Educational Engagement Practices of Tongan Parents in relation to their Children's Learning

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the parental engagement of Tongan parents in relation to their children's learning and designs an engagement framework to enhance this engagement. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory framework was employed to conceptualise and inform the analysis of parental engagement of Tongan parents in this research.

Talaloto, a new Pacific research methodology which I developed for use in this study, was utilised for data collection from Tongan parents, as a way of capturing their authentic voices, grounded within their culture. Talaloto provides a space for personal lived experiences to be told. Focus group interviews were used for gathering data from teachers and students. Initial data collection motivated me to develop and implement an intervention to enhance parental engagement practices, for a sample of Tongan parents, students, and teachers, associated with a local primary school.

The findings showed that parental engagement is an holistic process, requiring collaboration between home, school, and the wider community to enable both participation and interaction. Recognition of and valuing home funds of knowledge as well as the implementation of home visits by teachers, were found to be significant contributors to transforming relationships and lifting student achievement.

The intentional creation of an Engagement Broker role for the purposes of the intervention demonstrated the importance of such a role in providing guidance to all participants as they navigated differing contexts and new roles and relationships.

A key outcome of this study was the development of the '*Kato Alu* 'framework, where a cultural metaphor is used to conceptualise and contextualise the understanding and use of parental engagement practices by Tongan parents in their children's learning. I used the four stages of crafting the Kato Alu: Tokonaki (preparation), Lalanga (weaving), Teuteu'i (decoration) and Foaki (presentation), to symbolise the four steps for guiding the parental engagement process. The hope is that this framework may be applied in other Pacific settings and can be adapted for broader use.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my father, Soane Takaetuli Naufahu (RIP) and mother, Malia Naufahu, who have both inspired me to be the best version of myself. You have put your hearts and souls into your family endeavours and surpassed all personal goals you have set. You have prepared the soil so I can grow. You have taught me so many things and I want to thank you for inspiring me in life and to be the person I am today.

This is for them.

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GLOSSARY

alu	A plant scientifically known as *Epipremnum pinnatum*
‘Eua	The name of an island in Tonga
faka’ap’apa	respect
fakaivia	empower
fakakoloa	enrich
fakamafana’i	to give warmth
fakataha	meeting
fakame	White Sunday for children which falls in May on the first Sunday
fekau/pu’i	to give an order or instruction to someone
fetaki	Branch cuttings placed on top of the ‘umu to allow air to circulate
foaki	presentation
folakoloa	laying out of wealth
fola’osi	laying out everything you got
ha’ame’avale	commoners, people who are not from noble families
kainga	extended family
kakala	flower garland, typically worn around the neck
kato	basket
loto	heart
lotu	prayer
mafana	warmth
malie	relevancy and worthiness
mata	face
matu’a	elders
mehikitanga	aunty
mo’oni	truth
mohokoi	A plant scientifically know as Cananga odorata
nopele	noble
poto	clever
talanoa	to talk or tell

talaloto	To share a personal testimony
tapu	sacred
teuteu’i	decoration
to’a	brave
toli	picking / to pick
tokonaki	prepare
tu’a	back
tu’asina	uncle
tu’i	king
tuitui	candle nut
‘umu	Tongan earth oven
vanua	land in Fiji

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem Statement –

I am proudly Tongan born, the son of subsistence farmers, a husband, father, educator, and Tongan Community leader. I call Aotearoa New Zealand home, but my heart is focussed on rectifying the inequities I see present in the educational outcomes of Tongan children throughout their schooling journey.

As a member of the local Tongan community and a primary school teacher, I taught at the primary school in this study for sixteen years. During this period, the number of Tongan students on the school roll increased dramatically, as Tongan parents from nearby suburbs enrolled their children at this school. Over time, I became more involved with Tongan parents through numerous community events, and parents appeared to be comfortable working with me and relied on me for school related matters.

The relationship that developed acted as a bridge for parents who distanced themselves from the school and infrequently associated themselves with any school event. Parents relied heavily on me to act on their behalf in matters such as behavioural problems, reminding them of upcoming events, and seeking homework assistance for their children. This was reminiscent of my perception of parents back in Tonga, where it is commonplace for parents to drop their children at the gate of the school and then leave. A myth from the islands still resonates with Tongan parents here in New Zealand, that, '*it is the job of the teacher to cater for all the learning needs of their children*'. This triggered the motivation to help inspire Tongan parents to recognise and value their home funds of knowledge and how they can make a difference in their children's learning.

With the hope of changing this perpetuated myth about the role of the teacher, from the beginning of 2007 I introduced a range of educational initiatives designed to engage Tongan parents. I organised numerous meetings with Tongan parents intending to build relationships with teachers, fund raising events were held, a homework centre for Tongan parents to get engaged in their children's learning was created, and even personal contact with families was made. Additionally, there were lengthy discussions with Tongan men at social kava nights on Fridays, and personal invitations for me to speak in many of

the local Tongan churches about education and the role of parents in their children's learning. However, despite these initiatives, there was little resulting impact on the achievement levels of Tongan children at our school. Clear evidence of this can be identified in Table 1 below.

Recording end-of-year data from 2013-2015, Table 1 reveals that the majority of Pacific students were achieving well below the National Standards in writing, reading and mathematics. Of note, most of these students were Tongan. The percentage of Pacific students who were achieving at or above the National Standard was fluctuating between 46% and 61%.

Table 1: Pacific Students' Writing, Reading and Mathematics Trend Table Results (2013-2015)

	2013		2014		2015	
	At Above	%	At Above	%	At Above	%
Writing	20	48.8	22	53.7	18	47.4
Reading	19	46.3	23	56.1	19	50.0
Mathematics	24	58.5	25	61.0	22	57.9

Our school attempted a few initiatives designed to raise the achievement of Tongan students as well as other priority learners who were lagging. A Home-School Partnership programme instigated by the Ministry of Education was implemented in the mid-2006s but discontinued two years later. Visits to other schools were part of Teacher Only Day programmes, reading workshops with parents at the Tongan playgroup were held; and teachers aimed to build strong and positive relationships with Pacific parents. There were home contacts between teachers and parents which included teachers writing an introduction or welcoming letter (in English) to parents at the beginning of the year detailing their programmes for that particular year. Parent interviews were trialled on Saturdays and extensive professional development for teachers on Pacific education also took place. However, despite these programmes being established, there appeared to be little or no corresponding increase in the achievement level of the Tongan students.

Obviously, there was no simple answer to raising Tongan students' achievement at our school. The challenge, then, was to explore why the school was failing to deliver

successful educational outcomes for the Tongan students and address what could be done to alleviate this. My concern, as a Tongan teacher, was that Tongan students had increased in numbers (from 3% to 18%) over the years to become the second largest ethnic group at our school and that this percentage was more likely to keep growing in the future. Based on the data in Table 1, without interventions, it seemed likely that Tongan students' achievement would not improve. This motivated me to further investigate other pedagogies around how to solve this problem by paying special attention specifically to parental engagement practices. I was aware that this focus would be challenging. In an earlier interaction that I have had with Tongan parents, there were some heated discussions around the role of parents in helping their children's learning. This was not a popular discussion topic as most of the parents indicated that they believed that it was the sole responsibility of the teacher to teach their children.

Inspiration about what was possible with parental involvement came from a surprising source, sevens rugby. Seven years ago, our school's sevens rugby team held the Waikato Primary school championship title for almost two years. The coach, a teacher and former Waikato rugby player, trained and moulded this group of boys to become a tight-knit group who seemed to believe in themselves and what they could achieve. The relationship between the coach and the parents of this group appeared to be strong, positive, and healthy. As the team progressed there became a stage where other primary schools did not look forward to playing against them as they were viewed as unbeatable. As a result of this success some of the players had scholarships lined up for them when they left our school. More than half of this team were Tongans. The success of the side continued until the teacher who coached this side moved to another school.

Of particular relevance was that Tongan parents whose children were in the team became intensely involved and took great care not to miss any training sessions and game times. They were eager to help the coach at any time and even held extra training sessions with their own children straight after school at the park opposite our school on non-training days. Some of the games were played as far as Tokoroa (2 hours), north of Auckland (4 hours), and I noted that parents did not hesitate to travel, at their own expense, to these games. Parents even enrolled their children in junior rugby clubs with the hope of further improving their skills and rugby knowledge. We became a school of

rugby fanatics, and the success of this team was buzzing around the community. There were parents who attended match games just for support, even though they themselves did not have any children in the team. The school community was extremely proud of this team, and this was reflected in the level of support shown.

As I reflected on the success of this team, I noted that the involvement of the parents was significant, and I was certain that they had contributed to the successful outcomes of the team. Unfortunately, when the coach left, parents slowly disappeared and rugby in our school went back to square one and eventually we even abandoned our involvement in tournaments due to the lack of success. However, the more I reflected on the success of these seven a-side teams and the contributions that parents made, the stronger my desire to dig deeper into parents' engagement practices in their children's learning in other areas became. I found it significant that parents with a typical perception that the teacher has the sole responsibility for children's learning, would become so intensely involved in a school-related area of their children's lives such as rugby.

My understanding of Tongan parents' perspectives had also been informed by previous research. My dissertation *(An investigation of Tongan parents' aspirations, expectations, and views of the value of Early Childhood Education for their children),* a small research study that I undertook for the completion of my Master's degree, was contextualised in a Tongan playgroup. The findings revealed that Tongan parents have high aspirations and expectations for their children's learning. They all wanted and hoped for their children to do well at school, have good jobs and a successful future (Mefi Naufahu, 2015). However, most of the parent participants in my Master's research seemed to distance themselves from knowing or learning about what their children did at the play group. They dropped off their children in the morning and then picked them up around midday when the play group finished. Parents saw the playgroup as a nest for learning English language, a place where children learn the Tongan culture and traditions and learn religious concepts. Of particular significance, most parents thought that it was the job of the playgroup co-ordinator to teach these concepts and they did not see themselves as contributors to this learning. The participants found it hard to make a link between playing and learning. They thought that playing is for enjoyment and has no connection to learning.

This finding brings me to the intention of my current study. That is, to explore and gain an understanding of the perceptions of Tongan parents, their child, and teachers around the role they play in the learning of their children. It also seeks to ascertain the type of engagement that exists and what motivates this. I also wished to investigate what structures could be established to support improved engagement, with the prime motivation being to enhance educational success.

The limited engagement of Tongan parents in their children's learning is not merely a local problem, but also an issue that is found nationally (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006). As such, the aim of this study was to explore this issue and ascertain whether Tongan parents understand the extent to which they do matter. I have no doubt that this study will not only help enhance Tongan parents' engagement practices but will also have broader implications for other schools with Tongan parents (and other Pacific parents) more widely.

The following were the two overarching questions of this study:

Research Questions:

1. How do Tongan parents, students and teachers perceive the parental role in the learning process?
    a. What types of formal and informal engagement practices do Tongan parents have with their children's learning?
    b. What factors influence Tongan parents to engage with or disengage from their children's learning?
    c. How do Tongan parents view or value their contributions toward their children's learning?
    d. How does the perception of Tongan parents of their children's learning align with that of the child and the teacher?
2. How and to what extent can an intervention programme designed on the basis of Research Question 1 findings support and enhance Tongan parents' engagement practices with their children's learning?

1.2 Significance of this study

This study proposes culturally appropriate parental and pedagogical practices that offer insight into valuable approaches to enhancing understanding and collaboration between teachers and Tongan parents in the interests of supporting children's learning. These approaches will be of interest to schools wishing to understand for themselves how to work constructively with Pacific families in a reciprocal manner.

There are three main reasons why this study is so significant. Firstly, this study directly relates to the raising of achievement levels of Tongan students whose educational disparity and lower educational outcomes are widely recognised within the New Zealand education sector (Houghton, 2015). While this study mainly focussed on the parental engagement of Tongan students and their parents, the intention is that this could be broadened to the wider Pacific context. Secondly, the introduction of *talaloto*, a new Pacific research methodology (a Tongan cultural dialogue technique from a church setting), contributes to the field of Pacific research. Thirdly, the study uses Kato Alu, (a traditional Tongan ceremonial basket), as a metaphor for conceptualising parental engagement practices of Tongan parents from a cultural perspective. The process of making the Kato Alu provides a framework with different stages representing the way in which parents, teachers and schools can enhance engagement with their children's education.

1.2.1 Raising achievement

The findings of this study could benefit Pacific educational outcomes in New Zealand, considering that parental engagement plays an important role in lifting student achievement. The greater demand for enhancing Pacific parents' engagement in their children's learning, justifies the need for understanding effective parental engagement approaches for Tongan parents. Schools, professional learning development providers, and other educational providers that apply the recommended parental engagement approach from this study are likely to enhance their students' learning performances.

While much research (J. Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Ferguson, Gorinski, Samu, & Mara, 2008; Gorinski & Fraser, 2006) has found that nurturing relationships and engaging with families/caregivers and communities can help lift educational achievement, very little

research, has explored the engagement of Tongan parents in their children's learning. My thesis addresses this gap in the extant research. The research not only identifies parental attitudes that constitute barriers to engagement but develops and trials an intervention that helps shift teachers' understandings and practices and raises both Tongan students' learning achievements as well as improving the parental engagement practices of Tongan parents.

1.2.2 New Methodology

Another significant aspect of this study is the introduction of a new Pacific data collection method known as *talaloto,* a Tongan concept borrowed from the church setting. Talaloto is a Tongan cultural dialogue technique where an individual connects their heart, mind, and soul to bring to the fore, and share the existing realities stored within. It is a personal testimony of an individual's lived realities and is presented in a format that offers the individual the space to talk freely, without interruption. That is, the rest of the congregation remain silent while a talaloto is given. This church ritual is also used in non-church contexts but still entails exposing true lived experiences of an individual. While talaloto focuses on a Tongan context, it could also be applied to other Pacific contexts.

The talaloto, as a cultural space, enables the individual to interact freely when they feel open to expressing themselves. Through the talaloto, a special environment is created during the introductory scene by the researcher. This helps trigger those deep hidden narratives of lived realities of the individual. The concept of talaloto itself, positions the individual in an environment that connects them to the church setting and its familiarity, which brings comfort, warmth and courage that permit talaloto to flow uninterruptedly. Talaloto as a research methodology, has the ability to facilitate meaningful exchanges with Tongan and other Pacific participants. Of benefit, the depth of my cultural understanding as well as being a Tongan researcher, placed me in a secure position to initiate and carry out my study using talaloto.

1.2.3 New parental engagement model

'*Kato alu*,' (a Tongan traditional ceremonial basket) was developed as a cultural metaphor for strengthening engagement practices of Tongan parents in their children's learning and helping address the paucity of Pacific parent engagement models. The four stages of

making the Kato alu (*tokonaki/preparation, lalanga/weaving, teuteu'i/decoration, and foaki/presentation*), symbolise actions taken with parents, students, and teachers on how to initiate and undertake practices to strengthen understanding and relationships between home and school and enhance parental engagement. The different stages are explained in detail in the Kato Alu model section.

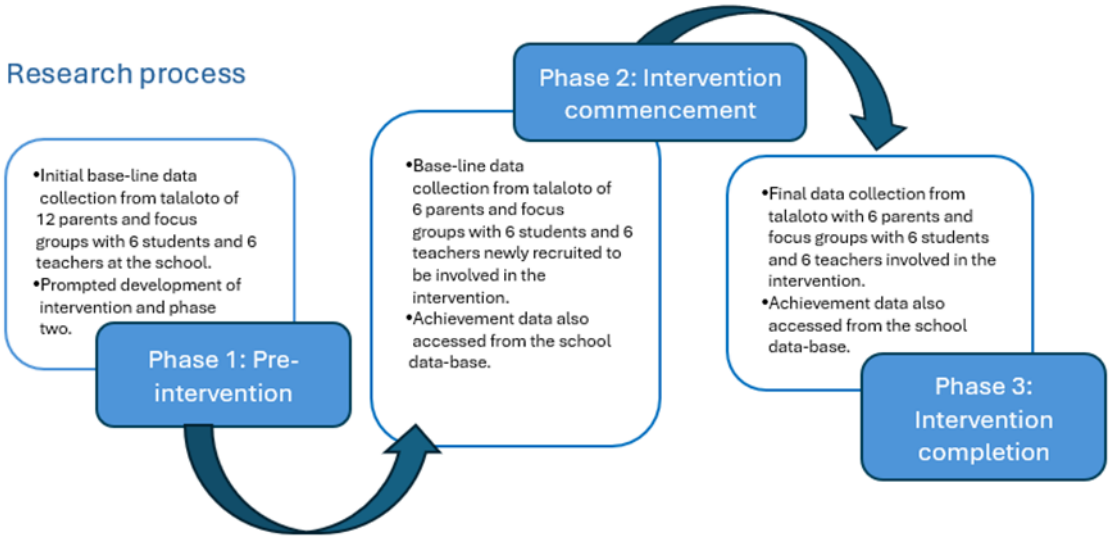
1.2.4 Chapter outline

In this chapter, Chapter One, I have introduced how I came to the realisation that parental engagement was an untapped field in Pacific education, including Tongan communities, which according to research has the potential to lift student achievement. There were two sources of evidence that underpinned this view. The first was my observation, as a teacher, of Tongan parents' limited engagement in their child's school-based learning and the other gained from observing sustained parental engagement in their children's rugby. The research questions are introduced as well as the rationale behind why this study is of significance.

Chapter Two discusses the theoretical perspective that informs the study and reviews the pertinent literature. The chapter outlines Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory. As a system, Bronfenbrenner's model offers a framework for understanding the complex environmental layers within parental engagement. This chapter also provides an overview of relevant international, Pacific, and New Zealand Pacific literature. I explore different models of parent-school involvement and argue the need to consider the significance of the concept of parental engagement, which captures a deeper understanding of how parents can support their children's learning. Engagement positions parents, teachers and students as partners in a non-deficit way. The move from involvement to engagement can be assisted by the inclusion of an engagement broker who supports the interaction between the parties involved.

Chapter Three discusses the research design, including the pre-intervention and intervention phases. It outlines the characteristics of the study's school and participants, and the qualitative methods utilised. Talaloto is introduced as a new method of data collection, which is culturally familiar for the participants and is grounded in traditional

Tongan cultural practices. An outline of the three phases of research and their inter-relationship is shown in the following diagram:



Chapter Four, the pre-intervention phase, examines engagement practices of Tongan parents in relation to their children's education that existed in the study school at that time. Data were gathered through talaloto of twelve parents and focus groups with six students and six teachers. These captured the rationale for parental engagement or disengagement and provided the impetus for the subsequent intervention.

Chapter Five presents the next phase of data collection undertaken with the intervention participants (six parents, six students, and six teachers) prior to the commencement of the intervention process. Student achievement data, accessed from the school data base is presented, alongside data from the talaloto and focus groups undertaken with the participants.

In Chapter Six, I describe the intervention itself, outlining the different stages and the ways in which the participants interacted throughout this. This includes both the initial whole group and individual meetings between the parent, teacher, and child. I also introduce the role I played as the Engagement Broker. A significant aspect of the intervention was visits undertaken by teachers to Tongan family homes. Detailed narratives and learning around home visits by two of the teachers are included in this chapter.

Chapters Seven and Eight present the intervention results in terms of student achievement, and the emerging themes respectively. The latter includes parents', teachers' and students' views of parental engagement which occurred through the intervention. Chapter Seven includes data from the final research phase, through talaloto, focus groups and access to the school's end-of-year achievement data, showing gains made by students through the duration of the intervention.

Chapter Nine introduces the Kato Alu model. This is a new model, which specifically utilises the metaphor of the Kato Alu (ceremonial basket) to specify and provide guidance for future educational parental engagement initiatives for Tongan parents. This is a model which could be tailored to and replicated for other Pacific educational settings.

Chapter Ten, the discussion chapter, presents the key themes and findings which have emerged from my research, drawing together conclusions from all three research phases.

Chapter Eleven offers the final conclusions and recommendations stemming from this research.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This review examines literature pertinent to the parental engagement of Tongan parents in relation to their children's learning, specifically the interactions between parents, children and teachers within their immediate settings. This literature review investigates three key areas, the first focussing on the ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979) as an underpinning conceptual framework. A review of literature associated with engagement practices comprises the subsequent sections, beginning with an examination of traditional Tongan interactions, followed by analysis of relevant international, Pacific, and New Zealand-based studies.

These sections are further organised as follows: Section one consists of: (a) perspectives on ecological systems theory and a discussion of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory which sets the conceptual framework for this study; (b) an exploration of the traditional parental engagement practices of Tongan parents; (c) a review of international literature on parental engagement, including sections on both parental involvement and engagement, home funds of knowledge and home visits; (d) literature around parental engagement in the Pacific; and (e) Pacific parental engagement in New Zealand. These sections are followed by (f) a summary of the main messages about parental involvement and parental engagement in relation to students' learning; (g) a definition of parental engagement in this research context; (h) a summary of this literature review; (i) identification of gaps in the literature; and (j) a concluding section.

2.2 Ecological systems theory

Ecological systems theory, developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979), provides this study with a theoretical rationale and perspective for analysing the close interrelationships between teachers, parents and students, and the influence of home and school settings and other surroundings on the development, experiences and learning of students. Ecological systems theory is described by Bronfenbrenner as:

> *…a study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which, the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 21)*

The emphasis on roles, activities, and relationships between individuals and contexts, provides a significant lens for this research to utilise when investigating how individuals make sense of their environments.

2.2.1 Rationale for this theory

This study necessitated a theory that could encompass the complexity and multifaceted nature of guiding and improving (Eriksson, Ghazinour, & Hammarström, 2018) parental engagement practices. The appeal of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory framework for this study rests on its definitions of complex environmental layers where each influences a child's development; particularly influential settings are families and communities (Knopf & Swick, 2008). The ecological perspective of Bronfenbrenner offers an avenue to accentuate both the child and the contextual systems, and their interrelationships, allowing a variety of "…conceptual and methodological tools for developing, implementing, and evaluating interventions" (Stokols, 1996, p. 283). Bronfenbrenner viewed the development of the individual as being influenced by the environment (Rosa & Tudge, 2013), and that the family and school play vital roles in supporting and interacting with the child, parent, and the teacher. As such, ecological systems theory is directly applicable to this study as it accommodates the diversity and changing nature of the relationships between participants, within educational, community and home settings, across both time periods and systems.

The child's world is perceived as, "a progression of nested structures that includes school, family, community and beyond," (Horwitz, 2015, p. 4). It is the interaction of these environmental layers or contexts within a person's environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) which are of particular interest. These layers are defined as five separate systems, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

2.2.2 Microsystem

As the first layer of Bronfenbrenner's nested ecological system, the microsystem, is the immediate setting of the developing individual where the child spends most parts of his or her life. This layer is specified by Bronfenbrenner as consisting of the child's home and immediate settings in which the child interacts. Anders, Cadima, Evangelou, and Nata (2017), describe this layer as the most influential layer in shaping the child's development. They refer to structural quality in relation to this layer as, "aspects such as family income, parental educational level, socioeconomic status and immigration status but also the availability of materials and other environmental characteristics," (p. 10). "The model assumes that structural aspects and beliefs have an impact on process quality which takes in turn direct effect on children and their development," (Anders et al., 2017, p. 10).

In this study, the microsystem settings are the homes, churches, and the schools, where the Tongan children spend most of their time. These settings are where children meet and interact face-to-face with parents, other siblings, peers, and teachers, and where individuals bring their own distinctive characteristics of temperament, personality and belief systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The sophisticated interrelations or connections between siblings, parents, peers, church members and teachers; the nature of these direct and indirect linkages, characteristics and personalities, and the school/home environments, influence the developing individual. Bronfenbrenner called these complicated interrelations of the immediate setting the 'microsystem'. Features of the child's immediate environment undoubtedly impact on the child's development, for example, parents working two jobs, the educational level of parents, their socioeconomic status, whether the household is overcrowded, or even the mindsets held by parents and teachers.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) points out that it is impossible to piece together parts of the evolving process of the developing individual, nor can it be done through direct observation. It can only be constructed through inference from patterns of activities, roles, and relationships in which the developing individual engages. In order to capture the reality of parental engagement practices, a challenge of this study was to gain insight

into lived realities of participants, through a combination of data gathering mechanisms and knowledge gained from inference acquired through activities, roles, and interactions.

2.2.3 Mesosystem

The mesosystem, the second layer of Bronfenbrenner's nested ecological system, is defined as interrelationships between microsystems. An example of a mesosystem is having parents (family microsystem) chaperone a school field trip (school microsystem). Bronfenbrenner suggests that the mesosystem is the connection of microsystems where interrelationships are overlapping. Hodgson and Spours (2013) refer to this layer as the layer where the developing individual determine his or her educational dispositions, behaviours, and aspirations.

This study incorporates the interrelationships between several microsystems, i.e., the school, homes, and the church setting. The influence of these microsystems on the developing individual may vary according to the length of time the developing individual spends in each microsystem. For example, some parents spend a considerable amount of their time working to support the family, with some, as referred to in discussion of the microsystem, even working two jobs to keep the family financially afloat. Therefore, most of their time is spent on work, leaving little time to help their children's learning at home. This may result in children falling behind the rest of their classmates although not necessarily, and is an example of the way in which microsystems overlap and impact on participants.

2.2.4 Exosystem

Bronfenbrenner (1979) defines the exosystem as, "…one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person," (p. 25). This is the third layer of Bronfenbrenner's ecological system and despite its indirect relation to the developing individual, still has an impact on the developing person.

There are examples which can be identified in this research context as constituting an exosystem, such as cultural events like a Tongan funeral, particularly if the family has to travel to the islands or other parts of New Zealand to attend. The decision, driven by

cultural obligation, may affect the child's learning and academic achievement, because of poor school attendance. This indicates that an impact on the developing person at the microsystem level can be caused by changes occurring in the exosystem.

2.2.5 Macrosystem

Macrosystem is defined by Bronfenbrenner (1979) as "…consistencies in the form and content of lower order systems (micro, meso, and exos) that exist or could exist at the level of the subculture or culture as a whole, along with any belief system or ideology underlying such consistencies," (p. 26). This is the outermost layer of Bronfenbrenner's ecological development system and, "… comprises cultural norms, societal values, and shared belief systems of societal groups. It also represents aspects such as the social structure of a society, demographic developments and how social inequalities are addressed in a society," (Anders et al., 2017, p. 5).

Within the study, "the interactions between all of the systems are defined by and define this outer layer," (Thor, 2016, p. 31). For example, the schooling opportunities of students are determined by the impact of the macrosystem, from national policies to the individual student. Thor emphasises that despite the macrosystem being the most distal layer, it has the greatest influence on all other ecological levels, even the microsystem. This means that any changes in policies from the national level influence the developing individual at the microsystem level, since the implementation of policies often happens at the microsystem level. For participants in this study, it is expected that cultural aspects will feature prominently in their macrosystem, given that they are all Tongan parents who are living within a strong, Tongan community, yet working and educating their children within a Western system as a minority group.

2.2.6 Chronosystem

Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes the chronosystem layer as sociohistorical events that influence the developing individual and the patterning of events and changes that occur over an individual's life. Bronfenbrenner refers to sociohistorical events as events that occur prior to the birth of an individual which can still influence and shape the individual or a society. An obvious example of a current sociohistorical event is the Covid-19 pandemic. The transmission of social and economic disadvantage of this sociohistorical

event in our Pacific families is causing an impact now but its effect is highly likely to be felt by future generations.

A key feature of ecological systems theory is its ability to examine behaviours across a period of time, rather than them being confined to a single event. According to Bronfenbrenner, "it requires examination of multi-person systems of interaction not limited to a single setting and must take into account aspects of the environment beyond the immediate situation containing the subject." (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 514). The interaction or interrelationship between the child and the environment is argued by Bronfenbrenner to trigger the establishment of relationships based on communication within the environment (Benjamin, 2015). The theory also acknowledges and allows for exploration of the way in which relationships and actions within one system may be reciprocal, and their influence not confined to that particular system, but felt beyond.

2.3 Further revisions

From the 1970s through to the late 1990s, Bronfenbrenner revised his theory across an additional two phases. In the initial phase (1970s) the focus was, "not simply on the environment, or context, but on the ecological system that included the developing individual," (Rosa & Tudge, 2013, p. 246). In the second phase, time became a concept of greater importance, with Bronfenbrenner advising the use of a chronosystem model. A key feature of this second phase was the development of firstly the Person-Process-Context model, and subsequently the Process-Person-Context model (Rosa & Tudge) in which personal characteristics are given prominence. The third and final phase, saw the development of the bioecological theory and model, which included the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model that was then utilised to inform and direct bioecological research.

2.3.1 Criticism of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory was not without criticism. Drawbacks identified include the perception that Bronfenbrenner's theory lacked attention to biological influences and cognitive processes (Elder, 1995; Santrock, 2008). While Bronfenbrenner amended his theory to include biological influences (Lerner, 2005), critics still believe that his adjustment to the theory does not fully address its limitations,

as it ignores the concept of innate ability, and neglects the diversity of human characteristics that impact on how individuals within the same environment respond (Mönks & Mason, 1993).

2.3.2 Utilisation of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory

Despite these critiques, I found Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory relevant as it focusses on the quality and context of the child's environment which increases in complexity as the child's physical and cognitive structures develop and mature over time. The current study is a short piece of research, conducted across a 6 – 12-month period. The core focus is on the changes that can be made in parental engagement through shifts in teacher and parent beliefs and practices and the perceived impacts of these on their children's learning achievements. While a longitudinal study could explore the impact of time, which is highlighted in Bronfenbrenner's second and third phases in relation to chronosystem, this aspect was not a central consideration of this study.

This study utilises Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, rather than subsequent models or revisions, as I view it as being the most appropriate for the research that was undertaken and the context of the participants. While the intent of this study was to improve learning achievement outcomes for Tongan students, its core focus was on parental engagement. Ecological systems theory allows for observation and analysis of more than one individual (for example, parent, child, and teacher) and offers an opportunity to focus on all participants. Further revisions, specifically the bioecological system, place greater emphasis on the child and their personal characteristics.

2.4 Traditional upbringing context for Tongan children

Tongan tradition and culture are predominantly passed down through oral traditions (Crane, 1978; Herda, Terrell, & Guncon, 1990). Written literature pertaining to the subject of traditional Tongan parental engagement is limited and this poses a challenge to the exploration of traditional parental engagement of Tongan parents in relation to their children's learning and development. Nevertheless, the limited literature (Firth, 1957; Herda et al., 1990; Kaeppler, 2007; Vakalahi, 2010) still captures aspects of relationships between parents and children, as well as glimpses of engagement and valuable cultural considerations, which may impact on parental engagement practices.

The following section explores societal structure, specifically hierarchy and kinship, as well as relationships within families including grandparents, parents, and children. This provides insight into cultural structures and aspects which impact on Tongan parents and children who are participants in this study and helps understanding of the nature of interactions and the perception of roles and responsibilities.

2.4.1 The hierarchy system and kinship

2.4.1.1 Societal structure

The hierarchy which infuses and governs the traditional Tongan way of life is complex, with Tongan society structured into three different layers or ranks. The tu'í (king) has the highest rank, followed by nopele (noble) and the haá meávale (commoners) (Firth, 1957). Affiliations between these layers are limited, complicated, and time consuming due to the number of cultural protocols associated with those of higher status (Gailey, 1987).

This system of ranking in the Tongan culture, "…has been characterised as one of the most hierarchical, centralised, and highly stratified societies in Polynesia, but also as having systems of rank and power that are contradictory," (K. James, 1992, p. 79). The 'pule' (social authority) was traditionally vested in titles, held by males, despite several examples recorded of females taking titles in lieu of a suitable male contender (Gunson, 1987). The structure of the 'kainga' (extended family) was mainly ruled by the joined forces of older brothers and sisters who were regarded as being highly skilful and who had different rights and duties from younger siblings (Rutherford, 1977b), who were treated as unskilful and placed in the lowest rank.

2.4.1.2 Family structure and relationships

Social inequality is evident in the Tongan kinship system (Firth, 1957), is also reflected in the individual household, and is apparent in a traditional household setting. Read and Bennardo (2007) emphasise that social interactions of Tongans are deeply rooted with one's world of kin. While the hierarchical system of the Tongan society is very intricate, the Tongan household structure is similarly sophisticated. The Tongan hereditary hierarchical system is driven by a set of principles according to age and gender (Herda, 1987; van der Grijp, 1988). These principles are applied to chiefly lineages, the allocation of power, and authority mirroring an individual's ranking in a lineage. van der Grijp (1988)

stresses that the interactions between parents and their children were traditionally constrained and avoided in certain circumstances:

> *Firstly, sisters have a higher status than brothers. Secondly, elder siblings have a higher status than younger. The order of these two principles is very strict: a woman has a higher status than her older brother…the third basic principle - patrilateral relatives have a higher status, and matrilateral relatives a lower status, than ego. Subsequently, the same rules which apply to ego's brothers and sisters apply to the father and mother of ego: father's eldest sister, the mehikitanga, has the highest status, next follow his younger sisters, and then, also in order of age, come the brothers. Thus, mother's brother, the tu'asina, in this system has the lowest status. (p. 449)*

Although fathers hold the highest rank and command in the household, interaction between them and the children is restricted, as Aoyagi (1966) explains:

> *Father and children: It is tapu (not allowed) for both sons and daughters to touch the father's head, to use his clothes, bed, combs and to eat the food he does not finish eating. Upon his death, they cannot stay inside a house where the corpse is laid. The attitude towards the father's brother is the same as towards the father. The head of a nuclear family is the father who is responsible for the management of the household affairs. When sons and daughters want to marry, they should consult their father, and if he forbids the marriage, the only way to affect their purpose is to elope. Mother and children: There are no tapu towards the mother. Either sons or daughters may use their mother's or sister's bed, clothes, and combs. (p. 161)*

2.4.1.3 The role and rank of children

The cultural Tongan institution does not regard the rank of children to have any authority, or power. For example, traditionally, the mobility of Tongan children was very much confined and limited to the boundary of their homes (van der Grijp, 1988) and their interactions with others was limited. The only rank in the household that children can interact freely with is their mother (van der Grijp, 1988). The father, brothers and sisters all have restrictions and fewer opportunities to interact with each other.

By the age of five, the main qualities of a child's character have been formed with the help of parents (Crane, 1978). The child learns to communicate through learning to talk and acquires other behaviours such as self-control, from parents. Parents mould their children to become 'poto' (clever), either to secure a job or become a successful subsistence farmer producing goods for the family (Rutherford, 1977a). Since the father holds restrictions in interacting with children, this parental help may be mostly carried out by mothers, as mothers rank like grandparents, in holding no interaction restrictions. This does not mean that fathers do not contribute to the learning of the child, but rather that perhaps fathers contribute less when compared to mothers and grandparents.

2.4.1.4 Brothers and sisters

Strong restrictions were placed on social interaction between brothers and sisters. Aoyagi (1966) identifies that while there were no limitations placed on social interaction between children and their mothers, restrictions with children and their fathers, and between siblings were evident. Children were required to show values and deference in their family interactions, such as showing respect for more senior members of the family and being compliant with adults' demands (Morton, 1996). At the same time children were discouraged from questioning adults who expected them to follow orders unreservedly. Morton describes the brother and sister restrictions as:

> *The relationship between them is still an outstanding feature of Tongan kinship... Brother and sister should respect (faka'apa'apa) each other. They cannot see each other naked. At ten years of age, they must sleep separately. A brother may enter the same room as the sister but may not talk to her without sitting down. The sister may not come into the brother's room or hut except on a special occasion such as a funeral. They may not use each other's comb, bed, clothes, or suitcase. They may take a meal together, must sit separately as far as possible, and must not use tableware in common, but if it is washed it may be used. When the brother is beside the sister he may not eat while standing. They may not lie down where they are together. When addressed, the other must reply with 'koau' politely. They may talk with each other except on such topics as a quarrel or love. When the sister is talking with someone, the brother should keep away from her lest he should overhear the conversation about an obscene matter. Each may not attend the*

wedding and funeral of the other. They may not dance together. The brother may not join a circle of 'kava' drinking in which his sister is asked to make kava. The sister may cook and wash for him, but not his underwear. When one is ill and there is no one else to care for the patient, the other may nurse, but must stay as aloof as possible from the patient. At parting, one may shake hands or kiss the cheek of the other. Elder brother and younger brother: It is 'tapu' (sacred) for the younger brother to eat the food the elder brother leaves over and to wear his clothes. Elder sister and younger sister: 'Tapu' of the same nature as between the brothers are also found in the relationship between the elder and the younger sisters. When one is delivered of a baby, the other may take care of her. (p. 162)

The use of restrictions and strict rules resulted in limited daily interactions between parents and children. Schoeffel et al. (1996) suggest that the traditional upbringing tends to use transactional dialogue as a process of giving advice or instructions that children are expected to listen to and obey, with information flowing in one direction; from higher to lower ranks. For children to challenge an order (fekau or pu'i) from parents is considered disrespectful and disobedient. The assumption is that higher ranks were always considered correct in all aspects, with the lower rank regarded as not ready to attain the wisdom of a higher rank despite a fekau, being wrong.

2.4.1.5 The role of grandparents

Kaeppler (1971) notes that grandparents form another distinctive rank, in the wider kinship system. van der Grijp (1988) observes that there is no restriction or tapu observed between grandparents and the grandchildren, and that this gives them freedom to assist children with their learning needs. Therefore, grandparents are fundamental to the survival of the Tongan culture and the impact of grandparents in grandchildren's preserving of the culture is critical (Vakalahi, 2010). Tongan grandchildren socialise with greater frequency with their grandparents than their parents (Vakalahi, 2010), positioning the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren as significant in childhood, and the result of the non-threatening role of the grandparents within the kinship system (Kaeppler, 1971). Vakalahi argues that grandparents play a critical role in the safeguarding and transferring of cultural values, beliefs, codes of conduct like respecting elders, and social interactions from generation to generation.

While some aspects of tapu within families are more strictly observed in Tonga, there is still significant evidence of traditional Tongan cultural practices as they apply to hierarchy and relationships, evident within Tongan families in New Zealand. The evidence can be found in church protocols, community cultural events, and some families. It is therefore relevant to recognise these traditions when evaluating the engagement of Tongan parents in New Zealand with their children's learning.

2.4.2 Traditional learning environments

Traditionally, the home and extended family provided the learning environment for Tongan children. With the advent of European contact, places of learning expanded to also include church and western-styled schooling.

2.4.2.1 Home

Central to early development, the home context for Tongan children is typically characterised by social restrictions, clear role delineation and allocated responsibilities (Aoyagi, 1966; Morton, 1996). Apart from venturing out to church and school, the home was the hub of children's lives. In this setting gender-specific chores were allocated, such as boys collecting firewood and helping fathers in the plantation (Morton, 1996). Roles for girls included helping their mothers with domestic tasks such as washing, cleaning, and cooking. Recreational time, if this occurred, took place before dinner, but was mostly confined to the perimeters of the home or neighbours.

2.4.2.2 School

Western-styled schooling is not a traditional Tongan construct, with the education of children in pre-European times being undertaken by the extended family. Children learned alongside parents and grandparents the skills required for survival within their environment (Koloto, 1998). Thus, the introduction of missionary schools, based on Western models in the 1800s in Tonga signalled a significant shift of context and roles for Tongan children and their families (Mavoa et al., 2003), as schooling took place outside of the family home and was conducted by 'experts' or teachers who became key transmitters of knowledge, armed with a mandate to, "civilise and convert," (Thaman, 2013, p. 70). The decline of traditional knowledge, shared by extended family within the home context, occurred proportionately to the increase in acquisition by children of

Western literacies which included religious and moral teachings in addition to the '3Rs', reading, writing and arithmetic (Mavoa et al., 2003). Goldsmith (1993) emphasises that the colonial powers' mission was to destroy the cultural patterns of traditional society and noted that there is no better way of demolishing a society than by undermining its educational system. Given this deliberate removal of Tongan families from the traditional education process, it is perhaps unsurprising that Tongan families, both in Tonga and New Zealand, tend to feel marginalised from school experiences.

Although it is possible to pinpoint the time period (the late 1800s and early 1900s) from which Western-style schools became widespread in Tonga, the move towards European knowledge and practices occurred over an extended period, commencing around the seventeenth century when the impact of European exploration and trade into the South Pacific was felt. The concept of 'thawing', described by Paongo (1996) relates to the impact of this exposure, highlighting both the perceived benefits for Tongans, such as trade and connectivity with the wider world, against the detrimental costs such as disease, 'blackbirding' and societal unrest. Against this backdrop of irrevocable change, participation in schooling outside of the home became the norm for Tongan children.
Participation in a formalised education system, taught primarily in English, shifted the place of Tongan language as a core medium of instruction for Tongan children. The 1921 decision by the Tonga Privy Council was that English would be the delivery language in schools. Delivery primarily in English remains widespread in Tonga today.

2.4.2.3 Church

An additional learning context for Tongan children, the focus of the church was on religious education of the youngest generation, through the provision of Sunday Schools, in order to support the wider aspirations of Christianity across Tonga (Latukefu, 2014). The link between church and home was strong, with religious instruction, including prayer meetings and recitation of Bible verses being undertaken by families during the week. While the school system was infused with Christianity, its core emphasis was academic, whereas the church was primarily concerned with the spiritual development of the individual. The firm guidelines of the church reflected those of the home, with the expectation that children would follow orders, obey instructions, and not ask questions.

Understanding traditional learning environments, particularly highlighting the importance of the church as an educational setting, is useful to this study as the church remains recognised as a valued factor in children's learning in Tongan communities today. This appears to be irrespective of location, whether in Tonga or overseas.

2.4.2.4 Vā and tauhi vā

Vā and *tauhi vā* provide cultural concepts for framing our understanding around relationships (Kaili, 2005), especially the relationship between parents and teachers. Kaili defines vā as the space between people or things, and tauhi vā as nurturing sociospatial ties. The term vā is commonly used in some Pacific islands such as Samoa and Wallis Futuna but tauhi vā is unique to Tonga. To conceptualise the complexity of the tauhi vā, Kaili suggests to first unpack the sociospatial connection of vā.

Kaili (2005) posits that vā points to a specific notion of space, especially the space between two or more things. Vā is a root word in the Tongan language where vahafolau (open space for sailing), vahanoa (the open space), and vaha'a (space between two things) are derived. Similarly, Simati-Kumar (2021) further explains vā as the space between, the between-ness, not space that separates, but space that connects and holds things together, or space that gives meaning to things. From another perspective, Mahina (2002) categorises vā into four dimensions; the physical, social, intellectual, and symbolic. Mahina's four categories of vā connects vā to human connections, which is reinforced by Kaili's view, that vā is an interpersonal experience of social relations and space. He suggests that sociality and spatiality (closeness between two people) are linked together in the social ontology of Tonga. This means that the social ontology of Tonga is captured in sociality and spatiality (closeness between two people). Such social connection of 'kainga' (people) is referred to by Kaili as sociospatial where these ties conceptualised the *'nofo 'a kainga*' (how people live). Where physical distance exists, such as the distance between people living in Tonga and the diaspora, the sociospatial still connects them through their genealogy (Kaili).

Tauhi vā is defined as the art of creating and maintaining beautiful socio-spatial relations and the practice of keeping good relations with kin and friends (Kaili 2005). Kaili refers to tauhi as to tend, care, look after or sustain the sociospatial connection. Mahina (2002) uses the metaphor of lalava (lashing), the lashing of coconut fibres around the beams of

the Tongan *fale* (house) to make sense of the tauhi vā as the Tongan art of lineal and spatial intersection. Kaili highlights that the practice of tauhi vā is visible at cultural settings such as funerals, weddings, birthdays as well as offerings in church. The practice of the tauhi vā in these contexts can be giving of donations to funerals by relatives and friends, exchanging of gifts during weddings or assisting with food preparations at weddings. Again, this is also evident in daily living among Tongan families here and in Tonga. For example, the sending of money back to the islands, or relatives in the islands sending boxes of taro, yams, or cassava to Tongan people in New Zealand. Kaili also proposes that tauhi vā extends beyond kainga (related people) to those who are kainga-like such as schoolmates, rugby mates, friends, as well as parents and teachers. An example of the tauhi vā on these contexts would be when workmates make a donation towards a funeral of a co-worker's family member. On this note, vā and tauhi vā are appropriate cultural concepts to be used to conceptualise the nature of relationships between parents and teachers.

2.4.2.5 Mālie and mafana

Mālie is a Tongan term which is associated or stemmed from the Tongan traditional dance, known as katoanga faiva. Manu'atu (2000) defines mālie as the process of making meaningful connection between the ta'anga (lyrics), hiva (singing), and haka (bodily movements). The word 'mālie' is often used by audiences before, during and after the faiva performances, as they chant mālie! mālie! This chanting can be the physical expression of mālie, which brings to life the definition by Faavae (2021), that mālie is a potent of spiritual energy that ignites the loto (soul).

When the three components, ta'anga, hiva and haka come together, they produce mālie (Manu'atu, 2000). Manu'atu implies that mālie cannot happen if one of the three components is omitted. She also includes the presence of the audience as a significant component of the mālie where the psyche and spirit of both the performers and audience, all of which energise and uplift people. She continues to emphasise that the individual emotion, feeling, spirit, and psyche are mobile, and they fuse with each other for both the performers and audiences, like waves. When mālie reaches this point, Manu'atu refers to the ta'anga (lyrics) and hiva (singing) as 'quanta of energy,' meaning that performers and audience, and energies reach deeper relationships. This deeper

relationship energy perhaps triggers audiences to start moving to the hiva (singing), and where mafana begins.

Mafana is a Tongan term described by Manu'atu (2000) as the movement of warm currents that energises the process of mālie. She argues that there are no equivalent English words that can describe the meaning of mafana. Manu'atu suggests that malie and mafana are inseparable units where both concepts are processes and energies. This is further supports by Fa'avae (2021) that mālie is always associated with mafana. Manu'atu points out that processes and energies transformed audiences and trigger them to start moving to the hiva, even those who cannot dance or move to music. However, at some stage they are sitting and the next they will be standing and engage in the performance.

By understanding the concepts of mālie and mafana, the question that could be asked is how we apply mālie and mafana to the classroom learning environment. Manu'atu (2000) argues that mālie in the classroom context is when the content, pedagogy, language, and context of learning are connected and are experienced by both the student and the teacher. The student experiences insight and a feeling of gratitude for their interactions with the teacher which results in understanding and helps address the student's curiosities and challenges. At the same time the teacher is experiencing insight and a feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction when students achieve their learning goals and improve their learning achievements.

2.5 Gaps in the literature

An emphasis has been on sourcing peer reviewed articles and other academic writing (for example, doctoral theses) with a focus on recency or revisions of earlier studies. Where a discernible lack of research was identified, particularly in the area of parental engagement of Tongan parents in their children's learning, the search criteria was broadened in an attempt to find examples of research irrespective of publication date. Where research relating to engagement in the Pacific and within New Zealand settings was limited, the parameters were also extended to include engagement practices in health, in an attempt to gain insights which could be transferred and applied to this study.

An example of this was the study by Pengpid and Peltzer (2018) into adolescent mental health and the role played by parents.

2.6 International literature on parental engagement

This review presents international literature pertaining to the interaction between parents, homes, and schools in the pursuit of improved educational outcomes for students. The research falls into two broad categories, parental involvement, and parental engagement, based on terminology and perceptions of scholars around what constitutes this interaction, and how it is best described. Literature around parental involvement tends to focus on a series of theories and models which focus on either home or school as discrete settings and between which partnership needs to and does take place. The parental engagement literature delves more deeply into ways in which homes and schools exchange information and knowledge, and value the funds of knowledge which each party holds. The literature in this review spans two to three decades, indicative of the relatively short period of time in which this topic has been prominent in discussions around student achievement, and how the contribution of families can be utilised.

2.7 Parental involvement

Discourse around parental involvement in their children's education has typically centred around a positive impact on educational outcomes, with research including the development of parental involvement models or frameworks and approaches. Characteristically, these identify a series of recommended steps and interactions to promote and enhance involvement. Analysis has also been undertaken which focusses on involvement practices which consider perspectives of cultural differences and environmental factors, such as living conditions and family demographics.

This section in the review explores key theories and models of parental involvement, including J. Epstein et al. (2002), Green et al. (2007), Jeynes (2018) Dual Navigational Model, the BEAR model (Froiland, 2021), Parental Involvement Theory (Grolnick, 2009), and parental involvement studies which address differing demographics.

2.7.1 Models

2.7.1.1 Epstein et al.

The J. Epstein et al. (2002) parental involvement model was designed to support schools in assisting families to help their children's learning within their home environment, through the incorporation of six functions: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning, decision making and collaborating. The educational support role played by the parents has been identified as a benefit of the model (Bower & Griffin, 2011). There is widespread evidence that Epstein et al.'s strategies have been used internationally, not only as a framework for involving parents, but also as a tool to measure actions and perceptions of both parents and educators. A sample of these include research undertaken by Newman, Northcutt, Farmer, and Black (2019) about parental insights across differing demographics in a range of settings in the United States, a Qatar study by Ihmeideh, AlFlasi, Al-Maadadi, Coughlin, and Al-Thani (2020) to measure family-school connections, and more recently, work by Ekinci-Vural and Dogan-Altun (2021) to explore teacher perceptions in Turkish early learning settings, with a view to improving connections with parents.

However, the model has not been without its critics, with limitations being cited as a lack of information provided by the school for parents around strategies to use at home, and parents' involvement still being defined in school terms rather than that of home (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Bower and Griffin's study also concluded that Epstein et al.'s model does not adequately address cultural differences between teachers and parents and therefore does not fully meet the needs of minorities.

2.7.1.2 Hoover-Dempsey

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (Green et al., 2007) also provide a model of parental involvement whereby tasks and actions are allocated to increase parental participation. However, unlike Epstein et. al's model, areas of focus are clearly divided into home and school. Hoover-Dempsey et al. identify skills and attributes required of parents to optimise involvement. A core component of their model centres around the utilisation of specific parental belief predictors, particularly relating to motivation, how parents perceive requests from the educational setting, and factors within their personal context.

Research by Lavenda (2011) in Israel sought to test the Hoover-Dempsey model outside of the United States of America. Lavenda noted that while there were some cultural variations within the Israeli setting, in general, parental perceptions were similar. Views of their sense of responsibility, the belief that they were being invited to engage in their children's learning, along with their own perceptions of their resources and ability to commit, were present irrespective of culture. This study however, focused on parents as a separate entity, as opposed to parents, teachers and students collectively. Research by Deslandes (2019) likewise saw benefit in an integrated model based on Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler but noted a drawback as being the lack of student voice within parental involvement.

2.7.1.3 Jeynes

Following on from earlier research into parental involvement which had a particular focus on minorities, including African American, Asian American and Latino participants, Jeynes (2018) drew on subsequent meta-analyses to develop the Dual Navigational Approach (DNA) model for usage in schools. This, "more fully distinguishes and develops the two primary branches of parental participation, i.e., the school-based component and the home-based aspects," (p.147). In acknowledging and drawing on a combination of these two areas, and dividing each into five components, Jeynes clearly sees a role for both home and school in supporting learning achievement. There are similarities between Jeynes' DNA, the J. Epstein et al. (2002) and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (Green et al., 2007) models, specifically in the division between home and school environments. However, Jeynes strongly emphasises the importance of partnership between parents and teachers as a mechanism for raising learning achievement of children. While there do not appear to be examples of the DNA model being trialled in other settings, Jeynes' approach informed research by A. G. James, Rudy, and Dotterer (2019) into the impact of parental involvement on student achievement during the transition into adolescence, particularly in minorities.

2.7.1.4 Froiland

The BEAR (Beliefs, Expectations, Autonomy, Relationships) model developed by Froiland (2021) promotes the psychological side of parental involvement and while it clearly also distinguishes between home and school, it proposes a link between the home-based and

school-based behaviours as they pertain to their children's learning. Froiland also sees a training role requirement for "parental involvement experts," (p.107) particularly in terms of homework support. He views the lack of training as a constraint across the schooling sector. The importance of relationships, built on trust is also a key factor in the BEAR model. Echoing the psychological approach of the Hoover and Dempsey model, Froiland discusses the mindset of parents and teachers and the importance of their belief that they can be instrumental in supporting the learning outcomes of their children.

2.7.1.5 Grolnick

Parental involvement also features in the self-determination parenting theory of Grolnick (2009), who explores three key dimensions of parenting: autonomy support versus control, involvement, and structure. This theory highlights the importance for teachers, when working with parents, to consider the pressure parents are facing and be sensitive to them by promoting autonomy as a goal for their parenting. The theory posits that if support autonomy is properly invested in parents, students are most likely to show autonomous motivation in their learning. Although stressing the value of parental involvement, this theory focusses strongly on parenting approaches, and, like Epstein et al.'s, does not appear to take into account the cultural differences between parties involved (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Likewise, as Denessen et al., note, "This partnership could be at risk when parents differ with respect to their educational attitudes," (Denessen, Driessen, Smit, & Sleegers, 2001, p. 6).

2.7.1.6 Summary of models

The models of parental involvement all have a common goal of increasing parental participation in children's learning in order to increase academic achievement of the child. There is a common theme of recognition of the home as a learning institution and the value of including parents in the learning process. However, what appears to be lacking is that none of these models fully offers a mechanism or approach for an equitable partnership between the parent, child and teacher, or completely bridge school and home. Yet, there are aspects of these models which are of interest to this study. This includes Epstein's recognition that parents have a role to play and that involving them in the home can improve outcomes. Similarly, of pertinence for the current study is the emphasis by Hoover-Dempsey (Green et al., 2007) and Froiland (2021) on providing

training for parents around supporting their children and the priority Jeynes (2018) and Grolnick (2009) give to minorities and cultural sensitivity.

2.7.2 Parental involvement with differing demographics

Research into parental involvement has also focussed on differing demographics ranging from birth order, specific minorities, and cross-cultural perspectives as they impact on the involvement of parents in their children's education.

Exploring links between birth order and the extent to which parents are involved in education, Cabus and Ariës (2017) conclude that younger children are disadvantaged in parental involvement compared to their older siblings and that the differences in parental contributions through the birth order has an impact on children's learning achievement. For instance, as the oldest child has the most attention, they then in turn benefit the most in terms of support for educational attainment. The study also comments on gender of children and parental age as factors which may be pertinent for explaining existing levels of parental involvement. Cabus and Aries (2017) refer to evidence that fathers will pay more attention and have increased involvement with their children if one of them is a son. This aligns with Tongan society whereby chores are still divided into those undertaken by girls (mainly domestic) and boys (outdoors) and fathers therefore spend more time with their sons because of this division of labour (Herda, 1990).

In reporting on the meta-analysis of 21 studies in the state of California in the United States of America, Jeynes (2003) whose Dual Navigational Approach has been described previously, identified that the minority groups that were involved in the studies were doing better than the others. The analysis was on the impact of parental involvement on the learning achievement of minorities. While the findings concluded that parental involvement was significant for the learning achievement of minorities, Jeynes also noted that there were differences between the success of certain minorities. For example, Asian participants had more success than Latino Americans. However, Stevenson and Stigler (1992), suggest that Asian American parents put more emphasis on their children's learning or they might be using incentives. The challenge they encountered was to continue more research as to why certain types of parental involvement favours specific ethnic groups.

Cultural comparisons related to parental perceptions and their impact on involvement are highlighted in research by Kremer-Sadlik and Fatigante (2015) which examines parental practices and beliefs about involvement in children's education of middle-class families in Los Angeles and Rome. The findings reveal that parents from both countries engaged in similar practices but their involvement in their children's learning was experienced differently and different assumptions were key motivators. The Los Angeles parents treated childhood as a period of preparation for adulthood with a belief that that the children's future depends on present actions, whereas Italian parents thought that space for children's autonomy and freedom was important. Of interest in the Kremer-Sadlik and Fatigante (2015) study, was the treatment of children in their learning. Los Angeles parents deliberately tried to shape the future of their children while Italian parents appeared to be engaged in doing the opposite. Kremer-Sadlik and Fatigante argue that each culture has their own perceptions and practices which in turn reflected and reproduced their own preferences and expectations regarding the childhood education of their children.

Given that this review of international research into parental involvement is representative rather than exhaustive, it is useful to draw on the conclusions made by Johnson and Annuals (2015), which provides a helpful, evaluative overview. They found that most research relied heavily on Western European ideologies and values of urban parents while neglecting to look at parents and communities' backgrounds. They argue that researchers mainly used mono-directional and not culturally responsive approaches (Reynolds, 2010), and failed to recognise how families understand parental involvement, and define parents and teachers' responsibilities. They also observe that schools in the research studies held deficit views of families (Johnson & Annuals, 2015). Their review identified that a recurrent theme in the models of Epstein et al. (2007), Froiland (2021) and Hoover-Dempsey (2007) was a delineation between home and school and, while Jeynes (2018) acknowledges both in her Dual Navigational Model, a divide persists. This divide contrasts with this study, which is based on the premise of collaborative engagement and seeks to combine home and school as an equitable whole in supporting the child's achievement. Furthermore, the student voice was not considered in any of the

studies (Johnson & Annuals, 2015) and this is something which this study seeks to capture.

However, there are also aspects of the parental involvement models and research reviewed that have clear links and considerations for this study. Relevant considerations include Froiland's emphasis on trust-based relationships and an invitational approach to engage parents (2021). Also pertinent is research that focusses on minorities, such as that undertaken by Jeynes (2018), which indicates the relevance of cultural differences. While not fully explored, this recognition is in keeping with the focus on Tongan parents in a New Zealand setting. Likewise, the investigation into birth order (Cabus & Ariës, 2017), in some ways aligns to the hierarchy system of the Tongan family which accords different status to children based on birth order.

2.8 Parental engagement

Alongside research and practices which focus on exploring parental involvement, there is an increasing focus on parental engagement. This section explores literature associated with parental engagement, including increasing acknowledgement and utilisation of home funds of knowledge, and home visits.

As mentioned, despite the tendency, at times, for the terms 'involvement' and 'engagement' to be used interchangeably, (Goodall & Ghent, 2014) propose that there needs to be a move from parental involvement which mainly focusses on parents and teachers, to parental engagement which focusses on parents, teachers and children's learning. Parental engagement portrays parents as having greater commitment and ownership in lifting students' learning performances compared to parental involvement (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). J. Epstein and Sanders (2006), also support a shift in terminology away from the term 'parental involvement'. They suggest 'School, family and community partnership,' as reference to the proverb that 'It takes a village to raise a child' which recognises the collective responsibility between many partners, such as the child, parents, teachers (school) and the community, that is required to increase student achievement. Likewise, Goodall (2013) emphasises parental engagement as a far bigger concept than parental involvement. Her premise is that student achievement lies at the heart of parental engagement, unlike the core focus of parental involvement which tends

to be on the parent. Thus, parents being inspired and committed to becoming engaged in their children's learning can be viewed as the greatest lever for children's achievement (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Goodall & Vorhaus, 2011).

2.8.1 Goodall's parental engagement model

An extensive review of literature by Goodall (2013) resulted in the development of a parental engagement model based on the identification and utilisation of key engagement elements:

> *The model highlights six elements of effective parental engagement: authoritative parenting (which underpins the other five elements), and the need to begin engagement early, to take an active (rather than passive or reactive) interest in the child's learning, to continue this interest throughout the child's life, to have high educational aspirations and to stay engaged. (p. 133)*

The model is heavily reliant on thorough knowledge by schools about the parents who are involved. It requires the school to be interested and invested in finding out more about parents. Goodall and Vorhaus (2011) in their report for the 2010 UK government, suggest that schools should adapt this model to meet the needs of their own settings, highlighting that the model is a starting point rather than a solution for schools (Goodall, 2013). Approaching parental engagement from an holistic or partnership approach has also been recommended by Goodall and Vorhaus (2011) who suggest key points for successful parental engagement include a holistic approach for schools' strategies for parental engagement, parental engagement training for teachers involved and providing parents with clear and specific information and training as well. The authors promote a two-way flow of information from school to home and vice versa, effective sharing of information, and planning and collaboration.

More recently, Goodall (2018) has reinforced her position on parental engagement, in promoting more equitable, sustainable, and fruitful partnerships among those involved. In doing this she draws on the example of Freire's concern with the 'banking model' of education, suggesting the need for liberation of parents and teachers in regard to engagement, as well as continuing to promote learner-centred practices when engaging parents in their children's learning. Likewise, Loughran (2008) suggests that good

relationships should be a partnership that provides a two-way information flow between parents and teachers, links classroom learning and home learning, and "…provides the mechanism for the teacher to invite, and support, the parents' active participation in the child's education in the home environment," (p. 35). Essentially, the core focus of a shift from parental involvement to engagement practices involves schools understanding and seeking to know the parents and the home environment of their children well and being aware of the significance of information flowing between home and school in ways which benefits the child.

2.8.2 Home funds of knowledge

The notion of home funds of knowledge is based on the premise that all people hold knowledge through lived experiences and that home knowledge can be utilised in a school setting to support and enhance learning in the classroom (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Loughran (2008) suggests good relationships between home and school involve partnership that provides a two-way information flow between parents and teachers, linking the classroom and home learning. Such partnership, "…provides the mechanism for the teacher to invite, and support, the parents' active participation in the child's education in the home environment," (p. 35). Early research in this area by Thomson and Hall (2008) examined three cases in British primary schools, where funds of knowledge 'leaked' into different school settings but were not completely taken up in these schools. In the first instance, a report on children's lives using the television was not allowed to be aired. The second case was about children producing self-portraits which were to test out their ideas. The third case involved interviews of children and visual data collection from a primary school in the north of England. Their examination of results suggested that there was evidence of home funds of knowledge spilling over into schools, but in order for these to be widely incorporated, there needed to be some changes to the national curriculum. Additionally, Thomson and Hall suggested that changes were required around the beliefs that schools, and teachers hold about working with minorities. They noted that, including home funds of knowledge, "… not only presented challenges to the teachers' moral views about children, but also to the marketised milieu in which the school operated" (p.94). Echoing concerns around a potential dichotomy between homes and school learning practices, attitudes, and values,

(J. H. Jackson, 2016) suggests that there is rich school related knowledge that exists in the homes that is not recognised by the school context.

The theme of the importance of home-based knowledge is also present in the work of Hedges (2015). This research argues that understanding funds of knowledge through a cultural lens, provides teachers with an analytical tool when trying to justify their pedagogical decision-making to understand students. This stance was recognised earlier in the work of Cooper et al. (1996) who assert that "The concept of funds of knowledge as an analytical framing provides various ways to transform the quality of relationships, communication, understandings, and curriculum" (p.24). While both Hedges (2015) and Cooper et. al (1996) suggest funds of knowledge can be an analytical tool for teachers, the current research proposes that recognition and awareness of funds of knowledge is significant for parents as well, as it signifies the value of knowledge they hold within the home and the value of understanding school knowledge.

Signalling perhaps an increasing awareness of the significance of home funds of knowledge, there are several recent examples within the New Zealand context, of efforts to access and apply home funds of knowledge. Research by Hunter and Sawatzki (2019) with Pacific intermediate school students in New Zealand, drew on home funds of knowledge as applied to financial reasoning (to do with a fish and chips meal). The use of funds of knowledge within the classroom environment was based on the assumption that, "by simply going about their everyday lives and experiences, all people accumulate skills and know-how which are embedded in their cultural practices, and which ensure personal and family well-being and development, in ways specific to their ethnic, family and community context" (p. 424). In testing this hypothesis their research focussed both on the home knowledge applied by the children, the perceptions of the teachers, and the insights that they gained through the exercise. They found that the exercise gave them deeper insights into students' socioeconomic, family, and cultural backgrounds. The understanding of both cultural and social 'norms' funds of knowledge of the home by teachers, helped to strengthen the links between home and school.

Research within the New Zealand secondary school context by Hogg (2016), is similar to the research by Hunter and Sawatzki (2019). Hogg's research centred on Māori and Pacific students' funds of knowledge and took place within the classroom. Hogg looks at

the pedagogical application of home funds of knowledge using a dialogic approach and strengths-based student engagement and discussion. It focusses on the information learners bring to the classroom from home rather than the school setting. She highlights that there are benefits for teachers when they learn and gain insight into the funds of knowledge that their students bring with them. The research by both Hogg (2016) and Hunter and Sawatzki (2019) is of particular interest to this study as they demonstrate examples of the utilisation of home funds of knowledge, within New Zealand education, and involves Pacific students. Their research reinforces the findings of this study, that recognising and valuing home funds of knowledge has the potential to enhance the student learning experience. The point of difference with my study lies in the reliance on students bringing their knowledge from home, rather than, as I am promoting, an interaction between home and school.

Jacobs, Harvey, and White (2021) discuss exemplars related to school readiness and the 'language gap' in a New Zealand ECE setting. They make specific links between opportunities for families to be sharing knowledge and for teachers to understand them when deficit theorising and its impact exist. In contrast to some of the other studies, they warn of token gestures at acknowledging home funds of knowledge:

> *"… FoK [funds of knowledge] may be applied in trivial ways that dilute the complexities of children's lived experiences, reproducing essentialising deficit discourses that do not legitimise or assign the same status to the knowledges from children's homes when compared to the cultural capital privileged in educational discourses and institutions." (p. 269).*

They also suggest that the role of the teacher in upholding family pedagogies is a complex one as teachers confront and respond to their own deficit thinking. Jacob et al.'s view aligns with this study in its awareness of the importance of thorough preparedness for teachers who embark on interacting and engaging with homes. He also draws on the value of linguistic and culturally diverse literacies that children carry with them to school which often prompts a deficit discourse about children's language readiness in the formal education environment.

2.8.3 Home visits

The discussion in the literature about teacher home visits suggests this can be a viable way of bridging the gap between home and school. Seminal authors Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) argue that funds of knowledge of the home gained through teacher home visits have a transformative potential for teachers. Focussing on developing an innovation that draws on the practices of the households and classrooms of working-class, Mexican communities in Tucson, Arizona, Moll et al. (1992) utilised home visits as a medium whereby "… teachers assume the role of the learner, and in doing so, help establish a fundamentally new, more symmetrical relationship with the parents of the students," (p. 139). They noted that successful home visits were underpinned by the formation of good relationships between parents and teachers, and that these relationships then became the foundation for sharing accumulated home knowledge. This theme of relationships features strongly in a J. Meyer and Mann (2006) study of kindergarten and first grade students in the United States of America where home visits were used at the start of schooling as a mechanism for increasing communication and creating a bridge between school and home. They found that home visits created a depth of empathy on the part of the teacher and that this had a flow-on effect in the classroom. This was identified in terms of the level of comfort the children experienced when the teacher was in their home, and the way in which relationships were enhanced and trust was established between parents and teachers.

In following up five years later on the previous study, J. A. Meyer, Mann, and Becker (2011) found that results from their first research were still consistent. Specifically, there were benefits by way of relationship building, effective communication and the behaviour of the child in the school setting. The home visits were fruitful in providing insight into interactions within the home and identification of potential areas of need. Likewise, research undertaken by Wright, Shields, Black, and Waxman (2018) into home visits in a Texan charter school, recognised considerable improvements in the behaviour and achievement of children, and involvement of the parents, when home visits had been undertaken. Wright et al. (2018) also highlighted increased levels of motivation at school by the children whose families had received home visits.

A New Zealand study by Cooper et al. (2014) corroborates the recognition of the value of home visits. Their study identified considerable benefits to communication between parents and teachers, and the debunking of expectations and preconceived deficit notions. Two of their significant findings not necessarily highlighted in other research include the identification of benefits for the classroom curriculum as it becomes receptive to and influenced by home settings, and acknowledgement that using and recognising funds of knowledge requires a shift in power and an exchange of roles and signals a move from deficit-thinking. Interestingly, Cooper et al. (2014) note that in order to maximise the benefit of home visits and for these to transform the learning experience, not all homes need to be visited, and that visiting some is sufficient.

A slight outlier in research into home visits is an Arizona study by Hensley (2005). She explores the identification of parental talent through home visits, and the subsequent utilisation of these funds of knowledge within the classroom and school setting. Parents who were the subjects of home visits became empowered through their increased involvement at school and the opportunities to share their expertise in this setting, Hensley also points to the correspondingly positive impact on the children when they saw their parents' talents being acknowledged. Also, fundamental to this research and aligning with Moll et al.'s (1992) description of 'teachers as learners.', was the need for the teacher to have the mindset of a learner and think beyond the traditional parent-helper roles.

2.8.4 Parental engagement brokering

The current study emphasises elements such as process, hospitality, collaboration, and the initial relationships. The relationships were based on the teacher having the confidence to step out of their comfort zone and explore a foreign territory while trusting their instinct. Exposure to such a foreign space can be challenging and required the guidance of an expert in this field. This was where I saw myself playing the role of parental engagement broker.

The role I adopted as a parental engagement broker within this study prompted the need for a review of literature associated with brokerage, as a mechanism for supporting and increasing parental engagement. The concept of a brokering or bridging role within social

settings or hierarchy is not new, with research into social networks identifying both opportunities and benefits of brokerage (Borgatti, 2006). Brokering can be applied in terms of the transmission of information. The investigation of the knowledge transfer process in a health setting viewed brokers as providing an "interface between the worlds of the researchers and decision makers, … as the human force behind knowledge transfer whose tasks include finding, assessing and interpreting evidence …" (Ward, House, & Hamer, 2009, p. 2). Marsh (2012) recognised children as, "the experts in their own cultural practices," and noted that they, "…have valuable knowledge to pass on to adults who are interested in researching this area." (p. 509). Thus, their research into playground activities employed the children as knowledge brokers who provided insight and knowledge transfer for the researchers.

In a school setting, while not specifically using the 'broker terminology', Harris and Goodall (2008) identified that in relation to increasing parental engagement, those who interact with parents in a school community do not need to be teachers, and that those in other roles are able to also fulfil this task. They urged schools to heed the need for flexibility when communicating with parents; being cognisant of the life demands in terms of working hours and childcare arrangements. There are examples of schools who have used other roles to engage with families, such as the school-parent liaison or parent involvement co-ordinator outlined in Martinez-Cosio and Iannacone's (2007) research into educational agents in Texas. These specifically allocated roles targeted traditionally underserved communities and worked primarily as advocates and cultural brokers for parents, as intermediaries between them and the school. Similarly, Parental Involvement Officers (PIOs) were identified in a UK case study as also bridging the relationship between schools and families. However, these roles appear to have had a core focus on compliance with legal obligations, with social and economic issues posing a significant barrier (Brain & Reid, 2003).

Rather than creating additional roles, J. L. Epstein and Van Voorhis (2010) identified modifying roles of existing school counsellors as part of a process of increasing parental engagement and developing family and community partnerships. These roles were to be viewed as an integral component of the school structure, and in addition to the classroom

teacher and other core roles, such as the principal. Within the literature around brokering, Epstein et al.'s recommendations are of interest to this study of Tongan parental engagement, in that one of the identified tasks of the counsellors was conducting a series of workshops with parents to support their understanding of grading methods and reporting systems. The engagement broker role that I adopted, included similar sessions, based on understanding of curriculum and year levels and the methods used by the school to track and measure student progress. The emphasis that Marsh (2012) places on cultural brokerage is also significant as the research identifies the need for and value of a bridging or brokering role in relation to culture. The role of the engagement broker in this study was paramount as it not only acted as a bridge for access to both home and school environments, but also enhanced the nature of the connection to include aspects as culture and homebased knowledge.

2.9 Being an insider / outsider

I was an 'insider' in my study in respect to my roles as a broker, teacher, and member of the Tongan community. A benefit of being an insider is acceptance, where one's membership automatically provides a level of trust and openness among participants and the researcher (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). This can assume that a level of shared common understanding exists between the parties, that would not be present if the researcher was an outsider (Dwyer & Buckle). Watson (1999) also supports the view that being an insider in research provides a level of safety and comfort for the participants.

However, I was also aware that there were potential risks in being an insider. For example, the participants may not provide the depth in their responses that they would for a researcher who was an 'outsider', due to assumptions being made about my existing knowledge and understanding (Turnbull, 2000). Similarly, Turnbull notes that the terminology used and the style of communication of the participants, may be based on the cultural norms of interaction in the existing relationship. There was also the risk that my familiarity with the participants and their settings, would results in me inadvertently guiding or shaping the interview based on my experiences rather than theirs (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

It was important then, that I employ deliberate strategies to minimise these possible risks and biases. Gathering multiple perspectives throughout the research process was important. This included the use of more than one method of gathering data: focus groups, talaloto and school achievement records. The utilisation of talaloto as a methodology was key to removing potential researcher bias in the interview as by its very nature it gave participants the freedom to share their lived realities in an uninterrupted format.

Being a reflexive practitioner, I was able to reflect, question, analyse and evaluate myself throughout the research process, which was vital (Ide & Beddoe, 2023). Regular discussions with my supervisors provided the opportunity to check and reflect on my thinking and approaches, including where my previous experience and insider perspective may have inhibited me from viewing aspects of the study objectively (Russel & Kelly, 2002).

2.10 Parental engagement in education in the Pacific

There is a paucity of research on parental engagement in the Pacific, reflective of the low level of international research into engagement with minorities (Crozier, 2001), and in New Zealand (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006). In the last decade, some small-scale studies, related to parental engagement have been conducted in a handful of Pacific countries.

Pengpid and Peltzer (2018) identify the benefits of parental engagement in their exploration of the relationship between school-going adolescents and their parents. In the context of mental health, and health behaviour support in this pan-Pacific research project, the focus was on parents helping adolescents cope with peer pressure and relationship problems (Davids, Roman, & Leach, 2017). Spanning the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu from 2011 to 2013, findings, albeit from a self-assessment perspective, confirmed the positive impact of parental involvement in children's learning.

Some studies in the Pacific examine the relationship between parents' educational or socio-economic levels and involvement with children's learning. For example, Chand,

Bano, and Kaur (2021), in their Fijian study, identify clear benefits of parental involvement and the importance of the parent-teacher relationship. Their study focussed on the role of parents in supporting and reinforcing school learning. One interesting finding of their work was that parents' education level was a factor that influenced their level of involvement. In the study of Sun, Lau, Sincovich, and Rao (2018), in East Asia and the Pacific, the authors focus on socio-economic factors in examining the influence of parents on early development. Their study looked at interventions that could minimise the impact of economic disparities on children's learning.

The cultural context of parental involvement has been discussed in other studies. Research by Pope (2020) into parental involvement in church schools in Tonga identified ways in which parental involvement can be supported and increased. Of particular interest was the identification of the role of teachers in inviting parents into the learning environment in order to bridge the traditionally perceived divide between home and school. Specifically, training teachers around extending invitations to parents was promoted as a mechanism for mitigating reluctance to engage with the school. The notion of cultural influences on education was also evident in the research of Okuda (2022) where the case study examined the way in which Marshall Island parents were involved in their children's educational learning as well as factors affecting parents' involvement. However, unlike Pope's (2020) study, this went beyond perceptions of the role and status of teachers. Okuda identified that there was a strong sense of the value of education and understanding of the need to be involved, but that cultural obligations restricted the time that families then had for interacting with the schools. This included attendance at events such as funerals and providing financial assistance for members of the extended family.

A mix of perspectives about parental involvement emerged in other studies in the Pacific. Parents in research carried out by Wairiu (2020) in the Solomon Islands stated that they were willing to become involved with the education of their children, but felt constrained by a lack of transparent communication between them and the school. They identified clear communication as a mechanism for building trust in the school-parent relationship, specifically seeking to be valued and recognised by the school and treated as partners. In a Samoan study in Early Childhood Education settings (Tuia, Esera, & Faamatuainu, 2022)

parents also desired increased involvement in their children's education, beyond the support that could be provided within the home or in transactional functions such as providing transport and fund-raising. Aligned with Wairiu's (2020) study, the willingness of parents to be involved in the Early Childhood setting and partner with teachers was not reciprocated by principals and teachers. In the Samoan study, perceptions of disruption to daily activities and views of parental involvement as counter-productive inhibited parental participation within the classrooms.

There are several points of interest from this overview, for this study. Within the Pacific settings the school is still clearly identified as the primary place of learning. Parental engagement in the Pacific is a relatively new concept, and the research reviewed showed varying levels of willingness to engage, both from parents and , in the case of the Solomon Islands (Wairiu, 2020) the school. Competing demands on parents' time was also a theme, with cultural expectations significant and impactful.

2.11 Pacific parental engagement in New Zealand

Following on from a national focus on Pacific student learning achievement in literacy and numeracy across the early 2000s Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi, and O'Regan (2009), the Ministry of Education called for research on how to engage Pacific parents in their children's learning (Chu, Glasgow, Rimoni, Hodis, & Meyer, 2013). The mandate was for research to identify effective pedagogies for Pacific families to enable them to successfully help their children. Both the Ministry of Education and teachers followed validated approaches for home-school-community engagement and opportunities for teachers to develop knowledge of culturally responsive approaches to promote positive connections with families and Pacific communities.

Central to research undertaken by Fletcher et al. (2009) was understanding the perspective of teachers and Pacific parents around hinderances to their children's literacy performance, and the pedagogical practices and family factors that influence the child's learning. Their findings reveal that when Pacific values, language identities and cultural knowledge are part of the teaching and learning in the classroom, it helps to enhance students' learning achievement, from a teacher and parent perspective. A limitation of this research was that it did not investigate parents' contributions to their children's

learning. However, an outcome relevant to the current research was the recognition by teachers and parents of the need for a Pacific liaison person.

In other studies cultural context was to the fore such as in the work of Wolfgramm (1991) and studies by McNaughton, Afeaki, and Wolfgramm (1996). These studies examined Tongan parents' engagement practices in relation to reading with three and four-year-old Tongan pre-schoolers. They also explored the involvement of parents and the significance of using appropriate cultural settings for learning. The focus of these two studies was not on the parental engagement of Tongan parents but specifically on cultural aspects. Their findings highlight the use of a cultural setting as a unique way of socialising and conducting children's reading. McNaughton et al. (1996) found that using home pedagogies and cultural aspects in home reading creates a powerful connection between parents, the child and the school.

Involvement in children's learning with a cultural emphasis was also discussed in the doctoral thesis of MacIntyre (2008). This thesis closely examined the contribution of Tongan mothers to their early childhood children's learning. The findings articulate that the contributions of Tongan mothers to their children's learning incorporated cultural background, educational experience in Tonga, Christian faith, and new knowledge that they had acquired since migrating to New Zealand. It was noted that when the Tongan parents tried to implement child-rearing knowledge and strategies learnt in the islands, some aspects proved to be contradictory to the current practice here in New Zealand, for example, the use of corporal punishment. While this was a source of frustration for these mothers, they nevertheless adopted new practices to help comply with New Zealand cultural expectations. The valuing and utilising of cultural settings/backgrounds by McIntyre is similar to the findings of McNaughton et al., (1996) and Wolfgramm (1991). All these studies identified the need for teachers and schools to be more culturally responsive and consider incorporating home pedagogies and cultural ways as a channel for parental engagement.

Evidence of Pacific cultures being incorporated in a New Zealand primary school were identified by school principal, Irving (2013), who focussed his research on existing interventions and current practices that could help improve the academic achievements of Pacific students in his school. Based on successful interventions, Irving identified

aspects that help to enhance Pacific students' learning. For example, numeracy and literacy were explicitly focussed on small group teaching and vocabulary. Pacific cultures were incorporated in the classroom curriculum, family members were invited to help in the classroom, and in turn, professional development around topics such as reading, was provided for parents. Pacific languages were used in the classroom and teachers were activating their own inquiry about Pacific aspects. However, despite the inclusion of Pacific culture and family members in classroom learning, there was still evidence of some deficit thinking towards home pedagogies. Irving suggested that effective engagement needs Pacific families to be educated on things that will make a difference at home, such as finding out about their child's learning levels along with their strengths and weaknesses. Data was collected from parents and students, but none from teachers. There was no mention of educating teachers on the rich funds of knowledge of home, the focus was only about educating parents. This may be an indication that teachers were treated as experts and their expertise unquestioned.

While a number of studies have recognised the importance of culture in children's learning, research has also drawn attention to a prevalent mono-cultural paradigm in New Zealand education. Gorinski and Fraser (2006) emphasise the mono-cultural lens through which New Zealand has been operating for a long period of time needs to change into a more collaborative or inclusive education system where all partners in the education system are involved. They refer to a need to develop an alternative paradigm which involves parents, children, school, teachers, and communities in the construction of shared knowledge. This understanding is endorsed by Harker and McConnochie (1985), and Nakhid (2003) who state that a mono-cultural paradigm disadvantages families from different cultures, values, beliefs and first language to the dominant culture, and that their academic achievement often results in despair. Gorinski and Fraser (2006) view the key to mitigating this as being the fostering of good relationships among all parties. Numerous researchers are calling for an alternative paradigm proposing bicultural and multicultural perspectives (Airini, 1998; Bishop, 2003; Podmore, Sauvao, & Mapa, 2003; Vaioleti, 2011) and urge that learners need to be supported physically, spiritually, and communally. These sentiments are shared by Fletcher et al. (2009) in their study of the perceptions of Pasifika students, parents and teachers. They state that Pacific

parents demonstrate a strong desire to engage in their children's learning in the mainstream culture, but they also indicate that their own cultural identity should be also maintained.

The importance of New Zealand teachers understanding Pacific cultures is illustrated in a study by Allen, Taleni, and Robertson (2009) who undertook an initiative whereby teachers from Canterbury, New Zealand visited and lived with Samoan families in Samoa, while examining their cultural assumptions, attitudes, and beliefs. Participants opened up to a new and deeper ways of understanding Samoan children, where they felt more confident to make changes in their own teaching practice and work with the community to meet the needs of their Pacific students. Samu (2006) emphasises that quality teaching for Pacific learners requires in-depth development of teachers and educators in contextualised knowledge and knowing of their Pacific learners. Samu used a Samoan saying to emphasise his point which translates as "*The culture of the child cannot enter the classroom until it has first entered the consciousness of the teacher*".

While not specifically Pacific, Berryman (2014) sums up what parental engagement should look like in schools and homes. Berryman explains her view of the most effective parental engagement strategies for enhancing parents, whānau and communities. They are proactive strategies to create and sustain school–home connections, effective assistance by parents, parental involvement in professional development supplied by the school, joint teaching, teachers, parents, and whānau involved in training, collaboration, the commitment of all parties and the alignment of contributions by school leaders, teachers, and parents.

There are some further New Zealand studies that do not have a specific focus on Pacific learners, but have implications for them. McDowall and Schaughency (2017) explore parental involvement and engagement practices in beginning reading in a New Zealand setting from the perspectives of teachers and school principals. Although Pacific students were not an emphasis for this research, they did find that efforts by the school to engage with the parents increased proportionately in lower socio-economic areas. They suggest that this response may be attributed to government policy and guidance for schools around partnering with their Māori and Pacific families. Again, while not specifically focussing on Pacific learners, a study by Clinton and Hattie (2013), is unique and differs

from that of McDowall and Shaughency (2017) and the majority of other studies into parental engagement, in that its core focus is on students rather than parents and teachers. The authors noted that Pacific parents (along with Asian) were more likely to have high aspirations for their children but that they did not necessarily have the skills and knowledge to assist in the way in which they would have liked. From the student perspective, having their parents who are interested in their learning and having high ambitions for them was significant.

Investigating intergenerational storytelling of Pacific families in New Zealand, Cunningham, Jesson, and Wendt Samu (2022) examined less traditionally noted methods of parental engagement, including, "… shared family values, passing on of cultural knowledge, such as the evening talks, family prayer times and storytelling which emphasised the importance of education (p.138)". Aligned with Clinton and Hattie (2013) they also highlighted the high expectations of parents and their role in supporting their children's education.

It is evident that there is increasing focus within New Zealand education, on promoting practices with Pacific families that support the child's learning. Key themes which align with, and are of interest to this study, include steps taken to deepen and make more meaningful reciprocal school to home partnerships, incorporation of cultural understandings, symbols and practices within curriculum as being significant to the learning process, and a focus on education being a concern beyond the school, to include whānau and community (Berryman, 2014; Cunningham et al., 2022). Additionally, the current study shares the view reported in the literature there is a need and role for professional learning by teachers in order to fully meet the needs of Pacific learners (Samu, 2006).

2.12 Summary of parental involvement and parental engagement

A review of the literature around parental involvement supports the notion that when parents are involved in children's schooling, it improves motivation and student achievement (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005). There are a range of parental involvement models that are widely utilised with some providing frameworks to increase parental involvement, and also a mechanism for measuring these levels in different

settings. Seminal authors include J. Epstein et al. (2002) and Green et al., (2007) whose work features in numerous studies, both through utilisation of their models and as a reference point.

Common amongst studies is the delineation of home and school-based activities and behaviours. A theme is that while links between the two settings are seen, there tends to be a separate focus on each. The current study argues for an overlap between the two, in which home and school are equitably valued in each other's settings and where there exists a comfortable and instinctive interaction between them. There is also a body of work around parental involvement which includes the examination of differing demographics, specifically associated with the learning achievement of minorities and the way in which cultural perceptions may influence levels of involvement.

The review also highlighted the increased focus on a shift from parental involvement to parental engagement, characterised by greater commitment and participation by parents in their children's learning at home and school. The Parental Engagement Model (Goodall, 2013) is a critical framework in this field, presented as a starting point rather than a solution, and promoting partnership and an holistic approach. Engagement tools, home visits and the utilisation of Home Funds of Knowledge are gaining momentum in the research and learning environments, as they seek to bridge the gap between home and school and allow for interchanges of knowledge that support an increase in student achievement.

The review shows that there is limited research into parental engagement within the Pacific. A handful of studies demonstrate that while there are some clear benefits of parents being involved in their children's education, this approach is at times treated with caution by teachers and school principals. Additionally, cultural notions of traditional teacher-parent roles can be a factor in undermining efforts to shift parental participation beyond the superficial.

New Zealand research include studies where there are deliberate efforts to create a home-school partnership. However, these are not widespread and appear to be linked to government policy directives. There are increasing examples though, of employing home funds of knowledge within the classroom.

2.13 Definition of parental engagement in this study

An issue encountered within this literature review is that there is a plethora of definitions around parental involvement and engagement, many overlapping and in some cases more to do with semantics than meaning. It is important to have a clear distinction between the two in order to set the research parameters.

After analysing parental involvement and parental engagement, I conclude that the two concepts have some overlap, but they have different functions in relation to the parents' role in assisting their children's learning. Based on the literature review, I see parental involvement as an attempt by parents to act or be involved in non-cognitive or non-intellectual partnerships between parents and teachers in relation to both the school and home contexts, which in some cases can spill over into involvement with learning. Examples of involvement may include, attending parental interviews, meetings, volunteering work or teachers' informal home visits.

Parental involvement and engagement both deal with two settings the home-based and school-based and there is a strong linkage between these two contexts (Tan & Goldberg, 2009). The ecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) describes an individual's development and lifestyle as influenced by their interaction with contextual layers that they are nested in. In this study, the home and the school were the two most common settings.

Parental engagement is defined in this research, as an attempt, desire, or willingness of parents, teachers, and the community to act or be actively involved in the intellectual/cognitive and interrelations/interactions with a child's learning and development. Parental engagement also considers the non-intellectual/cognitive and interrelations/interactions between parents, teachers, and the community as significant for the development of the child. For example, teachers need to learn with and about their students' microsystem and the community where the students' microsystem locates. Within this it is also essential for parents to follow similar experiences by getting to know the teachers' interests, values, and their backgrounds. It is a two-way system of information flow and relationships. Therefore, the term parental engagement signifies a deeper desire and willingness of parties to unite towards a common purpose, that of

lifting the child's learning outcomes. At the same time, approaching the engagement process in partnership serves to develop and augment the practices of both parents and teachers.

To reiterate, parental engagement at its best is the result of the homes, schools, and communities working collaboratively. It involves an equitable contribution of each microsystem striving for a common purpose; to lift students' learning outcomes while enhancing practices of teachers, parents, and members of the community.

2.14 Summary of the literature

This literature review has introduced and explained Bronfenbrenner's 1979 ecological system theory, which is employed by this research to understand the interactions between the developing individuals and the context or the environment where they live. The capacity of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to define complex environmental layers where each influence the individual's development not only appeals to this study, but it also offers this research a theoretical rationale for analysing the close interrelationships between teachers, parents, and students.

The literature on the traditional parental engagement of Tongan parents provides insight and a cultural context around the participants in this research specifically through its elaboration on how the developing individual interacts with their microsystem. Glimpses of engagement and valuable cultural considerations which may still impact on current Tongan parental engagement practices were also identified. The roles of the early influencers in the traditional learning environments were recognised in relation to how they interact with and impact on the developing child's life. This included homes, school, and church settings.

International literature into parental involvement highlights not only the benefits of parents increasing contact with learning settings but is also characterised by a series of models developed by seminal authors such as Epstein (2002), Jeynes (2003), Green et al., (2007), Gronlick (2009), and Foiland (2021) which have been utilised widely to increase and review involvement practices. Research around parental engagement is dominated by Goodall (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014; Goodall & Vorhaus, 2011), and moves further from involvement into establishing clear links between home and school which explore

and seek to understand and value home funds of knowledge. Studies by Moll et al. (1992)also promote home visits and home funds of knowledge as pivotal components of parental engagement.

There is a paucity of research into parental involvement or engagement within the Pacific and in New Zealand. The studies that have been undertaken in the Pacific indicate the impact of cultural considerations, particularly the distinction of roles between parents and teachers as well as the preference for educators to follow Western models of training and delivery. New Zealand studies are weighted more towards the Early Childhood Education sector. However, there are also examples across the primary and secondary sector of increased acknowledgement and utilisation of home funds of knowledge. There remains a tendency for this practice to be confined to application within the school classroom.

This review has provided an overview of literature pertaining to parental involvement and engagement, beginning with a broader, international approach, and narrowing the focus to the Pacific, New Zealand, and finally, Pacific examples within a New Zealand context. Some of the key areas in which gaps in literature were identified through this review include the elements highlighted in the summary which follows.

2.14.1 Policy

Apart from occasional reference to government initiatives, there is limited literature pertaining to policy and parental engagement. Despite the partnership between parents and schools having been acknowledged internationally to positively impact on students' learning (de Medeiros Rodrigues Reali & Tancredi, 2004; Seitsinger, Felner, Brand, & Burns, 2008; Zhao & Akiba, 2009), and, "the growing significance of parent–school engagement to education policy and practice globally has important implications for the teaching profession," (Mandarakas, 2014, p. 22), either very little policy on parental engagement exists, or there is simply a lack of literature which reflects its presence. While Hornby and Lafaele (2011) state that only a few schools have written policies on parental involvement and there was no mention of parental engagement, this observation is now dated.

2.14.2 Teacher support on parental engagement

The inclusion of parental engagement in Initial Teacher Education is not evident in the literature reviewed. However, the literature emphasised the importance of training and supporting parents and the community when fostering parental engagement. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) suggest that teachers need to be included in a rigorous course on preparing themselves to be able to work with parents and communities from diverse backgrounds. Gonzalez et al. (1995) place teachers in their study as a collaborative taskforce that were given help and direction for visiting homes of their students. Resultingly, in their study, teachers were well prepared to play their role in parental engagement effectively.

2.14.3 Home visits

There are very few examples of home visits described in the literature review. The examples are even sparser when filtered down to the Pacific, New Zealand, and then Pacific learners within the New Zealand context. The only research identifying contact between home and schools via visits with Pacific families in New Zealand appears to be that which outlines Irving's contact with families in Christchurch, and some Early Childhood Education home-school transition visits. This does not of course definitively rule out that home visits are taking place but may be indicative of both a lack of both action and research in this area.

2.14.4 Limited research on parental engagement for Tongan parents

The literature exposed a need for research on parental engagement for Tongan parents and Pacific parents in general as well. Despite the international exploration of and research on parental involvement and parental engagement, there remains little research around parental engagement, especially for Tongan parents. In the Pacific and New Zealand contexts, there is scarcely any research into parental engagement, and this review has been unable to find any which relates specifically to Tongan parents. Similarly, areas such as home funds of knowledge and home visits remain under-recognised. This highlights the need for more targeted research around Tongan parents' engagement practices and the way in which it can support the educational achievements of their children.

2.15 Summary

This literature review has set the scene by introducing and explaining Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory (1979), which is employed by this research to make sense of the interactions between the developing individuals and the context or the environment where they live. The capacity of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to define complex environmental layers, where each influence the individual's development offers this research a theoretical rationale for analysing the close interrelationships between teachers, parents, and students.

The literature review suggests that collaboration could be a valuable mechanism for lifting Tongan students' learning outcomes. This necessitates homes, schools, and communities working together in harmony. It is a combination of many microsystems (home, school, church, community) with a common purpose to lift students' learning outcomes.

The literature on the traditional parental engagement of Tongan parents provides an insight into traditional child rearing in Tonga. It further elaborates how the developing individual interacts with their microsystem and identifies glimpses of engagement and valuable cultural considerations which may still impact on current parental engagement practices of Tongan parents. Brothers, sisters, parents, and grandparents were identified as the early influencers in the developing child's life and homes, schools and the church were the early traditional learning environments.

The review of international literature on parental engagement reveals interesting perceptions of scholars on the concepts of parental involvement and parental engagement. There is an inconsistency in the defining of the concept of parental involvement. Many scholars suggest that parental engagement is a concept which contributes directly to the cognitive development of the child where parental involvement contributes directly to parents.

The Pacific literature on parental engagement is lacking but there are a few pieces of research that have been conducted in New Zealand. A few scholars recommended approaching parental engagement in a holistic manner, which coincides with the idea of this research.

The current research defines parental engagement in relation to its context. It is a combination of many microsystems being utilised to help lift Tongan students' learning outcomes. This approach is a collaboration of a number of microsystems.

2.16 Conclusion

The notions of parental involvement and engagement have been widely explored and researched internationally and while definitions and approaches differ, there appears to be shared understanding that parents can play an important role in the education of their children. Yet in a Pacific and New Zealand context there is little empirical evidence of research into parental engagement, and this review has been unable to find any which relates specifically to Tongan parents. This highlights a need for targeted research around ways in which Tongan parents, through engagement practices, can support the educational achievement of their children.

While there is a lack of empirical evidence of research into parental engagement related specifically to Tongan parents, the vā and tauhi vā framework of Kaili (2005), together with the concepts of mālie and mafana examined by Manu'atu (2000) are useful models which could be applied to the building and sustaining of relationships between Tongan parents and teachers.

CHAPTER 3:

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology used to conduct this research. It introduces talaloto, as a new culturally appropriate Tongan methodology, outlining its origins and justifying its implementation and position within the research context. The chapter details how talaloto and focus groups were used to gather data, in order to provide a clear understanding of the engagement practices of Tongan parents in relation to their children's education.

3.2 Current Pacific methodologies

The starting point was an examination of existing Pacific frameworks to find an appropriate methodology for the cultural needs of participants and to provide rich and meaningful data for this research. As research in Pacific contexts led by Pacific researchers has increased, so too has the demand for, and discussion around, methodologies which are culturally relevant. A selection of these, are outlined as follows:

Talanoa

Talanoa is the most recent and widely used Pacific methodology. Introduced by Vaioleti (2006), the term 'talanoa' refers to talking or conversing, the notion from a research perspective being that participants are sharing or creating an idea through conversation. Vaioleti explains, 'tala' is to talk, and 'noa' is nothing. Therefore, talanoa means to create an idea out of nothing. Talanoa is also likened to a story-telling process where deeper feelings and experiences are shared (Halapua, 2008, cited in Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2012). There may be protocols attached to different contexts for talanoa, for example, around the order of speaking, depending on the status of those involved ((Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2012).

Vanua

As a framework with eight principles, the Vanua Research Framework developed by a Fijian researcher, Nabobo-Baba (2007) draws on culture, practices, and ideologies with the intention of minimising the influence of Western methodologies and instead, placing

Pacific world views at the core. The framework has a strong focus on research which is grounded in the communities and produces meaningful outcomes. The Vanua Research Framework is underpinned by cultural values which include reciprocity and respect (Naepi, 2019).

Kakala

A methodology based on the metaphor of the 'kakala' or floral garland, Thaman's (1992) Tongan framework is comprised of three components. These are *toli*, the gathering and collecting stage, *tui*, where the garland is created, and *luva* where gifting takes place. Thaman's framework encompasses teaching as well as research and has been expanded more recently by other researchers such as Fua, Manu, Takapautolo & Taufe'ulungaki (2007). These researches studies added three more stages, *teu* (conceptualisation), *malie* (worthiness) and *mafana* (transformation and application). Kakala is firmly based in Tongan cultural practices.

Fonofale

Polotu-Endemann's (2001) Pacific health model *fonofale*, is based on the metaphor of a Samoan meeting house or *fale*, designed for the New Zealand context. Also utilised as a research framework, fonofale is centred around four principles: physical, spiritual, mental, and other. These principles are embedded in culture and family. The framework provides a cultural lens for understanding health issues and a mechanism for continuous grounding of research in culture and its contexts.

3.2.1 Limitations of existing models

As representatives of Pacific research frameworks, talanoa, vanua, kakala and fonofale provide opportunities to position culture firmly within research. While arguably one of these, or a combination them, could be utilised for this research, there are limitations or a particular focus of each which lessens their appropriateness. With talanoa as an approach, there is the risk that responses are influenced by the views shared by other participants, and a possibility that the order of sharing in a group may be dictated by considerations of status. Talanoa may be suitable for a focus group setting within this research but does not appear to be ideal for individual narratives. As vanua is firmly grounded in Fijian culture, this creates challenges for translation into a Tongan context.

While there is overlap in terms of values, there is considerable difference in social structure between Fiji and Tonga which would be problematic if the vanua model was utilised for this research. Although a Tongan framework, with applications both in teaching and research, the components of Kakala, especially the gathering stage, do not allow the research to delve deeply enough into the lived realities of the participants. Finally, although the fonofale model has strong cultural connections and perspectives and is applicable across many Pacific settings, providing relevant points of reference, its core focus is on wellbeing and as such not tailored towards the in-depth study of education that this research requires.

3.3 Development of own model

In reflecting on the constraints of existing Pacific research methodologies, it became apparent that sourcing a framework which was able to explore experiences of participants was important. Similarly, it was recognised that the use of an inappropriate methodology may result in superficial data. The challenge was to find a framework that would enable individuals to talk freely and openly. Even the *manfana* stage of talanoa, which almost aligned with the conditions required for raw and honest responses, does not fully allow individuals to share in an open and uninterrupted manner.

In my research for an appropriate framework, I observed instances within Tongan social and cultural settings where individuals had the greatest opportunity to share thoughts, feelings and opinions in an unrestrained manner which might suit the demands of this research. Observing the practice of *talaloto* within a Tongan church service, I recognised an existing practice which could be adapted and replicated within a framework. It was this recognition that led to the development of talaloto as a methodology for this research.

3.3.1 Origins of talaloto

The term talaloto consists of two Tongan words, 'tala' and 'loto', with tala meaning to tell, share, or inform (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2012; Halapua, 2008) and loto being to do with the heart (Churchward, 1959). Talaloto can therefore be described as, "to tell all, reveal, or share honestly lived realities that are deep within your mind and heart at a specific time" (Naufahu, 2018).

‘Talaloto’ has existed for a considerable time within some Protestant Tongan churches. Evidence of its practice around the time of the missionaries has been identified, in churches such as the Free Tongan Church, Tonga Hou’eiki and Uesiliana churches. According to Churchward (1959), talaloto is defined as “fakataha (meeting) or Po lotu (evening prayer)” (p. 447). It has also been suggested that talaloto may have had its origins in traditional pre-European Tongan music, as a mechanism for composers expressing a depth of feeling. Currently, talaloto takes place monthly in some Tongan churches as part of their protocol for sharing personal testimonies or revelations. It is important to note that this is not done spontaneously, but that those sharing have an opportunity to prepare in advance what is on their heart, and that they would like to share with their congregation. It is specifically about the person’s relationship with God across the previous month. Therefore, in this context, talaloto is prepared, deeply personal, and heartfelt. An important feature of talaloto is that it is uninterrupted.

The extent of sharing and ease of the participants is often reliant on the skill of the church minister who creates an environment in which congregation members feel confident to share. This includes the provision of a space without judgement and where those who are new to public speaking, or are naturally hesitant, are encouraged and supported through the process. It is not uncommon for talaloto to be emotional experiences. According to Mefi Naufahu (2018):

> *The talaloto consecrated the whole congregation with an extra form of spiritual energy from above that helps to ‘fakakoloa pe fakaivia’ (enrich or empower) and ‘fakamāfana’i (to give warmth) to the gathering. The talaloto is a time of ‘fola koloa’ (laying of inner wealth before you) and ‘fola’osi’ (laying everything you have got before you). I have experienced and felt the ‘mafana’ (warmth) of talaloto when one of the proficient ‘matu’a’ (elders) has facilitated this practice. (p.18)*

While talaloto is essentially a church-based practice, technology has more recently provided different contexts and audiences. For example, the posting of pre-recorded talaloto on social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube mean that the church setting is potentially a global one. Likewise, publication of talaloto in newspapers or broadcasting on radio and television increases the scale and scope. However, while the

audiences may have changed, the purpose of talaloto remains the same, and it continues to be a heartfelt and personal testimony.

3.3.2 Talaloto as a methodology

In translating talaloto into a research methodology, I recognised the different stages in the process and aligned these to the research context. This is demonstrated in table 2 which includes the various steps undertaken in gathering research data, from initial contact with participants, through to the opportunity to share thoughts and feelings at a deep level.

Table 2: Different stages of talaloto (Naufahu, 2018)

Stage	Process	Rationale/comment
Initial contact	Met participants face-to-face, visited with them. During this visit: The purpose and their roles in the research were explained; and questions that they had were answered.	This is fakamahu'inga'i, or their value. While phoning, texting, or emailing may be acceptable for follow-up communication, the first contact needs to be made in person as a sign of respect and to assist engagement.
Sending of formal letter, including an informed consent form and research questions	Method of delivery was hand delivered; and the scene was set correctly in the initial contact.	Part of the ethics approval process and formalising of participation. It is important not to assume that the participant will send the consent form back; it is the researcher's duty to organise how this will happen and it is respectful to do so.
	The initial contact resulted in some hesitation, then I decided that face-to-face delivery was a wise idea. I was able to clear up any uncertainties with the participant. The consent form was collected later. Some consent forms had been stamped like that of school principal, and some were not.	It is important that the research questions are understood before the talaloto takes place. Participants need to have the questions for at least two weeks prior to the talaloto. This allows them to be well prepared in advance and have time to discuss the questions with anyone else. The purpose of this is the researcher's wish to understand the lived experiences of participants and what these experiences mean to them.
Recording of the talaloto	A recording device was used to record the talaloto.	The participants gave their full consent prior to the talaloto for a recording to be made, transcribed and utilitsed for the purposes of the research study.
The actual talaloto	**Step 1:** Talanoa After exchanging greetings we continue on to talanoa about life in general or any topic of interest offered by the participant. After about two to three minutes of the talanoa, it was time to begin with a prayer.	The talaloto is done in the home or at an agreed venue. If you are hosting, then it is appropriate to offer refreshments. If going to a participant's home, they are likely to offer you refreshments. You do not necessarily need to take food with you, but a small thank-you gift will be appreciated e.g., card and voucher. The use of talanoa is like an icebreaker or re-affirming your relationship with the participant. In Tongan settings, it is important to begin with a prayer. If you are confident, pray yourself, or ask the participant.

	Step 2: Empower (fakamafana'i) After the prayer I gave a short introduction using Talanoa to set the scene. Normally, I would say the prayer and I had pre-prepared some Tongan phrases to use during the prayer with the hope that it would help empower parents. Often the participant was ready to take over the talaloto after the prayer. There were some contexts when parents said the prayer and at the same time when I introduced the talaloto to begin, I used the pre-prepared Tongan phrases during my introduction and every time I did this, parents were keen to do the talaloto.	This is empowering the participants and allowing them the opportunity to take control or lead the talaloto. The questions need to be written in such a way that they prompt sharing and comment by the participant i.e., open questions. If English is not the first language, then translating the questions is appropriate.
	Step 3: The Talaloto The participants spoke to the research question/s, uninterrupted. At times I needed to prompt from time to time to encourage more sharing; or if needed to re-direct the talaloto. It did not matter that often the participant did not exactly follow the order of the questions. They were left to speak on the topics as they chose – assuming that they were well-intentioned and even if they did not see the link with what they were talking about it was relevant from their point of view.	Care needs to be taken when prompts are used so as not to influence the response, even inadvertently. This is part of giving the participant autonomy within the talaloto. Consideration needs to be given to Tongan participants who are not familiar with the use of talaloto in the church setting. For example, those who do not have church connections. In this case, utilising examples of talaloto from the internet (e.g. Facebook or Youtube) ahead of time could be helpful. Extra pre-talaloto discussion and explanation would be important as well.
	Step 4: Ending Once the talaloto was finished, I thanked the participant and ended with a prayer (self or participant). I reiterated here the confidentiality of what they have said and outlined the next steps in the research process.	Be prepared for a flexible time frame. A talaloto may take up to an hour. Pacific participants may be emotional when speaking. This is quite natural and does not mean that there is anything wrong with the process, rather an indication of the depth of feelings.
After the talaloto	Gift/s were offered at the end as a sign of appreciation.	To signify how you value your participant's contribution to the study.
Transcribing of the talaloto	Some participants did their talaloto in English and some in the Tongan language.	I transcribed all the talaloto. The English transcriptions were straight forward. I sent back the transcriptions to those who did their talaloto in the Tongan language to be checked for accuracy.

3.3.3 Application of talaloto within this research

In utilising talaloto with the Tongan participants (parents) in my study, I noted five key benefits which reinforced its potential usefulness as a research methodology:

- Talanoa to talaloto: I deliberately used talanoa at the commencement of the data collection sessions, in order to build rapport between myself and the participants and to put them at ease. The combination of two culturally appropriate communication techniques provided a smooth transition and minimised any awkwardness or stopping and starting. An indicator of the level of comfort of the participants was that they spoke uninterrupted when presenting their talaloto for three quarters of an hour to an hour and a half.

- Prompts were not needed: As talaloto is traditionally a prepared delivery and I had given the participants the topic ahead of time, I rarely offered any prompts while they were speaking. This supported the flow, also gave me the opportunity as a researcher to listen attentively.

- Participants were fully engaged: the majority of the participants were invested and confident. There were times where emotions were also to the fore. I was struck by the authenticity of what they were saying.

- Lack of researcher influence: in replicating the uninterrupted church setting, the participants appeared to be encouraged to continue with their speaking. They were not looking to me to provide the lead or continued cues, and I was not inadvertently making leading comments or influencing what they would say next.

- Richness of the data: The sharing of the participants in their talaloto was far deeper than I had expected, and what I had previously experienced when conducting semi-structured interviews.

I believe that the combination of feeling comfortable and prepared, and being able to speak freely and continuously, had a significant impact on data quantity and quality with the Tongan participants. Providing participants with the topic ahead of time allowed an

opportunity to prepare in advance (Stacey & Vincent, 2011) as they would if speaking in a Tongan church setting. In formulating talaloto as a framework, I had overlooked the effect that my silence during the talaloto might have. It is my sense that some of the rawness and honesty which came through, particularly in relation to sharing about church obligations, may not have occurred otherwise. Likewise, the spiritual dimension of talaloto allowed me to tap into a familiar practice which by its very nature prompts emotion and deep responses.

Potential shortcomings of talaloto

In outlining talaloto as a research methodology, it is important not only to look at its strengths, but also examine some of the drawbacks that may be encountered. Table 3 describes four potential issues which a researcher may need to consider, together with proposed solutions.

Table 3: Talaloto: Issues and solutions (Mefi Naufahu, 2018)

Potential issue	Proposed solution
Participants going off topic due to the broadness of the main question and opportunity to extemporise	Use prompts (sparingly) to re-focus participants
Participants becoming quite emotional while speaking	Allow them time to collect their thoughts and continue to speak (this is not uncommon in Pacific settings)
Language barriers	Translation of questions into Pacific language if required Use a translator at the interview (or for prompts)
Understanding (by the researcher) of cultural protocols	Seek advice before undertaking research in order to gain confidence and mitigate potentially damaging the relationship with participants
Relationships	May need to invest time in building relationships between the researcher and the participants

3.4 Talaloto – a summary

This research posits that talaloto, albeit in its infancy, is a valuable research methodology which positions itself in a Tongan cultural context. A key strength is its ability to generate data which allows the researcher insight into the lived realities of the participants. Dovetailing with talanoa, talaloto takes a familiar cultural practice and provides a platform for planned and uninterrupted narratives. I believe that this has provided an authentic voice for my Tongan participants, firmly grounded in a culturally appropriate setting, which in turn will contribute to the wider research arena.

3.5 Focus groups

The focus group research method was also adopted by this research as a second method for the data collection. Whereas talaloto was an appropriate method for gathering data from the Tongan parents, the adoption of the focus group strategy was a response to the requirement for a method that could elicit in-depth understanding of social issues from a selected group of individuals (Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick, & Mukherjee, 2018), specifically the teachers and students. Kitzinger (1995) defines focus groups as, "a form of group interview that capitalises on communication between research participants in order to generate data," (p. 299). Within a focus group, in-depth interactions between participants with a common interest, but who are a selected and not necessarily a representative sample, enable the researcher to collect information (Williams & Katz, 2001; Wilson, Morreale, Waineo, & Balon, 2013). Focus groups therefore seek to gather in-depth perspectives of selected individuals, through their participation in a facilitated and moderated group discussion. Nyumba et al. (2018) caution however, that the researcher facilitates or moderates the group discussion between participants and not between participants and the research.

3.5.1 Rationale for focus groups

While Kitzinger states that a focus group is another form of interview, the advantage of this method is that the researcher does not have to ask questions to every individual but everyone is encouraged to take turns to respond to the same question (Nyumba et al., 2018). Often when the focus group works well in a group discussion, the researcher is

exposed to a new and unexpected direction (Kitzinger, 1995). Krueger (2014) reminds us that an advantage of the focus group technique is its ability to create a comfortable environment for participants to freely express themselves about a topic. The choice of focus groups for the research were the two fundamental assumptions raised by Glitz (1998). First, that the richness of the focus group is based on individual sources of information, and secondly, the focus group setting helps to encourage responses that are different from other methods (Glitz, 1998). Sim and Waterfield (2019) also highlight the spontaneous and conversational qualities that a focus group can promote, while Gibson (2012) suggests that the focus group is an effective way for obtaining information from children since talking in a peer group is common to them. As participants in this research include students, this is a notable strength. Therefore, the focus group method is well-suited to this research since it seeks to capture the perspectives and understanding of different groups such as students, parents, and teachers on parental engagement.

3.5.2 Conducting the focus group

As a researcher, I hosted focus groups for students and teachers in three phases of data collection for this research. I commenced each focus group with an expression of appreciation for attendance and followed with an explanation of the purpose and goals of the meeting. I explained that I wanted to explore the parental engagement practices of Tongan parents, from the perspectives of both the student (the child) and the child's teacher. I set out the processes that the meeting would follow and the ways in which participants could contribute. I established the tone by emphasising that there were no wrong or right answers, and everyone was entitled to their own opinion. When the group was ready, I commenced with an opening question, making certain, as far as I could, that all opinions on any question were given the chance to be heard. This went on until all prepared questions were discussed. At the conclusion I thanked participants for contributing and attending the focus group.

3.6 Participants

There were 42 participants in this research, comprising 18 parents, 12 students and 12 teachers. There were three phases for data collection, identified as the pre-intervention, intervention commencement and intervention completion phases. These phases were completed within a year. The participants are further described below.

3.6.1 Pre-intervention phase participants

There were 18 participants recruited for the pre-intervention phase which included 12 Tongan parents, six teachers and six children. The parental participants were randomly selected from the Tongan parents whose children attended the school in this study, based on the belief that this it is the best method for selecting a sample from the population of interest. The advantage of this selection method is that the sample should represent the target population and eliminate sampling bias.

The participants in the parent group had an average age of 42 years. Some of the parents had grandchildren, and the majority had a lot of parenting experience. None of the Tongan parents held a degree; the highest academic qualification was a diploma. Details are provided in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Characteristics of parent participants

Participants	Male Female	Age	Place of birth	Place of schooling	No. of people staying in the house	Arrival in NZ	Occupation	Educational achievements
Talaloto 1	F	34	Tonga	Tonga	4	2010	Teacher -aide	Form 6
Talaloto 2	F	28	NZ	NZ	4	1990	Student	Undergraduate
Talaloto 3	F	54	Tonga	Tonga	8	1988	Factory	Form 5
Talaloto 4	M	51	Tonga	Tonga	8	1989	Factory	Form 5
Talaloto 5	M	48	Tonga	Tonga	5	2001	Factory	Form 6
Talaloto 6	F	36	Tonga	Tonga	10	2004	Factory	Form 6
Talaloto 7	M	32	Tonga	Tonga/ NZ	6	2001	Factory	Tertiary
Talaloto 8	F	52	Tonga	Tonga	6	2014	Factory	Form 5
Talaloto 9	M	56	Tonga	Tonga	8	2001	Factory	Form 5
Talaloto 10	M	49	Tonga	Tonga/ NZ	8	2000	Student	Tertiary
Talaloto 11	F	37	NZ	NZ	5	1990	Factory	Year 13
Talaloto 12	M	38	Tonga	Tonga	5	2004	Security Officer	Undergraduate

Table 5 (below) provides details of the student participants and shows an equal distribution of male and female. There was a spread across the year levels, with the exception of Year 2 where no students were participants, and also in the frequency with which parents visited the school. Parental engagement at home was measured by the consistency of occurrences of the parents working together with their child, for example, helping with reading or mathematics. It is noted that all student participants were New Zealand born. At the time of the research, there were no Tongan born students enrolled at our school, which is uncommon. However, all of the student participants had visited the Kingdom of Tonga at some stage of their lives.

Table 5: Characteristics of student participants

	Demographic details					Frequency of parental engagement	
Participants	Male or Female	Age	Year Level	Visited Tonga	Place of birth	At home	Through school visits
Student 1	Male	6	1	Once	NZ	Every day	Sometimes
Student 2	Male	8	3	Once	NZ	Sometimes	None
Student 3	Female	8	3	Once	NZ	Sometimes	None
Student 4	Male	9	4	Once	NZ	Every day	Sometimes
Student 5	Female	10	5	Once	NZ	None	None
Student 6	Female	11	6	Twice	NZ	None	None

Table 6, on the following page, describes the characteristics of teacher participants for the pre-intervention phase. It shows that the majority of teacher participants were female, with only one male teacher included. There were three different ethnic groups among teachers, Māori, Samoan and Pākehā, with an average age of 44 years and an average of 13 years of teaching experience. The teachers were recruited for the study on the basis that they had the student participants in their classes, and any ethnicity, age or gender patterns are purely coincidental.

Table 6: Characteristics of teacher participants

Participants	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Years of teaching experience	Have taught a Tongan student	Have been to Tonga
1	M	42	Māori	16	Yes	No
2	F	51	Pākeha	12	Yes	Yes
3	F	53	Samoan	24	Yes	No
4	F	43	Māori	20	Yes	No
5	F	34	Māori	6	Yes	No
6	F	44	Pākeha	4	Yes	No

3.6.2 Intervention commencement and intervention completion participants

Discussed further in Chapter 8, this data collection was associated with the intervention which was developed as a result of the pre-intervention phase data analysis. Eighteen participants were selected for intervention commencement, including six students, six parents and six teachers. The majority of the participants had not participated in pre-intervention phase activities. These participants were teachers and their students. The student participants were the children of the six parent participants. They were the same participants used for intervention completion. Pre-intervention phase data collection was implemented at the beginning of the intervention in mid-2018, and intervention completion data collection was completed at the end of the intervention at the end of 2018.

Table 7 below outlines the demographic information and characteristics of the participants, pertinent to this study. Student participants were selected according to two criteria. Firstly, there were those who could participate in discussions, that is, were able to further elaborate on their answers rather than providing a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response, and secondly, those who were representative of the population of Tongan students in the

school in terms of ages and year levels. It is noted that there were no Year Two student participants, reflecting the absence of Tongan students in this year level at the time the research was carried out.

Table 7: Characteristics of student participants

Participants	Gender	Age	Year Level	Visited Tonga	Place of birth	Parental help at home	Parents visiting school
Student 1	Male	6	1	Once	NZ	Every day	Sometimes
Student 2	Male	8	3	Once	NZ	Sometimes	Never
Student 3	Female	8	3	Once	NZ	Sometimes	Never
Student 4	Male	9	4	Once	NZ	Every day	Sometimes
Student 5	Female	10	5	Once	NZ	Never	Never
Student 6	Female	11	6	Twice	NZ	Never	Never

Table 8 on the following page, shows the parents who were selected for the research. The majority of the participants were factory workers, employed in the processing line and receiving the minimum wage (at the time of the research) of $15.75 per hour, equating to $630.00 gross income per week before tax. The average number of people living in each of these six chosen households was 6.5 people. Some of the parents matched the definitions by Nomaguchi and Johnson (2016) of working class families, working long hours and often two jobs, in order to provide sufficient income for their household.

Table 8: Characteristics of parent participants

Participants	Gender	Age	Place of birth	Place of schooling	No. of people staying in the house	Arrival in NZ	Occupation	Educational achievements
Talaloto 1	F	34	Tonga	Tonga	4	2010	Housewife	Form 6
Talaloto 2	M	28	NZ	NZ	4	NZ born	Receptionist	Undergraduate
Talaloto 3	F	54	Tonga	Tonga	8	1988	Factory	Form 5
Talaloto 4	M	51	Tonga	Tonga	8	1989	Factory	Form 6
Talaloto 5	M	48	Tonga	Tonga	5	2001	Factory	Form 6
Talaloto 6	F	36	Tonga	Tonga	10	2004	Factory	Form 6

Table 9 (below) shows the selection of teachers, based on the current teachers of the six student participants. Of note, one teacher had spent time in Tonga, gaining experience about the schooling system. Although all teachers had been teaching Tongan students at some stage during their teaching careers, the majority of teachers have known parents and students in the school context only and rarely interacted with them in other settings.

Table 9: Characteristics of teacher participants

Participants	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Number of years teaching	Have taught Tongan students previously	Have been to Tonga
Teacher 1	M	36	Māori	21	Yes	No
Teacher 2	F	42	Pākeha	11	Yes	Yes
Teacher 3	F	29	Samoan	14	Yes	No
Teacher 4	F	44	Māori	21	Yes	No
Teacher 5	F	39	Māori	16	Yes	No
Teacher 6	F	41	Pākeha	8	Yes	No

3.6.3 The 'Engagement Broker' as a participant

As the researcher, I also became a participant in the research, through the role I adopted as an 'engagement broker' during the intervention. This term describes my role of brokering or bridging connections and context between the participants; that is, *people* to *people,* and *people* to *contexts*. For example, I provided cultural guidance to the teachers before they went on home visits, or suggested strategies for parents to use to approach the teachers. This was not a planned role, but one that evolved due to the realisation that the participants in the intervention required support in setting up meetings and navigating their way through the intervention process, especially in relation to cultural and educational issues. An outline of the intervention and the process around the meetings, including my role is described in Chapter 8. However, in terms of methodology and the research process it is useful to outline the nature of this role and how it was distinguished from that of my researcher role, and where some overlap occurred. Table 10 (below) lists the key tasks I undertook and indicates the role/s to which they are linked:

Table 10: Engagement broker versus researcher

Task	Researcher	Engagement broker
Recruiting participants	√	
Gaining consent	√	
Holding meetings to provide information about the intervention	√	
Working as a conduit	√	√
Providing training session for teachers, parents, and students		√
Outlining protocols and providing cultural support		√
Taking teachers to home visits		√
Taking parents to school visits		√

I had considered not having any involvement whatsoever within the intervention, apart from the initial and concluding meetings and setting up the groupings. However, it became obvious early on that without a 'broker role' the intervention might struggle to gain traction.

3.6.4 Ethical considerations

The ethical guidelines for this research set by the Ethics Committee of the University of Waikato were strictly followed. Confidentiality of the data and full disclosure of all related content of this study were provided and followed. To confirm trustworthiness, confidentiality, assurance, and integrity of the study, all data were secured, locked, and protected.

3.6.4.1 Security of the data

Data from the transcript were stored in the form of electronic files on my computer. My hard drive and laptop computer used a password for security purposes. Electronic files of interviews with the participants were kept according to The University of Waikato Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related activities 2008, under section 12(1) in a secure place. These documents will be kept in a locked cabinet in my office for a period of five years until they will be destroyed.

3.6.4.2 Access to participants

An information letter for the School Board of Trustees is attached as Appendix B, seeking the Board of Trustees' approval to undertake the research in the school. I have access to the participants through my community visits and telephone. However, I recognized that this may mean that parents were reluctant to decline to participate. I assured them that no consequences will arise from not participating. It was also made clear that participation was on voluntary basis, and should they not wish to participate in the study, I respected their decision, and they would not be disadvantaged in any way.

3.6.5 Invitation to participants

3.6.5.1 Parents

I met parents informally, face-to-face when they dropped off or picked up their child before or after school. I approached parents with the idea of asking them to participate in the study. I gave them time to think about it and let me know their response later.

Once they responded with agreement to participate in the study, I wrote a formal letter to these randomly selected parents, providing detailed information about the research (see Appendix C). At the same time, I also sent home a consent form (see Appendix E) for parents to sign and return to me once they fully understood the content of the study and their role within it. They were also advised that they could withdraw from the study at any time during the research, up until the data analysis stage. The consent forms all came back to me within a week.

3.6.5.2 Teachers

Teachers were also approached face-to-face, and I introduced them to the idea of becoming participants. Once they all agreed, I wrote them a formal letter, detailing the research and their role within this (see Appendix C). A letter of consent (see Appendix E) was also sent to teachers together with the introduction letter. They were also advised that they could withdraw from the study at any time up until the data analysis stage. They were asked to sign the consent form if they agreed and return it back to me. I allowed them two weeks to send back the consent form, but they all returned the signed form within a week.

3.6.5.3 Students

Before any approach was made to students, parental permission was gained through an information letter and consent form (see Appendix G). It was culturally appropriate to gain parental consent before approaching students. Following this, students were approached in person and asked if they would like to participate in this study. I read the letter to those who could not read it, and again I asked them to ask their parents to reread the introduction letter to them to make sure that they understood the whole process and what they were about to be involved with. Despite parents giving consent for their children to participate in the study, I also asked students to sign their own consent form if they wanted to participate, and they all did. This was to ensure students were given their own right to choose whether to participate or not.

A back-up list of parents, teachers and students was also organized, to replace any participants if they pulled out or turned down the invitation. However, this was not required; none of the invited participants pulled out or turned down the invitation.

3.6.6 Length of talaloto and focus groups

The time allocated for the talaloto of twelve parents in the pre-intervention phase was 45 minutes to one hour, however, some parents' talaloto lasted more than an hour. There were two focus groups, teachers and then students. Teachers spent just over an hour for their focus groups, while students took 30 to 45 minutes for theirs. Nyumba et al. (2018) suggest that considering the duration of the focus group is significant because participants could suffer from fatigue from long discussions. However, the time span for children would be different since their attention span is shorter compared to adults and they often lose interest in the topic when the discussion lasts too long (Gibson, 2012).

3.6.7 Venues for talaloto and focus groups

The parents' talaloto were set up in their own homes based on their preference. I gave them three location options to choose from for the talaloto. These were first, their homes, second, at school, and third, a venue of their own choice. I wanted parents to pick the place that they felt comfortable with. I wanted a venue that would allow them to freely express their own views and perspectives on parental engagement. Elwood and Martin (2000) state that interview sites may be negotiated between the researcher and participants who are part of the research; participants are empowered when they are given a chance to negotiate the interview location.

Upon discussion with teachers and students, we all agreed that due to organization and timing, the best option for the focus groups would be for them to take place at school. Resultingly, the school Board of Trustees' meeting room was used for the focus groups since it had a big round table around which participants could sit and face each other. Nyumba et al. (2018) indicate that a convenient venue is required for the focus group, the venue should be free of distractions, comfortable with easy access, have enough space for activities, enough seating for participants and they must have a clear view of each other and the facilitator. The choice of the Board room provided all of these features.

3.7 Data Analysis

This research adopted thematic analysis for the data analysis. Thematic analysis is a common form of data analysis used in qualitative research. A thematic analysis method

emphasises examining, pinpointing and identifying patterns or themes within data. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that the thematic analysis method is poorly demarcated, is rarely acknowledged and offers an accessible and theoretically-flexible approach to analysing qualitative data. It is also a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data and it minimally organises and describes a data set in (rich) detail. The thematic analysis procedure of Braun and Clarke (2006) was utilized to analyse the data collected.

Braun and Clarke (2006) identify six steps to follow:

1. *Familiarise yourself with the data* – I completed collection of all three data sets. Before each data analysis I already had some ideas or prior knowledge of the data. It was vital that I should familiarise myself with the depth and breadth of the content. I therefore started taking notes and marking ideas for coding during the process.
2. *Generating initial codes* – At this pre-intervention phase stage I had read and familiarised myself with the data and had generated a list of ideas of what was in the data and what was interesting about it. This phase was the initial coding of the data.
3. *Searching for themes* – The data had been initially coded and collated with a long list of different codes that I had identified across the data. I was starting to analyse different codes and consider how different codes may have to be combined to form an overarching theme.
4. *Reviewing themes* – At this pre-intervention phase stage I was refining themes. It became evident that some themes were not really themes or other themes may be needed to be broken down into further themes. I also needed to read all the collated extracts for each theme and consider whether they formed a pattern.
5. *Defining and naming themes* – At this point I was satisfied with the themes. I then defined and further refined the themes; this was about identifying the essence of what each theme was all about. It was vital not to paraphrase the content of the data extract for each theme but identify what was interesting about it and why. For each theme I wrote a detailed analysis.

6. *Producing the report* – This phase was the final analysis of the themes and writing up of the report. The aim of this section was to tell the complicated story of the data in a way which convinces the reader of the merit and validity of the analysis. It was important to ensure that the writing provided appropriate and sufficient data extracts to demonstrate a theme.

Thematic analysis is a straightforward method for data analysis but there are a few things to consider during the analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). One possibility is that the data will not be analysed at all, while another pitfall is using the data collection questions as themes. This may happen when the researcher has not done sufficient analytical work to identify the themes and, as a result, the themes are based on the researcher's assumptions as opposed to data analysis (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). Other problems may occur when the theme does not seem to work, where there is too much overlap between themes, or there is a paucity of examples from the data to support the themes which can result in weak data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Collecting data under the same conditions for both phases of the current research aimed to strengthen the reliability of the data (Rothman, 2007). Subsequent comparison of both phases' findings was undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention.

3.8 Conclusion

In approaching this research, care was taken to utilise a methodology that was culturally appropriate and would enable me to generate data of a richness and depth that would provide insight into the lived realities of the participants. These considerations, after exploration of current Pacific methodologies, prompted the development of talaloto which was a familiar, appropriate, and effective method for the Tongan participants in this study.

Parents, teachers, and students were invited to participate in the research, which consisted of talaloto experiences for the parents and focus groups for the teachers and students. The inclusion of the researcher as the 'engagement broker' was a role which evolved following the completion of intervention commencement data gathering, during the establishment of the intervention.

Thematic analysis was undertaken as a data analysis method. The same collection and analysis approaches were used in all three phases.

CHAPTER 4:

PRE-INTERVENTION PHASE

Collecting data and examining the existing parental engagement of Tongan parents in the local school

4.1 Introduction

At the start of the research, before undertaking the intervention, I examined the existing parental engagement practices of Tongan parents and explored factors that influenced them to engage or disengage from their children's learning. This study of existing practices endeavoured to answer the first research question, 'How do Tongan parents, students and teachers perceive the parental role in the learning process?' Analysis also focussed on how engagement could be enhanced.

4.2 Overview

This section begins by describing the findings of the pre-intervention phase, derived from the talaloto of twelve Tongan parents. These talaloto captured the existing parental engagement realities of Tongan parents in their children's learning. Next, the discussion examines findings from two focus groups, one with teachers and the other with students. This is followed by a summary of the findings from the talaloto and the two focus groups, exploring their commonalities and differences, and ideas for future opportunities and possibilities.

4.3 Themes emerging from parents' talaloto

Six themes have emerged from parents' talaloto. The themes were: parents' high expectations for their children's learning; the existing engagement practices of Tongan parents; parents' perspectives on their relationships with teachers; parents' perspectives on and valuing of their contributions to their children's learning; parents' perspectives on the use of Tongan and English language at home; and parent perspectives on perceived barriers to children's learning.

4.3.1.1 Parents have high expectations of their children's learning

In discussing their aspirations for their children's learning, parents made comparisons with their own limited opportunities for education. Parents had lofty expectations for their children's learning and wanted them to reach high levels of educational attainment. All of the parents without exception wanted their children to succeed at school. As one parent explained:

> *I would like my children to do well at school and I have high expectations of them that they will reach high levels in education and not like me not achieving what I wanted to achieve. Since, I did not achieve my goals in education, now I would like my children to do better. (Talaloto 3)*

Alongside these expectations, parents expressed the desire for their children to be able to avoid the hardship they had faced with their schooling while growing up in Tonga. They refer to education as a door that opens to well-paid job opportunities. Given parents' depth of feeling around their educational aspirations for their children, it would seem likely they would welcome collaboration with teachers to support these aims. For example, one parent said:

> *I always say to my wife I feel, I do not want my children to follow the same difficulties that I came through or the type of jobs that I did. I want my children to follow a better way and achieve well in the future. I will always push our children's education to the best they can be no matter what. I am a painter, and I would not like them to become painters or fruit pickers in farms. The painter and the fruit picker may be paid the same at the end of the day but a person who earns his/her income from working in an office will be working under a roof and be safe from the rain, sun, and heat or cold. So, education is so important. (Talaloto 5)*

4.3.1.2 The existing parental engagement practices of Tongan parents

Findings from the pre-intervention phase reveal a mixed picture of parents' engagement with their children's education. Two households had both parents consistently helping their children's learning while eight households had no one to help due to parents either being busy at work, church, community activities or the parents saying they did not have the expertise to assist. In two households, older siblings were given the responsibility to

help with the younger children's schoolwork. Parents viewed helping with children's learning at home as ensuring children completed or attended to homework or school tasks and met all their school obligations.

In the two households where parents were engaging consistently in their children's learning, they used their '*home funds of knowledge'*, a term used by Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005, p. 446). This was knowledge that had been accumulated by parents throughout their lives. For example, one parent taught her child how to measure flour for cooking with a cup and how to read oven settings. This parent explained:

> *Our child is getting better at reading digital numbers and setting the time required for cooking. Baking seems to be a favourite time for our child at home especially when it comes to setting the time in the oven for baking. A few months ago, I was helping my child from time to time but now he can do it all by himself. (Talaloto 1)*

Parents also thought that, if their children recognised the effort that they put into their learning, it could help to inspire them to work harder at school and have a positive impact on their learning.

> *I always make sure to remind and encourage my wife and my other children to support any school learning activities or school activities. I believe that when children notice your support and encouragement it will empower them to work hard at school and even do their best. (Talaloto 7)*

However, at this stage in the research there was no indication of interactions between parents in these two households and their child's teachers. These parents had their own way of supporting their children by drawing on their life experiences.

In the households where casual or sporadic parental engagement existed, parents only engaged in their children's learning when their child's school-based learning aligned with their existing knowledge. These parents relied heavily on their own prior knowledge when helping their children's learning. It is possible that they may have been unaware of their potential to support their children in other ways, which may have led them to lack faith in their ability to provide assistance, as noted here:

I don't help my children's learning all the time since I feel that I don't have the knowledge and skills to help them. This is mainly with my English. Only in maths that I could help with my children's learning. I leave stuff like spelling and that for my wife to deal with it because her English is so much better than me. (Talaloto 1)

The above comment also highlights evidence of shared responsibilities where both parents contributed to their child's learning. While the child's dad allocated help with English to his wife, he perhaps saw this delegation as a negative and attributable to his inability to help his son's English, rather than a positive sharing of responsibilities.

In the eight households where there was no parental engagement, parents had very limited English, some did not feel confident, and some were just tired as the result of their demanding jobs. Additionally, the perception by these Tongan parents was that they had little to offer their children by way of academic support which may have been, to some extent, influenced by the traditional view that this was solely a role for the teacher and not one in which parents could actively participate. That is, the perception was that the teacher held the responsibility for supporting children's learning, and to be involved with this would be interfering with their job. These sentiments were reflected in the 'talaloto' of one of the parents:

My husband does not help our children's learning and often when he returns from work, he is so tired. The same with me I do not help them for various reasons such as it is the job of the teacher to teach my children. We parents should not interfere with the teacher's job. We do not want to step in too far to what we do not know. (Talaloto 8).

4.3.1.3 Parent perspectives of their relationships with teachers

While there were some positive reports on this relationship, for others this interaction seemed problematic. Some parents who, independently of this study, had been involved in a school and home partnership the previous year, discussed relationships between teachers and parents. The school and home partnership was seen by them as a mutually positive experience that involved communicating and visiting with each other. Parents valued the relationship between them and their child's teacher, viewing it as significant for the progress of their children's learning:

> *I now have a very close relationship with my son's teacher. Since the pilot programme that started last year, I am now aware of the importance of having a good relationship with my child's teacher. I have the time to talk to her about my child's learning. I now have a regular visit and talk with my son's teacher, and it is easy to do so. (Talaloto 1)*

A few of these parents indicated the realisation that they could be involved with their child's learning made a significant impact on the support they were then able to provide their child at home:

> *I am starting to help my children's learning, where as before, I hardly help their schoolwork. My shortfall and I have changed that for the better. I always talk to the teacher now and so on. (Talaloto 5)*

Other parents were struggling to do the same. There was minimal evidence of relationships between many parents and teachers. Parents unintentionally seemed to distance themselves from teachers, despite continuing to meet the basic needs of the school, for example, responding to weekly notices. Although parents knew the importance of having a strong relationship with the teacher, this had not progressed. What was evident was that these parents would like to do something about the relationship, but for whatever reason, were unable to implement this. One parent wished that her child's teacher would initiate contact, as she explained:

> *We only know the teacher from what our son tells us, and we only visit the school when we were asked to come to the Tongan Language Week this year. We only visit when school asks us to come. The teacher was telling me how wonderful the Tongan Week was and so on. We don't know each other well. She knows I am the mum, but I don't know her well. We met his first teacher this year during the parent interviews, but I do not think that she knows much about our culture or background. I think it is better for us to focus on what we can do from home for now, but I am sure we will do something about it later. I wish the teacher will do the same. (Talaloto 4)*

The importance of the first impression of teachers for parents came through in data and at times parents indicated this had a crucial impact on their relationship. For example, in

one case, a mother had organised to meet up with a teacher. When the teacher did not turn up for the meeting the outcome was that the parent never went back to meet with the teacher again.

> *I was interested in my children's learning. I remember one of son's teacher he rang me to have a meeting about my son's behaviour. I came to school, and he was not there that day and I never go back again. The year ended and I have never visited that teacher of my son. (Talaloto 12)*

4.3.1.4 How parents view and value their contributions to their children's learning

The findings in the pre-intervention stage also paint a mixed picture of participants' views of the value of their contribution to their children's learning. Some parent participants highly valued their parental contributions and saw these as significant to the development of their children's education. Evidence of this was when parents decided to visit the school. They made commitments to make regular school visits and to talk with the teacher. Typically, parents might only visit schools on occasions like sports days, behavioural meetings, and/or parent interviews but some parents in this research thought that making regular visit to the school was crucial.

> *We always try and visit school once a week. Other times I call in to drop their lunches and just say hi to their teachers. My son's teacher would update me from time to time how well he is doing in the class, and I do believe that it is important to visit school often and not just parent interviews. (Talaloto 9)*

Other parents took it further and acted to eliminate any hindrance that might prevent them from contributing to their children's learning. For example, one parent who had two jobs gave up one to allow him to have more time to help his children's learning. Other parents even gave up playing sport for the same reason. Such commitment from these parents showed clear evidence of the high value they placed on their children's education and their support for this. These same parents were those who asserted that they would do whatever it took to help their children's learning. Their seriousness is reflected in comments such as:

> *I always worried when I was working two jobs because I did not have time to stay home and help my children's education. I decided to give up one job as a result of*

my young son wanting us parents to spend more time with them at home. (Talaloto 3)

Two parents implied they believed that their children were not academically gifted, but they were still completely committed to supporting them. For example, one parent attended educational workshops with the intention of gathering knowledge and skills to help her child at home. This indicated a positive mindset and approach towards her child's learning:

When I help my son, I do it with 100% in whatever I can do. There were workshops that I attended on how to help our children's learning in which I've learnt a lot from, and it helps me when I am working with my son. (Talaloto 1).

One parent however, admitted that while they valued their children's education, their family priorities needed to be elsewhere:

I think I am valuing my child's education in my thoughts, and I cannot do anything about it. I am just too busy trying to make money for the family. I need to earn money to keep my family alive and that is my priority now. (Talaloto 8).

Comments such as this are indicative of the financial and time constraints that participants were experiencing and reveals the impact of these on their ability to support their child's learning.

4.3.1.5 Parents' perspectives on the use of Tongan and English language at home

There was one area in which all parents concurred that they could support their children: keeping the Tongan language alive. All parents indicated they valued the use of Tongan language and were supportive of keeping it alive at home, despite difficulties they faced in this. Their reasons for wanting to keep the language alive included communication, identity and for the future generation. There is currently no 'language nest' in the Waikato for Tongan language to be taught; parents are reliant on churches or their own home. Previous research (Herda et al., 1990; K. James, 1992; Vakalahi, 2010) noted that in Tongan society grandparents are given the role of teaching the Tongan language, culture, traditions, myths, music and more. Grandparents' role in nurturing Tongan language within the home was reflected in Talaloto:

> *Up to now all my children are very confident with the Tongan language and a big help to achieve this were the work of my in-laws (grandparents). My children can speak, write, and read in Tongan. This was learnt from home and not from school. Without the help of my in-laws with the learning of the Tongan language my children would not be where they are now, and I am so thankful to them. At the same time my children are feeling proud of whom they are, let alone they were born here in New Zealand and not in Tonga where they could have learnt from everyone around them. (Talaloto 2)*

In other households, parents used both English and the Tongan language, with more weight being put on the usage of the Tongan language. One parent explained that emphasizing the use of the Tongan language at home was not just for the purpose of learning it, but also for communicating with relations back in Tonga.

A barrier for some parents was the limitation of their English language skills which impacted on their ability to help their children. Some parents acknowledged that the reason they avoided visiting the teacher was due to limited skill in the English language. They explained that they do not want to look fakama, that is, feel embarrassed in front of their child's teacher, by not having the ability to respond appropriately if the teacher asked them questions. Some did not even want the teacher to know that they struggled with English.

While unsure of their own English, two parents thought that it was still wise to also keep using English, as they viewed this as being supportive of their children's education:

> *The languages that I mostly use at home are Tongan and English. I think 85% of the time I do speak in Tongan and the other 15% I speak in English. I only try to speak in English when I try to help my son's homework but I'm not very confident. However, I try my best to make sure that there is a mutual understanding between me and my son regarding his homework' (Talaloto 1)*

The importance of sustaining both languages was recognised by parent participants who were studying or who had studied at tertiary level. These parents indicated that they understood how a child's brain works and a child's ability to learn more than one language. The knowledge they had gained from their own studies had led them to value

the Tongan language and there was a sense that they were determined to keep it alive. As one parent explained:

> *I am so determined to teach my children the Tongan language and keep it alive at home. At the university, I am surprised that a few students are speaking the 'Te Reo' (Māori language) and they are proud of it. Now I will do the same for my own Tongan language. (Parent 7)*

Five parents explained that back in Tonga they only speak Tongan and that keeping the Tongan language alive was not an important consideration given its prevalence and widespread use. However, migrating to New Zealand and hearing different languages had opened their eyes to the fact that there was a risk to the Tongan language in New Zealand and that it could easily disappear if they are not proactive in supporting its continued use. One parent described that it hurt to hear children from other backgrounds speaking their own language so well when her children lacked this ability. This parent could visualise the impact on future generations, and this was a powerful motivator for her:

> *'The language we use at home; my husband speaks in Tongan, and I use both languages. Most times I use the English language to my two children. The study that I am involved with now, enables myself to reflect on the development of the child's brain that they can learn many languages at the same time while they are young. Since then, I became to value my Tongan language and the need for my two children to speak the language. This needs to start from home where all parents should make sure that this happens. It hurts me to listen to children from other ethnicities speaking their own languages so well and my two kids don't. This makes me value this more than ever before, so I am determined to do this at home. When they go to school they always speak in English and the Tongan language will be lost if they never have the chance to practice it. If this happens than their own fānau (children) will not have any chance to speak the Tongan language. (Talaloto 9)*

Another parent further supported the idea of learning and sustaining the Tongan language since it is part of who they are as Tongans. The Tongan language for this parent

differentiates them from people of similar features. It was integral to his identity as a Tongan and he wanted this to be maintained in future generations, as he explained:

> *Our Tongan language is so important to keep and teach the next generation and more to come. Our language keeps us unique from the Samoan or Cook Islands. We look similar in features, but our language tells the difference. We cannot be Samoan or Cook Islands, we will always be Tongans. (Talaloto 7)*

4.3.1.6 Parent perspectives on perceived barriers to engaging in children's learning

Numerous barriers to parental engagement were identified in the pre-intervention phase. These included work, lack of access to electronic devices, cultural obligations, church, and the teacher. Work was identified as one of the key factors that contributed to parents disengaging from their children's' learning. Most parents were working in factories, one was a Support Teacher, one was a Corrections Officer and two were undertaking tertiary level study. Thus, the majority of parents were employed in jobs which were physically and emotionally demanding. Most parents found themselves exhausted after work and some also continued with a second job, reflecting the reality for this community who are living in a low socio-economic environment. One parent who was studying at tertiary level was helping with administrative tasks for two family businesses after finishing her classes. As a result, finding time to help their children's learning was always a challenge for these parents. One explained:

> *I do try to balance involvement and engagement at home with my son's learning however, there are times where I am too busy, and I cannot engage in my son's learning. At home I manage the whole family in terms of paperwork for our painting business and look after my mum's cleaning business. Not only that but at church I do look after the young women group and every Wednesday I run activities for young women at church. So, at home I am very busy' (Talaloto 9)*

Parents also identified a range of other factors which had a bearing on their engagement with their child's school learning. In most households the distraction of electronic devices was identified as a factor which influenced parental engagement. In some households, parents allowed children to use mobile phones, explaining that they had no boundaries around these. Some parents explained that they used the mobile phone for baby-sitting

while they were occupied with other jobs. For four parents, they did not usually engage because trusted their child when they asked if they had any homework. Other parents admitted that they did not have the knowledge to check the completion of their child's homework. The realisation that their child had not completed their homework only occurred when teachers sent a note home or called them. However, parents were aware of this problem and wanted to act upon it.

The church was another factor contributing to parental disengagement from supporting their children's learning in some homes. Some parents recognised that the amount of time spent at church in the evenings impacted on their family time, including opportunities for their children to complete homework. They also noted that time spent at church often resulted in their children going to bed late and that church programmes and activities sometimes negatively impacted on their children's learning. These families made a clear link between the 'burdens' imposed on them by the church and consequences for their children's learning. As parents, they were fulfilling the church needs and not necessarily those of their children. Some even felt that they were trapped, and they were unable to do anything about this, being afraid to withdraw from church activities due to the likelihood of mocking from other church members. In addition to the demand of time, one parent described the significant financial impact on their family and their reasons for acceptance of this:

> *I always talk to my wife about how the church has a huge negative impact on us and avoiding us from helping our children's learning. I do believe that the church is also an education sector. I do respect our church leadership, but they often try to justify that the church and education are two different things. No, they are meant to be one where they support each other. Most times we do give to the church because we feel obliged to do so or to be obedience members of the church…However, the fact is that the church probably takes half of our income, and we only survive on the other half. We know this is wrong, but we keep quiet about it because that is the norm. (Talaloto 10)*

In addition to church obligations, cultural obligation was another factor identified as preventing parents from engaging in their children's learning. Cultural responsibilities such as grandparents adopting or looking after the eldest of the family contributed to the

lack of parental engagement. In this study, one of the student participants had to travel to another country to live with his grandparents who are citizens of that country. According to his mother, he was doing fine at school before he went to live with his grandparents. When the child returned after a number of years, his learning achievements were very low, and the school went the extra mile to help him with his learning. While this cultural responsibility has a place in the Tongan family setting, sometimes it can impact negatively on the child's learning, especially for an oldest grandchild:

> *With our eldest son we regret how we brought him up. Both my family and my husband's family really spoiled him. He was the first grandson for both families. When he wanted to go to Tonga he will go. He is called after my husband's dad. When he wanted to go to Tonga, he just asked my dad, then my dad will ring all his sons to pay his airfares. My mum will accompany him to Tonga, and he missed a lot of school days. Towards the end of last year, we realised what we have done and this year we are pushing at school to reach the right levels where he should be. (Talaloto 5)*

Parents' perceptions or assumptions about teachers were identified as one of the contributing factors to parents disengaging from helping their children's learning. When parents were asked if they would like teachers to visit them, they suggested that they would like teachers not only to learn to know about them, but their families and their cultures as well. While similar answers were received from teachers when the same question was asked it was unclear who would make the first move.

4.4 Themes emerging from teachers' focus group data

Five themes emerged from teachers' focus group discussions. They were teachers' perspectives of parental engagement; teachers' perspectives on how Tongan students learn best; teacher's perspectives of Tongan parents' contributions to their children's learning; teachers' perspectives on home visits; and teachers' desire to learn and utilise parents' home pedagogies in the classroom.

4.4.1.1 Teachers' perspectives of parental engagement

According to the teachers, some Tongan parents have visited them at school, wanting to know how their child is progressing and asking for ideas about helping their child at home. However, the perspective of four teachers in regard to their interaction with the parents, differed from that described by the parents. Whereas some parents held a view that teachers did not engage with them in a reciprocal way, teachers conveyed that they had experienced positive engagement with Tongan parents at school. While most parents focussed their parental engagement on lifting the learning performance of students, some teachers viewed parental engagement as a partnership going beyond helping students' academic potential, for example, to include parents participating in extra-curricular activities. One teacher explained that such engagement with parents was important not only for the sake of the child, but it was beneficial and helped to upskill the parent as well:

> *I have lots of engagements in my class. I find these engagements are so important for me as the teacher especially relating to the learning side. Better feedback from the parents and teacher involved. That is what I am finding when I am talking to parents and I also understand their side of the education, what they know, and it helps their learning as well. (Teacher 6)*

Conversely, some teachers admitted that they do not have any or have had very minimal parental engagement with the Tongan parents of their students. The main reason they offered for this was parents being busy at work and having insufficient time to visit the classroom. Other explanations offered were the lack of confidence from some parents, and them simply "not bothering" to show up. One teacher admitted that unfortunately the only time she met with a Tongan parent from her class was during a behavioural meeting:

> *One parent that I said to her, that it's a shame that I am calling you in for behaviour issue rather than academic one. The parent sat quietly during the meeting, and I did not realise perhaps I mis-read her body language that day. I tried to contact her later for other issues but to no success. That is the first and the last time I met that parent. (Teacher 2)*

The data did not reveal the reason why the parent never returned to meet with the teacher again. However, for both the teacher and the parent a relationship did not exist prior to the meeting, and regardless of the intent by either party, one did not develop as a result of their interaction around the child's behaviour. Nevertheless, two teachers insisted that if parents valued their children's learning, then it was up to the parents to initiate the parental engagement. Their comments indicated that from their perspective, that the degree to which engagement occurred was reflective of the priority the families placed on education. As Teacher 4 stated: 'I think it's pretty much then what they want to see. If they value their children's education, then they will come'.

All of the teachers stated that they would like parents to visit them at school, agreeing that parents doing so would lift student learning achievement and that there would also be a significant shift in the development of their relationships. Teachers understood the positive impact that school visits could have on children's learning as follows:

> *I would like parents to visit schools. This will be an opportunity to form relationships and address students learning goals. However, Tongan parents are often associated with being shy, so, I think it is a blessing if they can come to my class. Sometimes we teachers find it hard to visit some homes and I am sure it is hard for them too. (Teacher 1)*

What is evident from the data is that both parties; teachers and parents, desired a deeper relationship to enhance the children's achievement, but that they each felt that the meeting should occur in their own environment. The teachers wanted to increase parental visits to school, and parents wanted teachers to visit them in their homes. The overall goal of interaction was essentially the same but achieved through different pathways.

4.4.1.2 Teachers' perspectives on how Tongan students learn best

Repetition was identified by some teachers to be an effective way of teaching Tongan students. This teaching strategy had been used in some classrooms and Tongan students appeared to respond well when repetition was used. This was an interesting affirmation from teachers since it links to a traditional teaching technique used in Tonga. The culture, in terms of protocols, language, knowledge, skills and traditions, is normally transferred

through repetition. Church rituals and ceremonies often rely on a repetition method for their delivery to the congregation. One teacher had travelled to Tonga and had witnessed the use of repetition as a teaching technique in classrooms:

> *I agree with repetition because when I was over in Tonga last year that is what they teach over there. That is what they do, and it is obviously in them to learn that way. That's their learning style and I think it actually…I mean I have been doing poems in my classroom and the poem has just taken off and nine times out of ten is my Tongan students who can actually say over and over again… and singing that Tongan song that Whaea has given us. One student leads it. He gets up and starts singing…and it is giving him that confidence. (Teacher 3)*

Whilst these teachers expressed the value of repeating instructions for Tongan students, they also suggested the need for teachers to understand the cultural body language of students and seek other alternatives to make sure that students do understand what they are learning. For example, teachers need to recognise that a simple nod does not necessarily mean 'yes' or that a Tongan student being quiet does not mean that he/she does not understand, but it could be an act of being polite in the Tongan culture. So, it is crucial to confirm the child's understanding by asking the question again in another way:

> *Sometimes children with [English as a] second language nod because they do not want to create a fuss with their eye contact. Sometimes I will challenge that, and I will go. 'Yes? Okay,' then I will read it again… that kind of really works. (Teacher 6)*

4.4.1.3 Teachers' perspectives of Tongan parents' contributions to their children's learning

Teachers understood and valued Tongan parents' contribution to their children's learning. They admitted that parents' contributions at home were vital to the success of their child's learning. This appreciation led teachers to the introduction of postcards being sent home saying 'thank you' to parents for contributing to their child's learning:

> *What we are doing is once a week we're sending postcards out to the children's parents and saying thanks for helping their children's learning at home. They have done this and that and this is where they are at now. This gives them that*

confidence and values of what they are doing at home. I do appreciate and value what they do. (Teacher 4)

Interestingly, some teachers felt the urge to learn and utilise the culture, like the Tongan language, to show parents that they value and use their culture at school. They suggested the need for teachers to try and appreciate the culture of their students by learning about it if they could. One teacher suggested writing newsletters in Tongan as well as English, which would cater for those Tongan parents who may struggle with English language. Albeit perhaps unconsciously, the teachers described culturally responsive practices:

And I think that more of us need more of it too. When we send home newsletters, what's wrong with putting them in Tongan or Samoan? I think we need to make that extra effort and go the extra mile to value where they're at…And I think we're going to see more and more of it with our Tongan Language Week, I really do I think it opened a big door for us; it opened a massive door for us. (Teacher 5)

Throughout Tongan Language Week, most of the teachers made the effort to wear Tongan attire to show their support. Once teacher showed that they were interested in Tongan attire; this inspired a parent to come forward and offer attire to teachers, indicating to them their willingness to share and participate. Additionally, students were inspired and were keen to act as 'intermediaries' in negotiating teachers' needs with their parents:

And that's what I found too because I thought it was going to be a problem and so I said I don't have one… 'oh my Mum will bring you one tomorrow, okay' and I go 'Okay' and I didn't get just one I got two. (Teacher 4).

4.4.1.4 Teachers' perspectives on home visits

Some teachers who had undertaken home visits found the experience positive. These teachers had found parents very welcoming, and the warmth and the visit had been very rewarding. They wanted to take part in home visits more often. The teachers felt that visiting the Tongan homes broke down barriers and built relationships with parents. They suggested that relationships were strengthened as a result of rapport being established between the two parties:

I have visited and felt very welcomed into their home with a cup of tea and sat down and spoke to the families, so it's been very rewarding. And yes because of the rapport, when you see them again in the school it's strengthened that relationship and barriers are broken and they can just talk to you whereas if it's a phone call or they come to drop off lunch well that's just a hello, how are you and there's your child, but meeting them at home in their own home setting it's very welcoming and [I] absolutely love it. I should do it more often though. (Teacher 6)

Teachers indicated that the majority of home visits were concerned with behavioural problems, so it appeared that if teachers did not perceive there was a problem, they did not visit a home.

Two teachers reported that school management was sometimes a barrier to home visits. Teachers felt that they did not have the freewill to make home visits. While the management team allowed teachers to make home visits, at the same time teachers were warned about the problems that they may face during their visit. Some teachers viewed this as a strategy perhaps used by management to discourage them from home visits:

If a need had arisen where I have needed to go in terms of my Tongan student, then I would have no problem whatsoever to go and do that. I would love to visit because I love home visits as well. It really breaks down all the barriers… I thought I'm going to try because they could be home. And sometimes the response from management made me think twice as to whether I should or shouldn't but me being myself I'll just do it anyway. (Teacher 4)

Some teachers reported that they found home visits challenging to do and they needed someone to go with them as a support person. The support person would act like an icebreaker for them. Some teachers understood that visiting Tongan parents may put a burden on families to supply food for the visit and this discouraged them from visiting homes. These teachers understood this that this was part of their Tongan culture for welcoming visitors, and that it would be disrespectful not to partake:

They hold you in high regard and you feel like they're going to… like I can picture myself going in there and they put on this feast and…You're not really there for that but that's what they want to do to show their respect to you. (Teacher 2)

4.4.1.5 Teachers want to learn and utilise parents' home pedagogies in the classroom

The data revealed that teachers would like to learn more about the knowledge or home pedagogies in the Tongan homes. They would like to invite parents into the classroom to share their knowledge with the class. By doing so it could increase the teacher's understanding and further strengthen their connection. By inviting them to come to school and share their skills and knowledge this could also show parents that teachers do value them and what they have:

Sharing is caring, and I think use them and utilise them (home pedagogies) as much as we can, and I think what they have to share is showing that they care, and we care by letting them come in and to do sharing in our classroom. (Teacher 6)

4.5 Themes emerging from students' focus group

Six themes emerged from analysis of the students' focus group: the nature of parental engagement at home; inclination towards Tongan things; home visits; perspectives on parents' school visits; language discourses; funds of knowledge and home pedagogies.

4.5.1.1 Student perspectives on parental engagement in their learning at home

All students revealed that their parents cared about their learning as summed up in the assertion by student 6: "They care about my learning because they want me to do well." Students' comments that their parents wanted them to do well at school matched what parents stated in their talaloto. This also coincided with what teachers disclosed in their focus group, validating the high expectations for their children's learning held by these Tongan parents. Yet despite all parents having high expectations of their children's learning and children agreeing that they did, there were differences in students' descriptions of their parents' actions toward their learning. Reported parent actions or engagement in their children's learning varied from parental help, instigating older siblings' assistance, to no help being received at all.

Students commented on the differing roles of their mothers and fathers and siblings in their learning. Some students explained that their fathers did most of the help with their learning, whereas mothers were busy with other tasks like doing the laundry, cooking, doing the dishes or attending church on behalf of the family:

> *When I need to do reading, I go to my dad' 'My dad helps me at home with my schoolwork like maths because my mum is busy doing the laundry, dishes, and other stuff. There are ten people living in my house. (Student 2)*

Students respected their fathers as the main helper with their learning at home, recognising that demands arising from the number of people living in some households precluded mothers from providing learning support, as student 5 explained, 'Dad *helps us most of the time with our homework. He comes home tired but still play and help us with our work.'* In some households, mothers were also found to be involved in helping with learning, especially those mothers who played sports while they were young. This indicated that parents did not confine their help to academic work. Student three explained that: '*Mum always goes to the women's volleyball and sometimes she teaches us how to play it, but I am all right. My sister is good at it.'* In other households, older siblings were taking on the role of parental engagement. In such households the main reasons were that both parents were busy at work, or parents did not have the expertise to help.

4.5.1.2 Students' perspectives on parents' school visits

When students were asked if they would like their parents to visit them at school, they all indicated that they would love their parents to come and visit, as student 6 said, 'I would like my dad to come and visit me at school.' Some students suggested that if their parents could come to school, it would make them happy and encourage them to work hard. Student 3 said: 'I would like my parents to come to school often because it will help my learning.' Student 2 said he wished his dad would come to school like other parents who attend to watch him at the school's cross country.

4.5.1.3 Student perspectives on home visits

When students were asked if their teachers had visited them at home, the majority of the students said 'no'. However, two students said that their teachers have been to their

homes to talk with their mums about their behaviour at school. These two students were worried about the consequences they might receive from their mothers after their teachers' visits. This finding suggests that students associate teachers' home visits with the reporting of negative issues. There was no indication of teachers visiting homes to report positive matters:

> *I was too shy to look at the teacher at home. However, I was more worried about mum because she does not want us to have bad behaviour at school or the church. I thought I was going to get a hiding. (Student 3)*

But when students were asked if they would like their teachers to visit them at home, they all responded that they would love it. Even the two students who experienced negative teacher home visits both wanted the teacher to visit them at home. One student who said yes to a teacher visit, expressed that it would be strange for him to see his teacher coming home for a visit, but he thought it would be great.

4.5.1.4 Student perspectives on the value of their Tongan culture

All students stated that they felt proud when wearing the Tongan attire during Tongan Language Week. Wearing the Tongan attire made them proud of themselves and their culture. These students were all New Zealand born but their Tongan identity is taken seriously with pride. For student 1 it appeared that Tongan attire helped him make the connection with Tonga

> *I love wearing my Tongan costumes. It's part of who we are, and I am wearing it with pride, and I am embracing my culture because I was born here in New Zealand. (Student 1)*

This inclination by students toward Tongan things was also identified in their discussion of the church setting. Students liked attending their church since activities and rituals are done in Tongan ways. In this setting everyone wears Tongan attire. The church services on Sundays are a time where students are able to meet friends and relatives. They also enjoyed participating in cultural events hosted by the church:

> *I like my church (Wesleyan) because we all have to have a 'kai pola' (Tongan feast). When it is dark, we have church and then we have 'koniseti' (fundraising concert). (Student 5)*

When students were asked about whether they learn Tongan things in class, they said that they only learnt about Tongan ideas and protocols during the Tongan Week, but they would love to learn more. Student 3 explained: 'We only learn Tongan stuff during the Tongan Week. I should learn more Tongan stuff in the class. It would make me feel great and being appreciated in the class.' All the students said they would like to see more inclusion of Tongan culture in their school learning, as student 6 said: 'I would like to learn more about Tongan stuff in the classroom. We learn a lot of Māori but not Tongan stuff.'

4.5.1.5 Student perspectives on Tongan Language

When students were asked about the preferred language to be used at home, four students indicated that they would like to use Tongan language. Two students elaborated that they prefer the Tongan language since both their parents speak Tongan and this is the language that is used consistently at home. One student further emphasised that his preference for the Tongan language at home was because the language was significant for his identity. As student 6 said: 'I would like to use Tongan because my parents are Tongan and that's important for my identity.'

By contrast, in three other households, students preferred to use English language because it is easier for them than using the Tongan language. These households had been using the English language since these students were young. This does not mean that students in these households do not understand the Tongan language. Although English was the main home language, students mentioned that the Tongan language was also being used 'here and there'. Student 3 provided further insight: 'I like to use English because when I use Tongan at home, I struggle sometimes. I feel weird because I sometimes get Tongan words wrong.'

4.5.1.6 Student perspectives on home funds of knowledge and pedagogies

While some students acknowledged that their parents never share with them their knowledge and skills, even what they do as a job, others experienced a considerable amount of positive engagement with their parents whereby they learnt a lot from them. One student had experienced watching his dad welding at home and another student had seen and learned from their father how to paint, as the father is a painter. One student described her nana as a good weaver and another student described his dad as a weightlifter.

When students were asked if they would like their parents to come to school and share their funds of knowledge, they all responded that they would love that to happen. One student suggested that if this happened, she thought that it would make her put more effort into her learning. Some students thought that that would be a chance for them to learn about their parents, while others would very much like to see what their parents would be like at school, sharing their knowledge in class. As Student 1 said: *'Yes, I would like my mum to come and share her ideas because I would like to know how my mum is like at school.'*

4.6 Summary of the talaloto and focus groups

This summary draws together the themes that have emerged from the findings of the talaloto of parents and the two focus groups of teachers and students. It discusses the commonalities and differences between the groups and the implications of the analysis and rationale for the intervention to be developed. This summary also provides answers to the minor research question: *Do the perceptions of Tongan parents align with those of the child and the teacher?'*

4.6.1 What were the commonalities between the three groups?

There were seven commonalities identified from analysis of the talaloto and focus groups. These were that parental engagement varies from household to household, parents have high expectations of their children's learning, relationships between parents and teachers need to improve, there is a need for improvement in home visits, school visits need to improve, and that funds of knowledge and Tongan language and culture need to be sustained.

4.6.1.1 Parental engagement

All participant groups (parents, teachers, and students) identified different levels of parental engagement in children's school-based learning, ranging from engagement in learning in some homes to none in other homes. The findings demonstrate the inconsistent nature of parental engagement. Students revealed that some parents took an interest in and helped them at home with their school-based learning, especially the fathers, while mothers were busy with household chores or church attendance. At the same time busy parents encouraged older siblings to help their younger ones.

In the households where parental engagement in school-based learning was found, parents said that they had just started engaging in their children's learning. If the contents of the school-based learning aligned with that of parents, then they would help their children, otherwise others, such as older siblings, would be asked to take over. The learning engagements were not all specifically academic, and included non-academic activities, such as sports. Most importantly, home learning included the teaching of Tongan language and culture. These arrangements of shared responsibility for supporting learning in the home reflect a traditionally collectivist approach within Tongan culture. Additionally, teaching in the home around language and culture enhances the Tonga child's tupu'anga/fatu'anga or sense of identity and belonging around who they are and where they come from and the cultural elements that underpin the Tongan upbringing. This learning is not reinforced in the school, apart from in superficial ways and it is noted that this may be an area where parents and the wider community could make valuable contributions.

In other instances, some parents, in seeking knowledge and skills to enable themselves to better engage in their children's school-based learning, went on their own to attend workshops. These parents were motivated and were keen to do whatever they could, perhaps to fulfil their expectations for their children's education. Teachers identified that some parents had just started coming to school and asking for help with how to support their child in school-based learning and found this encouraging. However, this view of the teachers may also be indicative of their perception that learning was confined to the subject domains of the New Zealand Curriculum, and they were not necessarily aware of or placing value on either the collectivist nature of Tongan upbringing or cultural learning which exists separately from the formal schooling system. In some households where there was no parental engagement in school-based learning, it was found that parents perceived they lacked the ability, skills, and confidence to help. Some parents prioritised culture or church or indicated that they lacked the motivation to help their children because they saw this as the teacher's role.

There was a mismatch between teachers and parents on whose role it was to initiate parental relationships and engagement. Some teachers thought that it was up to the parents to initiate it, and they would only get engaged if there was a need for it, whereas

some parents thought that they would just follow the teacher's lead. This indicated a misalignment of expectations between teachers and the parents, but also demonstrated that there was potential for both parties to come together to understand their inhibitions and work together to address them.

4.6.1.2 Parents have high expectations of their children's learning

The findings revealed that all the Tongan parents have high expectations of their children's education, and this was recognised by the teachers and also reinforced by the children themselves. However, despite this communal desire for their children to succeed, considerable variation in engagement and level of relationships between home and school was reflected in the talaloto or focus groups of all parties. This showed that there was considerable opportunity for both engagement and relationships to increase and develop.

4.6.1.3 Relationships between parents and teachers

It was found that some parents had a relationship with their child's teacher but very little is known about the quality or the details of these relationships. While the findings showed that some parents were visiting their child's teacher, none of the teachers mentioned the quality of their relationships with the Tongan parents. However, there was evidence of teachers acknowledging positive engagement of Tongan parents in their children's school-based learning, but teachers did not further elaborate on the nature of their relationships. The students expressed a strong desire for there to be a positive relationship between their parents and teacher.

The findings revealed a tension between families and the teacher in regard to who should be initiating the relationship, with both believing it was the responsibility of the other. The children, however, were more focussed on the benefits of strengthening the relationship, rather than the 'how'.

4.6.1.4 Home visits

A commonality of the findings asserted by students, was that their perceptions on home visits were congruent with that of parents and teachers. Parents expressed their desire for teachers to visit them at home indicating that doing so would not only be appreciated but teachers also needed to know them well and vice versa. Some parents implied that

this was a method for improving their child's learning. Teachers who had previously undertaken home visits confirmed that implementation of these was based on a need. They neither disclosed whether it was done voluntarily nor whether it would improve students' learning. One teacher expressed that it was a shame that her visits were behaviour orientated. However, all teachers confirmed how momentous home visits could be for their relationship with parents and enhancing student performances. To facilitate this relationship, teachers who considered home visits, required someone to accompany them as a support person during the first visit. Students expressed that they would like their teachers to visit them at home and indicated that doing so would encourage them to learn more, and their mothers would appreciate it very much. The rationale behind students' responses does not give us a clear indication whether they understand how a teacher's visit could help their learning but a clear message from students was that they wanted teachers to come and visit them at home.

4.6.1.5 School visits

School visits were identified as a necessity by parents, teachers, and students as a way for parents to make connections with teachers and the school. Teachers confirmed that visiting schools would allow parents to examine what their child was learning in the classroom. They also indicated that, based on previous experience, it would boost students' learning attitude. Parents approved of and were convinced that school visits were paramount for lifting students' learning performances, despite identifying some barriers associated with this. Parents and teachers both agreed that forming a positive relationship between them through school visits was important. Students were also clear in their view around school visits. They thought that if parents visited them at school, it would empower them to apply more effort into their learning. This meant that all the participants recognised some value and were willing to take part in and support school visits but that, in some instances there were barriers to overcome in order for this to be achieved. The implication was that there would need to be changes in behaviour of both parents and teachers, including increased confidence and awareness of each other's needs in order for this to occur.

4.6.1.6 Funds of knowledge and home pedagogies

'Funds of knowledge' was a common theme found among parents, teachers, and students. Teachers identified the need to learn home pedagogies of their Tongan students and were keen to invite parents to come to school and share their funds of knowledge, for example, about cultural knowledge or even vocational skills and expertise with them and their class. Teachers suggested that the school visit would allow them to learn more about parents' backgrounds. However, comments from Tongan parents about their school visits did not reveal the nature of the interactions between parents and teachers, or the kind of information parents received during these school visits. There was no indication or mention of whether there were any school funds of knowledge learnt by parents from teachers to help them at home. Students mentioned that they would like their parents to come to school and share what they were good at. Yet, the findings did not show anything about the school taking advantage of the funds of knowledge from home.

4.6.1.7 Tongan language and culture

All three groups admitted that the teaching and keeping alive the Tongan culture was of compelling importance. Parents shared their desire to maintain and use the language at home. Despite some parents thinking that it does not matter to them whether their child speaks English or Tongan, they all strongly recommended holding on to culture and tradition. Their motives were identity, sustainability for future generations communication with the local Tongan community and, most importantly, with relations in Tonga. The teachers clearly engaged with and valued the sharing of Tongan language and culture during Tongan Language Week and saw its place in the classroom, but this tended to be confined to one week per year. While they did not echo the rationale of the parents (for example, identify and sustainability), they definitely viewed support of language and culture as being a central component of supporting Tongan learner success. The findings also showed that students were very willing participants in any activities to celebrate their culture and enjoyed the way in which school and home could intertwine in this space.

4.6.2 What were the differences among the three groups?

While there were common themes emerging from parents, teachers and students' data, there were also some differences between them. The differences found were the perspectives of parents and students on the role of the teacher, teachers' perspectives on how Tongan students learn best, variation of expectations and inconsistency of reading books sent home by teachers.

4.6.2.1 Perspectives on the role of the teacher

The perspectives on the role of the teacher differed between the parents and the teachers. The students did not cover this or refer to this in their focus group.

The perspective of the parents appeared to be based on their experiences in Tonga, where there are clearly defined roles and expectations; the teachers are the key holders of knowledge and are highly respected on the basis of the role itself rather than the person. The data shows the influence of this thinking on parents' hesitance to become involved or directly approach the teacher, and also a general lack of confidence in their ability to be the 'teacher' at home. As mentioned previously, some parents also indicated that they saw it as the role of the teacher to initiate communication and any ensuing relationship and that for this to be fruitful it should include home visits. By contrast with this Tongan understanding, the perspective of the teachers appeared to be based on Western traditions whereby although the teachers are the educationalists, they see a partnership role with parents in supporting the learning of the children. Within this the data showed an expectation by some teachers that the parents would not only attend meetings and activities as required at school but would initiate some of the communication and work as partners in building a relationship.

4.6.2.2 Teachers' perspectives on how Tongan students learn best

The findings highlighted differences in the perspectives of the teachers around the best learning style for Tongan students. There were two strategies that some teachers at this school had been using and found to have worked for Tongan students. Firstly, repetition was identified by teachers to be an effective way to teach Tongan students. Some teachers thought that possibly because of Tongan students' low English language ability, and that repetition was a traditional method of learning in Tonga, repeating the

instructions a few times would be helpful. Other teachers thought a good strategy for supporting learning would be for a Tongan child to have the same teacher two years in a row due to the strength of the relationship. Some teachers reported on the effectiveness of keeping the students two years in a row and suggested that this could be a direction the school could take up in the future.

Neither the parents nor the students commented on the learning style that they believed would be most effective in supporting learning.

4.6.2.3 Variation of expectations and inconsistency of reading books sent home by teachers

The inconsistency and variation in supplying reading books and expectations was found to be a factor impacting on parental engagement in their child's reading. The inconsistency of supplying homework and reading books had been noticed by the Tongan parents. As examples, parents commented that on one day their child brought home reading level 12, on the next day level 15 and the following day, level 10.

4.6.3 Opportunities and possibilities highlighted in the findings

4.6.3.1 Parental engagement

Results of the pre-intervention phase data indicate that there is a need to rebuild and reimagine the parental engagement practices of Tongan parents in relation to their children's education. Rather than persisting in the same behaviours or seeking to increase involvement in the existing forms of communication or relationships with the schools, findings demonstrated a need to explore and redefine what engagement between the parties might look like. One area, for example, that emerged as needing rethinking, was identifying a preferred means of communication and fundamentals of building relationships.

It was also apparent that some parents lacked the school funds of knowledge on how to assist their children's learning and as a result they turned to look elsewhere like enrolling in workshops or using their older children. There is an opportunity here to bring teachers and parents together for workshops on parental engagement. School and home funds of knowledge should be shared and encouraged to help both teachers in the classroom and parents at home.

4.6.3.2 Home and school funds of knowledge and pedagogies

It was obvious from the pre-intervention phase that the school funds of knowledge and pedagogies were different to the funds of knowledge and pedagogies of the homes. Evidence of this was seen by parents seeking help (knowledge and skills) elsewhere such as workshops and teachers. Parents were not aware of the richness of the funds of knowledge and pedagogies of homes that could be utilised during parental engagement. An idea emerged from the pre-intervention phase findings of the value of running workshops on home funds of knowledge and how to make the link between these and parental engagement. Similarly, the same thing should be done with teachers too. They need to be aware of how home funds of knowledge and pedagogies could be weaved into the classroom teaching and learning. This cannot be achieved without changing the mindsets of both parents and teachers on their current belief of what funds of knowledge and pedagogies are best for students' learning. This sounds challenging but is an opportunity to bring teachers and parents together and form a learning partnership. This analysis prompted the development of the intervention opportunity which sought to provide and support parents, teachers, and students in the process of developing and strengthening collective relationships, creating meaningful engagement between home and school, and recognising the value and place of funds of knowledge (both home and school) in order to increase student achievement outcomes. This is further described in Chapter 6: The intervention.

From these findings, I proposed three categories that I wanted teachers and parents to consider when merging school and home funds of knowledges and pedagogies. When parents and teachers come together to weave both funds of knowledges, they should consider, what the child is learning in the classroom, the child's learning performance levels and how parents could help at home with their children's learning. By doing so, both parties could come up with what funds of knowledge best suit the child's learning.

4.6.3.3 Relationships

Mitchell, Haggerty, Hampton, and Pairman (2006) emphasise that when teachers learn and know more about families, it helps to deepen their interaction. The pre-intervention phase revealed that despite the connections between some parents and teachers, it did not show strong relationships between them. Information was flowing in one direction

only from teachers to parents, and not vice versa. The majority of parents and teachers reported that they need to build a better relationship between parents and teachers. This was further supported by students with suggestions that teachers and parents visit each other in order to build a relationship between them. All participants suggested that the relationships between parents and teachers should be more than learning their names and include learning about themselves and their backgrounds. This indicated to me a desire by all parties to get to know each other beyond a superficial level.

One of the challenges of building this relationship was the question of who would make the first move. After analysing all parties' ideas on who would initiate relationships, I concluded that all parties should be responsible for making a move to build a relationship, recognising however, that the ease of doing this may differ from person to person. Some teachers and parents prior to the *talaloto* wanted to build relationships with each other, but they do not know how, and some felt fakama (shy). If the professional status of teachers is minimised and the review of parents as the owner of students revised, both parties can work together in order to help children's learning. Parents and teachers perhaps both have responsibilities to initiate relationships.

4.6.3.4 Home visits and school visits

Parents' and teachers' agreement that home and school visits are significant to forming relationships, was a strong theme emerging from the data. Cognisant that this is not the sole mechanism for establishing relationships, I nevertheless suggest that this is an important avenue for both parents and teachers and that both parties should be responsible for initiating these. Allen et al. (2009) emphasise that before effective engagement can occur, we need to make connections with Pacific students and their families. Home visits have the potential to change views and, in some instances, may serve to address a deficit mindset. One of the teachers who went for a home visit reported on how she learnt new things about the Tongan parents she visited, and she had no idea that they could run or own a business. While parents can learn so much from a school visit about the teachers' background and school funds of knowledge, an equal opportunity exists for teachers to learn from a home visit.

CHAPTER 5:

THE KATO ALU MODEL

5.1 Introduction

To optimise parental engagement, it was important to find a culturally appropriate and sustainable conceptual model. Accordingly, the '*Kato Alu'* (ceremonial basket), a Tongan traditional artefact, has been employed as a metaphor to conceptualise and to develop a new Pacific parental engagement model. This model conveys my understanding of how beneficial parental engagement practices can be co-constructed by teachers, parents and students. The model is applicable to Tongan parents as well as Pacific descendants. The different stages of crafting the Kato Alu highlight the different phases of parents', and students' interactions and contribute to the success of the ensuing parental engagement practices. The development of this model was motivated by a number of factors such as my desire to help Tongan parents value of the home funds of knowledge, engage more in their children's learning, and the necessity to find answers to the second Research Question: *'How and to what extent does an intervention programme designed on the basis of Research Question 1 findings, support and enhance Tongan parent's engagement practices with their children's learning.?'*

5.2 Overview

This section begins with an overview of existing resources specifically designed to support Pacific parental engagement and highlights the gaps in this space. This is followed by a description of Kato alu, its origins, how it is made and its use as a Tongan cultural artefact. Kato alu is then used as a conceptual framework for an intervention to support engagement of Tongan parents in their children's education. Each stage of the model is described, with accompanying rationale and pertinence for the parental engagement process.

5.3 Pacific parental engagement framework

Despite a multitude of ways in which parents can be involved in their children's education (Harris & Goodall, 2007), there is no innovative Pacific model which directly addresses the issue of Pacific parental engagement practices. Numerous researchers have

recognised the positive influence of the parents' role in their children's learning (Beveridge, 2004; Hattie, 2009) and other researchers have concluded that the home is where effective parental engagement is most likely to occur (Bull, Brooking, & Campbell, 2008; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). However, western frameworks are still predominantly used when conceptualising parental engagement and there is limited evidence of the use of Pacific metaphors for this purpose.

5.3.1 Talanoa Ako

While the literature in this space is limited, the Ministry of Education (2016) produced a summary report, '*Ngaue fakataha ki he ako: Schools and Parents and Families Working Together to Better Understand and Support Pasifika Students' Progress and Achievement at School,' a* research and development project commissioned by the Ministry of Education. Beginning in 2011, this was led by a Pasifika Education Research Priorities Working Group. They focussed the project on relationships in an effort to understand and support Pacific children's learning, progress, and achievement at school. The project team worked together with three Auckland primary schools' parents in support of Pacific students' learning achievements. The project resulted in the introduction of the '*Talanoa Ako Cycle'.* Talanoa (Talk/share) Ako (learning) cycle which sets out key actions to help schools, parents and families, teachers and students understand the steps needed to improve aspects such as inclusive relationships partnership between parents and teachers and establishing clear learning goals for the student.

5.3.2 Pasifika Education Plan

The Pasifika Educational Plan 2013-2020 and 2020-2030 both have the child, parents, and families at the centre. The Education Plan requires parents, families, and communities to champion their children's learning achievement. In order to achieve this, there is the need to improve the supply of information to parents, have better networking, improve wellbeing, partnerships and support the culture, languages, and identities of Pacific learners.

5.3.3 Aiga

Another Pacific parental engagement model was developed by Friend and Cook (1992), known as a collaborative Pacific Island School which emphasises a family or 'aiga'

(extended family) approach. The book also identifies knowledge and skills required for professional partnership in terms of parent conferences, collaboration, and problem solving with others. It is more of a broader family concept where the extended family members are required to learn professional skills when meeting face to face with others.

The Pacific parental engagement frameworks that have been discussed incorporate and acknowledge Pacific aspects, knowledge, ideas, and protocols that are common and familiar to Pacific peoples. Talanoa Ako is utilised by educational providers to help contribute to the lifting of Pacific students' learning success, but other engagement models such as Aiga are not widely used. The hope is that Kato Alu will contribute to this area of education, especially the parental engagement practices of Pacific peoples. In the following section, I introduce the search for a Tongan parental engagement metaphor, outline its origins, propose Kato Alu as a framework, and provide detail around how the process works.

5.4 The search for a Tongan metaphor for the parental engagement model

The search for a Tongan parental engagement framework model was a response to the second research question. This question prompted the need to look for a Tongan metaphor that could best express a way for parents, students, and teachers to interact and implement parental engagement. Choosing a Tongan metaphor was challenging, and inspiration came almost serendipitously. I attended a Tongan funeral, was sitting in a cultural format (semi-circle all facing one direction) with Tongan elders, while the churches and relatives came with their 'koloa' or offerings to the funeral and placed them in front of us. This is a moment for the elders to culturally acknowledge and appreciate the *'fononga'* (the koloa and people who brought the koloa), on behalf of the family. It was during this occasion that I spotted a special basket presented to the Tongan elders by one group, which stood out from the rest of the *'koloa'* (tapa, mats, etc) presented, and it was filled with perfume and makeup. The basket was woven in a way which was unique in its weaving techniques and the material used. It was very shiny on the outside and was decorated beautifully. This was an unusual type of basket and is not commonly used for everyday activities. I asked the Tongan elder sitting next to me about the basket and he explained that it was the Kato Alu and gave a detailed account of it. After listening

to the old man's story of the Kato Alu, I thought that the Kato Alu could be the Tongan metaphor that I was looking for, as its creation process relates and matches well to the nature of parental interactions between teachers, parents, and students in connection with students' learning. Correspondingly, after careful reflection, I came to choose the Kato Alu as a model for this study. It could capture and steer the future parental engagement of Tongan parents and other Pacific parents in schools and homes. The following section explains the origin of the story of the Kato Alu.

5.5 Kato Alu - a parental engagement model

In this section, I introduce and argue for *Kato Alu* (a Tongan royal ceremonial traditional basket), as a new Pacific parental engagement framework that can culturally enrich and facilitate reciprocity, authenticity, and sensitivity, in the enhancement of Pacific parental engagement practices here in New Zealand via a Pacific cultural lens. The usage of Kato Alu has provided me, as a Tongan researcher, with both a Pacific and a uniquely Tongan traditional practice for my research. I view the model as being significant in its capacity to illuminate processes to lift Pacific students' learning achievements.

5.6 The origin of the Kato Alu

Due to the paucity of literature on the origin of the Kato Alu *(Epipremnum pinnatum)* the sources for knowledge of the Kato Alu model, were a combination of stories told by Tongan elders here in New Zealand and overseas, and limited literature such as the work of Hettinger and Cox (1997). These sources showed common features in the setting, characters, timeline, and events as in the following narration:

> *A mother from the island of 'Eua in Tonga wanted to support her new married daughter moving into the husband's household (a Tongan cultural protocol), by making her a basket for food storage purposes. She decided that the basket would be unique, but she had trouble trying to figure out what material the basket should be made of. She went to the bush searching for the material but her whole piece of land was covered in coconut trees and alu plants, which are specific materials that no one has ever made a basket from it. She decided to choose the alu plant and tu'aniu (Cocos nucifera). from the coconut leaves for the basket as these products were the two most abundant materials available on the island.*

After the completion of the Kato Alu, a high chief, from royal descent from the island of Tongatapu (Tonga's main island), visited 'Eua, and he noticed the beauty of the Kato Alu, and asked the mother if he could have it, as a gift for his own daughter (princess), getting married. The Kato Alu was gifted to the high chief who instead of using the Kato Alu for its original purpose for food storage, decided to use it to store her makeup. The makeup of a Tongan girl during this era consisted of oil made from coconut mixed with other fragrance (plant materials), and tuitui (candle nut) chewed with Tongan traditional flowers like 'mohokoi,' (Cananga odorata) for traditional skin moisturising of a Tongan woman. Since then, the gift of the Kato Alu to the high chief has changed its purposes from food storage to royal female's traditional makeup storage basket. Today, this is the only and most commonly used basket by Tongan women as gifts, especially for big occasions such as funerals, weddings, birthdays, and church celebrations (Hettinger & Cox, 1997).

Hettinger and Cox (1997) describe the Kato Alu as a woven ceremonial Tongan basket (kato) made from the root of the alu plant and tu'aniu This special basket is traditionally associated with the storage container of a Tongan female's traditional makeup which includes a number of Tongan oils and tuitui oil (a mixer of chewed dried tuitui (candlenut) fruit with other scent leaves or flowers like mohokoi.

However, due to the difficulty of making the Kato Alu, its similar version today is the kato teu, normally used for storage of perfumes for the decoration of the deceased person during Tongan funerals, gifts for weddings, and birthdays. The kato teu is made from materials like pandan leaves (Pandanus amaryllifolius) which are easier for weaving rather than alu.

5.7 Kato Alu Model

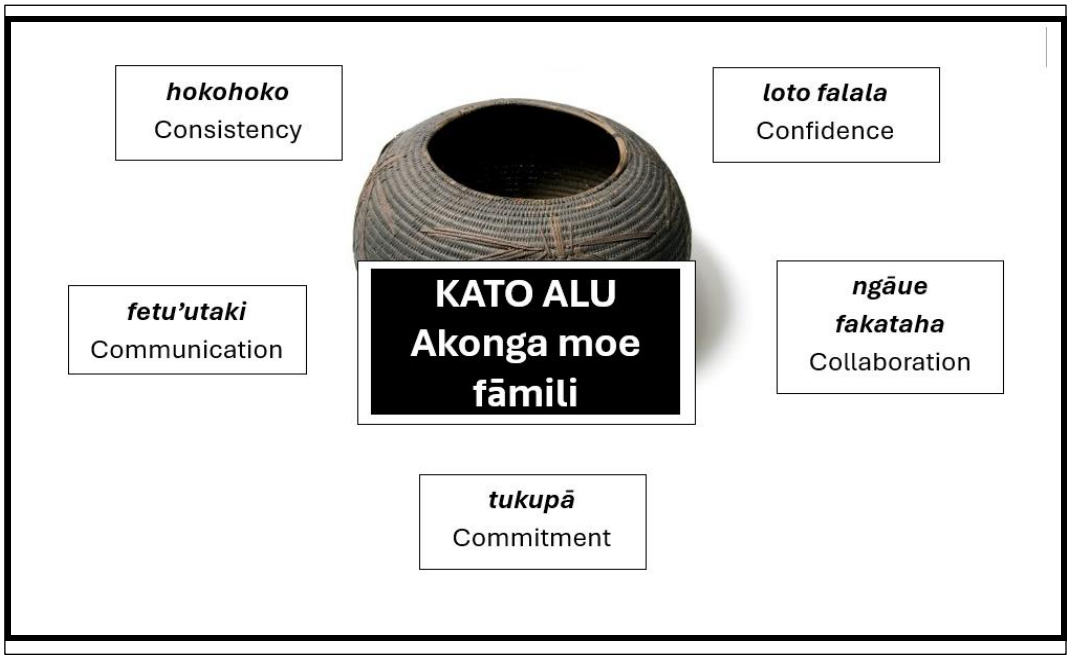


Figure 1: Kato Alu model

I felt strongly that I needed to use a Tongan cultural symbolic metaphor to express my conceptualisation of parental engagement practices of Tongan parents within the New Zealand education system. The Kato Alu as a model, expresses and embraces our Pacific perspectives and values, a model that has its roots from Tonga (Figure 6). The following is the explanation of the five fundamental principles that are intrinsic to the model and the focus on child and fānau centred learning that lies at its heart.

5.7.1 The Kato Alu (basket)

This model focusses on child (akonga) and fānau (family) centred learning. The Kato Alu model recognises that these units, the c'hild and the fānau, are inseparable units where the child's learning success depends very much on the support of parents/care givers and the fānau.

5.7.2 The 5 Cs

The 5 Cs represents five principles (the English version) in which their initial letter begins with the letter 'C' and these are values that are significant to this model. The 5 Cs stands for: loto falala (confidence), tukupā (commitment), fetu'utaki (communication), ngāue fakataha (collaboration), hokohoko (consistency). The 5 Cs are important principles in this

model, and they are fundamental to its success. If one principle is missing, then the process, child, and fānau would struggle to move forward. There are, however, other principles underpinning this model which are also significant such as: relationships, respect, honesty, openness to change, reliability, caring and trustworthiness.

5.7.3 The funds of knowledge (home and school)

While teachers expect parents to help at home with their children's learning by using school funds of knowledge, teachers are expected to be open to change. This means teachers need to be exposed to and learn about the home funds of knowledge, which are invaluable and contribute to the success of the child's learning. The ability of the teacher to be ready to accept home funds of knowledge is vitally important to a positive school and home connection.

5.8 The 4 stages of making the Kato Alu

Kato alu as a conceptual model employs the four stages of making the Kato alu. Each stage conveys parental engagement strategies for Tongan parents. Since the Kato alu is a familiar concept to Tongan parents, it should be readily adaptable by Tongan families as well as being useful for research.

The knowledge of Tongan elders of the making of the Kato alu corresponds with that of Hettinger and Cox (1997) where they agree that there are four stages of the making of Kato alu: Tokonaki (preparation), Lalanga (weaving), Teuteu'i (decoration) and Foaki (presentation). These stages are described in the next section as well as their translation into parental engagement strategies.

5.8.1 Tokonaki (Preparation Stage)

Churchward (1959) defines tokonaki as "to lay up in store, to keep or store in readiness, to prepare or provide, to get together ready for use or to gather food" (p. 490). This is the first stage of the Kato alu, where the gatherer goes out to the wild land to collect the two main ingredients, the alu and tu'aniu. The gatherer may have to travel a short or a long distance to where the alu and the tuaniu can be found and also may have to travel to two different locations to get these materials. This collection of the alu and the tuaniu must be done between May and October, when the alu (air roots) are long enough and almost touching the ground. (Any time before May or after October, the roots are

shorter, and the longer ones have, entered the ground and are regarded as over matured meaning they are too hard for making the kato alu). The tu'aniu are chosen from matured coconut leaves but not the ones that have turned brown in colour. When the leaves are still green in colour, the tuaniu is strong and flexible for weaving. The old brown tuaniu is strong but not flexible and can easily break.

After the alu is harvested, an *'umu* (earth oven) is prepared to cook the roots. The *'umu* is a traditional Tongan earth oven where a hole is dug underground. Firewood is placed in the hole and is fully ignited. Stones are placed on top of the burning firewood and kept burning until the stones turn white. Once the wood is burned out the 'umu is meant to be *'u'* (left over burning wood is taken out of the earth oven), leaving only the hot stones evenly distributed around the underground earth oven hole. The alu roots are placed on top of the stones and *fetaki* (branch cuttings) are placed on top of the alu roots to keep heat rotated inside. Banana leaves are put on top of the fetaki and soil is poured on top of the banana leaves to avoid the heat from escaping. The 'umu is left to cook for hours and sometimes it is left overnight.

After the alu roots are taken out from the umu, they are then *tata'o* – soaked in the sea in bundles. Stones are put on top of the bundles to avoid them from drifting away in the sea current. The tata'o process lasts a few weeks until the outer skin of the root can peel of easily. The sea water helps to preserve the roots. The outer skin is peeled off and the inner part of the root is dried out in the sun. The roots are then soaked in fresh water to soften. When they are soft, they are then split in two halves – the face (mata) and the back (tu'a). The face and the back are split again. The halves with one flat and round surface are kept while the halves with two flat surfaces are discarded. The round and flat surface alu are then wrapped around itself and stored for they are now ready for weaving.

5.8.1.1 Linking the Tokonaki to home-school initial formation of partnership until they are ready to begin engaging in the child's learning

The alu and tu'aniu setting

The context where the alu and the tu'aniu are found, represents both the school and home. These settings are where the crafting of the Kato Alu occurs, symbolising the parental engagement occurring at home and school as well.

The gatherer

The possible gatherer in parental engagement is the parent or the teacher. The gatherer holds the tokonaki role of being the icebreaker or the initiator of reaching out to one another. However, since teachers hold the academic information about students, and are the professionals, perhaps they could be the main initiator but not necessarily as the parent can play this role as well.

The alu and tu'aniu

The alu and tu'aniu represent the home and school funds of knowledge. The funds of knowledge are transported to another context by a gatherer travelling to that context where the funds of knowledge exist. This travelling is known in this study as school and home visits conducted by the parent and the teacher. The funds of knowledge or the materials to be gathered include many things. They could be cultural sensitivity when addressing each other for the first time, they could be the use of various forms of communications such as letter writing, phone calls, notes, emails, or catching up at the school car park, even carrying out of home or school visits, informal catching up, or even formal catch ups in relation to the child's learning and academic results.

Gathering timeline for the Kato Alu materials

The best time for gathering materials for the Kato Alu is in October. In this model it is recommended that the beginning of the year or the first two weeks of enrolment of the child during the year, is the best time. Getting to know parents and teachers as early as possible is the best option to set the scene correctly from the beginning of the year or when the child enrols at a school.

Ta'o

Ta'o (an earth oven) is described by Churchward (1959) as a resource to smelt, to melt, to brew or pasteurise. This stage addresses the need to change the alu from one form of state to another through the process of cooking in order to be fit for its purpose. This stage imposes an intentional dedication to changing the perception of parents and teachers and their dispositions towards parental engagement. Changing people's minds is not easy, since parents and teachers have their own beliefs on certain issues that have

been developed strongly overtime, for example as some parents noted that: *'It's the sole task of the teacher to teach my child,'* or *'I do not have the expertise or experience to help my child*.' It is also possible for a person to impose their ideas too aggressively on someone and the result may be that they resist or switch off. Considering parents' roles, contributions, behaviour, attitudes, opinions, funds of knowledge and pedagogies as well as motivation and empowerment is important in order to clarify limited knowledge and uncertainty. Enabling a change of mindset is compared here to the cooking process where time is allowed for parents to digest information and make changes to the way they think, just like the umu is left to cook for hours but is checked a few times. Planning continues at this stage and is finalised before the next stage, just like the alu is taken out of the sea water and prepared for the lalanga stage. Since it takes more than one person to make the umu, this stage is regarded as a collaboration stage where there are many hands contributing. This is the stage where the engagement broker contributes, such as giving advice on certain issues or tasks.

5.8.2 Lalanga (Weaving) planning and implementation

Lalanga is the weaving or implementation of the parental engagement model, but before the implementation begins, the alu roots are soaked in water for a day to soften. The tu'aniu (midribs of coconut leaves) are bundled up in groups of 10s. The mata (face) of the alu is inserted into the tu'aniu and wrapped around outside the tu'aniu. This is a repeated process; at some stage the wrapping goes across to the next row in a repeated pattern. The tu'aniu and the alu are repeatedly added once they run out. Wrapping and going across are repeated until the basket is finished. This is a skilful process and special patterns are added to meet the need of the owner of the basket or the weaver.

5.8.2.1 Rationale: Linking the lalanga to the engagement implementation stage

Lalanga is described by Churchward (1959) as weaving, knitting or the work or the things produced and, in this context, it represents the implementation stage of the parental engagement process. Roles, responsibilities, commitments, deadlines, funds of knowledge (school and home) and pedagogies are fused together. The traditional Kato alu has one or a maximum of two weavers, as one is holding the material and the other weaves. In this context, there are two weavers: the parent, and the teacher. All parties hold equal power, and their contributions reflect each piece of alu crossing each other to

form the pattern of the basket. A great layout of the basket's pattern depends on collaboration, commitment, willingness to participate, respecting one another, valuing each other's ideas and funds of knowledge, listening to each other, being consistent, playing one's role and strengthening of relationships, and many more.

Once parents agree to collaborate, meetings are planned and the planning and goal setting between the parent, child and teacher continues at this stage. The teacher identifies and explains the curriculum learning levels of the child, what they mean and represent. These concepts are pre-prepared by the teacher in advance, making sure it makes sense to parents.

The teacher plays the role of a learner and continues to learn and familiarise himself or herself with the knowledge that existed in the homes. Carrying out a home visit could be an appropriate way to assure a better understanding of this knowledge at this stage. Parents are also required to expose themselves to the school funds of knowledge and pedagogies through sharing and collaboration with the teacher. This is not an opportunity to pinpoint what may be wrong, or correct strategies, but it is a possibility to empower and learn from one another. In order to move on to the next stage, parents, students, and teachers have clarified any ambiguities or concerns that they may have. Meetings are scheduled and are held once a week or fortnightly by parents, teachers, and students. Goals and tasks are set by the main weavers of this stage – parents, and teachers where they share power in decision making about what the child learns. During the planning, the child is given the first chance to choose the next learning step/s and the parent or teacher may contribute if the child cannot make any choice. Home funds of knowledge and pedagogies are shared, and school funds of knowledge and pedagogies are also added by the teacher. The teacher should reinforce and encourage any knowledge or pedagogies of home that meet the needs of the classroom. Goals and tasks are set weekly/fortnightly and are recorded in the home partnership book that parents take home to use for the engagement. All parties come back in a week/fortnight time to evaluate and check the success of the engagement and the child's progress. New goals are set depending on the progress of prior goals.

5.8.3 Teuteu'i (Decoration)

Since the Kato alu was intended for chiefs, nobles and kings, the creation of it included the decoration stage. Tongan elders that I have talked to note that the Kato alu given as a gift for higher ranks in the Tongan culture must be decorated. This is a sign of respect and honouring of such status.

The decoration of the Kato alu is mainly the painting of it. The material for the decoration includes black dye from the koka plant, tuitui, and sometimes clay soil. Tuitui is burned and added to the black mixture from the koka plant. The clay is a sticky substance and is added to the black mixture to enhance texture. The Kato alu is painted and once dried, tuitui is rubbed on the outside of the basket to give it a pleasant scent and keep it shiny. Others have decorated the Kato alu with other materials like strings, shells and kafa (coconut fibre).

5.8.3.1 Rationale: Linking the teuteu'i to the evaluation of the parental engagement

The teuteu'i stage represents the continued enrichment, fine tuning, and enhancement of the parental engagement practices through personal growth. The partnership between parents, students and teachers should continually improve in order to stay on top of their game. It is at this stage that the child is treated with highest respect and has equal status to that of higher ranks in the Tongan culture.

Both parents and teachers should be very fastidious at this stage to guarantee the best choice of knowledge and strategies to be utilised. This stage also refers to the gathering of other materials ready for the decoration process. It includes recognising that there is so much knowledge that we do not know and still so much to learn. This is about having a passion for personal growth and continuing to look for ways to self-improve in order to help lift students' learning performances. This could be done through self or group reflection and evaluation, setting new goals and next learning steps if prior goals do not work, or even updating with new knowledge and pedagogies. Parents are innovative at this stage just like the skilful weaver of the Kato alu, who has the choice of personalising the design to suit his/her or the owner's need. In this case, the weaver may focus the decoration and design patterns specifically on the need of the owner (the child). The decoration stage is devoted to finetuning.

5.8.4 Foaki (Presentation)

After the weaving and decoration of the Kato alu, a piece of tapa is placed at the bottom of the basket and containers filled with coconut oil or tuitui oil are placed in the Kato alu. Now the Kato alu is completed and ready to be presented as a gift. Foaki is described by Churchward (1959) as to give or bestow. In this context foaki is referred as to grant, to allow or let go. Foaki is having the competency, courage, expertise, and skills to go alone. However, keeping in touch in a collaborative manner with the teacher for any queries, questions, or feedback as they arise is essential; to keep up to date with new knowledge, keep high productivity and not lose interest by being alone.

5.8.4.1 Rationale: Linking the foaki to presenting of the parental engagement

Parents are becoming independent at this stage, can take the lead and rarely rely on teachers for help. However, while they may come back to teachers infrequently, they are confident enough to carry out the engagement practices with their children's learning self-sufficiently. Highly competent and efficient parents are found at this stage, performing at a higher level and can practice parental engagement effectively. The relationships between students, parents and teachers are healthy and strong and they have experienced success in the parental engagement process. The foaki symbolises the Kato Alu being passed on to the child. However, the teacher and parent continue to work alongside the child as the child move up classes. This process continues through from primary, secondary, and tertiary, until the child gains a degree or has children of their own. At this stage the child will then start to create a Kato Alu for his/her children. Therefore, the foaki is an ongoing process.

5.8.5 A summary of the Kato Alu model

Table 11: How Kato Alu works

Stages	Process	Rationale
1. ***Tokonaki***	Preparation or gathering stage. At this stage the weaver goes out to the bush and gathers materials (tu'aniu and alu leaves). The gatherer prepares an earth oven and cooks the alu leaves for hours. The alu is	This is the preparation step where parents and teachers start to build relationships with the help of an engagement broker. (NB: the teacher could be the engagement broker). Home and school visits can be carried out, depending on the strength of the relationship.

	then soaked in sea water for days and are dried out in the sun. The alu leaves are then rolled up and stored away. This means the preparation stage is completed.	Meetings are held in regard to holding a formal and official meeting, agreeing to commit to the engagement, and gathering data such as learning achievements of the child. Once these requirements are ready then the engagement is ready to move on to the next stage.
2. Lalanga	This is the planning and weaving stage. This stage the alu leaves are separated into finer strips. The rolled alu are soaked in fresh water to soften. Once ready then they *'ha'alo'* (make into fins strips). The tu'aniu are bundled in groups of tens. The weaving begins.	This stage is where planning and implementation of the parental engagement occurs. Parents, teachers, and the child come together to plan the parental engagement. They will use the interactions and data collected from stage 1 to plan the engagement process. The learning intention planning: • The child is given the first choice to choose his/her learning intention. • Parents are given the second choice to choose the learning intention of the child if the child cannot pick one. • The last choice would be the teacher, but the teacher would only supply a framed options for the parent and the child to choose from.
3. Teuteu'i	This is the decoration stage of the Kato Alu. At this stage, the weaver uses shells, and traditional paint made from the skin of plants to decorate the Kato Alu.	This is the data collection and analysis stage of data to confirm the success of the engagement. Data from the school database can be collected as well as data from the teacher and parents as well.
4. Foaki	This stage is when the Kato Alu is ready to reveal, present and offer to the owner.	This stage is the presenting of the findings and recommendations are made.

5.9 Summary

The Kato Alu model recognises that when teachers, parents and families work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school (de Oliveira Lima & Kuusisto, 2019; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Douglass & Practice, 2011). This is referred to by

Manu'atu (2000) as the mālie, the coming together of teachers, parents, and students to lift students' learning achievements. Through these robust constructive connections and contributions, the child improves their learning outcomes, the parent learns about school funds of knowledge, and the teacher can learn home pedagogies and home funds of knowledge. Often parents and students are inspired and empowered during mālie, and this may cause them to voluntarily start helping other parents. This is known by Manu'atu as mafana, an electrical current that charms the loto (soul). The embedding of the Kato Alu engagement in the homes and schools and having shared meaningful philosophical constructs about the role of parents and teachers, enables sense making and effective parental engagement. The success of following the Kato Alu can be demonstrated in a connection forged between the home and school, in particular, in the roles played by parents and teachers. This connection can go beyond schoolwork to connecting on a friendship level, morally, intellectually, and socially and the existence of trust, respect, honesty, and warmth.

However, for the Kato Alu model to be successful, it requires the existence or the present of the 5 Cs: confidence, commitment, communication, collaboration, consistency. If teachers, parents and students have confidence, commitment, good communication, collaboration, and consistency, then parental engagement will be successful. If one of the 5 Cs is missing, then the Kato Alu model will not be successful.

CHAPTER 6:

THE INTERVENTION PHASE

Collecting base data for the intervention from participants and the implementation of the intervention

6.1 Introduction

An intervention was developed based on the pre-intervention phase and intervention commencement data findings, in order to support and enhance the parental engagement of the research participants. The development of the intervention was a direct response to and an effort to answer the second research question, '*How and to what extent does an intervention programme designed on the basis of Research Question 1 findings support and enhance Tongan parents' engagement practices with their children's learning*?' Research question 1 had asked how Tongan parents, students and teachers perceive the parental role in the learning process.

The premise of the intervention was that the parent, teacher, and child, with my support as an engagement broker, would work together to develop a series of goals around the achievement of each child in the research study. Parents, teachers and students would collaborate in the implementation, revision, and evaluation of these goals, with core foci being the children's academic progress and an increase in constructive parental engagement.

6.2 Overview

This section I highlights the implications from the pre-intervention phase and intervention commencement data phase findings that informed the development of the intervention. The different steps of the intervention are explained, and success indicators are identified. The intervention comprised seven steps with a number of key tasks and roles aimed at ensuring that the issues and goals within each intervention step would be appropriately addressed.

Within the intervention, the researcher took up the role of a '*parental engagement broker*.' This decision was based on the need for a broker, as someone who plays a vital role in the initiation of the intervention and connecting, inspiring and empowering both parents and teachers to participate in the intervention. The role required a person who knew both the home and school funds of knowledge and who could support the connection between people, practices, and places. As the researcher who was also a teacher and a member of the local Tongan community, I was the appropriate person for this role.

An overview of the intervention is provided in Figure 1 below. The diagram shows the order and alignment of the meetings within the intervention. Each of the steps is then described in more detail in the rest of this chapter.

At the end of this chapter is an extended section about home visits undertaken by two of the teachers. This includes the planning phases that were undertaken as well as narratives of the visits and learning from the events. A summary of learning for schools around home visits is also included. Finally, the chapter details the narratives of home visits undertaken by two of the teachers and explores the leaning from them.

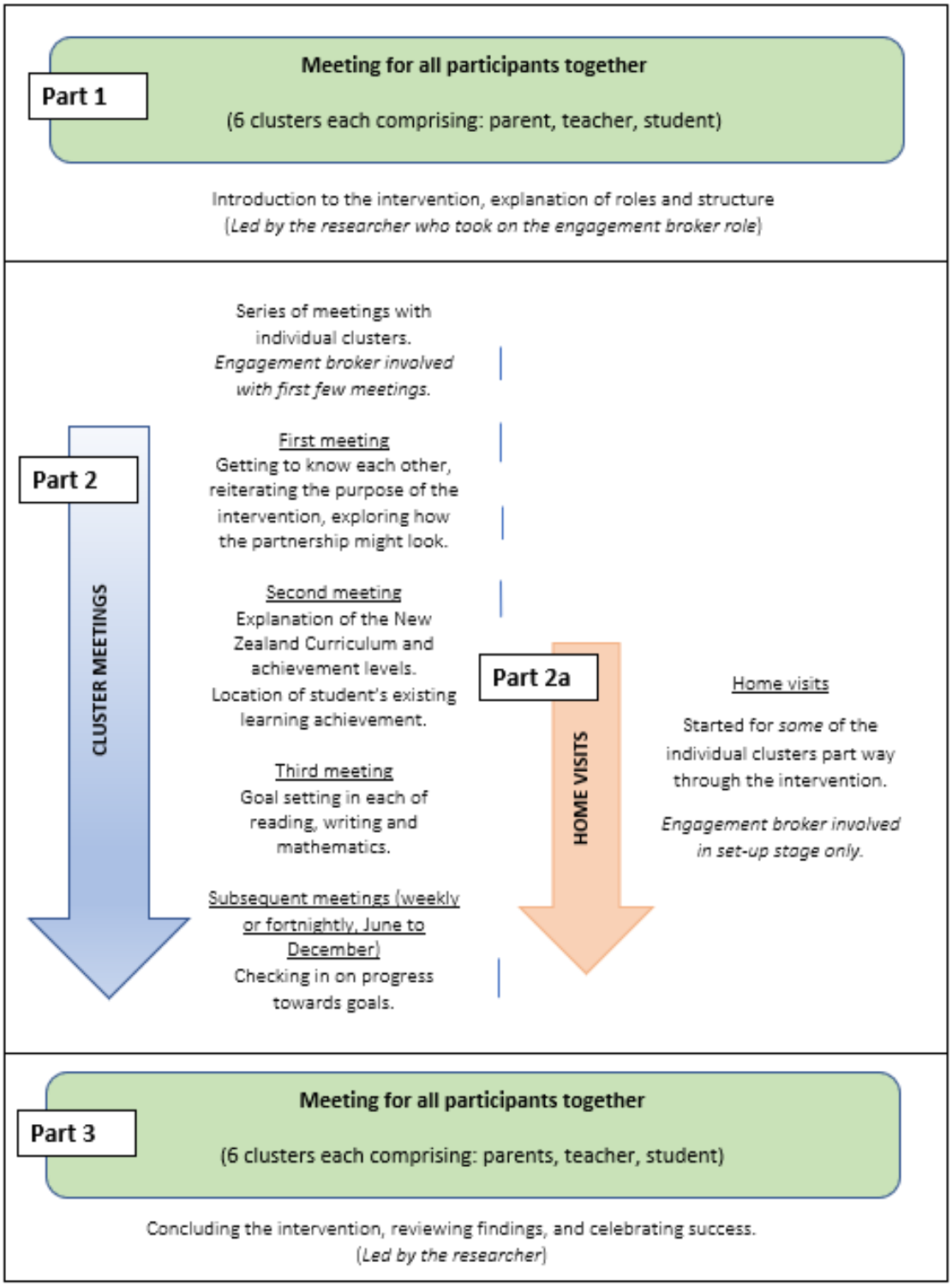


Figure 2: Intervention overview

6.2.1 Step 1: First formal intervention meeting with all participants

Task and rationale

Informed by the findings of the pre-intervention stage, the next step was to bring participants together. The aim of this meeting was to ensure shared understanding of the purposes, expectations, and logistics of the planned intervention. The next step was to gather all participants together in order to ensure alignment in terms of the purpose, the expectations of and the logistics surrounding the intervention. The researcher set up the gathering and invited all participants (parents, teachers, and students) to attend a meeting at the school.

As a researcher, I was mindful that this meeting involved a coming together of four different cultures, Māori, Samoan, Pākehā and Tongan, and that cultural sensitivity was crucial to gain the trust of all participants (George, Duran, & Norris, 2014). In this instance, being from the Pacific, and working in a Western learning environment was an advantage as I was well placed to accommodate everyone's needs for seating arrangements, the provision of refreshments, and clear articulation of the intervention purpose and process. At the commencement of the meeting, participants introduced themselves and shared details about themselves such as their backgrounds, families, and hobbies, as a whakawhanaungatanga (a Māori term for-getting to know each other) process. The researcher then outlined the details of the intervention including objectives and aims, tasks, roles, and timeframes and responded to any questions from the participants. It was important to ensure that while parents, teachers, and students were invited to attend, that they understood that participation in the intervention were entirely optional. The meeting was followed by refreshments.

The seating arrangements deliberately challenged formal boundaries. The classroom where the meeting was held had chairs randomly distributed in a huge circle, so that not only could participants choose where they sat, but also had ample choice of seating to help them to feel comfortable. As Leach, Rogelberg, Warr, and Burnfield (2009) emphasise, meeting attendees may feel greater comfort and be less distracted when the physical characteristics of the meeting environment are positive. The random placement of the seating was also designed to mitigate any perception of power, and gender

inequity. For example, a potential power gap was removed by not having all the teachers sit at the front of the room. From a cultural perspective, Tongan men and women are not usually seated next to each other in church or at social gatherings, so allowing them to sit wherever they were comfortable removed formal expectations. It is also typical for Tongan men to be seated at the back at an event and they were able to make this choice in the classroom if they desired. Additionally, having plenty of seating available ensured that any latecomers were not embarrassed by needing to make their way to the front of the room. In these ways the design of the meeting space provided an important starting point for an intervention which was to challenge conventional boundaries, expectations and model equity.

From a Pacific perspective, it was culturally appropriate to provide refreshments at the end of the meeting to thank participants for their attendance and end in a fitting manner. In Pacific cultures, a function without food is viewed as incomplete. The food also allowed participants the chance to interact less formally, foster a sense of belonging and gain a sense of being valued. It was a gesture of thanks from me to all attendees, mindful that they were giving up time at the end of a busy day.

6.2.2 Step 2: Initial cluster meetings

Building rapport and gaining clarification

Following the first formal meeting of the intervention with the whole group, there were six small cluster meetings. A cluster consisted of the parent, their child, the child's teacher and myself as the parental engagement broker. These initial cluster meetings focussed on clarifying the rationale for the intervention, exploring the themes from the findings, and setting the scene for the goal setting steps. With the exception of meetings where all participants gathered together (3 times during the intervention), it was participants in these individual clusters who worked through the intervention.

A clear explanation was provided for participants around how the implications identified in the pre-intervention phase and intervention commencement findings had resulted in both the development of and design of the intervention. This included reference to utilisation of home funds of knowledge and the desire of all groups to have a stronger relationship. While some of this information replicated that provided at the meeting for

all participants, the smaller setting enhanced the opportunities to clarify and address specific questions and concerns. While a significant proportion of the initial cluster meeting was spent building rapport and ensuring common understanding of purpose, it was also an opportunity to emphasise the need for effective and positive communication between home and school and establish a collective understanding on how to best support and meet the students' learning needs.

A collaborative approach

A key component of the meeting was the development of a collaborative approach which would underpin the intervention. A significant change for the intervention was a shift from the traditional planning and goal setting model, which is typically solely teacher led and directed, to one which included the parents, students and teacher working together in directing student learning, thus, creating a model of equity. This change was based firstly on the assumption that the inclusion of the parent and child in the planning process would allow collaboration and connectedness between participants, and secondly that power sharing around what a student is learning would give each contributor (teacher, parent, child) insight into the perspective of the others.

Time was spent in the meeting discussing how the partnership might look in practical terms and explaining the role of the engagement broker as a conduit and a support, while emphasising that the core focus would be on the child/parent/teacher unit. Practical aspects of the partnership were also discussed, such as location and frequency of meetings as well as how record-keeping would be undertaken and shared. The need for clear, positive, and open communication was also stressed.

6.2.3 Step 3: Curriculum and achievement orientation

The next set of individual cluster meetings (once or twice a week) included both an explanation of the New Zealand curriculum and the location of the child's achievement within the curriculum as a basis for subsequent goal setting. The intent of this meeting was to ensure that all parties had a common understanding around how the data about the child's existing learning performance in relation to the curriculum and school expectations.

The New Zealand Curriculum

Prior to this meeting there was discussion between the teachers and the researcher/ parental engagement broker around how to present information about the New Zealand curriculum in a manner that would be easily understood by the parents and their child. An aim was to avoid the use of school-specific jargon. These are some examples of the type of messaging (exact transcriptions) that I used with parents:

Reading

The New Zealand reading curriculum falls into three reading levels at primary school level, which are Level 1, 2, and 3. In Level 1, it is the early schooling years as year 1 and 2; Level 2 is the mid-primary years like year 3 and 4; then Level 3 is towards the end of primary school years which are year 5 and 6. If the child is achieving curriculum reading Level 3 by the end of year 6, then the child is ready for Intermediate. If the child achieves any lower than curriculum Level 3, then the child is achieving below or well below which means they would be eventually falling behind the Intermediate level. Let's take reading; to move from the New Zealand reading curriculum Level 1 to Level 2, is huge. Remember that the New Zealand reading curriculum covers from year 1 to year 2. To report to parents that your child is reading at Level 1 and repeat it again in year 2, does not give parents any indication whether their child is making progress or not. This is where the research school is using the Colour Wheel reading levels. The equivalent of completing the curriculum Level 1 in the Colour Wheel reading levels is achieving 18 reading levels (level 1-18) which are identified in colours. For example, the first reading level in the Colour Wheel is Magenta 1 and 2, Red 3-5, Yellow 6-8, Blue 9-11, Green 12-14, Orange 15-16, Turquoise 17-18. These 18 reading levels show reading progress across the first two years of primary school. To complete curriculum level 2, the child must complete reading level 19-26 (Purple 19-20, Gold 21-22, Silver 23-24, and Emerald 25-26) of the Colour Wheel and curriculum Level 3, they must complete reading level 27-30 (Ruby 27-28 and Sapphire 29-30). If the child is achieving curriculum level 3 or more by the end of year 6, then they are ready to cope with the Intermediate level.

Mathematics

Keep in mind that the New Zealand mathematics curriculum covers from year 1 to year 2 and is a huge learning area to cover. To report to parents that your child is working at Level 1 and repeat it again in year 2, does not give parents any indication whether their child is making progress or not. Therefore, the research school is using 'stages' for measuring students' mathematics achievements. The rationale for this is that the stages refer to stages of the Number Framework and relate to number in particular. Throughout the year, students tend to pass through different stages as they learn to solve number problems. As a result, these developmental stages are numbered consecutively (stage 1-8), where each stage clarifies things that students can do. These stages are different from the prescribed levels of content in the curriculum. So, this is how stages work in relation to school years at primary. The child should be achieving stage 2 to 3 by the end of year one. At this stage the child can do the following: for example, identify and read numbers 1-20, forward and backward counting or order numbers correctly. After year 2, they should be working on stage 4 and should be able to do the following, for example: skip count in 2s, 5s and 10s or count on from the biggest number in addition problems (7 + 4 = 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 = 11). By the end of year 3 they should be working at early stage 5 and they should be able to do the following, for example: they should be able to make tens (1 + 9, 3 + 7) or do addition facts like (7 + 6 = 13). By the end of year 4 they should be working at stage 5, and they should be able to do the following, for example: subtraction in parts, for example: (57 – 26, 57 – 20 = 37, 37 – 6 = 31). At the end of year 5 they should be working at early stage 6, and they should be able to do the following, for example: use place value as a strategy (65 + 23 = 60 + 20 + 5 + 3 = 80 + 8 = 88). By the end of year 6 they should be working at stage 6, and they should be able to do the following, for example: use multiplication facts (8 X 6 = 48). If the child achieves curriculum level 3 or more by the end of year 6, then they are ready for the Intermediate school level.

Writing

For writing, the school uses their own writing progression which include 9 writing levels. In writing level 1, it has 1a, 1b and 1c, writing level 2 (2a, 2b and 2c), and

for writing level 3 (3a, 3b and 3c). The highest writing level in each level is c, a is the lowest level. Students should be able to progress through each level by attending to majority of writing features that they need to achieve. For example: at writing progression 1a, the child should be able to hold an idea in their heads long enough to be able to write it down, writing progression 1b, the child should be able to write from left to right leaving spaces between words or form letters accurately, and in 1c, the child should be able to attempt to use capital letters and full stops in a sentence. When the child has mastered these, then they are working at writing progression level 2a.

The explanation continued with other progression levels of writing, providing an opportunity for parents (and children if they desired) to ask questions and gain clarification as needed.

Location of the child's existing learning achievements

Once common understanding of the curriculum was gained through data and explanation, the next step was to locate the child's achievement in reading, writing and mathematics within this framework. The aim was to stablish starting data in discussion with the parent and the student, as benchmark for both goal setting and the measurement of progression throughout the intervention. Once this benchmark data was established, the next step were goal setting, planning, and implementation.

6.2.4 Step 4: Goal setting and implementation

The goal setting for each cluster began with a quick review of the last meeting on the New Zealand Curriculum and confirmation of the learning achievement level of the child. Once the parents and the child communicated their understanding of these, the goal setting process began. In each case, the child was given first choice in deciding their goals for mathematics, writing, and reading. This was done to emphasise that the child has *'koloa*.' Koloa is a Tongan term that refers in this case to the child's ability, knowledge, and skills, which are often overlooked by teachers. Giving the child the first choice means the child *'fakakoloa'* the goal setting. The prefix 'faka' when added at the beginning of a word, turns the word into a verb. To fakakoloa is to contribute (your skills and knowledge) to the goal setting. If needed, parents and teachers provided pedagogical support;

parents assisted their child if they got stuck with their choices and the teacher stepped in to help parents and child if required. The fakakoloa for each week were determined by the child from their own thoughts, sometimes discussed with their parents, or selected from the framed options preprepared by the teacher.

Before we continued with each meeting, it was crucial to clarify educational jargon used in these meetings. For example, '*well-below*' is when the child is achieving two or more levels lower than where they should be according to the curriculum. '*Just below*' refers to the child achieving one level below from where they should be. '*At*' refers to the child achieving at their right learning level or achieving at the right age group. '*Just above*' means that the child is achieving one level above where they should be, and *'well-above'* is when the child is achieving two or more levels above where they should be.

The following tables provide outlines of the first individual goal settings meetings for each student participant:

6.2.4.1 Student 1 (Year4)

Table 12: Reading, writing and mathematics goal setting

	Current level	*Short-term goal*	*End of year goal*
Reading	Red, level 4	Level 5	Level 9
Writing	Level 1b	Level 1b	Level 2a
Mathematics	Stage 3	Stage 3	Stage 4

Reading

The existing reading achievement for student 1 was Red, level 4 of the Colour Wheel. The child had been at school for 4 years and was identified to be reading 'well-below' this age group. Recognising, the need for collaboration and acknowledgement of parent and child contributions, (as identified in the pre-intervention and intervention commencement phases), the child was given the chance to decide their end of year goal. This child indicated that she was aiming to be reading at Level 9. The parent and the teacher both agreed that this was achievable, however all parties were aware that achieving this could pose a significant challenge since the child suffers from bad asthma and often misses school during wintertime. Nevertheless, the child, parent, and teacher were all supportive of this goal.

To achieve the long-term goal all parties agreed that there should be a series of short-term goals, specifically for the child to progress by at least one reading level fortnightly. Therefore, in the next evaluation and planning meeting, the expectation was that the child would have progressed to at least reading level 5. To achieve this short-term goal, all participants agreed that the child should read one book every day. Both parents and the child were not able to suggest what reading strategy to work on, so, the teacher offered a framed option (for example, working on comprehension, retelling the story, identification of vocabulary, reading speed, or self-correction), for the child to choose from. The child selected comprehension and vocabulary as options with the agreement of the parent and the teacher. This was recorded in the workbook which was to be completed by the parents and the child.

The parent requested from the teacher some guidance around how comprehension and vocabulary can be practiced at home. The teacher, curious to know how the parent read with the child at home, asked the parent to demonstrate this. The parent explained that the only reading they do at home is from the Bible for church purposes, but they were keen to learn about the classroom reading activity. On this note, the teacher shared with the parent how the reading at home links to classroom reading. The teacher explained that, whether you read in the classroom or the bus stop, under a tree or even at home, they all have the same purpose, which is 'to make meaning of what you read', highlighting that reading at home connects with and contributes to the reading in the classroom. The parent described how they would typically read a chapter or verse from the Bible, and then they would stop and share its meaning. The parent would never correct the child's interpretation, believing that everyone has a right to express their own opinion and that as a parent they should not contradict their child's perspective. The parent was surprised to learn from the teacher that what they do at home is extremely relevant and helpful to the classroom reading and that they suggested to the parent to keep doing what they do with reading at home.

In terms of vocabulary, all participants decided that the parent and the child would start recording in the workbook any new vocabulary that they came across and start building a word bank. At the same time, they needed to look for definitions of new words and

learn them. The next learning step for this was to look at how to apply the new word or words in sentences.

Writing

The existing writing achievement of student 1 was writing level 1a of the school writing progression and the child was identified to be writing 'well-below' this age group. Again, the child was given the chance to decide their end of year goal and said that they wanted to be writing at Level 1c. Both the parent and the teacher agreed that this was achievable despite, as mentioned previously, the child's asthmatic problem during winter and resulting absences from school. The short-term goal was to reach writing level 1b within two months. This would require doing a piece of writing at home on a daily basis. The features of writing that all participants agreed to work on for the next two months were saying and recording the predominant sounds in the words the child wanted to write, hearing and saying the initial and final sounds that they wanted to write, attempting to use capital letters and full stops as they developed their understanding of sentences, writing consonants and vowel sounds, attempting to use capital letters and full stops, and to write a simple sentence if possible.

Mathematics

The existing mathematics achievement of student 1 was stage 3. The child had been at school for 4 years and his mathematics achievement was identified against the curriculum to be 'well-below' this age group. When everyone was clear about this, they then moved onto the goal setting. Again, setting their own goal, the child decided to aim for stage 6 and to achieve this within the next six months. The teacher thought that this goal was impossible to achieve within six months and the teacher explained their rationale behind this opinion. The justification given by the teacher was that it usually takes a whole year to progress from one stage to the next and the child had chosen to achieve 3 stages. After further discussions all participants agreed to settle on a stage 4 goal.

The next target was to set the short-term goal. The parent suggested to set the short-term goal at early stage 4 by the end of September. The teacher agreed that it was possible and showed both the student and parent some learning steps. The child decided that his next learning step would be 'working on counting on from the biggest number.'

They all agreed that this would be the learning intention of the child until they met again, the following week. There were discussions between the parent and the teacher on how to address this strategy at home. The teacher suggested to the parent that if they had any spare time, they could start looking at skip counting in 2s, 5s, and 10s. At the conclusion of the meeting all parties were happy and very well informed and agreed on what to do for the following week's meeting.

6.2.4.2 Student 2 (Year 5)

Table 13: Reading, writing and mathematics goal setting

	Current level	*Short-term goal*	*End of year goal*
Reading	level 12	Level 13	Level 17
Writing	Level 1b	Level 1b	Level 2b
Mathematics	Stage 4	Early-stage 5	Stage 5

Reading goal setting

The meeting started with revisiting the child's learning achievements and how the student's level measured against the expected level in the curriculum. Student 2's learning achievements were found to be 'well below' this learning age group. In the fifth year at school the child should be able to understand reading features such as, fiction (untrue) and non-fiction (true) stories, and more complex or longer sentences. In this case, the child was still reading stories with compound sentences and was struggling with new vocabulary.

The child was given a chance to locate the goal for his reading level by the end of the year and chose to be reading at Colour Wheel reading level 17. This was agreed by the teacher, but the parent stated that they would like to set the target at level 20. After some negotiation they all agreed to set it at level 17; the main reason behind this was to respect the choice made by the child, which was achievable. To achieve at reading level 17 by the end of the year, the participants needed to set some short-term, weekly goals. In the next meeting they all agreed that the child must be reading at level 13. To achieve this, at least one book was required to be read by the child at home every day and the teacher would make sure that the child was given a reading book daily. The child decided to try reading two books every day, read one at school and one at home.

The child chose to focus for the week on using the rest of words of the sentence to work out the meaning of unknown word or words. If this was too difficult then the dictionary or the computer could be used. The other chosen learning step was to work on improving the reading speed. The child and parent would work at home to time the speed of reading a paragraph or a page with a stopwatch. While the focus was on new vocabulary and speed of reading, the parent and teacher decided that comprehension should be checked as well.

Writing

Student 2's 1b writing achieving was 'well-below' his age group. The child should be working on level 3a of the school's writing progression or early level 3 of the curriculum. At this year group, students should be able to use writing features such as using different ways to think about, plan and organise their writing or use words and phrases that are suitable for the topic and audience. However, the child was still working on connecting words such as 'and' and 'like' to join sentences and writing several sentences that had different beginnings.

After hearing the discussions between the teacher and the parent, the child decided to set their end of year goal at 2b. Both the parent and teacher agreed that as the child still had one more year at school, the following year, before Intermediate level, if the child could achieve level 2b within the next six months then 3c would be achievable for the whole of the following year. Therefore, all participants decided that writing level 2b the child set for the year was achievable. The participants discussed the writing features that they would like to focus on for the next two weeks. They decided to work on the child using a writing structure (beginning, middle and ending) and writing compound and sometimes complex sentences. The child thought that the skill learnt from using connecting words could be useful in writing long and complex sentences.

Mathematics

The child was found to be working at stage 4, 'just-below' with mathematics. The teacher noted that at this year level, the child should be able to choose an appropriate method to solve problems like using addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and clearly

explain their methods to other people, or use their known basic facts to work out unknown facts.

After hearing the teacher's discussion on year 5 mathematics achievement, the child decided to set the end of year goal at stage 5 and the short-term goal was that within the next three months the child would be working at stage 5. The teacher explained that to go from stage 4 to stage 5 is a big leap but that if they could put a hundred percent effort into this for the rest of the year, it could be possible. All parties agreed on the goal set and the child suggested that they would like to learn using place value in multiplication for the next week. For example, 13 X 3 that is 10 x 3 = 30, and 3 x 3 = 9, so, 30 + 9 = 39. He said he would also like to work towards using two- and three-digit numbers. The child also wanted to use the same strategy (place value) for addition and subtraction and both the teacher and parent agreed with this idea.

At school the class were being introduced by the teacher to 'place value strategy' which the child found interesting and easy to follow. Therefore, the child's suggestion to work at home with the parent on place value for both multiplication and addition, was based on appealing to this interest and understanding of the place value strategy. The meeting ended with a commitment to meet the next week to evaluate the previous goals and set new ones for the following week.

6.2.4.3 Student 3 (Year 4)

Table 14: Reading, mathematics, and writing goal setting

	Current level	*Short-term goal*	*End of year goal*
Reading	level 6	Level 7	Level 11
Writing	Level 1b	Level 1b	Level 2a
Mathematics	Stage 3	Early-stage 4	Stage 4

Reading

Student 3's reading achievement was found to be reading 'well-below' this year group. A year 4 student should be able to read materials that include compound and complex sentences and also self-correct consistently when the sentence does not make sense. At this point of the child's learning, the reading materials were simple sentences and at times the reading materials had some compound sentences.

The child decided that their reading goal for the end of the year was reading level 11. The child had been at school for four years and only achieved 6 reading levels, so, they would like to be reading at level 11 by the end of the year. That would be a total of six months to achieve this goal and attempting this was supported by both the teacher and the parent. During the meeting both the parent and the child discussed what reading goal they would both work on at home. They confirmed that they would work on trying to understand what they were reading and be able to talk about the main ideas, as well as ideas that were not so obvious. At the same time, they would also look at recognising and understanding the information in different kinds of books. The idea of comprehension was explained and discussed by both the teacher and parent, and they agreed that they had a shared understanding, so the parent could go ahead and practice the strategies at home with their child. The teacher reminded them that if these goals were too much for them, to focus on what they could achieve. They could complete the rest in the next goal setting meeting the following week.

Writing

The writing level for student 3 was level 1b which was 'well-below' their age group. The child should be working on level 2c of the school's writing progression or early level 3 of the curriculum. At this year group, students should be able to do the following: noticing mistakes and correcting them in their writing most of the time (spelling, grammar, punctuation), and reading and changing their writing to improve it, most of the time. However, the child was still working on self-correction of their work, and this was not yet mastered.

After negotiation with both the parent and teacher, the child decided to set the end of year goal at 2b. They all believed that to progress from 1b to 2b was achievable and the child could achieve level 2b within the next six months with consistent work between the parent and the child at home as well as the teacher in the classroom. The child said that they could carry on working at home during the school holidays and Saturday but not Sundays, because the family would attend church on that day. All participants discussed this and then decided that the child should be working on rereading their writing at various stages to check for meaning and fitness for purpose. They also decided that the child should be working on using mainly simple and compound sentences, along with

some complex sentences, that vary in their beginnings, structures, and lengths and are mostly correct grammatically. The teacher explained how these goals are being taught in the classroom and showed the parent a simplified version of the classroom teaching. For example, before writing, the teacher suggested that the parent could find out from the child their chosen topic. This could be followed by planning the format of their story by talking what will happen in the beginning, at the middle and at the end.

Mathematics

Student 3 was identified to be 'well-below' the mathematics learning achievement level for stage 3 after being at school for 4 years. The teacher explained that at this year level, the child should be able to do specific mathematics problems. For example, the child should be able to interact with numbers up to 1000 or use the times tables 2, 3,4,5 and 10, to solve mathematics problems. However, the child commented that they were working with numbers up to 100 and thought that they could try working with numbers up to 1000. Based on this, the child decided to set the end of year goal of stage 4 for mathematics, with the approval of both the teacher and parent. Student 3 was determined to work with three-digit number problems for both addition and subtraction. The parent would help at home if the child got stuck with anything. The child was hopeful that by the following week they could work at home on multiplication with up to 3-digit numbers. The parent asked the teacher for some guidance on strategies (methods) to use at home. The child interjected and stated that the place value strategy is easy, and they could use it at home. Both the teacher and parent agreed that this was a good idea that when learning a strategy to use at home, it was a wise idea to look for one that the child is familiar with and would be easily mastered.

Before the meeting ended, the child suggested that for next week's goal setting, they would like to learn how to do division. This was written down in the workbook and they would discuss it in the next goal setting meeting the following week.

6.2.4.4 Student 4 (Year 1)

Table 15: Reading, mathematics, and writing goal setting

	Current level	*Short-term goal*	*End of year goal*
Reading	level 5	Level 6	Level 10
Writing	Level 0	Level 1a	Level 1b
Mathematics	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3

Reading

Student 4 had been at school for 5 months and was achieving 'just below' this reading year level. The teacher explained that the child should now be reading at level 6 which is Yellow of the Colour Wheel reading levels. There are 12 reading levels to be completed by the end of this year and so far, the child was behind by one reading level. It was mentioned by the teacher that at this reading level age group, the child should be able to read groups of words together in phrases or notice some errors in their reading and take action to self-correct. The parent shared that they were, (at the time of this meeting), working at home on self-correction. This surprised the teacher to hear the child's learning pace, and they were encouraged to continue practicing it at home as one of the goals. The other goal that was set was suggested by the child, which was to show some understanding of the story being read and be ready to share that understanding. During this discussion, the child stated that learning new words was another goal that they could work on at home. The parent agreed to this, and the teacher reminded them to just do what they could and not to worry about trying to complete or rush the learning.

Writing

Student 4's level 0 writing achievement was 'well-below' their age group. The child should be working on level 1b of the school's writing progression or early level 1 of the curriculum. At this year group, students should be able to use writing features such as learning to plan their writing by talking, or by drawing pictures or writing for different purposes. For example, they may write about caring for an animal (science) or a report on a visit to the museum (technology). In their piece of writing, they should be able to read and talk about what they had written. After hearing the discussions, the child decided to set the end of year goal at 1b. Both the parent and child agreed that if the

child could achieve level 1b within the next six months then level 2b would be achievable for the whole of next year. Therefore, all participants approved that writing level 1b which the child and parent had set for the end of the year was achievable.

The participants discussed the writing features that they would like to focus on for the next two weeks. They decided to work on the child using a writing structure (beginning, middle and ending). They also decided to add on for the parent and child to plan what they wanted to write by talking, drawing, or perhaps writing word ideas. On this note, they also needed to start hearing sounds of words and try writing letters that match the sounds. As the parent had attended a workshop on reading at school, they decided that they could try and go ahead and work on the goals being set.

Mathematics

The existing mathematics achievement of student 4 was stage 1. The child had been at school for half of the year and his mathematics achievement was identified to be working 'at' the right age group. The child seemed to like mathematics and was very keen to set their own maths goal for the end of the year. Student 4 set the end of year goal at stage 3 and hoped to achieve this within the next six months. The teacher thought that this goal was possible to achieve within six months as the child had mastered the majority of the skills and strategies needed to be able to be on stage 3. After further discussions all participants agreed to set the goal for stage 3.

The next step was the setting up of the short-term goal and the parent suggested to set the short-term goal at early stage 2 by the end of September, which would be in the next three months. The teacher agreed that it was possible and showed both the student and parent some learning steps. The child decided to work on counting on from the biggest number which he had heard the teacher teaching another maths groups and had thought it was interesting to learn. They all agreed that this would be another learning intention for the child until they met again in two weeks. The meeting came to an end and all parties were happy and understood what to do for the following meeting.

6.2.4.5 Student 5 (Year 3)

Table 16: Reading, mathematics, and writing goal setting

	Current level	*Short-term goal*	*End of year goal*
Reading	level 6	Level 7	Level 11
Writing	Level 1b	Level 1b	Level 2a
Mathematics	Stage 3	Early-stage 4	Stage 4

Reading

Student 5's learning achievement for reading was 'well-below' this age group level. The teacher explained that student 5 has been at school for 3 years and was achieving reading level 6 which is similar to a year one level. At the time of the meeting, the child was reading books with simple sentences and was working on retelling the story being read. However, the teacher also suggested that at this year level, the child should be able to use parts of the book like pictures, sub-headings, text boxes, glossaries, or indexes to work out the meaning. At the request of the parent, the teacher clarified the meaning of glossaries and indexes.

Setting the end of year goal for the child was discussed by all participants and it was agreed that the child should be reading at level 11. The parent noted that both parents do shift work and finding time to complete this work at home would be challenging, but nevertheless agreed to give it a go. The parent had attended the school Reading Together programme and had picked up some ideas on how to do reading at home with their child and indicated that they did not need the help of the teacher this time. For example, the parent who works with her Year 1 child, knows how to read from left to right, match the word to the picture, or sound out the first two letters of an unknown word as a hint for the child to work out the rest of the word.

The parent decided that they would be working mainly on retelling what they have read and will try to start reading books with some compound and complex sentences. At the same time, they will attend to new vocabulary and start building a word bank. The teacher also affirmed that goals set by the parent and the child were enough for the next two weeks to practice at home.

Writing

Student 5's level of writing achieving was 'well-below' their age group. The teacher explained that the child should be working around level 2a of the school's writing progress or early level 2 of the curriculum. At this year group, students should be able to use writing features such as learning to organise their writing using a basic structure, for example, writing a text with a beginning, a middle and an end, or writing mainly simple (and sometimes complex) sentences that have different beginnings and lengths.

The parent in this case continued to suggest the learning goals for the child, since the child could not come up with any suggestions. The parent decided that their writing goals for the following week would be writing a piece of writing which focussed on using basic structure for the beginning, middle and end of the story. They all indicated that this goal was enough to keep the parent and the child busy until the following week. The teacher showed the parent how to structure the story in the workbook by using pictures and key words.

Mathematics

Student 5 was identified to be 'well-below' with the mathematics learning achievement stage after being at school for 3 years and still working on stage 3. The teacher explained that at this year level, the child should be able to do the following mathematics problems, work with numbers up to 100 or use the times tables 2,5 and 10, to solve mathematics problems.

In response, the child decided to set the end of year goal for mathematics to be learning at stage 4, with the approval of both the teacher and parent. They thought that if the child and the parent work consistently at home, they could easily achieve stage 5 by the end of the year. Student 5 was determined to work with two and sometimes three-digit number problems for both addition and subtraction. The parent would help at home if the child got stuck with anything. The teacher showed in the workbook how to do addition using place value strategy. The parent recorded this in the workbook, and they were ready to work at home until their next goal setting meeting.

6.2.4.6 Student 6 (Year 5)

Table 17: Reading, mathematics, and writing goal setting

	Current level	*Short-term goal*	*End of year goal*
Reading	level 15	Level 16	Level 20
Writing	Level 2a	Level 2a	Level 3a
Mathematics	Stage 3	Early-stage 4	Stage 4

Reading

Student 6 was identified to be reading 'well-below' this age group. The teacher clarified that the child had been at school for 5 years and at this reading age, he should be able to work out the words he did not know by looking at the surrounding words, pictures, or other clues. He should also be able to understand and discuss the different levels of meaning a story can have, for example, understand hidden meanings.

The child was confident enough to set the reading goals and level for the end of the year and decided to set the reading level at 20 and thought that this goal was achievable. Both the teacher and parent agreed with this reading level and they both asked the child could set the learning intentions as well. The child decided to ask the teacher if it was all right for them (parent and child) to focus on strengthening retelling and self-correction for next week. This was the learning that the teacher and the child were focussing on in the classroom. Teacher agreed that it should be all right to keep practising this goal at home as well. The child showed the parent how to do this, impressing the teacher by showing that he remembered what they had been covering in the classroom.

Writing

Student 6's writing achievement was identified to be 'just-below' his age group. The teacher reinforced that practicing of writing at home is crucial, and effort is paramount for the achievement of the learning goals set for the end of the year. The parent acknowledged that they had been neglecting their child's writing over the first three years of their learning due to cultural obligations as they sent their firstborn (Student 6) to be raised by the grandparents during that time. They had regretted that decision and vowed

to do their best from now on to ensure that their child would catch up to their peer group with their writing.

The child struggled to set his end of year goal and the parent asked the teacher to guide them with the best solution on how to accelerate their child's learning. The teacher's advice included spending at least 10 to 15 minutes a day doing a piece of writing. They continued with setting of the child's end of year writing level, and they all agreed to set this at 3a. A series of framed learning options were shown to the child and the parent, and they both decided to select; to learn to think about, record, and communicate their experiences and ideas in writing and also to discuss ideas for writing which may come from talking, listening, and reading about topics in all areas of the curriculum.

Mathematics

Student 6's mathematics learning achievement was identified to be 'well-below' his age group. The teacher confirmed that at this age group the child should be able to do the following maths: the child should be able to choose an appropriate method to solve problems using (+, –, x, ÷) and clearly explain how they solve it to other people. He could also use their known basic facts to work out unknown facts, like, 7 + 6 = 13, so, 13 – 7 = 6 or 6 X 4 = 24, so 24 ÷ 6 = 4.

The child was keen to learn the basic facts for stage 5 as mentioned by the teacher, but after a brief discussion with all participants, they all agreed to learn the basic facts up to 10. The thought was that if the child could master this, then it would be easier to tackle bigger basic facts. The child was given the choice to decide the end of year goal level, which was set at stage 4. Although the goal set by the child would still result in them being 'well-below' if achieved by the end of the year, they all decided that they would put a lot of effort into this parental engagement, and it could be possible to achieve stage 5 if everything went smoothly.

Once the planning was finalised, a weekly or fortnightly meeting was set depending on the availability of both parents and teachers. The length of the first meeting was approximately half an hour and regular meetings were shorter depending on the need of the parent and the child. Regular meetings were organised at intervals of one or two weeks.

6.2.5 Step 5: Regular meetings

The regular meetings were essential for the success of the intervention. The meetings enabled parents, teachers, and students to connect and meet, either weekly or fortnightly, to present feedback or feedforward, to evaluate whether the last goals set were met or not, and to plan the next learning steps. On important aim was to identify effective pedagogies utilised by households, and to share them with other participants. For example, one parent shared how she showed other parents how to utilise the Bible as an extra reading resource and have lots of stories, while one parent shared how to do self-corrections.

The regular coming together of all participants helped to strengthen the individual parental engagement clusters and continued to empower and inspire participants to sustain the momentum of their parental engagement. This processed aligned with findings by El Nokali, Bachman and Votruba-Drzal (2010) that parents who are regularly and highly involved in their children's learning, contribute to improve the learning performances of their children. Participants in this research illustrated this and seemed to be highly motivated by the regular meetings and the sharing of empirical evidence and encouragement.

During these regular meetings, parents, teachers, and the children, were invited to share what they had done at home during the week and to identify where the successes and weaknesses had been since the last meeting. Students' progress was identified, together with successful teaching and learning pedagogies perhaps used later by parents, teachers, and students, which were noted in the workbook. Regular meetings were organised, agreed upon, and also included in the workbook.

Some parents who could not meet with the teacher regularly for various reasons, mutually agreed to use other communication methods. Lekli and Kaloti (2015) promote phoning parents as an effective mechanism for maintaining contact, due to its two-way communication nature. Subsequently, informed by this recommendation, the setting aside of dates and times to contact each other was organised between parents and teachers. Both parents and teachers reported that, with the exception of face-to-face, meetings that this was the most effective communication method.

In addition to the regular cluster meetings, bi-monthly meetings were held during the period of the intervention, to bring together all participants. The purpose of these general meetings was to provide an opportunity for sharing, supporting, and empowering the participants and to encourage them on their journey. This was also a time for reflection, redirecting, re-energising, and sharing of successful parental engagement practices (learning intentions being met), as well as unsuccessful ones (learning intentions that were not met), which was caused by cultural or church obligations.

It was during this stage of the intervention that two of the teachers undertook visits to the homes of their students. The rationale, planning process and narratives for these home visits are outlined below in 6.3.

6.2.6 Step 6: Evaluation of the intervention

An evaluation of the intervention was completed at the end of six months, just prior to the end of the school year, in weeks two and three of December. Data was collected from six talaloto of six parents, two focus groups from teachers and students, and students' end of year learning achievements. The data was analysed and compared against mid-year data in order to ascertain the effectiveness of the intervention in responding to the question, '*Did the parental engagement intervention lift the child's learning performances?*'

6.2.7 Final Meeting

A final meeting was held to give all participants feedback and feed forward on the success of the intervention. Students' academic results both before and after the intervention were compared and interpreted. Participants were given a space to share their experiences during the intervention.

The next section is dedicated to home visits and their impact on parental engagement within the study.

6.3 The Home Visits

Home visits contributed to positive relationships and interactions among participants, and the knowledge gained by both parties, assisted in improving students' learning achievement by helping teachers with their classroom planning and implementation, and

aiding parental engagement practices. A detailed outline of home visits made by two of the teachers in the intervention is presented in order to provide an insight into the different stages of the process, the experiences of the teachers involved, and to highlight the capacity and effectiveness of the home visits in parental engagement.

6.3.1 Home visit rationale

6.3.1.1 Parent requesting home visits

Parents were keen for teachers to visit them at home, anticipating that this could be a solution for building relationship with the teachers, as very limited relationships currently existed. Most parents hoped that the decision to undertake a home visit would be based on friendly, mutual agreement. Some parents commented that in arranging the visits, they felt teachers should be willing to negotiate their availability with the availability of parents:

> *I would like the teacher to come for a visit like twice a term. Often, we, parents try to fit in with the schedule of the teacher, but I think that way has gone now. Teachers should try and fit in with our schedule or perhaps we can come to a mutual agreement somewhere. (Parent).*

Interestingly, the tone of this request from a parent perhaps suggests their recognition of the need for change in the dynamic of the partnership between themselves and teachers. The phrase, “Often, we, parents try to fit in with the schedule of the teachers, but I think that way has gone now,” implies a greater empowerment of the parent and possibly signals a shift from the traditional acquiescence in Tongan culture towards the teacher, toward a more equal relationship. This is a challenge to a tradition that has been historically ‘tapu’ in their culture. Traditionally, the Tongan protocol of respect is an expectation of a person to display faka'apa'apa (respect) to those who are ranked socially higher than them in the society (Thamam, 1987). In Tongan society the teacher holds the higher rank and status, and a parent would not presume to suggest that the teacher should accommodate the needs of the parent.

6.3.1.2 Benefits of home visits

Peacock, Konrad, Watson, Nickel, and Muhajarine (2013) argue that despite the challenges of home visits, their benefits outweigh their limitations. These benefits are

reinforced by Gorter-Reu and Anderson (1998) who state that teachers who make regular home visits developed a rapport between parents, students, and themselves. J. Meyer and Mann (2006) further acknowledge the significance of home visits in the findings of their United States study. They found that home visits lead to improved school performance of the child as teachers have an increased understanding of the impact of the child's home environment on their learning. Likewise, González et al. (2005) state that:

> *'…getting to know a few students on a deeper level by visiting them in their homes and seeing how little we really knew about them just from our classroom interactions, we began to realize that even those students whose homes we had not visited were bringing multiple resources to school.' (p.14)*

The literature advises that a successful working partnership between parents and teachers leads to improved learning performances by students. For example, Leirbakk, Dolvik, and Magnus (2017) articulate that when schools and families work together, changes are created including shifting the power and the terms of meetings to a more equal condition, leading to a change of role for teachers from professionals to supporters, and families feeling comfortable with contributing to teacher thinking. J. Epstein and Sanders (2006) further pinpoint that when home, school and community genuinely work together to support students' learning and development, this can lead to students learning more and achieving at higher levels. However, Kronholz (2016) advises that we cannot quantify and tie home visits to an assessment, but the actual visit changes the dynamic. For example, children may open up to a teacher who has seen their bedroom, or parents have the confidence to share information about traumas that might be haunting their children. While literature promotes the benefits of home visits, intervention commencement data also articulates associated barriers.

6.3.1.3 Barriers to home visits

The initial suggestion of implementing a home visit triggered a lengthy pause by teachers when the concept was raised at their focus group. This silence perhaps indicated mixed feelings amongst them, indicating that perhaps the assigned task (home visit), was viewed as being challenging or undoable. After the initial silence, teachers thought that home visits could be possible, as one teacher responded:

"I'm actually being quite serious here, you know, we're talking about breaking the barrier with them coming into school. Well, it's the same going into their homes. It's a bit scary like it's out of our comfort zone but I think it's possible." (Teacher)

The main theme here was a lack of any meaningful connection between teachers and parents. The relationships may have been transactional, such as sending newsletters home, but could be based on the parents wanting to please the teacher or feeling obligated to meet school demands. The lack of comfort felt by parents, in being in the school environment also came through in the parents' talaloto:

"I don't really know the teacher because I rarely visit her, and I don't think the teacher knows us well either. Sometimes I am not used to visiting school because I feel insecure when I come to school. It's a place for professional people and I don't understand them. Maybe I need to do something about it." (Parent).

This was coupled with some of the teachers needing to be convinced of the value of the visits as well:

"I think it's all about the need of kids. If there is a need to visit homes, then I will go otherwise I don't see the point." (Teacher)

The barriers teachers experienced about visiting homes, can be compared with the barriers parents experienced in visiting the school. Research suggests that barriers to school visits includes parents being overwhelmed with school expectations and not knowing how to deal with them, lacking the educational background to interact with teachers, cultural differences, having negative experiences as students and the inability of schools to provide a hospitable environment for parents. All these contributed to the unattractiveness and low appeal of school visits for parents (Aronson, 1996; Campbell, 2011; Harris & Goodall, 2007). What seemed to be the missing factor here was relationships or making connections and interactions between the two parties (Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis, & George, 2004).

The unwillingness of teachers to take part in home visits in this study was consistent with that of the findings, that very few home visits had been performed by teachers previously in this school, so there was no history or culture of visiting on which to draw. At the same time there was a lack of models for teachers to learn and develop the skills required for

a productive visit, and little is known on how to conduct one (Stetson, Stetson, Sinclair, & Nix, 2012).

Aronson (1996) also observes that often parents hear from school when there is a problem, which may in turn reinforce a negative association with school involvement. This was raised by one parent:

> *'… we only visit the school when we were asked to come to talk about a problem with our child or the Tongan Language Week. We only visit when school ask us to come.' (Parent)*

At the same time, the literature and experiences of teachers who visited homes offers solutions to mitigate the teachers' reluctance to carry out home visits.

6.3.1.4 Solutions

A solution suggested by Warren, Noftle, Ganley, and Quintanar (2011) is to establish a deliberate in-school action that provides teacher education on understanding family, school and community that can transform teachers' sense of the value of collaborating with adults. Positive changes could occur to home partnership and students' learning if teachers participated in a deliberate in-school education, that attends to studying and understanding their school community and families (Warren et al., 2011). The principle of deliberate in-school learning on understanding families was supported by one of the home visiting teachers. She displayed a considerable amount of confidence and confirmed the home visit that she made had taken her to a new level. She suggested that it could also help and recommended that the programme to be continued at school:

> *I would like this programme to continue next year because it benefits our students and their families, our school, and teachers as well. I think there are lots of teachers at our school who will benefit from this programme. I benefit a lot like I approach Pasifika people a lot more now because I don't feel as stand off and shy, you know, and I think it will benefit other teachers who are on the same boat as I prior to this program. I believe that it will help teachers in their classrooms by understanding where their students come from and so on. It will also help parents as well. The more teachers get involved, the more parents are more likely to join*

in and benefit from it. I am really hoping that this programme is not only for your research but should continue in our school. (Teacher)

Moll et al. (1992) conclude that teachers who are exposed to the home-based context of learning will not only understand the child as a whole but will be aware and have insights into the multiple challenges the child face on a daily basis. Such awareness could help teachers plan and strategize how to help students in their classrooms and collaborate with parents on how to improve parental engagement as well. One of the teachers who visited homes, reinforced the significance for teachers in having some insights into the life of the homes, and the benefit this provides them in their classroom teaching:

I think that irrespective of whether we are able to visit or not, any kind of insight into where kids come [from] is helpful for our job. You know, things do happen and in our own lives with our own kids and that we know that it affects them, and they grow out of the homes, and they take that junk with them and when we see any behaviour differences among our children in our classrooms, it always good to be aware of that there are other things going on in their lives. But in terms of parent sharing with us that's completely their own prerogative really. (Teacher)

T. O. Jackson and Boutte (2018) emphasise that, "We need to be aware that our students should be seen as human beings with agency who are connected to families and communities contextualized within socio-political and sociohistorical spaces that impact their life and academic outcomes" (p. 88). In order to capture and understand the whole package that our students bring to school with them on a daily basis, it is necessary to prepare teachers, especially those working with families of poor communities, on how to establish strong relationships that lead to more parental involvement and improve students' performances (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007; Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman, 2007; G. Perry, 2007). This relationship is described by Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) as one that is built on principles of being non-judgemental, transparent, and reliable.

Relationship is so significant to the success of partnership with parents and children. What you do is that you build trust with parents and children. If you don't have trust and respect, you don't have any relationship with parents (Teacher)

6.3.2 Planning the home visits

A solution suggested by Warren et al. (2011) is to establish a deliberate in-school action that provides teacher education on understanding family, school and community that can transform teachers' sense of the value of collaborating with adults. Positive changes could occur to home partnerships and students' learning if teachers participated in a deliberate in-school education, that attends to studying and understanding their school community and families (Warren et al., 2011). The ideology of deliberate in-school learning on understanding families was supported by one of the home visiting teachers, as she displayed a lot of confidence, and confirmed that the result of the home visit that she made had taken her to a new level, suggesting that it could help others too, and recommending the programme to be continued at school:

> *I would like this programme to continue next year because it benefits our students and their families, our school, and teachers as well. I think there are lots of teachers at our school who will benefit from this programme. I benefit a lot like I approach Pasifika people a lot more now because I don't feel as stand off and shy, you know, and I think it will benefit other teachers who are on the same boat as I prior to this program. I believe that it will help teachers in their classrooms by understanding where their students come from and so on. It will also help parents as well. The more teachers get involved, the more parents are more likely to join in and benefit from it. I am really hoping that this programme is not only for your research but should continue in our school. (Teacher)*

Moll et al. (1992) conclude that teachers who are exposed to the home-based context of learning will not only understand the child as a whole but will be aware and have insights into the multiple challenges the child face on a daily basis. Such awareness could help teachers plan and strategize how to help students in their classrooms and collaborate with parents on how to improve parental engagement as well. One of the teachers who visited homes, reinforced the significance for teachers in having some insights into the life of the homes, and the benefit this provides them in their classroom teaching:

> *I think that irrespective of whether we are able to visit or not, any kind of insight into where kids come [from] is helpful for our job. You know, things do happen and*

in our own lives with our own kids and that we know that it affects them, and they grow out of the homes, and they take that junk with them and when we see any behaviour differences among our children in our classrooms, it always good to be aware of that there are other things going on in their lives. But in terms of parent sharing with us that's completely their own prerogative really. (Teacher)

Jackson and Boutte (2018) emphasise that, "We need to be aware that our students should be seen as human beings with agency who are connected to families and communities contextualized within socio-political and sociohistorical spaces that impact their life and academic outcomes" (p. 88). In order to capture and understand the whole package that our students bring to school with them on a daily basis, it is necessary to prepare teachers, especially those working with families of poor communities, on how to establish strong relationships that lead to more parental involvement and improve students' performances (Henderson et al., 2007; Ingram et al., 2007; G. Perry, 2007). This relationship is described by Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) as one that is built on principles of being non-judgemental, transparent, and reliable.

Relationship is so significant to the success of partnership with parents and children. What you do is that you build trust with parents and children. If you don't have trust and respect, you don't have any relationship with parents (Teacher)

6.3.2.1 Making connection

In order to nurture and build a caring and responsive relationship with parents and students, teachers needed to make a close connection with families and their home life (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Early on in the intervention process, parents and teachers initiated personal contact with each other. This was supported through the meeting of all participants, and then continued to develop. While the nurturing of the relationships was supported through the intervention structure, if parents had not been involved with the intervention, then the teachers could have utilised alternative contact methods such as an introductory letter home, which could include a blend of personal information about the teacher such as background and interests, alongside learning intentions for the term. Alternatively, teachers could have caught up with parents coming into the classroom after school, or in the carpark during the before and after-school drop off/collection of their children.

I viewed the building of a strong relationship between the teacher and the parents as paramount to the success of the home visits. For as B. D. Perry (2001) articulates "The most important property of humankind is the capacity to form and maintain relationships. These relationships are necessary for any of us to survive, learn, work, love and procreate" (p.1).

6.3.2.2 Contacting homes

Teachers had the opportunity to raise the possibility of home visits during their intervention cluster meetings or during informal catchups at school. Assuring parents of the purpose behind the home visits was critical, in order to avoid negative assumptions or raise concerns. It was appropriate, for example, to clearly message that home visits help teachers to improve communication with families, have a better understanding of students and the impact of home environment on students' school performance (J. Meyer & Mann, 2006; Sweet & Appelbaum, 2004).

In terms of arrangements for the visit, teachers found personal contact to be the most effective form of communication but also recommended phone calls as an alternative, and a successful means of contact. However, finding a convenient time to phone could be challenging. It is recommended that once initial contact is made that alternative means of communication are considered such as email, text, or Facebook so that they are available as a back-up if a face-to-face conversation is not possible.

Being culturally responsive is important and may be critical to the success of the home visit, or even being able to make arrangements for this to happen. This includes things like learning the correct pronunciation of parents' and students' names in order to show respect and avoid mispronunciation that is inadvertently offensive. Additionally, knowing about customs such as whether to take off your shoes (Fairbairn & Jones-Vo, 2010) at the main door or the appropriateness of giving and receiving gifts is also crucial. Protocols around food such as arriving at a home with food and partaking in a meal are also important to understand ahead of time.

6.3.3 The home visit plan

In order to support the teachers in the intervention with home visits, the researcher (in the parental engagement broker role) developed the following guidelines to enable

adherence to culturally appropriate practices and values, to empower the child and parents, and to ensure the teacher was well prepared and organised.

Home visit steps / guidelines

1. Confirm the visit

   Call parents earlier in the day before going over to make sure that it's still fine to visit. Ensure you have everything you need for the home visit, for example, a pen and a recording exercise book.

2. Arriving at the home

   When greeting parents at the door, remember to use correct pronunciation of names, introduce yourself and shake hands if appropriate. Be aware some parents might go straight for a hug.

   When parents invite you to go into the house – take off your shoes. Some households might allow you to go in with your shoes on, but do not assume this.

3. Breaking the ice

   As you are seated 'Talanoa' (talk generally) with parents and try and make the visit look as informal as possible. The time for this 'Talanoa' could vary in length, depending on how well the visit goes. You should initiate the sharing of information about aspects such as your background, hobbies, and strengths, and then let parents do the same. You may ask questions for clarification and encourage parents to do so.

4. The planning stages

   Depending on the state and length of the sharing, parents might offer you a cup of tea or food. If this happens then this will be the transition time to the next part and that is planning with parents around the child's learning needs.

   Before you begin planning, explain this task clearly to parents, that is the planning of the child's learning in the classroom together with parents, the child, and the teacher. The focus here is on the child's learning.

If you are recording in the exercise book, make sure that parents don't feel that they are being assessed. During this step, you discuss with parents the following:

- *Student's learning levels* (literacy and numeracy are the only areas we are looking at during the planning process), indicating where the child is at now. (Remember to use simple language so that parents could follow and avoid using educational jargon). Remember that the goal setting process encourages the contributions of all parties involved. It is a collaboration, respectful, listening and power sharing process.
- *Goal setting: long term goal/s* This is where the child would like to be at by the end of the term or year. The child and the parent can discuss and choose the goal but with the help of the teacher if the goal is too low or high. Remember you may need to readjust expectations, but this should be approached carefully and respectfully. Short term goal/s - discuss weekly goal/ are set too and recorded in the exercise book.
- *Next learning step/s:* normally teachers choose the next learning step/s for students, but this time give students the power to choose the next learning step/s from options you frame. If the child does not want to choose then allow parents to choose. You should only choose if both child and parent do not want to. You can support this process by supplying a list of framed options for the next learning steps.
- *Conference with parents* around how to address the next learning step/s. Discuss with parents and find out the funds of knowledge or home pedagogies that they can utilise to work together with their child to achieve the next learning step/s.

  Also share school strategies with parents that they and their children could use at home. It is crucial during this step, to make sure that parents know how to help at home with their children's learning otherwise they may be left with goals to achieve, but unsure how to support their child.
- *Schedule the next home visit* and/or arrange the next time you would meet at school.

Leave the exercise book with parents so they can record what they do at home with the child. This will give you and the parents an indication of the progress the child is making. The child could bring the exercise book to school if the next learning step/s is/are being mastered earlier than planned. Then you and the child could set the next learning goal at school and send it home with the child then ring parents later to explain if parents are too busy to come to school.

6.3.3.1 Ending of the home visit

Teachers could do a summary of the meeting and remind parents of the next home visit or a follow up visit. Teachers should ensure that parents know what they need to do. Teachers may find that some parents might not be able to help their child and can advise that other adults or older siblings could help in such cases. Teachers should inquire whether they would like the next home visit somewhere else like a coffee shop or anywhere else of their own choice. Some parents might give the teacher something to take home like left over food or fruit and the teacher needs to be prepared to offer something in return (baking or gift voucher) as an appreciation of the visit and being culturally sensitive. Finally, parents should be asked parents if they have any questions and thanked them for the opportunity to visit their home.

6.3.4 Home visit stories

The following stories are accounts of two teachers who visited the homes of their Tongan students. The homes where the two teachers visited were situated in a low socio-economic suburb. The subsequent narratives are analysed stories of what the two teachers experienced and found. (pseudonyms are used for names).

6.3.4.1 Whaea Nancy's home visit

6.3.4.1.1 The home of Malau

Malau, aged 7 years old, is a Year One student in Whaea Nancy's class. He has an eyesight problem which impacts on his learning; he is awaiting a consultation with the eye specialist. His writing performance shows the impact of his eyesight problem, with letters written above and below the lines and the length of time it takes him to write a word down. Busch (2001) advocates that when teachers struggle to deal with the day-to-day issues they face at school as a part of their jobs, they sometimes lose sight of the effects

of their decisions on the individual. However, J. Meyer and Mann (2006) indicate "…that home visits allow teachers to see children in their home environment. As a result, teachers develop a better perspective of the strengths and challenges that a child might face in the classroom" (p. 95). Despite Malau's ongoing problem, he continues to show determination and enjoyment in his schooling. He attends school regularly and tries his best all the time. Whaea Nancy is determined and passionate about helping Malau.

The occupants of the household consist of Malau, his older brother aged 9, mother, father, and grandmother (maternal) all living together in a three bedroomed house. The father is a painter while the mother studies at a tertiary institution as well as helping to oversee her mother's cleaning business. At the time of the visit, Malau's mother has put her study on hold to help her husband and mother with their growing businesses. The mother has just enrolled in a book-keeping course which was an important family goal that was expected to lead to better financial control and better operation of both businesses.

The family have structured daily and weekly goals for each family member including family activities, roles, and routines. Each individual family member knows exactly what their weekly-daily goals are. Malau's family is a very tight-knit unit where education and church are highly valued. They hold family meetings on Sunday evenings, known as '*Efiafi 'o e Famili'* or family evening. This is a church initiative and requires every family of their congregation to spend Sunday evening sharing and listening to each other's success stories or concerns and to work together to meet those needs while building strong family connections. After school every day, Malau, and his brother spend time relaxing and playing games. Sometimes their grandmother takes them to her workplace to show them what she does as a job and sometimes they help her. In some weekends, the father takes the boys painting while lecturing them on how he earns money for the family as a way of motivating his children to do well at school and get a better job than painting.

The family spends a lot of time reading the Bible and other doctrine of their church. Malau's mother said that they learn a lot from Sunday services, and they do a lot of scripture readings too. The father relies heavily on his wife to support their children's academic needs and commitments to parental involvement and engaging with the school. The mother always helps Malau and his brother to complete their homework

before tea and they spend a lot of time rote learning the times tables if no homework is assigned by the teacher. After tea the family sit around the lounge and chat or read religious readings. Around 8 o'clock Malau's parents take turns reading a book to both children while they are getting ready for bed. This reading time is a typical daily routine for Malau's family.

6.3.4.1.2 The Actual visit

When Whaea Nancy arrived at Malau's house she was greeted by his parents, grandmother and the two boys. The family warmly welcomed Whaea Nancy to their home and before they realised it, an hour had gone past while they were enjoying the new connection they had started. Malau was quite compared to the outspoken child in the classroom and Whaea Nancy noted this. The mother noticed it too and mentioned to Whaea Nancy that perhaps Malau was still trying to deal with her as an unusual visitor, especially being his teacher, which was something new to him and the whole family. Whaea Nancy was taken by surprise that the parents had pre-booked a restaurant and she was invited to join them for dinner. She politely accepted the offer as she had been advised to expect the unexpected. With the exception of the grandmother, the whole family took Whaea Nancy out for dinner.

The nature of sharing and discussion between Malau's parents and Whaea Nancy was informal, relaxed, and friendly. The whole conversation was very general. They were very interested in each other's life stories and exchanged childhood experiences, family, church, values, culture, hobbies, and celebrations. During dinner, Malau, became talkative and participated in the conversation and so did his brother. The parents suggested the occasion was something that all teachers should be doing. They felt honoured and supported by the presence of their child's teacher. They also expressed that this is the first time ever for a teacher to visit them at home. During the evening they continued to share the experiences of their two boys at school and how they felt positive about the school and the teachers of their children. They enquired about Whaea Nancy's view about the home visit and Whaea Nancy admitted how reluctant she had initially been, but since a visit to Tonga, her attitude had changed.

Whaea Nancy shared her experience of visiting Tonga with the school principal the previous year and that she had learnt a lot about Tonga including her perception that one

took a three-hour flight from New Zealand and on landing in Tonga it was like being on another planet. She shared that her visit to Tonga had changed the way she thought about Tongan people and the Pacific students in our school. She emphasised how she now understands why Tongan people in New Zealand value church so much, that on Sundays in Tonga everyone goes to church, and everything closes for the day and it's like living in a deserted town. She also now understands why many Tongan people value church more than education. While she was in Tonga, she noticed that church impacts on everything they do, for example, prayers are part of school routines (morning and evening), so too in the government departments and even the parliament.

The parents and the children shared their family routines and how church and education are highly valued by the family. Their ancestors came to New Zealand to look for a better life and they have inherited the hard work and commitment traits of their grandparents and parents. Their parents did not do well at school, but they have worked hard to make sure that they gave them a better education and lifestyle. Above all, they have passed on to them the commitment to church. The mother shared that the church not only teaches them a lot about the family, but it also helps their children to read, speak in public, and other qualities that are important in their lives such as love, sharing, peace and caring.

As the night out ended, the mother and father insisted that they pay for the dinner. Whaea Nancy tried to challenge them but gave in and accepted the offer with appreciation as she knew that it was culturally appropriate to do so. Whaea Nancy and Malau's family learnt so much about each other and they planned to get together again at school the following week for a goal setting session.

6.3.4.2 Whaea Lorraine's home visit story

6.3.4.2.1 The home of Lute

The household of Lute consists of her mother, her three older brothers all attending college and one younger one at primary school. Her parents have been divorced for almost two years. The family have been living together with another family in their home for the last three terms since they shifted from the South Island at the end of last year. Now they have just moved to their own house a week ago and are busy settling into their new four-bedroomed house. Lute has a room by herself while her brothers are sharing the other two rooms. In their last house the whole family shared two rooms only, so Lute

and her mother shared a room while the boys all slept in the other. While they are enjoying their new living environment the mother is feeling stressed trying to meet the financial commitments for the family, school, and church. After paying power, rent and groceries, there is nothing much to live on. Sometimes demands from school or the church will be skipped. Other times the family will live on inexpensive food to be able to meet these demands. Some days the children will only have breakfast and there is no lunch. especially the last day before the mother's payday.

Lute is a year four student in Whaea Lorraine's class. She is always bubbly and keen to learn. However, she suffers from eczema and asthma. Her sickness impacts a lot on her attendance and contributes to her academic achievement being well below her age group. She is reading at level 5 of the colour wheel which is well below her age group. A year four student needs to be reading at level 23 by the end of the year to be regarded as reading at her right reading level. Lute's achievement in maths and writing are also well below so it is a 'big ask' of Lute to commit herself and work hard to get to where she should be. Lute is not the only child in the family to be well below with her learning achievement as so are all her brothers. The children have been caught up in their parents' divorce resulting in them missing a lot of school days for various reasons.

The mother has been and is still the cornerstone of the family. She works night shift and comes home in the morning to get the children ready and drop them to school. She will then do housework and have a few hours of sleep. She always gets up to collect the children from school, comes home and cooks dinner then will get ready and go to work again. This is her routine for six or seven days of the week. Sometimes she will have a day off work, and she will spend this time doing shopping, washing, and other housework. Lute's mother revealed that she is usually tired, but she knows that she is the breadwinner, so she keeps going.

6.3.4.2.2 The Actual Visit

When Whaea Lorraine arrived at Lute's home she was greeted by mum and the children. Whaea Lorraine brought with her a roast chicken and potatoes that she had pre-prepared as a gift for the family. The mother welcomed Whaea Lorraine into the house and took her for a tour around the house. She was excited to show Whaea Lorraine the new house.

The children were also excited to show Whaea Lorraine their rooms. After the tour they had a cup of tea while they shared stories of their lives.

The mother began by sharing her life story detailing the struggle they have gone through. Being a single mother with six children is something that she never envisaged. All she wanted was for her children to have a better life in the future. She wanted her children to do well at school, and she understood that her contribution may not be good enough, but it is the best she can do. She believes that she should have done better but she does not know how to do this. For example, the school and classroom teacher have asked her to bring Lute to school with her asthma medicine and said that they would be able to look after her at school while she was learning. The mother has turned down this offer because when Lute's asthma is bad, she often throws up and she felt it is better for Lute to stay home until she is better. The mother thinks that it is her job to look after her daughter, but she also understands that this contributes to Lute missing a lot of school. Lute's mother shared with Whaea Lorraine about being the breadwinner of the family and how she struggles to fulfil their needs. She is often tired but always tries to keep on going for the sake of her children. She is facing so many pressures from her family, school, church, work, and the extended family as well.

The mother knows that Lute is behind in her learning achievement because she misses lots of school days. Sometimes she is away from school for almost half of the year. She is very concerned with Lute's learning and wants her to do well. She accepted the invitation to participate in this study with the hope that this will be beneficial for Lute's learning. The mother hopes Lute's learning achievement will have a quick turn around and that she will be able to catch up to where she should be. She knows that it is a 'big ask,' but she is willing to help where she can.

The mother always takes her children to church when she is off from work. She explains that the church is highly valued by her family, and she expects her children to follow her footsteps. She states how the church's teaching supports her children and herself intrinsically in terms of morals and spirituality. This is significant for raising her children now and in the future. She inherits this from her parents, and she desires her children to do the same thing.

In their conversation, Whaea Lorraine shared her family background including the struggle she had with her husband when he was in the hospital. While she was sharing Whaea Lorraine was very mindful of the struggle Lute's family are going through and she was very cautious on what she said. She was aware of other people visiting the family's new home, so she ended her talk. She knows that she will continue talking with the family again soon.

Lute's mother gave Whaea Lorraine a gift of food as an appreciation of her visit and as an exchange for her present for the family, which is culturally appropriate to do so. They arranged to catch up the following week for goal setting for Lute and the role that the mother will play.

6.3.5 Learning from the home visits

6.3.5.1 Change of mindset

Teachers in this study were initially reluctant to carry out the home visit for various reasons and they seemed to doubt their ability to undertake this challenge. However, once they started to review their mindset, they were more inspired and enthusiastic to make the effort to visit homes of Tongan parents. Allowing time and space for teachers to re-examine their beliefs on home visits enabled them to be open to a change in their thinking. As a result of this change, they found that not only was the actual visit fascinating, but it also helped them to reconsider the way they think about Tongan parents:

> *They think differently to the way we think. Their values are probably like ours, but they put their Christianity first in their lives, and I think this is important to them and we have got to respect that. (Whaea Nancy)*

Perhaps the solution, when there is uncertainty, is to commit and carry out the visits in spite of doubts. This was further supported by one teacher, during teachers' focus group discussion who observed that "This could mitigate the uncertainty about the home visit with a positive result."

6.3.5.2 Tongan parents wanting to be part of their children's learning

Harris and Goodall (2007) remind us that parents can have a huge impact on children's learning if they support them at home. This was evident in Whaea Nancy's home visit

where parents wanted to be part of their children's learning. Despite Harris and Goodall articulating the significance of parental help at home, Nancy found parents were faced with the challenge of not knowing how to help their children. Parents may believe they lack the appropriate skills or strategies to be utilised for certain tasks:

> *What they do is goal setting every Sunday night. This goal setting involves what they do as a family for the week. It was neat to be part of that discussion and it gave me an inside into how families, especially the Pasifika families are very mindful of their children's education and how they need to be part of it. At the same time when it comes to education, parents wanted help with how to help their children." (Whaea Nancy)*

By contrast, Whaea Lorraine found Lute was receiving very little help at home. Her mother was too busy trying to keep the family afloat and Lute's older siblings could not help her either since they were struggling with their own schoolwork. Byrd (2012) admits that contemporary busy lifestyles prevent them from participating in their children's learning and this was true in Lute's household. Her mother has the best intentions, she worries and wanted to help Lute's learning, but she has no time or energy to assist her at home. Whaea Lorraine indicated that once their family problems settled down, she was keen to work out with Lute's mother how to help her.

6.3.5.3 What schools do not think about when dealing with homes

Campbell (2011) insists that school leaders need to undergo a paradigm shift and think beyond the school gate. Schools often require parents to fulfil all school obligation while disregarding problems families may be encountering. This led to Whaea Lorraine's home visit, prompting her to stop, 'pull back' and think about issues that parents were facing that school does not always consider. She also commented that she had once walked in the shoes of Lute's mother, so she understood the burden that she is dealing with. She suggested that Lute's mother needs time and space, and once life settles down for her and the family then they can come back together and think about Lute's learning. As Whaea Lorraine shared:

> *It's not always a priority in schools, schools don't see that other part. For me personally I see the other part because I have walked a life like that as well. My*

kids haven't gone to school for some reasons because for me that's more important too. I just know that when I had trauma in my life, my husband was very sick in the hospital, the last thing that I would think about was that my kids had to go to school. I always felt that if they have those basic needs, they will always be fine. They will always catch up with their education somewhere, but it was more important for them to be at home with me at that time while we are going through what we are going through. So, that was my priority at that time. I didn't feel guilty like a bad mum. I felt that why should I send my children to school, and they would be worried about what we were doing at home whereas home was the most important part at that time. (Whaea Nancy)

6.3.5.4 Values

Visiting teachers noticed that church *(lotu)* and education *(ako)* are two critical factors which are highly valued by Tongan parents. Statistics New Zealand (2013) specifies that 82.5% of Tongan people living in New are affiliated with a Christian church organization. Whaea Nancy speculated that Tongan parents' values are probably like those of pākeha, but Tongans put Christianity first in their lives and that teachers should respect that. Schools perhaps should understand how church plays a vital role in Tongan people's lives. During the talaloto (personal testimony of participants) of Tongan parents, they emphasised the 'ongo 'olive,' referring to the two olive leaves on the Tongan shield which represent the church and education. These are considered the two most precious 'koloa' (wealth or possession) that every Tongan should have. Thaman (2006) believes that *ako* and *lotu* when pursued together lead to *'poto'* (wisdom).

Whaea Lorraine understood Lute's family situation and how the mother felt helpless about not being able to help her children as much as she wanted to. She knew that their learning was falling behind their peer groups and that Lute's mother wanted the best education for her children. Meeting the educational needs of her children was a challenge, but Whaea Lorraine knew how crucial education and church were for her children despite her tiredness and sense of hopelessness.

6.3.5.5 Home funds of knowledge

Teachers noticed that family routines had been in place and were alive in some Tongan households and parents had already used home knowledge and pedagogies to teach their

children. These were knowledge and skills mostly learned from parents' life experiences. For example, Bible readings, *'fananga'* (story telling) by grandparents, Malau's father taking him painting to teach him life skills and how he earns money for their family, individual family roles, sharing or speaking at church, rote counting and playing games. This is referred to by Moll et al. (1992) as funds of knowledge – effective home practices utilised by minority students that differs from general deficit discourses. When Whaea Nancy noticed the funds of knowledge that existed in Malau's household, it also gave her the opportunity to switch from the teacher role to that of a learner:

> *The visit to Malau's family was very enlightening…we talked a lot about the family. I learnt a lot about their family values, routines, knowledge and what input they have in their children's learning. It shows me that they are…um…do a lot of reading the bible which I think is good. I felt beneficial after visiting the family because we are going to form a relationship and a partnership with our Pasifika families at school. (Whaea Nancy)*

Whaea Nancy was surprised by the existing funds of knowledge at Malau's household but questioned how she could utilise these funds of knowledge to help lift Malau's learning achievement. One option suggested by Moll et al. (1992) is that when teachers and parents make the link between funds of knowledge and learning in the classroom, this can allow them to redefine their roles to work out new strategies that are driven by the need of the child. Another possibility could be teachers acknowledging, validating, and encouraging the knowledge and skills that parents may already have, as valuable to the parental engagement process. Ensuring a positive change of mindset from parents and supporting them to believe in themselves and what they have as significant and of value could inspire them to support successful outcomes for their children.

6.3.6 Summary

Prompted by the findings from the pre-intervention phases and intervention commencement data, the intervention was developed in order to seek ways to improve parental engagement of a group of Tongan parents. The intervention structure was tailored to meet the needs of the participants, particularly in relation to the groupings or clusters that were formed, the timing and sequence of the meetings and the locations.

Careful planning was undertaken to ensure participants were confident in the process and that sufficient opportunities for meeting were provided, to ensure that the intervention maintained its momentum. Support was provided throughout by the researcher who adopted an engagement broker role, with a review of outcomes and the process undertaken upon completion of the intervention.

The stories of the two teachers visiting homes in this study raise significant questions about how we conceptualise home visits. Some teachers may struggle to understand how home visits can improve students' learning performances and help build relationships; this was evident in teacher participants' uncertainty during our first meeting. However, findings support the argument that not only does the home visit extend the school funds of knowledge to the homes where it fuses with that of the domestic domain, but it also exposes teachers to the distinct world of the home, which it has its own organisation, experiences, and practices. Whaea Lorraine and Nancy were able to experience and make the link between home visits and improving learning performances of students, which they thought, after completing their home visits, should be done by every teacher. This is not an easy task for teachers since the transition of a teacher from the classroom and school to the homes of their students requires skills, strong relationships, abstaining from deficit thinking, respect, honesty, trust, being non-judgemental and possessing a readiness to listen and learn from one another. Of course, the home visits also require a willingness on the part of the families involved.

CHAPTER 7:

INTERVENTION RESULTS

7.1 Overview

As elaborated on in previous chapters, an intervention was designed to support and enhance parental engagement in school-based learning and teacher understanding and appreciation of Tongan parents' funds of knowledge. The intervention compromised, a planned series of meetings between parents, teachers, and students, in which goals around learning achievement were set collaboratively. The intervention also focussed on strengthening the relationship between home and school in order to create an optimal environment for parental engagement. It was anticipated that as engagement and collaboration increased, that there would be a positive impact on student learning achievement. In this chapter, the students' achievement on baseline assessments in reading, writing, and numeracy are compared with their achievement on assessments following the intervention and related to curriculum expectations for the student's age level in the three subjects. Reasons for any individual change were gauged through anecdotal comments and notes made by parents, a final taloto with parents, and focus group with teachers and the student. The chapter responds to the research question, How and to what extent does an intervention programme designed on the basis of Research Question 1 findings support and enhance Tongan parents' engagement practices with their children's learning?

The chapter begins by presenting students' end of year academic results in writing, reading, and mathematics. These results were extracted from the school's database end of year results, which showed what students achieved during the period of the intervention. This is followed by a comparison of students' academic results collected mid-year with the end of year results. An explanation of the outcomes is also provided.

7.2 End of year results

Table 19 compares the levels achieved by each student in reading, writing and mathematics at mid-year, before the intervention, and at end of year, following the intervention.

Table 18: Students' end of year results from the school database on December 9, 2018.

Student	Year Level	Reading Mid-year	Reading End of year	+/-	Writing Mid-year	Writing End of year	+/-	Math Mid-year	Math End of year	+/-
1	4	4	6	+2	Level 1a	Level 1b	+1	3	3	NC
2	5	12	18	+6	Level1b	Level 2a	+2	4	5	+1
3	4	6	13	+7	Level1b	Level 2a	+2	3	5	+2
4	1	5	11	+6	Level 0	Level 1b	+2	1	3	+2
5	3	6	12	+6	Level1b	Level 2a	+2	3	5	+2
6	5	15	17	+2	Level 2a	Level 2c	+2	3	3	NC

Key: NC - No Change

7.2.1.1 Explanation of the table above

The end of year results showed achievement levels for all students increased between mid-year and the end of year in at least one subject, with data from four of the six students showing increases in levels on all three subjects. The most positive increases were in reading levels and the lowest increases were in mathematics levels where two students did not show any differences at all. Both these students did not drop down in any mathematics level and they achieved the same mathematics levels as at the beginning of the intervention.

Figures 2, 3 and 4 showed students' learning achievements in reading, writing and mathematics at the beginning and end of the intervention in relation to the curriculum expectations.

Figure 2: Reading results in relation to the curriculum expectations

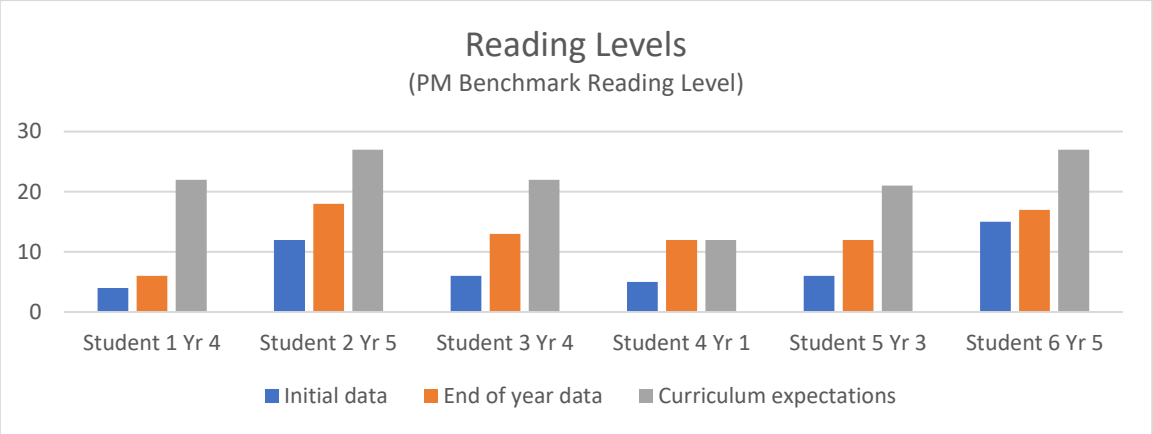


Figure 3: Mathematics results in relation to the curriculum expectations

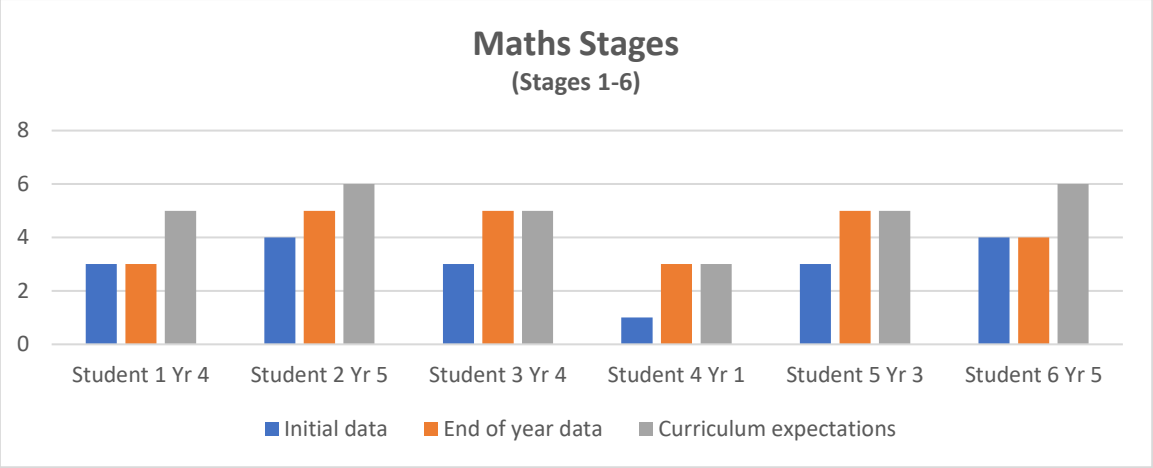
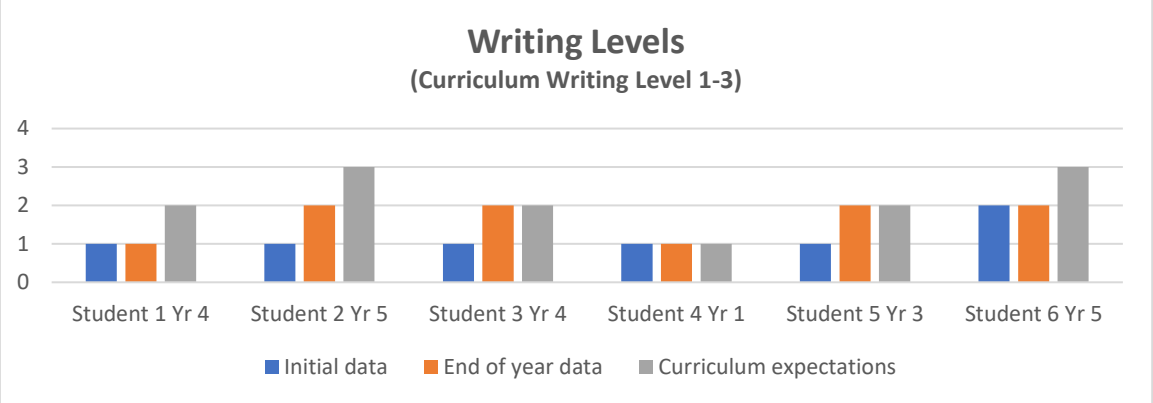


Figure 4: Writing results in relation to the curriculum expectations



7.2.2 Individual student analysis

Further analysis of individual student data provides more detailed insights into progress within levels of learning and achievement. This data is also compared against goals set at the commencement of the intervention and supplemented with commentary gathered through the workbook and researcher notes and observations.

7.2.2.1 Student 1 (Year 4)

Table 19: Goals and reading progress

Mid-year	Goal set	Steps to meet goal	End of year	Progress	Commentary
Level 4	Level 9	5 Levels	Level 6	+2	Well-below

Student 1 did not achieve her end of year reading goal. Despite improving by two more reading levels during the intervention, the student was still identified to be reading well-below her age group. What does this mean? The evidence showed that the child was struggling to catch up to her peer group. School attendance seemed to be a big contributor to the slow progression. During the third term, absences due to asthma accounted for more than half of the school days. In addition, the planned collaborative reading between the parent and child was not able to happen. Books were delivered home for reading purposes, but the mother admitted that as the only breadwinner of the house, she was unable to help her child at home after completing two shifts at work.

Writing

Table 20: Goals and writing progress

Mid-year	Goal set	Steps to meet goal	End of year	Progress	Commentary
Level 1b	2b	3 levels	Level 2a	+2	Writing at her right age group

Student 1 did not achieve her end of year goal but was able to progress by two writing levels. What does this mean? The anecdotal notes recorded by the parent during regular

meetings stated that student 1 spent most of her time at home writing. This was also confirmed by the parent during the last 'talaloto,' that student 1's favourite subject was writing. However, a consequence of increased enjoyment in writing was that student 1 spent less time working on other curriculum areas.

Mathematics

Table 21: Goals and mathematics progress

Mid-year	Goal set	Steps to meet goal	End of year	Progress	Commentary
Stage 3	4	1 stage	Stage 3	NC	Well-below

Student 1 did not make any progress at all with mathematics, and it was clear from the discussions with the parent and the child during regular meetings that the child had no interest at all in mathematics. During the initial planning meeting, student 1 showed enthusiasm during goal setting but the rest of the regular meetings did not match that enthusiasm. The parent reported that much of the learning at home was spent on writing. Therefore, mathematics was ignored. The parent commented that she tried to place pressure on her child to learn mathematics, however they were concerned that this might impact negatively on all learning, as had previously happened twice. Consequently, they did not apply pressure in this instance.

7.2.2.2 Student 2 (Year 5)

Reading

Table 22: Goals and reading progress made

Mid-year	Goal set	Steps to meet goal	End of year	Progress	Commentary
Level 12	17	5 levels	Level 18	+6	Well-below

Student 2 exceeded the reading goal set for the end of the year, progressing by 6 reading levels which was one more level than the end of year goal. Unfortunately, despite this

outstanding achievement by student 2, he was still reading well-below his age group. However, in focussing on the significant level of achievement, two key contributing factors can be identified. First, the parent said that student 2 spent a lot of time reading at home apart from the reading time with the parent. This was also noted by the teacher as the same behaviours were replicated at school. The child was developing a love for reading and they were consistently reading whenever they had spare time. The second factor was the commitment the parent made at home. The parent never missed their reading schedule across the entire intervention, demonstrating complete commitment to supporting their child in reaching their goal.

Writing

Table 23: Goals and writing progress made

Mid-year	Goal set	Steps to meet goal	End of year	Progress	Commentary
Level 1b	Level 2a	2 Levels	Level 2a	+ 2	Well-below

Student 2 achieved his writing goal for the end of the year, progressing by two writing levels against the school writing progressions. The teacher noted a change of attitude by Student 2 towards his writing, in the last two terms. The teacher mentioned during their regular meetings, student 2 was becoming hooked on his writing in the classroom and was asking lots of questions which he had not done previously. Student 2 shared during the students' focus group that he was working hard at school and home because their parents were working very hard with supporting their schoolwork and they were also working to support their family. Student 2 wanted to match this level of commitment.

Mathematics

Table 24: Mathematics goal and progress made

Mid-year	Goal set	Steps to meet goal	End of year	Progress	Commentary
Stage 4	Stage 5	1 Stage	Stage 5	+ 1	Below

Student 2's end of year maths learning goal was achieved. It was very clear from the last meeting that student 2 had a lot of help from both parents. The father who was good at mathematics, worked hard with her on her times tables. Before the intervention, Student 2 only knew her 2s, 5s and 10s times tables. At the end of the intervention, she had learned 3s, 4s, 6s, 11s and 12s both by skip counting or randomly.

7.2.2.3 Student 3 (Year 4)

Reading

Table 25: Reading goals and progress made

Mid-year	Goal set	Steps to meet goal	End of year	Progress	Commentary
Level 6	Level 11	5 levels	Level 13	+7	Well-below

Student 3 exceeded his end of year reading goal by two more reading levels. This has been his biggest improvement in reading since he started primary school. In the last four years of school, he only managed to achieve 6 levels of reading. This intervention lasted close to six months, and he was achieving more reading levels within six months than in four years. However, despite student 3's great progress, he was still reading well-below his age group.

The teacher shared during the last regular meeting that perhaps the mother's weekly school visits had inspired and empowered student 3 to work hard at school. Student 2 was always looking forward to these visits which were often during their reading time and was always proud to see his mother reading with others in the classroom.

Writing

Table 26: Writing goals and progress made

Mid-year	Goal set	Steps to meet goal	End of year	Progress	Commentary
Level 1b	2b	3 levels	Level 2a	+2	At

Student 3 did not meet the goal set for writing at the end of the year, falling short by one writing level. However, despite the shortfall, he was found to be writing exactly where he should be for this age group by the end of the intervention. Both the teacher and parent acknowledged the effort the child was putting into his learning at school and at home. The parent also acknowledged how reluctant his child was to go to bed without doing his scheduled learning for that day. The child would also hurry the parent to leave the church and return home to complete their learning tasks set for the day before bedtime. The teacher also noted that he always asks for some writing for homework.

Mathematics

Table 27: Mathematics goals and progress made

Mid-year	Goal set	Steps to meet goal	End of year	Progress	Commentary
Stage 3	Stage 4	2 Stages	Stage 5	+2	At

Student 3 achieved his end of year goal by progressing in two stages. To progress from stage 3 to stage 5 within six months is a remarkable effort. It often takes a whole year to progress from one stage to the next, but this student made a tremendous achievement. How did the student 3 do this? The teacher recalled from the workbook that every evening and weekend the child worked with his father on learning their times tables and as a result, the child now knew her tables up to 12. The teacher concluded that perhaps knowledge and skills in the times tables helped the child a lot in other areas of mathematics.

7.2.2.4 Student 4 (Year 1)

Reading

Table 28: Reading goals and progress made

Mid-year	Goal set	Steps to meet goal	End of year	Progress	Commentary
Level 5	Level 10	5 levels	Level 11	+6	At

As a Year 1 student, the child has been at school for six months and met her end of year reading goal. The end of year reading goal was set at reading level 10, however, the child managed to achieve one more extra reading level. This means that the child was reading at her correct reading age group by the end of the intervention. The mother was very consistent with her school visits and always shared their reading activities at home with the teacher. The teacher recognised the changes that the child was making in the classroom. The child would spend a lot of time occupying herself with activities and often would prefer to stay in the classroom and do reading or writing than venture outside at break time. Every morning the child would share what she did for reading with the teacher.

Writing

Table 29: Writing goals and progress made

Mid-year	Goal set	Steps to meet goal	End of year	Progress	Commentary
Level 0	1b	1 Levels	Level 1b	+1	Just below

Student 4 met the writing goal set for end of year. Prior to the intervention, she was missing a lot of school days but during the intervention, she hardly missed any school days. The child was consistently completing planned writing for each day, and she began to enjoy writing and completed every single piece of writing in the classroom as well. Despite not yet writing a complete sentence, the workbook showed that she has been working hard on recording initial sounds of words or trying to write down letters that represent spoken words.

Mathematics

Table 30: Mathematics goal and progress made

Mid-year	Goal set	Steps to meet goal	End of year	Progress	Commentary
Stage 1	Stage 2	1 Stage	Stage 3	+2	At

Student 4 met her end of year goal, and she had shown a lot of care about mathematics in the classroom and at home. The teacher has closely monitored her maths progress in the classroom and cannot believe the considerable progress student 4 achieved in a short time. The teacher realised that student 4 was improving with their times tables especially her 2s, 5s and 10s. Mum reported that her eldest son was helping to teach student 4 the times tables every day. This has allowed student 4 to be more confident in contributing to the classroom discussions.

7.2.2.5 Student 5 (Year 3)

Reading

Table 31: Reading goals and progress made

Mid-year	Goal set	Steps to meet goal	End of year	Progress	Commentary
Level 6	Level 11	5 Levels	Level 12	+6	Well-below

Student 5 accelerated with her learning by 5 reading levels. For the last four years and a half she managed to reach reading level 6, and within the last six months she mastered 6 reading levels. While not yet at the reading level for her age, Student 5 demonstrated significant gains in reading. It was evident from the workbook that she never missed a day without completing her reading task. The teacher also reported that she became the most improved student in the class in reading. Additionally, student 5 never missed a school day during the last two terms compared to many school absences in term one and two.

Writing

Table 32: Writing goals and progress made

Mid-year	Goal set	Steps to meet goal	End of year	Progress	Commentary
Level 1b	2b	3 levels	Level 2a	+2	Just Below his writing level

Student 5 made great progress in writing, achieving two writing levels within six months compared to one writing level after three years at school. Student 5 often stayed with her cousin's family after school and her parents would pick her up during the evening after they finished work. In the cousin's household there were two older siblings at high school, and they did help a lot with student 5's learning. One of the sibling's favourite subjects was writing, and she spent many hours during the intervention helping with student 5's writing.

Mathematics

Table 33: Mathematics and progress made

Mid-year	Goal set	Steps to meet goal	End of year	Progress	Commentary
Stage 3	Stage 4	1 Stage	Stage 5	+2	Just above

Student 5 achieved her end of year goal and made more progress within six months than the last three years of school. The teacher reported that student 5 was very active at school and noticed an increased focus on schoolwork. This included asking more questions and fully participating in group and class discussions. During the regular meetings, the parent shared that one of student 5's cousins is particularly good at maths, and she was encouraging and helping student 5 to learn the times tables. Evidently, student 5 knew her 2s, 3s, 4s, 5s, 6s, and 10s times tables. She could recite, or skip count these times tables or answer correctly if times table questions were being asked randomly.

7.2.2.6 Student 6 (Year 5)

Reading

Table 34: Reading goals and progress made

Mid-year	Goal set	Steps to meet goal	End of year	Progress	Commentary
Level 15	Level 20	5 Levels	Level 17	+2	Well-below

Student 6 did not achieve the end of year reading goal. He managed to progress by two reading levels, however, this still meant that his reading level was well-below this age group. At this reading level the teacher noted that he should be able to read for longer periods of time, read for fun, choose stories that support his learning, and re-reading parts of the story that she does not understand. These were still yet to be mastered by student 6.

The parent consistently attended the weekly meetings but often admitted to not completing the reading goal for most week. Both parents were mostly busy looking after their new family business. They did a lot of travelling around the country and failed to meet the child's learning needs. The timing of the intervention clashed with their business but still they were desperate for their child to catch up to their peer group. It was recorded in the workbook that sometimes the grandma came twice a week and looked after the grandkids. Whenever grandma came to their home, the child's reading was sometimes completed.

Writing

Table 35: Writing goals and progress made

Mid-year	Goal set	Steps to meet goal	End of year	Progress	Commentary
Level 2a	Level 3a	3 levels	Level 2c	+2	Just below

Student 6 did not meet the end of year writing goal and the child's writing level was identified to be 'just-below' his age group. The teacher shared that the child was spending most of the classroom learning times on writing. This was also evident when the teacher gave homework, the writing was always completed compared to other learning areas. This effort the child was putting into the writing just started when the intervention began. It was also noted from the workbook that grandma loves writing and always assisted the child with the writing.

Mathematics

Table 36: Mathematics goals and progress made

Mid-year	Goal set	Steps to meet goal	End of year	Progress	Commentary
Stage 3	Stage 4	1 Stage	Level 3	NC	Well-below

Student 6 did not meet the end of year mathematics goal, and this identified the child as working well-below this age group. Both the home and school reported that the child did not like doing mathematics and often came up with excuses. The grandmother always wanted to please her first grandchild (student 6) and did not like it when the child's parents tried to force their child to do an activity. The teacher explained that the child always ended up being emotional during maths and would not want to do maths. The child would rather do writing all the time.

7.2.3 Summary

Despite some students not achieving what they should be at the end of the intervention in relation to their curriculum learning levels, they were still gaining learning levels. This means that the majority of the students were gaining more learning levels within 6 months than what they had done in a whole year despite still being below or well below with their learnings.

A number of key points emerge from the post-intervention results, particularly in relation to the students and their families. It was evident that, in general, the motivation of the students increased. While this was often associated with their own interest in a subject, it was clear that the contribution and interest of the parents was a significant motivational

factor, whether through their areas of strength or interest, or their participation in the home or school educational environment.

There was also consistent evidence of students prioritising their learning, whether through putting extra time into their homework, increasing their attendance at school, or pressuring their parents to forgo church activities to provide more time for study.

Noticeably, the role of the extended family also came through. This included support for the student from parents, siblings as well as their extended family, which in at least one instance included cousins and a grandparent. The family structure and the dynamics associated with this in many ways reflect cultural values and practices such as wider family involvement and church activities.

These key points suggest that in order for parental engagement to be effective, all parties involved must play their roles with honesty, consistency, commitment, great communication, confidence, and collaboration. Parental engagement stretches beyond the teacher and parent; it is a practice between school, home, and the community.

CHAPTER 8:

INTERVENTION COMPLETION:

End of the intervention data collection

8.1 Introduction

The chapter examines the findings of the intervention completion data, drawn from the final talaloto of the parents and the focus groups of the teachers and students. These are the same participants who took part in the intervention. While Chapter 7 presented intervention results in relation to the learning achievement records of the students, the focus of this chapter is on the qualitative data which can help to answer the first research question: *How do Tongan parents, students and teachers perceive the parental role in the learning process?*

8.2 Overview

The findings from the intervention completion revealed several key themes: an enhanced relationship between students, parents and teachers, the value of home visits, recognition of home funds of knowledge, improved parental engagement practices, three-way planning and the sharing of power, improved achievement, and indications of a growth mindset. These themes identified substantial changes in relation to behaviour, practices, and the mindset of participants. Relationships have shifted to those characterised by warmth, trust, and partnership. Home visits proved valuable both in strengthening relationships and making visible home learning and pedagogies; the utilisation of these pedagogies fostered understanding and enriched the learning experience of all parties. Improved parental engagement practices were characterised by participation, planning and the sharing of power in decision-making. Throughout, there was evidence of a growth mindset, particularly by parents and teachers in relation to engagement and enhancing achievement.

8.3 Themes emerging from the intervention completion

8.3.1 Enhanced relationship between students, parents, and teachers

The intervention completion identified that parents and teachers had established positive relationships with each other, in comparison to the intervention commencement. This

newly formed relationship appeared to be developing a strong foundation for collaboration, trust, honesty, respect, valuing of each other and a genuine warmth. Regular organised contact between teachers and parents was in place for conferences regarding students' learning. Parents and teachers collaborated in a manner that was congruent with their values and the purpose of the relationship; for example, parents valued their children's education by making regular contact with the teachers. Parents noted that they also felt connected to teachers at a more personal level, and this included exchanging personal information.

There was a marked difference in parents' views of teachers. Parents found teachers very approachable, which had a huge impact on their partnership with them. They also revealed that one successful feature of this relationship was the positive determination and commitment of teachers to work with Tongan parents:

> *She really understands my family; our values and I think that she is behaving like a Tongan friend to me in terms of the kind of jokes we exchanged. I really like it and I hope she will have one of my other children for next year. We need teachers like this, a teacher that is down to earth and humble and who want to work closely with typical Tongans. (Parent 3)*

The positive nature of the relationship between parents and teachers was further evidenced by parents' growing confidence. As one parent explained:

> *I believe the stage of our relationship with the teacher has become stable and solid. I mean I have trusted the teacher and I know she does to me too. I can openly share anything with her because I know that she is the professional and has the confidentiality quality…She really understands my family; our values and I think that she is behaving like a Tongan friend to me in terms of the kind of jokes we exchanged. (Parent 3)*

These relationships appeared to be strengthened by parents' appreciation, and acceptance of teachers' perspectives, as well as understanding that teachers were listening to them and ensuring that decision making was always collaborative. These interactions resulted in teachers earning parents' respect:

We have a good relationship with each other. We have been talking with her a lot at school or over the phone if something urgent comes up. I think we do have a positive relationship because when I told her about what I think of what is happening to my son's learning, she listened and tried to work closely with me about it. She told me her side of the story and we both try to find common grounds to work together on, so I think the teacher respect us and we do respect her also. I felt that we are honest with each other. I know that the teacher listens to us, and we do listen to the teacher's ideas as well. (Parent 2)

It appears that the parents also recognised that the establishment of a good relationship with the teachers was a critical step for them in building effective parental engagement; they could identify the link between their relationship with the teacher and their own level of interaction:

At the beginning of this intervention the teacher and I have learnt so much about one another which resulted in a positive relationship being formed. This also resulted in us becoming more open with our conversations and trusting each other. Now, our working partnership flowed smoothly and every time we catch up at school, we always discuss my child's learning needs. I think this had inspired my son to learn as a result, compared to when he first started at this school. I trusted my son's teacher in whatever work that he gave us to work on from home. (Parent 5)

Relationships were highly rated by both parents and teachers who saw these as pivotal to lifting students' learning performances. They had similar perceptions on the importance of having close relationships between them and both spoke of its significance in relation to students' learning success. They also recognized their relationship as an avenue for understanding each other better:

Relationship is the key for student's success, and I think it is the key for everything. You must have a good relationship with parents in order to help lift students' learning achievement. It's the same with children if you can build a relationship with any child, then you are better able to work with them, our Pasifika students.

Building that relationship, you need to understand what's important to them and their background. (Teacher 2)

In commenting further about their relationship with parents, teachers were able to clearly define what they saw as characteristics which were essential for an effective relationship:

I believe that relationship is so significant to the success of the partnership with parents and children. What you do is that you build trust, honest, working together and respect with parents and children. If you do not have these in place, you do not have any relationship with parents. (Teacher 1)

The teachers were also aware that relationships were dependent on active participation by all parties which enabled them to move beyond the transactional and into a partnership model:

It is more than sharing of that knowledge you have with parents. It is about giving them more insight to the home and school knowledge and beyond. Relationship is about the truth, honesty and caring for one another as human beings. But remember that relationship is the product of teachers and parents' interactions. It is the honest and hard contribution of both parties to the partnership. (Teacher 6)

Initially, it was anticipated that the teachers would initiate the relationship with parents since they were the professionals, and they also oversaw students' learning performances. However, by the end of the intervention, parents were inspired and motivated to initiate the relationship with their child's new teacher the following year, signalling growth in confidence and perhaps a shift in the perceived power balance. As one parent stated:

Yes, I am sure that I can initiate relationship from now on. Teachers are not that scary, and they are there to help us and our children. I wish I had this confidence earlier on during my child's early years of schooling. I would have done far better than now. However, I cannot change the past, but I can change the future and I cannot wait for next year. (Parent 1)

Interestingly, some teachers noticed that another positive impact of their relationships with parents was the influence on other siblings of the family which was an unexpected spill over effect. The nature of the interaction between the teacher and the family influenced the perceptions of other siblings, and many were drawn closer to the teacher as well. Even though other siblings were not part of the research, the impact of this positive relationship helped to improve their attendance and learning achievement, as one teacher said:

> *It's funny too because it's not only the parents, like, I've got a little girl in my class that has a little brother with long hair, from that home visit because I went to their home, he targets me now. So, I am standing there in the middle of the field or something. I just felt this massive rush behind me and flings his arms around me and I feel the hair and I know it's him. It's kind of spills out on to other siblings. (Teacher 5)*

The impact of positive relationships between their parents and teachers was noticed by students and they acknowledged the fact that they liked seeing their teachers meeting with their parents. Students also indicated that the relationship between teachers and parents had a positive impact on them, they were now feeling closer to their teacher and had asked for more home visit times. One student stated that the teacher is now like a family friend, indicating the depth and nature of the relationship:

> *I feel good when my parents meet the teacher, and I would like to see more of that. The teacher is our friend now and my family likes her very much. (Student 1)*

When students were asked how they felt about parents meeting their teachers, they responded that it made them feel good about themselves. Additionally, some admitted that it showed that their parents value their education, so, they wanted meetings between parents and teachers to be a more regular occurrence.

It is evident from intervention completion data that the parents and the teachers spoke warmly about the shift in the relationship, recognised its significance and that students also noticed and commented on this. Interestingly, the changing nature of the relationship between parents and teachers dominated both the talaloto of the parents and the focus group of the teachers. The extent of the change in the relationship is more

marked when compared to the intervention commencement data. A comparative sample of statements from each phase evidences the significant developments (Table 38).

Table 37: Comparison of phrases used by parents to describe their relationship with Teachers

Pre-intervention and Intervention commencement	Intervention completion
- We only know the teacher from what our son tells us. - We only visit when school asks us to come. - We don't know each other well. - I came to school and he [teacher] was not there that day and I never go back again. - Honestly, I do not have any relationship with my child's teacher. - I am not close to her, and I have only met her [teacher] once. - I feel like I am far away from her [teacher].	- The teacher and I have learnt so much about each other and resulted in a positive relationship. - …more open with our relationships and trusting each other. - Now, our working relationship flowed smoothly. - Our relationship with the teacher has become stable and solid. - I can openly share with her [teacher] anything. - I have trusted the teacher and I know she does too to me. - [teacher] chat to me just like I do with my Tongan friends. - We have a good relationship. - I think we have a positive relationship. - We both try to find common ground to work on together. - We are honest with each other. - I think the teacher respect us and we do respect her also.

These comments reveal relationships which moved from being characterised by distance, lack of familiarity and disconnection in the pre-intervention phase and intervention commencement, through to relationships where closeness, trust, honesty, respect, openness, and friendship were evident.

8.3.2 Value of home visits

Teachers disclosed how comfortable they were while visiting students in their home environment and that this was no longer a foreign context for them. Once the initial shyness of all parties had worn off, the visits were characteristically warm and friendly,

arguably enabling a depth of relationship to be formed in a far shorter space of time than if interactions had been limited to those in the school setting. As one teacher noted:

> *For me it worked brilliantly. The home visit connected me and parents to another level of relationship. We broke down that wall by going into the homes and it opened my eyes to another new learning context that I always viewed it from my own created personal perspective. These home visits allowed me to experience the reality of these homes and I have learnt a lot. (Teacher 1)*

Some teachers who had initially been reluctant to undertake home visits and found the concept challenging, described the ease of communication with the students within the home environment. The children were happy to see them, far more relaxed than in the classroom, and able to engage easily in conversation with their teacher. Where there were subsequent visits, the children were often waiting outside the house to greet their teacher. While most teachers embraced the home visits, this was not universal. However, for those who did, not only did they note a strengthening of relationships, but also commented on a change of perception in the way they viewed the parents and the home setting. This had a flow-on effect into the classroom. As one teacher stated:

> *At the start of the intervention when you suggested a home visit, I thought to myself, God there's no way, but after that I was quite happy to go because I knew, and I feel like that I will be welcomed in the house and again relationship, relationship, relationship. Finding the best time for them and myself was a challenge. They are busy people too running their own business and I am now aware of that too. Never crossed my mind that they own businesses…and this changed the way I do planning and teaching in the classroom.' (Teacher 6)*

As a result of home visits, some teachers felt closer to families and wanted to do more to help children's learning while other teachers recognized improvements in students' attendance:

> *I felt that we broke down the wall by going into the homes. I really felt that I broke the wall between school and home. Even though, his family, mum went to hospital for an operation, we keep in contact, and I think I've got that rapport with that family, and I would like to continue with this next year. I would like to see both my*

children's parents get involved with the next teacher. I think that we have started something essential, and I would like it next year to pick up another couple of students and exactly do the same thing starting from day one of the first week. (Teacher 5)

Some teachers recognised the ability of the home visits to provide a breakthrough in relation to the barrier between school and home. Home visits empowered parents who previously found dealing with school unappealing, and subsequently had a change of mind and adopted a more positive view of working together with the school:

For my other student I think that has broken down a lot of barriers between mum and school. It gave her the confidence to do things at home and involved her two sons with the daughter. She had that barrier up and I think we have broken that barrier down. I think the more we do with this student the more that barrier get broken down between home and school. (Teacher 3)

The findings also indicated that increased confidence gained through the home visits was not restricted to the parents but extended to all parties involved and beyond the interaction within the home to the school setting. The following example highlights benefits for the classroom programme, the achievement of the child and the ease of the relationship between home and school:

My student's mother never came anywhere near me or the classroom but now you know, I rung her up and said I want some songs to help teach the children, so she emailed me some songs and she wouldn't have done that before. There's no way she would have done that before if we did not have that relationship with her. She says hello, and she is polite and that's it but now it's different, I mean in a good way. It also helps me build my confidence too... So, it helps both ways in my view. My student's confidence has hugely improved compared to the beginning of the programme. She is totally a different child now and getting ready for year seven next year. (Teacher 1)

Teachers also disclosed that the home visit gave them confidence to continue with home visits the following year. One teacher used the word 'essential' to describe home visits:

I would like to see both my children's parents get involved with the next teacher. I think that we have started something essential, and I would like it next year to pick up another couple of students and exactly do the same thing starting from day one of the first week. (Teacher 2)

Students indicated that the home visit allowed them to interact with the teacher in a different way. The teacher was friendlier, and happier, and that they saw them from a different perspective. Increased respect was also gained through the teacher eating the Tongan food that the family provided:

It was good to see the teacher at home. She was a different person at home. She was much happier and friendly. She ate our Tongan food too. My mum was happy with it and my dad said that she is a Tongan lady now. (Student 4)

In reflecting on the home visits, students acknowledged how important it was for them that not only did the teacher know about their immediate family, but also knew about the extended family. It was important to students that the teachers knew them individually and the names of their family members:

'I think she knows my family better than before. Now she knows mum's name, myself and my brother and the rest of the family.' (Student 1)

Some students suggested that they would prefer frequent home visits by their teachers and that they would appreciate it, if the visits included the viewing of homework:

I was shy first but now we are used to it, and I always look forward to seeing the teacher at home. I would like her to come every week and see my schoolwork at home. I do not bring them to school. (Student 4)

Students were also aware of the changing nature of the relationships with their teachers, the layers of connectivity and the way in which closer connections can shift behaviours and move participants from traditional roles:

'The family is important in our church and the teacher knows that. She knows my grandma and she talk to her at school too. She said that she got some spare rugby boots of her son for my brother.' (Student 3)

Comments such as this reflect the developing and positive nature of the relationship between the students and their teachers. It also indicates too, that there is learning that takes place in the home that is not visible unless the teacher sees the child in their home setting.

8.3.3 Recognition of home funds of knowledge and pedagogies

Not only did teachers express enhanced appreciation of home funds of knowledge, but there was also evidence that they drew on these pedagogies in classroom planning and teaching. An increase in understanding about cultural capital and ways of doing things and learning within the home clearly impacted on the teachers and was reflected in their determination to do things differently within the classroom. While teachers who undertook home visits had a unique opportunity to gain understanding about the home funds of knowledge and pedagogies of their students, it is important to note that even teachers who had not made visits, were able to increase their awareness throughout the intervention. All teachers within the study were able to make the link between the two ecological contexts (home and school) and as one teacher commented:

> *I think making use of the home pedagogies during planning with the child and the parent is really important in a way that we are taught like we go to university, we have all these ideas and things put on us like this is what you do, and this is how you do it because that's how we teach. But at home the parents do different things, I mean, the same with us now, we teach them different things. For example, my three kids, two were brought up on rural property, so they know stuff about rural things but my youngest was brought up in town, so she knows about town things. When we talk about rural life on the farm, my youngest struggle to understand or she will say how come I did not have that chance to learn about rural stuff. So, I think it's important what is taught at home and how it is taught and what they know is important for them. It's a matter of bringing the two worlds together. (Teacher 4)*

Parents noticed that teachers valued the home funds of knowledge more compared to intervention commencement and provided examples of teachers inviting them into the classroom to share their knowledge and skills with students. Parents also felt that the

perception of the teachers towards them had changed from that of 'deficit thinking' to valuing and recognising their contributions. They largely attributed this to the teachers gaining understanding about their cultural backgrounds, employment, lifestyles, abilities, and interests:

> *The teacher was very surprised with what my husband and I can do. The teacher was so astounded to learn that I can sing, and I have been competing in many singing competitions. She said that she could not believe that we can run a business and she has never thought of that about us. I mentioned to the teacher that most people that we have met also think like that about us, like, that we are only typical Tongans working in the factory or the farms. I was invited to sing during the Tongan Language Week. The teacher also asked me to come to school and teach a simple Tongan counting song in which I did. (Parent 2)*

Teachers found that utilising home funds of knowledge at school helped to empower both students and parents and allow them to share control over students' learning and develop a partnership between learners, parents, and teachers. Teachers viewed this as a source of empowerment and an outcome of their strengthening relationships:

> *I think it's great because it's an empowerment. We are not only empowering our parents but students too. It's giving them the empowerment over their own learning and it's like giving them that control. (Teacher 6)*

> *I think the knowledge from home is something that we need to embrace it more in the school because it's about knowing our students, where they come from and what is important to them. I think and I would like to see more people on this programme so that there's more relationships built so parents feel comfortable coming into the school and all that kind of things. (Teacher 1)*

Some parents became aware of the fact that the skills and knowledge that they had were significant to the engagement process. Parents were able to make the link between what they already had (knowledge and skills) with the educational learning of their child. This new perspective of parents led them to realise that there was a place and value for their home funds of knowledge and pedagogies in the educational learning process of the child. There was also evidence of changes in the parents' thinking:

> *What I have learnt at school and life is different from what my husband has been learning due to myself growing up in New Zealand and my husband growing up in Tonga. We both contribute what we have learnt along the way. There are strategies in maths that my husband has learnt from school in Tonga that is different from how I have learnt it here. I see this as a strength that we have as parents. Our son just learn these different strategies and he uses them wherever and whenever is appropriate and faster for him to use. (Parent 2)*

It appeared that the combination of pedagogies and funds of knowledge of school and homes contributed to the improved learning performances of students. Both parents and teachers noticed the impact of combining the knowledge and pedagogies of the two different ecological environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Parents praised the blending of pedagogies and funds of knowledge of homes and school and observed that they found their child's learning achievement improving. While parents noticed the commitment and consistency of teachers performing their roles during the intervention, parents seemed unaware that they were equally committed in the roles that they had undertaken.

While this study was interested in the increasing recognition of teachers of the home funds of knowledge and pedagogies of the parents, what was unexpected was the degree to which the parents began to familiarise themselves and adopt the school funds of knowledge. For example, they quickly picked up and used educational terminology such as 'learning intention' and 'next learning steps.'

> *When I went to our last discussion, she said that my son's learning was above everyone else in the class. The rate of success was very fast and perhaps not to push my child too hard or he might resent. The commitment of the teacher to this intervention was incredible that she contacted me every day especially the reading tasks for my child to be completed for the following day. She also phoned me for the learning intention and the next learning step for my child. (Parent 1)*

Students did not use terminology of 'home funds of knowledge', but in their focus group during the intervention completion they voiced a strong desire for there to be more evidence of Tongan things within the classroom. This does not mean that classrooms were not utilising aspects of Tongan culture, but students felt that there should be more

learning about Tongan concepts. One student indicated a sense of pride in relation to learning Tongan content in their classroom:

> *We are not learning enough Tongan stuff, but we are learning things like Tongan stories and myths. I like telling other students about what I know about my Tonga. My dad has taught me a lot of things. (Student 5)*

There was clearly appreciation of, and enjoyment gained from the way in which teachers participated in Tongan Language Week. However, the comment below also reveals a potential vulnerability, and sensitivity because of an underlying fear that Tongan cultural practices if followed, might not be met with acceptance:

> *They like sapasui (Tongan food) and I like seeing that from teachers. If they did not like it, I would be unhappy. They liked it very much and I was happy. (Student 6)*

At least two parents shared the students' wish for continuous inclusion of their own funds of knowledge in school learning:

> *I guess the teacher thinks that the best thing to learn is what they teach at school. Maybe the teacher is right to some extent, but I think they should acknowledge what we teach at home are as equally important as what is taught at school. (Parent 4)*

> *I believe that the funds of knowledge of home is significant to my son's learning, but I think the school are not acknowledging this as much as it should be…When I work with my son on fraction, I use a loaf of bread to teach naming of fractions. (Parent 3)*

These views align with that of one of the teachers who comments that:

> *So, I think it is important what is taught at home and how it is taught and what they know is important for them but, I think we as teachers should be aware of what is taught at home too. Often, we need home to know what is taught at school. (Teacher 3)*

There was a recognition that it is about reciprocity, understanding and a willingness to share and be receptive to the funds of knowledge within the home and school contexts.

8.3.4 Improved parental engagement practices

Intervention completion data indicated that parents who participated in this study had improved their parental engagement practices. The parents who were involved in the intervention displayed collaboration, strong communication, commitment, and had the confidence to deliberately engage in a working partnership with the school. The engagement at home increased immeasurably, resulting in parents committing consistently to their children's learning at home. One parent noticed the difference the intervention had made for their child during its duration, linking the outcomes directly to the relationship with the teacher and their own level of engagement. The child's improvement across three learning levels was greater than the child's overall learning achievements in the three years the child had been at school.

> *At the beginning of this intervention the teacher and I have learnt so much about one another which resulted in a positive relationship being formed. This also resulted in us becoming more open with our conversations and trusting each other. Our working partnership flowed smoothly most times, and it inspired myself and my son to take his learning seriously. He was improving with his learning faster in the last two terms then compared to the results of the last three years. (Parent 2)*

Evidence showed that other parents also became aware of the critical nature of their role:

> *This intervention has helped me big time because normally I only work with my child if I am being asked to, otherwise my son will be learning by himself. However, this intervention gave me the chance to set a time to consistently work with my child daily. This programme has inspired me to realise that I have an obligation and a role to play in my son's learning needs and my contribution is highly valued by the school. (Parent 2)*

In this instance, the parent identified a correlation between the structure and content of the intervention and their increasing realisation of the importance of their role in lifting their child's achievement. In stating, 'my contribution is highly valued by the school,' the

parent also reveals a considerable shift, from their perception of the parent role at the intervention commencement.

The intervention addressed numerous aspects of learning such as cultural sensitivity and upskilling parents and teachers. These aspects positively impacted on parents, and it appeared that parents were exposed to new concepts that they had not been exposed to previously and increased their engagement. A commonly held perspective was explained by one parent as follows:

> *This programme has inspired me to realise that I have an obligation and a role to play in my son's learning needs and not to wait for when I am needed. The training we did at the beginning of the intervention helped me a lot in terms of upskilling myself to know what to do. Right now, sometimes I need the teacher's help, but often I can now do most stuff by myself. (Parent 2)*

Parents became convinced of the significance of their role in relation to their child's learning and had responded with a commitment for this engagement to become the 'norm'. Parents also recognised the need for them to be proactive in their engagement, rather than relying on requests or prompts from the teacher or school. This also indicates that parents had increased their confidence in being able to support their child educationally.

The types of parental engagement opportunities varied. One student described a game they played at home with their grandmother:

> *We played 'Heu' (A Tongan game where you use two sticks. You take one stick and hit the other with it and see how far it can go then use the other stick to measure how many repeated times the measuring stick is from where you hit to where the other stick landed) with grandma a lot and I always won.' (Student 4)*

While this may appear to be outside the scope of the intervention and not necessarily aligned with the previous findings, it was a comment made by a student when asked about different types of engagement and learning, and from their perspective this was an example of home funds of knowledge.

8.3.5 Three-way planning and the sharing of power

Including parents and students was something new for all parties but there was evidence that teachers approved of the three-way (teacher, student, parent) planning approach. They acknowledged that despite this type of planning being time-consuming, that it changes the planning dynamic from teacher-led to a more collaborative approach. Teachers appeared to think that they were giving parents and students autonomy and some control over what the child learns:

> *I think making use of the home pedagogies during planning with the child and the parent is important. It takes time to organise this, but I felt that we are empowering parents and the child at the same time. We are giving them power to take control of the child's learning. (Teacher 3)*

Teachers acknowledged and valued the role played by parents in the parental engagement. Some considered it to be as important as the role of teachers. This means that the school learning and home learning have similar objectives, but different approaches:

> *The planning was basically done on what we do together and not so much what is in the classroom but what they could do at home. Not just for this child in my class but for all of them. I believe the parents are just as important as teachers because you know, like the planning for the home learning depend on parents for its success, the planning for the classroom depend on the teacher for its success. (Teacher 5)*

At the same time, teachers recognised the fundamental reciprocity of parental engagement, involving both the home and school contributions, where listening and respecting each other are central. Within this there was acknowledgement that benefits were not exclusive to the parents and the child, but that the teacher was also learning new concepts:

> *When we do discussions, I did not just say that this is what you should do but I tried to empower her with what she does. So, it is not only about teaching the children but also teaching parents how to help at home. How can they help their children if we do not help teach them too? But also, it is about them teaching me*

the importance of their culture and how to bring that into my classroom. It's a two-way thing. They are a family oriented, and they do thing as a family, so I tried to include everyone when we do discussions. (Teacher 3)

The teachers emphasised both the value of the funds of knowledge and the empowerment experienced by the parents when they were made part of a collaborative planning process.

The findings also revealed that not only had the confidence of parents and students increased, but that they appreciated the changing power dynamic between them and the school and enjoyed actively participating in goal setting and the learning process:

'It's fun now having to choose what I learn in maths and reading.' (Student 3)

'I have never been invited or been part of a school programme of the school. Without being rude I think there is a bit of arrogance from the teaching profession that they know best, but this programme has enlightened or inspired myself that I have some sort of control over what my daughter learns. This is something new but empowering at the same time.' (Parent 2)

Empowerment and the sharing of power also featured in the findings with the teachers:

'The process of negotiation has helped me change the way I do planning. Giving the power for students and parents to choose what to learn is slowly settling in with me because I am used to telling everyone what to learn. However, at some stages I provided a framed learning intention option for them to pick from if they cannot come up with one, but this does not always happen all the time. Allowing this to happen opened up a different mindset and an opportunity to reflect on my own performances and now I truly agree that co-construction of what student learn is an effective tool.' (Teacher 2)

Students admitted that they liked being part of the classroom planning especially when it came to choosing what to learn. A few students preferred parents and the teacher to make the choice for them, but those who preferred to make the choice themselves, tended to choose what was familiar to them. Having the ability to choose what to learn,

appeared to help encourage students to focus more on their learning. One student used the Tongan phrase *Óku to atu'.'* This means nice, interesting, or enjoyable:

> *The teacher sometimes asks me to choose what to learn. I like it. Sometimes she asks mum to choose what I should learn. I always choose to learn about racing cars and rugby. I love drawing cars and I know different racing cars. Óku to atu! (Student 3)*

This is further supported by another child suggesting that choosing what to learn is their preference. They love learning about what they like and when the teacher gives them this chance, it is preferable for them:

> *The teacher gives us options in what we do. I like choosing what to write and read because I like writing about my family and friends. We should be doing this often. (Student 5)*

Within this common thread of empowerment and changing approaches, all participants mentioned a change of behaviours, whether by themselves or others; for example, from the child having the opportunity to select their work, through to the teacher stepping back and allowing the families to select the learning intentions. What was also universal was the opinion that this change was one with positive outcomes.

8.3.6 Improved achievement

The overall results of the intervention (as outlined in Chapter 6) demonstrated that students' learning performances improved significantly. Despite some variation, students all made improvements in their literacy and numeracy. The positive impact of the intervention on their children's learning was noticed by the parents and was clear in intervention completion findings:

> *I am so thankful to my child's teacher for her dedication to the intervention. My child's results at the end of this year were amazing. My child improved her learning far more than her entire years in the primary school. This programme has inspired me to be aware of my role as a parent in relation to my child's learning. The dedication of the teacher and my commitment to this programme paid off at the end and I will continue to do this next year.' (Parent 5)*

Parents felt inspired by both the improved achievement in results of their children and the commitment shown by the teachers:

> *'…this intervention gave me the chance to set particular time to consistently work with my child daily. The weekly improvements made by my child inspire me to commit to this task. Our interactions with the school and the teacher were outstanding where I noticed the teacher putting a lot of effort into this. This programme has inspired me to realise that I have obligation and role to play in my son's learning needs and not to wait for when I am needed.' (Parent 2)*

Overall, not only were the parents delighted with the improvement made by their children and impressed and enthused by the dedication shown by the teachers, but there was also a clear theme of reflecting on their own role and responsibility in relation to their child's education. This was coupled with a desire for the success to continue, a commitment to ensure the success of the intervention was duplicated in ensuing years and a belief that they had the skills to actively participate.

8.3.7 Indications of a growth mindset

Intervention completion data highlights that parents showed a positive attitude about parental engagement, and identified it as the best way they have found so far to help improve their children's learning performances. Prior to the intervention they were unsure about parental engagement, but now they emphasised that the partnership between them and teachers had helped lift their children's learning performances, and they believed that students' achievements had been better than in any other school year. As one parent said:

> *Gone are the days that we just say hi and walk past each other. This is a nice thing to have. This partnership has helped to lift my child's learning achievement. It is not only a leap of success but her biggest accomplishment than any other time since attending the primary school. (Parent 5)*

Parents said that this parental engagement had a positive impact on their families. Some revealed that this deliberate planned task, not only helped to improve their child's learning achievement but it also helped to upskill the parent. Some admitted to the intervention had brought such positive evidence, that they now trust that their

engagement at home will contribute to their children's learning. This positive shift in thinking indicated that parents were more confident with their parental engagement role, as one parent stated:

> *I am more confident now with this well-planned task because the teacher sends books home for my other younger boys and instructed me to do the same thing that I have done for my daughter. I did the same thing and other things that I think that are also important and as a result one of my sons won the most outstanding award for his class by the end of the year. I now understand the significance of helping my children at home and I will continue to do the same thing next year and the year after that. (Parent 2)*

Some parents were inspired and empowered to help other families to also get engaged in their children's learning:

> *I was not sure at the beginning what this was all about but quickly it becomes obvious that one on one is a huge advantage for my child. This inspired me to reach out to my friends and families and showed them the benefit I got from parental engagement. I wish that I had this understanding when my child was in year one. I think my friends would benefit the most because their children are still young. (Parent 5)*

The findings validated a definite increase in the confidence of parents and a strong recognition of the value of parental engagement, as it related to the achievement of their child. Such confidence drove the vast improvement in the engagement capabilities and positive mindset of parents.

All teachers agreed that parental engagement is a positive and successful strategy for improving students' learning achievement. Teachers noted that from their perspective, the benefits from this intervention were mutual. They also seemed to be motivated by the result of the intervention which led them to conclude that carrying out the same programme in the following year would benefit the school:

> *I would like this programme to continue next year because it benefits our students and their families, our school, and teachers as well. I think there are lots of teachers at our school will benefit from this programme. I benefit a lot like I*

approach Pasifika people a lot more now because I don't feel as stand off and shy, you know, and I think it will benefit other teachers who are on the same boat as I prior to this programme. I believe that it will help teachers in their classrooms by understand where their students come from and so on. It will also help the parents as well. The more teachers get involved, more parents are more likely to join in and benefit from it. I am really hoping that this programme is not only for this research but should continue here at our school. (Teacher 4)

One area that showed teachers with growth mindsets was in respect to cultural confidence. When teachers were asked what type of teachers should work with Pacific learners, one teacher disclosed that:

It should be a teacher who is culturally sensitive. It is someone who go out and build those relationship for the children in the classroom. A teacher who does not only teach numeracy and literacy but one who build relationships so that students, parents, and themselves are so confident with themselves because once they are confident with themselves, they will start learning. It is a person who believes in success and improvement. A person who does not give up on minorities. (Teacher 5)

These teachers were describing the importance of cultural responsiveness in relation to developing strong relationships with families and persevering towards a common goal.

Students also showed signs of growth mindsets toward their learning. When they were asked if the intervention helped their learning, the majority replied positively to the impact of the intervention. Some suggested that, unlike prior to the intervention, parental engagement had made a positive impact on their willingness to attend school:

Yes, I like learning now than before because I got lots of help and I am enjoying coming to school and learning with others. If there was no extra help from my mum and the teacher, maybe I still make excuses to stay home. (Student 3)

Another student explained that the teacher placed him by himself and had asked them to assist others when they had completed their work. This child's response indicated that they enjoy helping others, but that perhaps more recognition could be given to the preference of the child in where they are seated:

Yes, school is good now. Last year my parents never help me but now they help me every night. It is good, but I don't like sitting by myself because the teacher said I am learning too fast, and I need to help others to catch up. I feel left out sometimes. (Student 3)

The examples of parents, teachers and students showing indications of a growth mindset in relation to engagement with school, home and learning in general draw together many of the themes previously identified, specifically strengthening relationships and utilisation of home funds of knowledge. This in turn provides a useful 'springboard' from which to discuss the key learning from this study and accompanying intervention.

8.4 Conclusion

Intervention completion data collection included parents' talaloto and focus groups with teachers and students. Within the variety of themes which emerged, there were commonalities, specifically in the development of parents' and teachers' thinking and the enhanced understanding and relationships between participants in relation to improving educational outcomes of students. The significance of home visits as a space for recognising and exchanging funds of knowledge, those of both school and home are features. These themes, and other findings which the data revealed, are further discussed in Chapter 9.

CHAPTER 9:

DISCUSSION

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the main findings are analysed and discussed, together with relevant literature in order to draw conclusions from this study and identify limitations and recommendations for future study. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the parental engagement practices of Tongan parents in relation to their children's learning. Within the concept of parental engagement perceptions and practices, this study examined the following engagement features; the reciprocity of parents' relationships with teachers, parents' understanding of the school pedagogical practices and teachers' explanation of these practices for use by parents at home, school visits, and the value of home funds of knowledge as recognised by teachers through home visits. To examine these parental engagement practices, the study focused on investigating links between the home and the school, the two main settings where parental engagement occurs. The findings enabled this study to provide a response to both research questions: 1. How do Tongan parents, students and teachers perceive the parental role in the learning processes? 2. How and to what extent does an intervention programme based on Research Question 1 findings support and enhance Tongan parent's engagement practices with their children's learning?

9.2 Overview

This discussion begins by reiterating the core components of effective parental engagement, and the links to Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory framework, the theoretical underpinning for this study. This is followed by drawing together the core findings which relate to the importance of understanding and valuing home funds of knowledge, and the way in which home visits contribute to building relationships which support the learning process. The role of the engagement broker is revisited as a core component of the intervention, while the Kato Alu model is presented as a tool specifically designed for supporting the parental engagement of Tongan parents in their children's education. The Kato Alu model also represents a synthesis of the key findings of this study.

9.2.1 Parental engagement and Bronfenbrenner

The most significant conclusion of this study is that parental engagement needs to be collaborative and equitable process, which incorporates school, family and community. This finding aligns with the recommendations of Goodall and Vorhaus (2011) for an holistic approach which links home and school, and includes planning and collaboration. However, the conclusions of this study broaden the definition of parental engagement to include the student, school, and wider community, valuing home visits and the acknowledgement of home funds of knowledge as core components. The study affirms that to support Pacific students' learning performance, it requires a whole system approach. This necessitates the inclusion of all parties, not only the child and their immediate environment, but also interaction with the broader environment. This conclusion links to the conceptual framework of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological System Theory, which views the child's development as a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment (micro-chrono).

By applying the lens of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory and examining the interactions and changes which occurred in this study at the different stages, influential factors are identified within and between the different systems which influenced parental engagement. For example, within the microsystem the core interactions between home and school are developed, and from the perspective of this study, the foundations of the intervention were built. The interaction of multiple environments in the mesosystem highlighted the additional commitments of families to church and community events, which within the intervention context prompted for some of them, reprioritisation, and differing levels of participation in their customary activities. A signal of increased parental engagement within the exosystem level was seen in the changing perception of parents around the impact that cultural pressures from grandparents to send first-born children to Tonga might have on their child's learning achievement. Additionally, the impact of financial pressures such as market-driven rental costs, and increased employment to maintain financial security were also evident in the intervention. Albeit to a lesser extent, there was evidence of the macrosystem at play within the study. For example, the lack of encouragement by school management around home visits made some teachers hesitant to visit families. The chronosystem, however, did not appear to have a significant impact

in this research, largely due to the absence of significant world events as the research was undertaken prior to the spread of COVID-19.

Viewing parental engagement as requiring a whole system approach is significant for schools as it presents a perspective from which they can identify where opportunities for engagement can be maximised, recognise the ways in which activity within different levels impact on the parents and students, and tailor their responses and role in the engagement dynamic accordingly. Specifically, as competing demands for parents, including cultural and community participation emerge in the mesosystem level, so too does the opportunity for the school and teachers to bring to the engagement partnership cultural understanding and responsiveness gained within microsystem interactions, and seek ways to further support engagement, such as through increasing their flexibility.

9.2.2 Home visits

The combination of home and school visits which supported the building of relationships and shared understanding between parents, teachers, and students, was found by this study to be one of the most powerful avenues for building relationships. The home visit has become a powerful way of tauhi vā or nurturing the vā (Kaili, 2005) between school and homes. Significantly, in the instances where home visits were undertaken by teachers, students had the greatest increase in their achievement. This aligns with findings of several authors (Kronholz, 2016; Moll et al., 1992; Wright et al., 2018) around the importance of fostering and strengthening home and school visits. This finding resonates strongly with Kronholz's assertion that while we cannot quantify a home visit like an assessment, it nevertheless changes the dynamic of how teachers, parents and students connect with one another. Home and school visits-built trust, with teachers and parents making themselves available, meeting regularly and following through on actions. This finding concurs with that of Moll et al. (1992), that the mutual relationship between parents and teachers reduces insularity since it becomes the basis for exchanging knowledge between homes and schools.

Home and school visits required both parents and teachers to navigate their discomfort and in doing so, showed courage, authenticity, and vulnerability. Teachers also encountered some resistance from school management, which while perceived as a barrier, was likely motivated by concerns for teacher safety. Yet in pursuing home visits,

both parents and teachers were afforded benefits which align with the findings of J. Meyer and Mann (2006) that positive impacts of home visits not only strengthen relationships, but that they enhance ease within the relationships and create a level of comfort which flows into the classroom setting. Such flow on or ripple effects were an unexpected outcome of this study, not only in the classroom, but also where some relationships between parents and teachers developed into friendships. In some cases, the teacher became more like a family friend, which broke down barriers between the student, parent, and child, and also spilled over to the other siblings and extended family.

Through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems approach the extent of the impact of home visits on the child was identified. Beginning with changes within the microsystem due to initial parental engagement, this extended to the mesosystem level where interaction of more microsystems took place. This included the teacher visiting the home and further connections developing at out of school events such as sporting and cultural activities. School policy around visits can be viewed as sitting within the exosystem, indirectly linked to the child.

9.2.3 Home funds of knowledge

Based on the findings, it is also conclusive that it is important to seek out and take account of, and value home funds of knowledge to support the learning achievement of Pacific students. This conclusion aligns with that of Loughran (2008), who argues that a strong basis for positive relationships between the home and the school setting is supported by a partnership that recognises the importance of parents engaging with the learning of their child, within the environment of their home. However, this study differs from others which also recognise the value of utilising the child's home funds of knowledge in the classroom (Hunter & Sawatzki, 2019) or inviting parents to share specific skills (Hensley, 2005). This research suggests that at its best, interaction between school and home should include teachers experiencing, recognising and valuing funds of knowledge that exist in the home through personal observation within the home context. Equally, this study shows the need for opportunities in the school setting for parents to strengthen their understanding of school funds of knowledge and recognise how their home funds of knowledge can contribute to school learning achievement.

This study concurs with Hogg (2016) that home funds of knowledge create a space which is devoid of stereotypes and in which links with school knowledge can be made, and that where home and school funds of knowledge co-exist, learning in both contexts can be complementary and of equal value. Home funds of knowledge provide rich learning opportunities, not only for the students, but, as outlined by Moll et al. (1992) teachers as well, as they take on the role of learners.

Although some studies, for example, Jackson (2016), suggest that schools often fail to recognise home funds of knowledge, thus providing challenges for parents, this study has demonstrated that in the right conditions, teachers can effectively engage with and work with parents to elevate and embed home funds of knowledge in the school learning experience. The impact on the perception of the teachers in this study about the students and their families was substantial and included challenging stereotypes, particularly in relation to occupations. The teachers not only discovered more about Tongan culture itself but began to understand why it was so important to the students to see their culture reflected in the classroom, and correspondingly sought authentic embedding of home funds of knowledge within their learning environment.

9.2.4 The engagement broker role

The engagement broker role I played provided a key mechanism for supporting and strengthening parental engagement. Central to this role was the brokering of relationships between participants and this required cultural liaising to be at the fore. Creating a level of confidence among participants around navigating unfamiliar spaces and the ways of doing and being of school and homes, necessitated of me, lived cultural experience, knowledge of curriculum and the school setting, and the ability to draw on existing interpersonal relationships and leadership within the school and community.

The concept of the brokering role is not new (Borgatti, 2006; Ward et al., 2009), neither is the value of intermediary support for parental engagement (Harris & Goodall, 2008; Martinez-Cosio & Iannacone, 2007), but what made my situation unique was that I was an 'insider' in both the home and school communities. If this contributed positively to the success of the intervention and accompanying improvement in learning achievement of

the students, then sustainability considerations exist if this type of study is to be replicated.

Options for schools include a focus on equity of employment, whereby teachers who reflected the demographic of the community are employed. Likewise, meaningful partnering between the school and community can be promoted so that expertise can be shared. Ideally too, parents who are already engaged (or whose children have recently attended the school) could undertake a guiding or brokering role between other parents and the school based on their previous experience and personal relationships.

9.2.5 Kato Alu

The Kato Alu model offers a culturally appropriate model of the paternal engagement process for Tongan parents when working with their children's education. Articulated fully in chapter five, the model has been developed as a framework for schools and Tongan parents to facilitate parental engagement practices. The metaphor of the Kato Alu, a royal ceremonial basket, is based on the conceptualisation of four steps in the process of preparing, through to gifting of the artifact, specifically, Tokonaki, Lalanga, Teuteu'i and Foaki. These represent the stages of preparation, planning and implementation, data collection, and presentation of the findings. Embedded within the model are factors which this study has found to be instrumental in supporting parental engagement of Tongan parents in their children's education; the establishment of strong relationships between home and school which include home visits, and recognition and valuing of home funds of knowledge by parents. The intent is not only to provide a framework which allows for these factors to be prioritised, but to also establish a cultural paradigm appropriate for optimal engagement of Tongan parents.

The Kato Alu as a parental engagement model, represents the key findings of this study: parental engagement requires equitable contributions from all participants involved in the child's learning process, including the child themselves. Such contributions include active participation in activities directed towards lifting the learning achievement of the child, within home and school settings.

CHAPTER 10:

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 Conclusion

The overarching purpose of this study was to explore the existing parental engagement of Tongan parents and to develop an intervention to help support and enhance the engagement process. This study has achieved its purposes. The study supports, promotes, and contributes to the limited body of research about the parental engagement of Tongan parents in relation to their children's learning. The study probed parents, students, and teachers approach to parental engagement. The research has also demonstrated that there is a proportionate link between enhancing parental engagement and gains in student achievement.

The take home message of this study is that parental engagement plays a vital role in supporting children's educational achievement, specifically during primary school. In conjunction with this, parents and teachers must both understand their contributions, roles, and the changes needed from all parties in order to improve engagement practices. An intervention designed to support reciprocal understanding and meaningful parental engagement revealed that parental engagement increased when parents moved from involvement to engagement practices. This means that parents placed more emphasis on engaging in their children's learning as opposed to placing more efforts on meeting school needs.

While capturing the perspectives of parents, teachers, and students on parental engagement, knowledge has also been gained about how the school and home contexts, and other factors influence the engagement process, and clear indicators have been found around achieving successful outcomes in similar settings. Following thorough analysis and discussion of the findings against a backdrop of relevant literature, this study has drawn several key conclusions which have then informed a series of recommendations.

From the findings of this study, I found relationships to be the glue that binds and holds people together and that reciprocal relationships help to strengthen the bond between individuals. The evidence is clear: relationships are at the heart of processes that support

parental engagement. As parents, teachers and students progressively strengthened and increased their interactions, they gained greater insights into, and enhanced their understanding of each other's lives and contexts. In instances where contact between the parties included home visits by the teacher in addition to school visits by the parents, the relationship was further strengthened.

One of the greatest transformations of this study was the recognition of the equivalent value and contribution of home and school funds of knowledge in enhancing both student achievement and parental engagement. A shift in the dynamic of the partnership between home and school, where home funds of knowledge were valued and promoted, was indicative of a stronger relationship. While school funds of knowledge are widely used in traditional parental engagement, there should be a place for home funds of knowledge to be recognised, valued, and utilised within contemporary parental engagement practices for the benefit of both schools and homes.

An unanticipated outcome was the extent to which traditional cultural norms such as funerals, weddings, or eldest sibling being adopted by grandparents, could be questioned, influenced, and changed. This occurred in the context of new understandings of parental and teacher roles in a child's education. Given the extent of this cultural paradigm shift, it is significant to note that there is no evidence that cultural values have in any way been eroded or diminished.

This study demonstrated that, when parental engagement takes place, and the parent, teacher, and student work in partnership around shared educational goals, that an environment is created where all voices can be equally heard and valued. The inclusion of the parent and student together as decision-makers adds impetus to progress towards achievement.

In the initial proposal, I emphasised my desire to develop a new methodology (talaloto) as I felt this would suit the cultural nature of this study. The utilisation of talaloto as a data collection method provided raw, honest, and heartfelt data. While I cannot argue that other research methodologies (for example, semi-structured interviews, talanoa) would not have also produced similar results, it is my opinion that talaloto provide a greater depth of response than anticipated, allowed a stronger cultural connection with

participants than I had experienced previously in my Master's research and created a safe cultural space for Tongan parents.

10.2 Limitations of the study

Despite the success of this study, there were limitations. An obvious limitation was the number and selection of participants. This study recruited parent participants who, with the exception of one New Zealand born parent, were born in Tonga which may have influenced perspectives. There was also a limited number of parents involved. It is acknowledged that a larger number of participants, including a mixture of New Zealand and Tongan born would have provided a larger and more varied data set, and be likely to increase the ability to generalise. However, it should be noted that the smaller number of participants involved in this study, particularly with the intervention, meant that the logistics of the study were manageable within the setting and available resources.

My assumptions and reflections are of interest to this study but may also be perceived as a limitation. For example, as researcher and engagement broker, I considered; *does my ethnicity as a Tongan and knowing the participants impact on conducting this research with Tongan participants?* While every attempt was made to eliminate bias and the influence of personal experience, for example, the extent to which my parents were engaged in my early schooling, I am aware that there may have been instances where my insights and actions were affected. In order to mitigate this, I relied on data, literature, and ethical decision making rather than inference. Within the intervention I took care to set up the process, provide support in the initial stages where and when needed, but to ultimately step back and allow participants to complete their course without undue influence.

The intervention's timeframe is noted as a limitation as well. The six months duration for the intervention could be questioned in relation to the validity and reliability of the research. It would be problematic and questionable within the education system to use a short-term initiative result as a solution to fix a long-term problem. On the same note, it could also be a strength as most interventions can usually only be targeted and reasonably short term. However, for the purposes of this study the intervention provided indicative data. It would be interesting to replicate the same intervention three years

later to check the impact of the intervention over time. This could provide answers to questions such as whether students were able to continue to make significant progress in their learning achievements and have the same value for and appreciation of their culture. It would also be possible to ascertain whether parents kept building positive relationships with teachers.

10.3 Recommendations

Following on from these conclusions are several recommendations. These are related to utilisation of the new parental engagement model (Kato Alu), future iterations of this research, professional development and Initial Teacher Education training opportunities, and widespread adoption of the engagement broker role.

It is recommended that the new parental engagement model (Kato Alu), is utilised as a framework for engaging Tongan parents in their children's education. While this study has applied to a group of parents in a particular setting, the expectation is that the framework will allow similar engagement practices to be achieved with other groups of participants across a variety of locations. It is also recommended that the framework is trialled with parents from other Pacific ethnic groups within New Zealand. While recognising the uniqueness of each Pacific ethnic group, I believe that the framework allows sufficient flexibility for it to be adapted and nuanced to meet the needs of different groups, while still achieving similar successful outcomes in parental engagement.

It is also recommended that where the Kato Alu model is implemented in additional settings, that research is undertaken to measure its efficacy. Data gained from this could then inform both future adaptations of the model and any training support required. Replicating this study in other contexts would also serve to validate and improve the reliability of the research (Noble & Smith, 2015). I also believe that there are other research opportunities relating to this study which should be explored in the future. These include investigating the long-term impact of cultural shifts made by Tongan parents in relation to their children's education, and the effect, over time, within extended families and the community, of increased parental engagement.

Engagement with Pacific families should become a professional development focus in schools, and topic of study within Initial Teacher Education programmes, and be

recognised as a key mechanism for lifting student achievement. Training should specifically relate to how to build meaningful and authentic relationships with Pacific parents and families and how to value and utilise home funds of knowledge. Guidelines for home visits should also be developed alongside engagement policies.

A strong recommendation is that an engagement broker role is established within each school in order to support and facilitate parental engagement with Pacific families and communities. This role could be undertaken by any member of staff with sufficient knowledge of both curriculum and Pacific communities. While this role could be carried out alongside a substantive role (for example, a classroom teacher), ringfencing this as a specific position would serve to recognise and elevate its importance and centrality. However, it is worth noting that if Pacific parental engagement becomes a component of Initial Teacher Education, then over time such a broker role would become obsolete.

Finally, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Pacific Peoples give serious consideration to the language and culture of Tongan and other Pacific communities within educational settings. Culture was a recurrent theme which permeated this study, with students repeatedly referring to culture and identity as a source of belonging and something of which they were proud about. While practices vary across educational providers, the current focus on Pacific culture tends towards time-bound events such as language weeks or festivals. Elevating the recognition of language and culture within schools, alongside increased utilisation of home funds of knowledge, home and school visits, and the establishment of an engagement broker role in each school, would support an environment in which parental engagement could thrive.

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10.5 Appendices

10.5.1 Appendix A: Formal letter offering a place as a PhD candidate at the University of Waikato

Te Mata Kairangi School of Graduate Research
The University of Waikato Private Bag 3105
Hamilton 3240, New Zealand

Phone: +64 7 858 5096
Email: SGR@waikato.ac.nz
Website: http://www.waikato.ac.nz/go/postgraduate/

30 November 2016

Mefi L Naufahu
38 Edinburgh Road Hillcrest
New Zealand 3216

Dear Mefi,

Re: Formal offer of a place as a PhD candidate at the University of Waikato

Your application has been considered by the Postgraduate Research Committee and I am pleased to advise you that your enrolment in our Faculty of Education PhD degree programme has been approved on the terms set out below:

1. This offer of a place in the PhD programme is valid for 12 months from the date of this letter.

2. The minimum term of enrolment is three years (full time equivalent) for PhD enrolment.

3. Your research topic has been recorded as "Educational engagement practices of Tongan parents in relation to their children's learning".

4. You are required, as a condition of enrolment, to maintain regular contact with your supervisory panel, and in particular, your Chief Supervisor. As part of this, and once your enrolment has been confirmed, you will be required to submit a progress report every six months. The members of your supervisory panel are:

Prof	Bronwen Cowie	PGS Supervisor
AProf	Linda Mitchell	PGS Chief Supervisor

To let us know if you wish to accept this offer of a place or not, **please complete and return** the Acceptance slip to Te Mata Kairangi School of Graduate Research as soon as possible.

The current regulations for the PhD can be found online at http://calendar.waikato.ac.nz/regulations/higher/index.html.

Further information can be found on Te Mata Kairangi School of Graduate Research website at http://waikato.ac.nz/go/postgraduate.

You will be unable to complete your enrolment if the University has not received confirmation of your start date, verified copies or sighted the originals of the following: tertiary academic transcripts, graduation certificates and proof of identity. Please note that scanned copies are not accepted as original or verified copies.

Please contact our office if you have any queries regarding this offer and quote your student identification number **0221351** in any correspondence. We wish you all the best for your studies.

Yours sincerely,

Dean of Te Mata Kairangi School of Graduate Research

Tanya Wakefield
Te Mata Kairangi School of Graduate Research

cc: Student File - 0221351
Supervisory Panel
Chairperson of Department
Faculty/School PGRC Rep
Faculty/School Administrator
Library
Scholarships Office
Research Office

10.5.2 Appendix B: Information letter to the Board of Trustees (Fairfield Primary School)

Educational engagement practices of Tongan parents in relation to their children's learning

10 Portree Pl
Queenwood
Hamilton, 3210
New Zealand
June 29, 2017

Dear Chairperson and Trustees

SUBJECT: Advice about parents, students, and teachers' research

The purpose of this letter is to seek your support to conduct a research study at your school, Fairfield Primary, Hamilton. This study is a requirement for completion of my PhD study at Waikato University.

I am Mefi Naufahu, and I have taught at Fairfield Primary School for 12 years (2005-2017). I am currently studying for my PhD at the University of Waikato, New Zealand. In my field of study, I am required to complete a research project in education.

The title of my research project is '*Educational engagement practices of Tongan parents in relation to their children's learning*.' The research focuses on finding out the educational engagement practices of Tongan parents and their children who attend your school and how teachers who have taught these children view this parental engagement. On my second year of study (2018) I will develop and test an intervention for your school to not only help lift Tongan student's achievement but also Pacific students as well.

This research will involve an individual Talaloto (a new Tongan data collection methodology) like semi-structured interview, and focus group interview with parents, students, and teachers. The Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee has approved this research project. Hence the study will strictly adhere to their ethical expectations.

Should you need further clarification, feel free to contact me on my email. Alternatively you can contact my supervisors, Associate Professor Linda Mitchell, Department of Professional Studies in Education, University of Waikato, New Zealand via phone: 838 4466 Ext 7734 or email: lindamit@waikato.ac.nz or Professor Bronwen Cowie, Director of Wilf Malcolm Institute of Educational Research, University of Waikato, New Zealand, phone: 838 4987 or email: bcowie@waikato.ac.nz

I am looking forward to this research and I hope it will be helpful for the school.

Yours faithfully,

Mefi Naufahu

10.5.3 Appendix C: Information letter and invitation for participants to participate.

Educational engagement practices of Tongan parents in relation to their children's learning

10 Portree Pl
Queenwood
Hamilton, 3210
New Zealand
Phone: 0277334953
Email: mln5@students.waikato.ac.nz
June 29, 2017

Dear Sir/Madam,

SUBJECT: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

My name is Mefi Naufahu, and I have taught at Fairfield Primary School for 12 years (2005-2017). I am currently studying for my PhD at the University of Waikato, New Zealand. As part of my study, I am required to complete a research project in education.

The title of my research project is '*Educational engagement practices of Tongan parents in relation to their children's learning*.' The research focuses on finding out the educational engagement practices of Tongan parents and their children who attend your school and how teachers who have taught these children view this parental engagement.

This research will involve 12 individual semi-structured interviews and two focus groups where there are 6 parents in each. The individual semi-structured interviews will be approximately one hour. The venue will be individual homes and time will be discussed with individuals. This interview will be recorded for later transcription. A copy of the transcribed interview will be returned to you for scrutiny and confirmation. Should you wish to add further relevant details or change some detail, you will have the opportunity to do so.

The focus group interview will be held at the school and will take up to one hour.

The Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee has approved this research project. Hence the study will strictly adhere to their ethical expectations. The identity of both you and the school will remain anonymous and confidential. However, it may be difficult to ensure complete anonymity because the participants are likely to know each other so confidentiality is very important. It is also important to note that generally it is not possible to withdraw or amend data from focus group interviews. Your rights will be fully respected. The transcript will be kept for a period of five years then destroyed. This research may be published and viewed as digital copy on the university website and used in academic articles and presentations.

Should you need further clarification, feel free to contact me on my email. Alternatively you can contact my supervisors, Associate Professor Linda Mitchell, Department of Professional Studies in Education, University of Waikato, New Zealand via phone: 838 4466 Ext 7734 or email: lindamit@waikato.ac.nz or Professor Bronwen Cowie, Director of Wilf Malcolm Institute of Educational Research, University of Waikato, New Zealand, phone: 838 4987 or email: bcowie@waikato.ac.nz

If you are willing to be part of this research project, please indicate by signing the consent form attached.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Yours faithfully

Mefi Naufahu

10.5.4 Appendix D: Koe tohi fakamatala moe fakaafe ki he kau kau ‘I he fakatotolo ni

Ko e founga/’ulungaanga e fengaue’aki ‘a e matu’a mo e fanau ‘o makatu’unga he ako ‘o ‘enau fanau

10 Portree Pl
Queenwood
Hamilton, 3210
New Zealand
Phone: 0277334953
Email: mln5@students.waikato.ac.nz

‘Aho 29 ‘o Sune, 2017

Ki he Matu’a Tauhi Fanau,

Taumu’a: Ko e fakaafe ke ke kau mu’a he fakatotolo ni

Ko hoku hingoa ko Mefi Naufahu pea ko e ta’u eni ‘e 12 ‘eku fakakaungatamaki he faiako he ‘apiako Fairfield Primary School mei he 2005-2017. ‘Oku ou lolotonga ako ki hoku Toketa he mala’e ‘oe ako ‘I he Univesity Waikato ‘I Nu’usila ni. Ko e konga ‘o e ako ni ‘oku fiema’u ke fakahoko ha’ate fakatotolo.

Ko e kaveinga ‘oku fakahingoa’aki e fakatotolo ni ko e ‘***Ko e founga/’ulungaanga e fengaue’aki ‘a e matu’a mo e fanau ‘o makatu’unga he ako ‘o ‘enau fanau.’*** ‘Oku taumu’a e fakatotolo ni ki hono vakai’iange e founga pe ko e ‘ulungaanga e fengaue’aki ‘a e matu’a tauhi fanau Tonga mo ‘enau fanau ‘o fekau’aki mo e ako ‘o ‘enau fanau, ko e anga hono mahino’i ‘e he faiako e fengaue’aki ‘a e matu’a mo ‘enau fanau he ‘apiako ni.

‘Oku toko 12 ‘a e kau kau ki he ‘initaviu fakafo’ituitui pea mo e ongo kulupu ‘e ua kehe. Ko e intaviu fakafo’ituitui ‘oku fakafuofua ki he houa ‘e taha. Ko e feitu’u ‘e fai ki ai e initaviu fakafo’ituitui ko e ngaahi ‘api pe ‘o kinautolu ‘oku kau ki ai pea ‘e toki fai e talanoa ‘o fekau’aki mo e taimi pea mo kinautolu. Ko e ngaahi initaviu ‘e lekooti ia ki hano

fakaikiikiange ‘a mui ange. Ko e kopi ‘o e liliu ‘o e initaviu ki hano hiki fakamatala ‘e to e fakafoki mai kia kinautolu ne kau he initaviu kenau fakapapau’I ‘oku totonu mo mo’oni ‘a e kopi koi a. ‘I he taimi tatau ‘e malava pe k eke fakatonutonu ha me’a ‘oku fehalaaki, fakalahi, pe to’o ha konga mei he fakamatala kuo hiki. Ko e ongo kulupu leva tena fakahoko ‘enau initaviu ‘o fe’unga nai mo e houa ‘e taha. Ko e feitu’u ‘e toki fai e laulea ki aim o kinautolu.

Ko e komiti ‘a e Univesiti Waikato ‘oku nau tokanga’I e tafa’aki fakaefika kuo nau tali ke fakahoko e fakatotolo ni. Kuo pau ke muimui e fakatotolo ni ki he fiema’u faka’efika ‘a e komiti ni. Ko e ongoongo ‘o ko e pea mo e ‘apiako kuo pau ke tauhi ia ke fakapulipuli pea mo malu foki. ‘Ihe taimi tatau pe ‘e faingata’a hano tauhi ke malu eni ko e ‘uhi ko e kau kau ki he fakatotolo ni ‘oku fe’ilongaki ka ‘oku fiema’u ke malu’I eni ke malu. ‘Oku fiema’u foki ke fakaha heni ko e anga maheni ‘oku ‘ikai fa’a tali ke toe to’o ha fakamatala mei he initaviu fakakulupu. Ko ho’o totonu kuo pau ke faka’apa’apa’I ia. Ko e fakamatala kuo hiki tonu mei he ngaahi initaviu kuo pau ke tauhi ia ‘o fe’unga mo e ta’u ‘e 5 pe ‘e toki lava ke faka’auha. Ko e fakatotolo ni ‘e malava pe foki ke tukuatu ha kopi he uepisaiti ‘a e Univesiti ‘o faka’aonga’I he ngaahi ‘atikolo faka’ekatemika mo ha to e me’a kehe pe.

Kapau ‘oku ke fiema’u ha toe fakaikiikiange teke lava pe ‘o toe fetu’utaki mai he’eku meili fakaelekitolonika pe teke fetu’utaki ki he’eku supavaisa ko Associate Professor Linda Mitchell, Department of Professional Studies in Education, University of Waikato, New Zealand via phone: 838 4466 Ext 7734 or email: lindamit@waikato.ac.nz pe ko Professor Bronwen Cowie, Director of Wilf Malcolm Institute of Educational Research, University of Waikato, New Zealand, phone: 838 4987 or email: bcowie@waikato.ac.nz

Kapau teke loto keke tali lelei k eke kau ki he fakatotolo ni pea ke kataki mu’a ‘o fakamo’oni he foomu ‘oku ke tali ke kau.

Faka’apa’apa atu

Mefi Naufahu

10.5.5 Appendix E: Consent Form for Participants

Topic of Study:

Educational engagement practices of Tongan parents in relation to their children's learning

Consent Form for Participants

I have read the Participant Information Sheet for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that:

1. I may ask further questions at any time.
2. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time and the data up until data analysis commences or to decline to answer any questions in the study.
3. I can withdraw any information I have provided up until I have approved my interview transcript.

I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out in the invitation letter.

I agree to participate in this study.

Signed:_____

Name: _____

Date: _____

10.5.6 Appendix F: Foomu tali ke kau he fakatotolo ni

Topiki:

Ko e founga/'ulungaanga e fengaue'aki 'a e matu'a mo e fanau 'o makatu'unga he ako 'o 'enau fanau

Foomu 'a e kau kau he fakatotolo

Kuo ou 'osi lau 'a e tohi fakamatala fekau'aki mo e fakatotolo ni pea 'oku mahino kiate au hono fakaikiiki. Ko 'eku ngaahi fehu'i kotoa kuo tali kotoa ia he ngaahi fakamatala he tohi pea 'oku ou fiemalie ki ai. 'Oku 'ou 'ilo foki 'e malava keu:

1. Fehu'ia ha me'a 'i ha fa'ahinga taimi
2. To'o hoku hingoa mei he fakatotolo ni ha fa'ahinga taimi pe pea mei he taimi ni 'o a'u kimu'a hano 'analaiso 'o e ngaahi fakamatala 'o e fakatotolo ni.
3. To'o ha ngaahi fakamaala neu 'osi fai kimu'a pea toki tali mo fakapapau'i 'a e initaviu kuo 'osi hono fakahoko.

'Oku ou tali loto lelei keu 'oange ha ngaahi fakamatala ki he tokotaha fakatotolo 'aki e mahino tene tauhi mo faka'apa'apa'i hook ongoongo hange koi a 'oku ha he tohi fakamatala 'o e fkatotolo ni.

'Oku ou tali keu kau ki he fakatotolo ni.

Fakamo'oni: _____

Hingoa:_____

'Aho: _____

10.5.7 Appendix G: Consent Form for Parents to allow their children to participate in this research

Topic of Study:

Educational engagement practices of Tongan parents in relation to their children's learning

Consent Form for Participants

I have read the Participant Information Sheet for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand my child:

4. May ask further questions at any time.
5. Is free to withdraw from the study at any time and the data up until data analysis commences or to decline to answer any questions in the study.
6. Can withdraw any information that she/he has provided up before his/her interview transcript is approved

I agree to allow my son/daughter to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out in the invitation letter.

I give consent for my son/daughter _____to participate in this study.

Parent's Signature: _____

Full Name: _____

Date: _____

10.5.8 Appendix H: Foomu fakangofua ‘e he Matu’a Tauhi Fanau ke kau ‘enau fanau he fakatotolo ni

Topiki:

Ko e founga/’ulungaanga e fengaue’aki ‘a e matu’a mo e fanau ‘o makatu’unga he ako ‘o ‘enau fanau

Foomu ‘a e kau kau he fakatotolo

Kuo ou ‘osi lau ‘a e tohi fakamatala fekau’aki mo e fakatotolo ni pea ‘oku mahino kiate au hono fakaikiiki. Ko ‘eku ngaahi fehu’i kotoa kuo tali kotoa ia he ngaahi fakamatala he tohi pea ‘oku ou fiemalie ki ai. ‘Oku ‘ou ‘ilo foki ‘e malava ke:

4. Fehu’ia ha me’a ‘e hoku foha/’ofefine ‘i ha fa’ahinga taimi pe.
5. To’o hono hingoa mei he fakatotolo ni ha fa’ahinga taimi pe pea mei he taimi ni ‘o a’u kimu’a hano ‘analaiso ‘o e ngaahi fakamatala ‘o e fakatotolo ni.
6. To’o ha ngaahi fakamatala kuo ‘osi fai kimu’a pea toki tali mo fakapapau’i ‘a e initaviu kuo ‘osi hono fakahoko.

‘Oku ou tali loto lelei ke ‘oange ’e hoku foha/’ofefine ha ngaahi fakamatala ki he tokotaha fakatotolo ‘aki e mahino tene tauhi mo faka’apa’apa’i hono ongoongo hange koi a ‘oku ha he tohi fakamatala ‘o e fkatotolo ni.

‘Oku ou tali keu foaki e ngofua ke kau hoku foha/’ofefine ko _____ ki he fakatotolo ni.

Fakamo’oni ‘a e Matu’a: _____

Hingoa Kakato: _____

‘Aho: _____

10.5.9 Appendix I: Parent's individual interview questions

Educational engagement practices of Tongan parents in relation to their children's learning

Prior to the Talaloto

I will be having a Talanoa with participants before the question/s are being asked. Currently, I am creating the right condition for the Talaloto to take place. It could be something like this:

How are you today? What have been up to? You know why I am here and before we proceed, I would like to say this before we begin the Talaloto. Whatever you say will be safe with me. After the analysis of the Talaloto I am developing an intervention at school which your child could benefit from it. However, the development of the intervention will depend very much on your Talaloto. You don't have to pretend with your Talaloto. Your honesty is very important here. I would like you to share with me your honest engagement practices in your child's education. I want to know the real reality of your engagement experiences with your child. I would like to know everything you do when engaging in your child's learning. You can also tell me things that are not related to education. The floor will be yours after I ask you the questions. Have you got anything to ask me before we proceed?

RESEARCH QUESTION 1:

1. How do you perceive the parental role in the learning process of your child?
    a. What types of formal and informal engagement practices do you have with their children's learning?
    b. What factors influence your engage or disengage from their children's learning?
    c. How do you view or value your contributions toward your children's learning?

10.5.10 Appendix J: Ko e fehu'i ma'ae Matu'a Tauhi Fanau

Ko e founga/'ulungaanga e fengaue'aki 'a e matu'a mo e fanau 'o makatu'unga he ako 'o 'enau fanau

Kimu'a pea fakahoko e Talaloto

Teu fakahoko e Talanoa mo e tokotaha 'oku 'initaviu kimu'a pea fakahoko e fehu'i. Ko e taimi eni hono feinga'I ke fakatupulekina mo fa'u ha taimi totonu ke lotolahi e tokotaha 'initaviu kene fakahoko e tali 'o e ngaahi fehu'i. 'Oku meimei anga pehe ni hono 'ai:

> 'Oku ke fefe hake he 'aho ni? Ko e ha e me'a lahi ne fai he 'aho ni?... 'Oku mahino pe foki kiate ko e 'a e 'uhinga 'oku ou 'I heni ai he 'aho ni. Kimu'a ke fai e Talaloto 'oku ou fie vahevahe atu eni. Ko e me'a kotoa pe teke lea'aki teu malu'I ia ki he lelei taha. Ko e 'osi 'a hono 'analaiso 'o e fakamatala mei he fakatotolo ni, teu hanga 'o fokotu'u ha polokalama 'I 'apiako ke tokoni kihe ako e fanau pea 'e lave ai ho tama. Kaikehe, ko e lelei hono fokotu'u e polokalama koi a 'e tipeni ia mei he Talaloto 'oku 'amanaki fakahoko. 'Oku 'ikai fiema'u ke ke fakamahamahalo ho'o talaloto. Ko e mo'oni 'oku fu'u mahu'inga 'aupito ia. Faka'amu pe ke ke lave mai 'aki e totonu mo e mo'oni ho'o ngaue mo ho'o ki'I tama fekau'aki mo 'ene ako. Pe na'ake fai ha ngaue pe 'ikai faka'amu pe ko e me'a mo'oni eni teke vahevahe maim o au. 'Oku ou fie 'ilo ki he kanokato ho'o fakahoko ngaue pea mo ho'o tama ki he'ene ako. 'Oku 'ikai ngata pe he me'a fakaako pea mo ha me'a kehe pe 'oku 'ikai kaunga ki he ako. Ko e 'osi pe 'eku 'oatu e fehu'I pea 'ata leva kia koe k eke fa'iteha ha'o tali teke 'omai. 'Oku 'I ai nai ha'o fehu'I ki ki mu'a peata hoko atu?

Tefito'i Fehu'i:

1. **'**Oku fefe nai ho'o vakavakai ki he anga ho'o ngaue pe tokoni ki he ako ho'o fanau 'i ho tu'unga faka-e-tauhi fanau?
    a. Ko e ha nai e 'uuni me'a 'oku ke pehe 'oku fomolo pe 'ikai fomolo 'oku ke fakahoko fekau'aki mo e ako ho'o fanau? (fomolo – ngaahi me'a 'oku fekau'aki mo e ako faleako, 'ikai fomolo – ngaahi me'a 'ikai fekau'aki mo e ako)
    b. Ko e ha e ngaahi tefito'I me'a 'oku ne uesia ko e ke ke ngaue fakataha mo ho'o fanau fekau'aki mo 'enau ako pe ngaahi me'a 'oku ne

fakafe’atungia’I ko e ‘o ‘ikai ke ke ngaue fakataha aim o ho’o fanau ki he’enau ako?

c. Ko e ha nai ha’o vakai pe mahu’inga’ia ‘I ho’o tokoni ki he ako ho’o fanau?

10.5.11 Appendix K: Student's Focus group interview questions

Educational engagement practices of Tongan parents in relation to their children's learning

Questions

How does the perception of Tongan parent's educational engagement practices align with that of their child?

1. What do your parents do at home to help you with your schoolwork?
2. What other things do they do to help you that are not related to schoolwork?
3. How do they help you with these that you mentioned above?
4. If your parents do not help you than who does and how?
5. Do you think that your parents have done enough to help you with your learning? If not, then what should they do? What factors are avoiding them from helping you?
6. How do you feel when your parents help you or not helping you? What should you say to them about this?

10.5.12 Appendix L: Teachers focus group interview questions

Educational engagement practices of Tongan parents in relation to their children's learning

Questions:

How does the perception of Tongan parents on educational engagement practices align with that of the teacher of their child?

1. What do you think is the nature of the parental engagement practices Tongan parents might have with their children's learning?
2. What strengths/weaknesses do they have on this area?
3. What contributions can you give, or have you given to the Tongan parents?
4. What can be done to improve these connections with homes?
5. How do you see the future of the Tongan parents and their children?
6. Any other recommendations for the Tongan parents?