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**Exploring Approaches to support Pacific student success
in Secondary Schools**

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree

of

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at

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by

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Abstract

The New Zealand education system has historically fallen short in addressing the needs of Pacific students, specifically at secondary school as they advance towards National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) levels. Efforts to improve the education of Pacific students have often focused on institutions making changes based on their own assumptions of what students need, without adequately involving students' own views. This thesis argues that attention should be directed towards the perspectives of Pacific students and how they can be motivated and encouraged to succeed in education. The study highlights the crucial role of teachers and how appropriate practices are used to develop their understanding of Pacific cultures to help these students thrive. The research aimed to uncover effective strategies employed by two secondary schools to promote Pacific students' success. It explored Pacific students' views on their teachers' roles in their education and their interpretations of success in relation to their goals. Data collection was conducted through Talanoa sessions that embraced Teu le vā as an acknowledgement of mutual respect for each other's space. Talanoa was carried out with Pacific students using two fa'afaletui, and with two Pacific liaison teachers using semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was used to organise the data and identify themes.

Three key findings resulted from the study. Firstly, building on existing research demonstrated the integration of Pacific cultural values within the wider school curriculum. This approach supported and promoted effective relationships between teachers and Pacific students to achieve success as Pacific. Secondly, it highlighted that success for Pacific students was a collective endeavour that encompassed their cultural values, families, and broader Pacific communities. Thirdly, it pointed out that teachers deepened their understanding of Pacific cultural values through specific cultural frameworks. These frameworks included the Kāinga Tongan model, Tapasā, and the Pacific Values framework, that consequently improved knowledge and enhanced the engagement and academic success of Pacific students.

Acknowledgements

*The purpose of a person's heart are deep waters,
but one who has insight draws them out.
Proverbs 20:5*

Thanks to our Heavenly Father whom I draw my strength to complete this work.

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Glossary

ākonga	students
'āiga	families
aigapotopoto	extended families
alofa	love
fa'aaloalo	respect
feosia'i	reciprocity
Fa'afaletui	focus group
faaleagaga	spirituality
Fa'asamoa	Samoan way of life
fakatalanoa	relates to talanoa between people who meet for the first time.
filosofia	philosophy
fono	meeting
fua fatongia	obligation and responsibility
gafa	genealogy/ancestry
Kete	bag/basket
loto-ma'u mo loto-feinga	appreciation and value the determination
Lotu tamaiti	Children's White Sunday
mālie	happy/enlightened
māfana	warmth
mo'oni	authentic
'ofa moe faka'apa'apa	love and respect
Palagi	European
Pasifika	Pacific people
Talanoa	Pacific concept of dialogue
tamaiti	children
tauhi vā	nurture or maintain the space
tausile-vā	respect the space
tautua	service
Teu le vā	value/nurture the space
tuakana-teina	relationship between an older and younger person
vā	holistic/space
vā' fealoa'i	mutual respect
whakawhānaungatanga	understanding one's identity and positionality
whānau	family/extended family

Chapter 1 Introduction

Samoan Proverb

“E felelei manu ae ma’au i o latou ofaga”

“Birds migrate to environments where they survive and thrive”

(Ministry of Education, 2023)

This proverb refers to the migration of birds to habitats that enable them to survive and thrive. Their migrations require them to adapt to new surroundings. In the same way, ancestors from Pacific Nations journeyed across the ocean in search of knowledge, prosperity and growth (Ministry of Education, 2023).

- For the students, the birds in this proverb relates to them pursuing their goals to succeed within their educational environment.
- For the principal and teachers, this relates to their commitment to do better for Pacific students and to provide a place to thrive.
- For me, this relates to my perseverance to contribute positively to my personal and professional life and continuing to support ways to prosper and grow our wider Pacific communities.

The Present Study

This research explored how two Secondary schools demonstrated positive approaches in their education programmes and practices towards improving Pacific student success. The research used a qualitative approach and an interpretivist¹ epistemology² based on building a trusting relationship with participants and attempting to gain a deeper hermeneutic understanding of their world (Taylor & Medina, 2011). Furthermore, it was underpinned by a Pacific methodological approach: Talanoa (Vaiolleti, 2006) using the conceptual framework of Teu le vā (Anae, 2010; Ofe-Grant, 2022; Ponton, 2018). Two key questions were used to frame my research:

¹ An interpretivist focuses upon conducting research amongst people and adopting an empathetic stance to understand their social world and the meaning they give to it from their point of view. Saunders & Tosey (2012). Research Design. [The Layers of Research Design](#).

² Epistemology is a related view of the type of knowledge that can be generated and standards for justifying it. It constructs knowledge intersubjectively (Taylor & Medina, 2011). Educational research paradigms: From positivism to pluralism. *College Research Journal*, 1(1), 1-16.

- What approaches are secondary schools using in their programmes and practices to improve Pacific student success? What is the teacher's perception of success?
- What are Pacific students' perceptions of their teacher's role in their learning? What does success mean for Pacific students?

This study utilised a strength-based approach emphasising the value of cultural knowledge and family practices on students' success (Fasavalu, 2015).

Purpose

There is persistent discourse concerning Pacific students not achieving in education as a reflection of their low socioeconomic status, and deficits in numeracy and literacy results (Alton-Lee, 2005a; Reynolds, 2017a; Spiller, 2013; Thompson et al., 2009). A great deal of research on Pacific education seems to centre around improving environments, focusing on what institutions think they need, and making assumptions (Dyck, 2021; Ferguson et al., 2008; Fistonich, 2023; Nakhid, 2003; Reynolds, 2019; Spiller, 2013). However, the focus of this study was a consideration of positive approaches schools were implementing to support their Pacific students to succeed in education. In response, this thesis takes a strength-based approach and argues that the attention should be directed towards the perspectives of Pacific students and how they can be encouraged to progress their motivation and success (Benseman et al., 2006; Chu, et al., 2013b; Flavell, 2023). A study conducted by Chu et al. (2013b) was carried out to support the development of educational policy and practice to enhance Pasifika learner outcomes. The outcomes of this study promoted and supported the importance for teachers to develop their understanding of how Pacific people work together as a collective to encompass cultural values. These values include their beliefs, traditions, the church and the wider Pacific communities in which they live (Faa'vae, 2017) to support their success. The purpose of the current study was to explore positive teacher practices (Ministry of Education, 2023) and identify strategies that motivate Pacific students to succeed in education (Reynolds, 2018a).

Student Voice

Identifying effective approaches that are successfully being implemented by schools, can potentially provide an accessible *kete* of tools for all educators with the intention

of producing desirable outcomes for their Pacific students. It is the student's voice that is missing when researching into Pacific education (Reynolds, 2018a) to determine how relationships between students and teachers, and the inclusion of their wider communities, can be strengthened (Anae, 2016). A key focus in this study was to identify through student voice how Pacific participants felt supported by those around them to achieve success in education. More in-depth engagement with Moana/Pacific students is required to build awareness of indigenous cultures and identify what Pacific students perceive as success (Faa'ea & Fonua, 2022). This study attempted to fill this gap.

Te Mātaiaho and Te Tiriti o Waitangi

This thesis explores what approaches are being used in secondary school programmes and practices that guide and support their Pacific students to enhance their academic achievement. Key consideration is given to Te Mātaiaho, The New Zealand curriculum refresh document, which is designed to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and is inclusive of all ākonga. It aligns with NELP (Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities) by means of responding to “the uniqueness and diversity of all ākonga – their identities, languages, cultures, and strengths” (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 5).

It is with respect that I acknowledge Te Tiriti o Waitangi as it honours the tangata whenua who were the first settlers of Aotearoa New Zealand (Si'ilata et al., 2023). Māori and Pacific are people of the Moana, and our histories are interwoven and closely linked (Waiari et al., 2021). Similar to the Moana, many of our Pacific cultures are enriched with language, narratives, beliefs, artefacts and worldviews that are connected (Hau'Ofa, 1999). The ocean is what connects and unites us as people of the Pacific, and our history of voyaging using indigenous methods and knowledge is a symbolic reminder of our shared histories (Hau'Ofa, 1999). I continue to fulfil the Polynesian narratives and the legacy of my parents to provide a better life for our families and future generations in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Positionality

O le a le mea e sili ona taua i le lalolagi?

What is the most important thing in the world?

O tagata, o tagata, o tagata.

It is the people, it is the people, it is the people.

My interest in this topic reflects my own cultural background, beliefs, customs, and constructs that have shaped who I am today. My experience as an educator has broadened my views and deepened my inquiry into supporting Pacific learners achieving success as Pacific. This introductory section positions me, as the researcher, in relation to my research topic. Specifically drawing upon my Pacific Island heritage, Western lens, and te ao Māori lenses that have shaped my identity³. More importantly, it is the people and places of interest that have greatly influenced me and how I currently view the world. I begin with my personal journey.

My Story

I was born in Wellington, and the second to youngest child in the pecking order of six children. My parents migrated from Samoa to New Zealand in the late 1950s, during which time New Zealand provided employment opportunities for unskilled and semi-skilled workers (Spoonley, 2011). At the time, Samoans notably comprised the principal component of the Pacific diaspora, forming the largest Pacific Island migrant populations in New Zealand and the United States (Looser, 2012; Papoutsaki & Strickland, 2008). My mother's parents came from Tokelau and Samoa, and my father's family came from Samoa with German, Tuvalu, and Danish descents. I have a deep connection with my Pacific culture but know very little about my European descendants. My parents left their homeland, the safety net of their cultural environment, to live in a foreign country where they established their roots in the 'city of opportunity' Porirua. Like many other Pacific Islanders, they were seeking to settle in the land of 'milk and honey' and it became a place where a large population of Pacific Island migrants had planted their roots. My parents were part of a small group who founded the Porirua Pacific Islands Presbyterian Church (PPIPC) and helped build a place where they felt a sense of belonging. They adapted to Western society, demonstrating their high work ethic so they could earn money to support our extended family in New Zealand as well as their own families back in Samoa. It was a desire for many first-generation immigrants to support their loved ones by sending money home to help with day to day living expenses.

³ Identity is shaped across contexts and time by cultural influences including age, generation, gender, gender identity, ethnicity, race, religion, spirituality, language, sexual orientation, social class, education, employment, ability status, national origin, immigration status, and historical as well as ongoing experiences of marginalization. Comas-Díaz (2012). <https://doi-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/10.1037/13491-000>

Fa'a-Sāmoa

My Samoan culture is Fa'a-Sāmoa, which is the traditional way of life for 'āiga, and *aigapotopoto* (families and extended families). Our community is based on the Samoan values of *alofa*, *fa'aaloalo*, *feosia'i* and *faaleagaga* (love, respect, reciprocity, and spirituality), and these values are demonstrated through *tautua* (service) (Laban, 2007). This service extends to "family, church, community, and nationwide" (Vaiotele, 2006, p. 27). At the heart of fa'asamoa is family, land and chief titles, specifically where we come from and who we are. Our place of belonging and our identity is *gafa*, genealogy, and ancestry. These values are passed down through generations and as I stand on the shoulders of my ancestors, they continually evolve to become a huge part of who I am today.

As a child growing up in New Zealand, I was fortunate to be a part of two worlds, firstly as a proud Kiwi and secondly as a Pacific Islander with strong Samoan cultural values. Christianity is a huge part of our Pacific culture and the Presbyterian church I grew up in consisted of Samoa, Tokelau, and Cook Island people within our Pacific diaspora. I was presented with rich experiences from these Pacific regions through my involvement with church activities and cultural events which enabled me to understand the unique traditions and customs each Island had to offer. Our household became the hub for many family gatherings and celebrations, with many extended families visiting from Samoa mainly for education. The Samoan language was spoken in our household from a very young age, and it wasn't until we started school that English became our second language. I still have a good understanding of the Samoan language and have taken steps for further learning. There is a tendency for New Zealand born Pacific children to lose the fluency of their mother tongues and is more apparent in smaller island groups, while cultural retention is higher among larger Pacific groups such as Samoan communities (Papoutsaki & Strickland, 2008).

Being Pacific Abroad

As a mature adult my appetite to delve deeper into my culture became highly influenced both here in New Zealand and abroad. I travelled to London in the early 90s for my big 'overseas experience' and during my time there I was part of the Samoan UK Association and met many other Samoans who were either travelling or resided in the United Kingdom. The group performed Pacific cultural dances and

songs at various public events, and it became a comfortable space where you were able to exchange Pacific banter and laughter around traditional island food. I felt at ease around people who had a shared cultural understanding.

In 2017 our family moved to Samoa for six months on an extended holiday to experience the lifestyle and to provide an opportunity for our son to learn more about his Pacific heritage. The experience provided invaluable insights and a better understanding of the Samoan culture, traditions, and the importance of customs and values. *Fa'a-Sāmoa* conceives individuals as essential members of *'āiga*, regardless of where they currently live (Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2009). We attended the same church in Samoa where my grandfather was a past Minister, and we were present for *'Lotu Tamaiti'* which is an important annual event in the church calendar to acknowledge and celebrate the children. Families and their children were all dressed in white, and recited bible verses, songs of praise, and performed plays entirely in the Samoan language. The experience left a heart-warming feeling and a sense of belonging that our own parents and grandparents had encountered many years before. Individuals are continually reminded about the importance of their contributions to the welfare of their families as a collective, and these *'āiga* relationships are developed through responsibilities that are maintained over time (Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2009).

Dawn Raids

Back in New Zealand from the early 1970s Pacific peoples were specifically targeted due to perceptions they were causing job shortages and other social harms. My parents had established themselves in Porirua in the early 1960s and became respectable members of their church and community. I recall a situation that happened on our street, during which my dad was taken to the police station against his will, as they didn't believe he lived at the property he was standing on. The Dawn Raids created considerable public outcry from Pacific leaders, churches, media organisations and groups at the time. Groups including the Polynesian Panther Party, and the Citizens Association for Racial Equality (CARE) protested the targeting of Pacific peoples (Etherington, 2022; Pacific Peoples, 2023). These stories created a fire in my belly to actively support our Pacific people even more, which was one of the reasons why I became a teacher.

Teaching career

My teaching career began 12 years ago and as a primary teacher I have learnt a lot about myself and how much I enjoy working with children. My mum was also a teacher in Samoa before retraining in Wellington back in the mid 1970s. As described in Alansari et al. (2022), I resonate with the experience of Renee Tuifagalele:

From my own experiences, I wanted this research to highlight the collective support and effort that both Pasifika learners and families give. The relationships between the learners, families and their teachers are powerful, and I found it important to explore this, as it gives an insight to why educational success is perceived as a collective achievement rather than as an individual. In exploring these same relationships, I also wanted to share how important they are in shaping people's lives. (p. 55)

I currently work at a faith-based school supported by positive values that are similar to my own. These values continue to foster and develop connections with school, families and the wider community. During my earlier days as a teacher, I felt our Māori and Pacific Island children were not being fully supported in the classroom. The key issue being a lack of understanding about the cultural background of the student, and insufficient support that was needed to develop those connections. As I reflect on my earlier years of teaching it was the 'one size fits all' approach and did not consider the culture of Māori or Pacific learners. I have always endeavoured to be inclusive of both Māori and Pacific cultures, with a particular focus on acknowledging and implementing te ao Māori and Te Tiriti o Waitangi into my teaching practice. I completed Te Ara Reo Maori Levels 1-3 as a beginning teacher which gave me a good foundation to teach and develop the understanding of students around the importance of identity. As a Pacific teacher, I am in a fortunate position to offer opportunities and support to other colleagues in making comparisons between Pacific cultures and te ao Māori by sharing my own cultural experiences and knowledge.

Community Service

Outside of school, I am a trustee of Pasifika in the Bay Trust, an organisation that provides education excellence for Pacific students, their families and the wider Pacific communities. It is through working in these spaces that I feel a responsibility and commitment to support our Pacific Island *tamaiti* to succeed in education. Our vision

is to provide professional learning development to all primary school teachers to grow their awareness and understanding about Pacific Island cultures through appreciative inquiry (Chu, 2010; Flavell, 2023). As part of our journey, all the trustees are undertaking their Masters in Education, so we can build our capability and demonstrate our aspirations to be lifelong learners.

As a Pacific teacher it is intuitive to advocate and support Pacific students to experience a sense of belonging and self-confidence that their culture is valued. By creating opportunities for connectedness and gaining a greater appreciation of their worldview, supports my positionality to undertake this research. Further reasoning is to consider reformed Government policies for Pacific Education, including the Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020-2030, and how schools have implemented these into their wider school curriculums. In 2019 the Government invested \$27.4million over four years to provide initiatives in support of Pacific learners and their communities (Ministry of Education, 2023b), and consideration was given as to how this progressed.

In response, this study investigated how much impact school programmes and practices had on improving the success of Pacific students at Secondary school towards achieving NCEA level. Earlier research explored the notion of success for Pacific learners in English-medium classrooms, and how they were supported to enable their culture, worldviews and experiences to be considered and valued (Si'ilata et al., 2018). Teaching practices and effective strategies were identified that developed teachers' knowledge that enabled Pacific students to experience education success (Reynolds, 2017a).

Overview of Thesis

This thesis is grouped into six chapters. Chapter One introduces the topic and provides information on the present study, purpose, and my story. Chapter Two reviews literature related to identified themes pertaining to the area of research. Chapter Three outlines the use of Talanoa as an indigenous qualitative methodology and the reasons for utilising this approach in the current study. In addition, it presents the research process including setting, participants, methods for data collection and data analysis, validity and reliability, as well as ethical considerations. Chapter Four presents the research findings. Chapter Five discusses the findings relevant to existing literature.

Chapter Six provides a conclusion, limitations and implications, and closes with a personal reflection.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter reviews literature related to identified themes associated with this study.

The study addressed the following research questions:

- What approaches are secondary schools using in their programmes and practices to improve Pacific student success? What is the teacher's perception of success?
- What are Pacific students' perceptions of their teacher's role in their learning? What does success mean for Pacific students?

This chapter builds on a considerable amount of literature published on improving success for Pacific learners in English-medium classrooms (Airini et al., 2010; Evans, 2011; Reynolds, 2017a; Si'ilata et al., 2018). Firstly, the term 'Pasifika' is defined to determine how Pacific peoples are referred to in this study. Additionally, the significance of 'success' for Pacific students is explored from a cultural viewpoint. Secondly, a brief review of the New Zealand education system considers the improvement of Pacific education, and the development of cultural competency to support teachers and schools. Thirdly, an examination of what literature asserts about effective teaching practices for Pacific learners, the importance of student-teacher relationships and the establishment of connections with family and the wider Pacific communities. The role of the teacher in the development of culturally responsive practices is considered and more importantly, the perceptions of Pacific student voices are determined as to what good teaching practices look like to support their learning. This research study aimed to build on and contribute to literature that exposed key approaches that were effective and established good teaching practices, thus presented opportunities for Pacific students to succeed and thrive in education as Pacific.

Pasifika

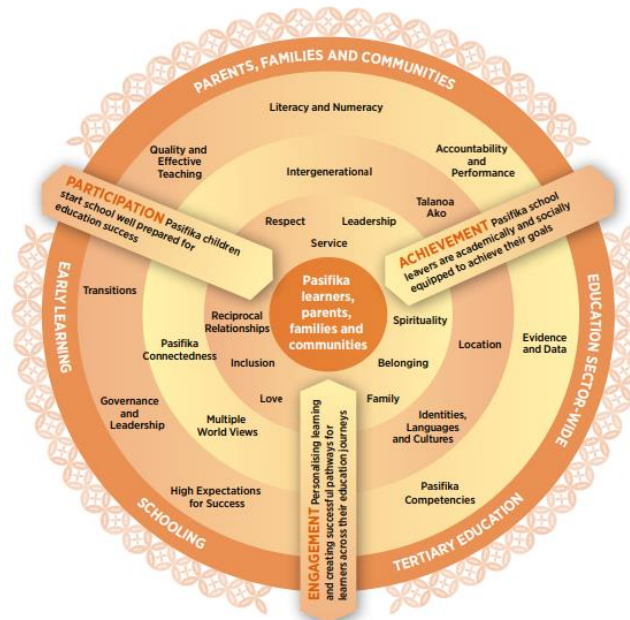
The term '*Pasifika*' is used collectively to refer to people or students who identify or have ethnicity origins from the islands of the Pacific (Airini et al., 2010). There are 17 distinct ethnic groups that are identified in the Pacific and the 10 largest Pacific

populations are from Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands, Niue, Fiji, Tokelau, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Tahiti, and Papua New Guinea (Ministry of Pacific Peoples, 2020). Although 'Pasifika' is an umbrella term, it may pose a concern that all Pacific peoples are perceived as homogenous (Matapo, 2019). It is important to note that statistics on education (Education Counts, 2023a) refer only to the island countries of Samoa, Tonga, Niue, Tokelau, Fiji, and the Cook Islands. In addition, Pacific students from the remaining Island countries are classified as 'Other', which include Tuvalu, Kiribati, Tahiti, Papua New Guinea, Hawaii, Nauru, Pitcairn Islands, Rotuman, and Solomon Islands (Ministry of Pacific Peoples, 2020). Consequently, not all Pacific groups are represented accurately in statistics. For the purposes of this study the word 'Pacific' will be used to describe all Pasifika peoples.

Pacific Student Success

We can define success as a favourable outcome or a positive result, as explained by the Oxford Dictionary. However, success from the perspective of Pacific individuals may also include the holistic cultural view including a collective success of their families, communities and the wider society in which they live (Fa'avae, 2017; Matapo, 2019; Si'ilata, 2014). Essentially, there is a partnership and a shared understanding between all those involved to work collaboratively to support children to succeed, to include school, church, and wider family commitments (Fa'avae, 2017). The Tapasā Pasifika Success Compass (Ministry of Education, 2018) is a component of the Tapasā cultural framework and is an example that shows how students, parents, families and communities are placed at the centre of everything. The points of the compass represent values that support Pacific world views, including reciprocal relationships, inclusion, service, respect, spirituality, belonging, *alofa*, and leadership. The Pasifika Success Compass (Figure 1) supports teachers' understanding that the collective success of a larger group can influence opportunities for employment, income and how they contribute to their communities (Statistics New Zealand & Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2010). For example,

Figure 1 Pasifika Success Compass (Ministry of Education, 2018)



the Ministry of Education (2018) communicated how Tapasā describes educational success for Pacific learners:

Is achieved when teachers recognise and build on what Pasifika learners, their parents, families, and communities already understand, value and what they know; and integrate those understandings, values and knowledge into their planning and teaching practices. (p. 3)

Furthermore, Fa'aea and Fonua (2022) argue that success with respect to Moana/Pacific learners is:

... the ability to understand how it can be fostered and generated that lead to future career prospects, to hold academic positions that will allow indigenous knowledges to have their rightful place within institutions that enjoy the benefits of studying Moana/Pacific peoples, but rarely champions them. (p. 1507)

Therefore, the importance of engaging with Pacific families and their communities who are key knowledge holders, enables opportunities for teachers and educators to value what Pacific students bring to enhance their strengths (Dyck, 2021; Si'ilata et al., 2023).

When Pacific individuals succeed, they often attribute success as a combination of their culture being valued and the continuing support of those key people who surround them (Bills et al., 2022; Faa'ea & Fonua, 2022; Fa'avae, 2017; Miller, 2015). In other words, the transformation of success is experienced by Pacific students when explicit connections are made between their culture and learning (Ministry of

Education, 2023b), and it becomes more powerful. An illustration of this is the cultivation of student-teacher relationships. In this context, teachers of Pacific students placed considerable value on these relationships, viewing them as a crucial step towards acceptance, which was identified as a pivotal form of success for Pacific students (Reynolds, 2018a). Furthermore, when acceptance is communicated, the achievement of *Teu le vā* is likely to be strengthened between students and teachers (Anae, 2016). So how does the New Zealand education system support Pacific students?

New Zealand Education System

Statistics indicate that Pacific people are the fourth-largest group in New Zealand, with their population growing rapidly. From just 2,159 Pacific people in 1945, the number reached nearly 400,000 by 2018, with two-thirds being New Zealand-born. By 2028, the Pacific population is projected to reach between 490,000 and 540,000. As their numbers increase, so does the demand for educational support for Pacific families (Flavell, 2023; Si'ilata et al., 2023). Government policies and educational reforms, such as *Te Mātaiaho* and the Action Plan for Pacific Education Refresh (2020-2030), have aimed to address these needs (Aumua & Tominiko, 2016; Chu et al., 2013b; Ministry of Education, 2023a). These initiatives emphasise inclusivity and the integration of Pacific worldviews, languages, and cultures into the curriculum. However, there is still limited progress in fostering intercultural education that fully embraces Pacific diversity. The question remains: Are schools and institutions effectively implementing these practices in their curricula?

New Zealand institutions are committed to supporting their Pacific students by valuing their culture and heritage, which fosters a sense of belonging and success (Bills et al., 2022; Swann, 2021; Victoria University of Wellington, n.d.). For example, Swann (2021), the Principal of Otahuhu Primary School, discussed how his school addressed Key Shift 1 of the Action Plan, which emphasised reciprocal engagement with diverse Pacific communities to meet their needs. Swann (2021) argues that schools must confront challenging questions, such as identifying the needs of their Pasifika community and determining how to engage with them to build trust and reciprocity. Although these questions can be difficult, establishing relationships based on mutual respect and trust is essential for success, and hosting a school fono that embraces a Pasifika worldview is a positive first step (Swann, 2021). Despite these efforts, many

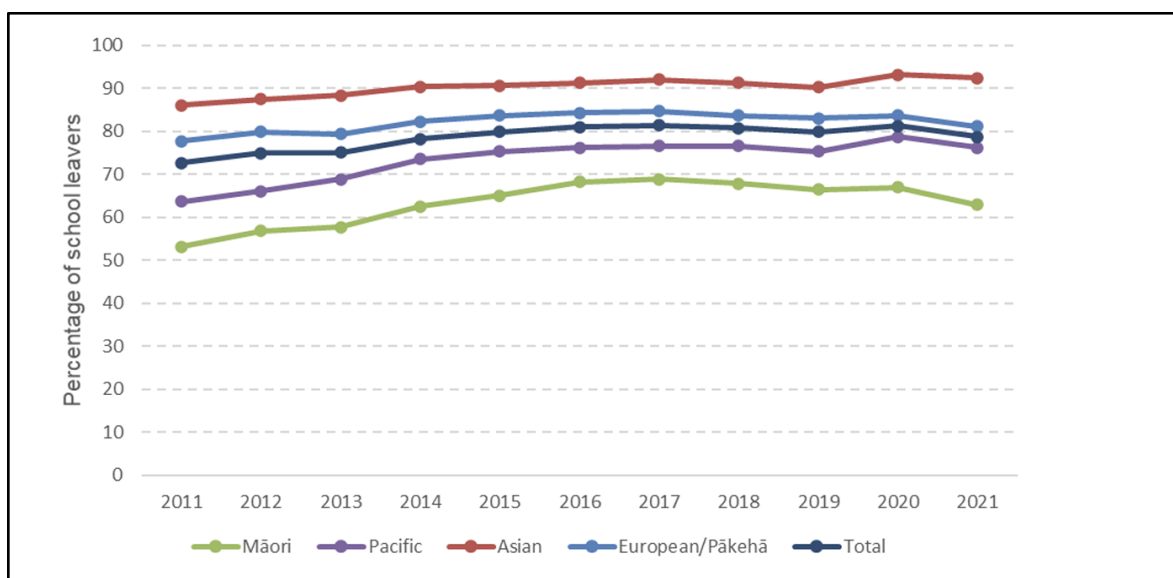
institutions struggle to support a diverse group of Pacific students due to the complexities of interpreting Pacific values as outlined in policy documents (Hargraves, 2022; Averill et al., 2020). This raises the question of how the government is demonstrating its support for promoting positive educational outcomes for Pacific students.

In response to government policy changes aimed at improving educational outcomes for Pacific students, the New Zealand Government invested \$27.4 million over four years in 2019 to support Pacific students and their families (Ministry of Pacific Peoples, 2019). These initiatives provided Pacific students with the skills and knowledge needed to pursue various educational pathways (Ministry of Pacific Peoples, 2019). This study examined the impact of this investment on the success of Pacific students at two secondary schools, where both schools reported positive outcomes in academic achievement and student well-being through the implementation of specific programs. However, challenges remain as teachers often group all Pacific students under the term "Pasifika," influenced by preconceived notions of Pacific cultures and ways of knowing (Sanga & Reynolds, 2020a; Spiller, 2013).

There is a significant need for research and guidance that helps educators effectively implement Pacific educational policies, yet this need remains largely unmet (Averill et al., 2020). Almost two decades ago, Alton-Lee (2005a) highlighted the inadequacies of the New Zealand education system in addressing the needs of its increasingly diverse student population, calling for a more responsive approach through community and systemic development. Despite these early warnings, little progress has been made, and schools continue to struggle to meet the needs of their diverse Pacific students and their families (Samu, 2020). This ongoing challenge highlights the urgent need for comprehensive research to inform policy implementation and teacher practices, ensuring that educators can "celebrate, develop, and support the lives of Pacific peoples as both unique and connected wherever they are" (Sanga & Reynolds, 2017, p. 202). In some cases, teachers have not been supportive of Pacific students' educational success, often due to deficit theorising (Chu et al., 2013b). Therefore, educators require guidance and expertise from those equipped to provide such support if they are to foster the success of their Pacific students (Airini et al., 2010; Samu, 2006).

Education results revealed ethnic deficit perspectives (Waiari et al., 2021) in reference to the attainment of NCEA Level 2 or above, with a steady increase made by Pacific school leavers since 2011 (Figure 2). According to Samu (2013), deficit theorising by teachers, such as low expectations towards their Pacific learners, was evident due to their inability to appreciate, value, or consider the nuances and complexities of Pacific identities, and were therefore unable to make crucial connections with them. Between 2018 and 2021 the attainment of Pacific students had decreased (Education Counts, 2023a). In review of these results, how culturally responsive is NCEA for Pacific students?

Figure 2 Pacific school leavers with NCEA level 2 or above since 2011



New Zealand Context

In the present climate, schools experience increased numbers of Pacific students who are largely expected to adhere to Eurocentric education practices (Bills et al., 2022). This can greatly impact how Pacific students carry aspirations to uphold their identity, language and culture to support their success, instead they become marginalised when standardised education assessment measures take precedence (Spiller, 2013). With increasing numbers of Pacific people, it has become critical to support education through a system that is culturally sustaining for further generations of Pacific students (Dyck, 2021). However, results in NCEA level 2 revealed there is more work to be done. Research linked poor results of Pacific students with deficit views of teachers

who held low expectations and fell short of enhanced relationships to develop and understand their cultural identities (Hargraves, 2022).

A large body of research indicated that Pacific students' needs were not being met from a cultural perspective (Matapo & McFall-McCaffery, 2022; Reynolds, 2018a; 2019; Spiller, 2013; Taleni & Surtees, 2024). Sililoto (2022) shared an example of her own experience as a parent who attended a parent interview with her son:

My son and I are sitting with his English teacher. He asks her how many literacy credits he has, as he has enrolled in the University of Auckland and wanted to confirm whether he had met their entry requirements. I was proud of my son for speaking up and for his drive to attend University. However, his teacher's response shocked me. Her demeanour changed and her eyes shifted between my son and I as she said in what I understood to be a sarcastic tone "Oh, I didn't think you were planning on going to university?" (p. 2)

This example demonstrates the low expectation of a Pacific student (Hargraves, 2022) by the English teacher. Sililoto (2022) believes through her observation of the event that the teacher showed "bias and prejudicial attitudes" seen in her "body language and tone of voice", and this conveyed disbelief in her son's ability to attend university (p. 2). Bills et al. (2022) reveal that through teachers' lack of understanding, Pacific students' lives are siloed but they need to be de-siloed. In other words, instead of isolating their cultural heritage, beliefs, and language, they should be embracing and promoting these cultural nuances to create more communication and cooperation between their Pacific students (Bills et al., 2022).

The tendency of some educators to adopt deficit perspectives, which blame Pacific students, families, and communities for non-compliance with the Western education system, highlights significant challenges in Pacific education (Nakhid, 2003; Reynolds, 2018b; Sililoto, 2022). This viewpoint extends beyond students, often interpreting Pacific parents' absence from meetings as a lack of interest in their children's education (Nakhid, 2003). The focus on achieving government-mandated targets can overshadow critical gaps in the system, as schools prioritise data-driven outcomes over meaningful engagement (Sililoto, 2022). This is evident in teacher-centred classrooms, where a packed curriculum and time constraints disrupt the relational balance (*vā*), leading to disengagement and poor academic progress among Pacific students (Reynolds, 2018a). In a system driven by economic priorities, these issues

raise important questions about the impact on Pacific learners and the role of both Pacific and non-Pacific teachers in addressing these challenges.

In Aotearoa New Zealand the teaching body is largely made up of European origin at 72% and only 4% identified as Pacific (Chu-Fuluifaga & Reynolds, 2023; Education Counts, 2023c). The low number of Pacific teachers greatly impacts the cultural knowledge they provide to strengthen the cultural connections and experiences of Pacific learners (Pole'o, 2021). According to Benseman et al. (2006), Pacific staff are valued by Pacific students as role models and mentors. My experience with my own students is that I can share my cultural background and nuances that resonate with other Pacific students in the classroom, and this often creates trust and a respectful environment. However, at times, Pacific students feel their cultural identity is devalued within a society where they are a minority in a Westernised culture, and their cultural narratives are created by concepts of the majority (Pole'o, 2021). Bills et al. (2022) argue that Pacific students should not have to change to adhere to Eurocentric concepts that have continued to dominate. Opportunities to utilise the cultural capital that they bring to school should be made so that their learning can accelerate. Therefore, changes are necessary to develop appropriate pedagogy and practices to assist non-Pacific teachers to improve the education of Pacific students (Chu-Fuluifaga & Reynolds, 2023).

Numerous studies have highlighted ongoing disparities in academic achievement between Pacific and non-Pacific students (Nakhid, 2003; Reynolds, 2017a; Ponton, 2018; Waiari, et al., 2021; Boon-Nanai et al., 2021). Similar studies have described Pacific students as at-risk learners, low achievers, vulnerable, problematic to reach, and non-traditional (Airini et al., 2010; Benseman et al., 2006; Chu et al., 2013b; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014; Ferguson et al., 2008; Mayeda et al., 2014; Siteine, 2010). An example was recently reported by the Education Ministry about poor attendance rates for term three in 2023 as being the worst figures on record, with Māori and Pacific students being the most affected (Gerritsen, 2023). These articles portray Pacific students with unsatisfactory attendance and link them to poor education results, without considering their circumstances or cultural obligations. A study undertaken by Chu et al. (2013a) showed that the nature of a collective Pacific family life was not compatible with a model derived by the New Zealand educational system. Additionally, Pacific students were prone to spend more time on family matters and culturally based

activities than their Palagi counterparts. These activities included church, community and caring for sick family members which ultimately took precedence over study (Chu et al., 2013a). This linked to Pacific students' cultural values of leadership, respect, and service that contributed to their success as a collective (Bills et al. 2022; Faa'ea & Fonua, 2022). The teacher participants in this study shared that many Pacific students between years 11-13 were unable to attend school due to supporting their families financially, out in the workforce. Whilst schools and teachers considered ways to support their diverse Pacific cultures (Si'ilata et al., 2018), how productive were schools in building a supportive network to develop cultural competence?

Developing Cultural Competence

The need to develop cultural competence presents ongoing challenges for teachers to embed into their teaching practices (Dyck, 2021). Greater numbers of Pacific students emerge each year and support is paramount if they are to succeed in education. For teachers to develop cultural competence they need a supportive network, and this takes time to develop depending on context (Fa'avae et al., 2016; Thompson et al., 2009). In addition, Si'ilata et al. (2023) argue that cultural competence on its own is unable to achieve purposeful change. Pacific Advance Secondary School (PASS) was set up for Pacific students growing up within the context of South Auckland, but in modern-day society in Aotearoa New Zealand. PASS identified that the different aspects of Pacific students' lives were siloed, including their faith, aiga, and school (Siope, 2011). Furthermore, it was necessary for these aspects to be de-siloed for students to fulfil their potential, and this became their *filosofia* (philosophy) (Bills et al., 2022). This *filosofia* influenced the way teachers empowered their Pacific students to use the language of their mother tongue (Reynolds, 2018a), and encouraged them to share their rich cultural knowledge and experiences to accelerate their learning (Anae, 2010; Bills et al., 2022). Essentially, this led to improved cultural competence for teachers and favourable outcomes for Pacific students in their education. PASS identified appropriate resources that supported teachers' knowledge and these were essential to engage and encourage Pacific student success (Aumua & Tominiko, 2016).

Fa'avae (2017) highlights the importance of being culturally responsive to how Pacific students live and learn, particularly towards understanding how Tongan people and

families live in their daily environment, and within school. In addition, Reynolds (2017b) argues that when teachers learn about Pacific concepts like *vā*, a relational space where the dynamics between students and teachers are understood, they gain the potential to reframe Pacific education by gaining insights into themselves through comparison. Understanding *vā* enables teachers to view Pacific education as a process of learning about oneself in relation to others, shifting the focus away from teacher personality and emphasising the importance of opportunity, ability, and willingness to learn (Reynolds, 2017b). Furthermore, Si'ilata et al. (2018) maintain that accountability lies with all teachers to consciously make attempts to provide students with heterogeneous paradigms⁴ that support and enhance their success. Si'ilata (2014) articulated her own thoughts:

If Pasifika learners' languages, cultures, and identities are represented in the 'valued knowledge of school' and utilised as a normal part of language and literacy learning in their classrooms, then their perceptions of success will include, rather than exclude, their linguistic and cultural identities. (p. 2)

Teachers' assumptions about Pacific ways of learning do not always manifest good teaching, and Pacific students experience repetition, teacher centred activities, and a lack of interest, as identified in a study conducted by Spiller (2013). These assumptions demonstrate the impact on Pacific learners, who may lack confidence in their teachers and become bored, potentially hindering their learning progress (Spiller, 2013). Where teachers lack the skills to support classroom interactions within a culturally empathetic context, learning is unlikely to take place (Sanga and Reynolds, 2020a). This reinforces the importance of culturally appropriate teaching practices identified to develop teachers' understanding to support their Pacific students (Si'ilata et al., 2018). Chu-Fuluifaga and Reynolds (2023) highlight professional learning development as essential for teachers who pursue community partnerships that support communities' prime concerns and aspirations that represents Pacific ways of life. How does this impact Pacific and in particular non-Pacific researchers and policy makers in their approaches and solutions when inquiring into Pacific ways of knowing and learning? What do we know about effective teaching practice?

⁴ Paradigm: "is a comprehensive belief system, world view, or framework that guides research and practice in a field" (p.8). Willis, J. W. (2007) <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452230108>

Effective Teaching Practices

Effective teaching practices are essentially a means for schools to improve and make progress, meet national educational goals, and ensure that students are at the centre of their learning success (Chu et al., 2013b). So, do these teaching practices suit the learning of all diverse learners, and are these learners cognisant of the way these practices are delivered to support their learning?

Student-Teacher Relationships

Teachers as professionals are obligated to progress their relationships with a range of learners and whānau that come from different backgrounds and are committed to raising professional standards (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2023). Bishop & Berryman (2006) articulate student-teacher relationship building and argue:

When teachers listen to and learn from the students, they can begin to see the world from those students' perspective, this helps them to make what they teach more accessible to students and helps them to think of teaching, learning and the way we study them as more collaborative processes. Students feel empowered when they are taken seriously and attended to as knowledgeable participants in important conversations. They become motivated to participate constructively in their own education. (p. 4)

The role of the teacher is to show their commitment to work in the best interests of learners, their families, and the wider society, so how can they support Pacific students in their learning?

Teachers of Pacific students have the agency to build and develop relationships with students, their aiga, and the communities in which they live to foster success (Miller, 2015; Samu, 2020; Si'ilata et al., 2018; Spiller, 2013). Students' learning experience through collaborative processes were greatly improved by teachers who established strong relationships that were respectful and encouraging (Chu et al., 2013a). Maxwell (2007) likened student-teacher relationships to "people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care" (p. 116). As a Pacific educator I resonate with the importance of knowing who your Pacific students are and to value their cultural backgrounds. My own cultural identity was role modelled and shared with students to develop a more collaborative experience and consequently, established good relationships that created a safe space for them to share their own stories. These

relationships were based upon shared values of “respect, compassion, humility, honesty, integrity, trustworthiness and reciprocity, that are integrated into teaching and learning practices and policies for Pacific students in education” (Chu et al., 2013a, p. 7).

Alternative cultural and relational practices bring Pacific students' views of their world to the forefront (Tu'imana, 2022). A Tongan concept *tauhi vā* is a Pacific perspective that enhances the nuances and develops relationships that are nurtured (Tu'imana, 2022), and are strong and reciprocal (Reynolds, 2018a). When teachers use different approaches that are offered by concepts of a Pacific-origin, paired with a more reflective practice around Pacific relationships, will allow for Pacific education to occur more systematically (Reynolds, 2018a). In contrast, Hawk et al. (2002) were of the view that teachers who had a certain type of personality possessed a taxonomy of personal characteristics including empathy, care, and respect, that provided a platform for relational success. This theory implied that relational success was based on a teacher's positive and caring personality, however are they intuitive to how Pacific students learn and their Pacific ways of knowing?

I reflect on a Kiribati student who was very shy, quiet, and low in his academic progress, yet very respectful and kind towards others. I found that when space was created in the context of his Kiribati culture, his passion to learn came to life. He grew in confidence when he was able to share his culture with others and explained the meaning behind some of the traditional Kiribati dances. After receiving guidance for two years to cultivate a sense of belonging, he was ready to transition to Intermediate school with a newfound appreciation of his self-worth as a Kiribati student. This connection links his narrative to the concept of 'Pacific ways of knowing' (Boon-Nanai et al., 2022). These student-teacher relationships also extend to their families.

Relationships with Family

When schools actively build relationships with their Pacific families then *Teu le vā* is promoted with Pacific students and their lives between home and school (Boon-Nanai, 2021). When parents were encouraged to visit PASS at any time around their work commitments, the school promoted a welcoming environment (Bills et al., 2022; Flavell, 2023), and they were more inclined to visit. At PASS the school was in regular contact with Pacific parents and they were seen as part of the wider school *aiga*.

Appreciative Inquiry (Chu, 2010) seeks to identify positive change that acknowledges the strengths of its stakeholders (Flavell, 2023). Furthermore, it potentially demonstrates how the voices of families can contribute to making decisions that positively support students' learning (Flavell, 2023). PASS fosters an intrinsic culture of lived experiences that nurtured family relationships between teachers, students and families (Si'ilata et al., 2023). Many of the student participants in this study praised their Pacific tutors and Pacific liaison teachers who worked tirelessly to support them to achieve their educational goals (Chu et al., 2013a), particularly in partnership with their parents for extra support (Flavell, 2023). Teachers and staff at PASS considered themselves as part of the *aiga*, as students treated them with respect and reciprocity, thus enabled them to feel comfortable for students to address them as 'uncle' or 'aunty', and this led to collective success (Bills et al., 2022). This example is strengthened by The Tapasā Pasifika Success Compass that links to the engagement and development of relationships with Pacific families and encompassed values of reciprocity, inclusion, respect, and belonging.

Tapasā Cultural Competency Framework

The Tapasā document is a cultural competency framework that evolved from earlier Pacific Education plans (Dyck, 2021; Reynolds, 2019) and highlights the importance of The Tapasā Pasifika Success Compass. The purpose of the framework is to support the participation of teachers to engage with Pacific learners in a culturally responsive manner (Ministry of Education, 2023). As previously described, Tapasā encouraged teachers to recognise and build on the cultural knowledge that Pacific students presented and to integrate these into everyday practices.

The Talanoa research framework is highlighted by Tapasā and was developed by Pacific researchers to express and articulate Pacific knowledge and their worldviews (Ministry of Education, 2018). Furthermore, its purpose is to support teachers in getting to know their Pacific learners better. Additionally, Sililoto (2022) suggests that Tapasā encourages teachers of Pacific learners to combine and apply moral principles and experiences of a diverse group of learners into their teaching practice, thus normalising the diversity of cultures. According to Samu (2006), quality teaching and being responsive to diversity are notions that go hand in hand, therefore highlighting that for quality teaching to be effective, it must include diversity and difference of all

who participate. The Tapasā resources support and develop teaching practice in relation to understanding Pacific learners and their kainga and community (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2024). An example would be for teachers to provide student centred opportunities that create positive learning spaces to support cultural nuances and customise teaching content (Thompson et al., 2009). How has the Tapasā document been implemented by schools and has it proved to be effective? Averill & Rimoni (2019) highlight the challenges with implementing policies is due to the absence of Pacific cultural understanding among many teachers. Consequently, this prompts the importance of providing cultural professional learning development by leaders with expertise (Si'ilata et al., 2023). Moreover, opportunities are provided for Pacific students to improve their education, and to support the implementation of policies.

Pacific Values Framework

The Pacific Values Framework implemented by the Ministry of Education (2023a), is a guide for teachers to determine how they can support the needs of Pacific students. In my experience many non-Pacific teachers have asked for my help with their Pacific students, and I have consciously sought accurate information to support their student's cultural needs. However, my Samoan world views do not always represent a diverse group of Pacific learners, but having access to a framework that references specific examples from different Pacific cultures, can create an influential shift. This links to developing cultural competence (Bills et al., 2022) and access to effective resources will encourage kaiako to reflect on their teaching practice and look for opportunities to strengthen their course design to be inclusive of Pacific learners and contexts.

Pedagogy

Pacific students responded positively to teachers who implemented cultural approaches aligned with their Pacific perspectives. As a result, they experienced success in relationships strongly influenced by cultural pedagogies (Ministry of Education, 2019; Tu'imana, 2022). Additionally, Bills et al. (2022) highlight that Pasifika mo Pasifika is recognised and acknowledged when pedagogy is culturally and continually supported. According to Silipa (2004), he found that when teachers allow Samoan students the freedom to create and self-govern, it fosters purpose and trust, embodying the value of vā' fealoa'i (mutual respect). Teachers who embrace culturally responsive pedagogy develop a deeper understanding of the cultural needs and

worldviews of their Pacific students, which helps them to thrive and succeed (Bills et al., 2022; Silipa, 2004). In contrast, Spiller (2013) suggests that teachers who employ strong pedagogy and encourage engagement with Pacific students can improve their educational outcomes, from a Palagi perspective. Spiller maintains that for Pacific students to compete globally, they would benefit from a Western education. These differing perspectives may create confusion for teachers when deciding how best to engage with their Pacific students.

Pacific students demonstrate confidence and trust when their teachers actively engaged them in pursuit of learning and established high expectations (Miller, 2015; Spiller, 2013). Teachers who promoted student agency and leadership, encouraged positive learning outcomes and improved values of reciprocity and respect that link to Teu le vā (Reynolds, 2019). Furthermore, when teachers understand the vā between spiritual interconnectedness and community connections linking people, land and surroundings (Allen et al., 2022; Tualaulelei & McFall-McCaffery, 2019), the importance of valuing these connections is reinforced (Talení & Surtees, 2024). Additionally, the concept of a 'pedagogy of the heart' is a transformative process enacting Pacific values of tautua, alofa, and reciprocity that are established from the heart with compassion, that is felt, lived and enacted in the vā (Talení & Surtees, 2024).

Pacific principals were of the view that for their teachers to value and appreciate the knowledge their Pacific students presented, they needed to take a strengths-based approach (Dyck, 2021; Si'ilata et al., 2023). In a study by Si'ilata et al. (2023), teachers' mindsets were challenged with situations that involved working with Pacific students when their traditional thinking of teaching was reading, writing, and maths. An example was provided by a teacher who shared how a young Pacific child persistently cried when he was asked to write. Si'ilata et al. (2023) found that for teachers to intentionally build a child's confidence was to recognise what the child was able to do by actively taking a strengths-based approach, thus appreciating the value of knowledge they bring. This linked to research that demonstrated teachers who consciously attempted to understand and acknowledge their Pacific students, helped to build trust and a safe environment for them to learn and grow (Nakhid, 2003; Siteine, 2010).

Professional learning development (PLD) that is purposeful and effective can provide appropriate Pacific-origin concepts that embrace the world views of Pacific students and largely affect positive outcomes (Samu, 2006; Tuimana, 2022). However, Timperley et al. (2007) discovered that the synthesis of literature on international PLD was ineffective in supporting teacher learning. This ineffectiveness mirrored the situation where teaching did not consistently facilitate learning for students in ways that maximised learning opportunities. In support, Si'ilata et al. (2018; 2023) state that PLD for teachers should be guided by instructional leaders who understand how to direct their teachers and can challenge their beliefs and practices. This linked to literature by Thompson et al. (2009) and Fa'avae et al. (2016) who highlight the importance for teachers to develop cultural competence. However, specific courses or PLD customised for teachers that focus on cultural practices and Pacific people are in short supply in New Zealand (Chu-Fuluifaga & Reynolds, 2023). Furthermore, processes and resources that are culturally appropriate to support Pacific student success needs to be readily available to guide educators (Chu-Fuluifaga & Reynolds, 2023; Coxon et al., 2002). According to Dyck (2021), research in Pasifika arts education has mostly been carried out by non-Pacific scholars with an emphasis on teachers and not on students. This links to a lack of student voice when the focus should be on identifying their cultural views and acknowledging their Pacific 'ways of being' (Faa'ea & Fonua, 2022). Therefore, the importance of developing culturally responsive practices is crucial for teachers to improve their cultural knowledge to support Pacific students.

Culturally Responsive Practices

Culturally responsive practices contribute towards raising student achievement for all cultures, and students are encouraged to reach their educational potential regardless of their individual needs or ethnic background (Hargraves, 2022). According to Reynolds (2019), the teaching profession in Aotearoa New Zealand is mostly made up of European origin (Education Counts, 2023c), hence the education system was designed and originated on a European model. As a result, teachers' development of Pacific education is focused within inter-cultural spaces where an understanding of obligation and caring for relationships is conducted using the concept of *vā* (Reynolds, 2019). In Pacific education a relational focus encourages Pacific communities and teachers to develop relationships constructed from the Pacific value of generosity

(Rimoni et al., 2022). This is linked to appreciating the value of learning and forming close relationships with Pacific students. Realising one's position in this vā relational space is well known within many Pacific cultures, and "to understand this notion is to reflect ... how Pasifika students are brought up within the home environments or those of their parents within a diasporic community" (Boon-Nanai et al., 2022, p. 187). However, this conflicts with Eurocentric/Western notions of learning as highlighted by Boon-Nanai et al. (2017).

The importance of relationship building is to enhance in-depth engagement between teacher and student (Samu, 2006; Sililoto, 2022; Thompson et al., 2009), thus Pacific learners are encouraged to build their confidence through Teu le vā (Airini et al., 2010). An example in the Samoan culture is when young people show their awareness in physical and spatial contexts. Additionally, these are demonstrated in the way they lower their body position when talking to their elders, or being silent when elders are speaking, thus displaying signs of respect (Boon-Nanai et al., 2022). Similarly, Pacific students treat teachers with the same respect, however their actions can be perceived as a lack of engagement (Dyck, 2021), but understanding one's place and looking after the vā in this relational space illustrates respectful behaviour that influences the culture of silence (Boon-Nanai et al., 2022).

Strategies and Interventions

Strategies and interventions for Pacific education incorporate culturally responsive teaching and learning, family and community engagement, and supportive and inclusive learning environments. For example, the role of mentoring and leadership programmes support Pacific students to succeed and aspire towards leadership positions (Chu et al., 2013a). The student participants in this study highlighted that faith was of great importance in their Pacific cultures. Faith has become more accepting in school environments as a means of camaraderie and support for student wellbeing (Boon-Nanai et al., 2021). The teacher participants emphasised the importance of prayer and songs that embraced their different cultures. In addition, they encouraged Pacific students to build their confidence and experience success as leaders to speak in public. My son developed a strong faith at the secondary school he attended where prayer meetings were organised by Pacific students and created a culture of belonging (Siope, 2011). His values of service and leadership continued to guide prayer meetings as a Senior student and encouraged other students to continue

with their faith journeys. At PASS, their faith is central to the school's composition and when students expressed a part of themselves confidently towards one another and to their teachers, their wellbeing was elevated (Bills et al., 2022). These examples positively influence key aspects and values when developing relationships and building connections with families and their Pacific communities.

Teachers engage in practices that are relational when encouraged by “principles of respect, responsibility, reverence, reciprocity, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy” (Allen et al., 2022, p. 2). A relational teaching model inclusive of Pacific learners, creates an environment that promotes diversity and uniqueness of Pacific cultures, thus enables teachers to build connections and respond to individuals' needs (Chu-Fuluifaga, 2022). Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI) (2020) highlights the importance to plan a curriculum that demonstrates New Zealand's cultural diversity and encompasses values, histories and traditions of all its people. A study by Chu-Fuluifaga and Reynolds (2023) illustrated how teachers enhanced engagement with their Pacific students by using family names in mathematical problem-solving that situated students in familiar relationships. This highlights the importance of making connections using contexts such as family and cultural values that can improve culturally responsive practices.

Establishing Connections

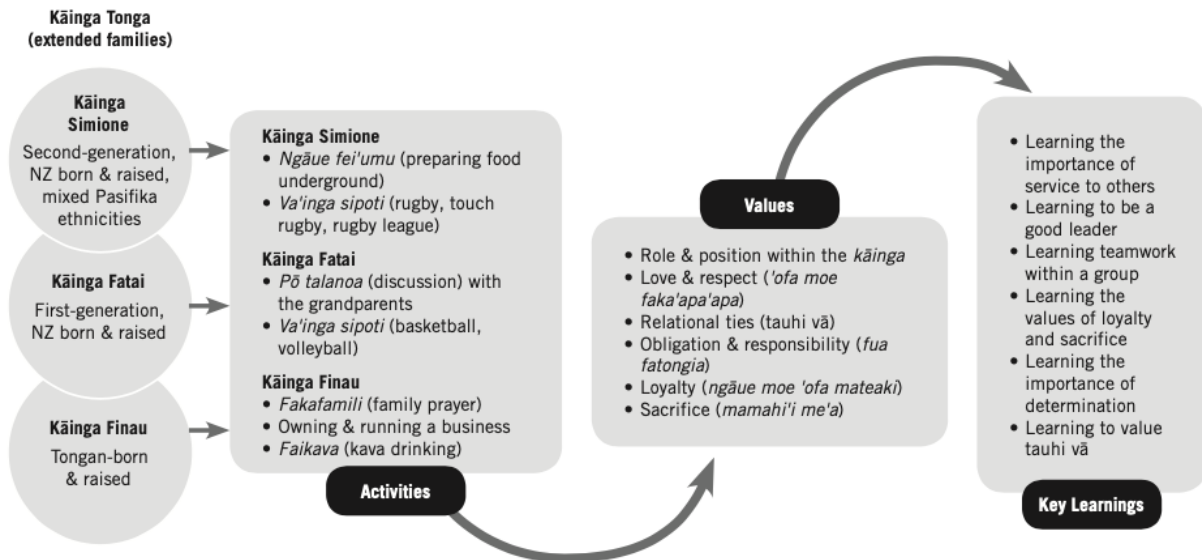
Teachers are in a privileged position to develop their understanding that Pacific people are situated within a system of family and community through collectivism (Bills & Enari, 2023). Favourable relationships occur between schools and their communities when support for learning environments is created for students from minority groups that encourage education, wellbeing, and social development (Bills & Enari, 2023). Ministry of Pacific Peoples were successful in securing government funding towards their Strategic Intentions 2019-2024 Plan to provide initiatives in support of Pacific learners and their communities (Ministry of Education, 2023b). In addition, strong family relationships are pivotal to the success and wellbeing of Pacific students, and when love, support and encouragement are provided, they are motivated to succeed (Chu et al., 2013a). As a parent helper at one of the school programmes, a local community organisation Good Neighbour Aotearoa Trust, showed their generosity and provided food to support and promote the wellbeing of Pacific students. The Pasifika in the Bay Trust, who worked alongside the schools, were funded by the Ministry of

Pacific Peoples to provide key programmes for supporting Pacific students in achieving education success. These culturally responsive interventions allowed teachers to embrace the *vā* within their community that reflect the Pacific values of students. Furthermore, engagement with parents therefore occurred organically within the school's educational processes (Bills & Enari, 2023).

Successful teachers of Pacific students who are willing to enhance their knowledge of Pacific cultures using a Pacific lens, consequently, develop relationships that promote Pacific student success (Reynolds, 2018a). My colleagues and I attended the Pasifika Fono 2023 held at Te Papa Tongarewa in Te-Whanganui-a-Tara. It was a privilege to meet and listen to Dr Cherie Chu-Fuluifaga, a Senior lecturer, and PhD Supervisor at Victoria University, who was recently honoured with a Queen Service Medal. She encouraged us to reflect on our identity and what our personal beliefs were about teaching and learning. It was empowering to hear heartwarming stories from both Pacific and non-Pacific teachers about the challenges they faced in their Pacific space to influence others to 'see' their Pacific students. Consequently, these stories link to Havea et al. (2020), for teachers to reflect on their teaching practices in their Pacific educational spaces and to identify ways of improvement.

A model using an example of a Tongan boy's cultural education (Figure 3) illustrates key areas of learning that teachers may adopt for their Pacific students (Fa'avae, 2017). Some of the examples include learning the importance of service to others, how this was respected within their *kāinga* (Fa'avae, 2017; 2018), and how learning values of loyalty and sacrifice were instilled by previous generations.

Figure 3 Tongan males' valued activities and knowledge.



Key aspects of this model resonated with a Tongan family I had taught who had strong cultural and Christian values that were evident in the way the boys showed their obligation and responsibility (*fua fatongia*) for their younger sister. They would visit her during break times to make sure she had food and collected her after school each day. Their grandparents attended and supported their school events, and when they graduated, they expressed how proud they were of their achievements. This linked to values of love and respect (*'ofa moe faka'apa'apa*). The whole family would be present to show their appreciation and value the determination (*loto-ma'u mo loto-feinga*) and success as a collective, integrated through relational connections *tauhi vā*, as highlighted in the *Kāinga Tonga* model (Fa'avae, 2017). This example emphasised the importance for schools to make connections with their Pacific communities to support their Pacific students to succeed.

This model of Tongan males' valued activities and knowledge is presented as a collaborative approach with activities and knowledge that can be shared with schools for their planning and wider curriculum. Fa'avae (2017) summarises the *kāinga* in three layers with each having their respective activities that lead to cultural values which are established within their common practices. In addition, the last layer demonstrates key learnings that emerge and can be assimilated within a school context. The literature continues to support the necessity to provide a culturally responsive teaching and learning space to support all students (Chu-Fuluifaga & Reynolds, 2023; Reynolds, 2018a; Si'ilata et al., 2018). In reviewing how positive approaches in culturally responsive teaching can impact the success of Pacific students, new theories of

Pacific research have paved the way to develop a more collaborative approach to researching Pacific student success in education.

Pacific Research Theories

New theories of research participation challenged existing theories of how culture fits in the larger picture of research praxis and how to research Pacific peoples in culturally appropriate ways (Chu-Fuluifaga & Reynolds, 2023; Edwards-Groves & Kemmis, 2016; Ualesi, 2021). An analysis of Pacific education research literature was completed to develop a collaborative, coordinated approach to gather quality research knowledge to improve Pacific presence, engagement and achievement in education (Chu et al., 2013b). Furthermore, Tualaulelei and McFall-McCaffery (2019) claim that the growth of Pacific people and Pacific research approaches is encouraging, however:

“... researchers are encouraged to think of the Pacific research paradigm as a cumulative effort and collective movement ... and to promote the development and sustainability of research inspired by Pacific ways of knowing and being. This entails stronger critical perspectives and reflexivity on our own work” (p. 199).

The discourse of Pacific research to move away from the assumptions of Eurocentric research had been described by Pacific academics as ongoing since at least the 1970s (Naepi, 2015; Sanga & Reynolds, 2020b). There have been some developments as highlighted by Smith (2021), however the power of colonialism continues to define what one perceives as real knowledge. This issue arises because stories that are retold or rewritten often reflect a Western perspective, making it challenging to grasp the essence the story intends to convey. Vaioleti (2006) believed that social interactions are highly influenced by the requirements of acceptable ethics, but do not reflect the different ways of thinking of people from the Pacific. What impact do these Western views have for novice Pacific researchers (Sanga & Reynolds, 2020b) as they grapple with what is acceptable and appropriate for Pacific research?

Pacific research methodologies serve as a pathway for Pacific researchers to implement a Pacific perspective and build on their understanding of Pacific (Naepi, 2018). In the context of Aotearoa, Smith (2021) engaged with indigenous methods and positioned her ethical responsibility as inseparable to her connection to land, places

and stories. Talanoa is comparable to these connections (Faleolo, 2021) to determine the origins of Pacific students, knowledge of their ancestors, and how their families came to be in New Zealand (Havea et al., 2020). More importantly, how these stories are conveyed and perceived serves as an illustration of how symbolic cultural values and personal stories are in achieving success (Havea et al., 2020).

In Pacific research contexts, the collection of data and nuances vary depending on the customs of the Pacific culture. An example illustrated by Tongan communities is the potential of a study to be influenced by status or ranking of importance of the researcher within the community (Vaiotei, 2006). In addition, Fa'avae et al. (2016) highlight that interactions during talanoa were not led by the requirements of ethical standards as followed in more traditional interviews, but the researcher's hierarchy decided how the talanoa would progress. An example was shown by Naufahu (2018), a Tongan researcher, who used his own Pacific methodology 'talaloto' through Talanoa with his church community. During his Masters and PhD he developed and nurtured key relationships within his community, and his status progressed to a higher level. As their relationships became more trustworthy, the participants became more comfortable to share and Talanoa at a deeper level.

Naufahu was a guest presenter for our 'Becoming a Researcher' course at the Waikato University campus. His demeanour clearly showed his humble personality and respectful status within his community. He articulated the importance of using a Pacific framework for Pacific research and provided key learnings to be genuine, humble, culturally sensitive, and to follow through with what you say and do. This example supported key practices that were undertaken during our fa'afaletui with student participants and allowed their stories and cultural views to be communicated freely.

Insider and Outsider Researchers

Researchers are compelled to create opportunities to engage in discussions that promote a myriad of perspectives that describe an abundance of ethnic identities that students and their families bring from the Pacific (Anae, 2010). However, Bishop (2008) states that although a close connection to the research study is considered, there is a lack of flexibility or careful consideration for cultural views. Further implications on more recent literature continue to report on a lack of consideration or understanding for cultural views in Pacific research (Averill et al., 2020; Goodyear-

Smith et al., 2022; McAllister et al., 2022; Tuitoga, 2020). Despite that, Smith (2012; 2021) viewed research of this nature as challenging the dominant tendencies of traditional paradigms and leans more towards an outsider's objective view as opposed to a connected insider's subjective view of the real world. Benham (2006) and Anae (2010) contend that regardless of whether we approach research from an insider or outsider perspective, it is essential to examine our own perspectives and comprehend the viewpoints of individuals within our Pacific communities. This may necessitate sincere efforts to unlearn Western philosophies. During our Talanoa with student participants, it was helpful to make connections with those who came from Samoa as familiar references to cultural practices were made (Faleolo, 2021). However, the impact of unlearning Western practices was not easy as Talanoa sessions with participants adhered to a tight timeframe and resulted in less time for deeper thinking.

It was important to demonstrate my cultural understanding of participants through my affiliation and connection with Pacific communities (Taylor & Medina, 2011). My own subjectivity of interpretation reflected on how my values, beliefs, and assumptions influenced the interpretations of participants (Vaiotei, 2006). Although the stories and cultural upbringing between participants were not identical, we shared some similarities in social dynamics of being a Pacific person and understanding the struggles and triumphs in education (Bishop, 2008). As these shared phenomena were considered and processed by all participants, it was through Talanoa that we started to understand and make sense of our stories, thus a pattern of meaning or theory was created (Havea et al., 2020). Consequently, student voice supports how teachers can strengthen and enhance their learning.

Pacific Student Perceptions

The importance of student voice uncovers and considers their experiences in how they perceive their teacher's role in their learning (Dyck, 2021). Teaching and learning that are of quality standard are linked through students' experiences of what teachers and educators do (Radmehr et al., 2020). For years research has pointed out that Pacific students were not performing as well as their counterparts (Mather, 2013; Waiari et al. 2021; Nakhid, 2003; Eil & Grudnoff, 2013), yet when their cultural ideologies and values were at the forefront of their education, there is a cultivation of success (Anae, 2010; Anae, 2016; Reynolds, 2016; Reynolds, 2017a; Si'ilata et al., 2018; Ofe-Grant,

2022). A study carried out by Siope (2011) identified that Pacific students wanted to feel a connection to and understood by their teachers. This links to literature that highlights a shared understanding between all those involved who work collaboratively to support Pacific children to succeed (Fa'avae, 2017). In contrast, an issue with students who experience a disconnection from their teachers, also corresponds to a disconnection from their education (Zepke & Leach, 2010).

Pacific students are accustomed to the idea that their teachers and other students imply biased notions against them and are made to feel they cannot bring their culture into schools, leading to disengagement in their learning (Siope, 2011). However, perspectives of Pacific students that utilise student voice suggests that teachers' relationships with family, and positive student-teacher relationships were key to improving student engagement (Fistonich, 2023). Many Pacific learners are instilled with knowledge, cultural values and ways of learning from their parents (Boon-Nanai et al., 2017). This links to the importance for teachers to develop strong relationships using culturally responsive practices for Pacific students to encourage engagement that is more in-depth, and to include parents to advance and support their cultural competence (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014). The experiences of the student participants in this study were linked to feeling welcomed, loved, taking risks and encouraged to succeed (Bills & Hunter, 2015). Additionally, when they encountered acceptance, the concept of Teu le vā was strengthened (Anae, 2016).

Chapter Summary

There are various practices that influence approaches relevant to the learning experiences and education success for Pacific students. Firstly, the literature review highlighted effective teaching practices in addition to using Pacific cultural frameworks, successive Pacific education plans and the importance of developing strong relationships between teachers and students. Research revealed that Pacific students continued to achieve below other non-Pacific students, and the question remains whether NCEA is culturally responsive to their learning or ways of knowing. Culturally inclusive pedagogy is focused on extending the knowledge of teachers about the culture, perspectives, experiences and values of their students. Student voice suggested that relationships with family and positive student-teacher relationships were key to improving student engagement. However, a greater effort is required to

support teachers of Pacific students if they are to see positive change. The literature indicated that Pacific students' perceptions of success were deeply influenced by their cultural ideologies and values, with education seen as central to this notion. Success is viewed holistically, encompassing not just personal achievement but also the well-being and prosperity of their families and broader communities. This study is an attempt to contribute to the existing literature around embracing Pacific cultural values within schools. Given the significance of culturally responsive pedagogy highlighted in the literature, this study employs qualitative methods to explore how these practices are implemented and perceived in secondary school.

The next chapter will discuss the overarching theoretical framework adopted for this research study, including a description of the research design, methods and approaches, circumstances surrounding validity and reliability, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the design, methods and procedures employed to investigate the research questions and conduct the study. It delves into the rationale behind the chosen methodology and techniques utilised for data collection and analysis. Furthermore, it examines the selected setting and participants, followed by discussions on data collection, analysis methods, considerations of validity and reliability, and ethical concerns. First, a re-examination of the purpose of this research is discussed.

The study addressed the following research questions:

- What approaches are secondary schools using in their programmes and practices to improve Pacific student success? What is the teacher's perception of success?
- What are Pacific students' perceptions of their teacher's role in their learning? What does success mean for Pacific students?

This study aimed to investigate positive approaches that secondary schools employed to enhance the educational outcomes of Pacific students. It focused on understanding how teachers perceive success for their Pacific students and sought insights from the students themselves regarding their teachers' roles in their learning journey and their own definitions of success. The involvement of Pacific liaison teachers and dedicated tutors, who showed commitment to improving their cultural competence, may have played a role in the success of Pacific students at secondary school. The study aimed to amplify the voices of students, shedding light on their experiences and perspectives. Ultimately, it aimed to contribute to knowledge and inform effective strategies in secondary schools that support teachers in fostering the success of Pacific students, potentially paving the way for their advancement to tertiary education. The next section examines the Pacific research methodology.

Pacific Research Methodology

A Pacific research methodology is utilised to carry out research with Pacific peoples and communities that are both ethical and methodologically well founded with outcomes that are transformative (Anae, 2019). The ongoing concern in Pacific research is the utilisation of theories and research methods that are traditionally Western, which tend to dominate and overshadow the *vā* (Anae, 2019). Additionally, these include the sacred, spiritual, and social spaces of relationships between the researcher and Pacific participants being researched that can potentially be misconstrued (Anae, 2019). Therefore, Talanoa was selected as an appropriate methodology for this study. In reference to literature regarding methodology and Pacific culture, the most suitable fit was a qualitative interpretive approach (Anae, 2016) to meet the outcomes of this study and the research questions.

Qualitative Interpretive Approach

The role of the researcher in a qualitative approach is central to the research process therefore the shaping of relationships between all participants involved was crucial to the success of this study (Anae, 2016). A key attribute of this research was to understand the views of the participants and an interpretive⁵ paradigm allowed for this to happen. This research approach demonstrated the importance of respect and care towards lived experiences (Alase, 2017) and situations examined through the eyes of participants (Cohen et al., 2018). The paradigm of interpretivism was employed to think about the realities of the participants and how to make sense of their collected data (Newby, 2014). An interpretive study provides a qualitative analysis of students' and teachers' perceptions of Pacific practices that helped guide students to succeed in schooling. The benefits of approaching the research context as a Pacific educator enabled me to build relationships with participants and gain some understanding of their narratives (Vaioleti, 2006). As a key contributor and having a shared understanding of experiences with student participants, it was because we had similar educational journeys. During my experience at secondary school my Pacific identity was not at the forefront of encouragement to succeed in education. These encounters highlighted the lack of appreciation for my culture, but they emphasised the importance highlighted by Fa'aea and Fonua (2022) and the Ministry of Education (2018) for

⁵ Interpretive paradigm is a subjective and interactive socially constructed ontology and an epistemology that acknowledges multiple realities and understanding situations from the participant's perspectives (Cohen et al. 2018) <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/reader.action?docID=5103697>

educators to recognise and enhance their understanding of Pacific students' cultural perspectives to support their success.

Talanoa Approach

Talanoa aligned with the aims of this study to use appropriate methods that embraced Pacific cultural views and used a qualitative and interpretivist research paradigm (Tualualelei & McFall-McCaffery, 2019). This is strengthened by Masoga et al. (2020) who highlight that appropriate research methodologies for “Indigenous communities should employ cultural competence and apply culturally sensitive research methods, which are applicable to diverse participants” (p. 96).

Vaiioleti (2006) identifies the influence of Pacific indigenous values on the world views of New Zealand Pacific peoples from a Tongan perspective:

Talanoa can be referred to as a conversation, a talk, an exchange of ideas or thinking, whether formal or informal. It is almost always carried out face-to-face ... Talanoa, then, literally means talking about nothing in particular, and interacting without a rigid framework. (p. 23)

Talanoa is a traditional Pacific concept of dialogue and storytelling with emphasis on inclusiveness, respect by those involved, and a shared understanding of one's cultural nuances and practices (Vaiioleti, 2013). The concept of Talanoa, deeply rooted in the rhetorical traditions of various Pacific nations like Fiji, Samoa, and the Solomon Islands (Prescott, 2008), resonated with the island origins of the student participants, making it a fitting Pacific methodology for this study. Talanoa generates insights particularly relevant for addressing challenges faced by Pacific peoples, who possess distinct epistemologies and lived experiences, in Aotearoa (Vaiioleti, 2006).

Sitiveni Halapua led the way in developing Pacific researchers to evolve their thinking around talanoa as a methodology and its cultural relevance to Pacific research (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2012). Consequently, Talanoa has been widely used in the context of community-based Pacific research (Gremillion et al., 2021; Halapua, 2008; Naufahu, 2018; Prescott, 2008; Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014; Vaiioleti, 2006, 2013). A contrasting view by Tunufa'i (2016) claimed that Talanoa as a research methodology, lacked status partially due to not having a clear “philosophical rationale” (p. 227). During our Talanoa sessions, student participants took time to feel at ease

when they shared personal narratives in response to questions, partly because our meetings had limited timeframes (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2014). In addition, Fa'avae et al. (2016) shared a practical dilemma when existing Talanoa principles could not guide him due to inconsistencies of Talanoa with regards to overlaying his knowledge about interview methods onto Pacific methods. This was also evident during our fa'afaletui for this study and served as an important reminder that Talanoa is not structured and systematic but will allow for informal conversations to take place (Vaiotele, 2006).

In the Tongan culture, there are several levels of Talanoa regarding the process of developing relationships between researchers and participants, and these concepts closely resembled our Talanoa with student participants in this study. The initial start of our relationship was fakatalanoa, to relate and connect to familiarise with each other's place and identity. Next was pō talanoa where participants knew each other and shared stories about their daily lives, and then talatalanoa, involved topics that were discussed at length. Our meetings commenced with fakatalanoa and slowly moved to pō talanoa, and in some respects talatalanoa took place. These examples of Talanoa link with values that incorporate respect, trust, collaboration and a desire to achieve a position of understanding and connection (Halapua, 2008). Our relationship became more trusting as both student and teacher participants were receptive to answering questions and contributed further mo'oni (authentic) knowledge through Talanoa (Vaiotele, 2006). Without building a trusting relationship, our conversations would remain at fakatalano (Fa'avae et al., 2016) so it was crucial to make connections from the outset.

Talanoa is seen as both a method and a methodology as it “encompasses a practical method and the theoretical concepts used to enact that method, as well as the analysis of the information collected.... is deeply interconnected with the concepts of cultural engagement” (Fa'avae et al., 2016, p. 140). The concepts of mālie and māfana are characteristics of Talanoa (Fa'avae et al., 2016). Mālie is to feel enlightened and inspired due to a positive connection through sharing of stories and experiences, and māfana is an internal feeling of warmth and comfort (Boon-Nanai et al., 2021). When participants were greeted for the first time there was an unspoken characteristic that presented itself, we greeted with a hug, and some with a peck on the cheek, as a Pacific cultural exchange. An immediate acknowledgement of respect for one another

was demonstrated, and this created mālie and māfana. At the conclusion of talanoa, the presence of both mālie and māfana had ceased as there was no more new information to be added (Fa'avae et al., 2016). These concepts closely align with an interpretive paradigm (Cohen et al., 2018) to understand participants' worldviews and beliefs.

The intention of Talanoa is to maintain its virtues by providing methodological autonomy (Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014), essentially taking into consideration relationships that embraced respect and collaboration, thus allowed for contextual interaction with student participants to occur naturally (Vaioleti, 2006). Throughout the research process the participants were valued as individuals and for their insights towards their contribution to the research. When Talanoa was selected for the purpose of this research it was appropriate to embed methods of fa'afaletui and semi-structured interviews to support data collection (Reynolds, 2017a). Undertaking fa'afaletui provided a space for student participants to share their narratives about their own cultural experiences through a Pacific lens and encompassing values of fa'aaloalo and reciprocity during our introductions and opening prayer. It allowed the subjective nature of socially constructed realities to be recognised and allowed for new knowledge to be created, thus generating a new theory of meaning (Havea et al., 2020). I continued to reflect on my own thoughts during our Talanoa and being reflexive⁶ about what was observed and how we interacted as Pacific (Fa'avae, 2018). Using a reflexive practice was crucial during the analysis process and helped to self-evaluate my positionality, and how this may affect the research process and outcome (Berger, 2015).

The epistemologies of Pacific peoples are unique, and as a Pacific researcher it is important to acknowledge and recognise that data collected using Pacific methodologies enabled me to embrace my own Pacific principles and values that conveyed the cultures of individuals. Reynolds and Chu-Fuluifaga (2023) describe the Talanoa framework as being like a map and is not necessarily a procedure that is relevant for every situation but provides a starting point in which to gain strength and develop experiences for Pacific students in education. As a Pacific researcher I have

⁶ Reflexive practice: A journey of self-discovery, in which aspects of one's positionality were not previously attentive, is revealed. An opportunity to acknowledge values and prejudices. Reflexivity allows one to gain insight into their own behaviour in the interviews and observations, and how that may influence the findings. <https://nasejournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-8578.12426>

considered Western methods and processes to support my understanding, however this knowledge has encouraged me to reflect on my own Pacific worldviews, particularly with using the concept of Teu le vā.

Teu le vā

To support the development of relationships with participants, the concept of Teu le vā (Airini et al., 2010; Anae, 2010; Anae, 2016; Reynolds, 2016) was utilised so participants felt comfortable to share their narratives. 'Vā' can be loosely translated as space devising relationships of both "secular and spiritual dimensions that facilitate both personal and collective well-being" (Airini et al., 2010, p. 10). Teu le vā allowed the ability to value, nurture and look after the relationships between all participants to achieve the outcomes of this study (Airini et al., 2010; Anae, 2010; Anae, 2016). Our face-to-face interactions encouraged open conversations and positive body language to progress purposeful and favourable outcomes to develop our relationship (Anae, 2016).

Teu le vā is a Samoan philosophical concept that focuses on the need for all those participating in the relationship to "tidy up the physical, spiritual, cultural, social, psychological and tapu 'spaces' of human relationships in order to improve outcomes for all stakeholders involved" (Airini et al., 2010, p. 2). In Pacific culture our younger generations have been taught to respect their elders, commonly known as tausi-le-vā (Boon-Nanai et al., 2021) and are expected to continue this with vā fealoaloa'i (relational sincerity). An example was evident when introductions were made at the start of our meetings, I was addressed by student participants as Miss or Miss Laban, thus showing their relational respect for our vā (Boon-Nanai et al., 2021). If this space was disrupted, then it was important to reinstate the vā through teu-le-vā (Samoan) or tauhi vā (Tongan) as highlighted by Boon-Nanai et al. (2021).

Vā is holistic which includes the metaphysical; the history of our ancestors through voyaging, and cultural practices that are constructed and co-constructed through social contexts and community experiences in New Zealand (Anae, 2010; 2019; Faleolo, 2021). My own parents travelled to New Zealand from Samoa to establish themselves in the 'land of milk and honey'. They were met with many opportunities that also came with challenges including the need to adapt to a Western society that didn't always sympathise with their cultural understandings. I identify with the way I

was brought up as a Samoan encompassing *vā* to convey the importance of my cultural values and practices. Additionally, this included my time and service as a Sunday school teacher at church, being respectful towards teachers and Principals through school, and knowing my place at home and at family events. Pacific people are natural navigators and storytellers who draw on the history of their descendants, share their cultural practices, and create new experiences to cultivate the *vā* of their intentions for the present and for the future of their generations (Boon-Nanai et al. 2021).

I unpack 'Teu le *vā* (Anae, 2010) as a Pacific relational concept (Reynolds, 2018a), placing it within the educational space. Relational success in Pacific research may evolve from a cultural expectation using the concept of Teu le *vā*, to understand and foresee a culture of care that relates to respect for each other's space (Reynolds, 2018a; Anae, 2010; Anae, 2016). During our *fa'afaletui* with student participants Pacific values of empathy and respect were demonstrated at the start with a prayer followed by getting to know one another over something to eat. During the interviews with teachers, our connection was established through my involvement with a community-based programme at the school. Moreover, it was important to expand connections with our families as they were both affiliated with my son through school or club sport. Consequently, Teu le *vā* naturally evolved to build mutual trust and reciprocal relationships.

The reciprocal relationship between a teacher and student is of great importance, but it is also critical for teachers to understand the *vā* from a Pacific student's perspective. As an example, particular emphasis is around how silence is perceived in the classroom when Pacific students are expected to challenge the status quo and speak their minds. In our Samoan culture whilst growing up, we were taught to sit quietly and listen. Traditionally knowledge is passed down from generation to generation, so it was equally important to listen without interruption, which is seen as a sign of respect (Ministry of Education, 2023c). According to Boon-Nanai et al. (2022), the culture of silence is a sign of showing *fa'aaloalo* (respect) for teachers, and further state "silence in an educational setting has epistemological constructions and ontological realities that can only be explained from an intercultural viewpoint of the *vā* relationality" (p. 187). In agreement, Otsuka (2006), views silence in the Fijian culture as polite and therefore encourages children to avoid exposure to any confrontation to maintain

peace. This is a common notion in many Pacific cultures for one to realise their place in this *vā* relational space, therefore emphasis on reflecting from a Pacific viewpoint is encouraged to help understand the expectations on Pacific students within their environments including home and the wider Pacific community (Boon-Nanai et al., 2022). I previously attended the Homo Haia Homework Hub (“HHHH”) at one of the schools as a helper in the catering department but also as a Pacific teacher. These school initiatives support Pacific students by acknowledging their Pacific cultural needs and encouraging their willingness to improve and succeed in their education. As we became familiar with each other to support progress, we began to ‘teu’ the space that was created between us.

As we developed our knowledge to understand our positionality in this relational space, the next section will describe how semi-structured interviews and *fa’afaletui* (focus groups) techniques were selected for generating data.

Research Setting and Participants

The research site and participants were selected on the basis that they were central to the phenomenon of the study (Creswell, 2012). Two reasonably large sized secondary schools within the local region were chosen as the sites for the study due to high numbers of Pacific students in attendance, and my familiarity with these schools. The roll at one school comprised 2059 students with 4.7% who identified as Pacific, and the other school comprised 1363 students with 4% who identified as Pacific (Education Counts, 2023b). Principals from both schools were sent a covering letter (Appendix 1) outlining the nature of the research study and consent forms (Appendix 2). They were informed that I knew the Pacific liaison teachers who attended the Homo Haia Homework Hub, as I was a trustee of Pasifika in the Bay Trust who implemented Pacific programmes at both schools, thus attributed towards their decision to accept the study at their schools.

Participant Recruitment Process

Eight Pacific students and two Pacific liaison teachers were invited to participate in the research study. In accordance with purposive sampling (Cohen et al., 2018), student participants were recruited on the basis they belonged to one or more Pacific groups, and teacher participants were either Pacific studies tutors, or Pacific liaison teachers

as a necessary requirement to fulfil the purpose of the research questions (Denscombe, 2010). All participants were kept anonymous using pseudonyms. The ethnicities of the participants are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1 Student participants/pseudonyms and their ethnicities

Participants/Pseudonyms	Ethnicities
Participant 1 (P1)	Samoa
Participant 2 (P2)	Samoa
Participant 3 (P3)	Samoa
Participant 4 (P4)	Samoa
Participant 5 (P5)	Samoa/Tokelau/Niue
Participant 6 (P6)	Tonga
Participant 7 (P7)	Samoa
Participant 8 (P8)	Solomon Islands
Teacher 1 (T1)	European and part Fijian
Teacher 2 (T2)	Māori and South American

The selected teachers were sent participant information sheets (Appendix 9) and consent forms (Appendix 10) via email and their prompt responses reflected their willingness to support the process for selecting Pacific students. The teacher participants briefed Pacific students who attended the homework hub and four students from each school volunteered to participate. They were sent participant information sheets (Appendix 4) and consent forms (Appendix 3) via email and information sheets were also sent to their parents (Appendix 5) to keep them informed. Out of the eight students four of them were under the age of 18 years so consent forms were sent to their parents to complete (Appendix 3A).

A google form was provided (Appendix 6) for student participants to record details for meeting the criteria to participate in the study. Their Pacific liaison teachers informed them that the study was voluntary and were given assurance that their names would be kept anonymous in the report. Letters of information regarding the research were

provided for all students and parents to keep them informed. Consent forms were signed by students, and those who required their parent's consent had a copy emailed directly to their parents. Two separate fa'afaletui were carried out consisting of four students from each school, and both teachers were interviewed on separate occasions. All interviews were audio recorded and held on their school sites with the duration of meetings up to an hour each. It was important to execute a rigorous process to demonstrate validity and reliability.

Data Collection

This section discusses the rationale for choosing fa'afaletui (focus groups) and the semi-structured interviews.

Fa'afaletui

Talanoa with Pacific participants presented their responses through fa'afaletui (Fa'avae et al., 2016; Galuvao, 2018), a culturally appropriate method for interviewing in Pacific research. Fa'afaletui is intended to connect people through deep and meaningful conversations and embraces cultural participation and interconnectedness (Fa'avae et al., 2016). The interviews were facilitated using open ended questions to generate qualitative data (Check & Schutt, 2012; Denscombe, 2010). Fa'afaletui developed an understanding and acknowledged the importance for student participants to Talanoa about their experiences using a Pacific lens (Galuvao, 2018). As a Samoan I can see how fa'afaletui nurtures the Samoan cultural values of respect, compassion, alofa, and working together as a collective to build and develop reciprocal relationships (Airini et al., 2010). To gain an understanding of participants' aspirations and difficulties through Talanoa, we need to "holistically contextualise the words they share with us as we move with them through the course of their daily lives" (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2012, p. 4).

This cultural method is used by both Pacific and non-Pacific researchers to develop their appreciation for knowledge and stories that have a deeper meaning. As an example, during one of the fa'afaletui, a participant introduced themselves and talked about their family and how one of their parents had worked at a place that I had also worked at before. There was an instant connection between us as we exchanged stories during the time his dad had worked there. Although he didn't let on, I later

discovered that his dad had passed away, yet without taking the focus away he showed his place with respect in our *vā* relational setting.

Procedure

To support student participants with their responses, the questions (Appendix 7) were shared with them before the scheduled interview. It was important that student participants understood the questions being asked of them, so time was taken at the start of the interview to unpack some of the key words and a brainstorm activity was undertaken (Appendix 8) to support their understanding.

My assumption was that the purpose and importance of the study would encourage participants to contribute their thoughts with ease, however I found it challenging when convincing them to respond more readily. My initial questioning when probing into their thinking had defaulted to closed questions, and in reflection, open-ended questioning could have supported them better in what they wanted to convey. As the interview progressed my questioning became more open to encourage deeper *Talanoa*. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed personally by me into a table.

Semi-structured Interviews

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were carried out with the Pacific liaison teachers as a data-generating technique. A set of questions (Appendix 11) were provided as a guide that allowed for flexibility and aligned with the intended outcomes of this study (Denscombe, 2010). Western methods are widely used within *Talanoa* approaches to research by incorporating Pacific values and principles (Gremillion et al., 2021), thus allowing views and opinions to be shared at the same time (Denscombe, 2010). Similar to *fa'afaletui*, *Talanoa* was used to support open-ended questions so that teachers became more comfortable with expressing their personal perspectives and to develop their ideas and communicate more *mo'oni* (Vaioleti, 2006). Getting to know each other and finding commonalities helped set the mood at the start of our interviews thus creating rapport and building on connections (Faleolo, 2021) through *mālie* and *māfana* (Fa'avae, 2017). The questions were designed to guide teachers' thinking around what was working well within the school, but also to reflect on the challenges they faced with supporting their Pacific students to achieve success. Semi-structured interviews can present challenges whilst using *Talanoa* as constraints with time (Fa'avae, 2017) does not always permit the researcher to probe

deeper into teachers' thinking. However, it was equally important to Teu le vā with teachers and be mindful of their time and wellbeing.

Procedure

To address the vā with teachers, an Information sheet (Appendix 9) was sent to them that outlined the purpose of the study and acknowledged their time away from school commitments to meet with me. The questions were shared prior to the interview to give teachers the opportunity to read over them to gather their thoughts and perspectives. My inexperience in undertaking an important concept such as Talanoa, encouraged me to call upon my own spiritual being and cultural understandings to honour those who have gone before us, as I metaphorically “stand on the shoulders of my ancestors”, as devised by Isaac Newton. The data gathered was relevant to the topic and allowed flexibility and for Teu le vā to take place through participant's responses. The semi-structured interviews were recorded and personally transcribed by me. Although this was a time-consuming exercise it was intriguing to reflect on the responses and how they greatly contributed to the results of this study.

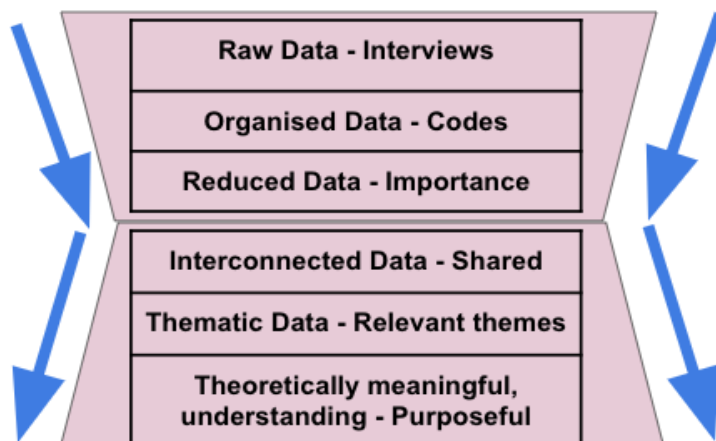
Data Analysis

This section discusses data collection, analysis methods, considerations of validity and reliability, and ethical concerns.

Thematic Analysis

The information data was collected and analysed using thematic analysis, a method that is widely used for qualitative data (Terry et al., 2017). Thematic analysis was an appropriate method as it reflected the Talanoa framework and captured experiential examples from participants about their families and Pacific communities. The method helped identify the need for measured research that considered academic assumptions, the research study questions, and how the data was collected and analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Terry et al., 2017). It is also a method that allows for flexibility when generating themes. During the analysis process, the data was explored inductively and reviewed repeatedly to systematically abstract the raw material, and this produced iterative themes that linked to theory (O'Leary, 2021). An adaptation of O'Leary's (2021) working with qualitative data is illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4 Working with qualitative data: Drilling in and abstracting out.



Insights were discovered that all participants shared similar thoughts and attributes towards education success, which served to triangulate the data and supported the research questions (Braun & Clark, 2006). For example, when asked about how participants were supported as Pacific learners at school, similar responses from both teachers and students included homework hub, cultural practices, variety of teachers, different subjects, mentoring, and Pacific leadership.

As a Pacific researcher, reflexivity and subjectivity are an important part of data analysis particularly when drawing on my own opinions and thoughts to interpret the data. Using a researcher notebook to record my observations of the interviews helped me to reflect and contribute towards being more reflexive and to ensure I was aware of my positioning in the research. Braun and Clark (2021) developed the idea of reflexive thematic analysis in which the researcher's role is central to producing knowledge by using subjectivity (Braun & Clark, 2019; Braun & Clark, 2021; Braun & Clark, 2023; Terry et al., 2017). This was a key part of the process when looking across the data set to identify and interpret iterative themes, reviewing and re-examining the themes. It was important to acknowledge the influence my cultural background had on the interpretation of the findings. I continued to be reflexive as I attempted to search for themes that emerged from the data with those identified in literature. Faleolo (2021) describes the importance for Pacific researchers when engaging in reflexive practices to draw on their "thought processes, perceptions, experiences, and inner voices that influence their research approach" (p. 131). Part of this process was acknowledging the reciprocal practice of *vā* (Faleolo, 2021) by showing respect for each other's space, and being mindful of Pacific cultural practices that align with Talanoa principles. In

accordance with Faleolo (2021) our beliefs are also considered to reveal connection, conflict, or a merging together that would impact our actions and influence what is being researched. In my experience it was the small details and occurrences that happened during the meetings that were worth noting, particularly towards the subtle influences that were not always obvious but helpful to engage with data (Faleolo, 2021). An example was when one of the students was asked to share something about their culture that was different to other Pacific cultures:

“Some of our traditions like.....(laughing).... you put me on the spot (laughing)”.

I could see she was shy about sharing her culture, but it could also mean she was embarrassed about where she came from and whether her culture was valued. These nuances are an example of how relevant it is for teachers and educators to develop their understanding of Pacific cultures. In preparation for sorting the data into appropriate categories, themes and codes were determined during the thematic analysis process and are described in the next section.

Themes and Codes

The Talanoa framework was used to capture the experiences and narratives of participants about their families and Pacific communities. The five stages of qualitative data analysis as described by Denscombe (2010) in Figure 5 were adapted to reflect how data analysis was carried out.

Figure 5 Adaptation of the five Stages of qualitative data analysis

Stage 1	Preparing the data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cataloguing the text or data. • Formatting Table to transcribe data. • Transcribe data into table and make notes.
Stage 2	Initially exploring the data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing and looking for commonalities • Highlighting key words and phrases. • Write notes to capture ideas.
Stage 3	Analysing the data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocating appropriate codes to the data. • Grouping codes into categories or themes. • Review concepts that summarises categories.
Stage 4	Presenting and displaying the data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cataloguing the text or data. • Written presentation of the findings. • Illustrations of points using visuals.
Stage 5	Validating the data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Triangulation of data and method. • Member validation. • Compare using alternative explanations.

Stages of Qualitative Data Analysis

Stage 1

The first stage required preparing the data that was audio recorded and personally transcribed verbatim into a table that illustrated columns under the headings: codes, pseudonyms, responses by participants, and themes.

Stage 2

The next stage explored and identified obvious recurrent themes or issues, and these were highlighted with notes written alongside to reflect ideas.

Stage 3

The third stage involved coding, grouping, and comparing the data that led to the development of more encompassing themes. To illustrate, examples in the interview that described how teachers showed a culture of care were highlighted and a code was allocated to represent these, labelled as 'teachers' and 'care'. A code was also given to how teachers illustrated their cultural responsiveness in their teaching practices, labelled as 'cultural support' and 'catering to their needs'. These codes emerged as themes and became concepts that were reviewed and summarised into categories (Mutch, 2013). These themes supported and conceptualised the findings in a concise manner whilst still maintaining the extent and context of the original data.

Stage 4

The fourth stage catalogued the themes and provided a written explanation of the findings, which is discussed in the next section.

Stage 5

The final stage validated the data (Denscombe, 2010). Triangulation (Evans, 2011) was used to encompass Teu le vā (Anae, 2016) to compare data between student participants, teachers, and reflexive practices.

At this point subjectivity and reflexive practice were considered to support and link back to the research questions. It was important for me to draw on my own Pacific practices, particularly at the beginning of each interview to Talanoa and connect with participants by showing respect through Teu le vā. As I reviewed the fa'afaletui introductions, I noticed key words and phrases acknowledged where their parents came from:

“I’m a Samoan descendant and both my parents are Samoan. My mum was raised in Savai’i and my dad was raised in Apia and I was born in Auckland. I have lived here since the age of 1, in the Bay...my dad worked at and my mum was a nurse at the time”.

These examples spoke volumes about participants’ cultural values and identity, which became a preliminary code and later an iterative theme. A necessary skill was the ability to separate material between important and unimportant. However, it was helpful to know that frequency of similar responses does not necessarily mean something is more or less important in qualitative research, as something that is stated only one time could be just as significant as something that appears many times (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Validity and Reliability

There are important circumstances surrounding validity and reliability that adhere to ethical principles (Cohen et al., 2018). Ethical issues were considered for using Talanoa, as traditional interpretations and institutional research conventions of validity and reliability may present problems as they are of little use to Pacific contexts (Vaiolleti, 2006). In fulfilling the criteria of the Pacific research paradigm being presented, the concepts surrounding validity are presented in the integrity of the

conclusions (Bryman, 2008). Cultural validity needs to be addressed at all stages of the research from the planning processes to the delivery of the final analysis as outlined in the Pacific Research Guidelines (Airini et al., 2010). The researcher notebook used to record my observations during the interviews contributed towards reflexivity and established my positioning in the research. Member checking (Mutch, 2013) was also important when returning transcripts to participants to confirm credibility and to ensure they aligned with their understanding of the research purpose. My own awareness of Pacific cultures integrated with social circumstances helped me to interpret the research process, research design and findings which are key elements of reflexive practice (Bukamal, 2022; Mutch, 2013). These ethical principles prompted the consideration of ethics surrounding participants.

Ethical Considerations

An application for ethics was submitted and approved by the University of Waikato Division of Education's Ethics Committee (Appendix 13). Participation information sheets and consent forms were sent to Principals, staff and students. This process addressed considerations including anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent, parental consent, and the right of withdrawal. Ensuring the wellbeing of the students was an important ethical consideration. My involvement with the school through the homework centre and my son being a past student at one of the schools was also considered. I have some affiliation with the teachers through school events and education initiatives in the wider community, and as a Trustee for the Pasifika in the Bay Trust, but do not personally know the student participants. Although this was not a complete conflict of interest, it was important to ensure students felt comfortable in sharing their personal opinions with a researcher, and assurances of confidentiality contributed to maintaining students' wellbeing. My positioning as a mother, Pacific educator, and Samoan contributed towards ensuring the use of Pacific practices were culturally appropriate and to Teu le vā with students so they felt safe and valued.

Sensitive information shared during the interviews was important to manage and participants were explicitly drawn to the information outlined in their consent forms about the limitations of confidentiality. One of the Principal's had initially declined the invitation for their school to participate due to other school commitments. Consequently, the importance of the research study was restated that all schools were

obligated to meet the requirements of the Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020-2030 to actively encourage and assist all Pacific students. The Ministry of Education *Teu le va* documents (Anae, 2016) provide guidelines in understanding the purpose of *Teu le vā*, and the ongoing discourse around how ethics are demonstrated and put into practice. These documents not only affirm modelled ethical behaviour, “but also acquiring a deeper knowledge of ethics, in the hope that improved moral behaviour is promoted by knowing what the right and good thing is to do—and seeing how decisions are made and implemented in practice” (Anae, 2016, p. 128). This message illustrates how relationships and Pacific communities described in acceptable research practice are required to be respected and valued (Anae, 2016), and knowing how relationships are developed and sustained through *Teu le vā*. This extends to the researcher maintaining relationships throughout and following the research project (Anae, 2010). It is not the Pacific way and unethical for researchers to use participants for the purposes of gathering information just to obtain knowledge, but to continue communication following the research and providing them with a copy of the findings to keep them informed. Since the interviews I have developed a good relationship with the participants as I see them at the homework centre and at various events including the Pasifika Prizegiving and the Pasifika Festival in the Bay.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the theoretical framework that underpinned a qualitative approach using *Talanoa* as a research methodology. As a Pacific researcher, and drawing on my own interpretivist paradigm, it enabled me to proceed with the study from an insider’s perspective to understand multiple realities constructed by individuals through social interactions. Utilising a Pacific framework for Pacific research illustrated the importance and relevance of its use for participants who came from different Pacific cultural backgrounds. The conceptual framework of *Teu le vā* focused on reciprocal relationships by valuing and nurturing the physical, spiritual and cultural spaces of connections between parties in a relationship (Faleolo, 2021). *Fa’afaletui* and semi-structured interviews through *Talanoa* were used to collect data and the method of thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. Ethical considerations were addressed regarding confidentiality and limitations, including anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent, parental consent, and the right to withdrawal. The Findings will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4 Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore approaches employed by secondary schools in their programmes and practices to enhance educational outcomes for Pacific students. It sought to understand teachers' perspectives on success. The study considered the importance of the relational *vā* between students and teachers, and how this relationship positively influenced teaching and learning. Additionally, the research identified Pacific students' views on the role of their teachers in their education and their definition of success. Lastly, the study determined whether students felt their identity, language, and culture were supported and influenced their educational success.

This chapter will present the findings through *fa'afaletui*, semi-structured interviews, and my own personal notes during the interviews. The previous chapter presented *Talanoa* as an appropriate Pacific framework for Pacific research. *Teu le vā* innately integrated throughout our *Talanoa* to encourage reciprocal relationships to be nurtured and valued, thus promoted positive engagement with teacher participants and student participants. Themes developed through analysis are reported.

Research question for the teachers:

- What approaches are secondary schools using in their programmes and practices to improve Pacific student success? What is the teacher's perception of success?

Research question for the students:

- What are Pacific students' perceptions of their teacher's role in their learning? What does success mean for Pacific students?

Themes

Six main themes transpired from the analyses of both students and teachers and are shown in Table 2. This section will present the findings from the study in two parts.

The first part will outline themes that developed from the student data and the second part will present themes from the teacher data in relation to the research questions.

Table 2 Themes

Student Themes	Teacher Themes
✘ Students' Identity and Cultural Values as a self-perception of success.	✘ Approaches and programmes that promote the success of Pacific students.
✘ Student wellbeing supports holistic success.	✘ Teacher practices contributed to a culture of care.
✘ Student aspirations as a self-perception of success.	✘ Teacher aspirations and setting high expectations for Pacific students.

Student Themes

Three key themes were identified from the analyses and the findings will be discussed further in this section. The themes are:

- Students' Identity and Cultural Values as a self-perception in support of success.
- Student wellbeing supports holistic success
- Student aspirations as a self-perception in support of success.

Prior to meeting with each fa'afaletui it was important to think about my own Pacific values of mālie and māfana. This was carried out by preparing homemade baking, club sandwiches and drinks for the participants as an example of enacting the Pacific principle of reciprocity to show my appreciation for their time. When participants were greeted, it was important to embed the essence of Talanoa by starting our meeting with a prayer, outlining the importance of the study and introducing myself over something to eat. It was during this time that māfana set the tone to make connections with participants. Mālie took place as we laughed about how hot the room was and if they fell asleep it wasn't due to boredom.

Following my introduction participants were asked to introduce themselves by sharing a little bit about their cultural background and family. At the start of our Talanoa participants shared their Pacific origins including where their parents came from, and an instant connection was made with some of the participants whose descendants came from the Island of Samoa. Six participants acknowledged their place of birth as New Zealand. P5 revealed that she and her family came to New Zealand from Samoa in 2013 so had spent most of her schooling here. Participants' ethnicities mentioned included Samoa, Tokelau, Niue, Tonga, Fijian/Indian and the Solomon Islands. The first theme that became evident was the importance of students' identity and cultural values as a self-perception of success.

Students' Identity and Cultural Values as a self-perception of success

Findings from the data showed the importance of student participants' identity and cultural values and how this contributed to their success. These included one's role and position within the family, love and respect, relational ties, obligation and responsibilities, loyalty, as well as sacrifice. Accordingly, identity and cultural values evolved as a theme demonstrating students' close connection to their cultural heritage. Consequently, this finding highlighted success for students to include their academics, family, and growing their confidence in leadership.

During the introductions, participants were asked about what success meant to them. P5, P6 and P8 indicated the importance of making their families proud, and P8 shared how her parents came to New Zealand on scholarships in the 1990s. P6 shared the importance of her parents' journey to New Zealand to seek a better life and the ability to achieve a good education for the future, which illustrates a strong connection to understanding her identity and the values of being a strong advocate for her Pacific culture. She understood that her parents had sacrificed their own needs to provide opportunities for their future generations.

Both my parents are from Tonga ... Success is ... when we are happy ... I know I have achieved my goals... making your parents happy ... they came from the islands so me and my siblings can have a good education and future.

P5 and P6 indicated that their successes were attributed to the efforts of their parents in supporting them with their education. P6 described the opportunities offered to them

in New Zealand would not have been made available in their island nations, so making their parents proud was an important motivator.

Knowing that a lot of Islander parents grew up struggling in school or not attending school and not having the same opportunities that their children do, it's good they bring their children here and can get these opportunities as they grow up... we are very lucky to be living here.

P5 referred to success as the success of others. There is a strong indication that she is referring to a collective group of people who support her to succeed, including her family, teachers, and the wider realm of her community.

My parents are from Samoa. Success to me is achieving something new... achieving your goals and making your family proud because your success is also other people's success around you.

Success through the eyes of P5 was inclusive of the people around her, including her family and community. P5 arrived in New Zealand when she was very young and has had 10 years of working within the New Zealand education system. She was aware of the importance of making her parents proud and excelled in education during her final year at school. Success as perceived by student participants, was strongly connected to making their families proud and acknowledged that success was not of one alone but of everyone who helped them to succeed.

The role of Christianity is a strong cultural value in Pacific cultures and plays a key part that extends to the wider Pacific communities. P2 was brought up in Wellington and attended a well-established Pacific Island church that included wider Pacific communities and embodied strong Pacific values of Fa'a Samoa and kāinga. P2's mother was a familiar figure in the Pacific community due to her leadership position for a Pacific organisation and her achievement incentivised his ambition to follow in her footsteps. When asked about role models they looked up to, P2 shared his thoughts from his earlier years at school and how Pasifika leaders provided a space for Pacific students to attend a Christian group.

... when I was in Year 10 and 11, Corban was doing the Friday morning prayers... they would gather and just pray for the week that was and bless us, ... he does Bible Study sometimes at lunchtimes.

Alongside values of being a Christian, P1, P2 and P3 shared the importance of how their culture was acknowledged and cared for by their teachers and how it fostered feelings of success. P3 voiced how more Pacific teachers were needed since their Pacific liaison teachers went over and above with giving up their personal time to ensure Pacific students were supported with their academics.

... it's a bit too much on Ms D because during her breaks she is still working ... more Pacific teachers would support us as Pacific students.

P1 and P2 explained their close connection with one of the Pacific liaison teachers whom they had known since attending the school in year 9. She treated them like they were her own children and they felt comfortable enough to call her aunty.

Like she doesn't treat us like normal students, she treats us like an aunty, and she lets us call her aunty.

P2 and P6 expressed their appreciation towards non-Pacific teachers who were motivated to support them. Some of the programmes they described provided opportunities to build good working relationships with different teachers and other Pacific students. References were made to the HHHH programme implemented in 2021 to include 4 secondary schools. P2 shared that teachers genuinely wanted to help them, and their parents also played an important role in encouraging them to attend the homework sessions.

There are heaps of teachers behind us. We have our Head Pasifika teacher, but when she left last year there were lots more teachers we didn't know, but they were all behind us as well. Like Mr W, and Mr B, even our parents...our families were trying to push us to come as well.

P2 also felt it was their Pacific liaison teachers who made a real impact in connecting with their Pacific culture and were sincere in helping them achieve success in education.

... our teacher is always talking about the homework hub... she taps people on the back if their grades are going down ... she goes to see the student's other teachers as well, so she always checks our academics... we appreciate them trying to help us get better with our education.

P8 and P6 articulated the benefit of having different teachers in attendance at the homework sessions who allowed contrasting perspectives of their work. P8 explained how their subject teachers were not always open to different perspectives, whereas there were opportunities to have their views heard or to hear alternative perspectives from different teachers whilst attending the homework sessions.

I think it's really helpful especially when there's a variety of teachers who teach different subjects.

I think it's better, like from a different teacher's perspective and views on your work, and not just your regular teacher in the classroom, it's another person's view on it.

It is in these spaces that enabled P2 to grow his confidence to ask questions and enabled him to step out of his comfort zone. P2 highlighted that as his confidence increased, it created opportunities to be more confident in other learning environments.

When we first started going we were too scared to ask for help... when I was growing up I didn't really ask questions because I was too scared, but now with the homework hub I can ... and during class I can also ask questions ... it has grown my confidence a lot.

The RH programme also provided a sense of belonging for participants. P6 felt comfortable in this environment as it was a place to build friendships and embrace their Pacific culture and those of others.

In summary, references made by most student participants who shared their cultural identity during their introductions, indicated the importance of their parents' journeys to New Zealand to provide a better education for their future generations. Consequently, the sacrifices made by their parents motivated them to achieve their goals and a testimony by one of the students highlighted their perception of success as the success of others around them. Christianity played a key role in their Pacific culture, and they demonstrated fa'aaloalo, a sign of deep respect, for their teachers. A suggestion was made by some participants for more Pacific liaison teachers who were dedicated and committed to connect with them and were open to developing an understanding of their cultural identity to promote strong relationships. Furthermore, student participants indicated that their identity and cultural values were acknowledged

by their Pacific liaison teachers, and non-Pacific teachers who also attended Pacific school programmes provided key support towards their success. The importance of wellbeing is also integrated with Pacific student success, which will be discussed in the next section.

Student wellbeing supports holistic success

The data revealed important information that contributed towards supporting the wellbeing of participant students. When participants were asked about what their schools were doing to support their wellbeing as Pacific students, several programmes were mentioned. These sessions supported participants with mentors, mental health strategies, and a provision of hearty food. P2 described the PR programme that encouraged Pacific students to attend in the early hours of the morning, to partake in fitness activities, followed by a Pacific speaker who shared their journeys of struggles and successes.

It helps us a lot because I know some days, you wake up in the morning and you don't want to come to school, but with teachers surrounding us ... there's like a reason to come to school.

All the participants agreed that their Pacific liaison teachers genuinely went out of their way to ensure Pacific students' health and wellbeing needs were met. P1 shared that their Pacific liaison teacher would use the school van to go around and collect the boys to take them to the PR programme.

... they used to go and wake all the boys up and pick them up and take them to school.

The highlight of the morning would be a cooked breakfast provided by parent volunteers and teachers, with food supplied by a local community organisation for free. P1 indicated how food was an important part of their programme as it helped them to learn, and the provision of a prepared lunch to take away was a bonus. He also mentioned how food was always provided for those who would otherwise have gone without.

There is lunch food prepared so there's food for the day... "NT helps us a lot with wellbeing. There's a lot of boys that come to school without food and she provides food for us when we're hungry, like it helps us learn.

The benefits of providing mentorship also covered areas of wellbeing which contributed to success for participants. Several programmes supported this area including, the BB programme, the A programme, and the mentorship programme. P6 shared how the mentoring sessions for Year 11 Pacific students provided a safe space to talk about their learning, their feelings and anything they might be struggling with at school. She also thought it was an opportunity to connect with speakers.

... a few of the girls struggle mentally with things that they prefer not to talk about ... interacting and connecting with other people ... allows them to be in a happier space where they can talk about their problems or connect and relate to other journeys ... guest speakers have been through.

The BB programme was reported by P2 as an opportunity for Pacific seniors to be paired with Pacific juniors to support them transitioning into a new school and that the juniors also had someone to look up to.

... every year they go on a trip ... all the BBs and the new Pasifika juniors get partnered up and we spend the day ... have some fun and get to know them... they see us around school and it's like "I know him", and they get to know more people and feel comfortable with the school.

P6 thought the A programme was helpful and met other Pacific students in the same age group from other secondary schools. Most participants agreed that this space provided important information to help with their wellbeing.

HF is very supportive ... they provide a website for mental health, where they can help and support you through it. There's also a holiday programme they provide where you can just go and join in. There's lots of options you can take through there.

P1 shared his experience when he first attended the A programme. He remembered doing a boxing workout, and then for 20 minutes to half an hour a speaker came and talked to them about health and wellbeing. He found the programme helpers pleasant to deal with and how he established a relationship with one of the key organisers through their interest in rugby.

I felt I had a connection with him... I play rugby league and I could talk to him about that... I already knew him from Year 7, but when I came back in Year

10 ... I didn't think he would remember who I was but he asked "how's the rugby going"? He actually remembered me.

In summary, the PR, BB and A programmes all provided key initiatives and strategies to support the wellbeing of students and encouraged success. Teachers genuinely cared by providing their own time to get students to the various programmes and food was always provided to fuel their learning. The A programme provided information on mental health strategies and a space to build and foster positive relationships. Mentorship provided a safe space to discuss struggles and issues, but also provided positive role models for participants to aspire to. When the wellbeing of students is cared for then they are more inclined to follow their aspirations, which the data will show in the next section.

Student aspirations as a perception of support for success

This theme became evident when participants shared their aspirations to be good leaders and to be surrounded by positive role models, thus their desire to demonstrate their insights to other Pacific students. Participants were asked about what things within their schools led to supporting their academic achievement as Pacific students. P2 highlighted his sporting and leadership successes.

I play sports... I was a 2020 Junior Volleyball National Champion, but I got injured and I couldn't play in the final. I'm the Head Pasifika Prefect Leader at College this year.

P3, P5 and P6 also held leadership positions and felt privileged to support other Pacific students in the school. They felt it was an opportunity for them to encourage others to aspire towards building character to become good leaders. P5 expressed her thoughts.

... P6's role from a Pasifika perspective, she helps out the Pasifika students which is really important. Year 9s come in and can see there is a Pasifika Prefect..... We can be a minority within the school so having that support person can be really good ... having Ms B and Ms R backing her up too.

P6 felt that being a leader encouraged her to embrace her Tongan culture, and encouraged others that wellbeing and education were key to succeeding in what they wanted to achieve.

... my leadership role has helped me improve and understand my culture more than the years before... I want to make sure my Pasifika group is embracing their culture and that their learning and wellbeing is at the top of everything they do.

In response to other activities schools were undertaking to support their academic achievement as Pacific students, some students shared their personal successes. P6 shared her success with film production and used a prevalent topic to embrace one's culture. She believed that some parents avoided talking about their culture but failed to understand how it affected their children. She was successful in winning the best film.

I've been involved in film production... from Auckland to the Bay of Plenty region for Pasifika students ... I wanted to do mine about my culture and how individuals are not yet ready to embrace their culture ... shouldn't be something to be embarrassed about. Especially in school ... it's something that you should embrace.

P2 shared role models that he aspired to be like who demonstrated positive values that set him up for success and allowed him to share this knowledge with others.

... when I was in Year 9 there were heaps of people that I could look up to ... and now we are Leaders, and we're grateful for that and we can try and do the same for the next lot of boys.

P1 described how the homework hub supported him and improved his academics.

... Every week ... we spend 2 hours getting individual help. I know for me it has definitely helped ... and since I've been going ... my grades have been getting better.

The data showed a close connection between students' aspirations and their perception of support for success. This was articulated through their enthusiasm to be good leaders and to learn from positive role models. When they embraced their Pacific culture and took steps to ensure their wellbeing and education were at the forefront of everything they did, consequently promoted success. Opportunities were provided that encouraged student autonomy, i.e. film production project, and improved academics led to positive outcomes in education.

The second part of the analyses presents themes that manifested from teacher participants in relation to the research questions.

Teacher Themes

In the previous section, three key student themes were identified, which included: Pacific students' identity and cultural values, wellbeing and aspirations. This section will discuss the analyses of data from two teachers in relation to the research questions.

Three key themes evolved:

- Approaches and programmes that promote the success of Pacific students
- Teacher practices contributed to a culture of care
- Teacher aspirations and setting high expectations for Pacific students

This research sought to explore what approaches teachers at secondary schools were using in their programmes and practices to improve education success for Pacific students. Their personal perception of what success meant to them was also considered. A recount of their narratives and experiences may potentially show how these approaches have influenced or impacted the way Pacific students encompass and achieve success as Pacific.

In similar preparation with the fa'afaletui sessions it was important to align my Pacific values with the Talanoa framework for the interviews with both teacher participants. At the start of each interview, we established connections, and I extended a small gift to show my appreciation for their time. I outlined the purpose and importance of the study and spoke briefly about the Talanoa methodology. Following my introduction, they were asked to introduce themselves and they shared a little bit about their cultural background and family which set the tone for mālie and māfana. The three teacher themes will be discussed further under their respective headings.

Approaches and programmes that promote the success of Pacific students.

Approaches in this study represented what schools were doing as clusters, including Principals, teachers, the wider school curriculum, and their local communities to promote the success of their Pacific students. Programmes as defined by the Oxford Dictionary are a set of related measures or activities with a particular long-term aim. For this study, programmes are initiatives or school activities and events that look to

actively encourage a purpose for Pacific students to succeed during their time at school and beyond.

During introductions both teachers shared how proud they were to be in positions that enabled them to work with Pacific students. They explained the importance of how they came to be in their Pacific roles. T1 is of Fijian descent but had very little to do with her culture whilst growing up, so she was surprised when her Principal offered her the position of Pasifika Tutor at her interview due to a change in staff roles. She happily accepted. Although she knew very little about some of the Pacific cultures, she was keen to find out with help from her Pacific students.

... I've always been very proud of the fact that I was Fijian even though I didn't know anything about it ... but I'm willing to learn... that's how I got initiated into the Tutor role ... there was a really strong family presence already within the school.

T1 described how she developed her understanding of Pacific culture.

I've learnt so much from the boys ... SC always used to talk to me about island time because I'll always be trying to get the boys to certain places and I'd be stressing ... "it's fine it will just happen Miss" ... I was very much trying to convert them into a Western way of doing things.

T2 described her nationality as Māori and South American. She completed a degree in Environmental studies prior to becoming a teacher and worked at the Council that exposed a connection environmentally, through people, land and culture.

So vivacious, beautiful and so loud. But actually underneath that... it hides a lot of other stuff ... I was drawn to that... they were so appreciative. You didn't have to knock down a whole lot of barriers, I absolutely connected with them straight away.

T2 felt it was natural for her to connect with other Pacific cultures and that she could make a difference to students who needed more support. She made references for potential opportunities for further support.

... I was drawn to some of the kids, not just struggling, but were in that lower kind of ability ... however I still held the same expectations ... in reality I saw, and still see, a big gap... I thought there were a lot more initiatives.

As part of their Pacific roles the teachers made connections with community groups

and created opportunities to implement school programmes for Pacific students. T2 reported how she had struggled in the past when engaging with some community funders and was unsuccessful in securing funds. However, she established a relationship with a parent who was also a trustee with the Pasifika in the Bay Trust (Trust) and whose daughter was a student at the school. T1 also expressed her connection with the Trust through the implementation of the HH programme.

We work with Pasifika in the Bay really closely ... so again we're trying to build those connections for the boys so they feel like they've got lots of people behind them.

In response to questions around initiatives that have been used in the school to support Pacific students' academic achievement, both teachers shared the same programmes relating to HHHH and the A programme. They also shared a similar initiative around mentorship. The HHHH programme provided extra one-to-one tutoring as previously mentioned by student participants. T1 indicated that the Trust was successful in working alongside the school and initiated the programme. The HHHH programme was found to have favourable benefits towards supporting Pacific students.

... we feed them, they're there as a group, they get to know the teachers because it's the same teachers that come ... there's all those people here that support you ... NT [staff] she's got really strong ties with the communities so we've got those links with families and with Pastors.

T2 expressed how the HHHH programme supported academics, but also thought there was scope for the school to provide further support.

HH trying to support that academic ... Our supporting DP has come to RH and once to HH. We don't need to be thanked or praised but just that support. Even to inquire ... to acknowledge how successful these initiatives are, how can we support a crossover to other areas? ... Where is it going?

T1 talked about the benefits of the PR programme and how it made key connections with families.

... we also have whānau that come and help, so we're bridging that gap between school and whānau ... we've had boys in Year 8 start attending so when they come to college it's not such a scary place, they've already been coming here, they already know the boys around the school.

T1 also shared how the PR programme supported academics, the health and wellbeing of their Pacific students, but also encouraged the younger Pacific students to attend.

It's showing to us obviously that wellbeing, that sense of belonging, their more confident, they feel more supported at school, that's going to obviously help with their academics.

The RH programme that was mentioned earlier was a similar initiative to the PR programme. The RH programme presents student participants with opportunities to share and learn about their Pacific cultures and hear from Pacific or Māori speakers about their journey. T2 explained that some of the RH workshops enabled students to embrace their culture, and one of the sessions involved them participating in hands-on activities in preparation for their cultural performances at the Pasifika Festival in the Bay.

... gives them an opportunity to see Pasifika and roles outside of school and gives them the opportunity to see someone's journey... they've been learning a dance and now they're making costumes for that dance, ... while they have breakfast they have a speaker, Pasifika or Māori.

T2 reported that the programme had grown immensely with more students attending, but also an increased allocation of her time was needed to manage the programme.

The Trust has been a turning point for initiatives. They have been 100% backed and committed and prodded us and said come on ... This is where we've got our initiatives now... I've really enjoyed it but it's gotten a bit bigger.

The importance of food being provided was to support the wellbeing of students. Whilst the RH programme addressed mental health issues, T2 explained how it also became a comfortable place for students to contribute, particularly when they were able to relate to guest speakers.

Breakfast club ... and RH ... it's important for their mental wellbeing. We're not counsellors but we can see their demeanour ... she's a bit low and she's not going to say anything ... having a safe space where you can talk to your mates ... my teacher is not up here, she is talking to me at my level.

The A programme was indicated by both teachers as being supportive to the wellbeing of their students. T1 expressed how the programme created a space for students to feel connected.

The A Programme ... takes groups of our Year 10 boys, and it's all about that wellbeing, that modelling and mentoring for them ... and that's increased their sense of belonging, I feel at school as well.

The mentorship programme was a positive initiative that both schools provided to encourage and support their Pacific students to thrive. T1 described how staff mentored Pacific students who required more support with school work and were also available as a support person.

We also do mentoring with the boys ... that are at risk, are identified the year prior and are given a staff member to mentor them ... creating that person for those boys to go to ... their rugby coach, or their form class teacher ... so they can kind of already have that connection.

T2 also reported on their mentoring initiative that focused on the year 11 cohort.

We've just incorporated Pasifika mentoring for targeted year 11s, and so we sit round table ... and we talanoa, we tell them our journey of becoming a teacher ... So we talk about opportunities ... and to support each other.

Pacific students who held leadership roles as described by T1, made a meaningful contribution in mentoring the juniors and primary schools.

... a lot of big brother little brother mentoring going on, so not only are our leaders there but it's opened up to all the seniors ... and we also go out and do mentoring in the primary schools ... encouraging that idea ... we are one family, we support each other. I think that's helped with their wellness as well.

In summary, positive approaches were developed and shared by teachers through their support with school programmes, and community initiatives implemented by the schools to promote the success of their Pacific students. Opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of different Pacific cultures were provided through these programmes and getting to know their students. Teachers have demonstrated a connection in building strong relationships to provide a safe space for students to share and build trust. Opportunities were provided for Pacific students to develop their leadership and build confidence to mentor other younger Pacific students. Fostering relationships is a key attribute for teachers to demonstrate in their practice, particularly if they are to contribute to a culture of care to connect with their Pacific students which will be discussed in the next section.

Teacher practices contributed to a culture of care

A culture of care was created by teacher participants to genuinely support the cultural identity and background of their Pacific students. This was evident in their actions to follow through with Pacific students who were not meeting deadlines or encouraging them to go along to the homework hub for individual support. They also felt it was important for Pacific students to embrace their own cultures by learning the language and participating at Pacific events through cultural performances.

When the teachers were asked how they would describe their teaching style, both stated that building relationships and maintaining high expectations were key characteristics when connecting with their Pacific students. T1 described how important relationships were at secondary school whilst getting to know her students and dealing with the different personalities. In her role she also encouraged other teachers to foster relationships with their Pacific students.

... always centred around relationships ... we've been trying to push with the staff as well and trying to connect with their Pacific boys in their classrooms ... you actually got to meet them on their level and show a genuine interest and form that connection before there will be that trust.

In a similar response, T2 felt that meeting the cultural needs of her Pacific students in her teaching occurred naturally, but also created a safe space for them.

... I like to have some sort of relationship ... make a connection. I have pretty high expectations and I've got clear boundaries ... they feel kind of safe ... when it's natural I fit in cultural things... in some way find something about them.

Following a description of their approach to teaching, they were asked about how their styles adapted during their time as a teacher in response to their student's needs. Both teachers indicated their improved relationships with students helped them understand their Pacific cultures and their stories. T1's response related to being more open to the Pacific way of doing things.

... the more I work with the boys the more I get to know about the different nuances of the different Islands and the different cultures ... you can't come at it with a Western lens. You've got to open yourself up to the Pacific views and the ways of life and what they think is important.

Both teachers noted the value of sharing their Pacific cultural knowledge with staff particularly the importance of knowing the cultural differences between Māori and Pacific students, as T1 described.

... quite often the Pacific boys get lumped in with the Māori boys ... but again they're their own identity, they're their own individuals ... Māori have multiple Iwi, and again they're still all lumped up, and the way that they do things are different, and that's what a lot of people just think, they're islanders.

T2's response was similar but also highlighted a safe space for Pacific students to share their stories and learn.

... I already have a relationship with those Pasifika students and I also understand some of the barriers that they may have ... I can understand how Pacific students come to school. I can understand their story getting here ... if they feel safe in their class.

T1 felt it was important to have informal conversations with Pacific parents to determine how students were feeling. T1 explained how a concerned parent shared their child was feeling out of place. After developing a relationship with the Pacific student T1 encouraged him to embrace his culture and to get involved with the Pacific cultural activities.

...M said "I just feel really plastic"... I told him my story ... here's a face value white girl coming in and trying to immerse herself with Pasifika people ... you've just got to get involved. He's flourished ... I've noticed a change in his behaviour and demeanour ... he is proud ... happy to yell out "Cheehoo" and amping the other boys.

The teacher participants shared how they supported the cultural identity and background of their Pacific students through ways that were culturally responsive to their needs, and they genuinely cared for their success. For example, this was evident in the relationships they nurtured when they supported Pacific students to meet deadlines and encouraged them to attend the homework hub for individual support. They also felt it was important for staff to make connections with their Pacific students and whānau to view them using a Pacific lens. Teachers also encouraged Pacific students to embrace their own cultures by learning the language and participating in Pacific events through cultural performances. As their understanding of Pacific students and their cultures improved over time, teachers' aspirations for their students and setting high expectations, will be discussed in the next section.

Teacher aspirations and setting high expectations for Pacific students

The aspirations of teachers for their Pacific students were clearly visible in the way they encouraged them to embrace their cultures and achieve as Pacific. The teachers set high expectations and continued to share their ambitions with staff school wide. A requirement for Pacific students to experience equal opportunities was necessary to grow academic success and improve their confidence. Increased awareness by staff was needed to develop their understanding of the diverse Pacific cultures to support Pacific student success.

In response to the question about what teacher's aspirations were for the experiences Pacific students had at school, both teachers shared the importance of meeting the cultural needs of Pacific students. It took some time for the "ie faitaga" (lava lava), a traditional cultural dress wear, to be part of the school uniform. With a change of Principal, the permission was granted.

... there were still a lot of barriers that were put up ... I was met with 'nos' the entire time. So we've actually just had it put through and accepted to have the "ie faitaga" (lava lava) incorporated into the uniform. This is my sixth year ... so it's been a long journey to get that into the school uniform.

The new school curriculum planned for the following year, was an opportunity for Pacific cultures to be included, as explained by T2.

The curriculum is in development ... but I see it as a way for all cultures, and that's where I can see Pasifika being included. You're learning about a culture that is naturally New Zealand ... So on all platforms, the opportunities, or seeing themselves in school.

Opportunities for Pacific students were shared by T1 to grow academic success.

... really important that they can see they can have the same opportunities as the other kids ... just because they're Pacific doesn't limit what they can achieve... my aspirations are that we grow that sense of belonging ... academic success because that's going to open doors for them ... to raise those expectations.

Similar thoughts were shared by T2 and that family was a key contributor towards decision making that supported outcomes for Pacific students.

Equal opportunities and that they feel that all teachers want to see them achieving their goals... recognise that they come from a different place... not just lumped together as Pasifika ... that people know that it is different for them to be represented in all realms ... and family is a really important part of their decision making but also equally ... part of celebrating their success.

The teachers were asked about how success was measured. T1 noted their attendance, positive role models, and genuinely being supported were measures that contributed to growing success.

... an improvement in attendance on Mondays ... starting their week off right, getting into school, doing a workout, getting a hot meal, getting lunch, having that connection with their brothers ... their academic attendance... informal ways where you're having those conversations ... how they're feeling.

Following their thoughts on opportunities, T1 highlighted the importance of broadening the views of Pacific students as well as engaging staff and parents.

... trying to widen our boys' perspectives ... often they're quite insular in their home life, in their faith, in their island so trying to expand that... trying to educate teachers on what's the best way to reach these kids, what's the best way to get families/aiga into the school ... while it's starting to be accepted there are still some barriers being put in place.

When asked about any everyday practices that they encouraged of staff or did themselves to support Pacific student academic achievement or wellbeing, T2 shared her thoughts on how often professional development was provided to support Pacific education.

We include Pasifika separately when we look at our NCEA as a whole staff. The Pasifika Ministry document has been presented to staff by a DP ... it was more like be aware of this ... Staff are aware and could have access to copies and know where to get it online.

T2 also expressed her aspiration to have a Pasifika Studies course provided at their school as it would be well received by many Pacific students.

We have also put in the past a referral for a Pasifika Studies course but that hasn't been taken up... we are supported by teachers and our DP ... It is hard to gauge what our principal thinks about what we are doing.

T1 expressed similar thoughts on professional development for staff.

... we promote using the language, and aspects of the culture with staff... I have asked for PD to be done for Tapasā ... the booklets were just put in various people's pigeon holes ... there are still some staff that think Maori and Pasifika are the same.

Teachers shared their aspirations for Pacific students to do well. It was important for them to have Pacific leaders as role models for other students and promote them to do the same. T1 shared her views.

...the boys in my first year talked to me about how there were no Pacific Prefects, and no leadership roles ... there were Maori leaders ... one of the first things I did was create the leaders group so they could have that experience ... it's definitely about family and the brotherhood and the boys all work as a collective.

In summary, many of the aspirations and high expectations described by the teacher participants became an ambitious pathway for setting Pacific students up for success. It was important to them for their Pacific students to embrace their Pacific cultures and to achieve as Pacific. Both teachers were motivated to see all Pacific students experience equal opportunities to grow their academic potential and increase their confidence. It was suggested by one of the teachers that a whole school approach was necessary to ensure that all staff developed their understanding of Pacific cultures to support all Pacific students.

Chapter Summary

The findings showed a connection between student participants' cultural identity and family sacrifices with the importance of succeeding in education. Student participants highlighted the need for more Pacific teachers who were able to connect with them and were open to develop an understanding of their cultural identity to promote strong relationships. Fa'aaloalo was a sign of deep respect shown by student participants towards their Pacific liaison teachers because of their dedication and commitment to develop their understanding and acknowledge their Pacific values so they could be motivated to succeed.

Appropriate initiatives provided by the schools positively impacted the wellbeing of students. Teachers who showed a genuine interest in their Pacific students fostered positive relationships. Mentorship programmes and positive approaches provided safe

spaces for students to share their struggles, and positive role models provided ambitions for Pacific students to achieve personal success. Aspirations for student participants were encouraged by opportunities that provided student autonomy, which strongly associated with success in building character and leadership.

Teacher participants considered their aspirations for Pacific students were driven by equal opportunities to grow academic success and improve their confidence. Teachers demonstrated high expectations and student agency was encouraged, that ultimately set their Pacific students up with good practices. Raising the awareness and capability of staff through professional learning development was key to supporting and developing their cultural understanding of students and their Pacific cultures. Consequently, this enables staff to nurture and foster relationships to provide a source of strength for Pacific students to experience empowerment and realise their potential. Teachers' aspirations indicated a requirement to provide more opportunities for Pacific students to thrive and succeed as Pacific. The findings indicate several key themes, including the role of cultural values in education, the importance of teacher-student relationships, and the collective nature of success. These themes will be further analysed in the following discussion.

The next chapter discusses the findings within the context of literature. Implications for Pacific secondary students, secondary schools and teachers are identified and linked to existing research in this area. Implications for the study is shared at the conclusion of the discussion chapter.

Chapter 5 Discussion

Introduction and chapter overview

This section explored the findings extracted from an investigation into the programmes and practices employed by two secondary schools to improve education outcomes for Pacific students. Recognising the importance of addressing the achievement gaps between Pacific students and their non-Pacific peers, these schools implemented various initiatives and strategies adapted to meet the individual needs of their Pacific students. The impact of relational *vā* on teaching and learning aimed at enhancing educational success, was determined with input from both teachers and student participants. This process identified teaching practices suitable for cultural contexts. These practices shaped students' views on their teachers' roles in their education and supported their identity, language, and culture, helping them succeed as Pacific learners. Teacher participants shared insights into what success meant for Pacific students and highlighted key factors that positively influenced their educational paths. Additionally, students' voices provided valuable personal experiences and narratives that fuelled their drive for success.

Throughout this discussion, I explore the effectiveness of these programmes and practices in fostering academic achievement, cultural engagement, and overall well-being among Pacific students.

The research aimed to answer the following research questions:

- What approaches are secondary schools using in their programmes and practices to improve Pacific student success? What is the teacher's perception of success?
- What are Pacific students' perceptions of their teacher's role in their learning? What does success mean for Pacific students?

This chapter presents the discussion in two parts with both parts following the same format as previously outlined in Chapter 4. Firstly, the student participants' findings will be addressed, then teacher participants' findings will follow. The section headings provided represent the relevant themes to which the findings will be discussed. The

final chapter concludes with a list of recommendations, and opportunities for further research are also identified.

Students

Students' identity and cultural values as a self-perception of success

The findings showed that Pacific students who maintained a strong sense of cultural identity were more motivated to improve their academic performance and achieve overall success in education. One student defined success as personal achievement and the success of those around them. The research highlighted Christianity and the important value of fa'aaloalo, which encompasses reciprocity and deep respect for teachers. Additionally, the study indicated a need for more Pacific liaison teachers who engaged in cultural understanding. These points will be discussed further in this section.

One of the findings revealed that Pacific students with strong connections to their cultural identity showed a greater desire to succeed in education features the importance of cultural identity in shaping educational outcomes. This aligns with research that highlights the significance of culturally responsive teaching (Allen et al., 2022; Chu-Fuluifaga, 2022) and emphasises the role of intergenerational values, where students feel a responsibility to honour their parents' sacrifices in migrating for better opportunities. Fa'avae's (2017) Kāinga model further illustrates how cultural values such as loyalty and respect for elders shape students' perceptions of their teachers and motivate them to excel academically. The concept of vā, as discussed by Fa'avae (2017) and Faleolo (2021), expands this understanding by connecting students' educational experiences with their broader cultural and community contexts. This finding enriches the literature on Pacific students by highlighting the critical role of cultural values and responsive teaching in fostering their educational success.

A key finding revealed that Pacific students perceive success as a shared experience, emphasising the interconnectedness of individual, family, and community achievements. This perspective aligns with Fa'avae's (2017) holistic cultural view, which stresses collective efforts and shared understanding, as illustrated by the Kāinga model. The discovery also highlights the role of cultural values, such as

Talanoa and Teu le vā, in fostering collaborative partnerships among teachers, students, families, and communities. This finding emphasises the importance of teachers not only in facilitating academic learning but also in nurturing positive relationships that support student success. Research by Bills et al. (2022), Faa'ea and Fonua (2022), and Fa'avae (2017) further confirms that Pacific individuals attribute their success to the combination of cultural recognition and communal support. The Ministry of Education's (2018) Pasifika Success Compass reinforces this, acknowledging the central role of collective support in educational policy and practice. This finding suggests that teachers who understand and value the power of collectivism can better foster inclusive and supportive learning environments for Pacific students.

Another finding highlighted links between the role of church and how Christian values strengthened and supported the cultural wellbeing and success of Pacific students. This aligns with Fa'avae (2017) and suggests that Pacific students derive resilience and support from their religious beliefs, cultural practices, active participation in church activities, and broader community affiliations. Similarly, Seiuli (2013), Spiller (2013), and Anae (2019) suggest that the spread of Pacific people's social interactions and identity continue to be created as members of strong Pacific community groups they affiliate with, through broader family connections and embracing their spiritual faith through church. The implication of this finding reveals that while the involvement of Pacific students in church activities appears to positively contribute to their cultural well-being and academic success, questions may arise regarding the potential exclusion of those who do not identify with Christianity or participate in religious activities. It is essential to approach these findings with a critical lens, considering issues of inclusivity, schools' impartial views, and the diversity of religious beliefs within Pacific communities (Reynolds, 2019).

A key finding highlights the link between Pacific students' identity and cultural values that foster confidence and success, particularly through the support of Pacific liaison teachers who demonstrate cultural understanding. Participants valued these teachers more than their non-Pacific counterparts, as they exhibited a relational understanding of cultural perspectives that facilitated academic achievement. Studies by Airini et al. (2010), Samu (2006), and Sililoto (2022) emphasise that building relationships is crucial for engaging Pacific students. These teachers created an environment that

embraced Teu le vā, empowering Pacific learners to actively participate in discussions. Similarly, Reynolds (2018a) noted that Pacific-origin approaches, combined with reflective practices around Pacific relationships, contributed to more systematic Pacific education. This indicates that strong, reciprocal relationships with teachers enhance Pacific students' participation and learning progress. However, while cultural recognition and support from teachers seem beneficial, concerns arise about the sustainability and scalability of such approaches within educational systems. There is a need for comprehensive training for all teachers in culturally responsive pedagogies and fostering genuine, reciprocal relationships with Pacific students (Si'ilata et al., 2023; Tuimana, 2022). The next section will discuss how student well-being supports holistic success.

Student wellbeing supports holistic success

Several key findings highlighted a connection between Pacific programmes and practices provided by both schools and how these supported the wellbeing of student participants. Pacific students' personal and cultural needs were at the forefront of their health and wellbeing, and when these needs were met it motivated them to experience success. Mentorship also supported their cultural needs through the provision of a safe environment to share sensitive topics, and opportunities to form connections that led to better relationships. Moreover, opportunities for discussing mental health concerns were pivotal for students to develop awareness and build external relationships to enhance their life skills. This section will delve deeper into these findings.

A key finding revealed that when the personal and cultural needs of Pacific students regarding their health and wellbeing were prioritised, it motivated them and contributed to their experiences of success. This finding aligns with Chu et al. (2013a) who state family relationships that are strengthened are pivotal to the success and wellbeing of Pacific students. In addition, Sharp et al. (2021) emphasised the interconnectedness between Pacific students' success in education and their broader wellbeing, situated within the relationships across home, school, and the wider community. The finding suggests that addressing these needs enhances students' confidence, leading to improved relationships with teachers. This increased the confidence for students to trust and take hold of opportunities, as evidenced by a student who independently entered and won a film competition. Furthermore, initiatives and opportunities that

promote cultural pride and integrate Pacific cultural elements into educational practices positively impact student wellbeing and academic success that link to collective success (Bills and Enari, 2023). The implication of this finding emphasises the necessity to address cultural and personal needs, but also the potential challenges to implement such initiatives effectively. Additionally, it is essential to recognise diversity within the Pacific student population and modify interventions accordingly to address varying needs and backgrounds. Overall, this finding contributes to existing literature and highlights the importance of focusing on Pacific students' cultural needs in promoting their health, wellbeing, and academic success.

Another finding identified a link between mentorship programmes that supported a safe environment to share sensitive topics, and opportunities to form connections that led to better relationships. Moreover, opportunities to discuss mental health concerns were pivotal for students to develop awareness and build external relationships to enhance their life skills. Bills and Enari (2023) emphasised that schools nurturing learning environments adapted for students from minority groups, encouraged education, wellbeing, and social development. This finding signified the importance of culturally inclusive education practices. Programmes and practices that promoted and contributed to successful educational environments for minority students, create potential for policymakers and educators to replicate these conditions across more schools. It also suggests that schools who actively address the needs of all students can promote a stronger sense of belonging and support among community members. This can lead to increased community engagement, resources, and support for schools.

The implications for Mentorship programmes that build better relationships also require tailored learning environments that may need additional resources, training, and ongoing commitment from schools and communities. An examination of the sustainability of such initiatives should be considered, particularly where schools experience resource and time constraints. Additionally, Silipa (2004) identified that when teachers provided Pacific students with the freedom to create and self-govern, purpose and trust developed and embodied the value of *vā' fealoa'i* (mutual respect) to support education success. This finding suggests that schools who provide avenues to discuss mental health concerns and foster a safe environment, not only contribute to academic success but also to the overall well-being and social development of students. However, it is essential to acknowledge potential limitations, such as the

generalisation of this finding across diverse cultural and institutional contexts. While the principles of mutual respect and community engagement are beneficial, their implementation may vary and are dependent upon cultural norms and educational systems. The next section will highlight student aspirations as a self-perception in support for their success.

Student aspirations as a self-perception in support for success.

Several findings showed a connection between the aspirations of students wanting to be positive role models to promote their leadership skills with an enhanced desire to build their confidence and self-belief to succeed. This connection was evident in their self-reflections, where they expressed a desire to serve as leaders to other Pacific students. Additionally, the study indicated that being a Pacific leader aspired them to embrace their Pacific culture and when encouraged to share their cultural practices with others, this increased their confidence and influenced their motivation to foster success. These findings will be further examined in the subsequent section.

Participants' confidence in their educational success was positively impacted by the presence of strong role models. These individuals included teachers and former Pacific students who served as sources of inspiration, fostering the development of character and self-confidence towards Pacific leadership. Furthermore, student participants were committed to convey positive values towards younger Pacific students through their own leadership roles and mentorship. This finding aligns with Chu et al. (2013a) who highlight the role of mentorship and leadership programmes that support Pacific students to aspire towards leadership positions. In addition, Reynolds (2019) highlighted teachers who encouraged Pacific students, nurtured positive learning outcomes and improved values of reciprocity and respect that linked to Teu le vā. Additionally, the emphasis on autonomy suggests a shift towards student-centered approaches in education that recognises the importance of student empowerment to take ownership of their learning experiences. While the study sheds light on the positive impact of role models, it is necessary to critically examine the types of role models and their characteristics. Furthermore, to determine whether role models represent diverse backgrounds within the Pacific community or reflect a range of career paths and experiences that resonate with students' aspirations. A deeper examination of these considerations can provide a clearer understanding of the effects of role models.

Evidence in the findings revealed a correlation between Pacific students who assumed leadership roles within their schools and who actively embraced their Pacific culture. These student leaders motivated fellow Pacific students to embrace their own cultural identity. This finding suggests that leadership is not merely a positional authority but also a cultural engagement that fosters a sense of belonging and pride among Pacific students when their cultural practices are accepted and valued. This finding links to Bills et al, (2022) that Pacific students should experience success as Pacific, and that 'Pasifika mo Pasifika' is recognised and acknowledged when pedagogy is culturally and continually supported. This finding extends to Dyck (2021) and Si'ilata et al. (2023) that for teachers to value and validate their Pacific students' knowledge, they need to take a strengths-based approach. This research builds on literature by providing empirical evidence on the positive effects of cultural identity and leadership roles on Pacific students' academic success. It supports the notion that culturally responsive teaching and leadership practices are crucial for Pacific students to experience success.

The following section will discuss key findings from the teacher interviews in relation to the teachers' research questions.

Teachers

Approaches and programmes that promote the success of Pacific students

Key findings showed connections between positive approaches that were developed and shared by teachers through school programmes and community initiatives with the education success of their Pacific students. Opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of different Pacific cultures were provided through programmes and getting to know their students. Teachers described the importance of building a strong connection with community organisations to bridge the gap between school and parents. Additionally, these programmes provided external Pacific speakers who shared valuable insights through their own educational and professional journeys that offered support and resonated with Pacific students. Mentorship played a crucial role and offered a supportive environment where students developed

leadership skills, gained improved confidence, and mentored younger peers. These findings will be discussed further in this section.

The research showed when opportunities were presented to engage with Pacific cultures through school and community contexts, teachers were open to connect with Pacific students and enhance their understanding of cultural diversity. Although only one of the Pacific liaison teachers were Pacific with limited knowledge of her culture, both were genuinely driven to support their Pacific students to succeed. This finding extends to Anae (2010; 2016), and Reynolds (2018a) who suggest that Pacific students feel empowered when they are encouraged to use the language of their mother tongue (home nation). In addition, Pacific students encounter acceptance as Pacific and strengthens the relational *vā* creating a more inclusive learning environment. Similarly, Si'ilata et al. (2023) suggest that for teachers to build their cultural competence, they need to actively take a strengths-based approach and appreciate the value of knowledge they bring. This indicates that by fostering an environment where Pacific students feel culturally accepted and supported, teachers contribute to their improved academic performance and overall well-being. Additionally, Taleni and Surtees (2024) suggest a pedagogy of the heart is a transformative process that enacts Pacific values of *tautua*, *alofa*, and reciprocity. Furthermore, it is established from the heart with compassion, that is felt, lived and enacted in the *vā*. There is potential for culturally responsive pedagogy to create more inclusive learning environments. However, it also demonstrates the need for ongoing efforts to promote cultural competence among teachers to ensure that all students feel valued and supported in their educational journey.

Another finding connected teachers' relationships with external organisations through school programmes helped bridge the gap between school and parents. The school programmes provided opportunities for Pacific parents to attend as a parent helper and to also engage with external Pacific speakers about educational and career pathways. This finding links to Reynolds (2019) suggesting that teachers' development of Pacific education is focused within inter-cultural spaces where an understanding of obligation and caring for relationships is conducted using the concept of *vā*. Additionally, Rimoni et al. (2022) indicate that in Pacific education a relational focus encourages Pacific communities and teachers to develop relationships constructed from the Pacific value of generosity. Similarly, Ministry of Education (2023) reference

the Tapasā Pasifika Success Compass that place students, parents, families and communities at the centre of everything. The finding suggests that teachers who facilitated school programmes that actively involved Pacific parents, created inclusive spaces that empowered both students and their families. This not only enhanced parental engagement but also promoted cultural understanding and appreciation within the school community. Moreover, the Tapasā Pasifika Success Compass supports and prioritises the involvement of students, parents, families, and communities in the educational process. By placing these stakeholders at the center of educational undertakings, schools can create more inclusive and supportive environments for Pacific students. The implications emphasise the importance of continuing to foster strong relationships between teachers, community organisations, and Pacific communities to strengthen the gap between schools and parents.

The study highlighted how teachers promoted and facilitated mentorship programmes and leadership development among Pacific students that empowered them to mentor other younger Pacific students. These programmes provided opportunities to pair students with role models they already knew to establish a connection and trust. This finding aligns with Reynolds (2017a; 2018a) highlight the significance of strong relationships in various settings among Pacific students and teachers. In addition, Lilomaiava-Doktor (2009) and Fa'avae (2017), emphasise the importance of collective family contributions and how relationships within *'āiga* are developed through responsibilities that are maintained over time. Similarly, Sanga & Reynolds (2020b) stressed the value of a safe space for sharing, which promoted a strengths-based perspective that fostered a deeper understanding and connection through empathy. The implication of this finding suggests that mentorship programmes play a crucial role in leadership development among Pacific students. By providing a safe space for students to share their experiences and build confidence, these programmes empowered them to become mentors themselves, to contribute positively to the development of younger Pacific students. Furthermore, by focusing on individuals' strengths rather than their shortcomings, these programmes promoted a more positive and inclusive learning environment. The next section will discuss how teacher practices contributed to a culture of care.

Teacher practices contributed to a culture of care

The findings revealed that teachers who demonstrated a culture of care for their Pacific students through supportive practices encouraged them to feel valued and accepted as Pacific. The connections between teachers with Pacific students and their families were intentional and relationships developed to greatly improve their understanding of Pacific cultures. Through this process, teacher participants demonstrated their awareness of the unique circumstances and obstacles faced by Pacific students in attending school and completing assignments successfully. These findings will be further discussed in this section.

A finding identified positive relationships between Pacific students and their families with teachers who engaged in culturally responsive practices and intentionally enhanced their understanding of Pacific cultures. These teachers acknowledged and appreciated subtle cultural nuances, differences and similarities among their Pacific students using a Pacific lens. As a result, trust was established, relationships were strengthened, and expectations were maintained to take care of the relational *vā*. This finding aligns with Chu-Fuluifaga and Reynolds (2023) who suggest a strengths-based approach to Pacific education recognises the key potential of Pacific parents and communities, alongside Pacific indigenous knowledge and wisdom to make valuable contributions. Additionally, Chu (2010) and Flavell (2023) identify positive change when voices of families are acknowledged through appreciative inquiry. Similarly, Vaioleti (2013) and Fa'avae (2018) highlight values of inclusiveness and respect that are essential for creating a shared understanding of cultural nuances and practices. This finding suggests that when teachers engage in and develop an understanding of cultural practices through *Talanoa*, then *Teu le vā* will innately evolve to build mutual trust and reciprocal relationships. The implication of this finding emphasises the importance of teachers to be actively engaged in learning about and respecting the diverse cultures of their students. This process involves more than just acknowledgment at a surface level, it requires a deep, sincere effort to understand and integrate these cultural perspectives into the teaching and learning process.

A further finding linked how teacher participants developed their cultural knowledge to understand the unique circumstances and challenges Pacific students experienced in getting to school and provided the necessary support. Teacher participants grew their awareness in identifying the role that Pacific students played in their families to support

younger ones, and the need to work to support their families financially. This links to Anae (2016) and Reynolds (2018a) who emphasise the importance of relational success in Pacific research, and how it evolves using the concept of *Teu le vā* to understand and foresee a culture of care that relates to respect for each other's space. Additionally, Fa'avae et al. (2016) and Sililoto (2022) highlight that cultural competence requires a supportive network and takes time to develop depending on context. Furthermore, the Tapasā cultural framework encourages teachers of Pacific learners to combine and apply moral principles and experiences of a diverse group of learners into their teaching practice, thus normalising the diversity of cultures. This finding has implications for educational policy and professional development opportunities that focus on cultural competence and relational pedagogies. By fostering an understanding of the unique challenges Pacific students face and integrating these insights into teaching practices, educators can better support students' academic and social success. While the study highlights the importance of relational understanding and cultural competence in supporting Pacific students, it also raises questions about the broader educational system's readiness to embrace these approaches. Educators must be equipped to adapt these frameworks to their specific teaching contexts, requiring ongoing support and resources.

Teachers' aspirations and setting high expectations for Pacific students will be addressed in the next section.

Teacher aspirations and setting high expectations for Pacific students

This study identified that aspirations for Pacific students to succeed as Pacific was of high importance to both teacher participants and maintained through high expectations and positive engagement. Teacher participants shared these ambitions with other staff. A key aspiration was for Pacific students to experience equal opportunities to grow their confidence and achieve academic success. These will be discussed further in the following section.

A finding highlighted the importance of teachers' aspirations for their Pacific students to embrace their cultures and succeed as Pacific. Both teachers continued to set high expectations for their Pacific students and endeavoured to ensure their cultural needs were addressed, and particularly encouraged other staff to do the same. This finding is strengthened by Thompson et al. (2009) who highlight that for Pacific learners to be

fully engaged in their learning, appropriate teaching methodologies need to be identified. Moreover, cultural contexts are used to embed Pacific knowledge, values and practices into school curricula. Similarly, Miller (2015) and Spiller (2013) note that Pacific students demonstrate confidence and trust when their teachers actively engaged them in pursuit of learning and established high expectations. In addition, Boon-Nanai et al. (2022) state that a common notion in many Pacific cultures is for one to realise their place in this *vā* relational space, therefore emphasis on reflecting from a Pacific viewpoint is encouraged to help understand the expectations on Pacific students within their environments including home and the wider Pacific community. This finding suggests that when students feel understood and supported by their educators, they are more likely to trust them and engage deeply with their learning. It also emphasises the importance of a holistic approach to education that values students' cultural contexts as much as their academic achievements. Additionally, Allen et al. (2022), Taleni and Surtees (2024), and Tualaulelei and McFall-McCaffery (2019) suggest that teachers understand the *vā* between spiritual interconnectedness and community connections linking people, land and surroundings. Furthermore, the importance of valuing these connections is reinforced.

Another finding identified a connection with teachers' aspirations for Pacific students to experience equal opportunities and to grow their confidence and academic success as Pacific. This finding suggests that Pacific students need to feel they have the same opportunities as other students whilst embracing their cultural views so they can grow their sense of belonging. It also suggests that support for teachers is needed to increase their awareness and knowledge of cultural diversity and practices to develop strong relationships, thus enabling equal opportunities for Pacific students to occur. This finding aligns with Chu et al. (2013a) who highlight that students' learning experience was greatly improved by staff who established strong relationships that were respectful, and shared values integrated into teaching and learning practices. Similarly, Samu (2006) and Airini et al. (2010) observed that when schools provided extensive professional development and guidance around diverse cultural approaches for their *kaiako*, it inevitably supported and lead to change for all students.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed important insights in relation to the findings presented in Chapter 4. The characteristics of effective programmes and teaching practices that support Pacific students' cultural identity, wellbeing, leadership and aspirations to succeed in education, according to teacher and student participants interviewed, were discussed in this chapter. These findings highlight the importance of culturally inclusive responsive teaching and the role of cultural values and experiences that shape educational outcomes for Pacific students. Teachers play a crucial role in the facilitation of academic learning and to maintain positive relationships with Pacific students, families, and communities. Additionally, the importance of professional learning development for all teachers is to grow their understanding of culturally responsive practices and pedagogy to engage with Pacific students and appreciate their Pacific ways of knowing. Furthermore, findings suggest that schools who foster a safe environment to address mental health concerns contribute both to academic success, and the overall well-being and social development of students.

The discussion that follows identifies conclusions drawn from this research and addresses the significance of the study's findings.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

Introduction

This study aimed to contribute to the growing body of literature concerning the educational achievements of Pacific students in Aotearoa New Zealand. The findings aimed to provide insights that inform policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in their efforts to promote educational equity and excellence for Pacific students. The purpose of this study was to identify effective approaches employed by two secondary schools that positively engaged and improved education success for Pacific students. Additionally, the study sought to uncover students' views on the role of teachers in their learning and how these perceptions influenced their understanding of success and sense of support from their school, family and broader communities.

The research questions addressed in this study were:

- What approaches are secondary schools using in their programmes and practices to improve Pacific student success? What is the teacher's perception of success?
- What are Pacific students' perceptions of their teacher's role in their learning? What does success mean for Pacific students?

The first part of the chapter summarises the study's key findings. The second part outlines limitations of this study followed by potential implications for policymakers, researchers, school leaders and classroom teachers. The chapter concludes with a brief reflection.

Key Findings

Building on existing research demonstrated how embedded Pacific cultural values and Pacific notions within the wider school curriculum supported and promoted effective relationships between teachers and Pacific students to achieve success as Pacific. Teachers nurtured the relational *vā* when environments were created for Pacific students to feel valued and empowered them to actively participate in their education success. This contributes to knowledge regarding the importance of a strengths-based

approach in education that values and validates Pacific students' cultural backgrounds and knowledge. Mentorship programmes promoted safe environments to form connections that led to better relationships. A connection between teachers' relationships and external organisations through school programmes helped bridge the gap between school and parents. It was conclusive that culturally responsive relationships developed to improve the confidence of Pacific students to be good leaders and achieve education success as Pacific.

Secondly, the study highlighted that success of Pacific students is a collective endeavour that encompasses their cultural values, families, and broader Pacific communities to achieve positive outcomes in education. Teachers who recognised the weighting of family and community assistance were better positioned to support the educational success of Pacific students by promoting inclusive and supportive learning environments. Teachers who actively increased their understanding of culturally responsive practices and pedagogy to engage with Pacific students, evolved to acquire crucial knowledge to appreciate 'Pacific ways of knowing'. The schools' Pacific programmes promoted cultural pride and integrated Pacific cultural elements into educational practices, which had a positive effect on the wellbeing and aspirations of Pacific students. This holistic approach supported their educational endeavours and overall success.

Thirdly, the findings concluded that teachers who deepened their understanding of Pacific cultural values, utilised specific cultural frameworks such as the Kāinga Tongan model, Tapasā, and the Pacific Values framework. This aligned with one of the key shifts identified in the Action Plan for Pacific Education (2020-2030), to "Enable every teacher, leader and educational professional to take coordinated action to become culturally competent with diverse Pacific learners" (Ministry of Education, 2023b, p. 8). The Tapasā cultural framework encourages teachers of Pacific learners to combine and apply moral principles and experiences of a diverse group of learners into their teaching practice, thus normalising the diversity of cultures.

Recommendations

Provide professional learning development for all teachers facilitated by experts in culturally responsive pedagogies to foster genuine, reciprocal relationships with Pacific students to appreciate their Pacific ways of knowing.

Limitations

This research provided stories and insights of Pacific resiliency that are relevant and align with existing literature on Pacific in education. However, the sample of eight Pacific participants selected from two secondary schools poses concerns in generalising this representation across the wider population of Pacific students in New Zealand.

Implications

Policymakers

The findings could influence educational policy and curriculum design, advocating for a framework that systematically incorporates Pacific perspectives, knowledge, and values. This approach not only benefits Pacific students but also enhances the educational experience for all students by promoting diversity and inclusivity. This research signifies the importance of promoting equitable outcomes for Pacific students in education. By identifying and promoting aspects that contribute to successful educational environments for minority students, policymakers and educators can work to replicate these conditions across more schools. The findings also emphasise the importance of incorporating cultural responsiveness training and resources into teacher education programmes and professional development initiatives.

Researchers

Based on what I found, the findings showed that further research is required in this area using Pacific methodologies, mixed method approaches and an increased sample size. Furthermore, as described by Anae (2016), to Teu le vā between researcher and participants is to understand the reciprocal relationships through face-to-face interaction, words spoken and our body language to achieve purposeful and positive outcomes of the relationship so that it can move to the next level. Further

research could delve into the long-term effects of interventions to support Pacific students and explore potential barriers to their implementation to maximise their effectiveness and sustainability. Continued examination and adaptation are necessary to address the evolving needs of students in diverse educational landscapes. The findings provide a limited generalisation of the research study as they are based on a limited sample of two secondary schools. A broader study involving more schools would provide a more comprehensive view and strengthen the validity of the conclusions.

School leaders and classroom teachers

The findings highlight the urgent requirement for schools to actively address the needs of Pacific students. This involves fostering a stronger sense of belonging and support within the community, which in turn can boost community engagement, resources, and support for schools. Additional resources, training, and ongoing commitment from schools and communities are needed for implementing and maintaining tailored learning environments to support Pacific students. Furthermore, schools should prioritise mentorship programmes as they are instrumental in nurturing leadership skills among Pacific students and create supportive environments that encourage students to champion leadership skills. Schools should also consider appointing a dedicated Pacific liaison teacher who demonstrates a willingness and commitment to enhance their cultural competence and support Pacific students. Additionally, they should work on building partnerships with Pacific families and their broader communities. An examination of the sustainability of cultural initiatives should be considered, particularly when schools are experiencing constraints with resources and time. School leaders and teachers need to actively recognise and address the cultural needs of Pacific students, which involves continuous learning and adaptation of teaching methodologies to be more inclusive and effective. This collective body of research suggests that systemic change, supported by government intervention, is essential for promoting equity in educational settings, highlighting the need for schools to adapt and implement changes that can foster a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for Pacific students.

Reflection

In reflection, the opportunity to interview students and teachers challenged me to use Pacific research methods appropriately, but more importantly to maximise the desired outcomes for the purpose of this study. In completing this body of work it has positively contributed to my personal growth as a Pacific educator and as a member of my Pacific community. It has made me more determined to continue to support ways to prosper, grow and strengthen our wider Pacific communities.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1: Covering letter to Principals

Talofa lava,

Project Title: What approaches are used in school programmes and practices that attribute to the success of Pacific students.

Introduction: Talofa lava, my name is Annette Laban, and I am a Primary teacher at St Mary's Catholic School, Tauranga. I am currently on study leave to complete a Master of Education through the University of Waikato, and as part of my thesis my passion is to undertake research in the Pacific space. I am of Samoan and Tokelaun descent and I am enthusiastic about encouraging and supporting our Pacific students to succeed.

Aim: The aim of this project is to develop an understanding of what effective approaches are being used in school programmes and practices that attribute towards the success of Pacific students at Secondary school.

What: I would like to invite a member of your staff and some Pacific students to participate in a research project during a time that is least disruptive to your school's programme and their learning. I would like to meet with you to outline the intentions of the study and to seek permission from you and your Board of Trustees to interview up to 4 Pacific students in Year 13, and 1 teacher who either takes Pasifika studies, has a high number of Pacific students in their classes, or who are the Pacific liaison teacher. With your permission I would like to meet with your Pacific Liaison teacher first to arrange a suitable time to meet with Pacific students in year 13 to briefly outline the nature of the study. Following this meeting students will be invited to register their interest via a short Google form and if they meet the criteria and are successful, they will be contacted via email.

Duration: Should your staff member choose to participate, their involvement would entail one 45-60 minute interview, and up to 2 weeks following the interview will spend up to 15 minutes to review their transcript and make any changes necessary. Should your Pacific students choose to participate, their involvement would entail two 30-45 minute focus group sessions.

Why: Your school is being approached because it is a secondary school with a high number of Pacific students in the local region. The school has experienced an increase of Pacific students achieving NCEA levels 1 and 2 over the years.

The research proposes to explore and identify two questions:

- What approaches are secondary schools using in their programmes and practices to improve Pacific student success?
- What are Pacific students' perceptions of their teacher's role in their learning?

This study will explore positive approaches the school is using to support teachers in their programmes and practices to understand how Pacific students learn, and to also identify what is working well to achieve NCEA goals from a Pacific students' perspective.

Benefits: The results of this study will be expected to gain valued insight from both Pacific students and teachers of Pacific students, and will help to identify effective approaches that work best to improve their education success. The school has continued to experience increasing success of Pacific students over the years and could potentially provide a model of success to share with other schools. The ability to build on these positive approaches will provide support for other teachers of Pacific students and gain a better understanding of students' needs.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this project is entirely voluntary, and both staff and students are under no obligation to become involved.

Project procedures: If you choose to participate, I would like to interview your staff member once and your Pacific students in two focus group sessions in July 2023. As mentioned earlier, the interviews will take approximately 30-60 minutes each, and with your permission will be audio recorded. The location of the interviews could be at your staff's place of work, or at a

location where they will feel comfortable. Interviews will be scheduled at a time that is least disruptive to the running of your school. A copy of the research findings will be made available to you if you wish at the conclusion of the study. The results of the study may be drawn upon for a conference presentation and/or journal publications.

Confidentiality: Confidentiality of your staff member and students is guaranteed throughout the duration of this research. However, there is a possibility that the students may know one another either from class or the homework centre. In this case, confidentiality could be compromised due to the students talking with one another outside of the focus group.

Consent forms will be provided (copies attached). At no time will their names be recorded or made public in any of the research, and no links will be made between their responses in the interviews that would identify them. If the information provided in their interviews is published, this will be done in a way that does not identify your school as its source. Whilst I will do my best to protect their anonymity, I cannot fully guarantee this. My Supervisors and I will be the only ones who will view the interview transcripts, and we will not record their names anywhere. My supervisors have signed a confidentiality agreement with The University of Waikato (a copy is attached).

Data storage: All interview material collected including audio recordings and transcripts will be stored on the researcher's hard drive on a password protected computer. Data will be retained for five years in its original format, after which it will be deleted.

Right to withdraw: The staff member is free to withdraw their participation at any time, and to withdraw any data traceable to them up to two weeks after receiving their transcript. Students may withdraw themselves at any time without giving a reason up until their first focus group session. They may withdraw by emailing al404@students.waikato.ac.nz.

Feel free to contact me directly should you have any further questions about this study.

My contact details are:

Annette Laban

al404@students.waikato.ac.nz

Phone: 021 234 0582

Additional contacts:

Supervisor - Lecturer in Literacy: Dr Emma Cunningham

Email: emma.cunningham@waikato.ac.nz

Associate Professor: Professor Sashi Sharma

Email: sashi.sharma@waikato.ac.nz

I appreciate your time and help in making this research possible and look forward to hearing from you.

Ngā mihi mahana

Annette Laban

Appendix 2: Consent form for Principals

Project title: What approaches are used in school programmes and practices that attribute to the success of Pacific students.

Name of researcher: Annette Laban

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet, have understood the nature of the research and my school has been selected. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction. I also understand that participation in this research is voluntary.
- I agree to having a staff member being interviewed once for 45 minutes to 60 minutes.
- I agree to having up to four students being interviewed twice in a focus group session on separate days for 30 to 45 minutes per session.
- I understand that my staff member is free to withdraw participation at any time, and to withdraw any data traceable to them up to two weeks after receiving their transcript.
- I understand that my students are free to withdraw participation from the research project up until the date of the first focus group interview, by emailing the researcher at al404@students.waikato.ac.nz.
- I understand that participants' responses, including audio recordings and transcripts will be stored on the researcher's hard drive on a password protected computer. Data will be retained for five years in its original format, after which it will be deleted.
- I understand that the research assistant has signed a confidentiality agreement with The University of Waikato.
- I understand that a summary of the findings will be made available to me at the completion of the study.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Principal: _____

Appendix 3: Consent form for student

I _____ have read and understood the nature of the research project and agree to participate as requested. I agree with the following statements.

- I understand that my participation is voluntary.
- I understand that by completing and submitting the google form I consent to attending two focus group sessions of up to 45 minutes each.
- I understand that if I wish to withdraw from the research project that I can do so, up until the date for the focus group interview, by emailing the researcher at al404@students.waikato.ac.nz.
- I understand that everything said in the focus group will remain confidential amongst the other participants, the researcher, and her supervisors.
- I understand that the transcript of the interview cannot be changed as any changes to the content may impact on the contribution of another participant.
- I understand that my identity and the identity of the school will be kept anonymous throughout the thesis and any information provided will be kept confidential.
- I understand that quotes and information provided by myself will be used in the thesis. I understand that whilst the researcher will do her best to protect my anonymity, she cannot fully guarantee this.
- I understand that my responses, including audio recordings and transcripts will be stored on the researcher's hard drive on a password protected computer. Data will be retained for five years in its original format, after which it will be deleted.
- I understand that the findings of this research will be used for the author's thesis, and could be presented at future events and/or published in academic journals or other literature.
- I understand I will be kept updated about the research via email and an electronic link to the thesis will be emailed to me once the thesis is completed.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Participant: _____

Appendix 3A: Consent form for Parents

(You are completing this form if your child is under the age of 18 years)

I _____ have read and understood the nature of the research project
and agree to _____ participating in the study.

I agree with the following statements.

- I understand that my child's participation is voluntary.
- I understand that by completing and submitting the google form my child consents to attending two focus group sessions of up to 45 minutes each.
- I understand that if my child wishes to withdraw from the research project that they can do so, up until the date of their first focus group interview, by emailing the researcher at al404@students.waikato.ac.nz.
- I understand that everything said in the focus group will remain confidential amongst the other participants, the researcher, and her supervisors.
- I understand that the identity of my child and the identity of the school will be kept anonymous throughout the thesis and any information provided will be kept confidential.
- I understand that quotes and information provided by my child will be used in the thesis. I understand that whilst the researcher will do her best to protect my child's anonymity, she cannot fully guarantee this.
- I understand that my child's responses, including audio recordings and transcripts will be stored on the researcher's hard drive on a password protected computer. Data will be retained for five years in its original format, after which it will be deleted.
- I understand that the findings of this research will be used for the author's thesis, and could be presented at future events and/or published in academic journals or other literature.
- I understand I will be kept updated about the research via email and an electronic link to the thesis will be emailed to me once the thesis is completed.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Parent: _____

Appendix 4: Information sheet for students

Talofa lava,

Project Title: What approaches are used in school programmes and practices that attribute to the success of Pacific students.

Introduction: Talofa lava, my name is Annette Laban, and I am a Primary teacher at St Mary's Catholic School, Tauranga. I am currently on study leave to complete a Master of Education through the University of Waikato, and as part of my thesis my passion is to undertake research in the Pacific space. I am of Samoan and Tokelaun descent and I am enthusiastic about encouraging and supporting our Pacific students to succeed.

Aim: The aim of this project is to develop an understanding of what effective approaches are being used in school programmes and practices that support the success of Pacific students.

I will be undertaking a research study that proposes to explore and identify two questions:

- What approaches are secondary schools using in their programmes and practices to improve Pacific student success?
- What are students' perceptions of their teacher's role in their learning?

The main purpose is to find out what is working well within the school's Pacific policies and practices that are being used in their school programmes, and how they support the success of Pacific students.

Duration: The study will require 4 students who are of Pacific descent to participate in two 30-45 minute focus group sessions on separate days. The sessions will take place at school during a time that is least disruptive to the school's programme and to your learning. A short presentation to Pacific students will be arranged during a convenient time (e.g. Pasifika studies, or homework centre) to briefly outline the nature of the study. If you would like to participate then you will be required to complete a google form registering your interest and availability to take part.

Confidentiality: If you have been selected to participate then you will be required to sign a consent form. If you are under the age of 18 years then a consent form will need to be signed by a parent (a copy will be provided for their information). Confidentiality of your information is a top priority throughout the entire duration of this research. At no time will your name be recorded or made public in any of the research, and no links will be made between your responses in the interviews that would identify you. If the information provided in the interviews is published, this will be done in a way that does not identify the school as its source. Whilst I will do my best to protect your anonymity, I cannot fully guarantee this.

Data storage: All interview material collected including audio recordings and transcripts will be stored on the researcher's hard drive on a password protected computer. Data will be retained for five years in its original format, after which it will be deleted.

Right to withdraw: You may withdraw yourself at any time without giving a reason up until your first focus group session. You may withdraw by emailing al404@students.waikato.ac.nz.

Feel free to contact me directly should you have any further questions about this study.

My contact details are:

Annette Laban

al404@students.waikato.ac.nz

Phone: 021 234 0582

Appendix 5: Information sheet for parents/caregivers

Talofa lava,

Project Title: What approaches are used in school programmes and practices that attribute to the success of Pacific students.

Introduction: Talofa lava, my name is Annette Laban, and I am a Primary teacher at St Mary's Catholic School, Tauranga. I am currently on study leave to complete a Master of Education through the University of Waikato, and as part of my thesis my passion is to undertake research in the Pacific space. I am of Samoan and Tokelaun descent and I am enthusiastic about encouraging and supporting our Pacific students to succeed.

Aim: The aim of this project is to develop an understanding of what effective approaches are being used in school programmes and practices that support the success of Pacific students.

I will be undertaking a research study that proposes to explore and identify two questions:

- What approaches are secondary schools using in their programmes and practices to improve Pacific student success?
- What are Pacific students' perceptions of their teacher's role in their learning?

The main purpose is to find out what is working well within the school's Pacific policies and practices that are being implemented into their school programmes, and how they support the success of Pacific students.

Duration: The study will require 4 students who are of Pacific descent to participate in two 30-45 minute focus group sessions on separate days, and will take place at school during a time that is least disruptive to the school's programme and to your child's learning. Your child has been invited to participate and if they are interested will be required to complete a google form indicating their willingness and availability to take part.

Confidentiality: If they have been selected to participate then they will need to sign a consent form. If your child is under the age of 18 years then a consent form will need to be signed by a parent (a copy will be provided for your information). Confidentiality of their information is prioritised throughout the entire duration of this research. At no time will their names be recorded or made public in any of the research, and no links will be made between their responses in the interviews that would identify them. If the information provided in their interviews is published, this will be done in a way that does not identify the school as its source. I will do my best to ensure participants remain anonymous, but I cannot fully guarantee this.

Data storage: All interview material collected including audio recordings and transcripts will be stored on the researcher's hard drive on a password protected computer. Data will be retained for five years in its original format, after which it will be deleted.

Right to withdraw: Students may withdraw themselves at any time without giving a reason up until their first focus group session. They may withdraw by emailing me at al404@students.waikato.ac.nz.

Feel free to contact me directly should you have any further questions about this study.

My contact details are:

Annette Laban

al404@students.waikato.ac.nz

Phone: 021 234 0582

Appendix 6: Student Google Form

Questions Responses Settings

Research Study - Pacific Student Success

Participation in a research study to determine what your perceptions are of your teacher's role in your learning. The purpose is to find what positive strategies or programs the school is using to help you succeed in your learning. What is working well for you?

Full Name *

Short-answer text

Which Pacific Island are you from? *

- Samoa
- Tonga
- Cook Islands
- Fiji
- Niue
- Solomons
- Other...

Are you a Year 13 student? *

- Yes
- No

Do you agree to attend 2x one to one interviews that may take up to an hour for each interview? *

- Yes
- No

Do you agree to an audio recording of the interviews to support accurate feedback of data. *

- Yes
- No

Please provide your contact email and mobile number for communication. *

Short-answer text

Appendix 7: Focus group question guide for students

- ★ How are you supported, as a Pacific learner, at your school?
- ★ Are you able to tell me about things within your school that helps your wellbeing and supports you achieving as Pacific?
- ★ How do these things help your wellbeing as a Pacific student?
- ★ Are you able to tell me about things within your school that support your academic achievement as a Pacific student?
- ★ How do these things help you achieve academically?
- ★ Are you aware of this initiative that has been implemented in the school?
- ★ What are some things that you particularly need or appreciate to support your wellbeing and academic achievement because of your Pacific culture, that may not be so relevant to students from other cultures?
- ★ What advice would you give to NZ principals or teachers about what has worked for you as a student?
- ★ Is there anything else that could be implemented in schools to help Pacific student wellbeing and academic achievement?

Appendix 8: Focus group post it exercises for students

- ★ Use adjectives to describe the school culture (the feeling about the school)
- ★ Our culture is supported at the school by...
- ★ This [insert initiative/occurrence] has helped me by...
- ★ Pacific achieving success as Pacific looks like...
- ★ Our college does this by...
- ★ To support my wellbeing as a Pacific student my school does this...
- ★ To support my wellbeing as a Pacific student I need....
- ★ To support my academic achievement as a Pacific student my school does this...
- ★ To support my academic achievement as a Pacific student I need...

Appendix 9: Information sheet for teachers

Talofa lava,

Project Title: What approaches are used in school programmes and practices that attribute to the success of Pacific students.

Introduction: Talofa lava, my name is Annette Laban, and I am a Primary teacher at St Mary's Catholic School, Tauranga. I am currently on study leave to complete a Master of Education through the University of Waikato, and as part of my thesis my passion is to undertake research in the Pacific space. I am of Samoan and Tokelaun descent and I am enthusiastic about encouraging and supporting our Pacific students to succeed.

Aim: The aim of this project is to develop an understanding of what effective approaches are being used in school programmes and practices that support the success of Pacific students.

I will be undertaking a research study that proposes to explore and identify two questions:

- What approaches are secondary schools using in their programmes and practices to improve Pacific student success?
- What are Pacific students' perceptions of their teacher's role in their learning?

The main purpose is to find out what is working well within the school's Pacific policies and practices that are being implemented into their school programmes, and how these support the success of Pacific students.

Duration: The study will require 4 students who are of Pacific descent to participate in two 30-45 minute focus group sessions on separate days. You have been invited to participate as a teacher of Pacific students for a one-to-one interview that will take between 45-60 minutes. These interviews will take place at school during a time that is least disruptive to your school's programme and to students' learning.

Confidentiality: If you agree to participate then a consent form will be provided for you to sign. Confidentiality of your information is prioritised throughout the entire duration of this research. At no time will students' names or your name be recorded or made public in any of the research, and no links will be made between responses in the interviews that would identify you or the students. If the information provided in their interviews is published, this will be done in a way that does not identify the school as its source. While every effort will be made to protect anonymity of all participants, this cannot be fully guaranteed.

Data storage: All interview material collected including audio recordings and transcripts will be stored on the researcher's hard drive on a password protected computer. Data will be retained for five years in its original format, after which it will be deleted.

Right to withdraw: You may withdraw your participation at any time without giving a reason, and withdraw any data traceable to you up to two weeks after receiving your transcript.

Feel free to contact me directly should you have any further questions about this study.

My contact details are:

Annette Laban

a1404@students.waikato.ac.nz

Phone: 021 234 0582

Appendix 10: Consent form for teachers

I _____ have read and understood the nature of the research project and agree to participate as requested. I agree with the following statements.

- I understand that my participation is voluntary.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time, and to withdraw any data traceable to me up to two weeks after receiving the transcript, by emailing al404@students.waikato.ac.nz.
- I understand that everything said in the interview will remain confidential amongst the researcher and her supervisors.
- I understand that the transcript of the interview will be sent to me for review and to make any amendments and then returned to the researcher within 2 weeks to make any necessary changes.
- I understand that my identity will be kept anonymous throughout the thesis and any information provided will be kept confidential.
- I understand that whilst the researcher will do her best to protect my anonymity, she cannot fully guarantee this.
- I understand that quotes and information provided by myself will be used in the thesis.
- I understand that my responses, including audio recordings and transcripts will be stored on the researcher's hard drive on a password protected computer. Data will be retained for five years in its original format, after which it will be deleted.
- I understand that the findings of this research will be used for the author's thesis, and could be presented at future events and/or published in academic journals or other literature.
- I understand I will be kept updated about the research via email and an electronic link to the thesis will be emailed to me once the thesis is completed.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Participant: _____

Appendix 11: Interview questions for teachers

- ★ How would you describe your teaching style?
- ★ How has your teaching style adapted over your time as a teacher in response to Pacific student's needs?
- ★ What are your aspirations for the experience Pacific students have at your school?
- ★ What are your aspirations for the futures of Pacific students at your school?
- ★ How do the initiatives, undertaken under your leadership as a Pacific Liaison teacher, support these aspirations, the academic achievement and wellbeing of Pacific students?
- ★ Can you tell me about specific initiatives that have been used in the school to support Pacific students' academic achievement?
- ★ Who was involved in implementing these initiatives? How was success measured?
- ★ Can you tell me about specific initiatives that have been used in the school to support Pacific students' wellbeing? Who was involved in implementing these initiatives? How was success measured?
- ★ Are there any everyday practices that you encourage of staff or do yourself that are done to support Pacific student academic achievement or wellbeing?
- ★ Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix 12: Supervisor Confidentiality Agreement

Confidentiality Agreement for Supervisors

Thesis Title:

Exploring Approaches to support Pacific student success in Secondary Schools

Candidate: Annette Laban

This is to confirm that we have worked with Annette Laban to develop this ethics application and that we will support Annette Laban to ensure that the research is conducted in accordance with this ethics application.

Signed:



Supervisor: Emma Cunningham

Signed:



Supervisor: Sashi Sharma

Date: 9 May 2023

My contact details are:

Annette Laban

al404@students.waikato.ac.nz

Phone: 021 234 0582

Additional contacts:

Supervisor - Lecturer in Literacy: Dr Emma Cunningham

Email: emma.cunningham@waikato.ac.nz

Associate Professor: Professor Sashi Sharma

Email: sashi.sharma@waikato.ac.nz

Appendix 13: University of Waikato Ethics

Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations

Guidelines for Professional Practice and Community Contact in the Conduct of University Research or Related Activities

This Appendix should be read in conjunction with the preamble.

The Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations are published in the [University of Waikato Calendar](#) and explains the standard of ethical conduct required in University research involving human participants, and the procedures that apply for the maintenance and monitoring of those standards.

In the course of engaging in research activities as part of their work or study at the University, staff and students may interact with members of the wider community in a variety of ways. In all such interactions, the staff member or student concerned is representing the University, and must therefore be mindful of the importance of professional conduct, with a view to upholding and enhancing the University's, as well as their own, reputation.

The following guidelines have been developed by the University of Waikato's Human Research Ethics Committee to articulate good practice for engaging with members of the community in the course of planning and carrying out research involving human participants.

These guidelines list generic items of protocol that should be taken into consideration when arranging appointments and participating in meetings. Advice is also provided about appropriate follow-up actions and relationship-building.

General Principles

The guidelines reflect common sense practices based on the principles of:

- respect
- cultural awareness
- commitment to learning and sharing knowledge

Understanding the context

Familiarise yourself with the University's policies and regulations about research. As well as the Human Research Ethics Regulations, the following documents all provide important information relevant research and ethical conduct:

- Student Research Regulations
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Code of Ethics for Academic Staff

Preparing for the engagement

- Ethics approval is required in advance for any research involving people, so you must first seek approval of your research project (refer section 22 of the Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations).
- Be clear about the purpose of your research, whether it is a regular part of your professional training or a one-off assignment as a student, or a professional/research activity as a staff member.

- Discuss proposals with your supervisor, course coordinator, or other appropriate staff member before arranging meetings with members of organisations or the general public.
- Organise well ahead of time: schedule appointments appropriately in advance (normally at least one week).

During the engagement

- Act professionally at all times: be polite, courteous, prompt and dependable.
- Adopt appropriate standards of dress, behaviour and language that signal your commitment to the successful conduct of the meeting.
- Arrive on time for appointments. If lateness or late cancellation is unavoidable, ring and apologise (preferably before you are due to arrive).
- If negotiating entry into a setting without prior arrangement, seek permission appropriately from those with the right to grant it and express your gratitude to all those who facilitate the visit.
- If activities are related to coursework requirements, adhere to agreed arrangements and do not change plans without the formal approval of a staff member with responsibility for the assignment.
- Use appropriate language for introducing yourself, based on your own position and the position(s) of those with whom you are meeting. Normally introduce yourself by your own full name (first name and surname, and title if appropriate) and address others using their full name and titles as appropriate (e.g., Dr, Professor, Your Worship) until they instruct you otherwise.
- Follow appropriate etiquette (e.g., do not sit until invited) and become familiar with cultural variations (e.g., regarding the exchange of business cards).
- Do not take things for granted: attention (or lack of it) to even apparently trivial conventions or protocols can significantly influence the outcome of encounters.
- Regardless of information sent in advance, restate or further explain your purpose, intention, what you want or expect from the meeting, how you wish to use any information obtained, and what you can do for the individual(s) or institution(s) participating (e.g., share reports, offer a presentation).
- Ensure there is mutual agreement regarding the way any information discussed may be used and disseminated. Formalise this agreement in writing when there are conditions.
- Ensure any financial reimbursement arrangements are professionally and ethically appropriate and that payments have been properly organised.
- Follow practices consistent with the University's commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi. Be aware of Māori protocol, where appropriate, and behave accordingly. If you are in doubt, ask an appropriate person.
- In all contexts, be aware of and respect the cultural practices of others.

Following and ongoing relationships

- Always explicitly thank the contact person/placement supervisor/ organisation before and after the interaction. Be sincere in expressing your appreciation for their time and effort, even if the meeting failed to achieve everything you hoped for.
- As appropriate, sustain healthy and collaborative working relationships with individuals and/or organisations.
- Adhere to agreed arrangements for confidentiality or anonymity. Check any issues that were not explicitly clarified during discussions.
- Do not take advantage of people's willingness to divulge sensitive or proprietary or trivial information. You are in a position of trust: do not share information around, even informally.

- Implement the principle of reciprocity in relationships. As far as possible follow through on anything you promised to undertake or provide.
- More generally, try to ensure through your conduct that individuals and organisations will be likely to assist other University staff or students in similar ways in the future.
- If matters do not proceed in a satisfactory manner for any reason, contact your supervisor/course coordinator/Departmental Chairperson or other appropriate senior University staff.