

Empowering Pacific and Māori students via Zoom

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Beyond kanohi ki te kanohi

In the context of online education, there's a prevailing notion that online learning may not align with the traditional learning preferences of Pacific and Māori students, who thrive in face-to-face environments.

We present comments from Pacific and Māori students about a successful zoom learning experience.

- What did they like about it?
- What made it work?

The tutorial

- Our first year Foundations paper “Rights and Reasons” trialed a tutorial for Pacific students in 2022B
 - Rights and Reasons has “lectures” in the form of Moodle lessons, face-to-face tutorials, and (since 2020) zoom and asynchronous tutorial options.
 - I received several inquiries from Pacific students asking if there was a zoom option for the Pacific tutorial.
- In 2023A we trialed a zoom version.
- Pacific students were invited to attend, and some other students joined at various points.
- Here we’ve collected some feedback, collected through interviews, from students who attended the Pacific zoom tutorial.
- It shows that Pacific and Māori students value online options, and that those options can succeed for these students

Fitting with other obligations

- Why have a zoom class?
 - Māori and Pacific students are in as much need of flexible and inclusive options as other students, and for the same sorts of reasons.
 - “Just speaking with the people I connect with, there are a lot of Māori that are really busy.... Working Māori, around the people I'm around, most of us are at kaupapa constantly, at marae, or on boards or committees. ...realistically zoom is my preference because I need my weekends free because kaupapa comes up real quick. This is why I prefer the zoom because if I get it done in the day and my normal time: I scheduled it, that's when I'm going to do it...”
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Question: if circumstances allowed it, would you prefer a zoom tutorial or an in person class?

- Some, in ideal circumstances, would prefer to attend in person.
 - “if, in the world of greatness, and I didn't have to work full time I would love to go and connect with them in person... If the world was lovely and I didn't have to work full time. [But] zoom is pretty much my survival line right now while working full time”
 - But not all...
 - “I think I would prefer to do zoom. I do see the advantages of tutorials in person, but I feel like I strive in zoom tutorials and prefer the flexibility and convenience.”
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What made the tutorial succeed?

Students appreciated having a dedicated tutorial

“My initial motivation for joining the Pacific tutorials was due to the fact that it was conducted online, which provided me with the flexibility and convenience to participate. However, as we continued throughout the tutorials, I discovered more reasons. Being surrounded by fellow Pacific Islander students created an environment that made me feel more comfortable. We would discuss several topics throughout the paper that we could all relate to. I understand that being in a different environment with other people may have forced me to “Code-switch” and act in a certain way. But with the Pacific tutorials, I could be my genuine self.”



“I just felt like we got each other in our little tutorial. You know we could have a laugh and I didn't feel so whakamā about delivering what I needed to deliver because I'm positive that we were all feeling their same nervousness about what we were about to deliver and it just didn't feel so, what's the word? 'university'.”

Creating a positive learning environment

- The students described the learning environment as safe and supportive
 - “the space was safe and that's probably what I felt like for me was to be able to talk to be able to give feedback but also to be able to just sit in their space and listen”
 - “we didn't feel the pressure ...to be the top of the class. ...you know how normal structures are tiers... The structure in that room was a safe horizontal one, we were all in the same level of discussion”
 - “I would recommend this tutorial to other students. The reasons being is due to the flexibility and convenience, and the comfortable environment created by being surrounded by peers who can relate to your own personal experiences as Pacific Islanders.”

Creating a positive learning environment

The approach from the teacher makes a huge difference:

“...I know that obviously some students there's stuff going on at home that they don't want to discuss they just want to come to class and just get on with the mahi. But on the other hand what sometimes can happen is the students are reluctant to talk or they don't want to share their ideas - maybe they're not prepared, and it's not because they've been lazy they haven't done the work it's more because there's something else going on. And I've always been aware that those things can happen. So for me as a tutor I wanted to make sure that the environment was comfortable enough that even if a student was coming in didn't know what the answer was that's okay let's work through it together. Let's try and find the answer.” (Interview comment from the tutor)

The benefits



Conclusion

- Pacific and Māori students appreciate online options being made available for them
- When done well, these students benefit from online learning experiences
- “I wholeheartedly agree that offering tutorial for Pasifika students is a remarkable initiative. It not only promotes inclusivity but also enhances the overall educational experience.”