (Student)

Another problem that participants encountered that could be linked to the learning environment was the timing of the programme. Most participants indicated that the programme could be organised better around putting the start date back until after the main or busy part of the season, timetable at least two sessions a week, timetable sessions during the week that does not clash with work, and schedule sessions at a time when people can rest, have dinner, and shower after work. These concerns over timing of classes were likely a key factor in the breakdown of the class reported by tutors and discussed above under "Teaching Practices".

Tutor discussions during the programme and reiterated in written feedback collected as part of this research posited a number of other contributing factors:

- "Members being sent home [from New Zealand] early seemed to be the death knell for the classes. They did not return to complete the programme
- The loss of their driver
- Petrol money – how far does it actually go?
- The role of the leader – her manner and relationship with the other women seemed to be strained at times. It appeared she was not the natural leader. This was an older woman (X) who seemed to have the respect of the other women. (Y) was not able to facilitate the group to make necessary commitment
- The class time 12.00-2pm meant the women had to wake from their 3am finish and come to class, twice a week
- Some students...were illiterate in their own language
- Work shifts would change at very short notice resulting in student absences. These shift changes were not communicated to the tutors beforehand

Learner achievement outcomes

The majority of participants believed that they had achieved significant learning outcomes around learning English and using a computer. When asked what activities they enjoyed most in the programme, learning English, speaking, reading and writing were the activities they selected, as represented in these translated comments:

> *Learning English such as nouns, verbs and know about making a sentence, especially when English is our second language.* (Student)

> *Before I was frightened to learn English but now I'm more confident* (Student)

Further, participants believed that learning and using English and computers well would enhance their ability to get a better job or undertake further training. Prior to enrolling on the programme, few had

ever used a computer. A couple of participants on the programme were initially afraid to touch a computer out of fear that they might break it. Over the 10 weeks, most learners learnt to use a variety of different computer functions, for example the 'Send Money Pacific' website, planning a bus trip using the Intercity Bus online booking facility, using the Meteorological Service online, email, and file management. When asked what they would like to do more of next time, most participants overwhelmingly indicated that they would like to learn more about computers:

> *I like to learn the letters for typing. I like to learn to type out and write a letter on the computer and even learn how to use the Internet and learn to use the email and learn how to download music and burn music...use the computer to download pictures from the camera and learn about memory sticks or USB sticks.* (Student)

On average, 60% of learners reported that they achieved important personal, social and workplace skills around speaking and listening in English, understanding their rights and responsibilities as an employee and acquiring new knowledge and skills to help them live and work in New Zealand including managing money and cooking basic meals. A majority of learners learnt how to use language around introducing themselves, the language to greet and meet people in social and workplace situations, to pronounce words by learning basic phonic sounds of the alphabet, use verbs and nouns to create a sentence or understand the purpose of a sentence, and learn new words to add to their vocabulary. Interestingly, most participants overwhelmingly believed the programme was useful and beneficial to them and their friends and family back home, particularly for changing misconceptions that education is only for young people, as one participant (comment translated) explained:

> *Every lesson has been interesting for me. However, changing people's attitudes that education is only for young people has been a challenge because back home education is not for older people. I'm 38 years old and this programme has refreshed my mind. Although, I have forgotten how to do some calculations...this course has helped me to refresh my mind.* (Student)

Some of the paperwork collected from exercises conducted during the programme shows the development of these practical skills (Appendix J Student pre-enrolment assessment results sample; Appendix G Student budgeting sample; Appendix H Greet and meet speaking activity; and Appendix I Student financial goal sample). Tutor comments also echo the students' comments about achievement:

> *The stand out experiences...were the moments when they first put their hands on a computer and made it work. Magic! If only I had more time to make them see the true potential.* (Tutor)

> *There have been instances for individuals when the penny has dropped, the face tells it all. They realise that they understand the idea, information or they can do something i.e. playing the Place Value Dice game has been a good example.* (Tutor)

Two tutors recounted a couple of sessions when all the students were engaged in their learning as they explain:

There were some positive lessons where all the learners came. The lessons on payslips and goal settings were successful. Nearly all students attended and there was a high level of engagement. (Tutor)

Many of the sessions embedded literacy, numeracy and financial numeracy learning in the teaching content. For example, two classes acquired some useful cooking skills on the programme. The aim of the cooking classes was to provide learners with the opportunity to follow written instructions, solve numeracy problems, practice oral language skills and enable learning through doing. They learnt how to prepare and cook scrambled eggs. In a subsequent session the group worked together to prepare and make a vegetable curry.

Managing money such as budgeting, understanding payslips and sending money back home were three modules that most students found useful in the programme. In particular, more learners were eager to understand the nature of a payslip, including how their pay was calculated, compared with budgeting. In another exercise, there was an overwhelming response to sending money back home because most learners were interested in exploring the cheapest way to transfer money. Consequently, staff representatives from a variety of banking institutions such as Westpac, ANZ, National Bank and Kiwi Bank were enlisted to talk to the learners about their range of products including international transfers. This session was followed up with the computer online lesson in using 'Send Money Pacific' website which generated an overwhelmingly positive response from a majority of learners.

Overall, most learners demonstrated a positive attitude and a strong desire to acquire new knowledge or learning something new. One participant told us they would have walked to attend class, and another noted that the group, as a whole, were keen to learn:

People who are interested in learning will get more out of the programme. (Student)

Going to the new class with X and meeting the students from the Solomon [Islands]...they came ready to learn and were hungry to engage in whatever was put in front of them. (Tutor)

Local employers also noticed learning achievements in their RSE workers. Most of the six employers interviewed had had previous experience with Pacific migrant workers; one had visited them in their homes in the Pacific Islands and has met many family members, and regularly attends church with them. Others said they, and their staff make a special effort in regards to pastoral care and have a strong respect and admiration for the work done by the RSE workers and a strong cultural respect as well. One employer said that he makes sure some workers have their NZ driver's license and are able to drive, making vans available so the workers have considerable independence. Another organizes

recreational trips for his workers and the company has parties to celebrate various aspects of the industry and their work achievements. One employer expressed concerns over past workers' tendency to try and run away - costing the company a lot of money and voiding the terms of their work visa - and has responded by putting in place a range of rules to keep tabs on the workers. He also runs a comprehensive training programme for the workers, which overlaps to some extent with the content of this literacy and numeracy programme.

When asked whether the content was relevant, most employers agreed that it was relevant to their workers' needs and interests. As one employer pointed out:

> *[I wanted to see] an improvement in their English, for them to be more competent and confident in their ability to relate to New Zealand workers, particularly supervisors and managers on orchards.* (Employer)

Another employer commented that some of their workers were more confident to talk to their supervisors and other managers. Some employers noticed that workers were no longer shy about querying things about their employment conditions such as pay slips. Using work related topics was found to cement employer support. However, one employer believed that the programme did not produce the outcomes expected for his staff because the organisation had on-going social issues with their employees that the programme did not address.

Despite some specific suggestions for improvements including teaching English at different levels and diversifying course content to include a leadership programme, the employers were adamant that the programme had been beneficial for individuals' confidence, communication and levels of interaction in work and general life. However they were hesitant to attribute the programme as being instrumental in improving production or work effectiveness because of other significant factors outside the programme. Nonetheless, the indirect benefits were seen as very positive.

Yet, as in the account of the class which was discontinued through students' lack of attendance, the Vakameasina tutor team identified some aspects of the pilot programme related to student achievement which require attention in future planning and delivery. The time constraints meant that assessment and content ambitions were at times problematic:

> *Assessment approach to the course lacked clarity and at times relevance. Assessment seemed to be driven by the funder/stakeholder need than what was formative for the learners. So for example, I can document that we covered the future tense for example; however, the structure of the course meant that the time needed to look at form/meaning/function of that grammatical point was not just available because of other learning outcomes that had to be achieved. I would have felt more comfortable if I had been able to have less content in the course to get through and more time to grow their language competency since this is what most of them wanted the most – that and computer skills.* (Tutor)

A second concern related to surface and deep learning; one tutor reported that her students believed that some of the learning was not relevant whereby they were more interested in achieving the outcome than understanding the learning process. She explains:

> *The other disconnect is the gap between what some learners know and what they think they know...this is most evident in Maths when they can perform the tasks but have no understanding of what they are doing and don't see the importance of developing understanding.*

Limitations

A great deal of information has been gathered that testifies to the considerable success of the Vakameasina pilot programme. Yet with hindsight, the concern noted in the earlier "Methods" section of this report regarding the issue of power and the likely desire of the learners to provide positive feedback, has ramifications for the Findings. Since this was a pilot, and there were no previous cohorts of students to compare these results with, and since no formal assessments were conducted to provide "hard" measures of achievement, there is, perhaps, an over-reliance on self-reported achievement and outcomes. While the use of feedback from employers, tutors and a larger student group who completed anonymous evaluations provides some counter-balance to the effusive enthusiasm of the focus group interviewees, a lack of strong evidence remains a potential weakness of the report. Reflecting on this issue the research team considers an improvement in research design would be achieved through including an existing theoretical model to provide a means of rigorously analysing student engagement and learning. Examples of options are the Survey of Student Engagement, a linguistic analysis matrix applied to video or work samples, or a literacy assessment tool (like e-asTTle). Determining the appropriate instrument would clearly require some research in itself, there are a wealth of educational models and frameworks available, and there may also be examples from international studies of adult learners with low literacy and ESOL needs. Adopting some means of formally measuring engagement and outcomes would also have allowed us to progress from a discussion of "what students liked" to a more useful one of "what worked".

5. Discussion

This section offers recommendations to remove barriers or enhance engagement of migrant RSE Pacific learners, based on discussion of the significant areas of teaching and leadership practices that promoted and hampered successful learning outcomes identified in the Vakameasina programme. Endorsement of these mostly successful practices reported in the "Findings" section of this report can also be found in the report "Review of the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) Worker Pilot Training Programme" (2011), an independent evaluation conducted by Mathea Roorda, for which her company Evalue Research won the Australasian Evaluation Society 'Best Evaluation Study' award for 2010. Roorda's review found that in most areas measured - curriculum, teaching methods, learning environment/engagement, attainment of new competencies, outcomes, targeting and media coverage – the pilot programme met or exceeded Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade expectations. Substandard outcomes were noted for assessment, completion of modules and management of the pilot (p. 2). Her overall conclusion: "The assessment suggests the programme is of immense value to workers and should continue" (p.4).

An organization that understands the needs of the learner and knows how to engage their learners effectively is most likely to promote a successful learning environment. For instance, during the Vakameasina student recruitment process, participants were required to undergo a literacy and numeracy assessment to enroll in the programme. This data enabled staff to identify and address their students' literacy and numeracy needs. In addition, the data revealed other things in addition to the curriculum that students wanted to learn such as buying a laptop. These issues were raised in the first lesson by staff with their respective students to incorporate in the programme as well. More importantly, it is critical that staff can relate to their students, particularly new Pacific migrant learners. This means creating a safe place of learning where students are prepared to take risks and make mistakes. Making mistakes leads to experience and subsequently more knowledge.

Good practice incorporates programme content that is responsive to the learners' needs. The content in the Vakameasina programme was prescribed by a consortium made up of employers and their managers, industry representatives and government officials. They expected that participants would learn and use skills in the programme to communicate more confidently and competently with their supervisors and other staff. Learners are most likely to engage in a programme that delivers what they want to learn, particularly about working and living in New Zealand. Although the Vakameasina programme was largely prescribed, the content must include topics and subjects that are important to the students. For instance, most students in the programme wanted to speak better English, learn and use a computer and explore ways to save money shopping for food and learn how to budget their money well.

Engaging students in their learning is more achievable when they are intrinsically motivated to participate in a programme. This stage should take place informally with the learners before the first lesson. The aim of the session is to determine and establish a group learning plan to ensure that the learners achieve some personal goals by the end of a programme. However, staff must acknowledge that some group goals may not be achievable because of time and resource constraints so, these constraints must be discussed with the group. The group learning plan is a significant stage because it will help form a strong and powerful bond between staff and their learners. This part of the process should not be underestimated.

It is therefore recommended that:

- First and foremost the content must be focused on addressing priority areas for the learner
- The three groups (employers, industry and government)collaborate to plan and design the programme in association with the providers and with representatives of the target student group
- Teaching approaches place the learner in a partnership role, with on-going consultation and negotiation over programme content
- Topics related to the workplace are an effective tool to embed literacy, numeracy and financial literacy learning

Pacific learners engage more effectively with the content when they are exposed to relevant and practical learning experiences (Pasikale, 1996). Learning is not a passive activity whereby learners just sit in class listening to teachers, learning by rote and forcing out answers to concepts often without real understanding of its meaning or significance. New Pacific migrants learn most effectively when they are provided opportunities in the real world to use their skills. For instance, students in the Vakameasina programme learned and used a 'Discount Traveler's Card' to save money shopping at a local Countdown store. Another example was when students' learned and used the Internet to shop online for gardening tools. The evidence suggests that a successful teaching approach includes opportunities for students to learn and use a skill in alternative learning settings. Pacific learners are most likely to engage better when they can practice a skill for themselves in a real-life setting. Learning environments should not be limited to the classroom, particularly when literacy and numeracy skills can be taught in naturally occurring situations.

Related recommendations include:

- Teaching staff incorporate real life opportunities for learners to apply a skill, particularly outside the classroom

- Encourage students to recount their experiences as stories or narratives to solicit positive learning moments.
- Subsequent activities must be grounded in student stories to ensure they are relevant and meet student interests, needs and aspirations.

Good practice requires a focus on raising Pacific learners' self confidence levels to ensure that they succeed in their learning (Anae, Anderson, Benseman & Coxon, 2002). Based on the findings of the Vakameasina programme, some students' low self-confidence was the biggest barrier to learning. Most of the students in the programme missed out on formalised learning back home or did not succeed in their learning. The tutors who made a big difference in students' lives in the programme were respectful, caring and understanding as Pasikale, Yaw and Apa (1998) point out that engaging learners is enhanced when tutors and learners shared similar backgrounds. These authors discovered that Pacific learners were often drawn to tutors who had "been there" and shared similar unsympathetic learning environments. For instance, lifting student self confidence levels as McDonald and Thornley (2006) point out, was managed by encouraging learners to think and make mistakes without fear of condemnation in the classroom. Less able students were buddied with more able English speaking students in some learning activities. Based on feedback from low level English speaking students, a special session was arranged just for them to practice conversational skills. Also, students were provided notebooks to take home and use to record questions to bring to the next class to discuss. As mentioned already, students must be provided many opportunities, both simulated and real experiences, to learn and use their skills. These learning principles around raising self-confidence should be reinforced regularly in class with all learners, particularly Pacific students.

Final recommendations: Programme goals are most readily met when students are

- Self-managing
- Participating fully in the workplace in New Zealand
- Confidently participating in their local community in New Zealand
- Economically secure and contributing to wealth creation in their homeland
- Feel nurtured

Limitations

Despite the value of the above research outcomes, the researchers concede that owing to a lack of specificity in the research design, findings cannot realistically be applied across a wider body of Pacific learners. In addition to the previous limitations noted, data analysis was restricted by the lack

of comparative data, such as a control group of other nationalities, or results from groups taught through different teaching approaches or alternative training programmes. Given that this was a highly contextualised project, the restricted level of generalizability of findings about teaching and learning is not unexpected, but nonetheless falls short of the original project aim. Learning here for future research enquiry is the need to build on a cumulative body of knowledge about the research process itself. A more robust design and an objective, specific methodology would have assisted us to demonstrate explicitly how the various strategies and elements of Vakameasina have a practical application to a wider group of learners, and can contribute to improvements in learners' outcomes.

A final limitation in this project relates to selection of a project mentor: this role is significant to the success of the project – more so than we first appreciated. We embraced as one of our aims, the intent of building research capability and capacity and researcher–practitioner partnerships, and recognised that we were relatively new to the field. Yet when the time came to collect, collate and analyse the data, the person we asked to act as a project mentor was committed to other projects and responded to requests for feedback only after considerable delays, or on a fairly uncritical level. In future, we would be more insistent on timelines and expectations around assistance available.

6. Conclusion

There are lessons to be learned from each research project. These lessons may be modest in some cases and more extensive in others, and relate directly to the scope, rigour, and robustness of the research design. In the case of this research, lessons related to both the subject of the research, that is, the teaching and learning of the RSE Pacific learners, and to the researchers' understandings about the process itself.

Supported by the findings of an independent review (Roorda, 2011), the study discussed in this report describes a successful training pilot, and allowed the research team to test and endorse a number of "truisms" from the literature. To promote a Pacific place of learning, strategies around empowering learners with some control over their learning, using a variety of teaching approaches, and developing a trusting relationship can help learners engage in a programme. Successful teachers must have the skills, knowledge and experience to engage Pacific learners. In fact, it is critical that staff have the skills to communicate the knowledge simply and clearly to their students. This includes using innovative, hands-on and active activities, particularly outside the classroom to reinforce the learning. Tutors must be able to step into the shoes of their learners and understand the issues that impact on their learning to help them achieve their needs and aspirations. It is hoped that the achievements and the barriers to learning noted here will have value for those delivering future Vakameasina programmes, and for others involved in similar training work with newly arrived migrant groups.

It is also hoped that the open disclosure of the limitations we learnt about the hard way during the lifespan of this project, may provide a better model for other researchers/practitioners. Even flawed projects can surely be considered a success, if they at least raise awareness of the complex components of conducting research better considered before, rather than after, commencement!

Most important of all, we believe, is to keep looking forward to future opportunities for learning, and we close this report in the spirit of one of our participants:

> *Thank yu long effort mo tijing blong yu we yu provitem during 10 weeks wetem mifala long New Zealand lukim yu long next year ... tata!* (Student)

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APPENDICES

Appendix A Information Sheet

Appendix B Consent Form

Appendix C Demographic Questionnaire

Appendix D Focus Group Interview Questions

Appendix E Employer Interview Questions

Appendix F Programme Student Evaluation Form

Appendix G Student Budgeting Activity Sample

Appendix H Greet & Meet Speaking Activity

Appendix I Student Financial Goal Sample

Appendix J Sample of Student Pre-enrolment Interview Assessment Results

INFORMATION SHEET
Focus group interviews

Halo, Malo e lelei, Halo oloketa,

My name is Clark Tuagalu and I am working in a research project sponsored by Ako Aotearoa in association with Fruition Horticulture and McGirr Associates.

Ako Aotearoa is interested in identifying better ways to support Pacific peoples in their learning related to literacy, numeracy and financial literacy training. It is intended that the results of this research will be used by Ako Aotearoa to help them meet the needs of Pacific Island communities more successfully.

We would like you to participate in a focus group interview (6-8 people) which will look at your experiences with literacy, numeracy and financial literacy training. The information gained from your focus group will be combined with that received from all four focus groups which mean that neither you, nor the focus group you are participating in, will be identified in any way.

The results of this research will be presented back to your community at the completion of the research.

The research may also be published in academic journals and used as the basis of conference presentations in New Zealand and internationally.

> You do not need to participate in this research and if you do not wish to be involved please do not participate in the focus group interview.
>
> You may withdraw from the interview at any time
>
> If you do participate in the focus group you will be considered to have given your informed consent

Note: Data collected will be securely stored and destroyed after a period of five years.

This research has been assessed and approved by <u>Fruition Horticulture and McGirr Associates</u>

Appendix B Consent Form

Consent Form: Vakameasina Focus Group Interview

I have read the attached information sheet about the study and understand what it is about. All my questions concerning the study and my participation in it have been answered to my satisfaction.

I am aware that:

- I may request further information about the study any time.
- My participation in the study is entirely voluntary.
- Any information I provide will be stored securely and accessed only by the researcher or members the project team.
- All information collected including video footage will be dealt with in such a way as to ensure that individual participants will remain anonymous.
- The results of the project will be published and may appear in research publications and presentations.
- The findings of this report will only be used for the purpose of this study and will not be used for commercial gain or personal financial gain.
- Participants will be offered the opportunity to review or edit their contribution during the focus group interview.
- If you have any concerns during this study please contact the researcher or the project leader

   Clark Tuagalu,

   320 Snodgrass Road, RD2, Te Puna, Tauranga, New Zealand 3172

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   Sandy Scarrow (Project Leader)

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On the basis of the above undertakings, I agree to take part in the study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

<center>**Appendix C Demographic Questionnaire**</center>

Halo, Malo e lelei, Halo oloketa

Thank you for agreeing to be involved with this research project.

Please fill out the following questionnaire which will allow us to better understand the responses from different groups within your community

    1.   Gender

        ☐   Male   ☐   Female

    2.   Age

        ☐   20 to 25

        ☐   26 to 35

        ☐   36 to 45

        ☐   46 to 55

        ☐   56 plus

    3.   Which ethnic group do you belong to?

                                                ☐   Tonga

                                              ☐   Vanuatu

                                              ☐   Solomon Islands

If other please list: _____

Appendix D Focus Group Interview Questions

Interview questions

1. What does education mean to you?
2. What made it difficult for you to participate in the Vakameasina programme?
3. What types of learning activities did you like doing in the Vakameasina programme?
4. What types of activities would you like to do more of in the Vakameasina programme?
5. What would make it easier for you to participate in the Vakameasina programme?

Interview questions

1. What does education mean to you?
2. What made it difficult for you to participate in the Vakameasina programme?
3. What types of learning activities did you like doing in the Vakameasina programme?
4. What types of activities would you like to do more of in the Vakameasina programme?
5. What would make it easier for you to participate in the Vakameasina programme?

Interview questions

1. What does education mean to you?
2. What made it difficult for you to participate in the Vakameasina programme?
3. What types of learning activities did you like doing in the Vakameasina programme?
4. What types of activities would you like to do more of in the Vakameasina programme?
5. What would make it easier for you to participate in the Vakameasina programme?

Appendix E Employer Interview Questions

Questions for the Employer

1. How was the interaction between your organisation and the Fruition/McGirr consortium?

2. What could we have done to make things easier for you?

3. How did you feel the initial presentations and assessment interview went?

4. How was the communication between your organisation and Fruition regarding class registers?

5. What thoughts do you have on the scheduling of the classes?

6. What thoughts do you have on the content of the course?

7. What do you think we could do to improve the content taught?

8. What are your comments about the duration of the programme?

9. How has the programme influenced your interaction with your RSE workers who attended?

10. What has been the impact of the programme on productivity?

11. How would you say this programme has impacted on economic development for your industry and for the Pacific?

12. If there is one thing that we could have done better what would it be?

Optional-

Comment on any change or development you observed with your RSE workers regarding:

1. *levels of engagement*
2. *confidence in relationships*
3. *confidence in communication*
4. *general interaction*
5. *effectiveness in work*

To what extend might these changes/developments be linked to the Vakameasina programme?

Date/Location:

Employer:

Interviewer

VAKAMEASINA evaluation form
Location Katikati, Bay of Plenty

Date:

Tutor:

Circle the face that shows how you feel about these statements:

☹   = I disagree strongly

😐   = I'm not sure how I feel about this

☺   = I agree with this

The teacher was well prepared and well-organised.	☹	😐	☺
Learning materials and handouts were tidy and useful.	☹	😐	☺
The course was well-planned and well-organised.	☹	😐	☺
I understood most of what the tutor said in each lesson. They were good at explaining things.	☹	😐	☺
There was enough time in the course to learn all the subjects I thought we would learn.	☹	😐	☺
The classroom was well-equipped, clean and comfortable.	☹	😐	☺
The course made me feel more confident about speaking and listening in English.	☹	😐	☺
Some of the things I learned will be useful to me when I go back to my home country.	☹	😐	☺
I now understand something I did not understand before about what my employer wants or expects.	☹	😐	☺
I now understand something I did not understand before about my rights as a worker here.	☹	😐	☺
I now understand something I did not understand before which helped me with living in New Zealand	☹	😐	☺

Savings Budget Record

Name: Shem Nakou.

Your weekly spending / Student XYZ	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Date: 4.5	Date: 12.5	Date: 19.5	Date: 26.5	Date: 2.6	Date: 9.6	Date:	Date:
Food	$ 30	$ 20	$ 30	$ 20	$ 30	$ 20	$	$
Phone	$ 20	$ 20	20	$ 20	$ 20	$ 20	$	$
Personal	$ 30	$ 10	$ 30	$ 10	$ 10	$ 10	$	$
Petrol	$ 5	$ 10	$ 5	$ 10	$ 5	$ 10	$	$
Send money Home	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ 300	$ -	$	$
	$	$	$	$	$	$	$	$
	$	$	$	$	$	$	$	$
	$	$	$	$	$	$	$	$
	$	$	$	$	$	$		
Your total spending or costs	$ 85.00	$ 60.00	$ 85.00	$ 60.00	$ 365.00	$ 60.00	$	$
Your weekly income Banked amount	$ 373.52	$ 716.22	$ 127.70	$ 128.02	$ 785.24	$ 908.30.	$	$
Your total savings	$ 777.70	$ 740.18	$ 138.66	$ 421.99	$ 664.28	$ 738.41	$	$
Amount sent/to send home	$	$	$	$ -	$ -	$ 300.00	$	$

Is this your banked amount?   How did you calculate this amount?   I need to have a look at your payslips.

Appendix H Greet & Meet Speaking Activity

1. **Name** – My name is... ~~Travis Tea~~ X
2. **Place** – I am from... Ton X
3. **Family background** – There are...8.... members in my family.
4. **Hobby** – I like to..Netball.

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1. **Name** – My name is... Felifi
2. **Place** – I am from... X Y
3. **Family background** – There are.... members in my family.
4. **Hobby** – I like to... Play touch

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1. **Name** – My name is... Semisi
2. **Place** – I am from... Tonga
3. **Family background** – There are...15.... members in my family.
4. **Hobby** – I like to..make money here in N.Z. Z (job)

1. **Name** – My name is... Finau Katoa
2. **Place** – I am from... Tonga.
3. **Family background** – There are...8... members in my family.
4. **Hobby** – I like to... Rugby

1. **Name** – My name is...Jane
2. **Place** – I am from... To A
3. **Family background** – There are.......... members in my family.
4. **Hobby** – I like to..grow things in my garden.

1. **Name** – My name is...Hala
2. **Place** – I am from... Tonga
3. **Family background** – There B members in my family.
4. **Hobby** – I like to...tv B ound different country

C

1. **Name** – My name is... JOHN
2. **Place** – I am from... Veotuu tongatapu.
3. **Family background** – There are....8... members in my family.
4. **Hobby** – I like to... clean house

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1. **Name** – My name is... Apolosi
2. **Place** – I am from... Tonga.
3. **Family background** – There are...3.... members in my family.
4. **Hobby** – I like to...playing Rugby.

D

E [   ]oals

Name:

Short term goals (what I want to achieve by the within 2 to 3 months) e.g. I want to save $400 to buy a weed eater.	By date (set a target) e.g. I want to save $400 to buy a weed eater by Thursday 3 June, 2010	My actions (steps I will take to achieve this goal) e.g. I will save $100 a week of my pay.
I want to... Save $400 To by buy a Chain Saw.	I want to... Save $400 Chain Sow by Thursday 3 June 2010	I will... save $100 a my pay.
Long term goals (what I want to achieve within 1 to 5 years) e.g. I want to save $3000 to build a house in Kiribati.	By date (set a target) e.g. I want to save $3000 to build a house in Kiribati by June 3, 2012	My actions (steps I will take to achieve this goal) e.g. I will save $1500 a year over the next two years by getting a job on the RSE scheme.
I want to... Save $4000 To build a House in vanuatu.	I want to... Save $4000 To build a House in vanuatu by June 3, 2010	I will... Save $1600 a year over the next two years by getting a Job on the RSE scheme

Appendix I Student Financial Goal Sample

good cf

Appendix J Sample of Student Pre-enrolment Interview Assessment Results

Name	[i]RL	[ii]LL	[iii]LC	[iv]RC	Numeracy Comment	Number Additive Level	Number Multiplicative Level	Number PR Level	Number Sequence Level	Number PV Level	Number Facts Level	What do you want to learn?
X	0	0	Step 1.	No reading	Step 2	1	1	0	3	2	1	Improve English
Y	2	1		Read well	Needs work on proportional reasoning, struggled to understand words such as "less"	1	0	2	2	0	2	To speak better English, computers and to send money back home
Z	2	2		Good		2	2	2	2	2	2	Learn English language and budgeting
A	2	2		Very good, leading ability	Good numeracy skills on average	0	2	0	2	2	0	All topics, everything especially computers
B	1	1		Better than ESOL- He speaks clearly and can understand basic English	Fractions are a bit new. Used fingers for #10. We need to teach "more"	3	2	2	3	2	2	English, Budgeting

[i] Reading level
[ii] Listening level
[iii] Listening comment
[iv] Reading comment