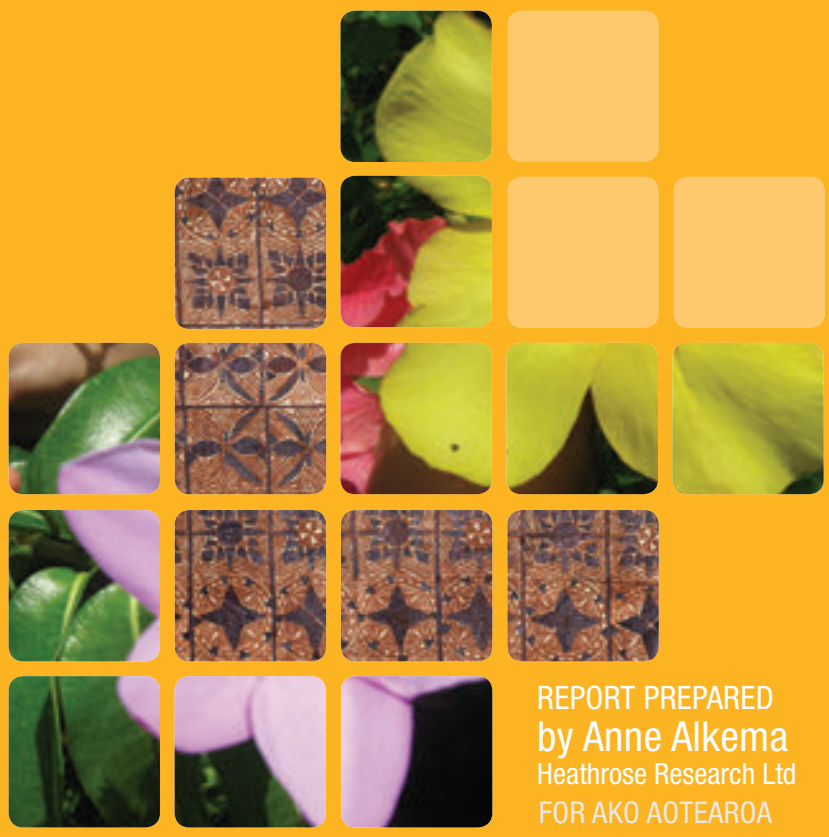
SUCCESS FOR PASIFIKA IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

Highlights from Ako Aotearoa-supported research



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SUCCESS FOR PASIFIKA IN TERTIARY EDUCATION: HIGHLIGHTS FROM AKO AOTEAROA-SUPPORTED RESEARCH

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Report prepared by Anne Alkema, Heathrose Research Ltd, for Ako Aotearoa.

Published by:
Ako Aotearoa – The National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence
www.akoaotearoa.ac.nz

ISBN 978-1-927202-60-9 (print)
ISBN 978-1-927202-61-6 (online)

MARCH 2014

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Purpose

This report provides a summary of the recurrent themes on what leads to improved outcomes for Pasifika learners in tertiary education, from research undertaken through Ako Aotearoa-funded projects between 2008 and 2013. It also discusses frameworks and methods for conducting research in a culturally responsive manner and provides evidence to inform policy and practice in tertiary education organisations. Above all it provides information on the factors that contribute to the success of Pasifika learners based on research with them and their educators. The research was undertaken in workplaces, private training establishments (PTEs), institutes of technology and polytechnics (ITPs) and universities.

Context

Successive Tertiary Education Strategies (TES) have set the strategic direction for tertiary education in New Zealand. The current TES (2010–2015)[1] acknowledges the diverse needs of learners accessing tertiary education in New Zealand and the expectations that providers meet these needs. The TES places priority on increasing the number of Pasifika students achieving at higher levels.

The Tertiary Education Commission's (TEC) Plan Guidance 2013–2015 for tertiary education organisations (TEOs)[2] has as a priority that TEOs "ensure that Māori and Pasifika students participate and achieve at all levels at least on par with other learners" (p. 7).

The Ministry of Education's Pasifika Education Plan 2013–2017 (PEP)[3] is the overarching strategy from which other education agencies set their frameworks and strategies. The goals for Pasifika in tertiary education are:

- Pasifika people are a highly skilled and highly educated workforce that fully contributes to New Zealand's economy and society;
- Use research and evidence effectively to achieve the goals of the Pasifika Education Plan; and
- Pasifika learners participate and achieve at all levels at least on a par with other learners in tertiary education.

The TEC's Pasifika Framework 2013–2017[4] outlines how the Commission will work with providers and across government agencies to ensure improved outcomes for Pasifika learners. The framework has four focus areas:

i. Successful transitions
ii. Continued and accelerated educational performance at all levels
iii. Contributing to building interagency capability
iv. Using research evidence more effectively.

In addition there is a New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) Pasifika Strategy 2012–2015.[5] This strategy outlines what NZQA will do to improve outcomes for Pasifika learners and its approach includes better analysis of data and feedback, and support to providers on good practice.

Aligning with these strategic priorities, Ako Aotearoa's mission is:

> "Through a focus on enhancing the effectiveness of teaching and learning practices, to assist educators and organisations to enable the best possible educational outcomes for all learners."[6]

One of our key strategic themes, overseen by our Pacific Peoples' Caucus, is to support Pacific Peoples' advancement through tertiary education. As our contribution to making this a reality, Ako Aotearoa has two funding streams:

- National Project Fund, which had a discrete Pacific Peoples' Project Stream overseen directly by our Pacific Caucus. This fund supported projects of a value between $100,000 and 150,000
- Regional Hub Project Fund for smaller projects of a value of up to $10,000, administered by Ako Aotearoa's Regional Hubs.

The projects summarised here were supported through those two funds.[7]

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1 The tables in Appendix 1 show Pasifika tertiary education enrolment, participation and completion rates overtime. http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/TertiaryEducation/PolicyAndStrategy/TertiaryEducationStrategy.aspx

2 http://www.tec.govt.nz/Funding/plan-guidance/Plan-guidance-for-2013/

3 http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/~/media/MinEdu/Files/EducationSectors/PasifikaEducation/PasifikaEdPlan2013To2017V2.pdf

4 http://www.tec.govt.nz/Documents/Reports%20and%20other%20documents/TEC-Pasifika-Framework.pdf

5 http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Publications/Strategic-publications/pasifika-strategy.pdf

6 *Championing Excellence in Tertiary Teaching and Learning. Ako Aotearoa's strategic plan 2010–2013*. Wellington: Ako Aotearoa.

7 From 2012 Ako Aotearoa has moved to a co-funding model and a single panel process for the National Project Fund. We still aim to fund at least one Pacific-focused project each round.

Key findings from the research

Pasifika learners come from a range of ethnicities and educational backgrounds and study across a number of education settings, from workplaces through to universities. As such, there is no one-size-fits-all approach, no one approach to learning[8] that will improve outcomes for Pasifika learners. What the research undertaken for Ako Aotearoa shows is that the combined and interwoven contribution made by people, place, practices and pedagogies are key to delivering successful outcomes for Pasifika learners in tertiary education. These can be illustrated as the three pillars that stand on firm ground established by organisations' articulated policies and values including the specific targets for Pasifika achievement.

Pillars for Pasifika Learners Success: A Holistic Learning Environment

Key themes in the Ako Aotearoa-supported research projects

People	Place	Practices and Pedagogies
Organisational leadership Teachers who are culturally aware, knowledgeable, empathetic and responsive Teachers who are welcoming and ensure learners feel a sense of belonging Teachers who are subject matter and teaching experts Teachers who are caring and respectful Teachers who set high standards, expect students to achieve, and support students to do this Strong relationships between students and teachers, and between students and students Students who are motivated	Pacific spaces Pacific artefacts Family-like learning environment	Academic and pastoral support/ mentoring Strong connection with families and communities Collaborative approaches to curriculum Curriculum content and pedagogies take account of culture Use of Pacific languages Understanding and meeting individual needs Small classes/group learning

AUTHENTIC ORGANISATIONAL POLICIES AND VALUES

The research does not identify what could be termed 'Pasifika pedagogy'. Rather, collectively it identifies what Thaman (2001) describes as a pedagogy "based on Pacific values, beliefs and knowledge systems that incorporate Pacific styles of learning and ways of knowing" (p. 6). In other words, what has been described in this body of research is culturally inclusive pedagogy.

[8] While some of the reports describe Pasifika learners as preferring kinaesthetic approaches research in the schooling sector has found "no markedly positive (and, in fact, negative) impacts when teachers use learning styles approaches—especially when students are classified as kinaesthetic learners. The intention behind the approach is undoubtedly good, but even those who argue they have found significant evidence of effectiveness, tend to emphasise a multi-sensory approach (auditory, visual, kinaesthetic and so on) rather than a preference-matching approach" (Alton-Lee, n.d., p. 2).

The overarching conclusion that can be reached from these reports is the need for organisations to take a holistic approach with Pasifika learners. For these learners and their families the most appropriate analogy is a learning village, where they are supported academically and pastorally in an environment where they feel comfortable and included as individuals. It is the multiplicity of factors that combine and interact that give rise to success.

> *Yeah, this course is a really good course. It's not like [university] how, you know, you study and after that, well, after the class, you just leave. But this course is like a family course, where they can help you in any situation with studying, not only for studying, but like personal. And you know, you feel happy that you're in a warm environment, like you can talk to the tutors, friends, the boss, management.* (Fiso and Huthnance, 2012, p. 22)

People

Central to influencing students' engagement, retention and achievement are staff beliefs, attitudes, abilities and behaviours. In relation to beliefs, the most critical finding concerns teachers' expectations that students will achieve and then encouraging, supporting and teaching in such a way that supports achievement.

> High expectations produce great results in my experience, especially for Pacific. Day one of teaching – I start by saying that we are all going to do well in this course and I keep that message going through my course. I make sure my tutors express it in feedback in assignments too. (Chu *et al.,* 2013, p. 10)

This is supported by teachers who are culturally empathetic and responsive to their students. In practice this means that staff "understood that to negotiate a va fealo'ai (social relationship) determined by va fealoaloa'i (mutual respect) produced mālie (results)" (Fiso and Huthnance, 2012, p. 7). It is exhibited in a practical sense when teachers openly value and acknowledge Pasifika students' culture, ways of thinking and preferred ways of learning.[9]

Interwoven with this is the relationship that tutors establish with their students. These are respectful relationships that are built on trust.

> Relationships is [are] of UTMOST importance. I knew no-one and I knew I had to get to know the personal stories of the students. I wanted them to know that their relationship is valued, show them I respect them . . . Relationships make them [students] feel more than just a number . . . Relationships are the foundation to setting the classroom learning. (Tomoana, 2012, p. 17)

Students too have a role to play in their own success. Here the research shows that student–student relationships were important for learning and motivation, and students felt empowered and were motivated to succeed by and within cultural groups. Chu *et al.* (2013) reported that students "stuck together" during the hard times of studying and preferred to do it this way:

> *If it wasn't for my Tongan association, I don't know how I would cope with my study. They provide support to me as a Tongan student...(p. 11).*

Practices and pedagogies

While people are central influencers, the organisations' practices and teachers' pedagogical practices are the beliefs and attitudes in action. Here the research has found a number of actions that contribute to success.

At an organisational level the practices include deliberate actions that involve Pacific communities. As Chu *et al.* (2013) point out:

> *They [organisations] can go out into the communities to talanoa on educational matters, to learn about Pacific life, and to support*

[9] Note: This is not about one approach to learning for Pasifika students, rather it is about using a range of teaching strategies that suit the learners and the context. It is not about limiting teaching and learning approaches in the belief that Pasifika students have particular learning styles.

> *Pacific development . . . It was about a relationship between the institution and everyone Pacific . . . This visible presence was important because it showed that the university cared about the students (p. 12).*

It also means having in place academic and pastoral support mechanisms that enhance Pasifika students' experiences and achievement. This includes mentoring (by staff or students) and peer support. "Other factors and major factors contributing to my success were the mentorship from Pasifika staff lecturers, developing us as students to be leaders, to be consumers of research" (Chu *et al.,* 2013, p. 67).

One of the studies noted that it worked well for students when the mentors or peer supporters were culturally competent and looked to develop meaningful relationships with students.

Collaborative curriculum development that includes Pacific content and inclusive pedagogies is also important as it aids the engagement of students and contributes to the visibility of Pasifika on campus.

Knowing and using Pasifika language was also seen as important. It helps affirm the learner's identity, helps with understanding the course content, and helps to translate theoretical and academic language. It is a particularly useful strategy with students for whom English is a second language. "The lead lecturer for all the modules was also of Samoan descent and therefore was able to use Pasifika pedagogy, and draw from lived experiences and Samoan language to unpack and break down Palagi concepts" (Luafutu-Simpson, 2011, p. 48).

Talanoa is an unstructured discussion process used in Samoan, Tongan and Fijian cultures. In the talanoa process the focus is on developing relationships between people and is a process where people share their stories, realities and aspirations. (Chu *et al.,* 2013, p. 3)

Physical environment (Place)

The third factor that influences Pasifika engagement is the environment. This includes the physical spaces, including both specific Pasifika space and spaces in which Pasifika see themselves represented, validated and belonging. Part of this is through the use of artefacts.

> Learners identified that the PTEs in this study purposefully created environments that were culturally appropriate, including Pacific and church decorations, motifs, symbols and rituals. Learners found that they could relate well to these familiar icons, which became the drivers for achieving successful educational results. (Fiso and Huthnance, 2012, p. 6)

It also includes the 'feel' of a place that harmonises at a sensory level the way that Pasifika students experience tertiary education. It is also about the way in which people and place are interwoven.

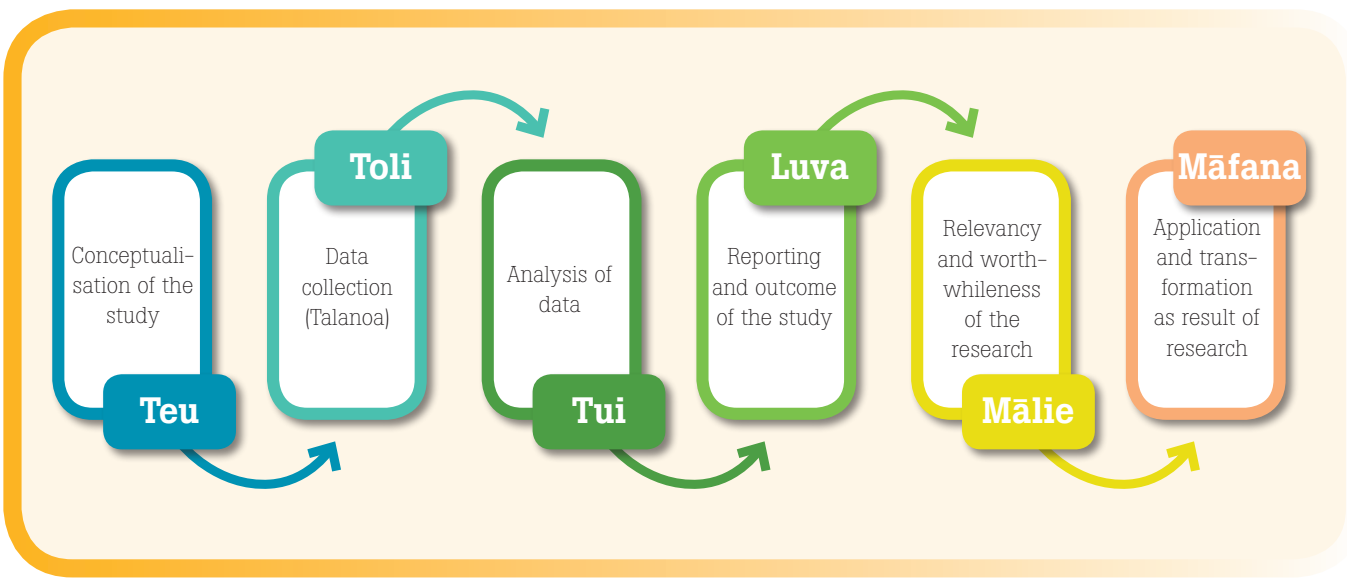
> There is a bit of, like, Pacific stuff in this, like in classrooms and stuff. But it's not about that; it's about the people that make you feel welcome to continue to come to study. And that's what this place has, like, the people are so welcoming, everyone's lovely. The tutors are great. They always put a smile on your face and that makes you feel so welcomed and so, like, you're important to keep coming, because they know you and they include you and they just greet you . . . there is some symbols and stuff, but it's just more about the people. (Fiso *et al.,* 2012, p. 22)

Informants associated Pasifika "visibility" with a number of interrelated factors: the numbers of Pasifika students and staff; a Pasifika staff presence in senior management; physical spaces and places (such as fono rooms and Pasifika centres) where Pasifika culture and language were recognised, validated and celebrated; Pasifika courses and Pasifika content in mainstream courses; non-Pasifika staff awareness of Pasifika cultural practices; Pasifika cultural events and art exhibitions; and active engagement and involvement with the local Pasifika community. (Horrocks *et al.,* 2012, p. 48)

Pasifika research frameworks

Across the research projects a range of methodologies and methods were used with most acknowledging a cultural approach to the work. Chu *et al.* (2013) provide the most definitive description of a Pasifika research framework, the Kakala Research Framework, with a detailed description of its six stages. This was first developed as an educational framework by Professor Konai Thaman (2003) and has its roots in a Tongan cultural context. It was later expanded into a research framework by Taufe'ulungaki and Johansson-Fua in 2009 (cited by Johansson-Fua (2009). In Tongan, kakala are "fragrant flowers, fruits and leaves which have mythical origins, strung or woven together into garlands and worn at special events or presented to honourable and distinguished people as a sign of love and respect" (p. 47).

The Kakala Research Framework



This framework consists of six stages:

- Teu: conceptualising the study
- Toli: data collection (talanoa)
- Tui: analysis of data
- Luva: reporting the outcomes of the study
- Mālie: relevance and worthiness of the research
- Māfana: application and transformation as a result of the research.

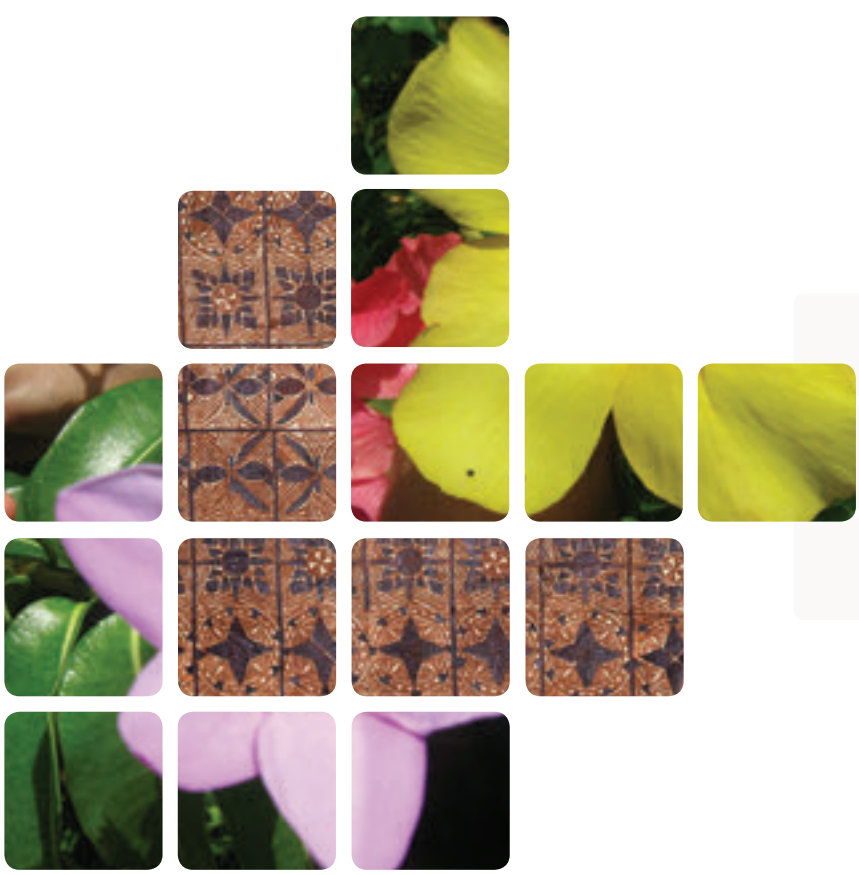
This framework, building as it does on the conceptualisation of the research through to its end use, is as Chu *et al.* state a "culturally meaningful and inclusive" approach. There is additional value in this framework in that it articulates the pre-data collection and the post-report stages that are important for the shaping and use of research. The latter, in terms of making a difference for Pasifika students, is particularly relevant. Much has been written about what improves success for Pasifika, yet little has changed in terms of achievement for these students. It is not enough to know what works; what matters is being able to do what works.

While the framework provides a way of describing the research stages it is the methods nested within the work that allow for the engagement of Pasifika in the research in culturally meaningful ways. The most frequently cited method used in the research was talanoa, described by Vaioleti (2006, p. 21) as "a personal encounter where people story their issues, their realities and aspirations… allows more mo'oni (pure, real, authentic) information to be available for Pacific research than data derived from other research methods".

Vaioleti describes how the process enables participants to engage in discussions that can lead to new knowledge surfacing through shared stories. Three of the research projects, Chu *et al.* (2013), Fiso and Huthnance (2012), and Luafutu-Simpson (2011), describe how this method has been used in their research.

Appreciative Inquiry, a strengths-based approach, also informed two of the projects: Chu *et al.* (2013) and Tomoana (2012). This approach enables a focus on what works and how this can be built on to improve outcomes for Pasifika students. The value of working in this way is that it frames the thinking in the positive and on success.

The combination of the Kakala Research Framework, talanoa for data collection and a focus on what works provides a culturally respectful and responsive approach to research with Pasifika. It is an approach that should be used to inform future research in this area as it allows for the meaningful engagement of Pasifika in research that is about them and for them.



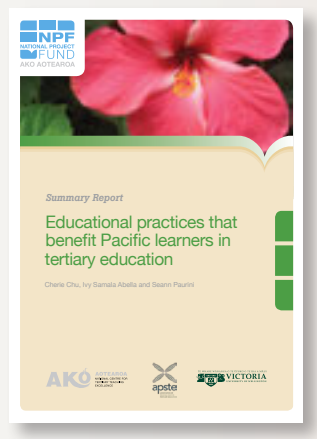
Highlights of each project

This section summarises each of the Ako Aotearoa-supported research projects and highlights the specific findings that the researchers found contributed to success for Pasifika learners. The summaries are organised in chronological order and start with three projects supported through Ako Aotearoa's national funding scheme followed by the six regionally funded projects.

Chu, C., Samala Abella, I., & Paurini, S. (2013). Educational practices that benefit Pacific learners in tertiary education

This research looked to understand the educational practices that are most effective for Pasifika students. The research took place with 119 students and 51 staff from five organisations that were selected on the basis of their high completion rates. The project used the Kakala Research Framework along with an appreciative inquiry approach. The research found three key factors related to student success (p. 8). These are:

- appreciative pedagogy that includes:
  - family support
  - personal commitment
  - a 'learning village' at the institution
- teaching and learning relationships that include:
  - respectful and nurturing relationships between teachers and students
  - recognition and implementation of cultural identity
  - 'Pacific' physical spaces
  - incorporation of students' learning needs
  - insistence on high standards
  - opportunities for students to pursue higher education
  - learning relationships between students
  - mentorship as a learning relationship
- institutional commitment that includes:
  - support from the institution
  - active institutional engagement with the Pacific community
  - strong and supportive leadership
  - significant Pacific role models.



Horrocks, J., Ballantyne, N., Silao, A., Manueli, K., & Fairbrother, P. (2012). Success for Pacific Learners: The Impact of Tertiary Education Strategies

This research investigated the extent to which the three successive TES (2002–2007, 2007–2012 and 2010–2015) have impacted on success for Pasifika learners. The researchers undertook a literature review, analysed Pasifika-related key performance indicators (KPIs) in the annual reports of 18 tertiary education institutions from 2002–2010, and interviewed key informants from each of the institutions.

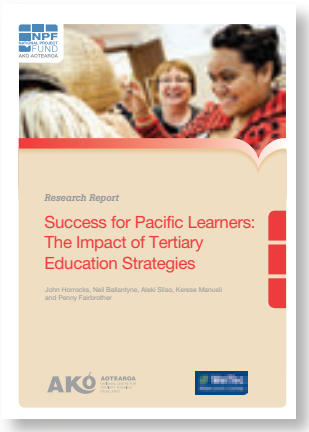
The first TES incorporated priorities that looked to enhance outcomes for Pasifika students. The second TES looked to increase "participation, retention and completions, and moving more Pasifika students onto higher levels of qualifications" (p. 13). The third TES continues with the priority of requiring tertiary education providers to focus on getting Pasifika students to higher levels of study, along with an emphasis on pathways into tertiary education, and literacy and numeracy development.

Since 2002 Pasifika participation rates have increased but completion rates have showed little change and gaps between Pasifika and non-Pasifika achievement have remained static. The outcomes from the third TES are yet to be fully realised, but key informants expressed concern that the concomitant policy changes that link funding to completion, the emphasis on funding higher-level qualifications and limitations on loans for older students have the potential to impact on the accessibility of tertiary education for Pasifika learners.

The research found a range of factors associated with the retention of Pasifika students including:

- academic and pastoral support
- smaller class sizes
- having teachers and support staff who are culturally aware and understand the needs of Pasifika students
- the use of community and/or peer mentors
- engaging and informing families and communities
- dedicated Pasifika spaces
- having Pasifika content in courses
- Pasifika graduation ceremonies.

The research found that while successive TES have influenced performance management activities, Pasifika success is contributed to by a combination of what is done at the organisational policy level, the staff level and by the students and communities.



Fiso, T. & Huthnance, L. (2012). Le So'otaga: Bridging the divide. Holistic teaching and learning practices at Pacific private training establishments in Aotearoa, New Zealand

This research project used the Kakala Framework and talanoa dialogue to gather data from 56 learners in three Pacific private training establishments. A literature review was also conducted. Overall the research endorses the need for holistic approaches to teaching and learning and as a result generated le so'otaga, a description of practices that provide "'a bridge' – a connection between divided spaces" (p. 11). These practices include:

- organisations sharing and encouraging ofa, fakalofa, alofa and aroa (compassion) for their students and providing a family-like learning environment
- organisations purposefully creating culturally appropriate environments through the use of icons, artefacts including Pacific and church decorations, motifs, symbols and rituals
- inspirational tutors who were experts, both technically and culturally
- Pacific staff demonstrating advanced understanding and knowledge of identified cultural values (va, fa'asinomaga, feagaiaga, tuā'oi, lotu, tapuakiaga, taui, tautua, vosa and vagahau) and including these in their teaching practices (p. 8)
- tutor-learner relationships reinforcing mutual respect and trust and ensuring that learning takes place
- teaching that is flexible with tutors being able to adjust to learners needs and schedules (inside and outside the organisations) and providing interactive learning environments
- motivation for achievement coming from feeling privileged to have been accepted onto the programme, for their families, significant others and particularly their churches, and to improving their future employment opportunities.

Of note in this research was that while many of the learners valued Pacific tutors and tutors who could speak Pacific languages, a larger proportion of them thought that the most important characteristic for a tutor was to ensure that learning took place.

Va (relational spaces), fa'asinomaga (identity and belonging), feagaiaga (relational covenants), tuā'oi (relational boundaries), lotu and tapuakiaga (worship and spirituality), taui (reciprocity), tautua (service), vagahau and vosa (language and voice)

Tuagalu, C. (2012). Engaging Pacific migrant workers in literacy, numeracy and financial literacy training: Reflections on the research process

RHPF Northern REGIONAL HUB PROJECT FUND AKO AOTEAROA

This project drew evidence from a literature review and interviews with learners, their tutors and employers involved in a 20-hour workplace literacy, numeracy and financial education programme for Pacific workers in New Zealand as part of the Recognised Seasonal Employer Scheme. The learning focused on their individual learning needs in relation to finance, computing and language. The key points made in this report about factors that contributed to success included:

- the creation of a Pacific place of learning through artefacts, *e.g.,* tapa cloth, video and audio clips
- the use of prayer and song at the beginning and end of lessons
- the opportunity for learners to tell their stories
- learners being provided with the opportunity to co-construct the curriculum and to practise their learning in real life settings
- tutors making the most difference were those described as "respectful, caring and understanding" (p. 33)
- the use of Pasifika languages and translation into and from English.

Tomoana, R. (2012). Sharing successful teaching and learning strategies for Māori, Pacific and youth learners: The Whitireia way

RHPF Central REGIONAL HUB PROJECT FUND AKO AOTEAROA

This project explored activities and approaches that led to success for Māori, Pasifika and youth learners. The research used an appreciative inquiry approach. Tutors and students in successful programmes were interviewed about what they thought helped them to achieve. Successful programmes were determined on the basis of completion rates and then matched to student satisfaction surveys.

The research found a range of factors that the staff and students thought contributed to success, at the centre of which was the importance of relationships and cultural responsiveness. The individual factors for Pasifika students included:

- the importance of strong relationships and cultural responsiveness
- empowering students and celebrating success
- using a range and variety of good teaching and assessment practices, and being reflective about these practices
- ensuring that students have the right pastoral support
- providing an environment where Pasifika students feel they belong.

The study also found that it was important for tutors to believe all students have the ability to achieve and that students were all different and this difference needs to be acknowledged.

Newland, C., Madell, D., To'o, F., & Endemann, P. (2011). Supporting Pacific Peoples' participation in the New Zealand horticulture industry

This project was based around the development of a horticulture qualification for Pasifika people. While the primary purpose was the development of the qualification, the literature review that informed the development was focused on practices and pedagogies that lead to success for Pasifika learners. These included:

- curriculum content and pedagogies that take into account the learners' culture
- tutors using Pasifika artefacts, *e.g.* models, symbols, metaphors, visual aids
- the use of Pasifika language in the classroom
- collaborative arrangements in the classroom, including group work and opportunities for learners to talk about what they are learning
- tutors developing positive relationships with students, being empathetic, caring and respectful, and enthusing and motivating learners
- tutors of a similar cultural background to the learners. This might have some advantage, but was not essential. It was the tutors' values, behaviours, effort and skills that were more important, along with their empathy towards the learners' cultures.

Smith, A., & Crane, T. (2011). Cultural confluence: Challenges for a training provider intending to work cross-culturally within Māori and Pasifika contexts

This project drew evidence from a three-day immersion programme for pre-service teachers in Year Three of the Bachelor of Education (Teaching) in primary and early childhood. The pre-service teachers spent three days in Māori or Pasifika immersion units. Evidence was gathered through pre- and post-programme discussions with the students about their learning, with staff from three of the eight immersion units visited, and the teaching staff themselves. While students had limited time they did observe the following in relation to teaching practice:

- the need for connection with learners and the time it takes to do this
- the importance of knowing some of the language
- the need to treat learners as individuals
- the importance of cultural artefacts.

Schofield, A., Walker, L., & Going, N. (2011). Supporting academic success by minority group students in a private training establishment

RHPF Northern REGIONAL HUB PROJECT FUND AKO AOTEAROA

The evidence for this research came from a literature review, survey and semi-structured interviews with 10 students in an early childhood education programme, three of whom were Pasifika. The research aimed to investigate the factors that supported the students' learning and influenced their qualification completion. The factors included:

- student–tutor relationships including both academic and pastoral support provided by lecturers, with students needing encouragement to make use of the support available
- mentoring needs to be considered as part of the holistic approach to student support
- students require support to help them with the challenges they face in their wider family and community lives
- a supportive learning environment (family-like), including the students' preference for small classes and an overall holistic learning environment
- lecturers as the key resource ('one-stop shop') for students' learning; these lecturers were seen as "flexible, committed, having a passion for teaching, focused on learners and able to motivate them" (p. 7)
- teaching that was clear and coherent and provided opportunities to practise.

This study also noted that there were wider concepts than academic success that needed to be taken into account, including positive attitudes towards study, confidence, self-esteem and self-belief.

Luafutu-Simpson, P. (2011). Exploring the teaching of effective approaches for assessing young Samoan children's learning in early childhood centres: Developing an authentic Samoan lens

RHPF Southern REGIONAL HUB PROJECT FUND AKO AOTEAROA

This research project aimed to find out why Pasifika educators did not fully engage with Palagi assessment practices in early childhood settings and how these might be strengthened to take account of cultural aspirations. The project took place in two early childhood centres. The rationale for this work was to improve the engagement of tutors and families with the assessment process of children.

The research found that the academic language associated with assessment was difficult for Pasifika educators, especially those who have English as a second language, to decipher. The solution was to provide a Pasifika framework for assessing Pasifika children through the use of the fale tele metaphor with the pou tu (three posts) of alofa (love and commitment), tautua (service) and fa'aaloalo (respect and dignity).

The fale tele metaphor provides the framework for how educators can work with Pasifika children and their families. It also provides an holistic framework for identifying children's dispositions, attributes and characteristics that contribute to their learning and to developing their confidence in their own identity and enabling them "to participate effectively in their own cultural world as well as in the world of the Palagi" (p. 61).

Mara, D., & Marsters, M. (2010). Pasifika students: Supporting academic success through the provision of mentoring

This research project looked at the process and impact of an academic mentoring programme for 10 Pasifika students in a polytechnic. Data was gathered through interviews, focus groups with students and database information that tracked information such as academic records, mentor meetings and the type of assistance required by the students.

The research found the success of the mentoring programme was determined by:

- the quality and nature of the mentor's role and tasks
- the skills and experience of the mentor, including:
  - the desirability for the mentor to be of Pasifika descent and be interested in and connected to Pasifika communities
  - having the ability to motivate students and develop their confidence sufficiently so they are able to help themselves
  - having strong and positive interpersonal skills and a commitment to working with the students
  - being able to challenge lecturers' thinking about their teaching and about Pasifika students
- the relationships that were established between the mentor, the students and the lecturers.

The study also concluded that there was a need for more culturally appropriate learning and teaching resources for Pasifika students.

Ross, C. (2008). Culturally relevant peer support for Māori and Pasifika student engagement, retention and success

The evidence for this report was collected during a pilot programme of peer support for Māori and Pasifika distance learners. Data was collected through the recording of peer support conversations, from student academic records and the student survey. It was evaluated, with 21 Pasifika students participating in the evaluation; however, their data was merged with the Māori data so it was not possible to report on those findings.

The evidence showed that the:

- peer-support programme was valued by learners, who appreciated the contact with knowledgeable peers and found it motivational and encouraging
- contact made them feel they were better able to deal with their study and feel part of a learning community
- contacts occurred at key decision-making points in the course and provided an opportunity to identify issues that were occurring and to resolve them.

Themes

The Ako Aotearoa projects described took place with diverse groups of Pasifika learners across a range of tertiary education settings. As such each piece has a different focus but there are recurrent themes and these are outlined in the table below. The themes fall into the areas of people, place, practices and pedagogies as described in the pillars. The number of times a theme occurs does not mean that it is more important than other themes.

Key themes found in the research examined	Chu, Samala Abella, & Paurini (2013)	Horrocks *et al.* (2012)	Fiso & Huthnance (2012	Tuagalu (2012)	Tomoana (2012)	Newland *et al.* (2011)	Smith & Crane (2011)	Schofield *et al.* (2011)	Luafutu-Simpson (2011)	Mara & Marsters (2010)	Ross (2008)
Leadership that proactively seeks Pacific success	•										
Respectful and nurturing relationships	•		•	•	•	•		•		•	
Recognition of and active acknowledgement of cultural identity	•	•	•			•					•
Setting high standards and expectations	•				•						
Pacific staff role models	•		•								
Pasifika environment	•	•	•	•	•		•				
Learning communities	•										
Pasifika context/content in curriculum		•		•		•			•	•	
Collaborative curriculum development				•		•					
Smaller classes		•						•			
Peer support/learning relationships	•										
Academic/pastoral support and mentoring	•	•			•			•		•	•
Students' personal commitment and motivation	•		•								
Connection to community and family	•	•							•		
Effective teaching			•	•	•			•			
Opportunities to practise learning				•				•			
Use of Pacific languages				•		•	•				

Conclusion

A wide body of research has shown that by the time Pasifika learners arrive at tertiary institutions many have had less than optimal education experiences. As a group, Pasifika are over-represented in low-decile schools and may not have been provided with the same learning opportunities as other groups of students (Chu, Glasgow, *et al.,* 2013). These opportunities can also be affected by a range of other factors in their lives such as family and community expectations and responsibilities. Given this, tertiary institutions need to be positioned to work with Pasifika students in order to improve outcomes for them.

The body of research described in this summary serves to highlight the diversity of Pasifika learners and the diversity of the programmes and educational organisations with which they are involved. Improving outcomes for all Pasifika remains a challenge, one that can be solved by the use of holistic, culturally inclusive approaches to education that are specifically Pacific. This means that educational practices at the organisational, programme, classroom and learner level incorporate Pacific values, culture and points of view and experiences. It also means engaging with individuals and drawing on Pacific communities and their experiences.

This research supported by Ako Aotearoa provides no definition of a theory that can be called Pasifika pedagogy. Rather it shows that when people, place, practices and pedagogies are interwoven in a culturally responsive and inclusive way Pasifika learners feel a sense of belonging, engage with and are retained in learning.

Recommendations for future work: Time for action

Recommendation One: Future research should focus on the links between interventions and retention, completion and higher achievement.

The research highlights cited above show what works to engage and retain Pasifika learners in tertiary education. However, the current projects are largely based on qualitative methods. In the future these need to be combined with quantitative studies that look at retention and completion rates for Pasifika to ascertain the extent to which what is being done is actually making a difference to learner outcomes.

Chu, Glasgow, *et al.* (2013) also note that this is an issue. In their review of Pasifika education literature from 2002–2012 they found no long-term studies on the impact of culturally responsive approaches, support systems and linkages to families and communities.

Recommendation Two: Conduct fewer literature reviews

Each of the research projects has used literature to inform approaches and check findings. While this is important, research projects in the future perhaps need less of a focus on literature and more on trialling and tracking the results of approaches that have been found to work. For example, what do culturally responsive approaches look like in practice? This would allow for descriptions of implementation and for testing the combination of factors to find out whether some combinations of factors work better than others. This would provide more information about 'how' approaches work, which in turn would provide more usable research that can be translated more fully into every organisation's practice.

Recommendation Three: Professional development for tertiary educators

Given what is known from this research and other recent New Zealand Pasifika research, professional development on how to support organisational leaders and non-Pacific teaching and support staff to develop their knowledge in relation to culturally responsive approaches would be of benefit.

Being culturally responsive is the responsibility of every tertiary practitioner. We must now do more with what is known so that Pasifika achievement improves.

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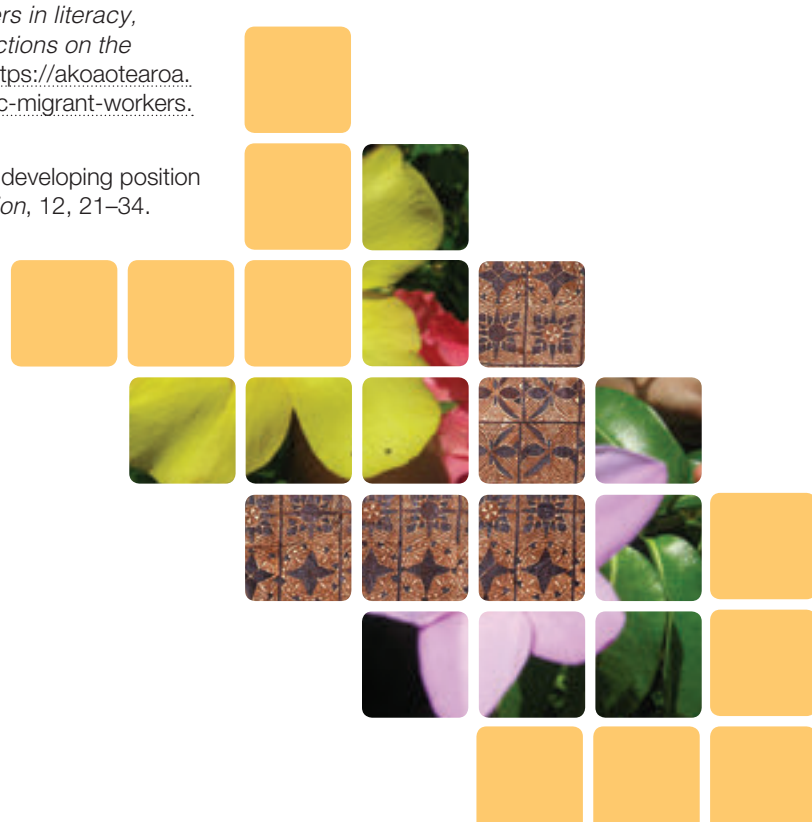
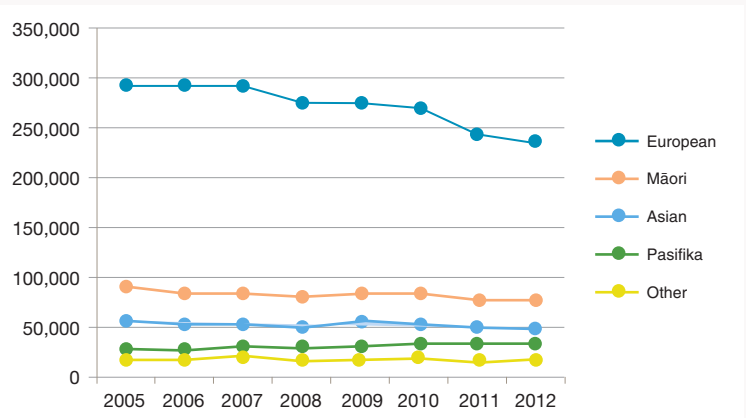


Appendix 1:
Pasifika tertiary education enrolment, participation and completion rates

Ministry of Education - www.educationcounts.govt.nz data show that while Pasifika enrolments in tertiary education have increased and participation rates have remained relatively steady between 2005 and 2012, Pasifika learner completion rates remain lower than for other ethnicities.

Enrolments

In 2012 there were 33,800 Pasifika learners in tertiary education. Other than a small decline in 2011, the number of Pasifika enrolments has been increasing 2005 to 2012. A trend of increase in enrolment is unique to Pasifika learners.



Source: www.educationcounts.govt.nz

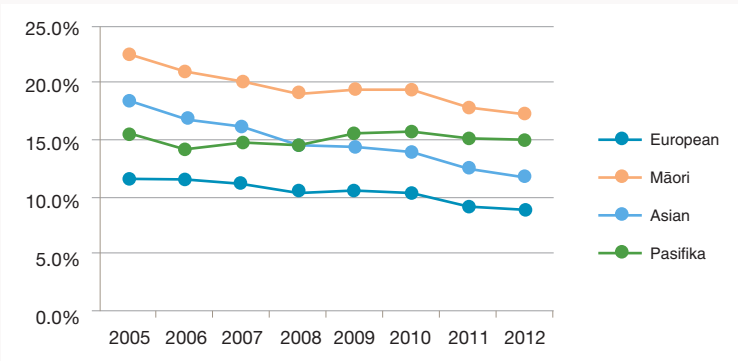
Ethnicity	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
European	293,222	293,456	291,356	275,504	275,829	271,484	244,034	238,623
Māori	90,340	85,689	83,939	80,929	83,603	84,280	79,431	77,929
Pasifika	28,153	27,002	29,260	29,809	32,007	33,706	33,111	33,800
Asian	55,225	54,035	53,891	51,191	53,833	54,000	50,106	48,278
Other	20,073	20,320	20,729	18,664	19,022	19,339	18,349	18,337

Source: www.educationcounts.govt.nz

Participation rates

While Pasifika participation rates in tertiary education have improved little over the eight years 2005 to 2012 (ranging between 14.1% and 15.8%), rates have remained relatively steady in comparison to other ethnicities.

Population participation rates in tertiary education as a percentage of own ethnicity 2005–2012



Source: www.educationcounts.govt.nz

Course and qualification completion rates for Pasifika learners in 2012

TEC Education Performance Indicator data

Sub-Sector	Course Completions		Qualifications Completions	
	All	Pasifika	All	Pasifika
Universities	86%	72%	80%	60%
ITPs	79%	73%	70%	62%
Wānanga	81%	78%	68%	65%
Private Training Establishments	81%	79%	83%	75%
Industry Training Organisations	70%	61%	68%	61%

Source: Tertiary Education Commission (2013) 2012 Tertiary Education Performance Report (p82). Wellington: Tertiary Education Commission.

Appendix 2:
Ako Aotearoa Good Practice Publications

Additional material on good practice with Pasifika students can be found in four of Ako Aotearoa's good practice publications:

Anderson H. (2011). *How to increase student retention and success: A systematic, evidence-informed approach*.

Macfarlane, A. (2010). *Huakina mai: Doorways toward culturally responsive education*.

Thompson, S., McDonald, F., Talakai, M., Taumoepeau, V., & Te Ava, A. (2010). *Training manual for teachers working with Pacific students: Engaging Pacific learners*.

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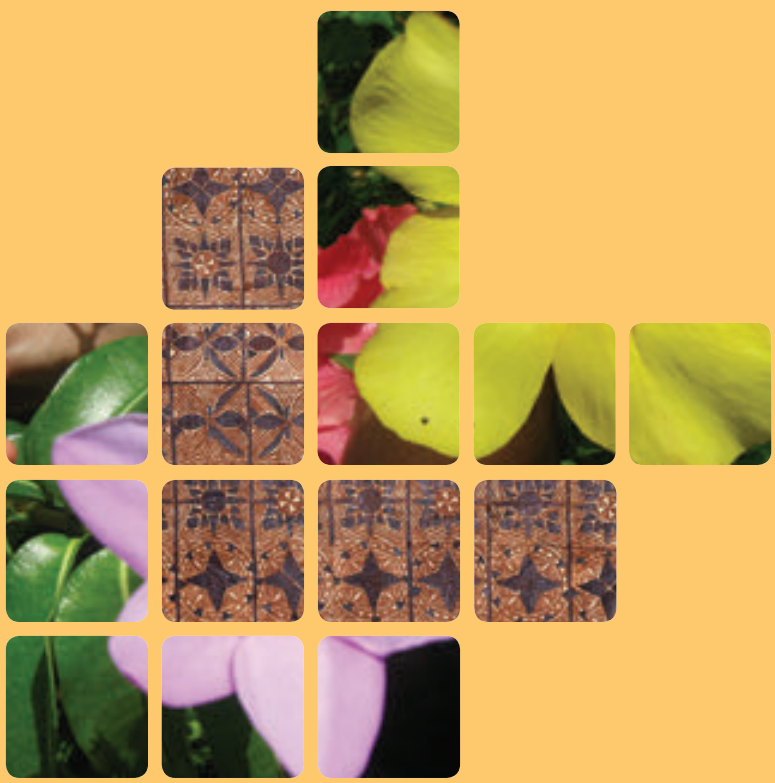

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ISBN 978-1-027202-60-9