Research Report

Educational practices that benefit Pacific learners in tertiary education

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Executive summary

This project was commissioned by Ako Aotearoa and carried out with the Association of Pasifika Staff in Tertiary Education (APSTE). The purpose of this study was to identify exemplars of success for Pacific students in tertiary education. Pacific educational achievement is often framed in terms of underachievement. This approach is somewhat limited and there is more of a need to examine success for Pacific learners. In Aotearoa New Zealand there are many exemplars of good practice for Pacific students in tertiary education. Within the tertiary landscape, it is clear that there is considerable activity in academic and student support areas for Pacific students. This project focuses on examples of success and builds on previous research in tertiary education. In order to contextualise the state of Pacific learners in tertiary education, we have reviewed key writings that are relevant to Pacific in tertiary settings. We present these in the literature review.

The study sought to identify, understand, and share educational practices in tertiary institutions that work best and benefit Pacific learners. The research gathers clear stories of success that help to inform theory and practice in education by shifting attention from negative and deficit explanations of Pacific student achievement to a focus on exemplars of success. As a result, institutions can be inspired to improve and strengthen their own policy frameworks, actions and practices. The tertiary environment can gain a more in-depth insight into the realities and aspirations of Pacific learners and their communities. Consequently, learners will benefit from more exerted efforts from a strengths-based approach to educational success.

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

1. What are the perceptions that tertiary students hold about success in education?
2. What enabling factors contribute significantly to one's success or achievement?
3. How do institutions engage in students' success in education?

The Kakala research framework (Thaman, 2003), combined with an Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005) philosophy, directed the research process. The Kakala research framework is both culturally meaningful and inclusive for it provides a sense of ownership in the process and development of Pacific education (Thaman, 2003). In Tonga, Kakala means fragrant flowers, fruits and leaves, which have mythical origins, strung or woven together into garlands and worn at special events or presented to honourable and distinguished people as a sign of love and respect. Thaman (2003) utilises the process of Kakala making, which is inherently valued in Tongan culture, as a basis for the research framework. The three different processes are toli, tui and luva. Each step in making the Kakala represents the stages in conducting research. Thaman's Kakala framework was

further enhanced by adding three new phases: Teu, Mālie and Māfana (Taufe'ulungaki and Johansson Fua, 2009 as cited in Johansson Fua, 2009; Manu'atu, 2001).

In terms of gathering data, talanoa discussions were undertaken in the study. Talanoa is an unstructured discussion process used in Samoan, Tongan and Fijian cultures. In the talanoa process, the focus is on developing relationships between people and is a process where people share their stories, realities and aspirations.

As a research tool, talanoa:

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

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

In all, 119 students and 51 staff from five institutions that represent the three different types of tertiary education provider in New Zealand (two universities, two polytechnics, and one private training establishment), namely University of Otago, Victoria University of Wellington, Pacific Training Institute (Wellington), Whitireia New Zealand, and Manukau Institute of Technology, participated in the group talanoa sessions. These institutions were selected because of the rates of successful completion in selected programmes and the various innovations in Pacific learner initiatives. Accessibility into the institutes (via APSTE linkages) and the availability of key people were also considered.

Colleagues within APSTE supported the research by inviting students and staff to participate. At each site, talanoa sessions were conducted with students, teaching staff, administration and general staff. In some cases, where it was culturally appropriate and at the request of participants, talanoa interviews with individuals were held.

Key themes were identified based on the case studies' findings that arose as the participants discussed what characteristics of their learning led to success. Success is a holistic concept and it requires an overarching approach when applied to practice.

Overall, the findings showed three broad themes and sub-themes that were identified as factors that lead to success for Pacific in tertiary settings:

1. **Appreciative pedagogy**
   - Family support in education
   - Personal commitment to success
   - The *learning village* at the institution

2. **Teaching and learning relationships**
   - Respectful and nurturing relationships with students
   - Recognition of cultural identity, values and aspirations
   - The creation of 'Pacific' physical spaces
   - Incorporation of students' learning needs
   - Insistence on high standards
   - Opportunities for students to pursue higher education
   - Learning relationships between students
   - Mentorship as a learning relationship

3. **Institutional commitment**
   - A firm level of institutional support
   - Active institutional engagement with the Pacific community
   - Strong and supportive leadership
   - Significant Pacific role models.

Key Findings

Tertiary staff are encouraged **to learn, to reflect, and to value the life experiences** of Pacific learners. In terms of education, there is a need to understand Pacific students as learners who live in collective contexts. These contexts are influenced by varying cultures, beliefs and values, depending on their Pacific ethnicity. Moreover, there are generations of Pacific learners who are born in New Zealand and have grown up in New Zealand.

The field of teaching and learning in tertiary institutions needs to encompass the multiple worlds of the Pacific learner. We start with what is with the learner and value what they bring to education. For Pacific people, learning is not confined to effective teaching strategies; successful learning sits on the pillars of the family, the community, cultural capital, collaborative relationships and institutional support. When Pacific learners are empowered as confident learners, they are successful.

In terms of Pacific learning and success, this summary document targets three broad domains: **appreciative pedagogy, teaching and learning relationships, and institutional commitment.** The three domains need to operate in partnership with one another to ensure Pacific learner success.

Appreciative pedagogy

Appreciative pedagogy draws out the strength of talents, skills, relationships, experiences, practices and knowledge of students that have largely been undiscovered in education (Chapman & Giles, 2009; Doveston & Keenaghan, 2006; Giles & Alderson, 2008; Kozik, Cooney, Vinciguerra, Gradel, & Black, 2009; O' Connor & Yballe, 2007). Below are three themes identified through this research.

Family support in education

Families that provided a constant and meaningful level of support to Pacific learners leading to academic success were apparent in the research. Family support in education is manifested through various approaches such as praise, encouragement, giving them time to study, and support towards advancement to higher levels of education. Moreover, families who are increasingly familiar with the notion of tertiary learning increased their own appreciation of the realities of post-secondary school study. This led to further support of Pacific learners. A student commented, "My whānau is my guiding force. They are my support system; they fuel the fire in my belly; they keep it burning." Another student remarked:

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

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

Personal commitment to success

From this study, success for a Pacific learner was primarily centred on completing their studies. One student strongly pronounced, "I am committed to being the best doctor I can be when I graduate; I want to serve my people when I return to my community." Another said, "Actually, I have a great system of reminding myself what my main drive or goal is. I make sure that the wall in my room is labelled with my goal of 'I will complete my degree' – my friends see this and they have done this in their own hostels or flats."

"I will graduate, I will do this in my three years here. This is my priority in terms of my education. This encourages me to do well and to be a successful learner. It drives me," another student mentioned.

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

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

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

Resilience stemmed from prior negative stories of failure. The self-empowerment that arises from external influences is a key motivator in focusing on completing their studies. According to one student, "I don't want to be on any benefit or welfare system. The news tells people that we Pacific people are on the benefit. But that's not true. Not all of us are like that and I am not going to be like that." Another student exclaimed:

> *I am so over it! I am over the negative images and stories of Pasifika people in the media. That is so not us! We are more than that. Look at me, I am doing well. I am going to prove more to the outsiders.*

The students would also like to use tertiary education as an enabling tool to break down stereotypes about Pacific learners being underachievers. A student identified one of the common stereotypes as "the white people will get high education and will have more money, while the brown people will work in low-income jobs and [live in] low-cost housing."

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

Some students admitted that the mainstream system of care lacked cultural knowledge and sensitivity in caring for Pacific elders. A student shared: "Coming to a rest home setting, I witnessed that there was no cultural safety, no cultural identity and I felt the

Palagi system failed to care for my grandmother appropriately." For example, when giving a bath, her grandmother felt that her privacy was invaded because she was exposed without first having been asked permission. This act is culturally improper for Pacific Peoples, who are accustomed to being covered up. Another student mentioned that having worked in a mental hospital, he believed that the mainstream service for Māori and Pacific is limited. The food being served in the residential home did not offer any dish that caters to the Pacific taste buds. Through the Bachelor of Nursing Pacific, the Pacific approach to, and elements of, learning are incorporated in the programme making it more connected to Pacific students and in touch with their own culture. The Bachelor of Nursing Pacific offered by Whitireia is the first of its kind and is developed locally in New Zealand (Falepau & van Peer, 2010).

Students from Otago University described their Centre as a home away from home. One student remarked, "If it wasn't for this Centre, we would not have a place to study together and be Pacific people. This Centre helps us to come together and study."

Teaching and learning relationships

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

Respectful and nurturing relationships between teacher and learner

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

Teachers who consistently went out of their way to get to know the students and were approachable were highly regarded by students. Students were more likely to be consistent with the course or programme. Pacific learners placed great value on relationships and specifically stated that strong relationships with staff were prominent in their success. One student described their teachers as:

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

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

Recognition and implementation of cultural identity, values and aspirations
The people, teaching strategies and spaces that facilitated Pacific students' cultural identities, values and languages further contributed to overall student confidence and motivation. Such recognition allowed Pacific students to maintain their sense of Pacific identity and cultural capital. A student stated, "Well, everyone has different learning needs. But when the teacher knows how you learn – well, that's great for our success because he or she can change the way they teach...it helps if they are open to this change though."

Further, the recognition should be translated into an implementation strategy such as when teachers become interactive and they get students to talk; when they make learning personal, fun and real; when teachers show balance in their lectures, which can be exploratory, dialogue, debates; when they pose issues and look at them from 360 degrees; when teachers use metaphor, pictures, simple words, concrete and current examples, or life experiences to clarify ideas for students; when teachers repeat the main ideas or important processes that students need to know several times until they are able to grasp them; when teachers give different options for assignments other than a paper and pencil test or research paper; when teachers provide various avenues for teaching and learning aside from within the four walls of the classroom; and when teachers try to connect the curriculum and learning to the identities or ethnicities of the students. One student shared his reflection:

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

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

The creation of 'Pacific' physical spaces
The creation of culturally thoughtful and nurturing teaching spaces is vital to the learning experience of students. This is also vital in providing access to space that supports the students' course of learning outside the formal lecture room. Spaces that nurture specific cultural values such as collectivity, relationships, identity and togetherness are beneficial

in enhancing the Pacific student's journey to success. Students described Pacific space as a "space [that] would support our learning. It provides us with a space that nurtures our identity. We can be Pacific. We can eat, share ideas and talk in our own way." It is:

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

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

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

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

> *Maintaining my Tongan identity is important in a big place like this. I am Tongan. I have Tongan values which are important to me, so that I remain as a Tongan while I study.*

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

Incorporation of students' learning needs

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

success of learning. Teachers who actively engaged and mentored students outside formal teaching contributed to further learning and student success. According to one teacher, "Interactive strategies in teaching are really important. They engage the student with the material. There is more interest and more discussion. Small group work has been a key factor in my courses – the students' grades increase as they work together."

Insistence on high standards

The teacher who outwardly and constantly instilled high expectations for Pacific learners greatly contributed to Pacific student motivation to do well in their studies. As one teacher shared, "High expectations produce great results in my experience, especially for Pacific. Day one of teaching – I start by saying that we are all going to do well in this course and I keep that message going through my course. I make sure my tutors express it in feedback in assignments too." Ongoing and constant insistence was regarded as meaningful, consistent and genuine to students. Furthermore, expectations need to be transferred into practice and into a context for ensuring Pacific student success is a priority.

Opportunities for students to pursue higher education

Staff who encouraged and provided opportunities for students to pursue higher education greatly increased students' outcomes. For a staff member to see their potential and offer encouraging words and the relevant directions was important in students' decisions to further their studies and educational journey; an example is the Pacific support groups that assist students both academically and non-academically, which were identified as instrumental to achievement. Ms. A was commended by the students because of her presence, dedication and service to the students, which sometimes went beyond the call of duty. She helped students in checking and discussing their assignments. Her presence as a Pacific person who knows the culture and ways of being Pacific appealed to the students. A student affirmed the idea of having a Pacific person who "understands where we are as Pacific Peoples and knows our needs as well as a person who understands the culture, values and protocol." A student valued the efforts made by Ms. A, when she said, "I don't know where I would be if it wasn't for her.' Another student said that Ms. A is "a special lady, who is always ready to help and is honest with her comments and points of view." Ms. A was also highly regarded for coming up with study groups, where she would discuss hard assignments by breaking down the questions to their simplest form so students could understand them. This was critical, particularly for first-year students who were new to the academic system.

Learning relationships between students

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

They felt empowered by their cultural links with other students. For instance, the Tongan Students' Association students supported one another when they studied in groups. Sometimes they had to stay at the library at night and so they looked after one another when this happened. They 'stuck together' during the hard times of studying.This is the option that students preferred. One student said, "If it wasn't for my Tongan association, I don't know how I would cope with my study. They provide support to me as a Tongan student."

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

Mentorship as a learning relationship
When people (Pacific and non-Pacific) in the institution become long-term mentors to students, it can create positive outcomes. The mentors have provided learning beyond the text book and facilitated pathways for learner development. In many cases, students have gone on to pursue higher degrees and obtain influential positions. Lives can change for the better and many learners have returned to serve their Pacific communities. Mentoring relationships extend further than academic development. They permeate into pastoral, personal and professional development when mentorship is fully encompassing of Pacific values. A student said, "Mentoring from lecturers is key to my success. Lecturers have this amazing knowledge, which they can share and aid my learning beyond the lecture room."

Institutional commitment
Institutional support varied across the sites but when it was evident, it demonstrated the commitment and responsibility towards Pacific students, their families and the wider community. Institutional support has to be more than a 'tick-box' feature.

A firm level of support from the institution
The level of support received by Pacific students impacted on the extent to which they enjoyed their course of study and valued their programme. It has an influence on how Pacific students perceive their programme and connection to the institution. The degree of integration and inclusion of community support and engagement is connected to the institution's performance and the sincerity of its relationship within and outside the community. According to the research, the Pasifika Education Strategy was highlighted as a significant development for Pacific staff, students and their communities. The strategy was viewed as an approach to lift the aspirations of Pacific people. The support from non-Pacific staff was also recognised as valuable behind the goals and visions for Pacific student success. One of the staff members spoke about the belief and ownership of the strategy and the goals. MIT's expansion into the Pacific community was seen as a positive factor. But this was not entirely about recruitment of students. It was a way of engaging effectively with the community and to operate as more of a holistic organisation: "Yes, this is an important strategy. It engages people from our community very well."

A firm level of support from the institution also affects the development (including resources) of programmes and practices for Pacific students and the ability of a support programme to provide a physical space for students. Clear and comprehensive goals and strategies are outlined in the Whitireia Community Polytechnic Pacific Education Strategy, which aims for the improvement of educational outcomes for Pacific students. Four strategic developmental goal areas were identified: improved educational outcomes, effective learning environment, foster Pacific identity and leadership, and develop collaborative partnerships (Falepau & van Peer, 2010). These provide direction for the institution as it fulfils its commitment in supporting Pacific learners in their education.

Active institutional engagement with the Pacific community

Institutions should actively engage and intentionally involve themselves with their Pacific community. They can go out into the communities to talanoa on educational matters, to learn about Pacific life, and to support Pacific development. Institutions have an influential role on Pacific success in education. Staff believed that when a university is committed to Pacific students and their communities, it would lead to excellent academic outcomes for students. For instance, at some Pacific student celebrations and functions with the community it was common to see managers of the university in attendance and in support. This visible presence was important because it showed that the university cared about the students. Staff believed that a 'more present' university contributed to the students' and staff's motivation to perform well in their studies. It was about a relationship between the institution and everyone Pacific. When the university was committed to Pacific development in terms of its resources and overall strategic policy, mood was enhanced and staff felt that they could support students better. This is manifest in the University of Otago's Strategic Direction to 2012, stating its obligation towards national good, particularly on the aspirations of the Pacific community. Otago is committed to strengthen the "links with Pacific communities both within New Zealand and in the Pacific region. It will take steps to increase the recruitment, retention and achievement of Pacific students, and to support the development of higher education in the Pacific" (University of Otago, 2011, p. 4).

Strong and supportive leadership

Pacific and non-Pacific individuals across the institutions (academic and non-academic) were perceived as leaders when they truly valued and cared for their students. At MIT, the staff knew of each other's roles across the many departments. Working together meant that they were united in the cause to help Pacific students achieve in their studies. They knew of each other's skills and knowledge and could send students to see a particular staff member if the student required advice or support. One staff member affirmed that MIT valued Pacific people. Also MIT had values that he instilled in his life. This was salient for him in his decision to work with the institution: "I love working here.

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

Many of the staff members saw their roles as positive within the wider Pacific community and they could promote tertiary education to people around them. They always went out of their way for students and provided consistent encouragement, even in their 'busy' times. These leaders provided specific learning opportunities that were above and beyond the typical experience of 'being a student'. However, these leaders should be supported by the institution or provide a succession plan in case the leader left the institution, and someone else took over.

Significant Pacific role models

Positive role models of varying Pacific ethnicities in the institution increased students' motivation to succeed. Seeing academic role models around them had indirect influence on their success and in some cases this was not known to the role models themselves. However, role modelling is an important feature for students as they looked up to their teachers, who inspire them and believe in their ability to achieve. One student remarked, "I don't know if my teacher knows he had an influence on me, but he did, and it is the best influence. He was my role model. One day I will tell him." Similarly, another student recalled, "My Palagi English teacher was awesome. She constantly encouraged me through my years at school. She told me I could make it to university."

Introduction

Pacific Peoples are defined as New Zealand residents belonging to the seven Pacific nations of Samoa, Cook Islands, Tonga, Niue, Fiji, Tokelau and Tuvalu (Statistics New Zealand, 2006a). There are 265,974 people identified in this ethnic grouping, which represents 6.9 *per cent* of the country's total population (Statistics New Zealand, 2006b). In terms of educational performance, 30.4 *per cent* represents Pacific school leavers with a university entrance standard and 25.6 *per cent* corresponds to the tertiary participation rate of Pacific students aged 18 to 24 years old. Of the Pacific students enrolled in tertiary education, 75.6 *per cent* enrolled in their second year but only 39.9 *per cent* of Pacific students were able to complete their qualification within five years. Of 213,120 Pacific students, 1500 (0.7%) enrolled in postgraduate-level study (Education Counts, 2010). These figures show that the educational progress and academic achievement of Pacific students has slightly and steadily improved compared to previous years but the reality remains that the education system in New Zealand still fails to deliver equitable outcomes for Pacific Peoples (Statistics New Zealand, 2010).

As a result, various research projects have been conducted to understand the educational condition of Pacific learners and to improve educational outcomes. On Pacific governance and leadership in tertiary education, the value of mentoring in developing leadership among Pacific students (Chu, 2009, 2010) and the importance of making institutions such as universities more inclusive (Petelo, 2003) are recommended. The relationship between Pacific communities and tertiary education was seen as vital to educational success (Benseman, Coxon, Anderson, & Anae, 2006). In terms of effective teaching, tertiary institutions that respect and understand Pacific culture (particularly Tongan) like flexibility of ta (time) and va (space) (Kalavite, 2010) and universities that consult with Pacific students about educational support (Mara, 2006) contribute to students' academic success. The importance of culturally appropriate learning, language connections, meaningful understanding of Pacific culture and identity, and positive relationships between teachers, mentors and students were identified as factors in improving student achievement in tertiary education (Mara & Marsters, 2009; Nakhid, *et al.,* 2007; Penn, 2010; Rio & Stephenson, 2010).

However, little research has been conducted to examine success for Pacific learners with an appreciative and positive approach for Pacific educational achievement is commonly framed in terms of underachievement. Within the tertiary landscape, it is clear that there is considerable activity in academic and student support areas for Pacific students. To understand and appreciate what tertiary institutions are doing well for Pacific students, attention is focused on good practice and benefits for learners. It is envisaged that from positive attention, newer insights, learning, practices and outcomes for staff, students and institutions can result. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to identify,

understand, and share educational practices in tertiary institutions that are of benefit to Pacific learners.

Our research adopts the Kakala Research Framework (Thaman, 2003) as this is deemed to be appropriate both for the aim of the project as well as the people studied. The project explores the success of Pacific in five New Zealand tertiary institutions, including universities, polytechnics and a private training establishment. This research also offers factors that lead to success for Pacific learners.

The purpose of this study is to identify exemplars of success for Pacific students in tertiary education. It aims to identify, understand and share educational practices in tertiary institutions that are of benefit to Pacific learners. By using a cross-institutional approach, this project draws from a representative cross-section of the sector. The project places education for Pacific people as the focus of educational research. In this way, research is more likely to lead to better educational outcomes for Pacific people.

The objectives of the study are to:

1) identify, investigate, analyse and report policies, programmes and practices at institutional level that implement and facilitate Pacific community educational aspirations as well as support the government's tertiary Pacific educational priorities and strategies

2) identify, analyse and describe specific programmes and practices that support effective teaching and learning for Pacific learners

3) investigate, analyse and describe internal and external motivational factors that contribute to Pacific learners' development and success.

The research will enable tertiary institutions to understand what can be done to achieve, sustain and reproduce Pacific student success. It will have a significant, positive impact on educational institutions and Pacific learners in the following ways:

- By shifting attention from negative and deficit explanations of Pacific student achievement to a focus on exemplars of success. The research will benefit Pacific learners as there will be clear stories of success that will help to inform theory and practice.

- As a result of reporting learning exemplars, institutions can be inspired to improve and strengthen their own policy frameworks, actions and practices. Consequently, learners will benefit from more exerted efforts from a strengths-based approach to educational success.

- The tertiary environment will gain a deeper insight into the realities and aspirations of Pacific learners and their communities.

The aims and objectives are aligned with Ako Aotearoa's vision of enhancing educational learners by identifying and sharing good practice, and by enhancing educational opportunities for Pacific people through research. It is hoped that this research will inform institutional and sectoral improvements in supporting Pacific learners in tertiary institutions.

The above aim and objectives produced the following research question: *What are the key enabling characteristics of educational practices that have successful learning outcomes for Pacific students?*

In answering the research question and meeting the objectives of this study, we will examine the practices of institutions, the operations of teaching programmes and the work of teachers and students' learning strategies.

Association of Pasifika Staff in Tertiary Education (APSTE)

In terms of background, Ako Aotearoa's Pasifika Caucus requested that the Association of Pasifika Staff in Tertiary Education (APSTE) take on this project. APSTE is a national network of Pacific staff who work in tertiary institutions (wānanga, polytechnic, private training establishment and university) across New Zealand. APSTE was initially developed in the 1980s by Pasifika liaison officers who wanted to come together to form a supportive professional network. Each year they have held an APSTE conference, which has provided the members with an avenue to share evidence of good work and discuss institutional challenges. The conference also provides the place for collegial guidance and dissemination of specific practices in supporting Pacific learners.

Throughout this research, the APSTE executive committee has provided support and advice. This research was enabled by members of APSTE who work in the institutions involved.

1 Background and rationale of the research

1.1 Pacific Tertiary Education

New Zealand tertiary education includes all involvement in post-school formal education. This encompasses foundational education (such as adult literacy), certificates and diplomas, bachelor degrees, industry training, adult and community education, and postgraduate qualifications. Tertiary education institutes (TEIs) include universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, wānanga (higher education institution), and specialist colleges (Ministry of Education, 2006).

Our study rests within the backdrop of governmental educational priorities. The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) has stipulated that one of its priorities is to increase the outcomes of Pacific students achieving at higher levels. Further, TEC believes that the tertiary education sector has a key role to play in meeting the development needs and aspirations of Pasifika peoples in New Zealand (*Tertiary Education Strategy 2010-2015*). TEC urges tertiary institutions to work closer with the Pasifika community groups to improve pastoral and academic support, learning environments, and pathways into tertiary education. In addition, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority's (NZQA) Pasifika Strategy is "to contribute to Pasifika learners becoming highly skilled and highly qualified" (*New Zealand Qualifications Authority*, 2009, p. 5). Hence, the commitment to Pacific education is a stated priority at policy and implementation levels.

It is apparent that while a greater proportion of Pacific people in tertiary education are studying at bachelor level or above (Figure 1), they are still over-represented in lower-level study. Completion rates for Pacific students are lower than for any other group (Figure 1).
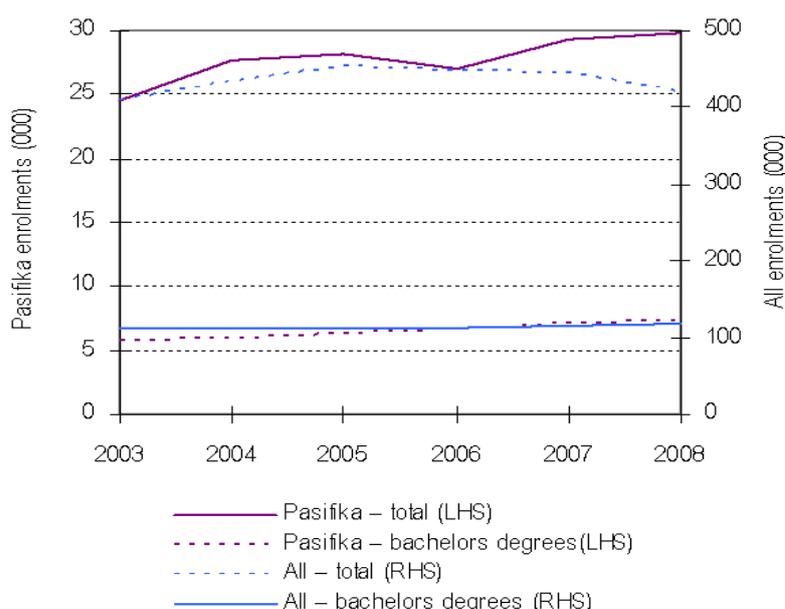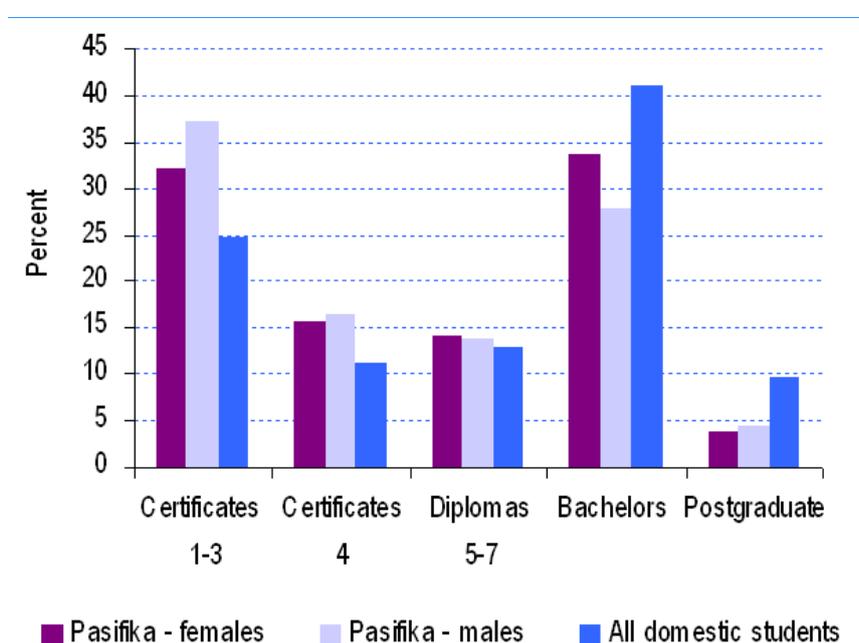

Figure 1: Domestic Pacific students in provider-based formal tertiary education compared with all domestic students

1.2 Pacific students and qualification levels

Thirty *per cent* of Pacific students were enrolled in bachelor or higher qualifications in 2008. This compared to 39 *per cent* for all domestic students. Thirty-three *per cent* of female Pacific students and 26 *per cent* of male Pacific students studied for bachelor or higher qualifications. The comparable figures in 2008 for all domestic students were 44 *per cent* for women and 37 *per cent* for men.

In 2008, four *per cent* of Pacific students were enrolled in postgraduate courses (levels 8 to 10). Of all domestic students, just over nine *per cent* were enrolled at postgraduate level. For Pacific and all domestic students, there was no difference in 2008 among the genders in the proportions enrolled at postgraduate level.

Source: Ministry of Education (2009)

Figure 2: Equivalent full-time student units in 2008 by qualification level and gender

As shown in Figure 2, there were, proportionately, slightly more Pacific students studying for level 5 to 7 diplomas in 2008 compared to the total number of domestic students. That is, 16 *per cent* of Pacific students studied at this level compared to 15 *per cent* of all domestic students. There were proportionately slightly more Pacific females than males who studied at diploma level in 2008. However, there was a decrease from 2007 to 2008 in the amount of study towards level 5 to 7 diplomas in terms of equivalent full-time student units, for both domestic Pacific students and all domestic students.

Pacific men participated at a higher rate in level 4 certificate study in 2008 than Pacific women (20 *per cent* compared to 17 *per cent*). Proportionately, there were also more Pacific men than women who studied towards lower-level certificates in 2008 (47 *per*

cent compared to 43 *per cent*). The overall proportion of domestic students enrolled in lower-level certificates was 44 *per cent* of males and 36 *per cent* of females.

Table 1: Tertiary education participation and completion rates, by ethnicity

Ethnic group	Participation rates (% population) for levels 1 to 10	Participation rates (% population) for level 7 bachelor's degree level	Completion rates (%) of level 7 bachelor's degree within 5 years of commencement	5-year higher-level progression rates (%) for tertiary education students
Pacific	14.6	3.7	32	39.6
Māori	20.3	3.4	36	28.5
Asian	17.6	6.6	55	31.0
NZ European	11.6	3.5	50	32.8

The rate of completion of qualifications is lower than for other ethnic groups. In pre-degree qualifications, while Pacific students are less likely to drop out in their first year they are also less likely to complete their qualifications within five years. When Pacific students do complete a pre-degree qualification they are more likely to go on to study for degrees than other people (Ministry of Education, 2007). Overall, the general trend for Pacific learners over ten years is still the same in that they are clustered at the bottom of the retention and completion data.

1.3 Gaps in the tertiary sector research

Coxon, Anae, Mara, Wendt-Samu and Finau (2002) published a literature review that identified Pacific education issues across all sectors of education in New Zealand. In terms of tertiary education, the report highlighted the statistical data patterns of students enrolled in tertiary institutes. It stated that a higher proportion of Pacific students were enrolled in lower-level qualifications and a lower proportion in degree and postgraduate programmes. This was consistent with the original intentions of the then government's Pasifika Education Plan for tertiary education, which focused on increasing participation and achievement, improving retention and encouraging higher levels of study.

The 2002 review identified issues of access, in particular of secondary-to-tertiary transition, and barriers to participation as well as various analyses of students' experiences of tertiary education. In the 2012 review of research, it is apparent that there has been a significant shift away from the overall deficit framing of identifying barriers and issues for Pacific students' learning and strategies in tertiary study (for example, Chu, 2009; Kalavite, 2010; Latu & Young, 2004; Mara & Masters, 2009). Much of the 2002–2012 research in tertiary education is focused at the level of university study and, to some extent, the polytechnic level. What are considered effective teaching strategies, student support programmes and intersections of culturally responsive approaches have been attractive topics in several studies (for example, Davidson-Touma'a & Dunbar, 2009; Elliott, 2008; Kepa, 2008;

Marshall, Baldwin & Peach, 2008; Nakhid *et al.*, 2007; Ng Shiu, 2011; Penn, 2010; Ross, 2009).

Evidently, the funding for support programmes (for example, academic mentoring, Pacific learning-support positions) or non-lecture teaching for Pacific students has increased in tertiary education since 2002. With such an increase, there is a requirement to understand the impact of such programmes on Pacific learners. Hence, Airini *et al.*'s (2009) two-year study provided the evidence for how non-lecture teaching activities complemented traditional teaching for Māori and Pacific student success. The research from the 'Success for All' project investigated what teaching practices in non-lecture contexts helped or hindered success in preparing for or completing degree-level study. The authors argued that detailed research is required to uncover the complexities of learning and teaching in tertiary education. 'Success for All' provides implications for the development and use of evidence for improving teaching and learning practices in universities. For example, the capacity and capability of university departments, faculties and service groups to collect and keep good records on how their practices help or hinder student success is a pressing need; resourcing to achieve capacity and capability is needed (workforce development programmes, staff and relevant expertise) as is the combination of qualitative and quantitative evidence to understand what teaching does to help or hinder student success and how these practices impact on Pacific students.

1.4   Moving the tertiary research forward: 2002-2012

The Coxon *et al.* (2002) report did not specifically provide recommendations for the research in the tertiary sector. The authors stated that they were disinclined to provide detailed recommendations in the area of overcoming barriers to Pacific Peoples' participation in tertiary education. However, they do state that further research could support representations of Pacific students across the range of tertiary providers and throughout the various levels of tertiary education. The review states that research will be required to address the disparities in outcomes. Further, if both participation and outcomes are to be enhanced, there will need to be attention to transition into tertiary education and from lower levels to higher levels of tertiary education.

Overall, there have been several studies on transitions or facilitating access to tertiary education. In these studies the attention has been on Samoan adult learners' experiences and their learning strategies to negotiate the balance between cultural paradigms (O'Regan, 2006), and the strategies taken by Pacific women in obtaining academic achievement (Ga'e, 2003). Williams' (2005) and Chu's (2009, 2010) work examined the significance of culturally relevant mentoring programmes and initiatives in supporting Pacific student transitions.

There is a range of descriptive studies that attend to understanding various strategies for transitions or pathways into tertiary education and/or the workforce from secondary

schooling, such as by Gavet (2011), Pasikale (2002), and Nilan (2009). Findings suggest workable strategies such as the focus on raising career awareness among young people, youth development programmes to prepare students with life skills after leaving school, and skill enhancement for employment.

Millward, Stephenson, Rio and Anderson's (2011) research at the Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT) utilised Vincent Tinto's internationally recognised model to assess possible reasons why Māori and Pacific students fail to complete their studies, or rather, why they 'drop out'. While the study primarily does not focus on transitions to tertiary education, the research provides findings that may support the argument for supportive measures in transitions to tertiary education for the institution itself.

In most cases, the research examines programmes or initiatives hosted by institutions as a way of facilitating transitions to their place of learning. These are mainly of the qualitative nature of describing and understanding experiences for people. It can be inferred that these studies are generally small-scale and are not longitudinal, that is, what happens for the student once they enter tertiary study and the impact the transitional programmes have had on them. Hence, further research on the area of transition is required.

Furthermore, while Pacific student numbers are significant in part-time study, there is still an unknown area – the types of experiences and forms of strategies that are used in their own transitions. It would be useful to engage with learners to understand some of their own successful personal strategies that were used in transitioning to tertiary study from secondary schooling. For international students from the Pacific region, there is also a need to understand their experiences as they transition from the Islands to the New Zealand context. This would help to support some of the development of student support programmes at universities, for example.

We infer that there is a need for further research that focuses on Pacific learning communities in institutions and the associated impact on student outcomes and achievement rates in New Zealand learning institutes. In order to increase Pacific student development, priority should be given to using research models and processes that effectively appreciate and draw out the strengths of Pacific students and their communities.

There is still not much known about 'what works well', nor has there been any in-depth examination of the key characteristics of successful learning programmes for Pacific students. We envisage that this study will create a pathway for similar research to be conducted so that practice can be further enhanced.

1.5   Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative for Pacific People (RPEIPP)

This research has been influenced by the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative for Pacific People (RPEIPP). Initially named the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative (RPEI), it was initiated and developed in 2001 by a group of Pacific educators and leaders (Professor Konai Thaman, Associate Professor Kabini Sanga, Dr 'Ana Maui Taufe'ulungaki, John Niroa, Dr Hilda Heine, Tili Afamasaga and Dr Unaisi Nabobo) who wanted to see some significant changes occur in education for Pacific Island countries (Sanga & Taufe'ulungaki, 2003).

There was concern about the lack of significant improvements in the progress of Pacific education. A few years later, RPEI added 'for Pacific people' to its name, so that it became RPEIPP. The main focus of RPEIPP was for Pacific peoples to rethink education in and for their own communities. Various activities initiated by RPEIPP have been directed at strengthening leadership development within Pacific Islands. RPEIPP has evolved from being an initiative to a movement. This research encompasses much of the rethinking philosophy for facilitating change for Pacific education: To rethink education, to focus on strengths of people and to encourage a more positive outlook in order to benefit the lives of young Pacific people.

2 Definition

2.1 Pacific Peoples

Pacific Islanders are commonly defined by Westerners as people living in Oceania particularly in the sub-regions of Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia (Thaman, 1995). These Island nations in the South Pacific have diverse cultures, different languages and various ethnicities, which constitute the three most salient features of its people (Fischer, 2002). In 1820, French explorer Dumont d'Urville coined the terms "Polynesian", "Melanesian" and "Micronesian" to describe and to distinguish the Pacific and its inhabitants from the rest of the world (Campbell, 1992). Similarly, the New Zealand government used the term "Pacific Islanders" in the early 1980s to group and to classify New Zealand migrants belonging to various Pacific ethnic groups under one name. In the early 1990s up to the present, this term has evolved into various names such as "Pacific Islands", "Pacific Nations", "Pacific Peoples" and "Pasifika" or "Pasefika" (Coxon *et al.*, 2002, p. 10). The New Zealand Census (Statistics New Zealand, 2006a) uses the term Pacific Peoples and they are defined as New Zealand residents belonging to the seven Pacific nations of Samoa, Cook Islands, Tonga, Niue, Fiji, Tokelau and Tuvalu. There are 265,974 people identified in this ethnic grouping, which represents 6.9 *per cent* of the country's total population (Statistics New Zealand, 2006b). In this study we have elected to use 'Pacific' as the primary descriptor but have left 'Pasifika and Pacific Islands' where it is appropriate to the institution and the participants' talanoa.

2.2 Talanoa

The word 'story' is short for the word 'history' and both share the same root and the same meaning. A story is a narrative on an event or series of events, just like history (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). Bishop and Glynn (1999) claim that stories are fundamental to narrative pedagogy. They constitute a powerful way of representing the truth and they allow for diversity to develop. Further, the power and control reside with the storyteller. Stories that are expressed in a talanoa process are related within the storyteller's cultural frame of reference and incorporate the language of the storyteller. The storyteller selects, recollects, and reflects on stories within their own cultural context and language. Bishop and Glynn (1999) argue that it is up to the 'other' to understand the storyteller and/or to facilitate the development of understandings in the story. To illustrate this point, the authors use the metaphor of storytelling to explain the relationship between the student (the storyteller) and the teacher (the listener). The teacher is required to understand the learner (the storyteller) and the stories (the knowledge). Stories are a metaphor for all of the knowledge that students bring to the classroom. Storytelling, as a specific learning and teaching strategy, opens up the intricacy of human experience. Stories allow listeners to identify with, and learn from, the experiences of storytellers. It increases the range of knowledge, interpretation and experiences available to the listener (Bishop & Glynn, 1999).

Storytelling is one of the oldest ways in the world to convey the values and ideals shared by a community. Stories can pass on lessons about shared values and enable others to work together. In the Pacific Islands stories were used for passing on important lessons in life, long before the development of the written word. It was evident that through talanoa the participants saw themselves in a developing story within education, and their sense of success was illuminated. Indeed, it was empowering.

3 Literature review

Learning in traditional Pacific Island culture took place everywhere: at home, during gatherings, in the fields and at sea. "[F]amily and community were inextricably interwoven, like strands of pandanus, into a coherent 'school' of learning" (Onikama, Hammond, Ormond & Koki, 1998, p. 1). This contrasts with traditional Māori society, where the brightest and gifted (young men) were selected to undertake training in a *Whare Wānanga* or 'House of Learning', a separate and distinct learning institute not unlike a school or university. There was no such model in traditional Pacific Island culture and even in contemporary Pacific life, success in education is still largely attributed to the influence of family, friends and community (Meyer, Weir, McClure, Walkey & McKenzie, 2009).

The first part of this literature review looks at Pacific people in the New Zealand educational environment and how it might be undermining their ability to participate, learn and achieve. The second part looks at various policies, programmes and practices that could enhance their ability to achieve and stay motivated to learn in this environment.

3.1 Pacific People in the New Zealand Educational Environment

The Ministry of Education's *Pasifika Education Plan 2009-2012* (Ministry of Education, 2011) has set the goal of increasing the participation of Pacific Island students in education at all levels but more importantly, it aims to improve their participation and achievement at the tertiary level. In particular, its goal is to close the gap with non-Pacific students in 20 years. At present, Pacific people are over-represented in statistics relating to failure in the education system. Consequently, less than 30.4 *per cent* of Pacific people leave school with a university entrance qualification and over a quarter of them leave with no qualification at all (Education Counts, 2010). Although their rate of participation in the tertiary sector has been improving during the past decade (Pacific made up 2.5 *per cent* of all students in 1990, which went up to 4.8 *per cent* in 2000), it is still well short of non-Pacific people including Māori. Furthermore, those who do participate often do not complete their qualification.

In 'Voices from Manukau', a study undertaken by Millward *et al.* (2011) for the MIT, Vincent Tinto's internationally recognised model was used to assess possible reasons why Māori and Pacific Island students fail to complete their studies, or rather, why they drop out. Tinto's (1975) Model of Institutional Departure explains that students' persistence or dropping out depends on their formal and informal integration with the academic and social systems.

The MIT is based in Manukau City, the largest multicultural city in New Zealand. Despite employing staff from a variety of cultures (including Pacific cultures), it has been recording a large drop-out rate amongst Pacific students after the formal withdrawal

period. What data did the MIT study produce? Of 1,931 students described as Māori or Pacific, 297 (15.4%) had been identified as no longer attending. All of these ex-students were sent exit surveys but only 32 were returned, and of those only 27 were viable. The biggest age group for drop-outs was 17–20 years. There was an even split between male (44%) and female (48%). Most students spoke English as a first language, thereby ruling out language difficulties as the cause for dropping out. There were significantly higher numbers of students dropping out of full-time courses as opposed to part-time courses, perhaps suggesting that Pacific students may be better suited to part-time study.

To help understand drop-out rates, the data were divided into themes: 'internal', 'external' and 'secondary' themes. Internal themes included institutional factors such as those related to timetables, teacher quality, support or lack of support, networks, and more general issues related to the institution. External themes included personal factors such as difficulties with finance and employment, childcare and transport. Secondary themes included negative personal factors, positive personal factors (getting a job), and moving away from the area. In terms of the latter, for example, some students said they suffered from difficulties with their peer groups and felt alienated.

Internal factors made up 66 *per cent* of students' reasons to leave whereas negative institutional behaviour was cited by 72 *per cent* of students. The students said things like "Islander students don't get as much help from tutors". About 27 *per cent* of students cited some negative factor/s in their peer group as the reason they left, stating things such as "other class members gave me a hard time" and "we need some activities to help everyone get along". Five students left because they found employment and/or moved from the MIT area, both external themes. The data indicate that significantly more external factors were cited than internal. The common themes above were identified as barriers to successful learning for Pacific people.

Many cultural values that are incompatible with the New Zealand educational environment came out of the MIT study. For example, the collective nature of Pacific family life is incompatible with the New Zealand educational model; Pacific students tend to spend more time on family matters and culturally based activities than their Palagi counterparts. These include church and community activities and looking after sick family members or children which, of course, take precedence over study. Additionally, the MIT study found that the more structured culture of the New Zealand school (and Pacific family) is not present in the tertiary environment, thus requiring students to regulate or discipline themselves. For many Pacific students, switching to a more autonomous, self-regulating environment might provide too much freedom and thus undermine their ability to achieve. It should also be noted that some students expressed the thought that the system is out to fail them because it does not take into account their cultural differences.

Other studies (Coxon *et al.*, 2002; Fa'afoi & Fletcher, 2002; Jones, 1983; Nakhid, 2003) have unearthed similar issues that also appear to undermine the ability of Pacific people to participate and remain in New Zealand's tertiary education system. Irrespective of how one wants to define these factors (that is, internal-external, social or cultural), they are nonetheless a characteristic of a culture that clashes with the current New Zealand educational environment. These factors are listed below and are expanded in the subsequent discussion:

- cultural/parental values of work over study

- Pacific peer groups

- financial and monetary concerns

- language and communication barriers

- Pacific shyness

- Pacific time concept managerialistic ethic of learning institutes.

3.1.1 Cultural/Parental values of work over study

Parental values of work over study appear to impact on the ability of Pacific people to participate in tertiary education. For instance, while consulting with community groups, many parents stated that students should not attend university so soon after finishing high school. They expressed the thought that it is more important to learn the 'value of the dollar' by getting a job and hence, delaying studying until they are more mature. In particular, Pacific parents appear to value learning the 'hard way' or through practical experience and activities rather than at an institute.

3.1.2 Pacific peer groups

Pacific peer groups appear to have either a positive or a negative effect on their ability to participate and maintain tertiary study. Peer groups, of course, are valued in terms of the mutual support and encouragement they provide. However, social activities can and often do take precedence over study. Such activities are often linked to the Pacific community and take the form of church and sporting pastimes.

3.1.3 Financial and monetary concerns

Financial pressure or monetary concerns appear to play a large role in course withdrawal. Pacific families have much lower household incomes and are therefore more susceptible to financial pressures. Many students have had to leave their studies in order to find work and support their families. Furthermore, many students were unhappy at having to take out student loans to get through study; they were unhappy that they would have to pay the money back, even if they did not finish study. It should also be noted that a lack of knowledge surrounding specific Pacific support services (including financial support services) played a role in the feelings of alienation by some students.

3.1.4 Language and communication barriers

Although language and communication barriers are much less prevalent with Pacific students now that so many learn English from a young age, they still face issues with confidence in speaking out, especially if they are not as fluent as their counterparts, whose English is their first language. In fact, many feel disadvantaged because they cannot speak as confidently as their non-Pacific peers. As such, they do not feel confident enough to ask specific questions in class or conversely, to say that they do not understand what the teacher/tutor is saying (Millward *et al.*, 2011).

3.1.5 Pacific shyness

Pacific shyness is closely related to the issue of language and communication. Pacific students often find it difficult to ask questions of educators; they come across as 'shy'. This reluctance to ask for help is often rooted in cultural beliefs surrounding the notion of 'face saving'. In a study carried out by Davidson-Toumu'a and Dunbar (2009), learning advisers and academic staff described Pacific students as shy, unassertive and lacking in confidence or self-esteem. According to Davidson-Toumu'a and Dunbar, this may be an error of judgement concerning Pacific behaviour. Western traits of assertiveness, individualism and motivation are highly valued in a tertiary setting. Conversely, the more modest 'Pacific' behaviours, according to the Pacific students who took part in their study, are deliberate and are viewed as appropriate in their cultural context. In short, this meekness is considered polite and contemplative.

One of the points that students made in the Davidson-Toumu'a and Dunbar study was that asking a question might indicate that the individual is not paying attention and thus, showing disrespect for the teacher-authority figure. More specifically, 'silence' was construed by these students as a sign of politeness whereas asking questions was construed as impoliteness (that is, it indicated that the student had not been paying attention). From a Pacific cultural standpoint, not questioning is often seen as a sign of 'respect' for elders or authority figures, a way of letting teachers 'save face' if a question cannot be answered adequately.

As noted, shyness and language-communication issues are closely related in the Pacific Island experience. For example, some Pacific students have stated that they feel shy about approaching Palagi for help because of language difficulties and the subsequent embarrassment that it might produce (Davidson-Toumu'a & Dunbar, 2009). Pacific-born students refer to their English language skills as contributing to their shyness and in particular, their feeling of being different. Some even stated that being physically different also affected their ability to interact openly and confidently with their non-Pacific peers. Being too shy to seek help might also be construed, some students felt, as not being adequate at the learning process (Davidson-Toumu'a & Dunbar, 2009). Fairbairn-Dunlop (2010) argues that male Pacific students in particular may be more reluctant or shy to seek help and ask questions because of these cultural beliefs and

recommends that the New Zealand educational system be reviewed with a "Pacific gender lens" (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2010, p. 150) to understand how Pacific students view education based on their cultural beliefs and understandings.

3.1.6   Pacific time concept

Davidson-Toumu'a and Dunbar (2009) see the Pacific concept of time as inconsistent with the Palagi (or Western) concept of time underpinning New Zealand's educational environment. More specifically, they point out that the 'Island time' concept could lead to significant misunderstandings by academic staff where Pacific students are concerned. For example, Pacific students can be left feeling "anxious or burdened" by the Western perception of time as a "finite commodity". They describe how one student in their study mentioned that he thought the concept of time to New Zealanders was internal, and that Palagi had an internal clock which ordered them around and led them to be constantly running uphill (Davidson-Toumu'a & Dunbar, 2009, p. 75). As they point out, time in the Pacific is more relaxed and fluid where "...time is limitless, flexible, natural, meaningful, conscious and patient…it is not forced upon people for they are never a slave to time" (Davidson-Toumu'a, 2009, p. 76). Pacific students described how they felt that there was never enough time in the New Zealand educational model, and that as a concept it was too rigidly defined, limited and controlled.

3.1.7   The managerialistic habit of learning institutes

Many tertiary institutions, including New Zealand universities, are inundated by what could be termed a 'managerialistic habit', a habit of control (including control over time) and perfectionism. This system is not only enforced in an administrative sense but also academically. For example, it is manifested in an attitude of inflexibility, in the context of language acquisition and fluency, and in the imperialistic attitudes of native speakers. For instance, students must enrol by a specific date, essays or assignments must be completed on time, and a specific way of articulating concepts must be used. There is strong evidence across education showing that this approach is not conducive to productive learning, motivation and success (Davidson-Toumu'a & Dunbar, 2009). In light of this, it is not likely that any overly formal structure will contribute to the educational health and overall well-being of Pacific bound up within that sort of environment.

3.2   Enhancing Pacific participation and achievement

The lack of Pacific student participation and completion rates for qualifications raises the question of how to integrate Pacific traditionalism into the mainstream system or ways. This whole notion clearly presents a challenge. As intimated throughout the first part of this review, Pacific students and families are caught between two traditions: their own tradition and the Western tradition that dominates the socio-economic and educational environment. Research indicates that this chasm in traditions appears to undermine the ability of Pacific people to participate and achieve in tertiary education. One way of bridging this disjunction might be to organise the educational environment as an aiga

"where personal and educational difficulties are not 'regulated' but addressed as soon as practicable" (Theron, 2007, p. 3). The second part of this review looks at possible solutions in the form of programmes, policies and practices/strategies that could be implemented to address the personal and educational difficulties confronting Pacific students. These solutions are listed below and are expanded in the subsequent discussion:

- location and community

- structured learning communities

- motivational enhancement

- Island-time recognition

- improved communication

- stress reduction

- general strategies/policies and practices.

3.2.1 *Location and community*

In the aforementioned 'Voices from Manukau' research, Millward *et al.* (2011) investigated an initiative set up by a university and an institute of technology in New Zealand. The purpose of this initiative was to increase the participation of students who were poorly represented in the statistics relating to tertiary education, namely Māori and Pacific people. The 53 Māori and Pacific students involved in this initiative were largely unsuccessful during their secondary education. So the majority entered the tertiary sector using the Special Admissions process. Nonetheless, 78 *per cent* of them went on to pass their courses (Millward *et al.*, 2011). This compared favourably to Māori and Pacific students who were not involved in this initiative. However, this group of Pacific were still slightly less successful than their Palagi counterparts who recorded an 89 *per cent* pass rate. Two themes came from the analysis of interviews with students from the Manukau programme that may help Pacific learning: first, the location of the programme in the local area; and second, the spontaneous evolution of communities of practice.

Convenience of location (Manukau) was important to both Māori and Pacific students, as most of the participants in this study were females who had families at home to care for. The familiarity of location was also important. Related to this convenience and familiarity were issues of identity. For example, the students indicated that they enjoyed studying with others with whom they could identify culturally and geographically. This is consistent with Crozier, Reay, Clayton, Colliander and Grinstead's (2008) findings in the United Kingdom. These researchers found that there were very few social and cultural challenges when students were studying with others with whom they could identify. And indeed, Crozier notes the "...very few social and cultural demands when the students were studying with 'people like them'" (Crozier *et al.*, 2008, p. 174). Indeed, Pierre

Bourdieu (2000) described familiarity of location and identity as being akin to "fish in water" (Crozier *et al.*, 2008, p. 169).

Being involved in a community that is learning together was another important aspect for students of the Manukau initiative. A sense of closeness ensured that each student shared a desire for learning and for the subject at hand. Free from hierarchical constructs, these 'communities of practice' enable novices and experts to learn together. As one student commented, "It's like a family bond. The teachers are there and we regard them like parents and here we are a family and so we help one another..." (Millward *et al.*, 2011, p. 284). The study groups seemed to develop a type of "communal memory" so that each person did not have to remember everything taught. They found that by working cooperatively, they could help each other learn: "We're sitting there, (we) listen and when the lecture's finished, some understand, some don't, so that was really important in our group" (Millward *et al.*, 2011, p. 284). Furthermore, different members of the community offered different strengths that ultimately benefited the entire group. As such, learning came about through group participation rather than in isolation and from differing perspectives or just from one person.

The findings of the Millward *et al.* study, however, were not all conclusive Although the idea of 'family' is largely positive, a family also involves complexities/tensions and this was certainly the case in the Manukau initiative. Furthermore, outside of this 'academic family', a large percentage of the students involved in the initiative had their own 'personal family' responsibilities and these responsibilities appeared to often place them under financial and emotional stress. Indeed, they also encountered stress due to demands placed on them by their extended families. Personal/external responsibilities and family stress may have been one of the reasons why this group still performed slightly below the success level of their Palagi counterparts.

3.2.2 Structured learning communities

Alexandra McKegg's (2005) research into structured learning communities shows that the Manukau approach may help Pacific students. Structured learning communities are a response to new groups entering education. Collaborative learning strategies such as those undertaken in Manukau allow students to have a voice. Research has shown that students who take part in learning communities are better placed for high retention and will achieve better grades (McKegg, 2005).

Learning communities are created by structuring and scheduling classes so that the same group of students study together across various subjects. In this way, students can learn together and get to know one another well. In particular, learning communities based on culture can benefit minority cultures that are usually poorly represented at learning institutes. Because they are often under-represented, many minority cultures feel isolated or under-valued in their respective tertiary environments (Bishop & Glynn, 1999, cited in McKegg, 2005). Anae *et al.* point out that a structured learning community based

on culture can provide a "comfort zone, through which Pacific students can learn about the new tertiary environment" (Anae *et al.*, 2002, p. 87, cited in McKegg, 2005, p. 296).

Raising the possibility of learning within one's culture, ethnicity or race is not a straightforward task. However, McKegg (2005) believes that all students need a space that makes them feel culturally safe, that is, in order to provide a context that facilitates their learning. The research suggests that the more students are connected with one another, the more likely they are to continue studying and learning (Tinto, 1998, cited in McKegg, 2005, p. 296). In the McKegg study, students spoke about their close connection to one another (that is, peer support) as a way of making sure "people turn up to classes" and as a way of "making sure we're all up to date with our work" (p. 298). Other Pacific students likened their tutorials to being part of a cohesive and interrelated group of friends or family. As one student put it, "We get along together, we're good mates. More than a community of learners, it's everything…" (p. 298).

Another student emphasised the ethnic bond more specifically:

> *Being in tertiary studies with the other Pacific Islanders it makes your confidence much more easier because, I um, I personally think that Islanders kind of go with the flow with things and I think that being together, studying together, it makes it easier* (McKegg, 2005, p. 298).

In addition to having a good relationship with one another, McKegg (2005) also found that students need to have a good relationship with their tutors. Having a good relationship with one's tutor not only nurtures the overall bonding process but also cultivates confidence. For example, one Pacific student stated how he liked the way that his tutor "steps down to our level" (McKegg, 2005, p. 297). Another student described his tutor as "humble – doesn't look down on us" (McKegg, 2005, p. 297). Indeed, these students felt that having a good relationship with their tutor was vitally important. They said their tutors were "on a one to one level" and that they were "easy to get along with" (McKegg, 2005, p. 297).

For McKegg (2005), it is important that learning communities are set up gradually and that enough time and energy are put into discussions to ensure institutions are clear about the benefits and goals of such communities. If the project is to be a success, it needs to be supported and driven by all those involved, including the students. If it is to be a fully informed and engaged 'learning community', then the entire learning cooperative needs to be aware and up-to-date. This means that in-house workshops need to be hosted and reading material should be up-to-date and available and last but not least, it is important that an environment is created that fosters confidence, where the input of Pacific students is treated with respect (McKegg, 2005).

3.2.3 Motivational enhancement

A by-product of the structured learning approach appears to be a greater level of motivation to achieve and do well (Latu, 2004). In short, motivation can be either intrinsic or extrinsic: intrinsic motivation reflects the desire to do something because it is enjoyable, whereas extrinsic motivation reflects the desire to do something because of external rewards such as money or praise. Latu found that Pacific students were low on intrinsic motivation. In other words, their motivation tended to be driven extrinsically by external encouragement, praise and reward. According to Latu, structured learning groups provide this external encouragement in the form of small group rewards (praise, support and guidance from other members). Furthermore, in a structured learning community or group, the disappointment associated with failure is moderated and externalised as a group problem, thus offsetting de-motivation. Those who are inclined to perform poorly are less likely to be demotivated by their inability because they are part of an able group.

While the structured learning approach appears to facilitate the learning of extrinsically motivated individuals, the ultimate goal of educators should be to cultivate intrinsic motivation. More specifically, educators need to help Pacific students develop internal motivational resources in the form of competence and self-determination. A sense of competence and self-determination reflects an internal locus of control where the individual is motivated intrinsically by a sense of control over his or her life. In other words, academic success is seen as a factor of one's own effort; it is driven by a personal sense of accomplishment rather than by external motivators that are often beyond one's control. Latu states that "educational environments need to find ways to support students' needs for competence and self-determination" (p. 347).

3.2.4 Island time recognition

As discussed in the first part of this review, Davidson-Toumu'a and Dunbar (2009) note that there is a Pacific concept of time which is inconsistent with the Western concept of time. However, it is the latter which underpins New Zealand's educational environment. Because there is a link between one's use of time and one's core values, the way in which Pacific students manage their time will likely differ to that of non-Pacific students and staff. This conceptual difference appears to lead to misunderstandings between non-Pacific staff and Pacific students who have an entirely different view of time and its role in their life. For instance, in Davidson-Toumu'a and Dunbar's study, advisers and lecturers expressed concern about the apparent lack of regard Pacific students showed for time. However, rather than accommodate the Pacific concept of time, many suggested that skills in time management ought to be taught. The Davidson-Toumu'a and Dunbar study concluded that while it is not necessary for non-Pacific learning staff to embrace Island time, it is important for staff to be aware of the different concepts in order to avoid such misunderstandings.

Conversely, it might be advantageous for all tertiary education institutes to look at ways to include 'Island time' in their educational curricula, in terms of research, methods and practices, or by incorporating this concept as a health benefit in educational communities, large or small, formal and informal. Such an approach may lead to less stress, closer ties, improved relationships, and a more fulfilling range of experiences. There may also be a greater level of understanding and more willingness to embrace or challenge similar and different world views that exist inside and outside the New Zealand educational model (Davidson-Toumu'a & Dunbar, 2009; Theron, 2007).

3.2.5   Improved communication

During the MIT initiative, staff noted a number of communication skills lacking in some Pacific students. These included classroom communication skills, the ability to give spoken presentations, the ability to participate in discussions, and a lack of confidence to express opinions. Making requests and working effectively within non-Pacific groups was also identified as an area where students struggled. No reasons were cited for these short-comings. However, they might be a factor of Pacific shyness or a need for external motivators as discussed above. Irrespective of the cause, MIT staff suggested that steps be put in place to make asking for help something that is seen as normal or healthy. Indeed, the development of adequate help-seeking behaviours, plus good communication and social skills, is seen as important when it comes to the adjustment of Pacific students to academic life in New Zealand.

3.2.6   Stress reduction

Stanley Theron (2007) argues that the aim in the education environment should be to 'stress less'. The result of less stress is better outcomes for all involved. Learning approaches that emphasise more cooperative planning and tuition are vital when taking into account Pacific students' needs, interests and objectives. Indeed, stress is exacerbated when tertiary learning is situated within settings that are "...planned, built and suited to the needs of management, business and budget" (Theron, 2007, p. 1). Whether stress, trauma and/or anxiety, it is not only the individual that is affected; it is everyone within the environment. Theron suggests that all staff, whether academic or management, should receive training in dealing with stressful situations, whether assessing, addressing or defusing a situation directly.

3.2.7   General policies and practices/strategies

Tinto proposes that institutions have a responsibility to support students inside and outside of the learning environment, to ensure that they remain in study; that is, students with fewer personal problems are better placed to succeed in study. The Pacific students studying at the Manukau institute identified a number of options that may be beneficial including 'more one-on-one time with tutors', 'help with English writing and speaking skills', 'more social activities on campus', 'access to Māori and Pacific support networks within MIT', 'financial assistance', and 'access to counselling services' (Millward

et al., 2011). There are many more policies, practices and strategies that could also be implemented, including those suggested by Benseman *et al.* (2006) below.

Benseman *et al.* (2006) looked at extending participation rates and retention for Pacific students once they are enrolled, and at factors that impede and increase retention rates. This study found (as the other studies have) that retention depended on communication between the student, the institution and the community. Pacific participation has grown steadily, in part attributable to bridging programmes, open entry policies in universities, the emergence of technical institutes, and increased enrolment in private training establishments. However, it is mostly in polytechnics where Pacific students' enrolments have increased. As Benseman *et al.* point out, the qualifications on offer at these institutes tend to be at "...the less prestigious end of the educational spectrum" (Benseman *et al.*, 2006, p. 150).

Benseman *et al.* also note the lack of Pacific academics whom students can access for support or as mentors and they recommend that more Pacific staff would be valuable, especially as role models. A related strategy would be to have these academics involved in services and programmes designed specifically for Pacific students. Pacific events were also cited as an effective way to show a Pacific presence in learning institutions, especially for students who are feeling isolated (Benseman *et al.*, 2006).

In the Benseman *et al.* study, many participants said that it was a teacher who provided the most support when it came to further study opportunities. More specifically, encouragement from teachers played a large, crucial role in the students' educational progress. Students felt that because teachers had been successful in 'the system', they were well placed to offer real insights into success and further education. Conversely, a number of respondents said that lecturers were nowhere near as supportive as school teachers and that the relationship with them was more informal, more impersonal. Finally, older family members, including parents, siblings and cousins, were also seen as valuable role models. Benseman *et al.* have also identified a number of other strategies that might be effective including:

- student-centred teaching
- teaching that fosters academic and social engagement between students and lecturers
- a commitment to high standards and an expectation that all students can achieve
- desire to make the high standards accessible through support
- access to resources
- accessible pastoral care

- a 'staircase' environment that offers links from one level of qualification to the next

- accurate and timely information, which was seen as invaluable in the making of good decisions throughout an academic career.

Findings from the Davidson-Toumu'a and Dunbar (2009) study indicate that culture and education go hand-in-hand and that educators need to have a clear understanding of how the two concepts work together. These authors argue that it is important to view the Pacific student as a whole person, who has myriad obligations in an often social and hierarchical culture. Indeed, these students routinely have a number of roles other than 'student' that they are required to fulfil. They suggest the following general strategies:

- Learning advisers and support staff need to not only teach their students, but learn from and understand their students.

- Learning staff consider cultural values when dealing with situations.

- There are wider networks to help to Pacific students.

- Social engagements are taken into account as crucial factors underpinning the success of Pacific students in New Zealand.

- Learning advisers observe and document issues that Pacific students face so that these can be communicated to those who are best placed to implement positive change.

- Support staff seek answers and understanding from a variety of sources and, most importantly, from those they wish to help.

- The difficulties of Pacific students are addressed at the management level and by the institution as a whole, and not just by support staff.

- Staff are available and approachable; this appears to be key factor in Pacific Island success.

The first part of this review, *Pacific People in the New Zealand Educational Environment*, looked at possible reasons preventing Pacific people from participating and achieving in New Zealand's tertiary education sector. As discussed, the rate of Pacific participation in the tertiary sector has been improving during the past decade but it is still well below that of non-Pacific. Though the Tertiary Education Strategy (TES) has influenced the performance management activities of tertiary education institutions, there is still a significant number of these institutions that do not include Pacific key performance indicators (KPIs) within their annual reports and considerable differences in the performance outcomes of Pacific students in these institutions were identified (Horrocks, Ballantyne, Silao, Manueli, & Fairbrother, 2012). Furthermore, those who enter the tertiary education sector often do not complete their courses. A number of reasons for

their poor performance have been put forward by researchers in this field. These reasons are detailed in the first part of the review and included Pacific parents' attitudes of work/income over study; the influence of peers and social activities which often take precedence over study, financial and monetary concerns and a reluctance to take out student loans, language and communication barriers, shyness and a reluctance to engage in open dialogue with authority figures, the Pacific concept of time, and the managerial ethic of New Zealand's learning institutes. In short, most of these issues are underpinned by cultural values that are inconsistent with the Western values on which New Zealand's education system is built.

In the second part of this review, we looked at possible policies, programmes and practices/strategies that might enhance the achievement of Pacific people in the tertiary education sector. These policies, programmes and practices are outlined in detail above. However, one of the main findings to come out of this review was that Pacific students perform at a much higher level when working in structured learning communities or groups. As detailed above, these structured groups or communities allow Pacific students to study together in a familiar environment and around people of their own culture. Indeed, this review indicates that structured learning groups can address a number of possible deficits outlined in the first part of this review (that is, language and communication barriers, Pacific shyness and the Pacific time concept). Furthermore, some of the solutions highlighted in the second part of this review also appear to be resolved within the structured learning group model. More specifically, structured learning groups/communities such as the MIT initiative are able to incorporate many of the solutions outlined above. For example, they can enhance motivation, incorporate a Pacific concept of time, improve communication skills, and reduce the stress associated with external cultural responsibilities. Additionally, these communities/groups provide an opportunity for educators to cultivate intrinsic motivation in Pacific students, an element that Latu (2004) suggests might be a significant factor underpinning their poor academic performance.

3.3 Appreciative inquiry

For this study we have used appreciative inquiry (AI) as a broad philosophy to help inform the lens we used with the participants, particularly in the framing of questions within the talanoa. AI provides a strengths-based approach to understand what works best in programmes, people, institutions and communities. AI provides us with the tools to find out what works well for Pacific learners. This section of the report provides the origins, description and applications of AI in various fields.

3.3.1 The origins of appreciative inquiry

Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) help explain the term *appreciative inquiry* (AI) primarily by defining its simplest form, *appreciate* and *inquire*:

Ap-pre'ci-ate, v., 1. Valuing; the act of recognizing the best in people or the world around us; affirming past and present strengths, successes, and potentials; to perceive those things that give life (health, vitality, excellence) to living systems. 2. To increase in value, e.g., the economy has appreciated in value. Synonyms: value, prize, esteem, and honor.

In-quire', v., 1. The act of exploration and discovery. 2. To ask questions; to be open to seeing new potentials and possibilities. Synonyms: discover, search, systematically explore, and study.

AI was a model conceived in the 1980s by David Cooperrider and his mentor Suresh Srivastva as part of his doctoral study in creating an organisation-development assessment that moves away from traditional deficit-based thinking (Lord, 2005) to a strengths- or positive-based perspective (Reed, Pearson, Douglas, Swinburne, & Wilding 2002). There are numerous ways the term appreciative inquiry has been described. Watkins and Mohr (2001) state that AI is a collaborative and highly participative, system-wide approach to seeking, identifying, and enhancing the "life-giving forces" (p. 14-15) that are present when a system is performing optimally in human, economic and organisational terms. It is a journey during which profound knowledge of a human system at its moments of wonder is uncovered and used to construct the best and highest future of that system.

Hence, AI focuses on the life-giving forces or goodness in the system that generates a collective positive image of a new and better future, which is meaningful to the active members of that system (Chen, 2003; Norum *et al.*, 2002). It revolves around qualitative, narrative analysis, focusing on stories and their generative potential (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). It springs from the concept of the "appreciative eye" in art, where it is believed that a certain beauty lies in every art (Gergen, 1999). AI is a shift from a deficit-based language into an asset-based language. To clearly illustrate this frame of mind, Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) used a model to differentiate problem solving and AI (Figure 3).
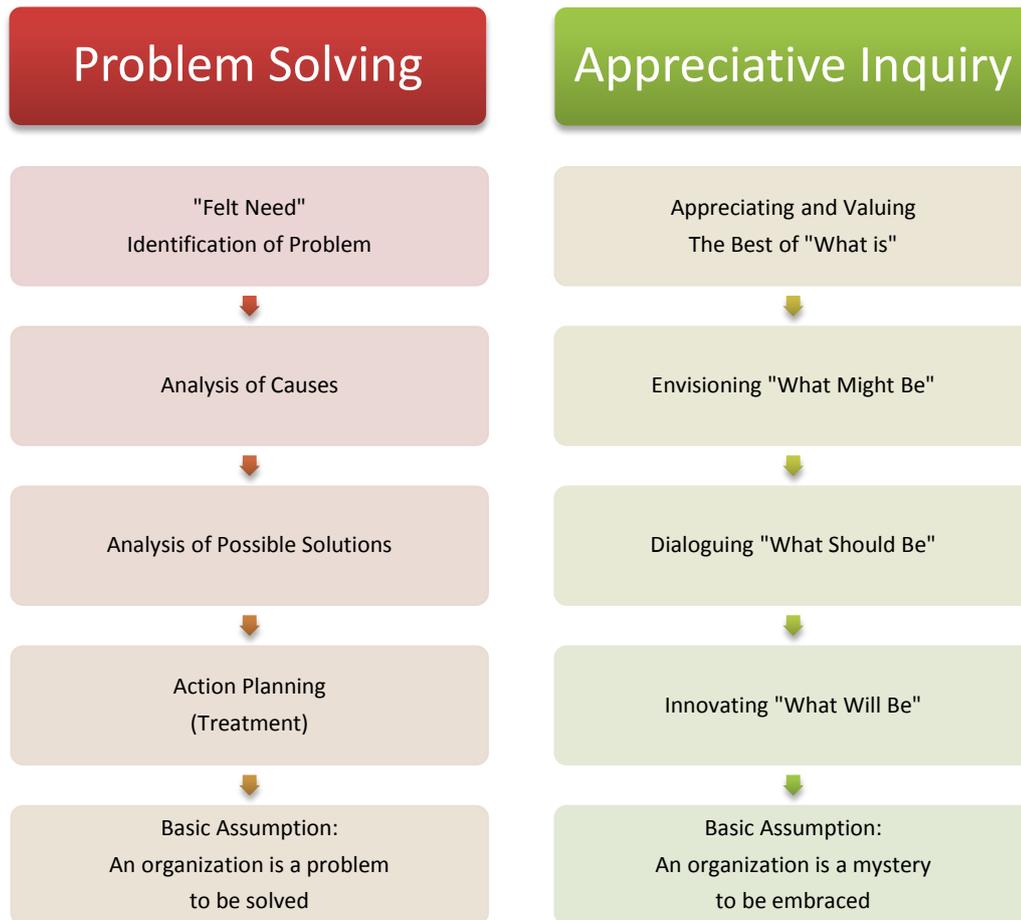
Problem Solving

"Felt Need"
Identification of Problem

↓

Analysis of Causes

↓

Analysis of Possible Solutions

↓

Action Planning
(Treatment)

↓

Basic Assumption:
An organization is a problem
to be solved

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciating and Valuing
The Best of "What is"

↓

Envisioning "What Might Be"

↓

Dialoguing "What Should Be"

↓

Innovating "What Will Be"

↓

Basic Assumption:
An organization is a mystery
to be embraced

Figure 3: Differentiating problem solving with AI (source: Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987)

Indeed, AI gives a new perspective in looking at things. It discovers and appreciates the best in people and their world through exploration of their inspiring life stories and uplifting experiences. It is in this sense that positive change can occur when these life-changing shared stories become shared vision and action (Fry & Barrett, 2002). Moreover, AI is an alternative approach to traditional action research because it starts with looking for what is best, then identifying the problem. However, AI has its share of censure (Van der Haar & Hosking, 2004). Some of its criticisms were revealed in the study of Bushe and Khamisa (2004), which evaluated the effectiveness of AI in achieving change in social systems by examining 20 published case studies using the AI framework. Only 35 *per cent* of the cases studied were identified as result of transformational change. Patton (2003) argued that AI puts too much emphasis on the positive and does not directly address the problems, weaknesses or things that are going wrong. Pratt (2002) added that recognition should also be bestowed on "the need to honour the multiple and undivided realities of human experience in organisations" (p. 119). Rogers and Fraser (2003) question whether AI encourages "unrealistic and dysfunctional perceptions, attitudes and behaviour" (p. 77).

Egan and Lancaster (2005, p.42) identified three challenges associated with the AI approach:

- difficult interpersonal situations may be overlooked and remain unidentified as challenges to the success of the group or organisation

- feelings of anger or frustration may not be voiced and may become barriers for some employees

- dissatisfied organisation members may retreat and withdraw from the process because they are unable to feel included by the AI approach.

In AI's defence Coghlam, Preskill, and Catsambas (2003) stated that AI addresses the problem or issue but from a different angle or perspective, concentrating not on the problem *per se* but its surrounding strengths and successes. Similarly, Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) affirmed the idea that AI recognises the conflict, issue or problem as lived experiences but never uses them as the basis of analysis and action.

3.3.2 AI in practice

For more than three decades, AI has been used to facilitate desired outcomes in various researches and fields of study. The contribution of AI to organisational development and change management has been documented by Bezzina (2008) as she outlined the effectiveness of AI as a paradigm for the development and implementation of the Bright Start Program in their school. Sullivan (2004) affirmed the promising role of AI in library organisation, where staff affirm the best of the past and the present and look forward to the future in which library services and programmes are relevant. Similarly, Kelly (2010) provided an overview on the effective role of AI in library and information management organisation. Elleven (2007) examined and suggested AI as a tool for organisational development and performance improvement in student affairs. The local government of Hampton City, Virginia witnessed the transformation of the city government when its workforce underwent an AI process to bring about their desired vision for the twenty-first century (Johnson & Leavitt, 2001). Calabrese, Hester, Friesen, and Burkhalter (2010) asserted the effectiveness of AI's 4D cycle in promoting and improving sustainable relationships among rural Midwestern school districts' stakeholders. Likewise, Lehner and Hight (2006) upheld AI as a positive approach to alter the workplace culture by empowering members of a student affairs unit.

Chu (2009) employed AI as a research approach in exploring mentoring as a strategy to develop and strengthen leadership among Pacific students in order to enhance success in tertiary education. Chu developed the Appreciative Mentoring Framework based on AI's 4D cycle. The AM framework includes recognise, realise, guide, and grow phases of mentoring. Morsillo (2006) used an AI approach within an action research framework to identify the social identity issues and create meaningful community projects among socially disadvantaged youths in the northwestern suburbs of Melbourne, Australia.

Grant (2006) investigated the significance of information and communications technology (ICT) in the governance of four primary school Boards of Trustees in New Zealand with an analysis of AI as a research method through application of critical theory. In his critique of AI, Grant (2006) concluded that AI should be seen as a process for, rather than a master of, change. He suggested that AI should not only focus on "what is good" but appreciation must also mean "to know, to be conscious of, to take full and sufficient account of" (p. 4).

AI has been used for numerous educational outcomes, such as the identification and promotion of best teaching practices and traits. With the participation of students enrolled in the Family Literacy project, Alderson and Giles (2008) utilised AI as a research approach to identify the processes that have positive impact in the relationship between the teacher and learners. These are: the vital role of adult educator is critical for the learners; the learning atmosphere should be socially enabling for learning; the importance, involvement and recognition of family/whānau in the learning journey of the students; and the need for inclusiveness of all learners. Doveston and Keenaghan (2006) applied the principles of AI to improve the teacher-student interpersonal relationship and collaboration in the classroom. Some significant areas identified were: ensuring everyone is consulted and their contributions acknowledged; making the classroom safe for students to contribute; creating fun, varied and rewarding classroom activities; and generating time and different ways for students to reflect and so on. Kozik, Cooney, Vinciguerra, Gradel, and Black (2009) identified traits using AI, which teachers must demonstrate, that would lead to success in an inclusive adolescent education. These are the values of social justice, passion, courage for change, listening and communicating. Likewise, Saunders (2003) employed AI as a method for institutionalising retention activity in the college of arts and sciences. She identified three principles from the study: to care as much about who we teach as what we teach; to provide an environment that allows students to be the best that they can be; and to sustain a supportive environment and encourage students to maximise their potential.

Calabrese, Hummel and San Martin (2007) examined the positive core of teacher and administrator in a rural district of USA in terms of appreciating at-risk students or students who are under-performing in academic assessments and school-related academic achievements. Using AI as a research approach, they identified that: 1) teachers viewed themselves as people who can make a difference especially for at-risk students; 2) teachers identified a positive core of experiences when working with at-risk students such as empowering students and developing trusting relationships; 3) teachers built positive rapport and relationship with parents of at-risk students, which was made convenient and easy through technology as a communication tool; 4) teachers and administrator worked for a common vision towards the improvement of at-risk students; 5) teachers and administrator espoused the most sincere demonstration of care for students; 6) the use of prescriptive language to at-risk students is words that express deficits or problems, which left little room for students to voice their own opinions. The

final finding was unexpected and in contrast to the first five, hence the study concluded that such a result was an insight into the organisational defensive routines (Argyris, 1999; Calabrese *et al.*, 2007).

AI has also been used to validate the effectiveness of a teaching technique, practice or method, for example the study of Smith and Neill (2005) on a story-based approach as an effective tool in empowering and promoting the ideas of peace in classrooms. Watt (2007) reviewed her personal teaching experiences in three domains of practice using the AI process and she concluded that AI as a theoretical framework enhances teaching practice, which results in improvement of students' experiences. Watt also identified some best teaching practices such as promoting independent and critical thinking skills, affirming students' self-esteem and self-worth, and creating a learning atmosphere for students to speak freely and share their ideas.

Similarly, Chapman and Giles (2009) explored the professional practice of a lecturer using the AI approach within the innovative narrative curriculum for midwifery. Findings showed various practices where the lecturer is at her best as well as the students. First, students' understanding is empowered when they see relevance to what is being taught in the class such as the use of real life experiences. Second, students are encouraged to actively participate in dialogue when there are various and interactive teaching and learning approaches. Third, socially enabling and safe learning environments greatly contribute to students' learning. Fourth, the lecturer's personality and character traits, such as openness, affirmation, flexibility and accessibility, define the degree of interaction and relationship of the students towards the former. Fifth, the lecturer must be clear with her role as a facilitator and co-learner in the teaching and learning process. Sixth, the genuine and sincere concern of lecturers toward the well-being of their students contributes to learning success. And seventh, the art of questioning as an approach to learning should be used to bring out critical thinkers among students (Chapman & Giles, 2009).

Giles and Kung (2010) affirmed the importance of AI in exploring the life-centric practices and an alternative discourse on the professional practice of a lecturer in higher education. These are: 1) teachers should 'walk the talk' and practise what they believe in order to establish an authentic bond or relationship with students; 2) teachers' personal values and practices must be in congruence with the organisation's values and practices; 3) teachers need to be aware of their holistic influence and life-time effect on students, hence teachers should sensitise themselves; 4) teachers must continuously pursue and be aware of their professional and personal development and growth (Giles & Kung, 2010). O'Connor and Yballe (2007), who created appreciative pedagogy using the principles of AI, applied AI to the development of teams in the classroom, claiming that team members "draw on memories of peak group performance to build positive images for their team and to inform action" (p. 296).

4   Institutional background

4.1   Victoria University of Wellington

From its humble beginnings in 1897 as Victoria College and with the Act of Parliament on 1 January 1962, Victoria University came into being. The capital city university has four campuses that house nine faculties. The Kelburn Campus caters for students whose interests are in science, engineering, social sciences and humanities. The Te Aro Campus is where the School of Architecture and Design is located. The Pipitea Campus is home to schools that specialise in the study of law, government, commerce and administration, and professional development. The Karori Campus is where the faculty specialising in teacher education and education studies is located.

Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) has come a long way in establishing its name as one of the country's premier academic institutions committed to producing graduates of communication, creative and critical thinking, and leadership (*Victoria University of Wellington*, 2006). Some of its notable achievers include Professor Albert Wendt, Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop, Ieremia Tabai, Luamanuvao Winnie Laban, Alama Ieremia, Ben Makisi, Alistair Te Ariki Campbell, Ida Malosi, Iegelese Ete, Jean Mitaera and Mufi Hannemann (*Victoria University of Wellington*, 2011b). They became first in their respective fields. They were leaders in their own lands. Their talents are world class. These are the people who shaped Victoria, men and women of profound character and great accomplishments. And they are identified as Pacific graduates of Victoria University of Wellington.

In 2009, the total number of students enrolled at VUW was 22,270. The figure increased by about 0.2 *per cent* to 22,310 students in 2010. Of the overall number of enrolments, 1,024 were identified as Pacific students in 2009 and 1,154 in 2010, which was a 12.7 *per cent* increase from 2009. In terms of course completion rate, 59 *per cent* of the total Pacific enrolments completed their course in 2009 and 63 *per cent* in 2010 (2010 Annual Report, 2011). The majority of Pacific students were enrolled in the faculties of Education, Commerce and Administration, Humanities and Social Sciences, and Law (Victoria University of Wellington, 2010).

Various Pacific support groups and programmes are available for all students both general and Pacific. The Pacific student support includes highly qualified staff dedicated to providing academic support and resources for Pacific students. The Pacific Information Day is an annual orientation day for Pacific first-year students prior to the start of the semester in February. The Pacific support coordinator, mentors and academic advisers are always available and ready to assist students. Pacific student groups are established to foster camaraderie amongst Pacific students. Scholarships for Pacific students are also offered. To be in the loop, the Pacific at VUW website was established to keep the students and community updated.

4.2   University of Otago

Founded in 1869, the University of Otago is New Zealand's oldest existing university. Having opened its doors in 1871 with only three professors as its staff, the University of Otago currently employs 3,749 staff (University of Otago, 2012a). Though the University's main campus is located in Dunedin, other campuses have been established in the North and South Islands of New Zealand. The Health Sciences campuses in Christchurch and Wellington were founded in 1972 and 1977 respectively. In 1996, an information and teaching centre was created in Central Auckland. In the new year of 2007, the Dunedin College of Education in Invercargill merged with the University, making it the newest campus of the University of Otago (*University of Otago,* 2012b).

In 2010, the total number of students enrolled at the University of Otago was 22,139, which slightly decreased to 21,728 in 2011. Of the total student population 3.1 *per cent* identified themselves as Pacific students both in 2010 and 2011 (University of Otago, 2011a). In 2010, 71 *per cent* of the Pacific cohort had successfully completed their course and 55 *per cent* completed their qualification (Tertiary Education Commission , 2011).

Pacific students at Otago are offered various support programmes to enable them to experience the best of university life. The Pacific Islands Centre welcomes all students, especially those with Pacific descent, and assists them in both academic and non-academic matters. The university also offers the "Dare to be wise" academic mentoring programme and extra free tutorials to support students academically. Cultural and pastoral support for students and Pacific community contacts are other services available for students (University of Otago, 2012c).

4.3   Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT)

MIT is reported as New Zealand's highest performing institute of technology achieving beyond the institutes of technology and polytechnics sector averages for all educational performance indicators (Tertiary Education Commission, 2011). Based in South Auckland, it has been serving students and communities for more than 40 years. MIT has established itself as a strong-performing national educational institution expanding throughout the city with specialised campuses at Newmarket, the central business district, Highbrook Business Park, and Pukekohe. MIT has maintained its relationship and network with other institutions such as the University of Auckland, Te Wananga O Aotearoa, Unitec NZ, Whitireia Community Polytechnic, and Southern Cross University in Australia (Manukau Institute of Technology, 2012c).

The total number of enrolments in 2010 was 11,747 (Tertiary Education Commission, 2010), which increased to 18,348 in 2011 (Manukau Institute of Technology, 2012a). Of the total number of students at MIT in 2010, 31 *per cent* were identified as Pacific students (Tertiary Education Commission, 2010), which rose to 34 *per cent* in 2011 (Manukau Institute of Technology, 2012a). In terms of Pacific performance in 2010, 72

per cent of Pacific students completed their course and 53 *per cent* completed their qualification (Tertiary Education Commission, 2011).

Being located in the city with the largest population of Polynesians makes MIT a strong advocate for Pacific students' academic success. Hence, MIT offers a lot of academic and non-academic support for Pacific students. They have the Pasifika Student Support and a Pasifika Student Liaison Officer committed to serve, guide, and advise students in their stay at MIT. Pacific events and projects are hosted and initiated to enrich Pacific students' lives while studying at MIT (Manukau Institute of Technology , 2012b). An example of this project is the establishment of the Pasifika Development Office, responsible for the implementation of the goals and objectives of MIT's Pasifika Development Plan. MIT also engages with the Pacific community through external (Pasifika Churches Forum, Pasifika Teachers Forum, and Pasifika Community Organisation Forum) and internal ("Fono Tagata Pasifika") forums. MIT also has the Pasifika Community Advisory Board as its main Pasifika advisory body and the Pasifika Leadership@MIT (Manukau Institute of Technology, 2012d).

4.4   Whitireia New Zealand (formerly Whitireia Community Polytechnic)

Whitireia is located on the shores of Porirua Harbour, where a large number of Pacific reside. Before it became known as Whitireia, it was Parumoana Community College, which opened in 1986 and was headed by Turoa Royal as the first principal of the new community college. After 25 years of its establishment, Whitireia has grown to become an institution catering for more than 7,953 students operating in different campuses in Auckland, Wellington, Kapiti and Porirua (Whitireia New Zealand, 2012).

In 2010, 4,706 students were enrolled at Whitireia, which increased by more than 50 *per cent* to 7,953 students in 2011 (Tertiary Education Commission, 2011). Of the total number of enrolments in 2010, 19 *per cent* were of Pacific descent, which rose to 21 *per cent* in 2011 (Whitireia New Zealand, 2012). In terms of course completion, 69 *per cent* of Pacific students succeeded while 51 *per cent* completed their qualifications (Tertiary Education Commission, 2011).

Various programmes and networks are established to support Pacific students during their time at Whitireia. The Pasifika Academic Support Coordinator provides academic and cultural assistance to Pacific students. A mentor is also available to students to help them cope and understand the course readings, assignments and lecture material. Pacific-related subjects and courses are offered by Whitireia that incorporate Pacific culture and values, such as the Bachelor of Nursing (Pacific). Financial advice and support are also on hand for the students. Whitireia has a Pacific Community Liaison Team that coordinates with Pacific communities in order to build strong relationships and has good communication to address their needs.

4.5 Pacific Training Institute (PTI)

Pacific Training Institute was founded by a man with a great vision for education for Pacific Peoples and other ethnic groups in New Zealand. His name is Mino Cleverly. He and his family wanted to set up a training institute that would cater for Pacific Peoples by providing them with quality education and pathways in a culturally safe and supportive multi-ethnic learning environment. Thus, PTI was established in 1993, offering short courses like English as a second language, retailing, panel beating and motor mechanics. After two years, PTI was relocated in the central business district of Wellington and started to offer additional courses including the PTI or New Zealand Diploma in Business, Aoga Amata early childhood education teacher training, computing for employment, and business administration and computing for work (PTI, 2012). The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (2012) is "confident in the educational performance of Pacific Training Institute" (p. 6).

5 Methodology and process: The Kakala metaphor

5.1 General approach

This research sought to address the question: *What are the key enabling characteristics of educational practices that have successful learning outcomes for Pacific students?* In answering the research question and meeting the objectives of this study, we aimed to examine aspects of the practices of institutions, the operations of teaching programmes and teachers' and students' learning strategies. Tertiary institutions already quantify academic achievement in terms of enrolment, retention and completion. This is evident in official documents, annual reports, strategic plans and profiles. Hence such data are outside the scope of this study.

In the words of Johansson Fua (2006, p. 1), "Our common history tells of seafaring ancestors who travelled the vast Pacific Ocean, conquering uncharted waters by 'feeling' the waves and reading the stars". This short statement brings up an image of the large space of water of the Pacific Ocean that has been navigated for hundreds of years by Pacific people. The large space of water can be metaphorically transported to the space of education for Pacific. There is much to discover and uncover, to travel to what is the true essence of what works well for Pacific students in education.

In selecting the institutions, we initially used a quantitative approach by identifying key statistics on achievement rates for Pacific learners. The next step in our approach was a qualitative one. Through talanoa, through the Kakala framework, we searched for the stories of Pacific people. We pursued the factors of policy, programmes and practice that brought about success for Pacific students in tertiary institutions. In Tonga Kakala means fragrant flowers, fruits, and leaves, which have mythical origins, strung or woven together into garlands and worn at special events or presented to honourable and distinguished people as a sign of love and respect. Thaman (2003) utilises the process of Kakala making, which is inherently valued in Tongan culture, as the basis for the research framework.

5.2 A Pacific framework

As the knowledge seekers we ensure that we adhere to Pacific values and beliefs in a way that empowers people. The Pasifika Education Research Guidelines (Anae, Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu, & Finau, 2002) affirm that research should promote Pacific people and communities and their right to be empowered, to have control of their education and of their development. The purposes and goals of education must be determined by Pacific communities. Finally, Pacific contexts, values, beliefs and knowledge systems must be reflected in these purposes and goals. At the same time, the global forces of change must be recognised. Pacific cultures and ways of doing should be adhered to and incorporated into the processes and structures of formal education, including the research process.

These ideas are consistent with the Pasifika Education Plan 2006–2010 (Ministry of Education, 2006), which emphasises the importance of more effective engagement with Pacific educators and communities. The Ministry of Education uses the Pasifika Education Plan as a strategic planning tool. The Pasifika Education Research Guidelines were established to support the Ministry of Education's work by:

- identifying key areas of research in Pacific education that assist policy development

- developing guidelines for research and consultation

- coordinating and prioritising research and evaluation that assist in monitoring the outcomes of the Pasifika Education Plan

- providing strong links with other strategic research priorities within the Ministry

- helping to make research reports available to Pacific people.

We affirm that effective Pacific research engages and facilitates positive development for Pacific people and it is critical for the work of educators in ensuring the welfare of Pacific peoples. The Guidelines acknowledge that research should be community-driven by Pacific people. Pacific models of contexts that promote success and well-being for Pacific peoples and communities are important in the development of research methods. The Guidelines assert that the selection and application of appropriate methodologies are crucial for the successful outcomes of research projects for Pacific people. Hence, our preference for the Kakala Research Framework.

5.3 Research design

Indigenous knowledge systems of people of the Pacific Islands must be reclaimed, represented and protected for they are vital in the collective survival and continuity of its people, community, culture and future generations (Thaman, 2003). As recognition of indigenous knowledge systems, Thaman (1997, 2003) developed the Kakala metaphor as an integrated and holistic philosophy and framework for research, teaching, curriculum development, art, and even spirituality, which is important to Pacific people. The Kakala research framework is both culturally meaningful and inclusive for it provides a sense of ownership in the process and development of Pacific education (Thaman, 2003).

The three different processes are toli, tui and luva. Each step in making the Kakala represents the stages in conducting research. Toli pertains to the selection and collection of flowers, fruits and leaves, which are ranked depending on their cultural importance, essential for making the Kakala. Details on the type of occasion and the person who is expected to wear the Kakala are also considered in making it. In research, the Toli phase is associated with data-collection methodologies. It refers to the 'doing' of research, how to do it, who does what, and when (Chu, 2009). Tui refers to the actual making or weaving of the garland. Certain features of the weavers and the weaving process are

regarded as important to ensure quality, presentation and art in the arrangement and completion of the Kakala garland such as time, knowledge, skill and practice. Similar to research, the Tui phase represents the analysis stage. It reflects on words, actions, metaphors, meanings, insights and discoveries, and so on elicited from the analytical questions posed. Finally, Luva is the giving away of the Kakala to the intended recipient, which in return the latter is expected to pass on to someone else. This gesture symbolises the value of sharing and the importance of relationships for the people in the Pacific. In terms of research, the Luva phase is the reporting and outcomes stage (Johansson Fua, 2009). It is giving back to the people (stakeholders and communities), who are the source of knowledge, the findings of the study in various modes or approaches of presentation.

Using Thaman's (2003) Kakala metaphor for education, we instilled Pacific values into our study. The significance of using Pacific values in conducting research is increasingly at the forefront of working with Pacific communities. Works by Koloto (2000) and Johansson Fua (2006) have cited the successful use of the Kakala framework in their interactions with Pacific communities. The Kakala educational framework was initially developed by Konai Helu Thaman. Professor Thaman is a mentor and educational role model for many of us in the Pacific, and much of the work that has arisen from the Kakala framework has fostered a cultural response to research.

The focus of Kakala is on the development of teaching and learning that is culturally inclusive for Pacific teachers and students. The Kakala framework is sourced from Tongan valued contexts of thinking. The framework provides an alternative way to "the totalizing framework of western scientific and reductionist thinking that continues to dominate our work in higher education institutions" (Thaman, 2003, p. 10). Thaman's Kakala metaphor has since been expanded by Taufe'ulungaki and Johansson-Fua (2009) and called the Kakala Research Framework (KRF).

Subsequent to Thaman's development of the Kakala framework, Taufe'ulungaki, Johansson Fua, Manu and Takapautolo (2007) have added in an extra phase, which is called the 'teu' stage. This is the conceptualisation phase of perceptions, beliefs and philosophies in the research process. In the Kakala metaphor, this is regarded as the thinking of and planning for the Kakala. Furthermore, Manu'atu (2001) has argued for the importance of Mālie (relevance and worthwhileness), and māfana (application, transformation and sustainability) as necessary components to monitor and evaluate the overall research process. The KRF as used in this project is a six-stage process, as explained by Johansson Fua (2009).

5.4   The research process

5.4.1   The Teu stage: conceptualisation; perceptions, beliefs and philosophies

Teu is the preparation phase in the making of Kakala. Decisions are made as to the purpose of the Kakala, for whom it shall be bestowed, what flowers, leaves or fruits shall

be used and so on. Just like in research, the Teu stage pertains to the conceptualisation of the study (Johansson Fua, 2009). It looks into the perceptions, beliefs and philosophies surrounding the research. In the KRF, the Teu stage refers to the preparation phase of Kakala making. Consequently, as part of their preparation, Tongan Kakala makers will ask: what is the purpose of this Kakala? Who will be honoured by this Kakala? Why? What flowers are needed? Why these and not others? How many (of each type) are needed? Who will collect them? When? Why? How? If a number of people are involved, how will quality collection be ensured? What "care" actions are to be taken? By whom? For what? Why? If permission is needed for collecting certain flowers, who should obtain this? From whom? Why? How? These and related questions can be asked and answered during this phase.

Thaman (2003) explains that the components selected for making a Kakala depend on the context for the occasion that the Kakala is being prepared for, the person(s) to whom the Kakala is presented and whether the ingredients for the Kakala are available. The philosophising on these issues is done during the Teu stage.

From a research perspective, the Teu stage is important. It involves clarifying the purposes of the project and conceptualising it. As well, this stage involves discussing, negotiating and agreeing to the terms of the project's application. The "how" of the activities are proposed, debated and agreed.

Together with the project proposal, the negotiations with APSTE, as well as the deliberations by the team, were part of the Teu stage. The institutional scrutiny and necessary ethics application processes were also part of the Teu stage. We gained ethical approval through the formal processes of the Faculty of Education Human Ethics Committee, VUW. At this stage, a literature review provided the necessary background to the study.

The Teu stage also involved considerable consultation. In particular, we consulted with the APSTE executive committee and members to discuss the research process and to prepare the ground for access and relationships with the institutions, students and staff as well as setting up talanoa discussions. When all of the necessary preparation issues were considered and agreed upon, the project began.

5.4.2 The Toli stage: data collections methodologies, talanoa
In Tongan Kakala making, the Toli stage is the actual collection and selection of flowers, fruit and leaves that are needed for making a Kakala. In the Toli phase, the gathering of flowers is based on understandings that have been initiated, negotiated and reached in the Teu stage. In the Toli stage, the actual methods of what is to be done, how, by whom and when – the doing of research – are undertaken. Appropriate and adequate care is shown when collecting "choice" flowers and leaves to ensure that quality is maintained.

For this project, the Toli stage began with a review of the background of the institutions, taking into account significant histories and challenges pertaining to Pacific development. For this task, relevant background information of institutional information, relevant educational plans and annual reports of the participating institutions were collected. These were used to help support the findings from the participants' talanoa. Further, we collated national literature that was deemed relevant for this study.

Besides website-based research, database and library searches, various consultative talanoa with relevant people (such as institutional staff who had a vested interest in Pacific learners) was essential. This strategy of consultation was formalised into an advisory group and headed by the APSTE executive committee and a small Pacific student advisory group. As a member of APSTE, the researcher played an integral role in capturing APSTE hopes for the research. Entry into the field was heavily reliant on the relationship of the researcher (Dr. Cherie Chu) with APSTE members and the expression of the reason for the research. Such a capacity will gauge Mālie – relevancy and worthwhileness. At this point we asked questions: Is the literature research worthwhile? Is it useful and for whom? Does it reflect the realities and speak to the needs of Pacific students and communities? Is the process to date Mālie? This suggested capacity was to be part of the entire project, and not just for this first phase of the research. It was important to reflect on each stage of our engagement with participants, whether Mālie was evident and that we, as researchers, remained true to the research being relevant and worthwhile for Pacific people.

The case study

Methods of data collection differ amongst the proponents of action research (McCutcheon and Jung, 1990). Bogdan and Biklen (1982) found that interpretivists have general questions to guide their observations or interviews. Observations are recorded with extensive field notes or with a tape recorder. The interview is conducted in a conversational tone rather than structured. Dialogue is important so that a rich description emerges. Our exploration of the case studies is based primarily on talanoa with the students and staff. Additional institutional reports, including achievement rates, were also sources of data that we collected. We believe that the case-study approach was most applicable for this research because it allows for descriptions of the context to come through clearly.

The next phase of the Toli stage was the field study involving five tertiary institutions, namely: VUW, University of Otago (Dunedin), MIT (Auckland), Pacific Training Institute (PTI), and Whitireia Polytechnic New Zealand. These institutions were selected based on the initial criteria in Table 2:

1) Victoria University of Wellington
   - Students were studying in Te Kura Māori courses of the Faculty of Education. These students were studying for Bachelor of Arts degrees, Honours, Masters of Education and PhDs.

2) University of Otago, Dunedin
   - Students were studying across the fields of dentistry, commerce, science, engineering, medicine and the arts. The majority of students were undergraduate students with a small proportion of students studying at the postgraduate level.

3) Manukau Institute of Technology, Auckland.
   - Students were studying for the Bachelor of Business degree. There was a good spread of students across first year, second year and final years of study.

4) Pacific Training Institute (PTI), Wellington.
   - Students were studying in the Early Childhood Education programme.

5) Whitireia New Zealand, Porirua, Wellington.
   - Students were studying in programmes of Nursing and Early Childhood Education.

Accordingly, we obtained consent from the relevant heads of departments to cite the institutions in this report.

In selecting the sites of our five case studies, the following criteria were used in the selection of the institutions:

1) We wanted regional variances that included a spread of sites across the country and a range of types of tertiary institutions: universities, polytechnics and a private training establishment. It was also important to ensure that participants were from a diverse range of Pacific ethnicities.

2) We required accessibility to the institutes (via APSTE linkages) and availability of key people.

3) We looked for cases where there was evidence of engagement with the surrounding Pacific community. The engagement included partnerships between institutions and community, and community input into various programmes.

4) We wanted a broad spectrum of disciplinary fields because this would give us a deeper insight into areas that people may not be aware of, but which had had "quiet success".

5) We were interested in support programmes that had strong interconnections with academic teaching.

6) We were very keen to explore institutions that had Pacific policy in place for students, staff and communities.

7) We also used the criteria of student participation and educational achievement rates for selection of institutions.

Table 2: Initial criteria for selection of institutions

Tertiary institute	Area of focus	Background reasons for research	General Pacific information	Overall population
Victoria University of Wellington	• Faculty of Education • Student Services Group Pacific development	• International postgraduate Pasifika students' experiences (research capability and sustainability, leadership development) • Evidence of Māori and Pacific collaborations and partnerships • Evidence of general support programme entrenched in academic teaching • Demonstrated provision of evidence of past Pacific student success • Subject areas: education, humanities and science	• 5% Pacific population • 77% completion of qualifications • 88% students progression to higher degrees • 81% students retained in study	• 15,578 student population (EFTS) • 85% course completion • 77% qualification completion • 81% student retention • 88% student progression
University of Otago	• Pacific student support programme	• Policy implementation of Pacific development and impacts/outcomes on/of learners • Evidence of purposeful engagement with Pacific communities • Academic advancement development, research capability, collaborative partnerships • Institution has not been extensively researched previously • International student experience	• 3% Pacific population • 81% completion of qualifications • 88% students retained in study	• 17,653 student population (EFTS) • 89% course completion • 81% qualification completion • 88% student retention • 89% student progression

Tertiary institute	Area of focus	Background reasons for research	General Pacific information	Overall population
Manukau Institute of Technology	• Pasifika Development Plan • Pasifika Community Plan • Pasifika student development and support programmes	• Policy implementation of Pacific development and impact/outcomes on/of learners • Evidence of purposeful engagement with Pacific communities • Successful Pacific student achievement that reflects demographic responsibility • A framework for Pacific leadership at all levels • Institution has not been extensively researched previously • Subject areas: management, society and culture, engineering and health	• 33% Pacific population • 61% completion of qualifications • 44% progression to higher degrees • 61% students retained instudy	• 6,124 student population (EFTS) • 82% course completion • 61% qualification completion • 61% student retention • 44% student progression
Whitireia New Zealand	• Pacific student support • Innovative Pacific student support and learning programme	• Community engagement • Teaching and learning support	• 11% Pacific s population • 91% completion of qualifictaions • 16% student progression to higher degrees • 84% students retained in study	• 2,275 student population (EFTS) • 80% course completion • 68% qualification completion • 64% student retention • 35% student progression

Tertiary institute	Area of focus	Background reasons for research	General Pacific information	Overall population
Pacific Training Institute (Wellington)	• Innovative Pacific student support programme *(home away from home)* •	• Evidence of progression to higher learning (100%) • Students transition to other forms of tertiary education • Demonstrated provision of evidence of past Pacific student success • Subjects: education, management and commerce	• 43% Pacific population • 98% completion of qualifications • 60% students progression to higher degrees • 75% students retained in study	• 16 student population (EFTS) • 86% course completion • 98% qualification completion • 75% student retention • 60% student progression

(Source: Tertiary Education Commission, 2011)

In terms of what areas of the institution we explored, we were directed by our APSTE contact people who had the insightful knowledge of their institutions. This point was the most significant point in determining our entry.

Our project scope determined our timeframe and the number of case studies. As the research process developed with the first two sites, we found similar themes began to emerge. While an exploration of more case studies could provide further details as to the description of Pacific tertiary success, we believe that the five institutions have delivered sufficient data to reveal features of it.

The research voice

In the Toli stage, we need to consider our approach to the data collection and the voice that we provide for Pacific people. The shift away from external researchers who have no inside knowledge of a group of people in Pacific communities is becoming the norm. The reasons for insider research for Pacific researchers differ according to the topic and the relationship the researcher has with their community.

Smith (1999) states that the hegemony of traditional paradigms of research needs to be challenged as it privileges the 'objective' voice from the outside over the 'subjective' voice from the inside. This challenge supports the form of research applied in this study; being involved in APSTE, the researchers are able to provide the subjective inside voice. This is 'giving a voice' to the process. This form of research allows for the challenging of traditional roles of researchers. As an inside researcher, the interpretivist philosophy

allows a degree of flexibility of research design. The interpretivist philosophy allows people to make sense of their worlds.

Talanoa: the relationships

At each institution, we undertook talanoa discussions with institutional participants: staff and students. Talanoa is an unstructured discussion process used in Samoan, Tongan and Fijian cultures. In the talanoa process, the focus is on developing relationships between people and is a process during which people share their stories, realities and aspirations (Sanga & Niroa, 2004). We believe that talanoa was appropriate for this study because of the unstructured process that would allow students and staff to speak comfortably. Our relationships with the participants were also a significant feature of the talanoa process. As the knowledge seekers we needed to develop strong relationships with the participants from the start. According to Vaioleti (2006), talanoa does not assume to be used in a rigid way and as a naturalistic research methodology. Participants were encouraged to utilise cultural expressions and specific language terminologies that they wanted.

As a research tool, talanoa:
1) is a conversation
2) can be formal or informal in nature
3) can be used for different purposes: to teach a skill or to teach ideas
4) is context-specific with different purposes and forms. Language and behaviour may be used differently to reflect the context
5) is a skill and embedded in values and attitude. The context of talanoa sets the knowledge, values and attitude.

With the consent of participants, the research team recorded the talanoa discussions via audio recorders. We also maintained journal entries throughout the process, thereby capturing our own reflections on, and insights from, the talanoa sessions. The research team also analysed the annual reports from 2009 to 2011 based on Pacific-related KPIs, which were not included in some institutions.

Participants

In each of the institutes, we had a colleague (from APSTE) who invited students and staff to attend the talanoa sessions. The invitation was broad for four of the institutes. For the PTI, the sample was shoulder-tapped as they were in a specific programme for teaching in Samoan language nests. Overall, we had 170 staff and students participate in the study, 51 staff members and 119 student participants respectively. All of the student participants were of Pacific ethnicities. For the staff, the majority were Pacific. We had talanoa with non-Pacific staff members who were extensively interacting with, and working in, programmes with considerable numbers of Pacific students.

We found that this number (170) allowed meaningful talanoa discussions and rich stories to emerge. At each institution, either one or two talanoa sessions took place: a student talanoa, a staff talanoa or a combination of staff and students. For some of the participants who preferred one-to-one discussions because of cultural customs, these took place as appropriate.

Student talanoa group: Our APSTE contact people were asked to invite student participants to a student talanoa session. We aimed to ensure that throughout the research, a broad selection of students – ages, mix of female and male, varied levels of study and a good cross-selection of Pacific ethnicities – was achieved. Some of the students identified with more than one Pacific ethnicity. Other factors of importance included duration of study time, graduate students, New Zealand-born and Island-born students and a family's first generation student to study at tertiary level. Approximately 80 *per cent* of the participants in this research were born in New Zealand, and they were either first or second generation (in their families) to study at tertiary level.

We posit that the views of students and staff do not necessarily represent the views of all Pacific staff and students in each institution.

Table 3: Numbers of talanoa groups and interviews

Institution	Talanoa groups	Interviews
1 PTI	1	1
2 MIT	2	9
3 Otago	2	9
4 Whitireia NZ	1	1
5 VUW	2	7

Staff talanoa group: As a part of good practice of the KRF, institutional colleagues, including members of APSTE, were invited to be part of the staff talanoa sessions. Moreover, APSTE colleagues (in the institutions) were encouraged to nominate key people to consult with, or to participate in, the staff talanoa. We tried to ensure that a good mix of general, academic and management staff participated in the staff talanoa. However, having such a good mix was often dependent on the availability of staff during their busy work schedules. Some of the staff did not want to identify with their department, to ensure anonymity. We fully respected these decisions. Overall, staff did not wish to be identified by their Pacific ethnicity as well.

Following the two group talanoa sessions, individual talanoa sessions took place with students and staff in each institution. This was important for us to do as there were some accounts that required further elaboration. It was clear that in talanoa, some people refrain from speaking too much because they let the older and more experienced people speak as a point of respect, rather than shyness. Only those who chose to participate in the interviews did so.

Table 4: The ethnic backgrounds and numbers of Pacific students

Ethnic group of student participants	Number
Tuvalu	3
Tokelau	6
Niue	7
Solomon Islands	6
Papua New Guinea	6
Samoa	34
Tonga	22
Fiji	11
Cook Island Māori	8
Tahiti	4
Vanuatu	6
Did not specify	6

Consistent with the KRF, we developed a process to gauge and monitor the extent of Mālie for each and all institutional talanoa sessions. Where appropriate changes were necessary in how the talanoa was conducted; these were made as advised by institutional advisory committee/groups. During the Toli stage and process, it was important that we had a sense of the Mālie of each talanoa session as Mālie is an indicator of the richness and depth of the data collected.

5.4.3   The Tui stage: analysis and reporting

In the KRF, the Tui stage represents the analysis part of research. As the knowledge seekers we ask: What data have we gathered? What do the data mean? Do the data make sense? What interpretations can be given to the data? What conclusions can be made? What are their implications? What meaningful insights can be obtained from the study? What sustainable strategies might be shared from the findings? These are some of the analysis questions posed in the Tui stage.

Analysis

All audio records from the talanoa sessions from each of the case studies were listened to by us and transcribed. We used methodological triangulation, which involved obtaining appropriate data from collected literature, particularly evidential literature from the institutions, talanoa groups and follow-up interviews. We analysed the data, ensuring that appropriate means of rigour were achieved and maintained through the process of triangulation where talanoa, interviews and document analysis were combined for corroboration. Using thematic analysis, we collapsed much of the gathered information together and then devised key themes across the participants' responses. Then our research questions provided the context for an initial analysis. A more detailed outline follows.

The analytic process:

1. **Prepare the data for analysis**

   For the interviews we transcribed the data into text.

2. **Initial reading of the text**

   We used an inductive approach to our thematic analysis to allow themes to emerge from the data, rather than search for pre-defined themes. During the first reading, we made note of major issues as they came to mind in order to acquire a sense of the various topics embedded in the information.

3. **Sort items of interest into proto-themes**

   This was where specific themes began to emerge as we organised items relating to similar topics into categories.

4. **Examine the proto-themes and attempt initial definitions**

   This phase involved going back through the information to examine how the information was assigned to each proto-theme in order to evaluate its meaning. A provisional name was created for each emerging theme.

5. **Re-examine the text for relevant incidents of the information for each proto-theme**

   This second process of going back through the data involved re-contextualisation whereby any information was considered in terms of the categories developed through the analysis.

6. **Construct the final form of each theme**

   The name, definition and supporting data were re-examined for the final construction of each theme, using all the material relating to it. This stage of re-contextualisation focuses more closely upon the underlying meaning of each theme.

7. **Report each theme**

   We finalised the name of each theme and wrote up the description and illustrated it with several quotations from the original text to help communicate the meaning.

Following this process, participants received and commented on the themes from the data findings and the initial analyses to ensure accuracy and representation. From the analyses, key findings, themes, learnings and challenges were then documented. Using an AI lens we ensured that data descriptions, interpretations and analyses were sufficiently and appropriately treated. AI informed our scrutiny, findings and insights from the study. Appropriate advisory committee/group feedback throughout the Tui stage gauged the Mālie of the analysis.

Reporting

As stated, in the preliminary stages we presented the words of the participants in broad themes without any of our commentary. Following the stage of analysis, we provided our interpretive discussion through the findings and the participants could feed into this process as well. As much as possible we maintained the voices of the participants. With

the permission of participants, we have named institutions but have referred to participants with terms such as tutor, student, lecturer and so on.

5.4.4 The Luva stage: presentation of findings

The Luva stage is the giving away of the kakala to the one(s) who are intended to receive the gift. In Tongan culture, the Kakala is given away with 'ofa (compassion or love) and faka'apa'apa (respect). Often, the giving away can be done in different ways, representing values of relationships and importance.

In the KRF, the Luva stage represents the presentation of the findings through various approaches to the different stakeholders and communities. Consistent with the KRF, for this phase, the research team asks questions like: what modes of giving are appropriate for this research? How best do we return the gift to the students, staff and institutions that we have obtained the information from? How to we return the gift to our commissioning agency and to Pacific communities with care and respect? How do we report the gift to ensure actions are taken to advance success for Pacific students in tertiary education?

A full written report of the study is prepared by the research team. Appropriate advice on reporting is sought and obtained from Ako Aotearoa and the APSTE advisory board. In consistent with the KRF, appropriate dissemination of the findings to the participants, their institutions and communities will be done in the relevant Pacific way. These will be done through appropriate public presentations or celebrations of the report, as guided by APSTE and relevant others.

As part of the Luva stage, the research team will present their findings at a relevant national conference so as to discuss the findings with the wider research community. Additionally, the researcher team plans to write a journal article for publication in an appropriate New Zealand or Australia journal– e.g. NZARE journal or an international journal.

5.4.5 The Mālie stage: relevancy and worthwhileness

In Kakala making, Mālie is the stage following the presentation of the garland wherein the makers, the recipient and observers reflect on the extent to which the Kakala is fit for purpose, is deemed useful, relevant and worthwhile. People said they enjoyed Mālie, having made the connections with each other in mind and soul.

In KRF, Mālie is sought throughout the entire research process. But in a concerted sense, it is at the Mālie stage that the research team will want to reflectively ask: Was the project worthwhile? Was the project useful? For whom? Did the project and its findings meet the priority needs of Pacific people? Did the project meet the needs of the commissioning agency? And key partners? To what extent was the talanoa during the project, or at the Luva stage, Mālie? To what extent were the processes used throughout the project, meaningful for all who participated? These and other questions reflect the nature of the Mālie stage of KRF. We ensure that we had regular team reflections

through journal entries and talanoa sessions. To ensure Mālie, we talked with key APSTE members to facilitate this accountability to the research.

5.4.6 The Māfana stage: application and transformation

In Tongan culture, māfana takes on many forms. According to Manuatu (2009), Māfana refers to the warmth of feelings to others. Hence, Manuatu says that Māfana is to energise, to spur emotions and passions of uplift, of love and of heart-felt expressions. In Kakala making, following the gifting of Kakala, Māfana is expressed through further gifting, dance and singing. Customarily the recipient of a Kakala will pass on the valued garland to someone else in appreciation. Also, recipients of gifts show their appreciation through further acts of kindness, generosity and love.

In the KRF, the Māfana stage is the final stage of the research process. At this stage, the research team, together with key stakeholders, might ask these questions: What are the actual outputs of the research and outcomes? In what ways are the outputs tangible? In what ways can the findings be applied, sustained and nurtured? What real changes can occur/have occurred as a result of this project?

We have produced this report as a way of providing the knowledge, as well as a summary document that will be available to institutions, academic staff, support staff, organisations, educators, community people, officials and students, as well as other interested people.

6   Findings

In this section we have provided the findings from the research under key themes that have emerged from the participants' talanoa. The staff and student talanoa have been combined under each theme as we found it more powerful to have the talanoa of staff and students sit side by side. The use of talanoa with an appreciative lens has given the research a strengths-based approach to the study. We present the findings as a story, as the talanoa occurred so that people could read this and learn. We hope that people will learn from these findings in order to understand what works well for Pacific students and the impact on ensuring success for their learning outcomes.

As the PTI had a unique sample of participants who were Samoan speakers and enrolled in the early childhood education course, the findings were not evident throughout the result section due to the small number of participants, who were adult learners and mostly international students.

The following broad themes categorise the responses from the participants that lead to successful learning:

1. personal aspirations

2. support from institutions and communities

3. engagement with Pacific learners

4. institutional structures and/or teaching approaches

5. special characteristics of the learning environment

6. a dream learning environment.

Following each theme, a sub-theme was identified as a factor that supports Pacific learners within each institution. We separated out each institution as there are specific contextual factors that make each institution and group of Pacific participants unique.

Each sub-theme aimed to answer the overall research question: *What are the key enabling characteristics of educational practices that have successful learning outcomes for Pacific students?* Within each sub-theme, we have included each of the case studies' talanoa findings.

6.1   Personal aspirations

UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

Personal aspirations as a motivational factor
We wanted to understand what some of the reasons were for students in pursuing their university studies. There was no shortage of stories and when the students spoke, there was a lot of hope expressed about the impact of education on their families and

communities. Their aspirations to learn and to succeed were motivated by external and collective values such as service, respect and humility. These aspirations motivated the students to do well in their studies. It was important to understand the influences and context behind Pacific students' desire to be in tertiary education. This is consistent with AI's Discovery phase, in that this process engages the learner by searching for knowledge and skills they bring with them as learners to tertiary education. To use AI as a frame is to take a strengths-based approach. Such an approach is particularly important for Pacific development where deficit approaches have traditionally been used.

We believe that in terms of understanding learners, the learner's context must be understood from the beginning of their educational journey. By starting with where they are at in their lives provides the starting point of development.

From the students' stories it was clear that they believed in their purpose to learn and study and to be committed to be 'great' in their careers. They did not want to be mediocre. The reasons for this were their high aspirations for families and for their country islands. Their aspirations were about creating a better place for their people and for some students it was about overcoming difficult personal circumstances in life.

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

> *My family is so important to me. Not just my immediate family, but for my extended family. I want to be in a position where I can support my family well.*

For some students the fact that they would be able to contribute to their community was the main reason for attending university. For example, one student cited the fact that there were only one or two psychiatrists of Pacific ethnicity in New Zealand and there was a greater need for more Pacific psychiatrists to support mental health development. It was also evident from the student discussions that completing their studies was a primary goal. Constantly reminding themselves (individually and collectively) of their goals was important for their success. Some of the students had written up their goals on the walls of their flats and hostel rooms or constantly posted Facebook statuses to remind themselves of their goals. Some knew that they had chosen courses of study (such as medicine) that required them to be disciplined as they embarked on their educational journeys. Failure was not an option and there was only success in their minds.

> *Actually, I have a great system of reminding myself what my main drive or goal is. I make sure that the wall in my room is labelled with my goal of "I will complete my degree" – my friends see this and they have done this in their own hostels or flats.*

> *I use Facebook status updates to remind myself, my family and friends of my academic goals. I stay true to these when they are written down.*

Family as motivation

In terms of the home environment, the theme of family was significant in the aspirations of the students. Family was referred to as the collective entity of all people who had a vested interest in one another: the village, the neighbourhood, the church parish and the youth group. Some students came from families as the first generation to attend university. It had been a lifelong dream for some of their families because no one had attended university education before. The students and staff said that being a first-generation university student was empowering for their attitude towards learning. They knew they had to represent their families and communities well in education. Attending university was perceived as honourable and regarded as part of a lifelong journey for families. One student said, "It is a privilege to attend university and I am not going to waste this opportunity. I am not going to take this for granted." Family support was integral to their educational experiences and many of the students had received regular weekly phone calls, Facebook messages and e-mail messages from family members who were proudly cheering them on.

Role models at secondary school

Students believed that various teachers in their secondary schools (Pacific and non-Pacific) had direct and indirect influences on their lives. Some students said non-Pacific teachers who cared about their educational success stood out to them. These teachers provided encouragement and support to students when they applied for university studies. One student spoke of a teacher who was a role model with his university degree hanging on his office wall. Every time this student saw the degree, he knew he "could do it too" by studying at university. Other teachers encouraged the students to go on to tertiary education. If it was not for these teachers, some of the students would not have contemplated the idea. Thus, role models were important for students. When they saw someone else from their community achieving and being successful, then they were inspired and wanted to do the same as well.

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

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

High expectations from within the education system

Students recognised that attending university education had been prevalent when they were at secondary school. Teachers and school principals had instilled high expectations about these students attending university. Some students had been awarded senior leadership positions in their schools, which also contributed to their thinking about university education. The expectation from their schools was that they would automatically apply for scholarships to study abroad, either in New Zealand or at the University of the South Pacific (USP). Students who had selected the University of Otago

for their studies were drawn to the medical, dentistry and science fields. In their eyes these fields had a world-class reputation at the University of Otago.

> *I have chosen this university because I know that they produce great dentists and doctors. This university has an excellent reputation amongst the profession.*

A key factor in doing well for some students was the influence of opportunities in the Pacific Islands that were often perceived as limited by the students. By effectively educating themselves in New Zealand they saw university education as a way of increasing their opportunity to work abroad and to provide a better way of life for their families in the future. Their families also desired these successful opportunities. In relation to the Pacific Islands, service was spoken about by some students. They discussed how they could return to their communities and, for example, help other young people as a result of studying.

> *When I return to my community, I want to help the youth that are not doing well at school. I can help with my degree and skills. We need to support one another. That is the answer.*

MANUKAU INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Overcoming hardships and being of influence for Pacific people

Overcoming negative Pacific stereotypes in New Zealand was important to the students. They expressed how they were frustrated with seeing negative images and stories on television and in the news. The students and staff spoke of how Pacific people in New Zealand were viewed as low achievers in the education system (from primary school through to tertiary education). By proving to society in general that this idea of a Pacific person was not for them was a motivational factor for the students. They wanted to be a generation of young leaders who overcame such negative perceptions in society.

> *I am so over it! I am over the negative images and stories of Pacific people in the media. That is so not us! We are more than that. Look at me, I am doing well. I am going to prove more to the outsiders.*

The students were very positive when it came to describing why they were studying. "I am studying for a better life," said one student. She said that a better life meant that she could make good choices about housing and buying groceries. For many of the students, they mentioned that they were pursuing a career in a specific vocation, such as in business and commerce. It appeared that their previous jobs were not advancing them toward any form of promotion. Some students spoke of boredom in their past roles. For example, "It [the job] was not mentally stimulating" so they wanted to pursue a new career where they could use their skills.

The state of the current employment market in New Zealand was also a major reason for studying. Students said that many work places required qualifications so this meant that

they had no choice but to obtain the degree or diploma. In roles they had previously applied for it was apparent that they were declined for an interview because a qualification was needed. The students acknowledged that graduates were on higher salaries than those who did not have tertiary qualifications.

Gosh I thought I had a great chance when I applied for the job. But when they came back to me with feedback, they said my chances of getting an interview would have been better if I had a degree and not just experience.

I have some friends who have degrees. They are earning great money. I want to enjoy such freedom as well.

All of the students agreed that life in New Zealand was becoming economically challenging and without a good job it was not possible to get ahead in life. They were not settling for "just getting by" from day to day and none were moving over to Australia. Students had the aspirations to do well so they had an investment for the future and could help inform other young people that education was important.

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

For some students, studying in higher education was about attaining success for their Pacific community. They expressed aspirations of wanting to be in positions where they could influence the government or organisations that primarily dealt with Pacific people. The majority of students were firmly set on graduating and so they had this in their minds and spoke of it as their highest priority. Being located in South Auckland, they were aware of the negative stereotypes of Pacific people always being on welfare. In their minds and attitudes, they did not want to reinforce this stereotype.

I will graduate, I will do this in my three years here. This is my priority in terms of my education. This encourages me to do well and to be a successful learner. It drives me.

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

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON (VUW)

The passion to learn as motivation in successful study
The love of learning and the fruit of studying inspired students to pursue higher levels of education. As one student shared, "Getting the qualification, experiencing freedom in learning differently by meeting extraordinary people who support your learning and inspire you through their purposeful actions" increases the desire to learn. Based on their stories, more students enjoyed the course they personally chose than those who were

persuaded or dictated by others such as parents and peers. They were also enthused by the level and depth of thinking that is developed in the university.

Furthermore, students were encouraged by the challenges they encountered and the various learning perspectives they gained. According to one student, "what I love most about studying is the love to learn, to build one's knowledge, experience and skills. I love it all." These desires were fuelled by different motivating factors like their families, support network, life's circumstances, and inspirations from Pacific and non-Pacific teachers in college, and last but not least, their communities.

A student remarked:

> I came to uni with my family and my extended family, my community. So there was a lot riding on me to perform and succeed. What about me made it important? Well, my cultural roots; I was taught how to work hard – no pain, no gain. I was also taught about the importance of education. I also saw the struggles my parents went through raising us and I turned this into positive energy, thus deeply motivated me to succeed. Other factors and major factors contributing to my success were the mentorship from Pasifika staff lectures, developing us as students to be leaders, to be consumers of research.

The positive influence of teachers as a reason to succeed
Some students attributed their aspirations from teachers in college (Pacific and non-Pacific) who saw their potential and encouraged them to succeed. Other students were inspired by their yearning to give back to their community. One student attributed his achievement to the service he gives back to others:

> My greatest achievement within that journey was the ability to give back, to pay it forward through service such as mentoring, tutoring, lecturing; the feeling that I was having an influence on others, that I helped, people accomplish their dreams! It's hard to understand but my greatest achievement at university was not even really about me and what I accomplished but that I served and led others in the fulfilment of theirs!

Families as driving force to succeed
Families have been the beacon of strength for the students. This motivation is also attributed to the fact that most students were the first generation in their families to attend university, which became a sense of pride and honour not only for their families but their communities as well. One student mentioned that their grandparents never reached tertiary or any higher form of education but they encouraged the younger generation to achieve what they did not academically. Looking back at the sacrifices of their parents and grandparents, reflecting on their adverse life situations, and wanting to change it or end the cycle of mediocrity, made the students do better with their studies and drove them to the finish line. A student shared:

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

WHITIREIA NZ

Families as a source of inspiration

Families were vital to the academic success of the students. They were the source of inspiration for students to finish their degrees in order to obtain professional jobs so that they could provide and support them with their needs, especially those with their own children. The act of altruism also extended to the community with the desire of the students to give back and to serve others. A nursing student said she wanted to finish nursing primarily because of her family but equally important was her desire to "give something back to my people in Samoa and help my own people in the rural areas and villages". Gaining their degrees would enable them to help their own villages and to supply the needs of the church's ministry. One student mentioned that she had been part of the community's efforts to care and teach children for six years, which is why she wanted to continue her service by becoming a professional early childhood teacher so she would be better equipped to do her work. Likewise, from a student who is a minister's wife, she saw the need of the younger generation to be confident in who they are and where they come from. Through studying early childhood education, she wanted to inculcate the sense of pride, culture and identity among children at a very young age.

PACIFIC TRAINING INSTITUTE (PTI)

Commitment to a professional career

The students were motivated to learn because of their aspiration to be professional and licensed teachers in New Zealand or in their respective Pacific Islands. A student said, "I love to work with children and I need to learn more through the aoga amata." They also loved to learn how to care for children in an early childhood setting and at the same time learn the English language since some of them were international students.

6.2 Support from institutions and communities

UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

Creating a Pacific place of belonging for learning

As the majority of Pacific students studying at the university came from outside of Dunedin, they discussed how it was vital that they had a place to belong to. This belonging was about recognising their cultural identities, their relationship to the university and their relationships with one another and staff members. Students expressed that the Pacific Islands Centre (run by Mrs A) was salient in their connection and relationship to the university. They believed that the Centre at the university

provided them with a home away from home and a place to be "Pacific people". "This is the heart of the Pacific students," claimed one student. The Centre was a house that was on campus grounds and it was central, rather than being located on the periphery of the grounds. The house featured a kitchen, study areas, computers, tutorial rooms and the office spaces of the staff of the Centre. At the Centre, there was food readily available for the students. This was important in bringing students together and if they had study groups, they could meet over food. It was a common practice at home, and they felt that this was significant in their sense of belonging at the university.

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

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

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

> *Maintaining my Tongan identity is important in a big place like this. I am Tongan. I have Tongan values, which are important to me, so that I remain as a Tongan while I study.*

Students were not isolated, nor were they lost in the university system. Each Pacific student had a connection to the Centre and knew that they could ask for help if they required it. The Centre has a kitchen space for the students where they can go and make any of their meals. Some of the staff said this also contributed to student development because it let the students be Pacific people. Sharing knowledge over food and having talanoa/discussions was a common feature in Pacific cultures. In the colder months of winter, students had a warm comfortable place to cook their meals and eat together, instead of going back to their hostels/flats, where they might end up skipping classes by choosing to stay indoors at their place of residence.

Some of the staff expressed the desire for more space for the Centre so that there could be more services provided to the students, such as academic learning support and counselling. By providing such services at the Centre, students would have a 'one-stop shop' in a sense. There would be more of a holistic approach to looking after the students. The support systems would be under one roof for the students rather than having separate services across the university.

It would be ideal to have all the services under one roof – so that it could keep students together, so they knew where to come. I see that this would lead to their success.

Community relationships which support Pacific learners as they study

The wider Pacific Dunedin community was also a key factor for the students' sense of belonging. As Mrs A was an active member and leader of the community, she (and other staff members) facilitated engagements between the university and the community. Community people came to the Centre to support students (for example, cooking meals) and church services were also offered to the students to attend. Again, this all contributed to the sense of belonging and belonging to an extended family. The students highly commended the community and university relationship, and many of them believed that the small size of Dunedin encouraged community involvement.

When the community come to cook for the students, I would say this is a unique feature. How does it help students? Well, let's say when the students are supported in this Pacific way, it is more help than not. We can look after the students.

Pacific leadership within the institution

Some of the Pacific academics referred to Mrs A and the Pacific Islands Centre as a special and unique factor in the students' academic success. The university had provided the space and the position as a way of supporting Pacific students. It was a commitment to pastoral care and academic development. Mrs A organised Pacific research symposiums, bringing together a collective of postgraduate students and academics. The undergraduates attended the symposium and had role models to see and learn from. The academics recognised the value of the Centre in the provision of tutorial rooms and computers. Similarly to the students, they perceived it as a home away from home, for the students who came from outside of the Otago region. Of particular note was the caring and respectful nature of Mrs A and her ability to bring people together of different cultures and to include the community in the Centre.

Mrs A is dedicated to her position. We do need more people like herself. She is unique. We need to learn from her, how she does it. If she had the opportunity to mentor other staff, to teach them, this would be great.

MANUKAU INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

The location of the institution enables students to learn within their community

Location and the links to community were deemed important by the students. They expressed that the location of the MIT campus was important for them. Many of the students were living in the South Auckland area and one of the reasons they selected MIT was because it was in their neighbourhood. They knew their community well and so the familiarity of the campus aided their settlement into studying. Some students knew

Pacific staff (from church) working at MIT, which meant that they already had an established awareness of MIT. The thought of having to travel across the vast region to any other tertiary institution was quickly disregarded by the students. They stated that the great distances meant that travelling would take up a lot of their valuable time.

> *Being close to my community is important while I study. I can ask people around me for help if I need a babysitter, for example. Also I am familiar with this area and I know that the library is close by.*

Being close to home and to transport were important for them. Several students said that their parents and extended families were more comfortable with their studying in Otara than going to an inner city location. They knew that if they studied in central Auckland, they would have to spend a lot of money on their travel. For parents who had children, it meant that they needed to be close to their childcare arrangements and so MIT was a great choice for them. Generally, staff were cognisant of the importance of location.

> *Having MIT close to my home greatly enhances my learning. I can spend more time on my studies, rather than travelling.*

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

Pacific support group works with students
VUW demonstrated support through various initiatives for learners. Generally, students expressed satisfaction for the high spirit and jovial welcome they received at VUW. There was a tight-knit Pacific community at VUW, probably because of its small student population. Students felt that there was good and open communication between them and their lecturers and tutors and that they could easily approach and ask for their support. Students acknowledged the role of the Pacific student support group in the development of such an atmosphere through initiating the one-week orientation programme for Pacific students.

A strategic plan that is committed to Pacific student recruitment, retention and achievement
The eight major goals identified in VUW's Strategic Plan 2009–2014 were reinforced in the Faculty of Education Pasifika Strategy that aims to improve the retention, progression and completion rates of Pacific students and to support Pacific student achievement (Victoria University of Wellington, 2011).

WHITIREIA NZ

Academic programme that is Pacific-centred
Some students admitted that the mainstream system of aged care lacked cultural knowledge and sensitivity in caring for Pacific elders. A student shared her experience: "Coming to a rest home setting, I witnessed that there was no cultural safety, no cultural

identity and I felt the Palagi system failed to care for my grandmother appropriately." For example, when giving a bath, her grandmother felt that her privacy was invaded because she was exposed without her permission having been asked for first. This act is culturally improper for Pacific Peoples, who are accustomed to being covered up. Another student mentioned that having worked in a mental hospital, he believed that the mainstream service for Māori and Pacific is limited. The food being served in the residential home did not offer any dish that caters for the Pacific taste buds. Through the Bachelor of Nursing Pacific, the Pacific approach and elements to learning are incorporated in the programme, making it more connected to Pacific students and in touch with their own culture. The Bachelor of Nursing Pacific offered by Whitireia is the first of its kind in New Zealand (Falepau & van Peer, 2010).

Institutional strategy that is committed for the academic participation and achievement of Pacific students
Clear and comprehensive goals and strategies are outlined in the Whitireia Community Polytechnic Pacific Education Strategy that aims for the improvement of educational outcomes for Pacific students. Four strategic developmental goal areas were identified: improved educational outcomes, effective learning environment, foster Pacific identity and leadership, and develop collaborative partnerships (Falepau & van Peer, 2010). These provide direction for the institution as it fulfils its commitment in supporting Pacific learners in their education.

6.3   Engagement with Pacific learners
Engagement was defined through the notion of relationships in teaching and student support for the participants. Relationships that facilitated success were evident between students, between student and staff, between student and institution, and between student and family.

UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

Fostering learning relationships with support staff and peers
In terms of relationships, the students expressed the importance of friendships with other Pacific students who were studying in different courses. The friendships were significant to students who came to Dunedin from different cities (in New Zealand) and from the Pacific Islands. Friends helped to support one another and provide each other with pastoral care. For example, this could involve listening to one another about their studies, the pains of missing home, relationship dilemmas and so forth. They admitted that the Pacific Islands Centre facilitated the development of relationships/friendships for the students as it was a common meeting place. Study groups were another important feature of their relationships. When they had a common bond, it was easier to meet together, regardless of which courses they were studying. Proof reading and editing one another's essays was an example of what they could achieve in study groups.

> *If it wasn't for this Centre, we would not have a place to study together and be Pacific people. This Centre helps us to come together and study.*

It was evident that the students had a strong relationship with Mrs A, who had been involved in their recruitment process when they were at secondary school. They had met Mrs A back in the Pacific Islands or back in Auckland. Their families had an established relationship with Mrs A. This meant that they knew someone was going to look after them at the university. She had maintained a connection with them through their course of study. This relationship involved shared values, such as respect, trust, honour and sharing. As Mrs A was of Samoan ethnicity, she knew and understood the cultural backgrounds of the Pacific students. Her knowledge of their Pacific ethnicities was deep and she could even speak phrases of some of their languages. Mrs A's relationship with the students provided them with motivation and someone to talk to if they needed help.

> *I think that the start of my academic journey would have been more challenging if I did not have the support prior to coming to university. The transition to study from school has definitely been made much more easily for me because of key staff.*

Building academic relationships as a way of enhancing the learning experience
The students also spoke of key relationships with academics. When they felt they were able to speak openly to their lecturers and ask questions (during and after class), their relationship with the lecturer could develop. This allowed them to gain more knowledge and to ask the lecturer to be a mentor to them, involving, for example, discussing career options or expectations of a specific job. In other instances, students who wanted to learn more about a specific topic could freely discuss this with their lecturers.

Those lecturers who understood them as 'Pacific students' and who were caring were considered very important by the students. For them it was about the lecturer who had a 'Pacific heart'. Non-Pacific lecturers who were interested in the Pacific students' backgrounds were appreciated by the students. The students wanted to attend their classes because these lecturers were perceived as friendly. Students felt that they could easily approach these lecturers and build a rapport with them.

As some of the students were studying in specialised long-term degrees (such as dentistry), there were small cohorts of students who were supportive of one another. Lecturers would usually support these cohorts and this led to an informal mentoring group where they could discuss assignments and study together. Lecturers who had set up mentoring groups for their Pacific students stated that this was an important factor in supporting students. They believed that mentoring groups that met monthly led the students to obtaining a deeper level of knowledge and skills in their courses. The lecturers facilitated the mentoring groups and encouraged the students to talk and share topics they were interested in learning more about. Small group learning produced in-

depth discussions among the students. They were more at ease in small groups, expressing their opinions or contributing to debates more freely than in big lectures.

> *Mentoring groups are awesome for my learning. It is not just sit and talk about assignments. We talk through career options. We have talks about life in general and also about other courses we are in. We can ask one another for help. Lecturers come and work with us as well.*

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

Many of the non-Pacific lecturers who had lectured Pacific students stated that getting to know the students' backgrounds was a key factor in encouraging them. This could be as informal as talking with the students after class and taking the time to ask them about their home countries or cities where they had lived before. Many of the lecturers admitted that they did not know a lot about the Pacific Islands, nor about Pacific cultures and were very keen to learn more about their students. They saw that when they engaged with the students, they were more likely to ask questions in class or to talk with lecturers after the session had finished.

> *I don't know much about the Pacific Islands in all honesty. But when I have spoken to Pacific students, well, this has helped me to engage with students on a more informal level. It helps with trust; they talk to me more freely after class.*

The presence of the institution in Pacific learners' lives
Staff believed that when a university was committed to Pacific students and their communities, it would lead to excellent academic outcomes for students. At some Pacific student celebrations and functions with the community it was common to see managers of the university in attendance. This visible presence was important because it showed that the university cared about the students. Staff believed that a 'more present' university contributed to the students' and staff overall motivation to perform well in their studies. It was about a relationship between the institution and everyone Pacific. When the university was committed to Pacific development in terms of its resources and overall strategic policy, mood was enhanced and staff felt that they could support students better. This is manifest in the University of Otago's Strategic Direction to 2012, stating its obligation towards national good particularly on the aspirations of the Pacific community. Otago is committed to strengthen the "links with Pacific communities both within New Zealand and in the Pacific region. It will take steps to increase the recruitment, retention and achievement of Pacific students, and to support the development of higher education in the Pacific" (University of Otago, 2011b, p. 4).

MANUKAU INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Developing student relationships for learning

The relationships between the students were deemed highly important and valuable in their success, especially from the start of their studies. Making friends from the start of their studies led them to feel connected to one another and less isolated. When they had strong relationships, they met together to study after class and help each other pass their assignments. These significant relationships were not just about being in school but also extended to outside of school. Knowing one another well outside of MIT study was important for their relationships. The students came from different Pacific cultures (for example, Tonga, Niue, Cook Island Māori, Tokelau) and came together to share their cultures and support students who had English as a second language. Some of the students were mentors to new students at MIT. Mentoring enabled the students to serve the MIT community as well develop supportive relationships with the first-year students. As these students were studying at the North Campus of MIT they believed that people who were of Pacific ethnicities knew one another. The small size of the campus and the fact that all students were studying for a business degree or diploma contributed to their close connections. Knowing the Pacific staff that were in non-teaching roles (such as administration, students support, campus care) was particularly helpful to the students as they could ask them questions about MIT (for example, where to find a tutorial room).

> It's funny, huh. Everyone contributes to our success, even the security guards and cleaners. We can ask them questions about places in the campus if we are lost, for example. They have a vested interest in our development.

A cohesive Pacific staff network supports students

Clearly MIT as an institution provided a context where Pacific staff were well networked and had cohesive working relationships. As one example, through the year they would meet up with one another to discuss their work and challenges for students. Their close working relationships was emphasised as being a successful factor in supporting students. The staff knew of each other's roles across the many departments. Working together meant that they were united in the cause to help Pacific students achieve in their studies. They knew of each other's skills and knowledge and could send students to see a particular staff member if they required advice or support. One staff member affirmed that MIT valued Pacific people and had values that he instilled in his life. This was salient for him in his decision to work with the institute. Many of the staff members saw their roles as positive within the wider Pacific community and they could promote tertiary education to people around them.

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

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

Positive learning relationships support Pacific learners
Three types of relationships were identified based on the students' discussion: the relationships inside and outside the university, and the relationship with God. For the students, having a real, authentic relationship within the university contributes to their academic and non-academic achievement. As one student said, "Establishing authentic relationships not only with lecturers but fellow classmates enables me to realise the potential and possibilities before me; it is exciting, humbling and amazing to be a part of. The knowledge gained and shared is a gift to be treasured." Another student defined relationship in the school context as:

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

Positive relationships with lecturers and/or tutors is essential to students' success in learning. It translates to: lecturers/tutors who share ownership of classroom, knowledge, and learning with students; teachers who empathise, respect, and affirm students' opinions and works; teachers who make time for students and share from the heart; and teachers who use fun in classrooms and insert humour in their lectures. A student commented:

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

A staff member concurred that establishing a relationship and sharing stories are important to learning. He said,

> *Some of my students are very encouraged when they hear stories of senior students and how they overcome barriers that they struggle with (usually some around cultural/generational conflicts and socioeconomic hardships). Relationships determine depths of sharing stories and how they support one another – this is only part of the journey to success.*

The leadership cluster facilitates student support
Relationships within the university also extend to friendships developed among fellow Pacific students and among the people behind the student support system. Students acknowledged that the leadership cluster facilitated the building and strengthening of collegial relationships. The leadership cluster is a university cluster group established seven years ago to provide support and create opportunities to leaders and leaders-in-

waiting using an AI framework (Chu, 2009). The cluster comprises students, mostly Pacific, and academic mentors. A typical cluster meeting is all about sharing personal stories, experiences and challenges; maintaining a positive attitude towards challenges; showing trust, respect and honesty to one another; and partaking of shared meals together. One student described the leadership cluster as "a very encouraging environment and strong relationships with people that last for a lifetime. It helps make the everyday grind of work and study a lot more interesting and motivating." Another student said, "The cluster asserts the principle come as you are – one and all, young and old, born here or born there, this is your place to learn and share in life's lessons and challenges together." It became a venue for students, mostly Pacific, to express themselves without being judged, to mentor and be mentored, to be inspired from the different experiences of others, to share values towards a common goal, to embrace learning and other opportunities for growth, and to develop as leaders in the various possible ways.

The leadership cluster became a source and venue for empowering and enhancing students' abilities and capabilities. According to one student:

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

Another student saw the cluster as:

> *A mentoring strategy that was powerful and effective – for a Fijian learner. Daring one to bring the best out, and make it habitual in everything you do – in your study, work, family, community serving and relationship with others. Such mentoring is rare at educational institutions especially at the university. The learning is something that no university can teach as a course, thanks to positive influence from cluster members and mentors.*

The students agreed that Mr. A and Ms. B influenced them to finish their degrees and even to pursue higher levels of study. It was through Mr. A and Ms. B's support, mentorship and practices that students gained confidence and faith in themselves by being given access to learning opportunities such as involvement in research work, participation and presenting at academic conferences, and being tutors. A student acknowledged that through the leadership cluster, with the guidance of Mr. A and Ms. B, "I was able to nurture the leadership inside me, which I didn't know existed. Taught a shy

boy from Porirua to have a voice!" One student appreciated Mr. A and Ms. B's "ability to know who you were and see you in a way other people don't."

Student support services assist Pacific learners
The students also shared their good relationship with people from the university's support group. Ms. C is very much loved by Pacific students because of the attention and support she gives to the students. Despite Ms. C's busy schedule, she still finds time to say "hi" and ask how things are with students. She stopped her work whenever students entered her room and a big hug awaited them to show that they are welcome and not alone. Another is Ms. D who provided space for students in her small office. She was able to support students, keep them together, and celebrate with them whenever they handed in their assignments. A student commented:

> *We had an awesome admin person at Samoan and Pasifika studies – she was awesome, providing free printing, tea, coffee, milo, warm space, kitchen and a great study space. One could hang out there all day to do studies and she was always welcoming, you know, never kicking us out when she had finished work, even allowing us to stay after hours.*

Similarly, there is Ms. E, a Palagi administrator, who tries to connect with students and cheers for them whenever they submit their assignments. Another person whom the students admire is Ms. F. Students enjoy being around her because they feel her sincerity to help them achieve and her passion for teaching them ways to understand better their academic requirements. Her office is always open for students and they can always go straight to her for assistance or just a simple chat.

Family support encourages student success
The relationship outside the university mainly involved students' families and their communities. Families were the number one factor that moved the students to pursue and achieve. They had been the students' constant supporter and cheerleader. One student said, "My whānau is my guiding force. They are my support system; they fuel the fire in my belly, they keep it burning." Communities were one of the end goals of students' success because they want to give back to the community and apply what they had learned. A student commented:

> *The biggest push for me was looking around my community and seeing a lot of my peers did not go through with their education made me sad…that is why my biggest strive was reflecting back on my community and how I could contribute. Hence, it is important for me to pursue higher education so I could actually stand there and have a ground to talk about what needs to be done.*

The students attributed their success to their faith and relationship with God. They believed that spiritual guidance, divine intervention and simple miracles helped them conquer the struggles and challenges they faced as individuals.

6.4 Institutional structures and/or teaching approaches

UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

High expectations and relevant course material
Academics discussed the notion of having high expectations of their students. They believed that high expectations produced great students. High expectations could be expressed through formative feedback on assignments or in informal conversations after class. Some very experienced lecturers said that high expectations always contributed to the students' overall positive state of mind and successful achievement.

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

In terms of external motivation, they referred to Mrs A as someone special who instilled positive self-confidence in them. She constantly reinforced their confidence, telling them that they were capable students. Mrs A expressed her high expectations to them. She was a mother figure to many of the students. Her care and alofa/love toward them were important. When they felt like they were lacking motivation, they would go and talk to Mrs A and she would talk about how important their studies were for them and their families.

The students alluded to being able to relate to content of the lectures. The lecturers that used Pacific examples in their teaching were valued by the students. This meant that content was connected to Pacific students' understandings, and they then remembered the material in a more meaningful manner. However, they mentioned that it was the more skilled lecturer who could do this. It was usually someone who had worked in the Islands or in the Pacific community. They added that this was a rare skill among non-Pacific academics.

MANUKAU INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Assessments as a source of academic challenge
Several students spoke of assignments that were difficult but provided a challenge to them. They enjoyed being challenged and being pushed by the lecturer to do well. As they progressed through each assignment, "the light at the end of the tunnel" could be seen and they knew they could overcome the hard assignments. Setting goals was a tool for success. Having and obtaining a specific goal motivated them. Goals could range from achieving an 'A' grade, to organising study groups, through to passing a compulsory course for their degree. The energy of motivation lifted them and their peers as it was about gaining more than they had ever anticipated. This was especially true for mature students who had returned to study after a period of life and/or work. When they achieved their goals, it lifted their aspirations to continue to do well. Overall the students

said it was useful to speak to others about their goals – whether it was a lecturer or a friend – because this was a form of accountability in commitment to the goal. MIT provided induction weeks for students at the beginning of their studies. Staff spoke of setting assignments that created a challenge in student learning. They believed that with academic support and mentoring, their students always did well, once they completed the course.

> *Yes, difficult assignments can really push you as a learner. But it's good, because it's challenging. And challenging means you grow as a learner.*

> *I set challenging assignments, but as a lecturer I must provide the academic support, I must teach well.*

Small lecture rooms facilitate successful Pacific learning

Students enjoyed the small lecture theatres at MIT because they could quickly get to know other students in their classes. But getting to know one another was also seen as meaningful and not just about saying "hi". They were seeking out other students for friendship and study groups. Many students said they felt at home when they looked around the lecture room because there were a lot of brown faces of different ethnicities. The intimate nature of small lecture rooms also led to the students getting to know their lecturers. The students commended their lecturers for passing on their work mobile numbers to them and this resulted in students feeling connected to their teachers.

> *It might be a small issue to some people. But small teaching rooms means for us, means that we can know other students. When we know one another, we connect, when we connect, we can share ideas – this helps us to learn as a community.*

Pacific learning needs addressed through teaching approaches

When the students had specific needs around their learning, their lecturers catered for these needs. Some needs that were identified included elaboration on course content, extra time to debate an issue and utilising small group discussions to work on assignments. It was evident that the students placed a high value on having good and long-term relationships with lecturers. They discussed how a good relationship led to their being able to ask questions freely and discuss various topics openly in class. A connected relationship was facilitated by the genuine approach of the lecturer to the students. Being genuine meant the lecturer was interested in them and sought to understand them, rather than their being just another student face amongst many. They said a lecturer should not be in a rush, must be an excellent communicator and take the questions as they arise. In terms of whether it was necessary for the lecturer to be Pacific, the students mentioned that their lecturers were all of non-Pacific backgrounds.

Well, everyone has different learning needs. But when the teacher knows how you learn – well, that's great for our success because he or she can change the way they teach…it helps if they are open to this change though.

Peer support through learning together for successful study
When students supported each other, it was a method that worked well for them. It was empowering. Students believed that it enhanced their success through the process of sharing challenges involved in the assignments, sharing ideas, and generally being able to talk through their work. This could be through a buddy-peer system or a study group. Essentially the concept of community was integral in the students' educational experiences. Some staff members met students who had come to study after many years away from school. They stated that for some of these students it was a huge culture shock. Making a learning context more comfortable and friendly was important for the staff. This could include small group learning, tea and coffee meetings or conversations outside of the classroom, for example, "How are you doing in your studies?" Student connectedness to lecturers, general staff and the campus was a factor in supporting students. Pacific staff aimed to do this in their different roles when they came into contact with the students.

We prefer to learn together. There is more collaboration. More talking of ideas. More sharing of the burden of late night study.

Interactive teaching and comfortable atmosphere lead to success
The academics discussed some strategies in their teaching to which the Pacific students gravitated. These strategies were applicable not just to Pacific students, but to all students. When the lessons were interactive, that is by including students in discussions and/or debates or by providing small group activities, the learning accelerated. Students felt involved and included. Small groups enabled the quiet students to speak up when there were only a few individuals in front of them.

Interactive strategies in teaching are really important. It engages the student with the material. There is more interest and more discussion. Small group work has been a key factor in my courses – the students' grades increase as they work together.

Lecturers aimed to create a relationship and atmosphere where students felt comfortable and could talk more easily to the lecturers. Doing away with teacher-centred teaching and focusing on the student was particularly beneficial for their students. The focus on a lot of group work led to successful outcomes in learning. This led to students being more motivated in class. Lecturers who displayed successful teaching practices included students in discussions and focused on students' learning needs. For example, learning needs may include slowing down the pace of their lectures or speeding up in some cases.

You have to be a reflective educator. You have to be open. You have to care. All teachers should make learning exciting and possible for all.

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

Passionate and creative educators' commitment to success in their teaching
Students were stimulated to learn when teachers were passionate and creative in their craft. These traits are revealed: when teachers come early or on time for lectures; when teachers become interactive and they get students to talk; when they make learning personal, fun and real; when teachers show balance in their lectures, which can be exploratory, dialogue, debates; when they pose issues and look at them from 360 degrees; when teachers use metaphor, pictures, simple words, concrete and current examples, or life experiences to clarify ideas for students; when teachers repeat several times the main ideas or important processes that students need to know until they are able to grasp it; when teachers give different options for assignments other than paper and pencil tests or research papers; when teachers provide various avenues for teaching and learning other than within the four walls of the classroom; and when teachers try to connect the curriculum and learning to the identities or ethnicities of the students. One student shared his reflection:

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

WHITIREIA NZ

Engaging Pacific learners and their needs
Students enjoyed learning when lectures were interactive and relevant to students. Visuals, case scenarios and practical activities were on top of their list. Students shared that their tutors encouraged them to think like real nurses whenever they tackle case scenarios, which made them excited and eager to learn. A small class number also facilitated their learning, for it gave everyone a chance to ask questions and confirm their understandings. Study group, group works and sharing of life experiences were effective in fostering connections and learning amongst students. Interaction and communication with fellow students, using their own language to understand concepts, and repetition of work aided students' success in learning.

PACIFIC TRAINING INSTITUTE

Incorporation of Samoan culture and language
ECE students started their day with praying and singing in Samoan language, which depicted their culture and values. Both Samoan and English languages were used in

instruction in class. However, Samoan language dominated lectures and class discussions, which made it more effective for both international and Samoan-descent students to clearly understand and easily learn the lessons. One student said, "I chose PTI because the teaching is in Samoan language; that helps out a lot unlike English, which is a bit complicated." By using their own native language, students could freely voice their ideas spontaneously and confidently. To reinforce the English language, students had a teacher from England who helped them learn the language. Translation of Samoan hand-outs and notes into English were also available for students' perusal. Hence, bilingualism has been an effective practice at PTI.

Creative learning
For the ECE students, learning was not confined to the four walls of the classroom. They went out into their community and shared what they knew. Students were excited when they related their visits to the radio station. They did an interview, a play and a poetry reading live on air. Such media exposure gave them confidence about themselves and speaking in public. Their classroom also extended to the stage, where they acted and danced in front of children from a nearby crèche. Learning among the students transpired through these activities. Having a small class size was also vital for students' learning because it was easy for them to seek one-on-one assistance with their tutor.

Sense of community
Being a relatively small institution with a population of 42 tudents, shared lunch was a customary practice for students and staff. It was built on the idea of a village or community, which fostered good relationships amongst students and administration. Teachers and staff are easy to approach and to ask assistance. Students said that tutors from other courses were very helpful to them even though they were not their students. Tutors found ways to help them in their academic needs such as lending computers and assisting them with their assignments or any queries about their subject matter. Even administrators, including the head of school, are very approachable and accommodating. They always had smiles on their faces and are easy to talk to.

Effective teachers
The students described an effective teacher/tutor as someone who comes to class prepared and on time, one who makes lectures enjoyable and easy to understand, who gives practical examples and inserts humour in class discussions, who provides various creative activities in class, and who students can easily approach to ask questions.

6.5   Special characteristics of the learning environment

OTAGO UNIVERSITY

Independent learning facilitates empowerment
The students defined empowerment as a feeling of control over their lives. This was not so much about studying but more about their overall day-to-day lives. The students were

quick to state that being an independent person at the university was empowering for them. This meant that studying away from their homes provided a "study only" environment where they could manage themselves. Being empowered as students also meant that they were away from the distractions of home life in New Zealand and in the Pacific Islands. Such distractions were referred to as their varying cultural obligations. One example was the obligation to attend to church duties every week. With this form of empowerment the students emphasised their choice and freedom to make their own decisions about study factors, relationships and friends.

> *Being at Otago means I can be an independent learner and person. Making my own decisions makes me more focused and less lazy. Other people don't have to make decisions for me.*

Comprehensive knowledge of knowledge systems
The majority of the students affirmed that their knowledge of information technology and related computer skills was a key factor in their empowerment. Some of the students talked about having a good knowledge of computers before they began their course of study. The knowledge and skills set them on a positive path when they were required to research and write up their assignments. Computer workshops run by the university were a common tool to gain such skills. Others were self-taught with a trial-and-error method back at home or in the student computer lab. Some students had learned computer skills at secondary school.

Associated with computer skills was having a good level of knowledge pertaining to library databases. Many of the students said that one of the key factors in their university preparation was being familiar with the databases of the library. They found that attending library orientation sessions and working with other students was highly beneficial for their studies.

For postgraduate students, attending regular workshops on writing, research and other academic skills was very important for their success. There was always something more to learn. The workshops also provided a connection with other students as postgraduate study was more about individual and isolated study.

The staff agreed that these were key skills necessary for successful learners.

MANUKAU INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Academic support through Pacific cultural associations
Cultural associations for students included the groupings of Samoans and Tongans. In these associations, the students located themselves within a culture of motivation to do well. They felt empowered by their cultural links with other students. For instance, the Tongan Student Association students supported one another when they studied in groups. Sometimes it was necessary to stay at the library in the evenings and so they

looked after one another when this happened. They "stuck together" during the hard times of studying. Being together has become helpful and valuable for these students.

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

Seeing Pacific staff members working in various roles (from security through to management) at MIT was perceived as externally motivating for the students. Indeed, the students saw them as role models who were serving an educational community. It did not matter what the role was, it was more about the person being at MIT as an employee. Some of the students spoke of their desire to also work for the institute after they completed their studies. They saw this as a way of continuing the good work for Pacific communities.

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

Being Pacific is a factor of strength for students
For many of the students, being Pacific motivated them to pursue university education in order to become role models to other Pacific students and their communities. One student told how she idolised her father because of his perseverance to finish his studies despite the odds and stereotypes. The students would also like to use tertiary education as an enabling tool to break down stereotypes about Pacific students being low or underachievers. A student summed up one common stereotype: as "the white people will get high education and will have more money, while the brown people will work in low-income jobs and [live in] low-cost housing". In their view, finishing university would mean that Pacific people can achieve and even do better than what statisitcs are saying.. Their identity is also their personal drive to succeed and provide for their family and community and end the cycle of ignorance and illiteracy in the family.

WHITIREIA NZ

Supportive learning environment for Pacific learners
Students expressed how much they feel at home in Whitireia and how the friendly disposition of its people and environment make it conducive for learning. One student commented, "You can be yourself and people will not look down on you here in Whitireia. I find it easy to go around and ask for help." The tutors were also supportive to the endeavours of the students whether it involved their learning or their family. Pacific support groups that assist students both academically and non-academically were identified as instrumental to achievement. Ms. A was commended by the students because of her presence, dedication and service to the students, which sometimes went beyond the call of duty. She helped students in checking and discussing their assignments. Her presence as a Pacific person who knows the culture and ways of being Pacific appealed to the students. One student affirmed the idea of having a Pacific person who "understands where we are as Pacific People and knows our needs as well as a

person who understands the culture, values and protocol". Another student valued the efforts made by Ms. A when she said, "I don't know where I will be if it wasn't for her.' Another student said that Ms. A is "a special lady, who is always ready to help and honest with her comments and points of view". Ms. A was also regarded for coming up with study groups, where she would discuss hard assignments by breaking down the questions to their simplest form so students could understand them. This was critical, particularly for first-year students who were new to the academic system.

Obliging tutors who took the time to know their students and had high and equal standards for students, whether taking Pacific, Māori or mainstream programmes, were welcomed. A student described the best tutor as the one who "spends time for [with] individual students and tries to meet our needs". Another student remembered one particular European tutor who "welcomed Pasifika students, followed through what she taught, set a high standard for students, and encouraged students to be proud of being Pacific". Mentors, either cultural or academic, who encouraged students from the start to finish of their studies, were beneficial to students' success. Financial advisers who provided economic support and hardship grants were a factor in alleviating the heavy load of the students.

Pacific programmes
Various programmes were initiated in the community that recognised the importance to Pacific identity of culture and needs, such as the Pacific graduation that occurs a day before the actual school graduation. This event gives Pacific students a venue to celebrate their achievement with their whole family, community and church. Participation of nursing students in Creek Festival boosted the students' confidence and sense of service to the community by giving free blood pressure check-ups and BMIs. The Pasifika Week at Whitireia showcased the culture and values of Pacific Peoples, which included food, clothing, dances and so on. This event acknowledged and celebrated the diversity of Pacific Peoples in the community. "Poly Prep" was an orientation workshop that worked well with the students in preparing them for what lay ahead and in familiarising them with different services and support available to help them succeed with their studies. Pacific scholarships were also effective assisting students not only with their studies but also in their transition from school to their future workplace.

6.6   A dream learning environment
Using the AI framework, we posed a question to the participants about their vision for their dream learning environment. Students and staff work to create a vision for 'what could be' in the Destiny phase of AI. It empowers participants to make suggestions for the institution. Through innovative ways, people can move the organisation closer to the ideal.

UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

Overall the students were very happy with their educational journeys and spoke highly of their experience at the University of Otago. They were positive about the teaching of their courses and it was clear that they did not have issues with the teaching approaches within their courses. Otago University for them was their dream university. In fact they could not speak more highly of their university experiences and wished that all Pacific students in New Zealand could have the chance to study at their university. One student said, "I highly recommend our university to all!"

These students strongly believed that the Pacific Islands Centre approach to facilitating their studies was the main factor in their success. The place united them as Pacific students. One of the students discussed how he had seen cultural tensions between New Zealand-born Samoans and Island-born Samoans. But at the Centre they were all as one. There were no cultural tensions. It was clear that the Centre provided a safe and comfortable learning environment alongside their courses. Whatever they needed in terms of pastoral care, food, a place to study, computers, friendships and resources was integral to what worked for them. Furthermore, the mother figure of Mrs A and other staff members in the Centre was so important to the students. They knew that the heart of the Centre was Mrs A. She created a village for them within the university.

The students expressed the desire for more Pacific lecturers and staff members at the university. They wanted to see more Pacific staff within senior management positions as role models.

> I think in supporting Pasifika learners, we need to see more Pasifika lecturers and tutors. They are role models. They understand our issues.

MANUKAU INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

In defining their dream learning environment the students focused on the areas of Pacific lecturers, life, culture and family. They expressed a strong desire to see more Pacific people as academics as they related to students better than non-Pacific lecturers. Pacific lecturers were capable of using different examples from Pacific to highlight a teaching point. Some of these lecturers were bilingual and used their language to clarify course content to students who spoke English as a second language. It was important to still have Pacific staff in support services as the students felt comfortable talking to Pacific people who understood their backgrounds.

> I have one Pasifika lecturer who really uses Pasifika examples well to illustrate key ideas. I get it instantly. It relates to my life. It helps me to understand the Western concepts.

When staff were asked about their vision of a dream learning environment for Pacific students, the most immediate point was focused on increasing the number of Pacific

academics. For students to see Pacific staff as role models in these positions was important for student aspirations. In this dream place the lecturers (both Pacific and non-Pacific) would have a thorough understanding of the students' cultural backgrounds.

The dream learning environment was also a place where their cultures were clearly visible on campus: in the physical spaces and for each student to be located within a student association that promoted their culture and language. They wanted a place where they could belong, eat and have access to resources such as working computers. The dream environment would also include families (such as childcare services) and welcome them to the campus. As many of the students had English as a second language, they ideally wanted their first languages to be valued (as in, spoken) but that they had lecturers who had knowledge of how to teach these students.

> *This space would support our learning. It provides us with a space that nurtures our identity. We can be Pacific. We can eat, share ideas and talk in our own way.*

Furthermore, the students recognised that some Pacific students were not good at writing and essays were viewed as Western forms of assessment. They wanted to have more assessments that encouraged their oratory skills. Overall, they envisaged more variety in assignments and not merely a focus on writing.

> *Writing is such a focus. I think there should be more variety in the way knowledge is assessed. This would help the diverse learners amongst us. We could use our strengths in different areas. For example, I am a good speaker and would do well with seminar types of assessments.*

Working computers and more state-of-the-art technology was also in their dream learning environment. Easy access to computer laboratories was a high priority with lower prices for printing out their work. In the technological world the students saw the significance of keeping up with the information environment as essential for their learning needs.

> *Having access to state-of-the-art technology is incredibly necessary for a Pacific learner. We have to keep up with the digital age. We need it for research and fast communication, even communicating with lecturers on Skype.*

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

When students and staff were asked how their university could be a better learning place, they had the following ideas for success: 1) all support systems for Pacific people in particular must come under one area or one umbrella as opposed to working separately. A staff member commented that being under one roof provides space for students where staff can support them, thus creating "a sense of belonging, community and family. As

Pacific People we do better when we are in number"; 2) no to red tape and justification of work and your everyday dealings with students; 3) build relationship capacity between staff and students (for example, gathering the whole Pacific community at VUW like a village meeting); 4) collaboration of staff and education of staff about Pacific People in order for them to understand and appreciate their students better; and 5) creation of a Pacific space in the university. A student described this space as:

> *Having a home away from home – spaces where I could go and hang out or even study – would help me immensely just because it provides me with an area I could go to. That's why we spent so much time at Education or even Pacific Studies because it was a space we could connect with. This is not just hanging tapa or mats around the institution and leaving them hanging but actually creating a space around the mats or the tapa etc. The mentoring programme that Ms. B created and worked to bring to life, that was another space we could go to. So having a space where students can hang, share, laugh, cry, eat and be together.*

Other suggestions were that the university 6) recruit more Pacific teachers (one student mentioned that sometimes it was difficult for him to communicate his ideas to his teachers because there is no Pacific teacher in his faculty to assist him); and 7) hire an additional Pacific officer to support Pacific students academically. With the growing population of Pacific students in the university, there is a need for additional Pacific staff under the student support services. Currently, there is only one Pacific student support officer at the university who looks after the academic needs of more than 100 Pacific students.

WHITIREIA NZ

When students were asked how they could make Whitireia a better learning place, they had the following ideas for success: 1) purchase more computers for student use as there are currently not enough computers for everyone to use; 2) create a Pacific space. Currently, Pacific students are sharing the space with their Māori brothers. With the growing population of both Pacific and Māori students, the assigned room is no longer conducive to catering for the learning space of each student; 3) open the computer rooms 24/7 every day for students who want to use them. Since the school has become their second home, it would be advantageous for students to have complete access to these rooms, especially when they need to work double time or extended hours; 4) create rooms or buildings for ECE students since the group is growing bigger and their space is not enough; 5) hold a get-together for students of all levels so everyone will have a chance to get to know each other just like in a Pacific village; and 6) recruit additional staff to support students with their academic needs.

PACIFIC TRAINING INSTITUTE

When students were asked how they could make PTI a better learning place, they had the following ideas for success: 1) extend financial support for international students. A student said that as an international student staying in New Zealand can be very expensive so financial assistance would be helpful in alleviating their struggles; and 2) raise the level of qualification of ECE at PTI from level four to level five based on the NZQA standards. According to the student, since PTI and other institutions that offer ECE courses have the same coverage in the curriculum for ECE teachers (except that the former uses Samoan language), graduates should get the same level of qualifications. Currently, PTI graduates of ECE can only be categorised for a teacher aide position and not as a fully fledged ECE teacher.

7 Discussion

7.1 Factors that impact on Pacific student success

Tertiary staff are encouraged **to learn, to reflect, and to value the life experiences** of Pacific learners. In terms of education, there is a need to understand Pacific students as learners who live in collective contexts. These contexts are influenced by varying cultures, beliefs and values, depending on their Pacific ethnicity. Moreover, there are generations of Pacific learners who were born in New Zealand and have grown up in New Zealand.

The field of teaching and learning in tertiary institutions needs to encompass the multiple worlds of the Pacific learner. We start with what is with the learner and value what they bring to education. For Pacific people, learning is not confined to effective teaching strategies. Successful learning sits on the pillars of the family, the community, cultural capital, collaborative relationships and institutional support. When Pacific learners are empowered as confident learners, they are successful.

To ensure Pacific learner success, the three domains of **appreciative pedagogy, teaching and learning relationships, and institutional commitment** need to operate in partnership. Some of these factors apply particularly to success for Pacific students. However, some factors can also be applied to the general student population.

7.2 Appreciative pedagogy

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

7.2.1 Family support in education

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

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

7.2.2 Personal commitment to success

Success for a Pacific learner was primarily centred on completing their studies. Education is perceived as key to better life, better job and better wages. Success equals application of acquired knowledge to benefit community, change public's negative perception of Pacific underachievement, and end the cycle of ignorance and struggles that their parents/families experienced. Pacific students are motivated to succeed by their personal battles and dreams and the external systems they are connected to like church, school, and family.

7.2.3 The learning village at the institution

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

Otago university students described their Centre as a home away from home. One student remarked "If it wasn't for this Centre, we would not have a place to study together and be Pacific people. This Centre helps us to come together and study."

7.3 Teaching and learning relationships

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

7.3.1 Respectful and nurturing relationships between teacher and learner

Teachers and non-teaching staff who developed respectful and nurturing relationships with students greatly enhanced the students' learning experience. Teachers who consistently went out of their way to get to know the students and were approachable were highly regarded by students. Students were more likely to be consistent with the course or programme. Pacific learners placed great value on relationships and specifically stated that strong relationships with staff were prominent in their success. *P*

7.3.2 Recognition and implementation of cultural identity, values and aspirations

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

Further, the recognition should be translated into an implementation strategy such as when teachers become interactive and they get students to talk; when they make

learning personal, fun, and real; when teachers show balance in their lectures, which can be exploratory, dialogue, debates; when they pose issues and look at them from 360 degrees; when teachers use metaphor, pictures, simple words, concrete and current examples, or life experiences to clarify ideas for students; when teachers repeat the main ideas or important processes that students need to know until they are able to grasp them; when teachers give different options for assignments other than a paper and pencil test or research paper; when teachers provide various avenues for teaching and learning aside from within the four walls of the classroom; and when teachers try to connect the curriculum and learning to the identities or ethnicities of the students

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

7.3.3   The creation of 'Pacific' physical spaces

The creation of culturally thoughtful and nurturing teaching spaces is vital to the learning experience of students. This is also vital in providing access to space that supports the students' course of learning outside the formal lecture room. Spaces that nurture specific cultural values such as collectivity, relationships, identity and togetherness are beneficial in enhancing the Pacific students' journey to success.

Otago students believed that the Centre at the university provided them with a home away from home and a place to be "Pacific people." The Centre is a house that was on campus grounds and it was central, rather than being located on the periphery of the grounds. The house featured a kitchen, study areas, computers, tutorial rooms and the office spaces of the staff of the Centre. At the Centre, there was food readily available for the students. This was important in bringing students together and if they had study groups, they could meet over food. It was a common practice at home, and it was felt that this was significant in their sense of belonging at the university.

Connections between people are important, particularly in tertiary institutions where Pacific students have come to study as individuals from various Pacific Islands or local communities. Pacific students generally come from communal cultures, so it is important to connect them quickly to other people in order to avoid isolation within the university. This is even more critical for postgraduate students because of the nature of independent study.

7.3.4   Incorporation of students' learning needs

What students bring with them in their learning experiences is as important as what the teachers bring to the classroom. Students described a range of deliberate learning strategies to enhance their own learning and for students to support one another. The teacher who could clearly see specific *learning strengths* of Pacific learners was perceived as a good teacher. Creative and innovative teaching and learning approaches

that captured the talents of students was a fundamental basic in teaching practices. Small sized classes and small group learning in courses were considered essential to the success of learning. Teachers who actively engaged and mentored students outside formal teaching contributed to further learning and student success. Interactive strategies in teaching are really important as they engage the student with the material and generate more interest and discussion. One teacher believed that working together in small groups has contributed to increased grades for students in her/his courses.

7.3.5 Insistence on high standards

The teacher who outwardly and constantly instilled high expectations for Pacific learners greatly contributed to Pacific student motivation to do well in their studies. Ongoing and consistent insistence on positive outcomes was regarded as meaningful and genuine by students. Furthermore, expectations need to be transferred into practice and into a context for ensuring Pacific student success is a priority.

7.3.6 Opportunities for students to pursue higher education

Staff who encouraged and provided opportunities for students to pursue higher education greatly increased students' outcomes. For a staff member to see their potential and offer encouraging words and the relevant directions was important in students' decisions to further their studies and educational journey; an example is the Pacific support groups that assist students both academically and non-academically, which were identified as instrumental to achievement.

One student affirmed the idea of having a Pacific person who "understands where we are as Pacific People and knows our needs as well as a person who understands the culture, values and protocol." Access to support for Pacific students was critical, particularly for first-year students who were new to the academic system.

7.3.7 Learning relationships between students

Students' talanoa repeated a key message in their learning. They valued learning relationships with fellow students to share their expertise and knowledge. They learned from one another in a comfortable way based on their own cultural routine. Cultural associations for students included the groupings of Samoans and Tongans. In these associations, the students located themselves within a culture of motivation to do well. They felt empowered by their cultural links with other students. Learners found ways to facilitate their own learning communities. Teachers who created learning communities between students in their courses also contributed to learner success.

7.3.8 Mentorship as a learning relationship

When people (Pacific and non-Pacific) in the institution become long-term mentors to students, it can create positive outcomes. The mentors have provided learning beyond the text book and facilitated pathways for learner development. In many cases, students have gone on to pursue higher degrees and obtain influential positions. Lives can change for the

better and many learners have returned to serve their Pacific communities. Mentoring relationships extend further than academic development. They permeate into pastoral, personal and professional development when mentorship is fully encompassing of Pacific values.

7.4   Institutional commitment

Institutional support varied across the sites but when it was evident, it demonstrated the commitment and responsibility towards Pacific students, their families and the wider community. Institutional support has to be more than a 'tick box' feature.

7.4.1   A firm level of support from the institution

A firm and concrete level of support impacts on the extent to which Pacific students enjoyed their course of study and valued their programme. It has an influence on how Pacific students perceived their programme and connection to the institution. The degree of integration and inclusion of community support and engagement is connected to the institution's performance and sincerity of its relationship within and outside the community. According to the research, the Pasifika Education Strategy was highlighted as a significant development for Pacific staff, students and their communities. The strategy was viewed as an approach to lift the aspirations of Pacific people. The support from non-Pacific staff was also recognised as valuable behind the goals and visions for Pacific student success. One of the staff members spoke about the belief and ownership of the strategy and the goals. MIT's expansion into the Pacific community was seen as a positive factor. But this was not entirely about recruitment of students. It was a way of engaging effectively with the community and to operate as more of a holistic organisation.

A firm level of support and commitment from the institution also affects the development (including resources) of programmes and practices for Pacific students and the ability of a support programme to provide a physical space for students.

7.4.2   Active institutional engagement with the Pacific community

Institutions should actively engage and intentionally involve themselves with their Pacific community. They can go out into the communities to talanoa on educational matters, to learn about Pacific life, and to support Pacific development. Institutions are seen to have an influential role on Pacific success in education. Staff believed that when a university is committed to Pacific students and their communities, it would lead to excellent academic outcomes for students. Staff believed that a 'more present' institution contributed to the students' motivation to perform well in their studies and staff's ability to support their students better.

7.4.3   Strong and supportive leadership

Pacific and non-Pacific individuals (academic and non-academic) across the institutions were perceived as leaders when they truly valued and cared for their students. At one institution, many of the staff members saw their roles as positive within the wider Pacific

community and they could promote tertiary education to people around them. They always went out of their way for students and provided consistent encouragement, even in their 'busy' times. These leaders provided specific learning opportunities that were above and beyond the typical experience of 'being a student'. However, these leaders should be supported by the institution or provide a succession plan in case the leader left the institution, and someone else took over.

7.4.4   Significant Pacific role models

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

8   Recommendations and applications for improvement

1. The appreciative pedagogy incorporates the motivational factors and contextual influences in the lives of Pacific learners. Its application can build confident learners that leads to success in education by:

    - recognising and encouraging the strengths in students' talent, skills and knowledge

    - showing interest and incorporating the identified strengths in the practice of learning and teaching

    - inquiring with appreciation: *"What do you perceive as your key strengths?"* or *"How can I help you to achieve/succeed?"*

    - understanding the enabling factors for Pacific students that are related to prior learning through their cultures, family context and background, personal values and church experiences

    - understanding the learner's context – or internal motivation – what drives students? And external motivation factors – what external influences do they have in their lives?

    - starting with what works well in Pacific learners' lives and building from that point.

2. Teaching and learning for Pacific success embraces several factors. Based on the talanoa, students and staff have identified the following as recommendations that would benefit Pacific learners:

    - Showing your high expectations of your students' academic performance. It could be through formative feedback on assignments or in an informal conversation after class. High expectations produce great results.

    - Connecting teaching with learning. Ask a reflective question: Is my teaching practice connecting the learner? Pacific students appreciate that lecturers relate the lecture to Pacific experience and examples.

    - Motivating students with challenging assessments. Assignments are the source of academic challenge and personal push for students. They enjoy the progress through each assignment and setting goals for finishing it becomes a tool for success.

    - Conducting lectures in small rooms. The intimacy of being in a small room gets students to know and to connect with other students in class. Thus, they can easily work together in groups and get to know their lecturers better.

    - Catering for students' learning needs. Examples of these needs are elaboration on course content, extra time to debate an issue and utilising small group discussions to work on assignments.

    - Supporting students through peer support. Students believed that it enhanced their success through the process of sharing challenges involved in the

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

- Providing a comfortable atmosphere and interactive teaching in classroom. A comfortable state means that students can talk more easily to the lecturers. Doing away with teacher-centred teaching and focusing on the student was particularly beneficial for their students. Interactive learning is the involvement of students in discussions or debate or by providing small group activities.

- Being passionate, committed and creative educators. Students are stimulated to learn when teachers are passionate and creative in their craft. These traits are revealed: when teachers come early or on time for lectures; when teachers become interactive and they get students to talk; when they make learning personal, fun and real; when teachers show balance in their lectures, which can be exploratory, dialogue, debates; when they pose issues and look at them from 360 degrees; when teachers use metaphor, pictures, simple words, concrete and current examples, or life experiences to clarify ideas for students; when teachers repeat the main ideas or important processes that students need to know until they are able to grasp them; when teachers give different options for assignments other than paper and pencil tests or research papers; when teachers provide various avenues for teaching and learning other than from within the four walls of the classroom; and when teachers try to connect the curriculum and learning to the identities or ethnicities of the students.

- Incorporating Pacific culture, identity and language in the classroom. Including Pacific culture helps students to clearly understand and easily learn the lesson because they can relate to it and see themselves within the context.

3. Institutional commitment starts with knowing the skills and knowledge of the learner and understanding their context. From this background institutions can build on policies and programmes that would target the needs of the students. Academic services, mentoring, innovative teaching strategies, peer support and celebration of learners' success are just some of the commitments that institutions can have in order to engage and encourage learners' success. Hence, institutional commitment towards Pacific success is about:

- engaging Pacific families and communities in their students' education
- observing students' success along the course of their study through shared celebration
- upholding the collective nature of Pacific people
- affirming the students' connection to their community
- having an active, ongoing, and long-term engagement between the institution and the community.

Conclusion

To develop a successful Pacific learner, people need to locate the 'passionate point' for the learner. Each learner is sparked by a different passion. An appreciative pedagogy is about what educators can do to understand the Pacific learner within a wide range of contexts and life influences.

At each of the sites, we have been excited by the amazing learners and staff who bring such wonderful skills, talents and knowledge to their studies. There are so many excellent ways of working with Pacific students already, but these good people need to be supported by institutions. Non-Pacific people can also help to support our good people.

Discovering what works well for Pacific learners provides much excitement in terms of knowledge seeking. Ultimately we are all participants in this study, learning together, and hoping that our stories will help to influence the attitudes, practices and policies of educational institutions across New Zealand, so we can support the agenda of changing the situation of Pacific tertiary education.

There is further discovery ahead for educators. This research is merely a starting point. We hope other researchers will develop projects that help to transform the education system.

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