

**Leaders' perceptions of the practices and challenges that
influence Pasifika achievement in New Zealand secondary
schools**

Written by
Monette Atkinson
Student: 1125314

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Educational Leadership and Management

Unitec Institute of Technology
2013

ABSTRACT

Within the New Zealand education system, Pasifika secondary school students are identified as being one of the groups most at risk of not succeeding, with large numbers underachieving. The Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office have indicated that leadership may be the key to greater academic success for Pasifika students. This study investigated senior and middle leaders' perceptions of the practices and challenges that influence the academic achievement of Pasifika students within New Zealand secondary schools and examined the relationship between leadership, school culture and Pasifika academic achievement.

A qualitative methodology was employed for this research; the two methods of semi-structured interviews and focus groups were used to collect data. At each location, semi-structured one on one interviews were conducted with principals and deputy principals, and focus groups were held with middle leaders; a total of 21 participants.

The findings revealed four major themes; leadership, school culture, practices, and challenges. This research suggests leadership, although indirectly, has a large impact on raising Pasifika academic achievement through the fostering of an inclusive school culture and the development of strategies and initiatives within schools to improve educational outcomes for Pasifika. The findings emphasise leaders' perceptions of the need to develop a school culture which values cultural differences, is premised on high expectations and is focused on mutually respectful relationships to ensure that Pasifika students are engaged, feel included and participate fully in academic programmes. Various practices were identified which were perceived by the leaders interviewed to have raised Pasifika academic achievement, while several challenges were highlighted as needing future attention in order to continue to improve the academic outcomes for Pasifika students.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and thank my principal supervisor, Dr. Josephine Howse for her guidance and support throughout this project. Her unwavering belief in my ability and constructive feedback has been invaluable to me. I would also like to thank my associate supervisor, Alison Smith, for her input into the final draft.

My thanks to all of the lecturers and staff in the Post Graduate Educational Leadership and Management team, particularly Dr. Howard Youngs, who encouraged me from the beginning through to the end of this journey.

Personal thanks to Paul Bennett for inspiring me to begin this Masters' Degree. I have appreciated his ongoing support and endless conversations about educational leadership.

Finally, thank you to my amazing family and friends for their emotional support and love throughout the year. It has meant everything to me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
RATIONALE.....	2
RESEARCH AIMS AND QUESTIONS.....	6
THESIS ORGANISATION.....	7
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	8
INTRODUCTION	8
PASIFIKA ACHIEVEMENT	8
SCHOOL CULTURE	19
LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING	26
LITERATURE REVIEW CONCLUSION.....	31
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	33
INTRODUCTION	33
METHODOLOGY.....	33
RESEARCH METHODS	38
DATA ANALYSIS.....	44
RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY	45
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	48
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY CONCLUSION	51
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA RESULTS AND FINDINGS	52
INTRODUCTION	52
LEADERSHIP	52
SCHOOL CULTURE	56
PRACTICE.....	71
CHALLENGES.....	81
SUMMARY.....	92
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS.....	93
INTRODUCTION	93
LEADERSHIP	93
SCHOOL CULTURE	96
PRACTICE.....	101

CHALLENGES.....	105
SUMMARY.....	109
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	110
INTRODUCTION.....	110
AN OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH STUDY.....	110
CONCLUSIONS.....	111
LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	121
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	121
FINAL CONCLUSION.....	126
REFERENCES.....	127
APPENDIX A.....	134
APPENDIX B.....	135
APPENDIX C.....	136
APPENDIX D.....	137
APPENDIX E.....	138
APPENDIX F.....	139
APPENDIX G.....	140

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 3.1: Sample selection: school profiles.....	36
TABLE 4.1: Summary of key leadership findings.....	53
TABLE 4.2: Conditions of school culture that are perceived to enhance Pasifika students' academic achievement.....	57
TABLE 4.3: Practices that are perceived to enhance Pasifika students' academic achievement.....	72
TABLE 4.4: Perceived challenges in raising Pasifika students' academic achievement.....	82

TABLE OF FIGURES

FIGURE 6.1: Model to raise Pasifika students' academic achievement.....	120
---	-----

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

'Pasifika' is a generalised term to describe people of Pacific origin, whether new immigrants or second or third generation New Zealanders. Pasifika people herald from the island nations of the South Pacific: Samoa, the Cook Islands, Tonga, Niue, Fiji and Tokelau. Historically, Pasifika peoples migrated to New Zealand in the belief that it could transform their life and career prospects, and provide access for their children to a free education system which would improve their life chances. Education also provided an increase in public esteem for the families who emigrated and a way of financially supporting relatives back home (Bedford, Macpherson & Spoonley, 2000). Today, Pasifika parents generally have high aspirations for their children and place real value on education (Alton-Lee, 2003).

Many Pasifika identify with more than one language and culture, with more than half of the Pasifika population New Zealand born and raised. Two thirds of all Pasifika peoples live in the Auckland region, with Wellington home to the second largest population of Pasifika (Samu, 2006). Many New Zealand born Pasifika have developed unique identities which often encompass multicultural values, attitudes and beliefs. The Pasifika population is a young one, and it is expected to increase for some time, having huge implications for the New Zealand education system. By 2021, it is projected that Pasifika children will make up around 17% of all New Zealand children and that by 2041, the majority of students in primary schools will be Maori and Pasifika (Samu, 2006). Each Pacific nation has its own unique culture and heritage, so it is important that educators value this uniqueness and diversity within our students in order to enable them to gain the most from educational opportunities.

The underachievement of Pasifika students has serious implications for New Zealand society, both economically and socially. Pasifika students are identified as

being one of the most at risk of not succeeding (Education Review Office, 2012b; Robinson, Hohepa & Lloyd, 2009). The Education Review Office (2012b) propose that there are large numbers of underachieving Maori and Pasifika students due to disparities in teaching effectiveness. The Ministry of Education (2013a) also highlight the issue of underachievement:

Currently, one in six Pasifika students will not have achieved basic literacy and numeracy skills by the age of ten. Almost one in five will leave school without any qualification; another one in five will leave with NCEA Level 1 only; and around one in five with NCEA Level 2. One in ten will become disengaged from education, employment, or training by the age of seventeen.

(p. 4)

Nusche, Leveault, MacBeath and Santiago (2011) reiterate this point, stating that “evidence shows that large performance gaps remain across ethnic groups. Despite improvements, there are lower performance and lower attainment rates for Pasifika and Māori students than for their peers” (p. 6).

In order to promote the learning of individual students and create next steps for learning through the development of a curriculum which reflects world views and cultural diversity, there is a need for schools to collect, analyse and use evidence about Pasifika learners’ cultural assets, interests and achievement (Alton-Lee, 2003; Amituanai-Tolua et al., 2010; Education Review Office, 2012b; Robinson et al., 2009). When reporting on the progress of Pasifika achievement in New Zealand schools, the Education Review Office (2012a) noted that there has been a lack of progress: “Many teachers were not making use of valuable information about students’ cultural backgrounds to plan programmes that celebrated and further extended students’ understanding of their own and others’ rich and diverse cultural backgrounds” (p. 15).

RATIONALE

Research has highlighted the underachievement of Pasifika students, creating a gap between Pasifika learners and others within New Zealand secondary schools. The

Education Review Office (2012b) state that despite these large disparities in educational outcomes, schools have not made substantial progress towards creating system-wide changes that will benefit Pasifika learners. This statement assumes that system-wide changes are the answer, however initiatives such as *Te Kotahitanga*, a programme developed to increase Maori student achievement in mainstream secondary school classrooms, which emphasises the building of relationships as a key component, appears to have worked for some Maori and could provide a model for Pasifika.

The Ministry of Education (2013b) suggest that school leaders and teachers hold the key to the successful engagement of Pasifika students and outline ways, through the *Pasifika Education Plan*, in which leaders and educators can address disparities but do not provide enough specific strategies on how to achieve this. Through the implementation of the *Pasifika Education Plan*, the Ministry of Education (2013b) propose increasing the responsibility and accountability of everyone within the education system by lifting the urgency and pace of delivering change and building on what is currently working well for Pasifika students in relation to learning and achievement. The aim of the *Pasifika Education Plan* is to strengthen engagement in all areas of learning and raise achievement through closer links between educational, cultural and home environments and responding to the individual identities, languages and cultures. The Ministry of Education's vision is: "Five out of five Pasifika learners participating, engaging and achieving in education, secure in their identities, languages and cultures and contributing fully to Aotearoa New Zealand's social, cultural and economic wellbeing" (Ministry of Education, 2013b). The *Pasifika Education Plan* outlines a range of initiatives that the Ministry of Education and other agencies will provide to schools in order to support Pasifika achievement. These include professional development for teachers on what works in engaging Pasifika students, new pathways for Pasifika learners, and engagement initiatives. Teaching in New Zealand has to be effective for all students who participate so that they can contribute well to society and schools need to make significant improvements to the way in which they respond to Pasifika students. Ferguson, Gorinsky, Samu and Mara (2008) state that "this requires a responsive,

future-focused education system, based on high expectations for successful outcomes amongst diverse learner groups” (p. 1).

The *Pasifika Education Plan* has had limited success as it appears that many schools are not catering to the needs of Pasifika students, therefore the problem of academic underachievement is an ongoing one. Schools need to cater for diverse learners. Ferguson et al. (2008) note that although there is no one solution for sustainable change for Pasifika student achievement outcomes, a co-ordinated and focused approach to policy design and implementation could achieve change in a relatively short time:

Such an approach would invest in research-informed teacher professional learning to build a coherent knowledge base. If such an investment was also focused on the identified areas for maximum leverage of Pasifika learner outcomes—effective teaching, learning, and assessment, productive learning partnerships, and how culture counts—then the achievement of a step up in system performance for Pasifika learners would indeed be a realisable goal in the short term. (p. 51)

Many researchers acknowledge the challenge in raising Pasifika achievement. Fletcher, Parkhill and Harris (2011) suggest that the challenge of establishing appropriate learning environments for culturally diverse underachieving students lies with all educators, across international contexts. Robinson et al. (2009) look specifically to leaders for the solution: “Since there is a very wide variance of achievement in our schools, the fundamental challenge for educational leaders across the system is to raise achievement and reduce disparity in ways that prepare all our students for the future” (p. 35). Ferguson et al. (2008) propose that there is a need to synthesise information and research in order to provide a clearer picture of Pasifika students’ achievement and progress. They note that it is important to examine current understandings, practices and terminology that may work to impact on the successful academic achievement of Pasifika students, however this remains an ongoing challenge. Nusche et al. (2011) suggest that the key to raising

achievement in New Zealand schools is to develop the conditions for school leaders and teachers to succeed.

The Education Review Office (2012b) state the importance of leadership for Pasifika achievement:

School leadership is integral to creating a positive learning culture for learners and staff. The vision and goals of a school can be successfully achieved if school leadership has the capacity to influence and drive change. The success of individual and groups of Pacific learners is highly dependent on the expectations school leaders set for the school. (p. 14)

It is important to closely examine leadership, as it may be both a barrier and a solution to the problem, given that it has a large impact on student learning outcomes, although indirectly, through the development of school and classroom conditions which facilitate teaching and learning (Lashway, 2006; Southworth, 2004; Robinson et al., 2009). In order to find out what part schools play in finding a solution to raising Pasifika achievement, I investigated leaders' perceptions of the importance of school leadership actions in raising Pasifika achievement and also their perceptions of the practices and challenges that influence the academic achievement of Pasifika students, either positively or negatively, within their secondary schools. Finally, I identified specific elements of school culture that leaders report as enhancing Pasifika students' achievement. There is currently very limited published research from the New Zealand context that examines the link between leadership and Pasifika achievement.

As a secondary school teacher who has worked in schools with a high Pasifika student population for eighteen years, I am concerned with the disparity between the achievement of Pasifika students and other students within New Zealand. Although there is literature about Pasifika achievement, there is little literature on the effects of leadership and school culture on Pasifika student achievement. Schools need to cater for diverse learners and their different perspectives, so it is important to

examine whether the actions of leaders need to change, as leadership could be a barrier or a solution to this problem. My thesis '*Leaders perceptions of the practices and challenges that influence Pasifika achievement in New Zealand secondary schools*' has attempted to address these issues, and it is hoped that it will provide a greater understanding of the role leadership plays in raising Pasifika student achievement in secondary schools and the school culture and practices required in order to do this.

RESEARCH AIMS AND QUESTIONS

The overall objective of this research was to investigate leaders' perceptions of the practices and challenges that influence the academic achievement of Pasifika secondary school students. The research aimed to examine the relationship between leadership, school culture and Pasifika achievement. The research objective and aims were reflected in three research questions which have formed the basis for this research study.

Three key questions are asked:

1. Why are school leadership actions important to the improvement of Pasifika student achievement?
2. What do leaders perceive as the practices and challenges that influence the academic achievement of Pasifika students (either positively or negatively) within THEIR secondary schools?
3. What specific elements of school culture have enhanced Pasifika students' achievement?

Three data collection sites were selected for this study. None of the three secondary schools had a connection to the researcher and were chosen using purposive sampling. The three schools are all secondary schools in New Zealand, ranging in decile rating and percentages of Pasifika students on their rolls. The schools ranged in size, educating between 1000 and 2200 students; two schools were large co-educational state schools and one was a single sex school.

THESIS ORGANISATION

Chapter One has presented an overview of this research project, a rationale that justifies the study and an outline of the research aims and questions.

Chapter Two presents a literature review that examines key themes identified in the literature relevant to the study. The literature bases of Pasifika achievement, school culture and leadership are critiqued. Within this chapter, each issue is defined, its significance is established and links are made between the three key areas.

Chapter Three examines the research methodology and design. The reasons for taking an interpretive paradigm and qualitative approach, and the selection of the two data collection methods of semi-structured interviews and focus groups are explained, and the samples chosen for data collection and analysis techniques are examined. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the ethical, reliability and validity issues relating to the study.

Chapter Four reports on and analyses the findings of the research. The findings are organised within four identified themes; leadership, school culture, practices, and challenges.

Chapter Five discusses and critiques significant findings and draws conclusions related to the research questions. This analysis is then linked to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

Chapter Six concludes the study with a summary of the project, a brief review of the possible limitations of the research, and final recommendations in regard to practice and further research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will review the literature relevant to the study's aims and research questions. The research aims and questions were concerned with investigating leaders' perceptions of the importance of school leadership actions in raising Pasifika achievement, and their perceptions of the practices and challenges that influence the academic achievement of Pasifika students (either positively or negatively) within their secondary schools. The research also aimed to identify specific elements of school culture that leaders report as enhancing Pasifika students' achievement. Within the aims, there are three core themes; Pasifika achievement, school culture, and leadership for learning. Consequently, I have made these themes the focus of my literature review. Due to a dearth of literature available on Pasifika achievement, I have included Ministry of Education, Education Review Office, and Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs reports, as these are from the New Zealand context.

PASIFIKA ACHIEVEMENT

This section reviews the literature related to Pasifika achievement. Six sub-themes are identified; Pasifika learners and the current New Zealand educational system, developing pedagogy that works for Pasifika students, cultural capital, valuing culture, relationships, and teacher expectations.

Pasifika learners and the current New Zealand educational system

In New Zealand, Pacific communities still have the highest proportion of people with no qualifications, despite some improvements in educational outcomes, putting them at a serious disadvantage (Statistics New Zealand & Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2010). Schools have not made significant progress towards implementing system-wide changes that will benefit Pasifika learners, and many school leaders and teachers are not actively recognising and responding to these needs (Education Review Office, 2012b). Developing pedagogy for a diverse range of students is a

need which is highlighted by several researchers, in order to raise academic achievement (Alton-Lee, 2003; Amituanai-Toloa et al., 2010; Ferguson et al., 2008; Fletcher, Parkhill & Harris, 2011; Gorinsky & Fraser, 2006; Nakhid, 2003; Sheets, 2009). Ferguson et al. (2008) state that “the high disparities and rapidly growing demographic profile of Pasifika learners in the New Zealand education system indicate a need for some reorientation in terms of meeting the needs of this diverse group of learners” (p. 1). The challenge then is for educators to improve and adjust schooling so that all students succeed in their learning.

Research shows that a range of solutions are needed if we are to improve the educational outcomes of diverse learners and lessen the disparities. Samu (2006) notes that our education system in New Zealand does not cater for students with specific cultural and ethnic backgrounds and calls for diversity and difference to be at the very centre of quality teaching. In order to make changes that will address the disparities, Samu (2006) and Pilbrow (2011) suggest that educators recognise the relationship between home and school if they genuinely want equity for their students. Fletcher et al. (2011) support this notion and state that it is fundamental to provide an inclusive schooling system that acknowledges, values and respects the cultural capital of students from diverse backgrounds. They suggest that inclusion provides the learning and support that allows for equal outcomes for all students. Gorinsky and Fraser (2006) propose a cultural construction of education by shifting away from tactical or responsive strategies regarding diverse cultural needs. They state “there is an increasing call to respond to this situation by adopting an alternative paradigm: a multicultural pedagogy concerned with equity, bicultural/multicultural perspectives, spirituality and a holistic approach” (p. 13). The Education Review Office (2012a) state “schools should be places where learners’ cultural and ethnic identities are acknowledged, celebrated and promoted through the curriculum” (p. 14). Researchers seem to agree that a more inclusive education system is needed in order to raise Pasifika academic achievement.

One of the biggest barriers to learning for Pasifika students is the dominance of a mono-cultural, Anglo-European culture, whose values and social interactions

dominate and become the social norm (Gorinsky & Fraser, 2006). Gorinsky and Fraser (2006) state that “consequently, families from a culture other than that from which the underpinning values and understandings of an education system originate, may be disadvantaged within the system” (p. 9). Bishop and Berryman (2010) support this view: “This pattern of increasing diversity is coupled with persistent and increasing educational disparities, primarily between those from dominant cultural groups and those of marginalised and minoritised children” (p. 173).

However, while Ferguson et al. (2008) highlight the need to acknowledge diversity, they caution against putting all Pasifika students into the same category and treating them as a homogenous group. Not only do Pasifika peoples come from a range of nations, identities, traditions and cultures, they also come from a range of experiences. Ferguson et al. (2008) state that “the responses and behaviours of second or third generation New Zealand-born Pasifika learners may be different from those of students brought up outside New Zealand” (p. 25). However, Ferguson et al. (2008) suggest that the range of learning styles and backgrounds amongst Pasifika learners is often seen as problematic due to the challenges they pose in terms of inclusion and tokenism. This identifies the need to create an inclusive educational experience that recognises the individual experiences, cultural capital and knowledge of the diverse body of students we have in New Zealand.

Developing pedagogy that works for Pasifika students

In order to cater for the needs of Pasifika students and make learning relevant, schools need to find out what students bring to the classroom in terms of their cultural heritages, families and forms of diversity. Samu (2006) suggests a closer examination of identity and a framework based on theory in order to identify and explore the factors that have the most relevance and influence in shaping the processes of teaching and learning specifically for Pasifika learners. The Education Review Office (2012a) support this notion by suggesting that teachers find out about their students in order to have a deep, contextualised understanding, which can ensure that learning is relevant to the student’s interests and cultural heritage,

developing specific pedagogy. Amituanai-Toloa et al. (2010) call for the development of culturally responsible teaching and emphasise the importance of this in developing positive student-teacher relationships through mutual respect.

Culturally responsive teaching requires that teachers understand and respond to the needs of diverse learners, enabling quality teaching through adjustments to pedagogy and curriculum. Amituanai-Toloa et al. (2010) suggest that there is a need for coherence between instruction and cultural responsiveness within schools. Samu (2006) supports this view and states that “responsiveness to diversity, in terms of the classroom, is about tailoring teaching to learner diversities in order to raise academic achievement” (p. 39). McNaughton and Lai (2009) call for teachers to be more like adaptive experts in order to be more effective.

It may then be important then, to critically examine *Te Kotahitanga*, a four-phase professional development programme that began in 2001 and concluded in 2012. *Te Kotahitanga*, a programme based on the notion of cultural construction and culturally responsive teaching, was developed to support teachers in engaging Maori students and raising their academic achievement. *Te Kotahitanga* also enabled school leaders to effectively support teachers by changing structures within the school. Bishop et al. (2012) list some of the dimensions in the *Te Kotahitanga* programme as possible solutions, including developing culturally responsive pedagogy, instilling culture into classrooms, strengthening teacher/student relationships and engaging with the community to affirm the value of culture. These dimensions could also translate into solutions for the development of responsive teaching for Pasifika students. Amituanai-Toloa et al. (2010) proposes a further way to develop responsive teaching through engagement with the community and the cultivation of relationships with Pasifika families. Amituanai-Toloa et al. (2010) suggests that these relationships provide the opportunity for schools to make learning relevant, creating links between school and home, impacting on student motivation and academic skills through the reciprocal sharing of knowledge and resources.

The Education Review Office (2012b) suggests that schools use Pasifika students' knowledge and experiences to develop curriculum with relevant contexts for Pasifika students. In order to do this, schools need to collect, analyse and use evidence about Pasifika learners' cultural assets, interests and achievement so as to promote the learning of individual students and develop a curriculum which reflects world views and cultural diversity (Amituanai-Toloa et al., 2010; Education Review Office, 2012a; McNaughton & Lai, 2009). In their report about the improvement of educational outcomes for Pasifika learners, the Education Review Office (2012b) state that "schools have been urged to tailor their programmes to meet the varying needs of the different Pasifika groups, their different identities, languages and cultures, and to recognise the cultural assets these students bring to their learning" (p. 1).

Cultural capital

For many minority students, school often represents an alien culture, therefore putting these students at a disadvantage (Dimmock & Walker, 2005; Gorinsky & Fraser, 2006). Nakhid (2003) suggests that students frequently search for representation of their own identities in the education system. If it is found, students feel as if they belong, if it does not exist, students may opt out of engaging in learning or leave school. How students respond to different aspects of schooling will often reflect their world views, which are influenced by many things such as socio-economic background, country of birth, culture, gender, family relationships and religious backgrounds. Samu (2006) states "the cultural capital of individual Pasifika students will be shaped by a number of factors that the school/learning institution has no influence over" (p. 44).

Often, schools find that the student's cultural capital, or the values, beliefs and experiences they bring from their home environment are either in conflict or in harmony with the school culture. Bishop and Glynn (1999) state:

Students who do not have the appropriate cultural capital are constructed as 'other' by virtue of their ethnicity, language and class, and the goal of education becomes one of 'fitting' them into mainstream society on

mainstream society's terms, for example by compensatory educational interventions. (p. 152)

Gorinsky and Fraser (2006) suggest that schools cannot offer equality of cultural capital as the curriculum and teaching methods are drawn from the dominant culture; the dominant culture will have the 'cultural capital' and benefit from this. In order to make education inclusive, schools need to recognise cultural capital by looking at any cultural differences between students and the school, and how these differences affect motivation and work habits (Nakhid, 2003).

The perceived cultural deficit of some Pasifika students can often be added to by the non-relevance of school process, practices and teaching and learning resources for these students. Ferguson et al. (2008) suggest that schools need to look closely at this mismatch and comment that "understanding the cultural capital of students is vital and considered an integral part of curriculum and pedagogical planning" (p. 38). Alton-Lee (2003) proposes that when a student's experience, knowledge and attitudes from home are matched with school, there is a higher degree of continuity of learning ability, and states "research on student learning has shown the importance of the match or mismatch between the social class and ethnic cultural capital of the home and the school" (p. 32). Nakhid (2003) calls for schools to allow the space for Pasifika students to bring, form, or connect their identities with school and suggests that this is a necessary condition for the success of Pasifika academic achievement. Nakhid (2003) states:

It is as important to Pasifika students, as it is to any of us, to be able to look and to find ourselves in the places where we are located. If the capacity to do this is missing, or the opportunity to create that feeling of belonging is absent, then it is a signal that our presence is not wanted or valued. (p. 314)

Valuing culture and diversity

Valuing and linking the diverse cultural resources that students bring with them is critical for learning programmes. Alton-Lee (2003) comments that "the dual dimensions of care and valuing of diversity are core features of a learning community (p. 23). Creating connections between students' cultural heritages and learning

across the curriculum is a powerful pedagogical strategy for linking learning and creating continuity (Alton-Lee, 2003; Robinson et al., 2009). Alton-Lee (2003) states “social, cultural and cognitive are inextricably implicated in student learning” (p. 34). When teachers are able to provide the links, time and opportunities for diverse learners to make associations between what they are learning and their own prior knowledge, teaching is likely to be highly effective and raise academic achievement, reducing the disparity in achievement outcomes. Alton-Lee (2003) emphasises the importance of these links, stating that they are “fundamental to the learning process and one of the recurrent and strongest findings in research on teaching” (p. 38).

The recognition of ethnic diversity and cultural difference is also critical to the development of effective, engaged relationships with parents and the community. Gorinsky and Fraser (2006) state that “the recognition, understanding and provision of mechanisms to engage parents are urgent then, in a Pasifika context” (p. 31). Involvement in community events and building relationships with parents can help teachers to develop an understanding and appreciation of the students’ cultural backgrounds and enable teachers to connect with the students (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Blackmore, 2006).

Relationships

The building of positive teacher/student relationships is fundamental to student engagement, which in turn, influences long term academic achievement. Bishop (2010) states “it is our position that positive, inclusive relationships and interactions will lead to improved student engagement in learning” (p. 695). In order to develop relationships with students, teachers must gain an understanding of students’ cultures and backgrounds (Blackmore, 2006; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Ferguson et al., 2008). Ferguson et al. (2008) cite the importance of teachers developing a deep understanding of how culture impacts on the social and cognitive development of students.

Developing relationships between the school and Pasifika families can be both beneficial and reciprocal for the school and students. Not only can parents support their children and impress on them the importance of education, but they can help them negotiate the culture of the school. Alton-Lee (2003) links relationships with parents and the community with academic achievement: “When partnerships between educators and parents are much more directly focused on student learning, the links to learning outcomes are much stronger” (p. 40). Parents can become partners with the school, developing relationships that enable parents to advise the school on cultural aspects and participate in the development of events, initiatives and programmes (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Pilbrow, 2011). Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (2010) state:

The greatest influences on success at school are the relationship between children and their parents, and in schools, effective teaching and leadership. Partnerships focused on learning between parents and teachers can also greatly enhance children’s achievement. While Pacific parents want to help their children at school, they sometimes don’t know how. Similarly, many teachers and schools do not know how to engage effectively with Pacific parents. (p. 11)

Schools may need to go out into the community in order to develop relationships and seek advice and assistance. Gorinsky and Fraser (2006) suggest that “this necessitates a shift in both thinking and practice around traditional notions of the locus of power and control in schools” (p. 31). Many teachers believe that Pasifika parents have little interest in their children’s schooling, due to the limited involvement that teachers have with parents and the limited opportunities to learn about the home lives of Pasifika students. These misunderstandings can prohibit family and community involvement in the school (Gorinsky & Fraser, 2006). Often factors such as language barriers and respect for authority can be a barrier to Pasifika families engaging with schools. Parents may not want to question the school or the teachers. Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (2010) note the importance of teachers understanding these differences in beliefs as “school expectations can be an early barrier to effective learning for many Pacific students, and to effective engagement with parents” (p. 11). When schools attempt to

understand these cultural barriers and develop strategies for home-school partnerships, this can be a starting point for community and family involvement in school (Pilbrow, 2011).

Schools need to communicate with parents about the positive aspects of being involved so that engagement can take place. As many Pasifika parents believe that it is the teacher's responsibility to educate students, they may be reluctant to get involved. Parents often carry their own negative experiences from when they attended school and this can create a lack of confidence in dealing with teachers, causing anxiety and barriers to involvement. Schools often alienate parents' involvement in the school community through failing to provide communication options for parents who have a second language, creating a sense of powerlessness. However, Pilbrow (2011) notes a recent shift in Pasifika parent perspectives from passive support to one of active participation, enabling greater connections between home and school. Providing workshops where parents can learn to support their children with their learning at home is seen as a way forward.

Teacher expectations

Teacher expectations of Pasifika student ability and achievement can have a great bearing on student performance and can mean the difference between success and failure for many Pasifika students. Gorinsky and Fraser (2006) note that there has historically been a prevalent belief amongst teachers that there will always be disparities in the achievement of Maori and Pasifika students. They note that teachers have low expectations of students from low socio-economic and/or ethnic 'minority' backgrounds. Pasifika students are often perceived by teachers as new immigrants with poor English language skills, when in reality, the majority of Pasifika students are New Zealand born (Nakhid, 2003). Pasifika students and their communities are also often regarded by teachers as being of low socio-economic status, which some teachers believe impacts on student learning abilities. Nakid (2003) suggests that some educators believe that cultural deficits contribute to a lack of self-belief in some students, putting them at risk of not succeeding. Statistics

New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (2010) note the link between self-belief and achievement:

Students with a higher self-concept and belief in their ability have significantly higher achievement. However, Pacific students often have low confidence in their ability and attribute success or failure more to luck, peers or family than their own ability and effort. (p. 11)

When discussing Maori academic achievement, Bishop (2010) suggests that the dominance of deficit theorising by teachers creates a self-fulfilling prophecy of underachievement and failure. Teaching practices often depend on the direct assumptions and beliefs that the teacher holds of the students. Therefore, the relationships teachers develop and the interactions they have with students will tend to be negative and unproductive. Bishop (2010) elaborates, stating that “despite our being well meaning, and with the best intentions in the world, if students with whom we are interacting as teachers are led to believe that we think they are deficient, they will respond to this negatively” (p. 692).

Teacher perceptions of student academic ability are often incompatible with student views (Nakhid, 2003), therefore creating a cycle of deficit. Low expectations perpetuate the self-fulfilling prophecy of failure, generating evidence to substantiate bias and forming a vicious cycle. Weber (1996) proposes a possible solution to this by using educational leaders as coaches in order to set goals and monitor expectations. Weber (1996) states “high expectations are the fulcrum point that instructional leaders can use to pry teachers, administrators, students, and parents away from unhelpful, unencouraging attitudes” (p. 265). While teacher expectations of high standards are necessary for student academic achievement, expectations alone are insufficient. Alton-Lee (2003) proposes that high expectations need to be integrated into quality teaching practices, demonstrating clear links between pedagogical practices and achievement outcomes. Research has shown that teachers overestimate the ability of their high achieving students and underestimate the ability of their lower achieving students (Alton-Lee, 2003). Weber (1996) proposes that when teachers lower their expectations of students, they use fewer

essential instructional elements and when they raise their expectations, more of these elements are visible. Alton-Lee (2003) suggests the use of data and assessment tools as a way to avoid assumptions about student ability and states that “valid assessment has a key role in combating the kinds of deficit attributions that persist in New Zealand educational practice” (p. 19). The Education Review Office (2012b) supports this practice, noting that schools which had been successful in raising Pasifika achievement used data and assessment as tools for the development of effective teaching and learning.

In their studies of indigenous students, Castagno and Brayboy (2008) note that an important common element in raising academic achievement was teacher expectations of excellence. They state that an “important disposition for culturally responsive teachers is an attitude and presence that expects high performance levels while caring about and understanding” (p. 970). Other elements that are important for teachers are an attitude of appreciation, value and respect for the students’ communities and cultures. Nakhid (2003) proposes that the perceptions schools hold of Pasifika students and the expectations teachers have for academic achievement are what frame the responses to these students. Nakhid (2003) suggests that if schools have different perceptions of Pasifika students, compared to the perceptions Pasifika students have of themselves, then the responses would be inappropriate.

This section has shown that in order to improve educational outcomes for Pasifika students, the New Zealand education system needs to develop a more inclusive approach which caters for students’ diversity and difference. This requires learning to be relevant and culturally responsive for Pasifika learners, taking into account prior knowledge and experiences, and valuing and linking the diverse cultural resources that Pasifika students bring with them to school. The development of positive relationships between teachers and Pasifika students, based on respect, appreciation and high expectations, alongside quality teaching practices, has been shown to impact positively on academic achievement. Making connections between school and home and the development of reciprocal relationships between Pasifika

parents and teachers can help to bridge any gaps in cultural capital, enabling parents to support their children in their education.

SCHOOL CULTURE

This section reviews the literature related to school culture. Three sub-themes are identified; leadership and the shaping of school culture, acknowledging cultural diversity, and teacher professional development for diversity.

School culture

School culture represents the assumptions, values and norms which underlie the everyday activities, or 'the way we do things around here' (Deal & Peterson, 1990; Dimmock & Walker, 2005, Southworth, 2004). There are often taken-for-granted beliefs and assumptions, which give meaning to what people say and do and shapes beliefs and behaviour over time. Deal and Peterson (1990) elaborate:

The concept of culture is meant to describe the character of a school as it reflects deep patterns of values, beliefs, and traditions that have been formed over the course of its history. Beneath the conscious awareness of everyday life in any organization there is a stream of thought, sentiment, and activity.

(p. 7)

School culture is the reality for those working in it, giving support and identity to members of the school and creating a framework for learning (Education Review Office, 2012a).

Lumby and Foskett (2011) suggest that culture enables individuals or groups to influence positively or negatively the physical and mental ability of others through the exercise of power. It is important then, that those in a position of leadership understand the culture in order to avoid creating inequities. Lumby and Foskett (2011) propose that culture can be used to create a more equitable distribution of the positive outcomes of education and may have the ability to move schools in affirmative, intentional directions. Many models of leadership (Deal & Peterson,

1990; Dimmock & Walker, 2005; Lumby & Foskett, 2011; Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008; Starratt, 2003) identify a positive shared culture as being vital to the successful implementation of processes and conditions that impact positively on student academic achievement. Dimmock and Walker (2005) state “there is a growing recognition that school culture holds the key to the effective management of change and school improvement” (p. 68).

An inclusive, shared culture underpins good practice in supporting students and helps to shape the way in which staff respond to challenges. Establishing a shared culture of understanding between teachers and school leaders also enables schools to develop positive partnerships and relationships with parents and the wider school community (Education Review Office, 2012b; Robinson et al., 2009). A school culture which encourages shared knowledge and shared ways of teaching can lead to greater effectiveness in teaching practice and in the raising of student achievement (Amituanai-Toloa et al., 2010; Lumby & Foskett, 2011; Robinson et al., 2009). Robinson et al. (2009) state “an effective school culture is also goal orientated and well organised. Excellent pedagogy, embedded in such a culture, will ultimately bring about the achievement we all desire” (p. 25).

Whole school alignment, where processes are focused on achievement, and a collective perspective between teachers and leaders, can enable teachers and students to work together more collaboratively for an inclusive school culture to be developed (Alton-Lee, 2003). Through whole school alignment, quality teaching can be supported, enhanced and sustained, optimising inclusion for diverse students in daily experiences and increasing the opportunity to learn. Alton-Lee (2003) states “the principle of whole school alignment is emerging as having a significant value-added effect on student outcomes, particularly social outcomes” (p. 70).

Leadership and the shaping of school culture

Leaders play an important role in creating, sustaining or destroying school cultures (Southworth, 2004) therefore, one of the most significant roles of leadership is the creation, encouragement and refinement of school cultures, through a shared belief and a sense of community and co-operation (Deal & Peterson, 1990; Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2004). Leaders can strive to change a culture; however, culture has a significant influence on school leadership as it can shape school leaders' thoughts and actions (Dimmock & Walker, 2005; Southworth, 2004). Deal and Peterson (1990) summarise this notion in their statement: "Leadership shapes culture, and culture shapes leaders" (p. 13). As a school's culture influences what happens in that school, leaders are very important in establishing and continuing a school culture. Dimmock and Walker (2005) propose that social interaction has the most significance for educational leaders, as this is how culture is expressed. They state "values, thoughts and behaviours that are the essence of leadership are social and interactive processes; consequently, they are culturally influenced" (p. 12). School culture usually survives throughout leadership and staff changes, so leaders must tread carefully when trying to change a culture; it must be a balance between doing nothing and doing no harm (Deal & Peterson, 1990).

On the other hand, Robinson et al. (2009) believe that the formation and maintenance of a school culture involves others, not just the leader, and endorse the value of distributed leadership in establishing a positive school culture. Robinson et al. (2009) propose that it is vital for all members of a school to become involved in the development of school culture, as this enables a connection to be established between principals, senior and middle leadership, and classroom teachers. Lumby and Foskett (2011) support the idea of distributed leadership, stating that leadership can come from principals, teachers, students and parents, but note that it is up to the principal to lead the culture as they hold more power than others, therefore their understanding of culture is vital.

Transformational leadership is proposed by Lashway (2006), Robinson et al. (2009) and Southworth (1993) as a vehicle for changing school culture through the development of people and building relationships. Southworth (1993) suggests that a transformational leader builds a commitment to organisational vision and mission through shaping the values and beliefs of their colleagues. Ramsden (1998) describes transformational leadership as being specific to developing a professional culture, fostering staff development, and solving problems more effectively. He states that “leadership’s unique function is to bring out the best in people and to orientate them towards the future” (p. 120). Gunter (2006) however, believes that transformational leadership has maintained rather than challenged the assumed way of doing things and is premised on overt sameness; those who do not fit in remain outside of the organisation or in the margins. This suggests that leaders need to acknowledge and consider the diversity of teachers and students within the school, involving them in the development and maintenance of the school culture where possible to ensure an inclusive school culture is established. Robinson et al. (2009) support this notion, proposing the development of a cohesive and collective school culture using purposeful leadership in order to improve teaching and learning.

Acknowledging and valuing cultural diversity in school culture

The development of positive school cultures that value and acknowledge cultural diversity, supported through leadership and reflected in the thoughtful management of the curriculum and learning programmes, are vital in order to raise Pasifika achievement. The Education Review Office (2012b) state that in successful schools, initiatives are underpinned by a school culture and a belief in the school’s ability to identify and meet the individual needs of the students, valuing diversity, and engaging them in appropriate programmes of learning. It is how the differences in language, culture and socio-economic status of Pasifika students are perceived by a school that influence learning and determine the academic performance of Pasifika students, not the actual differences themselves (Nakhid, 2003). It is those responsible for the development of curriculum and teaching and learning who decide whether or not to include Pasifika distinctiveness and culture in the classroom. Ferguson et al. (2008) state “in doing so, they inherently assume a position of power

that either facilitates equitable practices or subverts them” (p. 23). Ferguson et al. (2008) suggest that those involved in the educational process need to recognise the cultural distinctiveness of diverse learners and modify practice to suit so that diversity is acknowledged.

Teacher professional development for diversity

Research shows that the single most effective thing an educational leader can do to enhance student achievement is to support and engage teachers professionally through the development of strong relationships which open up opportunities for dialogue and reflection on teaching practice (Robinson et al., 2009). Robinson et al. (2009) also identify leaders’ promotion and participation in teacher learning and development as having the most impact on student outcomes, twice that of any other leadership dimension. Leaders who are actively involved in professional development are able to participate, both as learners and as leaders, gaining a greater appreciation of what is required to develop improvements in teaching and learning. This engagement in professional communities also develops collective responsibility and accountability, encouraging effort and competency amongst teachers (Robinson et al., 2009). A school culture that values and supports staff professional development is vital as this creates a sense of collective responsibility and allows teachers to flourish in a collaborative environment.

Teachers need to understand the unique contextual conditions within their school in order to implement and apply professional development which is tailored to the needs of their students. Timperley (2005) identifies an issue with school culture where staff rely on collectively held beliefs and familiar processes to solve instructional problems: “Every school contains a diverse mix of teachers and students with varying competencies and attitudes and a unique set of social, cultural, and political conditions, all of which have a powerful influence on teaching and learning” (p. 4).

While most teachers are good at creating caring environments, many lack the pedagogical knowledge in order to deal with difference and diversity. Blackmore (2006) suggests that there is no quick fix and states that “developing this repertoire requires encouraging a culture of teacher inquiry and professional learning over time” (p. 194). Blackmore (2006) proposes that educational leaders look at how equity is addressed in school policy and how the development of pedagogy addresses student needs. Professionally developing teachers in order to address student needs and become more culturally responsive will help to bridge the gap between the students’ own knowledge and what they will be taught. Research indicates that when teachers incorporate the languages and cultures of students into teaching practice, the students’ academic achievement increases (Banks et al., 2005). In order to maximise Pasifika cultural, social and academic achievement, teacher professional development must focus on utilising the cultural capital that Pasifika learners bring from their diverse backgrounds, through the fostering of teacher attitudes, skills, knowledge and practices which will acknowledge, value and build upon student cultural capital (Ferguson et al., 2008; Samu, 2006).

There is evidence that teaching which is responsive to student diversity can have very positive impacts on both high and low achievers at the same time (Alton-Lee, 2003). A key influence on reducing disparities across students from diverse ethnic and social class groups is inclusive pedagogy (Alton-Lee, 2003). Alton-Lee (2003) cites quality teaching as the main driver for effective learning which results in high quality outcomes for diverse students:

Our strongest evidence of the potential for higher achievement for diverse students arises out of a range of classroom research and development programmes that make student learning processes and understandings transparent, and make explicit the kinds of teaching practices and approaches that support student learning processes. What is notable about these responsive teaching approaches is that they bring together into coherent pedagogies many of the characteristics of quality teaching identified across the international research. In cases where there has been specific provision of professional development in such approaches in New Zealand, with

associated monitoring of student learning, there has been evidence of marked improvement in student outcomes. (p. 52)

Te Kotahitanga was one such professional development programme that challenged teachers' thinking, particularly in terms of deficit thinking and enabled the development of culturally responsive pedagogy. When discussing *Te Kotahitanga*, Bishop and Berryman (2010) state that professional development by teachers was associated with improved learning, behaviour and attendance outcomes for Maori students. Bishop (2010) calls for teachers to leave deficit thinking behind and take responsibility for student achievement through a professional commitment to bring about change. Deficit theory can have a major impact on Pasifika achievement as it can shape teachers' perceptions and the way in which they view Pasifika students, creating educational disparities (Bishop & Berryman, 2010; Ferguson et al., 2008). Ferguson et al. (2008) state "deficit theorising results in perceptions that are based on factors such as low socio-economic status of Pasifika, academic underachievement, and assumptions that many Pasifika students are recent migrants" (p. 27).

Bishop and Berryman (2010) also note that as there is currently a lack of diversity amongst teachers, teachers are often limited in their cultural experiences and understanding of what students of diversity can bring to the classroom. Bishop and Berryman (2010) state "the most pressing problem in education today is the interaction between the increasingly diverse student population on the one hand and the lack of diversity amongst the teaching force on the other" (p. 173). If there is a problem addressing teacher diversity for diverse learners, professional development which challenges teachers' assumptions about Pasifika learners is important.

This section has shown that leaders must understand the significant role they play in influencing school environments in order to create an equitable and positive shared culture that impacts positively on student achievement. A shared culture focused on

relationships that acknowledge and value cultural diversity can lead to greater effectiveness in teaching practice and raise student achievement. It is through a shared and inclusive culture, that students from diverse backgrounds feel connected to the school, are engaged in their learning and feel valued. Professional development that acknowledges diversity can help teachers to understand and become more culturally responsive to students' needs, utilising the cultural capital that Pasifika students bring from their diverse backgrounds.

LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

This section reviews the literature relating to leadership for learning. Six sub-themes are identified; the importance of leadership, educational leadership, leadership of learning, leadership for diversity, distributive leadership and the connection between leadership and school outcomes.

Why leadership is important

The Education Review Office (2012b) also identifies leadership as being one of the most important factors in creating positive change for Pasifika achievement in schools, stating that “the vision and goals of a school can be successfully achieved if school leadership has the capacity to influence and drive change” (p. 14). Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (2010) supports this theory, suggesting that effective teaching needs effective school leadership focused on student achievement outcomes.

The Ministry of Education (2013b) believe that school leaders and teachers hold the key to the successful engagement of Pasifika students. Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008) cite the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2001) and state:

A major reason for the interest in the links between leadership and student outcomes is the desire of policy makers in many jurisdictions to reduce the persistent disparities in educational achievement between various social and

ethnic groups, and their belief that school leaders play a vital role in doing so (p. 636).

Leadership makes a difference to student achievement and well-being (Robinson et al., 2009; Southworth, 2004; Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2004). There is a substantial relationship between leadership and student achievement; as leadership improves, so does student achievement (Waters et al., 2004). Ramsden (1998) suggests that effective educational leaders are able to motivate and inspire staff, encourage collegiality towards common goals and promote self-reflection and improvement of performance. Ramsden (1998) illustrates the importance of leadership by stating: “Leadership’s unique function is to bring out the best in people and to orientate them towards the future” (p. 120).

In the context of New Zealand, the relationship between school leadership and student achievement is particularly important due to the autonomous way in which schools operate when compared to educational systems in other parts of the world (Robinson et al., 2009). Dimmock and Walker (2005) suggest that effective school leadership is therefore seen in terms of school improvement through the promotion of shared values, collaboration in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, and the capacity to build strong cultures. Robinson et al. (2009) state that “effective pedagogical leadership creates the conditions that can ensure quality teaching in every classroom and, by doing so, reduce within-school variance in student achievement” (p. 57).

Educational leadership

Educational leadership is distinguished from other forms of leadership in that it is focused on lifting educational achievement and outcomes with a particular emphasis placed on leading teaching and learning (Bush, 2003; Cardno & Collett, 2004; Robinson et al., 2009; Starratt, 2003). Robinson et al. (2009) propose that educational leadership is about improving social and educational outcomes for all students and state:

The purpose of educational leadership is not only (for example) to develop a cohesive culture, have good communication channels with staff and students, and monitor and evaluate instruction—it is to do all these things in a manner that improves teaching and learning. (p. 69)

Educational leadership can be performed directly through such tasks as leading professional development and visiting classrooms, indirectly, through tasks such as articulating a vision, shaping the environment and providing resources; or it can be distributed, by sharing the role of responsibility with others (Cardno & Collett, 2004; Robinson et al., 2009). Starratt (2003) states that educational leadership “must be involved with teachers in seeking to promote quality learning for all children, and that all management tasks serve that core work” (p. 11). This statement is supported by Southworth (2004), who suggests that engaging teachers and creating opportunities for professional discourse is at the very heart of educational leadership and proposes that educational leadership, or ‘learning-centred leadership’ as he calls it, is equally concerned with professional learning, professional dialogue and the refinement of teaching within classrooms. Southworth (2004) describes leadership as a process focused on changing professional practice through the development and transformation of teaching and learning. Robinson et al. (2009) state “we argue that educational leadership is leadership that causes others to do things that can be expected to improve educational outcomes for students” (p. 71).

Leadership of learning

Leadership of learning is leadership with a particular emphasis on teaching and learning and changing professional practice. It is a process of influencing teachers to develop, enhance, refine and transform their teaching and students’ learning (Southworth, 2004). Leadership of learning is comprised of tasks such as setting educational goals, planning the curriculum and the evaluation of teaching and learning. It is different to transformational leadership, which is focused on vision and inspiration (Robinson et al., 2009). Leadership of learning is identified by Robinson

et al. (2009) as having a substantial impact on student outcomes, four times more impact than that of transformational leadership. They state:

Our primary conclusion is that pedagogically focused leadership has a substantial impact on student outcomes. The more leaders focus their influence, their learning, and their relationships with teachers on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their influence on student outcomes. (p. 40)

Leadership for diversity

Starratt (2003) takes the position that educational leaders must consider the diverse needs of students in order to create a learning experience that meets these needs. He proposes that leaders must cultivate an understanding of diversity, meaning, community and responsibility through social justice, and a commitment to ideal educational processes. Starratt (2003) calls for educational leaders to develop a vision of creating young adults who are autonomous, intelligent, caring and socially responsible, stating: "It is the awareness of the unnecessarily large gap between the ideal and the real that fuels the commitment of educational leaders to close that gap" (p. 15).

Diversity recognises cultural, religious, racial and gender differences and recent educational reform argues that schools should be responsive to this diversity amongst their students, parents and communities in the promise of inclusive and more equitable schooling (Blackmore, 2006). Managing diversity is based on the principle that value can be added to the experience and profits of an organisation through recognising and using diversity through maximising individual potential (Gunter, 2006).

Dimmock and Walker (2005) suggest some strategies for leaders when dealing with the negative issues associated with schools with diverse students, such as racism and discrimination:

Priorities will need to be focused on team-building, tolerance-building, conflict resolution and awareness-raising, both for staff and for students. Teaching and learning styles will need to be sufficiently flexible to ensure that schools become more interculturally responsive. Close links with parents and community members from culturally diverse backgrounds will also be necessary to foster dialogue and cross-cultural understanding. (p. 67)

Distributed leadership

Timperley (2005) identifies issues in relying on one leader to improve student outcomes. She suggests that leadership be distributed across multiple people and situations so that tasks and activities can be integrated, “leadership involves many people, rather than the single visionary” (p. 4). Leithwood, Patten and Jantzi (2010) conceptualised and measured leadership as “a set of practices distributed among staff rather than enacted only by those in formal leadership roles” (p. 683). Southworth (1993) calls on all staff to become visionaries and leaders so that the principal is not so depended on. He discusses the need for teacher empowerment in order to create less reliance on leaders and more equity in schools. Robinson et al. (2008) support this notion by stating that leadership of learning is not just inclusive of principals, but also their designees, those in positions of responsibility and shared instructional leadership.

Seashore Lewis et al., (2010) propose the use of middle leaders as valuable in developing teaching and learning and improving instruction. They suggest that middle leaders are often under-utilised and spend their time managing the day to day tasks, wasting the precious resources that they have to offer. Weber (1996) proposes an emerging model of educational leadership which shares and distributes the responsibility amongst staff. “It is a model in which leaders empower others to be leaders, as well. The structure of that leadership depends on the best configuration to achieve a learning organization – collaboratively managed, self-evaluating, and actively self-improving” (p. 277).

The connection between leadership and school outcomes

Leithwood et al. (2010) and Robinson et al. (2009) propose that the effects of school leaders on school outcomes are largely indirect. Instead, they influence student achievement by creating conditions in which teachers are able to be more effective. They identify a strong link between collective teacher efficacy and academic achievement, with leaders having a great influence and positive effect through such initiatives as professional development and encouraging networking and collaborative work amongst staff. The Education Review Office (2012a) support this theory and proposes that leaders support teachers and encourage collective responsibility for student achievement. The Education Review Office (2012a) state: “Importantly, leaders cultivate teaching communities that are focused on improving student success. They do this through an intensive focus on understanding the connection between teaching actions/decisions and student’s engagement and learning” (p. 10).

This section has reviewed literature that argues that leadership makes a difference to student achievement and can create positive change for Pasifika achievement in schools through the cultivation of collective responsibility for student achievement and an understanding of diversity amongst teachers. Educational leadership is particularly important, as it is focused on the development of teaching and learning in order to improve educational outcomes for students.

LITERATURE REVIEW CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have reviewed the literature on the three topics of Pasifika achievement, school culture and leadership for learning, which are all central to the aims and research questions that this study explores. This literature review has triggered the development of the following research questions:

1. Why are school leadership actions important to the improvement of Pasifika student achievement?

2. What do leaders perceive as the practices and challenges that influence the academic achievement of Pasifika students (either positively or negatively) within THEIR secondary schools?
3. What specific elements of school culture have enhanced Pasifika students' achievement?

Three themes that emerge from the literature review as being prevalent throughout the core topics include the development of relationships, the establishment of an inclusive school culture and a focus on the development of pedagogy which works for Pasifika. Leadership is the key link between the three topics explored as it is leadership that sets the vision and tone of the school, leadership which steers the school in the right direction, and leadership which leads by example in order to develop quality teaching and learning.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The overall objective of this research was to investigate secondary schools leaders' perceptions of the practices and challenges that influence the academic achievement of Pasifika secondary school students. The review of literature showed that this area was under-researched and that there was a need to investigate the link between Pasifika achievement and leadership. The literature suggested that data collection be focused on secondary schools within New Zealand that had a Pasifika student population and had experienced challenges in raising Pasifika achievement.

This chapter begins with the rationale for choosing the interpretive paradigm and a qualitative approach for this research. The two data collection methods of semi-structured interviews and focus groups are discussed in relation to the relevant literature, and key issues relating to the appropriateness of choice and sampling are explained. Strategies for data analysis are identified and discussed, with particular emphasis given to how the aspects of validity and reliability are strengthened. Lastly, ethical issues are considered with discussion on how these issues were addressed within the context of this research.

METHODOLOGY

Overview

Epistemology is the philosophical theory of knowledge which deals with how we know what we know (Davidson & Tolich, 2003). Ontological assumptions give rise to epistemological assumptions, which in turn give rise to methodological considerations (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). For this study I took a subjectivist epistemological position. I chose this epistemological position because it is founded on the belief that the social world is personal and humanly created and is principally concerned with an understanding of the way in which the individual creates and interprets the world (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

As my research is concerned with understanding the perceptions, values and beliefs of secondary school leaders, I worked within the interpretive paradigm, as this assumes that there are multiple realities, enabling individual perspectives to be expressed and understood (Cohen et al., 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The interpretive approach is characterised by concern for the individual and enables systematic analysis of social action in order to understand and interpret how people create and maintain their social worlds (Bryman, 2004; Cohen et al., 2011; Davidson & Tolich, 2003). Cohen et al. (2007) suggest that the interpretive approach requires researchers to become involved with their subjects and “to see knowledge as personal, subjective and unique” (p. 7), enabling the researcher to study complex human behaviour and the intangible quality of social phenomena. Creswell (2002) emphasises the need for there to be a match between the problem and the approach when researching and as my research problem is based on individuals’ perceptions and personal accounts, an interpretive approach is a good fit. Cohen et al. (2007) suggest that an interpretive approach is useful when there are multiple interpretations of, and perspectives on, a situation. An interpretive approach helps the researcher to examine the situation through the eyes of the participants, enabling ‘insider’ perspectives and understanding from within.

I rejected the idea of using a positivist approach or quantitative methodologies as they focus on confirming causal laws in order to predict patterns, which I did not believe would fit with educational research that deals with people’s individual views or perceptions.

Rationale for qualitative approach to research

As I have selected the interpretive paradigm and my research is dealing with individual perceptions, I selected a qualitative approach, as it is the best fit for a relatively under-researched topic. Creswell (2002) states “if a concept or phenomenon needs to be understood because little research has been done on it, then it merits a qualitative approach” (p. 22). Bryman (2004) proposes the use of qualitative research when dealing with people’s different views of social reality,

rather than quantitative research, which is based on a science model. Qualitative researchers are concerned with the meaning that people attribute to their experiences and argue that “this meaning cannot be measured in the way that quantitative research demands” (Davidson & Tolich, 2003, p. 29). I have selected the two qualitative methods of semi-structured interviews and focus groups as these methods allowed for comprehensive research into my aim and questions, interpreted within the secondary school context.

Qualitative research is value-laden in nature and seeks answers to questions about how social experience is created and given meaning. It is concerned with the individual’s point of view and provides rich and valuable descriptions of the social world (Bryman, 2004; Cohen et al., 2007). When discussing the positive benefits of qualitative research methods in comparison to quantitative, Bryman (2004) states “probably the most significant difference is the priority accorded the perspectives of those being studied rather than the prior concerns of the researcher, along with a related emphasis on the interpretation of observations in accordance with subjects’ own understandings” (p. 112). Bryman (2004) proposes that qualitative research is superior at revealing how people construct their social worlds, their meanings and interpretations.

As qualitative research is more flexible than quantitative research, it enables the researcher to “capture the uniqueness of a particular situation, person or programme” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 414). A more flexible approach to my research was called for in order to establish a rapport with participants and gather in-depth data which clarified the way the participants thought, their perceptions and experiences, and to gain an understanding of their human experience. Data was collected from the purposive sample of three Auckland secondary schools using the two methods of semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

Sample selection

Three Auckland secondary schools were selected by purposive sampling based on the typicality of New Zealand secondary schools that have a Pasifika student population. All selected schools were based in Auckland, as Auckland has the largest population of Pasifika peoples in New Zealand. It was important to ensure that the selected secondary schools ranged in decile ratings and percentages of Pasifika students on the school roll in order to be certain of a cross-section in the sample; one secondary school was high decile with a small Pasifika student number and the other two secondary schools were mid to lower decile with high Pasifika student numbers. One secondary school was single sex, while the other two were co-educational. Consideration was given to the time constraints, methodology and methods of data collection for this research when selecting the schools.

Table 3.1: Sample selection: school profiles

Characteristics	School A	School B	School C
School type	Co-educational state secondary school Years 9-13	Single sex state secondary school Years 9-13	Co-educational state secondary school Years 9-13
School roll	2000+	approximately 1000	1000+
Decile rating	high decile	medium decile	low decile
Pasifika roll (as % of total roll)	8 – 9%	55%	25%

Semi-structured interview sampling

I used purposive sampling for the semi-structured interviews by inviting two members of the senior leadership team from each of the three schools selected to participate; the principal and the deputy principal in charge of curriculum or Pasifika achievement. The reason for this purposive sampling was to enable me to interview senior leaders who were directly responsible for Pasifika student academic

achievement within their secondary schools. Overall, this sampling allowed for the gathering of rich data from two sources of senior leadership at each school, six senior leaders in total, providing triangulation of data to strengthen the findings. Before interviewing each senior leader, they were given background information on the research and the process was explained verbally, supported by an information sheet (see Appendix A). There was opportunity for participants to ask questions about the research project before signing the consent form (see Appendix B).

Focus group sampling

Focus groups were conducted at each of the three secondary schools selected. Again, I used purposive sampling criterion where the requirement was for participants to be middle leaders, including heads of faculty, heads of department, teachers in charge of subject areas, and teachers responsible for Pasifika curriculum or pastoral care, in order to gain a range of perspectives. After discussion with the principal of each school, appropriate middle leaders were suggested for participation in the focus group, some of whom included Pasifika teachers. Although I only required between four and six middle leaders to participate in each focus group, I initially approached eight to ten and offered them the opportunity to partake in this research project, with information provided to them through the form of a letter (see Appendix C). I was aware that some of those invited would be unable to attend due to other commitments or lack of interest, resulting in the use of convenience sampling. As Bryman (2004) states, convenience sampling “has not been derived from any form of probability sampling; rather, it is simply a sample that was available to the researcher” (p. 93). Hinds (2000) proposes that focus groups can be made up of between seven and ten individuals, with a minimum of four, so a focus group of between four and six participants enabled the group to be small enough to get through the research questions in the time allocated, yet large enough to provide rich data. At the start of the focus group, each selected participant was given a verbal explanation of the research project, with the opportunity to ask questions before consent forms were signed (see Appendix D).

Overall, 21 participants took part in this research, six of whom were of Pasifika descent. This helped to gain a balanced perspective and ensured that the Pasifika voice was heard.

RESEARCH METHODS

Semi-structured interview method

In order to gain insight into the perceptions of senior secondary school leaders, I used the research method of semi-structured interviews, held on site at each school. I chose to interview senior leaders as I wished to gain in-depth perspectives and clarification on leader's thoughts, attitudes and beliefs about the practices and challenges that influenced Pasifika achievement, as well as their accounts of what has worked in their school, even for a few Pasifika students. Semi-structured interviews enable rapport to be established through a fluid conversation and have an emotional dimension to them, whereas structured interviews have little flexibility in the way in which questions are asked or answered. When discussing semi-structured interviews, Bryman (2004) states "the investigator uses a schedule but recognizes that departures will occur if interesting themes emerge from what respondents say and in order to get their version of things" (p. 124). Therefore, semi-structured interviews allowed the space for participants' views to be expressed within their own context.

As I was interested in personal accounts, semi-structured interviews were fit for purpose as they allow individuals the opportunity to verbalise personal information about how they view the world and answer questions in their own way, using their own words (Cohen et al., 2011). An advantage of using semi-structured interviews was the ability to use a balance of predetermined questions and emergent questions in order for clarification between interviewer and interviewee during the process. Further questioning can enable interviewees to become involved and motivated and create a greater depth of understanding (Cohen et al., 2000). Creswell (2002) describes the benefits of data gathered from semi-structured interviews containing broad and general questions:

The participants can construct the meaning of a situation, a meaning typically forged in discussions or interactions with other persons. The more open-ended the questioning, the better, as the researcher listens carefully to what people say or do in their life setting. (p. 8)

Interviews enable the gathering of rich, in-depth data so that the problem can be examined and clarified while still remaining sensitive to the topic. Although it is important to establish a rapport during interviews, it is also critical that the interviewer remains as objective as possible so as not to influence the data collected. Fontana and Frey (2005) state “the researcher should avoid getting involved in a “real” conversation in which he or she answers questions asked by the respondent or provides personal opinions on the matters discussed” (p. 713). However, Fontana and Frey (2005) note that it is becoming increasingly popular for interviewer and interviewee to co-construct the interview through discourse: “Interviewers are increasingly seen as active participants in an interaction with respondents, and interviews are seen as negotiated accomplishments of both interviewers and respondents that are shaped by the contexts and situation in which they take place” (p. 716). This suggested that as I have a background in secondary education, discourse needed to take place with the participants before the interviews in order to establish rapport and a common ground.

To ensure that the interview questions were fit for purpose, unbiased and clarified they were piloted with a small number of individuals who were not linked to this research in any way. This piloting provided constructive feedback and the opportunity for questions to be tested and fine-tuned before use. When structuring the interviews, I needed to ensure that each stage of the interview was clear to the interviewee, in order to avoid any misunderstandings. This required a verbal explanation to all interviewees at the beginning of each interview about the overall aim of the interview and how many questions I would be asking. I began the interviews with a warm up question, followed by the main questions and concluding with a final question which provided the interviewee with the opportunity to comment on any issues they felt were relevant and important to this research that hadn't been

covered during the interview. When asking interview questions, I remained an active listener, allowing participants to take their time to think about the question and answer it in their own way without being influenced, as suggested by Hinds (2000). Hinds (2000) states “your own preferences or, perhaps, stake in the outcome of the interview should remain secondary” (p. 49).

Digitally recording the interviews was the most effective and accurate way to record what was said without bias, while at the same time, taking notes of the main points as a reminder. Hinds (2000) suggests that these notes may be used to summarise at the end, checking whether the interviewer’s understanding is correct and giving the interviewee an opportunity to add more information if an important point has been missed. This also lessens the possibility that the interviewee will want to add more information when they receive the written transcript of the interview. Hinds (2000) notes: “You should record accurately what was said and not what you think should have been said” (p. 49). Taking notes during the interviews and focus groups enabled me to come back to important points that needed clarification at the end, without interrupting the flow of dialogue during the process. Digital recordings from each interview were transcribed immediately after each interview in order to begin the initial analysis as the research project progressed.

There are however, some disadvantages to using semi-structured interviews. Interviewees may be less honest as there is some risk in answering face to face, without anonymity (Cohen et al., 2000). In order to combat this, proposal of the joint pursuit of a common mission can help to develop rapport and trust during an interview. This was established by explaining how it was hoped that this research would contribute to the improvement in Pasifika achievement and enabling the interviewee the opportunity to give their perspective on Pasifika achievement at the beginning of the interview. Other disadvantages are that semi-structured interviews can be prone to bias by the interviewer and questions can often be misinterpreted by the interviewee. Predetermined questions ensured that all topics were addressed and clarified at the interview. This helped to reduce bias in order to gain an accurate understanding and facilitate the analysis of data. During the interviews I conducted,

some questions were misunderstood and required clarification. However, this became an advantage, as it allowed further rapport to be developed through discussion and shared understanding, often drawing out further detailed data from the interviewee.

The semi-structured interviews I conducted were based around six pre-determined questions (see Appendix E) which were aligned with five pre-determined focus group questions (see Appendix F). These questions were based on the research aims and included introductory questions, key questions and a conclusion to the interview in order to allow for any additional points to be made by the interviewee. Before beginning the interviews, I gave the interviewees a brief introduction on my research topic and answered any questions they had.

Focus groups method

The process of a focus group is based on the principles of self-disclosure, set in a comfortable, focused environment and centred around a particular type of questioning (Hinds, 2000). This process allows information to be gathered about how people think, perceive events, ideas or experiences. By selecting focus groups as one of my methods of data collection, I was able to gain a range of representative responses from secondary school middle leaders, and use this data alongside the data from the semi-structured interviews to further triangulate and strengthen my findings.

One advantage of using focus groups was that this method allowed me to bring together a representative group of middle leaders who had varied opinions, thus enabling the collection of individual perceptions in a time saving way with minimal disruption. Through focus groups “there is potential for discussions to develop, thus yielding a wide range of responses” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 432), allowing participants to describe their experiences and respond to each other’s comments. Kreuger (1994) suggests that another benefit of focus groups is that each question

will stimulate new ideas and connections amongst the participants, enabling the exploration of a range of perceptions and multiple understandings, creating rich, useful data for the researcher. I selected the method of focus groups rather than semi-structured interviews for middle leaders, as this method allowed me to create a discussion amongst participants, gathering a range of perspectives and experiences, resulting in rich data.

In order to minimise unstated assumptions amongst the focus group, Krueger (1994) suggests the facilitator should provide background information about the purpose of the study. Participants will want to know why the session is being held and how the information will be used. Krueger (1994) states “it is important to establish the context of the question so that participants are mentally ready to respond” (p. 66). All participants in the focus groups were provided with background information through a verbal explanation and an information letter (see Appendix C).

Much of the success of a focus group depends on the quality of the questions. Questions must be carefully constructed and phrased before the event in order to gain the most information from the focus group. Krueger (1994) proposes that questions are the heart of the focus group interview and that “quality answers are directly related to quality questions” (p. 53). A range of questions will enable the creation of a comfortable atmosphere, exploration of past experiences and connections, and answer key questions. Krueger (1994) proposes that several different types of questions be used during focus groups, each serving a distinct purpose: an opening question, introductory questions, transition questions, key questions and ending questions. Ending questions are important as they can provide the opportunity for participants to comment on what factor they consider to be most important, creating a way of aiding analysis of the data.

When constructing questions for the focus groups, care was taken that the questions were open-ended in order to allow the participants to answer from a range of perspectives. Pilot testing the questions amongst a group of peers before using

them enabled the questions to be reviewed and tested, ensuring that the questions were logical and sequential in their flow and probed for the information required. Kruger (1994) suggests that questions should be asked without providing cues in order to get the recent or most vivid experiences or impressions from participants. Hinds (2000) proposes that the most important, meaningful or relevant information will emerge first. The interviewer may then follow up with cues if more detail or probing of the topic is required. During the focus groups I conducted, I needed to give cues immediately after Question 2 (see Appendix F), as it was complex to understand due to being two pronged and time constraints meant that there was not a lot of time for quiet reflection by the participants. Although I pilot tested the questions with others, I did not allow for the time middle leaders might require to reflect on this complex question before answering. I used 'what' and 'how' questions, avoiding 'why' questions, as suggested by Krueger (1994) in order that they were less directive. During the focus group sessions, I was mindful of allowing the flow of the discussion to inform the choice of the next question, rather than keeping to a predefined order. This resulted in changing the order of questions during one focus group so that the discussion flowed smoothly.

The advantages of focus groups include the rich data that emanates from these interviews with a relatively small amount of time and expense, the flexibility of the format, and the stimulation respondents can get from being part of focus groups (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Focus groups are also useful for generating and evaluating data from a specific sub-group, in my case, middle school leaders. However, when compared with semi-structured interviews, focus groups may not elicit as much individual information, but will provide more in terms of a collective response. During the focus groups I conducted participants were enthusiastic in their discussions, providing a range of perspectives and at times, evidence of functioning as a cohesive group. The disadvantages of focus groups can include managing the dynamics of the group, keeping one person from dominating the group, encouraging quieter participants to become involved, the possibility of 'groupthink', and eliciting responses from the whole group to ensure full coverage of the topic (Fontana & Frey, 2005). I avoided the dominance of one person during the focus group by inviting all participants to speak in a round-robin at the beginning of each question,

ensuring that each person was able to give their perspective. There is also the potential for attrition, meaning that one or two people may withdraw from the focus group due to unforeseen circumstances, so it is important to recruit a slightly larger number of participants than required. At two of the three schools involved in this research project, fewer middle leaders than anticipated attended. Fortunately, a larger number than required were invited to participate, meaning that the smallest focus group consisted of four participants; the minimum number required to run a focus group, as suggested by Hinds (2000).

DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis of interview and focus group data

I began the analysis of data early on in the project, transcribing and analysing each semi-structured interview and focus group interview as it was completed to ensure that this was methodically and consistently carried out. This also provided me with the opportunity to become familiar with the data as the research progressed. I used inductive analysis in order that the findings were data based, allowing me to draw out key themes which were cross-referenced across the samples selected and supported by research. Lofland, Snow, Anderson & Lofland (2006) propose that analysis of data is a highly interactive process, which requires the researcher to immerse themselves in the data in a methodical fashion. In order to analyse the data, I used colour coding and headings to highlight patterns, themes and commonalities, ensuring that the data related to my initial research question. I employed both initial coding and focused coding so that emergent themes were easily recognised. This helped to draw conclusions throughout the project as it unfolded and provided easier retrieval of data. Information such as the names of the organisations, localities, dates and times were recorded so that the files could easily be retrieved.

Throughout the research project, Lofland et al. (2006) suggest the researcher keeps field notes about their processes, experiences, impressions, feelings and interconnecting thoughts. These notes will assist with writing the research report,

providing credibility and helping to clarify any underlying assumptions. During the process of transcribing the data, I made notes of key concepts and ideas as they emerged, referring to them at a later date to confirm my initial thoughts. Lofland et al. (2006) propose a further way to connect themes and clarify analysis through the use of diagrams. This is an analytic activity which enables the researcher to see visual representations of relationships between the concepts, generating questions about the similarities and differences in the data in order to understand these connections. As the data and findings emerged from this research project, I drew diagrams in order to visually connect themes, resulting in the creation of a model to raise Pasifika student academic achievement (see Figure 6.1).

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) suggest these steps for analysis: creation of field text consisting of field notes and documents, indexing or filing, notes and interpretations based on field text, creation of a working document, and public text. They propose that this process will ensure the findings are valid, reflecting fully the data supplied by the participants in the study through true and precise recordings and analysis of data from different sources and methods into a single, consistent interpretation. Yin (2011) states “a valid study is one that has properly collected and interpreted its data, so that the conclusions accurately reflect and represent the real world (or laboratory) that was studied” (p. 78). As it was crucial to guarantee validity in my research, I worked in a methodical manner, recording, interpreting and analysing data to reflect a true picture of my findings. Lofland et al. (2006) state that the goal of data analysis is to formulate generic propositions, that sum up or provide answers to the research question, informed by the researcher’s knowledge of topics and questions. During the analysis of data, I was conscious of the research aim and three key questions, continually referring back to them to ensure that I was selecting the appropriate data, enabling clear themes to emerge.

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Paying attention to validity and reliability can attenuate threats (Cohen et al., 2007) and for this reason, reliability and validity are extremely important to the integrity of

research. However, as I undertook qualitative research, I was more concerned with validity than reliability. That is not to say that reliability should be dismissed in qualitative research; reliability can establish a consistency across groups of subjects and across indicators to ensure consistent results at different times, but because of this, it is more suited to quantitative research. In qualitative research, reliability can be measured through such things as honesty, richness, scope of the data, depth of the research, participants involved, triangulation, and the objectivity of the researcher. Cohen et al. (2007) state “in qualitative methodologies reliability includes fidelity to real life, context- and situation-specificity, authenticity, comprehensiveness, detail, honesty, depth of response and meaningfulness to the respondents” (p. 149).

In qualitative research, one way to ensure validity is through the use of triangulation. I ensured methodological triangulation through the use of two methods of investigation in three schools: semi-structured interviews and focus groups. I also employed combined levels of triangulation by collecting data at the individual level and the interactive level (groups). Keeves (1997) states that the aim of methodological triangulation is “to validate the evidence, the conclusions drawn and the theory being developed” (p. 284). The use of methodological triangulation will enable different perspectives, to provide strength and support to the findings and an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Cohen et al., 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Keeves, 1997). The use of triangulation, through the collection of data from both senior and middle leaders at three schools, allowed me to provide a range of perspectives in order to support the findings and provide greater interpretation.

Bryman (2004) proposes that triangulation enables the cross-checking of information gleaned from different sources which facilitates validation of the interpretation of subjects’ perspectives. Samples were drawn from a purposive selection of Auckland secondary schools to ensure a fair representation of senior and middle leaders, providing a multi-level analysis, a balance of voices and enabling rich data to be gathered at both individual and group level, strengthening the external validity of my

research. The research problem I investigated is of importance to New Zealand education, therefore this research was externally valid and of worth to leaders of learning throughout New Zealand. When discussing external validity, Cohen et al. (2007) state that it “refers to the degree to which the results can be generalized to the wider population, cases or situations” (p. 136). Although this research project was limited by research in a small number of schools in one metropolitan city, the strength of the findings indicate that these results could be generalised and valid for all secondary schools within New Zealand with a Pasifika student population.

Piloting of interview and focus group questions before use ensured that concepts and questions were appropriate to my research and that there were no leading questions in order to minimise bias. Replication of the questions used in each interview and focus group provided data that could be compared and confirmed the strength of the research. Content validity can be demonstrated through the use of an instrument which exhibits a fair and comprehensive coverage of the main issues in the proposed research, including depth and breadth, with careful selection of sampling strengthening the validity (Davidson & Tolich, 2003; Hinds, 2000). Content validity was demonstrated in this research project through the development of interview and focus group questions generated directly from the three initial research questions in this study.

In order to ensure internal validity, the findings must be accurate and credible and describe the phenomena being researched (Davidson & Tolich, 2003). A full, balanced representation of the data from the sample, collected in an ethical and trustworthy manner, will strengthen internal validity. Internal validity was demonstrated through the credibility and authenticity of the data, strengthened through the employment of triangulation techniques in order to confirm findings (Cohen et al., 2007). During interviews and focus groups, I took brief notes in order to keep track of the main ideas discussed and digitally recorded the conversations for transcription. Carefully selected questions ensured that the main research questions were answered. Once the written transcripts were completed, I emailed a digital copy to the interviewees who participated in semi-structured interviews in

order to check accuracy and gain agreement that this was a true account, while participants from the focus groups were offered digital copies of their individual transcripts on request. I kept and filed full written accounts so that there was an audit trail, as it is crucial that data is represented correctly and accurately. As Bishop (2005) states: “What people say should be presented unaltered and not analysed in any way beyond that which the respondent undertook” (p. 126).

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical research ensures the protection of people involved in the research study through the provision of information about the research, gaining informed consent from participants without coercion, and respecting autonomy, cultural and social sensitivity, and confidentiality. Put more simply, Wilkinson (2001) describes the key topic in ethics as “how we should treat others” (p. 13). This requires that subjects know and understand information about the research project, “that it is research; about any likely benefits or burdens; how much and what is asked of them; that they do not have to participate, and so on” (Wilkinson, 2001, p. 16).

Before undertaking my research, I submitted and gained ethics approval from the ethics committee at Unitec Institute of Technology. I also gained consent in writing from the Boards of Trustees and principals from each of the selected secondary schools (see Appendix G). Participation in the research was voluntary and participants were provided with background information, and verbally informed of both the risks and benefits of their involvement in the research. Cohen et al. (2007) highlight the ethical dimensions involved in interpersonal interaction which produces information about the human condition and state “one can identify three main areas of ethical issues here—informed consent, confidentiality, and the consequences of the interviews” (p. 292). Potential risks to the participants could be embarrassment, affronts to dignity, loss of trust in social relations, loss of autonomy and lowered self-esteem (Cohen et al., 2011). As participants were informed of the risks, participation was voluntary and transcripts were confidential and anonymous, these potential risks were minimised.

All participants received an information letter (see Appendices A and C), outlining the aim of my research, the key questions I hoped to answer through the research, and how it was intended that this research would contribute to a greater understanding of secondary school leaders' perceptions of the practices and challenges involved in improving Pasifika achievement. I provided my contact details so that individuals could contact me to ask any questions about the research. As part of the process, I sought voluntary informed consent, in order that participants chose freely to take part in the research without coercion. It was hoped that the benefits of participating in this research and making a contribution towards the greater good of education would outweigh the risks for participants. I made it clear to all participants that confidentiality would be maintained and transcripts would not be shared with anyone else, including school management. Instead, data would be analysed and written up in a final report, using coding so that no individual, school or person was able to be identified.

It was likely that some of the participants would be of Maori or Pasifika origin, so it was important that I explained my background and experience in working with Pasifika staff and students within secondary schools, in order to demonstrate my respect for Pasifika peoples and establish rapport as an equal with participants. I emphasised that this research would be of benefit to Pasifika, and that it was hoped that it would provide the information necessary to effect positive change in regards to Pasifika students' achievement. I also consulted with and gained the support of staff at the Unitec Pasifika Centre for my research project, including a discussion about the possible presence of Pasifika teachers amongst the participants of the focus groups or interviews. When discussing Maori participation in research, Jahnke and Tiapa (2003) highlight the fact that many researchers emphasise negative statistics, which consequently leads to suspicion by Maori, questioning the motives of researchers and the methodologies employed. With this in mind, I emphasised that priority would be accorded to the perspectives of the participants, rather than the researcher, and the value that participants' views and perspectives would add to this research. I also emphasised that I was there to ask the research questions and to

encourage and moderate the discussion, not to influence or change the participants' opinions.

In planning for the interviews, I carefully considered the information interviewees needed to know beforehand, ensuring that they were aware of the scope of the research, its potential audience, and the guidelines on the anticipated length of the interviews or focus groups. I also considered where the interviews and focus groups were to be held, taking care to select a venue that was relaxed and private, within the school environment. Careful selection of interview and focus group questions helped to ensure that the research could be completed within the time available in order that there was minimal risk of data that was incomplete or misleading.

The interviews and focus groups were digitally recorded in order to guarantee that all information gathered for transcripts was correct and true. During the interviews and focus groups, I was careful to permit both positive and negative comments to emerge without any influence, approval or disapproval, as this was able to give a more accurate picture of the information. This ensured that the data was valid and not selective or biased in any way. At the completion of the interviews and focus groups, transcripts were written up, with participants given the opportunity to withdraw their participation in the time leading up to three weeks after the event. In order to protect the confidentiality of participants, the interviewees involved in semi-structured interviews were able to receive their full transcripts, while focus group participants were only able to receive their portion of the contribution to the focus group discussion if requested.

An important ethical consideration is the writing up, analysis and reporting of research data. Cohen et al. (2007) propose that researchers need to be careful about their own bias when reporting data; there is a danger that they may end up looking for data that suits their own agenda, rather than analysing what is really there. An unethical case writer could be selective with the data in order to write anything that they wished to illustrate. Writers need to be aware of biases that can

affect the final product. Cohen et al. (2007) state the importance of being unbiased during the process of interpreting and defining the data: “One important factor in such circumstances that must be considered is the power of others to impose their own definitions of situations upon participants” (p. 25). Careful analysis of data to identify common themes and comparison with other literature ensured that findings were written up in a balanced and truthful way without bias or preconceptions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY CONCLUSION

This chapter has described the methodology and research method used in this research study. I have provided a rationale for adopting a subjectivist epistemological position, together with an interpretive paradigm and subsequent qualitative study approach. I have justified the choice of research methods using semi-structured interviews and focus groups for data collection and explained the reasons for using the combined methods of purposive and convenience sampling. Finally, I have justified the use of a general inductive approach to data analysis, described the criteria I have used to judge validity and presented ethical issues needing consideration for this research study. In the next chapter I will discuss the findings that this research methodology and data collection methods provided.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA RESULTS AND FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

This purpose of this chapter is to present a summary of the findings of the research data collected in three New Zealand secondary schools, through interviews with three principals, three senior leaders and three focus groups comprising of between four and six middle leaders. In total there were 21 respondents representing three different leadership perspectives, six of whom were of Pasifika descent. All data was collected by the researcher and each interview and focus group was digitally recorded, transcribed and validated through the emergence of themes during analysis. A simple coding system was used to identify each group; P identifying principals, SL identifying senior leaders and ML identifying middle leaders. The letters A, B and C were used to represent the three schools and participants in each focus group were assigned a number from one to six.

Four main themes emerged from the interviews and focus groups in relation to leadership and raising Pasifika achievement. These were leadership, school culture, practices and challenges. The theme of school culture interlinked consistently with the other three themes, so although I have chosen to report on school culture separately, it will appear frequently as a dominant condition throughout these findings. Each of these themes are supported by identified sub themes. A summary of each of these findings are provided at the beginning of each section.

LEADERSHIP

The first major theme to emerge from the data was the importance of leadership within secondary schools and its impact on Pasifika achievement in terms of good leadership practice, the development of strategies to improve Pasifika achievement and the support and development of leadership at all levels within the school.

Table 4.1: Summary of key leadership findings

Senior leaders' findings	Participant emergent strategies
Leadership is critical in raising Pasifika achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champion and lead the drive for raising Pasifika achievement (P: A/B/C) (SL: A/B/C) • Ensure good leadership practice is related back to best evidence (P: A/B/C) (SL: A) • Create strategic plans which raise Pasifika achievement and help to close the gap between Pasifika students and other students (P: A/B/C) (SL: A/B/C)
Middle leaders' findings	Participant emergent strategies
Support the implementation of initiatives which raise Pasifika achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the momentum going by continuing to implement and support initiatives in the classroom which drive Pasifika academic achievement to higher levels (ML: A/B/C)

The importance of leadership and its impact on Pasifika achievement

All principals agreed that leadership, both at the top level and at other levels within the school, had a huge impact on the improvement of Pasifika achievement. They cited leadership as key in creating the climate of learning, the school culture and giving profile to raising Pasifika achievement:

I think it's got a huge bearing on it. That's leadership within multiple levels within the school... The principal has that critical role of championing issues and putting Pasifika achievement on the table and resourcing it. (Principal: School A)

It is the key factor because it's your job to ensure the students are passing, so particularly around groups like Maori and Pasifika, if you don't prioritise and lead it and show how you're going to get them to pass then it's not going to happen. (Principal: School B)

Leadership is crucial and it has to be very proactive leadership to make things change. (Principal: School C)

One senior leader felt that it was important that both Pasifika parents and students saw leaders as being serious about academic achievement, as they looked up to

leaders and trusted them with the responsibility of educating their sons and daughters:

It's not culturally appropriate for Pasifika students to see a school leader being flippant about education or being flippant about progress or achievement... they see it as something very serious. (Senior Leader: School B)

Another four senior leaders emphasised the importance of leadership, particularly in developing strategies for raising student achievement and development of accountability for teachers:

I think as in all things, school leadership impacts hugely on student achievement, so not just for Pasifika. I think the projects and the strategies that leaders put in place will have an influence all the way down to individual students. (Senior Leader: School A)

I think one of the biggest things is establishing accountability with your management, and then them with their team, which can be lacking sometimes, so people understand why they're doing things and lots of reporting about what's going on in the school. (Principal: School B)

When asked about leadership and its influence on Pasifika achievement, four senior leaders reported the importance of using good leadership practices which related back to best evidence, having the ability to connect with staff and students and performing a range of tasks:

I think the positive ones link really clearly back to the research around what good leadership looks like, so it's around the culture of the organisation, it's around goal setting, data, it's around teaching and learning... so those sorts of steps are really important and link to some of the best evidence about the key things that leaders do to effect student outcomes. (Principal: School A)

I think a good leader for Pasifika students should be one who is able to, at another level, connect with not just the Pasifika students, not just the Pasifika parents, but Pasifika students seeing that the leader can also connect with non-Pasifika students as well as their families and communities so a leader who can sort of wear different hats right across the spectrum, Pasifika

students will respond to I think. So, having that ability to be a leader in a wide variety of situations; culturally, academically, socially, and the students seeing that instils confidence. (Senior Leader: School B)

Leaders' perceptions of current Pasifika achievement within their schools

Almost all principals and senior leaders interviewed agreed that Pasifika students, although improving, were not achieving as well as other ethnic groups within their schools:

The reality is Pasifika achievement lags. It does here as in most schools across the country. That's not a perception, that's the reality. My perception is that we are working really hard to close the gaps and we can close the gaps (Principal: School A)

Perceptions... and of course the reality is that there is still a gap but that is improving, particularly with Pasifika, but we're narrowing that gap most years. (Principal: School C)

Pasifika achievement is a significant issue that we work hard at because we recognise it, so the gap between Pasifika achievement and European achievement is too large. (Senior Leader: School C)

However, the principal of School A noted that achievement data could often be misleading, contributing to the perception of a deficit in Pasifika achievement:

The stock standard NCEA Level at the end of year 11, NCEA Level 2 at the end of year 12 discriminates against those kids because of their backgrounds but they make huge gains and if you change the frame of how you look at the achievement it's not as bad and we could close the gap. (Principal: School A)

Almost all middle leaders, although acknowledging there was still a gap, felt very positive about the progress made towards increasing Pasifika achievement. Some middle leaders were now focusing on increasing Pasifika students' achievement to merit and excellence levels:

Excellent! It's increasing. Last year for instance in Level 1, 84% of Pasifika boys gained Level 1, which was a higher percentage than Europeans and Asians which is really neat and it's increasing... 80% at Level 2. (Middle Leader 1: School B)

I think it's good. My concern is the top end as far as merit and excellence. (Middle Leader 5: School B)

However, it was noted by one senior leader and a small number of middle leaders that it was difficult to make a comparison between Pasifika achievement and other students' achievement, as it did not take into account the many individual cultures that come under the Pasifika umbrella:

It's a little bit like comparing apples with oranges because there are so many different students in each of those groups... at this school we have students from Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, the Cook Islands, Papua New Guinea and within the ethnic groups, the students are very different. (Senior Leader: School A)

I want it broken down a little bit better for myself, just because there are significant challenges in Niuean, Tokelauan, Samoan, Tongan... all are quite different so I always find it interesting that we always group that together. (Middle Leader 3: School C)

SCHOOL CULTURE

The second theme that emerged from the data was that of school culture. School culture was interlinked with the other three themes and was fundamental in linking all themes together to create a cohesive picture. School culture was critical in creating a sense of belonging for leaders, teachers, students and their families, and was at the heart of everything that was implemented within the schools. School culture was discussed at length by all participants in regards to leadership, the development of pedagogy, Pasifika academic achievement, relationships, community partnerships and student success. School culture, it seems, is at the heart of everything that goes on within a school and therefore many sub themes emerged from this data.

Table 4.2: Conditions of school culture that are perceived to enhance Pasifika students' academic achievement

Senior leaders' findings	Participant emergent strategies
Create an inclusive and supportive environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for Pasifika students to immerse themselves in school life and feel valued (<i>P: A/B/C</i>) (<i>SL: A/B/C</i>) • Acknowledge Pasifika culture as being important to the school (<i>P: A/B/C</i>) (<i>SL: A/B/C</i>)
Have high expectations of students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expect students to be successful – drive success and believe in them (<i>P: A/B/C</i>) (<i>SL: A/B</i>)
Celebrate Pasifika success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrate academic success whenever possible – in small ways as well as big (<i>P: A/B/C</i>) (<i>SL: A/B/C</i>)
Use Pasifika role models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for Pasifika student leadership so that they can lead others, particularly in academic achievement (<i>P: A/B/C</i>) (<i>SL: A/B/C</i>) • Use role models who come from the Pasifika community to influence students in a positive way (<i>P: A/B/C</i>) (<i>SL: A</i>)
Foster positive learning relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships are the most important thing when it comes to developing a teaching and learning relationship (<i>P: A/B/C</i>) (<i>SL: A/B/C</i>) • <i>Te Kotahitanga</i> has merit and should be looked at as a model for the development of learning relationships (<i>P: A/C</i>) (<i>SL: B/C</i>) • Fostering relationships with parents and the community can create a reciprocal partnership focused on raising Pasifika achievement (<i>P: A/B/C</i>) (<i>SL: A/B/C</i>)
Middle leaders' findings	Participant emergent strategies
Create an inclusive and supportive environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a warm, supportive, successful, family-type environment for students (<i>ML: A/B/C</i>)
Have high expectations of students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure is not acceptable – encourage students to find help and support when they need it (<i>ML: A/B/C</i>)
Use Pasifika role models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pasifika student leaders can influence others to aim high and create future possibilities (<i>ML: A/B</i>) • Use Pasifika staff, wherever possible, as role models for students (<i>ML: A/B/C</i>)
Foster positive learning relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caring, personal relationships are important for student-teacher engagement (<i>ML: A/B/C</i>) • <i>Te Kotahitanga</i> has provided a model for effective teaching and learning relationships (<i>ML: B/C</i>) • Fostering partnerships with parents and the community can open up reciprocal communication and support for Pasifika student achievement (<i>ML: A/B/C</i>)

An inclusive and supportive environment

All three schools in this study described their schools as having a caring, inclusive, family environment with structures that supported both staff and students. Creating a sense of belonging for students and providing a range of opportunities to immerse themselves in school life featured highly when participants described the culture of their schools:

In our school, we're quite student centred. We actually live that, we breathe that on a daily basis and there's lots of dimensions to that and really that means, part of that is that relationship with young people, it's about being genuine with them and giving them opportunities. (Principal: School A)

It's like the family, the Pasifika family; if you can understand the structures and where people fit in in terms of the community, the church they were raised in, as well as the school... in terms of involving our Pasifika students, if they can see a picture like that, they really mould into the culture and how we've built the culture of the school. (Middle Leader 3: School B)

I find that this school is very caring, very caring. (Middle Leader 4: School C)

Principals at Schools A and C cited valuing and acknowledging Pasifika culture as an important factor in creating a culture of inclusiveness and belonging within their schools:

And so we've seen through there that the students that are comfortable and positive about their school engage... it's also understanding cultures and changing your practices to fit in with those cultures, not trying to change those cultures to fit in with your practices. (Principal: School A)

So what you've got to do with school culture is create a culture where kids can believe in the school and feel part of that culture and just celebrate it in their culture and Pasifika, Maori, European... it doesn't matter as long as they feel part of a bigger system. That is very important. (Principal: School C)

However, a senior leader at School B spoke about a special 'bond' or culture that was prevalent in this single sex school which created a culture of inclusiveness and belonging:

There's definitely a very strong 'School B' bond, not just amongst the students, but I think even amongst teachers themselves and amongst teachers and students and so you could say that there's a 'School B' thing. (Senior Leader: School B)

Principal A described Pasifika students previously feeling like visitors within their own school because they felt like a minority and that they did not belong. As the culture shifted to one of inclusiveness, so too did the students' attitudes towards the school and their academic achievement:

By having the richness of acknowledging that culture as well as letting them know they were wanted, we got a much better, fuller result from them. (Principal: School A)

Some middle leaders from School A also pointed out the importance of all leaders and teachers working together to create a warm, happy, inclusive and successful environment in order for Pasifika students to feel that they belonged and develop a positive attitude towards their learning:

I think we need to be aware as leaders that the environment we create will have a direct consequence on how these students feel and perform. That's the biggest challenge, I think, as a leader. (Middle Leader 6: School A)

I think we're a really supportive school in all sorts of ways, in terms of supporting staff, careers, mentoring systems, all sorts of things going on. In general there's a real empowering, inclusive environment. (Middle Leader 4: School A)

Both senior leaders and almost all middle leaders from School B, a single sex state secondary school, discussed a sense of belonging within the school. They cited specifically a feeling of 'brotherhood' where the boys supported each other and wanted to 'jump on board' when they saw other Pasifika students achieving well:

Pasifika students tend to be quite communal, so if a group of boys jump on the bandwagon of academic success, whether it be the 1st XV as role models for other boys, so that's where the culture has shifted. (Middle Leader 4: School B)

I'm not sure exactly what it is, but it's there. That's a clear part of the culture of the school. So how have some of those elements enhanced Pasifika learning? Well, definitely. (Senior Leader: School B)

It's like you've got a critical mass all going in the same direction and they all wanted to become academic students all of a sudden. (Principal: School B)

Expectations

All principals in this study spoke about the importance of high expectations and celebrating success along the journey, not just as an end product, with a focus on what success looks like in order to breed those behaviours in the students:

I think your culture of high expectations, we expect you to be successful, so there's that culture that is in our school... to make kids believe they can be successful is the first step along the journey... driving success, telling the kids that you will pass and you will be successful. (Principal: School A)

There's all the belief stuff in the students, the standing up and telling them that they're expected to pass. (Principal: School B)

It's acknowledging kids all the time, so a higher reward factor for kids who are achieving little things. (Principal: School C)

There was a clear connection made between high expectations, goal setting and academic achievement through the fostering of positive relationships between students and teachers and school and community:

We know that relationships are fundamentally important. I think if you overlap that with some heavy stuff around expectations around goal setting you get really good results. That's not rocket science stuff, but to actually put it into practice works. (Principal: School A)

Almost all senior and middle leaders also spoke about high expectations and how important they were for Pasifika student motivation and success:

I think that there's a slogan going around that failure is not acceptable, failure is not okay... the fact that if you want to succeed, you've got to put the time in. (Middle Leader 1: School B)

Boys will tell you openly now that the school has changed and that it's more academic focused now. When you put up 80% pass rates at the start of the year, you're sending a massive message to the students that that's what's expected now. (Principal: School B)

Four middle leaders at School A discussed how the culture of high expectations within their school had in turn developed the confidence of Pasifika students and enabled them to ask for help when it was required:

They're not shy in coming forward which I find quite unusual compared to the last school I was at. (Middle Leader 1: School A)

What I've found about the Pasifika students, the ones who are not succeeding, who feel that they need a bit of support, they are open to come and ask for help, that's what I have found very positive about this school. In my past school which was predominantly Pasifika, their openness to come and ask what was lacking, so that's something I've found very positive about this place. (Middle Leader 3: School A)

Celebrating Pasifika success

All three schools in this study felt that it was imperative to celebrate Pasifika success, including academic achievement and other achievements within the school such as sporting and cultural successes. These were celebrated using a range of platforms and events:

Success was celebrated heavily, what success is, what it looks like, not just the academic end product success. A lot of work around the behaviours and what success looks like, that breed success in the learning behaviours, these were celebrated as well. (Principal: School A)

We absolutely celebrate success at assemblies. We do that through running specific assemblies, such as an academic assembly where we just celebrate whatever is going well in the school academically. We also have sports ones, but with the sports ones, we do very tricky little things now, like at the start of the year we won the National Condors, so we listed the boys and what level they achieved, so we're just constantly reinforcing that they're academics first and sportsmen second; so like you put up Level 2 beside their name and all the boys can see that and it's very powerful. (Principal: School B)

We have an achiever's assembly at the beginning of the year for those who have got Level 1. Their families can come in, they can get a special achiever's jersey, so getting Level 1 certificate, in some ways is seen as meeting external requirements, but it actually is a milestone for kids and I suppose saying we're going to raise you up to that or you've got to raise yourself up to this level is talking about aspiration for them I supposed and not being satisfied with being down here. (Senior Leader: School C)

As well as celebrating success at school assemblies, principal C spoke about giving out weekly reward cards for students so that there was a climate of positive reward for students who were achieving smaller things, enabling them to feel they had contributed to the bigger system and encouraging students to be present at school to learn:

Lots of little rewards means the kids will buy into it a lot more and the culture is focused on achievement. (Principal: School C)

School A had supported an initiative proposed by Pasifika student leaders which celebrated the successes of Pasifika students outside of the classroom. This initiative comprised of setting up a notice board in the area where Pasifika students congregated so that it was able to be viewed and talked about by students:

It's got all the things the Pasifika students have been involved in; the fashion show, all the pictures, business, the things that happen around the school anyway, but it's just publicising to all the Pasifika kids all the excellence students do. That's what our focus is here as leaders. (Senior Leader: School A)

Role modelling

All three schools discussed the use of role models as a positive strategy for giving Pasifika students someone to look up to and use as motivation for their own future aspirations. These role models included past, present and future students and role models from within the community, such as professional sportspeople.

I think Pasifika kids see other Pasifika kids in leadership roles and so that creates a possibility in their minds (Middle Leader 2: School A).

We're all about role modelling and I know that the previous principal was a really big advocate of old boys coming back to the school and teaching so that's highly influential for these young boys; seeing that in the school and around the school gives them something to build towards. (Middle Leader 3: School B)

If you can get those people into your school, who were successful from the past of your school, kids then believe that it can happen. (Principal: School C)

Role modelling also included current teaching staff who worked at these schools, in particular Pasifika staff. Middle leaders at two different schools described the benefits of having Pasifika staff who could act as role models:

Being of Pasifika descent, being an old boy of the school and also in middle management, I think that's highly influential for Pasifika achievement. Being involved in these groups, committees, boards around the school also really helps influence the Pasifika learner... seeing that there's a brown face that they can go to. (Middle Leader 3: School B)

The principal has employed 12 Pasifika staff and they're all on board. Anyone that's come through has said, "you've got way too many Pasifika staff" and I've said, "that's not a bad thing, we're all qualified, we are who we are and it doesn't matter" and the kids see that and so we try and role model to our students; I'm just like you. (Middle Leader 4: School C)

All three schools had access to Pasifika role models who were currently attending University and utilised these role models by having them speak at Pasifika parents and careers evenings. This enabled Pasifika parents and students to gain a greater

understanding of what tertiary education was about and provided support for aspiring students. Two schools (A and B) accessed the *MATES* (Mentoring and Tutoring Education Scheme) programme run by the University of Auckland, with one school also devising their own programme called 'Tall Poppies', where a current PhD student ran weekly sessions for aspiring Maori and Pasifika students on essay writing and study techniques:

We want to make sure that they feel included in a group that is academically focused and that increases aspiration. (Senior Leader: School C)

Developing student leadership

All leaders interviewed spoke about the development of leadership at student level and its importance in creating opportunities for Pasifika students, with School A demonstrating a very cohesive programme which included student leaders running initiatives at different levels across many spectrums of school life. These leadership initiatives gave students the opportunity to model leadership, own these projects, to take responsibility for them and solve any problems that arose:

Pasifika students really respond to it well, huge responsibility and opportunities to show how good they are in different environments. They really step up to the plate, you can find the opportunities for them to be incredibly successful and that success flows across to all sorts other things. (Principal: School A)

It's quite a big thing for Pasifika kids. They are trained up to be leaders so we work with them through the whole year and they run projects, they have to run leadership projects each one of them, so some of them have to organise and run camps, some of them have to run clubs. (Senior Leader: School A)

Pasifika kids see other Pasifika kids in leadership roles and so that creates a possibility in their minds. I think that's part of the school culture. (Middle Leader 2: School A)

Student leadership and its importance in creating a school culture of academic success

School A reported a shift in school culture when Pasifika students modelled leadership by developing and implementing a homework club. This resulted in Pasifika students engaging in study and frequenting the school library which quickly became the place for Pasifika students to congregate. This initiative also raised the academic profile and self-esteem of Pasifika students:

Student leadership can be really powerful in driving where the school is going in terms of expectations and the culture of the students... the senior students are really powerful through the culture; they have huge expectations and responsibility. You can tap into that; they become really useful. (Principal: School A)

The knock on effect is that the library has become this place where Pasifika students go and they are leading other students. (Senior Leader: School A)

Another initiative in School A was the initiation of mentoring programmes for Pasifika students, resulting in a culture change and “what Pasifika kids do here is study”:

It's had a real big effect in terms of just focusing the students. (Senior Leader: School A)

School B focused on student leadership as a vehicle with which to raise Pasifika achievement. Two years ago, they reduced their prefect numbers right down in order to focus on raising academic achievement before building up that leadership profile again. At School B, student leaders are made up from a range of groups including the 1st XV who run a homework club and act as academic role models:

Big changes even in sport here in terms of 1st XV. They run a homework club. In 2010, they had a 30% pass rate across all NCEA levels. Last year they had an 80% pass rate, so they're getting there and we flash it up in assembly, because rugby players are still quite big role models here in the school, and so you just flash it up and show the school that this is what these guys are doing now. (Principal: School B)

What has changed is the success rate in amongst our top sportsmen, so we had a statistic last year that 80% of our 1st XV gained Level 3... that's a huge turn around... a lot of them are strong role models in their final year and that again is another example of how the school culture operates (Middle Leader 2: School B)

Relationships between students and teachers

Without exception, all principals, senior leaders and middle leaders interviewed at the three selected schools cited relationships as being key in raising Pasifika achievement. They discussed relationships as being a critical factor in enabling effective teaching and learning relationships to develop:

Relationships are number one, number one! (Principal: School C)

More and more we recognise that it's those relationships with the kids that are the critical focus and most staff do have good relationships with kids, but to develop ones that will enhance learning more is the key thing with Pasifika kids. (Senior Leader: School C)

A culture of relationships... which I think really helps whether they're Maori students or Pasifika students. (Principal: School A)

Almost all middle leaders at each school spoke about making personal connections with students as part of good teaching practice and strengthening student engagement:

I think it's fundamental, whether it be Maori or Pasifika students; having that relationship. Not just knowing about the boy, but knowing about their cultural or their spiritual backgrounds and I think it goes a huge way in being able to engage those boys... it's massive. (Middle Leader 5: School B)

Really pushing the fact that we are caring. That it's really important that they matter, that they matter as people, that we want to be seeing them here. (Middle Leader 2: School C)

I try to find that personal connection... I've learned, early intervention, as soon as I see things starting to slip, I will intervene and make sure it's a personal one on one intervention because I've found that delivers and gets them back on board. (Middle Leader 2: School A)

Principal B did note, however, that effective teacher/student relationships had to be based on high expectations with a focus on learning in order to be effective. He saw that solely congenial relationships could have a negative impact, which was something that he had observed happening within his own school when he first began as principal:

I think that was a bit of a trap here really. It wasn't something I hadn't seen before. Really awesome relationships in the classroom, really warm friendly classrooms, but not a lot of learning going on, so that's changed a lot. (Principal: School B)

Te Kotahitanga as a model for relationships

Without exception, all participants acknowledged the importance of *Te Kotahitanga* in providing a teaching and learning model which was based on the building of positive relationships. Principal A discussed the need to have social interaction and build relationships with Pasifika students on a personal level before good teaching and learning could occur:

There's huge amounts around that whole 'how you with interact with Pasifika kids' and a lot of it's not rocket science. It links back to what we know about relationships, being restorative, Russell Bishop's work around work that he's done with Maori kids. It's the same sort of thing; it's about having that relationship with the kids before you do the business. (Principal: School A)

Schools B and C had recently had active *Te Kotahitanga* programmes within their schools and cited the benefits including the focus on building relationships between students and teachers:

I think one of the best things to come out of Te Kotahitanga was best practice that relationships are key with Maori and Pasifika and the quote that "they don't

care how much you know until they know how much you care” I think is fundamental for Pasifika. (Middle Leader 4: School B)

I think that for Pasifika students school wide, one of the biggest things is that we are a Te Kotahitanga school and the teachers who buy into that really are helping our Pasifika students as well. I think that would be one of the biggest things... it’s about valuing culture and relationships with students. It’s all about relationships. (Middle Leader 1: School C)

As funding for *Te Kotahitanga* came to a close, School B realised the benefits of this programme and made a conscious decision to adapt it using the essence of *Te Kotahitanga* in order to develop their own initiative that valued student cultural capital and positive relationships to enhance pedagogy and benefit all students:

I think a lot of us realised how good Te Kotahitanga was and so we decided to take from it what we thought were the things we could use at ‘School B’. So, we used the Te Kotahitanga Effective Teachers Profile and turned it into the ‘School B’ Teachers Profile and then based on Te Kotahitanga characteristics, what the good ‘School B’ teacher is like and so we’ve been focusing on that over the last three to four years and its evolved slowly. (Senior Leader: School B)

We have had a five year programme of Te Kotahitanga which was aimed at relationships and building better relationships in the classroom and group learning, so it seemed natural that at some point we actually accelerated what that could mean. (Middle Leader 2: School B)

Relationships between the school and Pasifika families

All schools in this study reported working hard to develop relationships with Pasifika parents and the community. School A had developed a Talanoa night, which had two foci: one was providing the social arena in order to develop and build relationships; the other was providing information and resources for parents and students so that students could maintain an academic focus with support from home. School C had established regular family conferences, which enabled clear

communication with parents and extended families. School C had also recently initiated careers counselling for students and their families in order to develop clear pathways for future course selection and study. Principal C spoke about the importance of these initiatives:

Linking with families and the communities to help them to understand how education works and how to be successful in that game is really important, and so you can't just do it through the kids, you actually have to engage with the families. (Principal: School C)

School B had begun academic counselling with a focus on a three-way conversation, which had resulted in a move from a 20% turnout to over 80% of Pasifika parents attending. These larger attendance numbers enabled school B to build stronger relationships and gain more family involvement. This was in part due to the Pasifika Dean developing and maintaining relationships within the community. He spoke about this process:

Part of the Pasifika Education Plan is basically our responsibility to engage with our Pasifika parents in regards to the holy trinity; the teachers, the school, the students, the families and communities so that in itself, but I think part of that is the culture of changing the expectation of students, staff and parents I think has changed and I think they have more of an assuredness in regards to these results, that they see the kids are doing well within the school. (Middle Leader 4: School B)

All three schools agreed that there were clear benefits to establishing and maintaining connections between home and school such as initiating conversations about academic achievement and providing support for families and students:

The relationships with the families' supporting the student learning has gotten way stronger than it used to be because they're involved now. (Principal: School B)

We tell parents now what questions to ask at parent teachers evening... here are the questions you should be asking about your son or daughter, so that you know what to do at home and that might help. (Principal: School C)

I've had times where 10 people will turn up at a conference... parents, uncles, aunts, little siblings and everyone comes and actually sits around the table and talks about learning and next steps and we try to focus again, not on the bad marks or anything, but what is the future stuff. (Middle Leader 3: School C)

One senior leader from School B spoke about establishing relationships and communication with home and how that had impacted on student engagement, resulting in positive behaviour and an improved classroom environment:

Part of the cultural change was to make that person engage with the issue of behaviour, because once we got some engagement and also some home communication, we created the triangle, instead of just talking about the triangle and that has made a big difference to the classroom situation. (Middle Leader 2: School B)

School A actively encouraged Pasifika parents and families to engage in two way communication and participate in the structure of the evenings by suggesting specific things they wanted to know about. This created an opportunity for parents to really feel connected and involved in the school:

The parents feel quite involved in the decision making and I feel that Talanoa night is the best thing this school provides to the Pasifika community as such; a forum, a voice (Middle Leader 3: School A).

Clear, regular, concise communication with both students and their families featured at all three schools and was an aspect that was appreciated by families and communities, giving them the sense of being kept in the loop and the opportunity to contribute to the school. However, all three schools in this study acknowledged that there was still difficulty in establishing and maintaining family and community connections, making it a constant challenge. As some senior leaders suggested, it is often out of the control of the school and may be due to commitments families have in their own lives or the hesitation of some parents to get involved:

They can't actually get to report evening. That's the reason, it's not because they don't think it's valuable. (Principal: School A)

It's still hard getting the community involved much but that's another project on its own. I think everywhere is struggling to get communities involved. (Principal: School B)

Pasifika parents are hesitant about getting involved in school because the school... that's where my child goes to... you do your job and I'll do my bit at home. (Senior Leader: School B)

The principal at School B did note however that although the school had put a lot of resources into Pasifika parents evenings and connecting with the community, he viewed a focus on raising Pasifika academic achievement as the first and most important step in gaining support from parents:

We're in that nice stage now where we can start thinking like that, we can start thinking wider because we've got results, we've got momentum, now you can start answering some of those other questions. (Principal: School B)

PRACTICE

The third major theme to emerge from the data was practices that were perceived to make a positive impact on raising Pasifika achievement. These practices were initiated at leadership level and implemented within the classroom. There were many common to all three schools, but subtle differences in the way these practices were executed were evident in the data.

Table 4.3: Practices that are perceived to enhance Pasifika students' academic achievement

Senior leaders' findings	Participant emergent strategies
Analyse data to plan strategically and inform future decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use data throughout the year to find the needs of the students and adapt accordingly (<i>P: A/B/C</i>) (<i>SL: A/B/C</i>)
Use data to track student achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make data available to students in order to encourage next steps for learning and gain momentum for academic achievement (<i>P: A/B/C</i>) (<i>SL: A/B/C</i>)
Use research and the enquiry cycle to develop teaching and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review continuously and gain input from teachers, students and Pasifika parents in order to develop programmes that engage and challenge Pasifika students (<i>P: A/C</i>) (<i>SL: A</i>)
Focus on the development of pedagogy as the key to good teaching and learning for Pasifika students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific pedagogy for Pasifika not necessary – good pedagogy is more important (<i>P: A/B</i>) (<i>SL: A/B</i>)
Develop courses which cater for Pasifika student needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage departments to create courses that will engage Pasifika students and provide pathways for future learning (<i>P: C</i>) (<i>SL: A/B/C</i>)
Offer extra tuition for students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create the structures for extra tuition for students (<i>P: A/B/C</i>) (<i>SL: A/B/C</i>)
Establish Pasifika leadership roles for teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pasifika staff can provide a bridge between home and school and become role models for students (<i>SL: B/C</i>)
Middle leaders' findings	Participant emergent strategies
Use data to track student achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use data at departmental and classroom level in order to adapt teaching strategies and have dialogue with students about their achievement (<i>ML: A/CB/C</i>)
Use the enquiry cycle to develop teaching and learning in the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create individual learning programmes for Pasifika students (<i>ML: C</i>)
Focus on the development of pedagogy as the key to good teaching and learning for Pasifika students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a range of teaching styles that will benefit all students (<i>ML: A/C</i>)
Develop courses which cater for Pasifika student needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use student voice to review programmes and find out what students require in order to engage (<i>ML: A</i>)
Offer extra tuition for students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create opportunities outside of school for students to catch up on work and extend themselves academically (<i>ML: A/B/C</i>)

Using data and tracking student achievement

At all three schools, the use of data to inform teaching and learning practices was highlighted as being important. Almost all senior and middle leaders agreed that it was imperative that data was analysed at both the management and teaching level in order to plan strategically, inform future decisions regarding programmes on offer to students and to track student achievement:

Using the data actively during the year to make changes. And using the data is not just at a senior management level, but bringing it back into the departments... leadership within departments is the key thing there too, but if they don't know the data and don't know how to come up with solutions, you've got to help them. (Principal: School C)

As leaders we spend a lot more time looking at the overall achievement data for the whole school or the overall achievement data for the whole faculty and I think because we've got the time and that is our job to look at it as an overall, that we can then decide on projects and create projects that will then have an influence on teachers but then it will have an influence on classrooms and individual students. (Senior Leader: School A)

I'd expect that all the teachers will bring to me evidence of what they're doing; their markbooks or data, so that we can see whether they're actually doing that. (Middle Leader 1: School B)

School A used data tracking sheets as a tool for the development of pedagogy and specific strategies for raising Pasifika achievement:

When students have completed an assessment, within 15 days the Head of Department has analysed the results and given them to the teachers so we can talk about what is working and what is not working. This means that we can share strategies with other teachers and that its not left until the end. (Middle Leader 3: School A)

However, one principal acknowledged that although using data proved useful, it often bogged people down and could be problematic:

I think data is a real catch phrase at the moment, that's my opinion. People spend hours and hours poring over data but a lot of it doesn't necessarily make you a better teacher in the classroom. (Principal: School B)

Two of the schools in this study discussed having designated staff who were given the responsibility for the monitoring and tracking of credits; at one school it was a deputy principal and at the other it was a designated data manager. Both of these schools published student results by displaying them in an area which students could access, enabling them to view and monitor their own progress. This process required a commitment from all staff including senior leaders, middle leaders, deans and teachers in order to ensure that student work was assessed in a timely manner and data was updated and checked frequently.

At School B, this practice sent a clear message to Pasifika students that the school was putting in a big effort to help them, enabling them to take a sense of pride in their success and become competitive about academic achievement:

Things like publishing credits constantly, putting them up in windows, putting them in assembly, all the data, constantly telling the boys where they're at, making comparisons with the year before so they get competitive about it and wanting to beat it. (Principal: School B)

That created a huge impact on academic achievement... it absolutely sent a message to the boys. Instead of us just talking about it, saying it was important, by us putting the effort into the charts and the boys seeing the effort that we made in terms of colour coding and sorting it out into class lots and making the effort to ensure that it was as up to date as possible the boys realised, "oh, sir's that keen about it, it must be important". (Senior Leader: School B)

That is excellent, because that gives the boys a very clear picture of where they are and where they should be by the end of the year and that's being promoted through leadership; the principal, the DPs, the APs, the deans, everybody... so the whole leadership team and the whole leadership cohort right down to the

*HOFs have really pushing that at all their meetings, right from the word go.
(Middle Leader 1: School B)*

All three schools in this study coupled the monitoring and tracking of credits with a specific evening for Pasifika parents and students where progress was discussed and future plans were made for academic progress. School A had devised a portfolio for each Pasifika student which contained personal and academic information:

We created some books of all our Pasifika students, so every year we have a photo board which is in the form of a book that we then distributed amongst all of our teachers, so it's got each year group, all of our Pasifika kids, what their interests are, what they want to do when they leave school, their attendance rate, who their teachers are. (Senior Leader: School A)

We have the one on one sheets with the kids, a print out of where students are, what they've passed, what they still have to do, what they've failed. So there's always that one on one in a concerned sort of way, what's going on, how are you feeling about this, what might you do? So there's that targeting, because we have a successful wide focus. (Middle Leader 2: School A)

School C set up a tracking and mentoring system where targeted Pasifika students met with their mentor every 3 – 4 weeks to discuss their achievement to date, set goals and agree on next steps for their academic journey. This initiative has helped to bridge the gap between school and home cultural capital:

The conversation is quite constructive and it's growing those kids, so that has had a big impact. (Principal: School C)

School C had also developed a credit forecasting system where teachers forecast the potential credits each student could possibly get in that standard. These forecasts were colour coded for easy understanding with the warmer colours such as yellow and red indicating that a student was doing well and was on track and the cooler colours, such as blue, indicating that there were some issues with achievement. This provided a tool for academic counselling and enabled both teachers and students to identify areas where extra help might be required:

It's a really good basis for conversation which is what you're going to use it for. (Senior Leader: School C)

Using the inquiry cycle

At School A, both senior leaders interviewed discussed using the inquiry cycle in terms of research and review at senior leadership level in order to develop teaching and learning within the school. This process included the use of achievement data alongside discussions with students, parents and teachers to develop programmes which would engage and challenge Pasifika students:

So I think that cycle of review and finding out what works and doesn't work is one of our strengths of leadership, so with regards to Pasifika, the curriculum review would have had quite an influence on that in terms of we did a full review in two years, all those different groups I've talked about. (Senior Leader: School A)

These reviews enabled leaders and teachers to work together to develop a specific strategy for Pasifika achievement, which aligned with the *Pasifika Education Plan*:

We wrote the strategic plan together. So you can see how it goes from leadership level, from the review down to working with these guys, meeting them on a weekly basis, down to individual kids that they work with whose results are now going up. (Senior Leader: School A)

Schools B and C had also developed specific strategic plans for Pasifika achievement and used a cycle of inquiry as part of that process:

In our strategic plan it is about raising Pasifika achievement, so we're doing this because we believe an immediate impact on that area and then it's about carrying out those practices that are active and impact straight away on the kids. (Principal: School C)

If we focus on that student and go through the cycle of inquiry... so where they're at, what do we need and how do we get there... I think it's a cycle that brings effective teaching and learning. (Middle Leader 3: School B)

Professional development and pedagogy for diversity

Although it was agreed by all three schools that it was important to run some professional development around teaching for diversity, most senior leaders and many middle leaders interviewed thought it was more important to focus on pedagogy as the key for good teaching and learning, not necessarily specific pedagogy for Pasifika. Good pedagogy was discussed in terms of clarity of success criteria, having a portfolio approach enabling students resubmission opportunities, breaking achievement standards down into manageable chunks, feed-back and feed-forward, using a range of teaching strategies which were innovative and interesting, focusing on the development of literacy skills and using student friendly language:

A lot of those strategies you've got to run professional development for and train teachers how to do it because a lot of them are old school here and they've got one sort of fixed method of teaching. It's generally just about good teaching, although we do specific Pasifika stuff, but that's not our main focus... ever! (Principal: School B)

Professional development is now all about pedagogy. It's all about teaching and learning, not about bringing in outside speakers who will bore people. It's all about good teaching and learning but it's also about engaging students who might have difficulties with language and literacy, which is a number of our Pasifika, so while it hasn't been tagged Pasifika, most of it will really impact on them. It's all about innovative, interesting practices that will engage students and make them want to learn. (Middle Leader 1: School B)

We're quite lucky being those teachers who teach in very different styles, so we have lots of different skills; listening skills, speaking skills, reading and writing, lots of communicative type stuff, lots of hands on type stuff, so we don't necessarily need to think about how we deal with Pasifika students' differently in terms of their learning styles, because we have all these different types of learning styles incorporated. (Middle Leader 4: School A)

It was noted by four senior leaders that culturally appropriate pedagogy did not necessarily mean teaching in a Pasifika way, but rather catering for the needs of all students through good teaching and learning practices, building relationships and treating students as individuals:

The old apple stuff in terms of building relationships with students, but I wouldn't say that was specifically Pasifika. All students appreciate it if teachers are positive and they're engaging and their lessons are interesting. Good teachers are fair... building relationships is part of it and so is treating them as individuals. We can't say that all Samoans will react if we do this strategy. Certainly strategies that are good teaching, but for me they work with all kids. (Senior Leader: School A)

Sometimes, even though you might have a large group of Pasifika students in your class, teaching a concept, a skill or something new might be inappropriate if you try to teach this concept in a Pasifika setting whereas the vast majority of students might be Pasifika students themselves. (Senior Leader: School B)

Creating the right conditions for learning featured as an important aspect of good pedagogy. Those conditions featured the use of a variety of teaching practices such as cooperative learning, individual learning and responding in a culturally appropriate way when necessary in order that students were exposed to a range of contexts:

You will find more success in finding out what is the best context or setting to teach this concept and then teach it regardless of who is in front of you and to me, that's being culturally appropriate, or culturally relevant, or responsive because our Pasifika students need to know too that there are other contexts, other environments that they have to operate in and that's a skill that needs to be taught. I'm talking about preparing them to move in different worlds. Part of being Pasifika responsive is teaching them to be able to identify and operate in different worlds and a good teacher does that at appropriate times or identifies with the appropriate times, I think. (Senior Leader: School B)

Development of courses that cater for student needs

All schools in this study indicated that creating the right courses for Pasifika students and ensuring that there were clear pathways for future study was crucial for the continued engagement and academic achievement of Pasifika students. This included tailoring courses to cater for a range of learning needs and interests:

Having the right courses for kids; redevelop it and make it work for kids so that they can click to it and it can lead to something. (Principal: School C)

Forcing faculties to offer courses that they perhaps never even thought of maybe or some of them would have definitely declined, saying that's not in our faculty, not our job. (Senior Leader: School B)

School A had used student voice to help solve the problem of developing courses which engaged Pasifika students and enabled them to succeed. With one particular programme, leaders noticed that it was not being selected by Pasifika students and when they asked the students why, it was brought to their attention that the course was perceived to be too dull and theory based. With some tweaking, a new course was developed, which has become very popular and successful amongst Pasifika students:

So we now have two courses at Year 13 of that new course running and a lot of our Maori and Pasifika students are highly represented in those courses and they're highly successful and they report that they absolutely love it. So, yeah. It's good to see that we listen to their voice and came up with a solution for it. (Middle Leader 6: School A)

Various options were also available to students at School C, with these courses proving popular, particularly amongst Pasifika students. These courses included a service academy and a Gateway programme, with other academies being established in the near future due to student demand:

So not only is that a vocational angle, but it's something that's providing more relevance, it's really important for our kids. (Senior Leader: School C)

Offering extra tuition and workshops for Pasifika students

All schools in this study offered some form of extra tuition for Pasifika students in the form of mentoring, after school tutorials, holiday and exam workshops in order to prepare students for external examinations and complete work for internal assessments:

We do a lot of tutorials after school so that they realise that we really are there for them if they want to get their internal assessments done. I find a lot of our Pasifika kids come to those. They'll try really really hard and they'll ask questions they won't necessarily ask in front of the rest of the class and that one on one time will just build up that relationship even more. (Middle Leader 1: School C)

We are providing school wide mentoring support to the Pasifika students and I think that is helping them a lot. (Middle Leader 3: School A)

A lot of great teaching learning relationships grew from those first days back because the whole classes turned up, much to the surprise of the teachers and then, they came back the next day. It was really, because it was a different learning space, they were able to come in their own mufti style gear and there was flexi time when they were working so that changed perceptions, perhaps of the learner, of that middle grade learner. (Middle Leader 2: School B)

Establishing explicit leadership roles for Pasifika teachers

All schools in this study had established explicit leadership roles for Pasifika teachers, providing opportunities for them to work directly with teaching staff, Pasifika students, Pasifika families and the community. Such roles established were Pasifika deans, teachers in charge of Pasifika students and staff who mentored students and managed Pasifika school events. The benefits of creating these positions included greater connection with parents and the communities and working directly with staff and students to support initiatives for raising Pasifika achievement:

Establishing the Pasifika deans role, and that's only five or six years old, the Pasifika dean has worked and it's more because of the Pasifika dean's personality... the way he is connected to the community and he's an old boy and the fact that he is well respected. He comes from a family that is well known in the community; all of those things have allowed him to create quite a strong connection now with Pasifika parents. (Senior Leader: School B)

We've got (Middle Leader 4: School C) who's got some time to oversee and chase up those students and some teachers that are overseeing them, as well as talking to the teachers about what's happening. (Senior Leader: School C)

We've got a lady that meets with all the year 11 Pasifika students on a two week cycle. She mentors them because their credits and it's had a real big effect in terms of just focusing the students. (Senior Leader: School A)

CHALLENGES

The fourth and final theme to emerge was that of challenges which are faced and will continue to be faced by leaders within secondary schools. These challenges are listed as sub themes and include those that occur within the secondary school environment and those that have outside influence such as family impact and future funding and directives from the Ministry of Education.

Table 4.4: Perceived challenges in raising Pasifika students' academic achievement

Senior leaders' findings	Participant emergent strategies
Low self-esteem and non-engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pasifika students do not seem to have self confidence in their skills: (SL: B)
Low achievement rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often Pasifika students begin secondary school with low literacy and numeracy skills: (P: A/C) (SL: C)
Low cultural capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some Pasifika students have a different type of cultural capital to that which assists students in achieving at school: (P: A/C) (SL: B)
Regular attendance by Pasifika students is sometimes an issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families and communities need to realise the importance of regular school attendance in order to achieve: (P: A/B/C)
Development of courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More non-traditional courses needed to ensure clear future pathways for Pasifika students: (P: C) (SL: A/B/C)
There is a need to focus on the development of pedagogy within the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outside initiatives can be a distraction: (P: B) Focus on the development of good pedagogy: (P: B/C) (SL: A/B) Changing teaching practice, based on best practice models, can solve the problem: (P: C) (SL: B) Robust appraisal systems can support the development of teaching and learning: (P: B) (SL: B)
Deficit theory thinking can be negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a leader's role to remove the deficit theory from the school: (P: A/B/C) (SL: A/B/C) There is a need to focus on the successes of Pasifika students: (P: A/B) (SL: A/B)
Funding for initiatives is unequal amongst schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a need for the Ministry of Education to approach funding from a different angle so that it is more equitable for underachieving students: (P: C) (SL: B)
Middle leaders' perceptions	Participant emergent strategies
The future challenge is engaging Pasifika students in their learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A different level of engagement is needed to reach higher academic achievement for Pasifika students: (ML: B)
Low achievement rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often Pasifika students begin secondary school with low literacy and numeracy skills: (ML: A/B/C)
Low cultural capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some Pasifika students have a different type of cultural capital to that which assists students in achieving at school: (ML: B/C)
Regular attendance by Pasifika students is sometimes an issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeping families in the loop about regular attendance is important: (ML: B)
Development of good pedagogy within the school can support teachers in the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robust appraisal systems help teachers to reflect on their teaching practice: (ML: B)
Focus on the positives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a successful culture that disproves the deficit thinking around Pasifika achievement: (ML: A)

Pasifika student low self-esteem and non-engagement

When discussing challenges related to Pasifika achievement, one senior leader who is Pasifika himself, suggested that challenges arose from low self-esteem, lack of confidence, particularly with the English language, and students being shy and humble when their work was praised:

It is worrying because on the surface a lot of Pasifika students don't have confidence... they don't seem to have confidence. I think too, a lot of them think that they don't have enough skills. (Senior Leader: School B)

Most middle leaders from School B also cited student engagement as an important factor in raising Pasifika academic achievement. They felt that the challenge for the future would be ensuring that Pasifika students were engaged enough in their learning to move to a higher level of achievement and build on the momentum gained so far:

Engagement is going to be one of those key things for getting boys up into those merits and excellences. They can all get through the achieved, but there's got to be a different level of engagement. (Middle Leader 5: School B)

I think the challenge for me, just looking at it, is to continue to build it... I suppose the challenge is to try to reach those kids who are quite disengaged in learning. (Middle Leader 4: School B)

Low achievement rates

Three senior leaders and a few middle leaders pointed out that one of the challenges in raising Pasifika achievement was the low level of literacy and numeracy skills Pasifika students often had when beginning secondary school. This meant that these students were behind others in their year group and this meant drawing on a lot of school resources in order to get the students up to par with other students in their schools:

One of the reasons for poorer achievement is that the kids are behind the eight ball when they come into secondary school. (Principal: School A)

Pasifika are still one of the biggest groups that lag behind, particularly Pasifika boys. In e-asTTle, the gap between them and European students is getting wider. (Principal: School C)

We are attracting students with lower e-asTTle and curriculum levels. We seem to be starting with a lower base. We have done a tremendous amount of improvement school wide but the challenges to develop better literacy, that's one of the huge challenges we now face. (Middle Leader 2: School B)

When discussing NCEA achievement, both the principal and the senior leader interviewed at School C spoke about a further challenge with the new standards realignment. They felt that the bar had risen for numeracy and literacy but the time allowed to complete the year had not changed and therefore this made it even more difficult for some Pasifika students to achieve Level 1 NCEA:

The literacy levels and the numeracy levels, which are a low base, and with the standards review it's meant that NCEA achievement standards are a much more difficult bar for them to get over because the level they're coming in with is a low level, maybe a 3B or 3P. To get over the bar for achievement standards, it has been raised for the numeracy one, that's been a real challenge. (Senior Leader: School C)

When you're talking about Level 1, they've improved, but the gap between them and Level 1 European boys is wider, so static, so numeracy is a real challenge, that's because there's a big push around language in numeracy rather than just number. (Principal: School C)

Cultural capital

Four senior leaders and a few middle leaders acknowledged that there was a challenge in that some Pasifika students had a different type of cultural capital to that which assists students in achieving at school when compared to others within the school. They cited cultural capital as being an important factor in academic achievement and felt that it was essential however, to recognise the cultural capital that currently existed and work with it:

Cultural capital is about recognising that there is a love and aroha there from the families but they don't have that expertise on how to succeed in school and our job is to allow that to occur. (Principal: School C)

I think we're becoming far more aware of the cultural capital and the teachers are being far more diligent in using that cultural capital. (Senior Leader: School B)

Many senior and middle leaders in this study cited the difficulties that students faced with a perceived lower cultural capital, particularly in terms of having families who may not know how the New Zealand education system worked, often putting these students at a disadvantage when compared to students with higher cultural capital:

There are segments in that community that don't understand, who haven't been successful in education and don't have the cultural capital to play the game. (Principal: School A)

We've got this European constructive school which is each man for himself and these kids have a foot in the two camps because that's not what home is about. Sometimes the understanding from home of what the world that their kids come to from 8am – 3pm they don't get. Understanding the world that they're in... the parents haven't lived in this world... the parents haven't gone through the corridors like their kids are and so the support that their kids need, they don't know. (Middle Leader 2: School C)

School attendance

Regular attendance at school by some Pasifika students was highlighted at all three schools as being a challenge. Principals at each school and some middle leaders from School B spoke about the frustration of having students absent from school due to family or church matters and how imperative it was to educate Pasifika families about the importance of students regularly attending school in order to achieve academically:

As far as attendance goes, we spend a lot of time talking to parents, especially Pasifika parents, just keeping them in the loop and making sure that they're

aware of why their son has to be at school. They just can't take time off school when they feel like it. There's a consequence to them not being here as far as academic learning achievement. (Middle Leader 5: School B)

I would have parents in my office, a church minister in my office, wanting to take kids out to do something and I would say, "but isn't education important?" "Yes, education is a very, very important, the most important thing!" "But you're taking them out of school to go on a church trip". "Oh yes, we need to go on a church thing". "But education is the most important". (Principal: School A)

We also allow our families to talk about what are their commitments outside that destroy their son or daughter's opportunity because they've got to go and be at the church for eight hours a week. Well, why don't we scale that down to four hours a week? That way they can spend four hours doing other stuff. Why do they have to sit outside the church while the family is in there for hours on end? Why can't they create a study group at the church? (Principal: School C)

Developing courses that enable Pasifika students to succeed

Although changing and developing courses which engaged and catered for the needs of Pasifika students was a common theme in all three schools, one senior leader pointed out that this was a challenge in itself, as often teachers did not want to move from the traditional courses due to workload and fear of the unknown:

I think there's still not enough understanding amongst most of our staff about the spirit of the New Zealand curriculum and I think there's still quite a lot of holding on to the academic subjects, the traditional academic subjects that some teachers even firmly believe that must stay the way it's always been. Our hands are tied a little bit because the universities view it like that as well. (Senior Leader: School B)

It was also pointed out by two senior leaders that when there were not enough non-traditional courses on offer, students often suffered as a consequence as this could mean that there were no clear future pathways for them if they were not successful the previous year:

So there's this dilemma, you could say, that many Heads of Faculties have and so some have basically said, "no, this is the barrier... if they don't have 10 credits then they're not doing my course next year". (Senior Leader: School B)

We weren't offering a broader different levels of subjects, we were only offering high academic subjects. We weren't looking after our tail. (Senior Leader: School A)

One principal discussed the importance of creating courses and pathways for students which would enable them to have vocational and educational options in the future:

Doing travel and tourism, the thing they used to do in the good old days, everybody can get Level 2. They can get everyone through Level 2, but is it a Level 2 subject that can even get you a job mowing the lawns? The answer is no, so we've trying to Level 2 pathways that actually lead to something real, so that's really important. (Principal: School C)

Maintaining a focus on teaching, learning and professional development

The principals at each of the three schools acknowledged that there were many outside programmes and initiatives which had been trialled within schools in order to raise Pasifika academic achievement and increase student engagement. The principal of School B felt that one of the biggest challenges of his leadership was sifting through these programmes and other peripheral meetings and projects, in order to decide which were worth initiating within the school. He felt that often these programmes came at a cost to teaching and learning and that as a leader, he needed to keep the focus on the development of pedagogy as the first priority:

The plethora of stuff that comes across your management in terms of projects, programmes, a lot of them are just side tracking you from the core business. Like I say, you can get into a lot of those things, but a lot of the time they can create more work, more reporting and teachers become reliant on them as the answer, rather than reliant on their own planning and teaching, which is the answer. (Principal: School B)

All principals interviewed acknowledged the usefulness of outside projects if you were to take the essence of them and stamp your own leadership on it, your own school brand, with a particular mention given to the excellent work that had been done with the *Te Kotahitanga* project. However, a small number of senior leaders interviewed felt that it was more important to keep a focus on the basics, including the continued development of pedagogy:

You have to go back to basics and if you haven't got that done, you can't do anything else. (Principal: School C)

Outside projects... I just try to get rid of them pretty quickly and focus on getting teachers in front of the classroom. A lot of the knowledge is in the school, like I've said with professional development, a lot of that stuff we can do ourselves. A lot of the other stuff just adds layers, confuses people and adds work. (Principal: School B)

Professionally developing teachers and changing practice was seen as a challenge in itself by a small number of senior leaders, as often teachers were reluctant to move from what they were comfortable with and developing good school-wide professional development programmes could be hit and miss as often there was little outside guidance for that was useful in terms of the development of pedagogy:

How do you get good pedagogy? You've got to professionally develop teachers and at the moment it's random so if you want things to happen, you have to have good professional development for teachers that is not random and comes from "here's models that have worked elsewhere. How do you fit that into your school?" (Principal: School C)

Getting teachers to change practice is absolutely another challenge. Practice is the other biggie as well I think, so yeah, if you can do just that, direct teaching practice to the way you think it should be like, I think you've got 90% of your problems solved. (Senior Leader: School B)

However, as a possible solution, School B reported a change in both the culture and the attitude of staff towards professional development when a new teacher appraisal system was introduced. All those interviewed from School B commented positively on this new appraisal system which included a professional development programme

focused on teaching and learning, and run both school wide and within faculties. It was about shared knowledge and looking to those within the school who had the expertise and could lead other staff. This appraisal system comprised of classroom observations, termly meetings with senior leaders and the checking and monitoring of markbooks and student grades. It also provided a platform for data analysis and discussion with teachers about the development of teaching practice in order to raise Pasifika achievement:

The performance system that we've set up here has made a huge impact here... huge! (Senior Leader: School B)

The appraisal system I believe is really qualitative in regards to us as teachers really reflecting and I think I've improved as a teacher just in the couple of years that we've done it; making sure that we gather evidence, that we write down and have proof of everything that we do in regards to lessons, that we show students. (Middle Leader 4: School B)

Deficit theory

All schools in this study agreed that it was a huge challenge to overcome the widely spread public perceptions and assumptions of low Pasifika academic achievement, or deficit theory. Deficit theory was spoken about in terms of the beliefs of teaching staff, the students, the communities, the media and even the Ministry of Education:

My job is to take all the deficit thinking out of it; to say we're going to get these students past, they're capable and they will pass. My job is to lead other staff. When I first started here, the first thing I had to do as a leader was tell staff that we were no longer going to accept that our students were Pasifika low decile therefore we were doing our best with the results. We had to change that. That was one of the first big steps. Changing the deficit thinking... that thinking that everything was as it was because the students were Pasifika and it was acceptable and you have to change it around straight away. (Principal: School B)

I really hate this media and Ministry of Education thing of “Oh, poor Pasifika kids that are failing”, because they’re just not here. We’ve got such a range of kids. We’ve got a huge number of Pasifika kids who go on to University, who are involved in leadership or charities or sport and probably one of our biggest thing here is publicising our leaders that succeed. (Senior Leader: School A)

There are huge amounts of negative stereotyping out there. (Principal: School A)

Many senior leaders discussed the wish to have greater publicity about the high achievement of many Pasifika learners in order to focus on the positive work that had been done to raise Pasifika achievement and dispel the myths about widespread under-achievement:

I don’t think people having a deficit theory of Pasifika is intentional, but I think all the stuff that comes out from the Ministry particularly is about priority learners. If you took 32 Pasifika students in year 11 this year here, why are they are a priority when five of them have excellences and five of them have got merit endorsed? (Senior Leader: School A)

In terms of the culture here, we do have a success culture. We definitely try to bash out the old deficit theory around Maori and Pasifika students and it’s very much that these students can achieve. (Middle Leader 6: School A)

Principal B suggested that a large number of schools had fallen into the trap of deficit theory and using the challenges such as poverty and hunger as a barrier and an excuse for Pasifika students not achieving as well as they could:

I reckon a lot of schools fall into that... they spend all the time talking about the issues, and they’re all real for sure, but if you’re going to focus on that, you won’t get anywhere. (Principal: School B)

Funding for school initiatives

One principal and one senior leader from Schools A and B, which are lower decile schools, cited a lack of funding as a major roadblock to creating and maintaining

school wide initiatives which would have an impact on Pasifika achievement. While School A, a high decile school, was able to find the funding to support Pasifika initiatives, Schools B and C struggled and voiced a wish for more guidance and financial support to enable continued work in raising Pasifika achievement. The principal of School C and senior leader from School B proposed that the Ministry of Education look at a different way of funding schools, such as funding based on the number of underachieving students, rather than decile rating. This would enable schools to receive funding to run programmes tailored for individual students who were underachieving:

The funding is quite different in low decile schools which helps but we need twice as much money and if you had that, you'd make a massive impact. Even a small amount can make a massive impact, but that's not to be. (Principal: School C)

I think too many times too, the Ministry doesn't have enough confidence in schools, so yeah, I think a lot more assistance should be given to schools, especially with schools with high populations of underachieving students, it doesn't have to be Pasifika students, but this is where the decile and formula based funding falls short. (Senior Leader: School B)

The principal of School C also had concerns with the way in which the Ministry of Education supported schools who had a large number of underachieving students and felt quite disillusioned about the future:

The Ministry have come up with "here's our model, you work with this model". "We've only got an x amount of dollars and weeks and it's got to be this model or that model" and that is a complete failure... there are no support mechanisms out there... what works is the Te Kotahitanga model and that is being disbanded and I respect that in terms of the resourcing that has gone into it, but what is next? (Principal: School C)

SUMMARY

All data collected through semi-structured interviews and focus groups was generated from discussion around leaders' perceptions of the practices and challenges which influence Pasifika academic achievement within New Zealand secondary schools. From the data, four central themes emerged: leadership, school culture, practices, and challenges. Analysis of the central themes allowed a number of sub themes to be identified. School culture was a dominant theme which was unable to be completely separated from the other themes, therefore it was critical in interlinking and tying all four themes together to create a cohesive picture of the practices and challenges faced by leaders in raising Pasifika academic achievement. The next chapter will explore in more detail these conclusions drawn from the findings presented in chapter four and examine the links between the literature presented in chapter two and the findings of the data collected.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss the significant findings presented in Chapter Four in relation to the body of literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The discussion will be framed by the research objectives; to investigate leaders' perceptions of the practices and challenges that influence the academic achievement of Pasifika students within New Zealand secondary schools, and to examine the relationship between leadership, school culture and Pasifika achievement. Four over-arching themes have been identified in the data collected; leadership, school culture, practices, and challenges, with sub-themes emerging from these. These themes will structure the discussion in this chapter that will consider the links between the themes and sub-themes, the perspectives investigated and the literature reviewed. When discussing these findings, principals and deputy principals are referred to as 'senior leaders', unless it is specifically the principal, in which case they are referred to as 'principal'.

LEADERSHIP

The first theme to emerge from the data was leadership, which included the sub-themes of; the importance of leadership, the role of leadership in creating an inclusive school culture, leadership based on best evidence and shared leadership.

The findings in this study suggest that leadership is critical to raising Pasifika students' academic achievement within New Zealand secondary schools. The findings showed that all three principals interviewed perceived that leadership had an immense impact on Pasifika achievement and that it was their job to lead and champion initiatives that would raise academic achievement. In order to make any positive changes for Pasifika students, all three principals had to prioritise Pasifika achievement and be proactive leaders. All principals interviewed also spoke about their leadership roles being key in the development of strategies for the improvement of teaching and learning through professional development and greater accountability of teachers. These findings are supported by research from the

Education Review Office (2012b) which identifies leadership as being one of the most important factors for creating positive change for Pasifika achievement in schools. It was evident in the findings that principals are responsible for selecting and authorising the strategies and initiatives that are driven within a school, therefore it is important that principals champion and support Pasifika achievement in order that initiatives to create positive change for Pasifika students be implemented.

The findings also indicated that leadership is key in developing an inclusive school culture that is focused on learning and academic achievement. All principals interviewed felt that this was an important part of their job as a leader, as creating the right culture would influence the academic achievement of Pasifika students in a positive way, however the findings indicated that leadership at all levels of the school were required to facilitate the creation of these conditions. One middle leader interviewed stated that it was his job to work with teachers to create an inclusive environment: *“it’s creating the environment that will make students feel happy, warm, successful”* (Middle Leader 6: School B), as he perceived the environment to have direct consequences on how Pasifika students felt and performed. Literature by Alton-Lee (2003) and Blackmore (2006) also concludes that the development of an inclusive school culture is important, particularly for students from diverse backgrounds, but states that creating caring environments is not enough. An inclusive school culture must be coupled with the valuing of diversity and the development of pedagogical knowledge in order to make any real difference in student academic achievement. Consequently, while creating an inclusive environment is an important role in leadership, leaders must ensure that this is supported by robust teacher professional development and a curriculum that is culturally responsive in order to increase academic success for Pasifika students.

The findings suggest that good leadership clearly relates to best evidence. Best evidence practices cited by the principals interviewed in this study included; the ability to connect with both staff and students, using inquiry and research to inform decisions, developing the culture of the organisation, goal setting and maintaining a focus on the development of teaching and learning, as these practices directly

affected student outcomes. This research concurs with literature which emphasises the importance of educational leadership, focused on the development of teaching and learning, as important in lifting student outcomes (Bush, 2003; Cardno & Collett, 2004; Robinson et al., 2009; Starratt, 2003) and making a difference to student achievement and well-being (Robinson et al., 2009; Southworth, 2004, Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2004). Robinson et al. (2008) state there is a clear connection between good leadership practices and student achievement, with higher performing schools being more focused on teaching and learning, resulting in a considerable effect on student outcomes. Therefore, leadership that is based on best evidence and is focused on the development of pedagogy is more likely to have a positive effect on Pasifika students' academic achievement.

Although principals hold the main responsibility for driving initiatives, the findings in this study indicated that it was imperative for principals to exercise shared leadership and gain co-operation from leadership at all levels throughout the school and in order for these initiatives be integrated successfully into practice. This was particularly evident in School B, where the newly appointed principal had introduced a robust professional development and teacher appraisal system, alongside the regular monitoring and tracking of student achievement. These initiatives were clearly supported by the majority of middle leaders from School B, who presented as a cohesive group with clear vision, corroborating senior leadership opinions and speaking about their part as leaders in supporting the implementation of these initiatives into classroom practice. The practice of shared leadership was further illustrated by the principal from School C who spoke specifically about the importance of middle leadership in setting the tone of the school and the development of teaching and learning in order to influence student outcomes: *“having active programmes throughout the school, particularly in the middle management area, because they’re the people who influence the most teachers and the most kids” (Principal: School C).*

Therefore, what is evident from these findings is that shared leadership is vital at all levels within a school in order to ensure initiatives successfully translate into

classroom practice and that the development of teaching and learning is ongoing. This research concurs with the literature of Lumby and Foskett (2011), Robinson et al. (2008), Timperley (2005) and Weber (1996) which highlights the benefits of distributing shared leadership across multiple people and situations within the school, enabling tasks and activities to be integrated. This shared leadership empowers others and helps to avoid the pitfall of relying on one sole leader, as identified by Southworth (1993) and Timperley (2005), therefore initiatives which are implemented through shared leadership are more likely to be adopted and supported by teachers, enabling these initiatives to be integrated into practice and sustained over time.

SCHOOL CULTURE

The second over-arching theme of school culture was a dominant theme and was identified as one that at times was unable to be separated from the other three themes of; leadership, practices and challenges, as school culture was woven into each theme, therefore interlinked. The theme of school culture encompassed many sub-themes; an inclusive supportive environment, the importance of relationships, high expectations of Pasifika students, celebrations of academic achievement and role modelling. These sub-themes emerged as those aspects that infused with the school culture to create a sense of identity and belonging for both teachers and students, contributing to an inclusive environment for Pasifika students.

This research has indicated the importance of leadership in creating an inclusive and supportive environment, as supported by literature (Deal & Peterson, 1990; Southworth, 2004; Waters et al., 2004). All senior and middle leaders in this research spoke at length about school culture as an intangible thing that was at the heart of their schools. One senior leader described it as *“the way we do things”* (Senior Leader: School B) in order to create a warm, welcoming environment with a special sense of support and empathy for one another. This empathy reinforced teaching and learning relationships within the classroom through genuine, respectful interactions which valued students as individuals. Acknowledgement of Pasifika

culture was seen as vital in creating a sense of inclusiveness and belonging, enabling Pasifika students to engage fully with school life and feel part of the bigger picture. Consequently this was seen to have a direct influence on Pasifika students adopting a positive attitude towards academic achievement which had a flow on effect, as described by one principal: *“it’s like you’ve got a critical mass all going in the same direction” (Principal: School B).*

This research and the literature highlight the importance of developing an inclusive school environment in order to acknowledge, value, and respect students from diverse backgrounds. Fletcher et al. (2011) propose that inclusion provides the learning and support that allows for equal outcomes for all students. Nakhid (2003) suggests that feeling included and identifying with school life is a necessary condition for the success of Pasifika students’ academic achievement and that non-inclusiveness will lead to a feeling of being undervalued and unwanted. Thus, an inclusive school culture that is welcoming and respectful, supported through the development of positive relationships, empathy and acceptance will enable Pasifika students to feel connected to the school, resulting in engagement in learning and a positive attitude towards academic achievement.

Relationships were consistently identified in these findings as the most important aspect of school culture; an aspect which was critical in enhancing achievement through the development of teaching and learning relationships centred around high expectations. Almost all senior and middle leaders acknowledged the importance of making personal connections with Pasifika students as a part of good teaching practice in order to strengthen student engagement. Personal connections included finding out about the student’s cultural backgrounds, their families, their spiritual backgrounds and their interests. One middle leader explained how making these personal connections impacts on Pasifika student engagement: *“I think it’s fundamental, whether it be Maori or Pasifika students; having that relationship. Not just knowing about the boy, but knowing about their cultural or their spiritual backgrounds. I think it goes a huge way in being able to engage those boys... it’s massive” (Middle Leader 5: School B).*

Relationships were also identified by the majority of senior and middle leaders as a way to demonstrate that teachers cared about students as individuals, often facilitating learning support and intervention for students who may struggle with academic achievement. These findings are supported by the literature of Amituanai-Toloa et al. (2010) and the Education Review Office (2012a) who cite the importance of developing positive relationships with students in order to ensure that learning and pedagogy are relevant and there is mutual respect between teachers and students. Similarly, Bishop (2010) cites the building of positive relationships as paramount: “It is our position that positive, inclusive relationships and interactions lead to improved student engagement and learning” (p 695). A large number of senior and middle leaders at all three schools acknowledged the positive impact *Te Kotahitanga* had had on the development of effective teaching and learning relationships. *Te Kotahitanga* helped to reinforce the importance of relationships in enhancing student engagement and academic achievement, and although this programme was focused on Maori achievement, most senior and middle leaders viewed it as a model that was fundamental in raising Pasifika achievement. As one middle leader stated when discussing the importance of developing relationships to enhance learning for Pasifika students “*they don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care*” (*Middle Leader 4: School B*). Senior leaders at School B in particular, felt that *Te Kotahitanga* had offered real value within the school, so therefore had adopted many of *Te Kotahitanga*’s characteristics and evolved them into their own school initiative, which was focused on the development of culturally responsive pedagogy and effective teaching to raise academic achievement for all students, including Pasifika.

The findings from both senior and middle leaders also emphasised the importance of developing relationships with Pasifika parents and the community as an important aspect of school culture. Almost all senior and middle leaders felt that fostering these relationships helped to develop connections between school and home and provided support for students in the home environment through the facilitation of conversations around academic achievement with families. As families became comfortable in the school setting, they were more confident in being involved in school activities. Two way communication was reported as enabling Pasifika

parents to participate in decision making, fostering a sense of them being kept in the loop and contributing to the school. This sentiment is echoed by Alton-Lee (2003) and Castagno and Brayboy (2008), who acknowledge that strengthening parental and school partnerships can have positive outcomes, such as parents being more directly focused on student learning, becoming partners with the school and participating in the development of events, initiatives, and programmes.

Data collected in this study indicated that almost all senior and middle leaders perceived the benefit of strengthening Pasifika family relationships with schools was the impact on student engagement, resulting in positive behaviour and an improved classroom environment. This viewpoint is supported by the literature of Amituanai-Toloa et al. (2010) who state that the development of parental and community connections create strong links between home and school, impacting on student motivation and academic skills, resulting in learning that is more relevant for Pasifika students. However, almost all senior and middle leaders at all three schools in this study acknowledged the ongoing challenge in getting Pasifika parents and communities involved in school meetings and functions on a regular basis. These challenges are also acknowledged in the literature by Gorinsky and Fraser (2006) who note that misunderstandings about why parents do not attend events can often prohibit family and community involvement in the school. Consequently, this indicates the importance of the development of reciprocal relationships and clear two-way communication between families and schools in order to develop mutual understanding, promote the participation of families in school events and increase student engagement through more relevant learning.

Having high expectations of Pasifika students' academic success was highlighted in this study as being an important factor in the development of a school culture that was focused on academic achievement. The majority of senior and middle leaders interviewed reported that telling Pasifika students that they 'could and would achieve' had a positive effect on students, breeding self-belief, self-worth and success. One principal explains: *"when you put up 80% pass rates at the start of the year, you're sending a massive message to the students that that's what's expected now"*

(Principal: School B). Having high expectations was reported by all senior leaders to lead to greater motivation and confidence for Pasifika students, shifting the focus to one of academic achievement and attainment. This finding concurs with the literature of Alton-Lee (2003) which states that having high expectations can make a difference to Pasifika student academic achievement. However, Alton-Lee (2003) highlights the importance of coupling high expectations with high quality teaching practices in order to make an impact. Consequently, the literature of Nakhid (2003) and Bishop (2012) emphasise the danger of low expectations by teachers perpetuating in a self-fulfilling prophecy of academic failure. Therefore, leaders must consistently reinforce the message of high expectations to teachers, students and the community, while simultaneously aligning this with the development of pedagogy, in order to build academic momentum and self-esteem and self-belief amongst Pasifika students.

The findings also showed that all senior leaders and a majority of middle leaders perceived that a culture of academic achievement was further reinforced and enhanced through regular positive messages and celebrations of Pasifika academic success at school assemblies and events. Involving Pasifika families in these celebrations was perceived by many senior leaders to be a factor which contributed to raising students' expectations, aspirations, and changing the school culture to one that focused on achievement. These findings concur with literature by Alton-Lee (2003) who proposes that partnerships between parents and schools that are focused on student learning and achievement result in better student outcomes. This research further highlights the perceived benefits of using the practice of role modelling alongside celebrations of Pasifika students' success to reiterate a culture of academic achievement. Role models included; Pasifika staff in leadership roles, past and present students, current university students and those involved in Pasifika communities. Role models, as reported by all senior leaders and a small number of middle leaders, were perceived to be valuable in the facilitation of Pasifika students' belief that success was tangible, helping schools to bring achievement to the fore. Role models also provided Pasifika students with the knowledge and skills needed for future study and aspirations. Student leadership added a further dimension to this through role modelling and the development and implementation by Pasifika

student leaders of initiatives that were focused on academic achievement, Pasifika student support and an inclusive culture within each school. A majority of senior and middle leaders interviewed perceived mentoring and role modelling through student leadership as important in supporting the engagement of Pasifika learners, having a great impact on how Pasifika students viewed academic achievement and its attainability.

PRACTICE

The third major theme to emerge from the data was practice, which included the sub-themes of; using data and the inquiry cycle, professional development and pedagogy for diversity, developing courses that cater for student needs, developing effective communication with Pasifika families and offering extra tuition and workshops for Pasifika students.

The use of data was highlighted in this research as being an important practice for raising Pasifika student achievement within all three schools in this study. The majority of senior and middle leaders spoke about using data to plan strategically, inform future decisions about teaching and learning, and make changes at leadership level and within the classroom to cater for the needs of Pasifika students. All schools in this study also used data about academic achievement to track and monitor student progress. Schools A and B made this data open and available to students, regularly updating the data so that students could monitor their own progress. This practice was perceived by all senior leaders and the majority of middle leaders at these two schools as being one that motivated students, facilitating discussions between students and teachers about ways to improve academic achievement. The literature supports the need for schools to collect, analyse and use evidence about Pasifika learners in order to promote the learning of individual students and develop a curriculum which reflects world views and cultural diversity (Amituanai-Toloa et al., 2010; Education Review Office, 2012a; McNaughton & Lai, 2009). Subsequently, data was viewed as hard evidence by all senior leaders and was used as part of the inquiry cycle to identify gaps in student achievement and assist in discussions with middle leaders and teachers about overcoming issues and

improving pedagogy. A small number of senior and middle leaders also discussed the inquiry cycle as an important tool for developing school-wide strategies, reviewing curriculum, informing teaching and learning, providing evidence for change and developing specific strategies for Pasifika achievement. School B used data and inquiry to inform teacher appraisal and professional development, subsequently attributing this to the marked improvement in Pasifika students' academic achievement over the space of two years. This research is in agreement with Alton-Lee (2003) who proposes data and assessment tools as a way to avoid assumptions about student ability. Using data to inform the academic progress of students, review initiatives, curriculum and teacher professional development effectiveness is therefore critical to making positive change to enhance Pasifika achievement based on evidence, not assumptions.

The findings in this study indicated that the development of teaching and learning was seen as vitally important to raising Pasifika achievement by all three principals interviewed. What is interesting is that it was stated by two principals and two senior leaders in this study that the development of specific pedagogy for Pasifika students was not necessarily needed in order to improve Pasifika achievement. A senior leader from School A explains: *"I don't think teaching and learning practices are specific to Pasifika students, I think they apply to all students"* (Senior Leader: School A). This sentiment is echoed by the principal from School B: *"it's generally just about good teaching, although we do some specific Pasifika stuff, but that's not our main focus, EVER!"* (Principal: School B). Another senior leader, who is Pasifika himself, pointed out that he felt Pasifika students do not necessarily need to be taught in a 'Pasifika way' using specific pedagogy: *"so no, I don't think there is a specific teaching practice that Pasifika students will particularly respond to. I still believe in having a variety of teaching practices and obviously being culturally appropriate too and being culturally appropriate does not necessarily mean being Pasifika appropriate"* (Senior Leader: School B). Subsequently, what was identified by the majority of senior leaders as being important was the development of good pedagogy based on best practice and the use of a range of teaching strategies to cater for individual student interests and needs. These were practices perceived to

be important in engaging students and fostering positive teaching and learning relationships.

Consequently, there seems to be a disparity between data collected in this research and the literature when discussing the development of pedagogy for a diverse range of students. Several researchers view the development of specific pedagogical practices as being important to raising the academic achievement of diverse students (Alton-Lee, 2003; Amituanai-Toloa et al., 2010; Ferguson et al., 2008; Fletcher, Parkhill & Harris, 2011; Gorinsky & Fraser, 2006; Nakhid, 2003; Sheets, 2009). This research has highlighted that perhaps what is more important is that teaching is culturally responsive, which includes catering to the needs of Pasifika students by making learning relevant and adjusting the curriculum to suit student interests. The literature of Castagno and Brayboy (2008) echoes this notion, suggesting that culturally responsive teaching is focused around having high expectations and caring about students, while valuing and showing respect for students' communities and cultures. Bishop (2010) also supports this theory, proposing that culturally responsive teaching is centred around learning relationships, leaving deficit thinking behind. Bishop (2010) calls for teachers to create learning environments where students feel safe in bringing what they know and who they are into the classroom. All senior leaders and a large number of middle leaders in this study were conscious of being culturally responsive, citing the practices that are commonly used in their schools to increase Pasifika achievement; using a range of teaching strategies, providing a positive learning environment, being culturally responsive when appropriate, and teaching in a range of contexts in order to prepare Pasifika students for moving in different worlds after leaving school.

As part of being culturally responsive, all schools in this study provided a range of academic courses which engaged Pasifika students and catered for their interests, previous experience and knowledge, offering pathways for future study. School A used student voice to adapt a traditional theoretical course to one which was more practical based after students gave feedback citing this as the reason they were not selecting this course for further study. The other two schools in this study offered a

greater range of alternative courses, with senior leaders at these schools reporting that Pasifika students often found these courses more relevant and engaging. The practice of developing academic courses to suit Pasifika student needs is supported through the research, with Education Review Office (2012b) stating that successful schools identified and met the needs of students, engaging them in appropriate programmes of learning. Starratt (2003) calls for leaders to consider the diverse needs of students in order to create a learning experience that meets these needs. What is evident from these findings is that schools in this study are being culturally responsive by addressing student needs and developing curriculum based on these needs.

The findings also indicated the importance of involving Pasifika families in discussions about students' academic achievement and next steps for learning in order that families were able to understand the school system and provide the support needed in the home environment. The majority of senior and middle leaders felt that it was important that dialogue with families was centred around data and providing information that could be useful to parents, therefore it was crucial that conversations were about academic achievement rather than just behaviour. Alongside this, each school in this study had established explicit leadership roles for Pasifika teachers, which had helped to facilitate stronger connections with parents and the Pasifika community, and provided support for students and teachers. These Pasifika leaders also had the added bonus of doubling as role models; someone for Pasifika students to identify with and go to when certain issues needed to be solved.

A final practice, identified as having a large impact on Pasifika student achievement, was offering extra tuition, through after school programmes and holiday workshops. These supplementary programmes, offered at all three schools in this study, provided students with further opportunities for support and were reported to produce positive benefits including the strengthening of teacher/student relationships and a sense of teamwork and collegiality amongst students. Much of the increased academic success of Pasifika students was attributed to this extra mentoring and tutoring, with school B in particular noticing a jump in achievement at Levels 1 and 2

NCEA from 30% to 80% over the space of two years. This finding highlights the practice of providing Pasifika students with extra learning support and opportunities for learning outside of the classroom as important. This practice was identified by almost all senior and middle leaders as one which increased the engagement, self-belief and academic success of Pasifika students.

CHALLENGES

The fourth theme to emerge from the data was that of challenges faced by leaders in raising Pasifika achievement. These challenges included; teacher professional development, maintaining a focus on teaching and learning, perceived lower cultural capital of Pasifika students, deficit theory and funding and support for professional development and school initiatives.

The findings from this research indicate that although the development of pedagogy was perceived to be the most important focus for the future by all senior leaders, three senior leaders felt that this was also the biggest challenge. These senior leaders expressed concerns about the reluctance by some teachers to change teaching practice and the scarcity of specific professional development programmes or guidance on offer to schools from the Ministry of Education. Instead, professional development was described by two senior leaders as an unguided process in which schools are left to unravel and solve the problem of their own free will. Literature emphasises the importance of tailored professional development in order to meet the needs of diverse students (Timperley, 2005). Robinson et al. (2009) state that the single most effective thing an educational leader can do to enhance student achievement is to support and engage teachers professionally and open up dialogue for reflection on teaching practice. Southworth (2004) and Starratt (2003) support this statement, suggesting that educational leaders must focus on the development of pedagogy as their core work and is at the heart of transforming teaching and learning to improve educational outcomes.

As a solution to this problem, School B developed a teacher appraisal system that linked professional development and classroom observations, supported through quarterly meetings with appraisers. This appraisal system gave teachers the opportunity to talk about their own progress in the development of teaching and learning, providing a platform to discuss student achievement, with a particular focus on Pasifika achievement. Coupled with this were school-wide and faculty-wide professional development programmes focused on the improvement of pedagogy and encouraging shared learning. The literature of Amituanai-Toloa et al. (2010), Lumby and Foskett (2011) and Robinson et al. (2009) acknowledges that a school culture which encourages shared knowledge and ways of teaching can lead to greater effectiveness in teaching practice and increasing student achievement. This finding highlights the importance of robust teacher professional development and appraisal based on inquiry in order to create a cohesive strategy for the improvement of teaching and learning.

A further challenge reported in this study was that of maintaining a focus on teaching, learning and professional development. One principal spoke of the vast amounts of outside initiatives and programmes offered on a weekly basis, which often detracted from the development of teaching and learning and therefore came at a cost to the school. This principal explains: *“the plethora of stuff that comes across your management in terms of projects, programmes, a lot of them are just side tracking you from the core business”* (Principal: School B). This finding is echoed by the literature of Starratt (2003) and Robinson et al. (2009) who state that a leader’s focus must be on the core business of developing teaching and learning in order to promote quality learning and influence student outcomes. Therefore, this finding indicates that any outside initiatives need to be carefully selected by leaders, dependent on how effectively these initiatives will contribute to the development of teaching and learning within their schools.

The perceived lower cultural capital of some Pasifika students when compared with other students in the school was identified in these findings as another challenge. Two principals and a small number of middle leaders perceived lower cultural capital

being due to some Pasifika parents not experiencing the New Zealand education system for themselves or understanding how it worked. These leaders felt that there was often a large gap between the cultural capital at home and the European school system, stating that it was the school's job to value the cultural capital that existed, work with it, and develop it through family and community partnerships. Literature highlights the discrepancies that often occur between students from minority backgrounds and schools that are based on the dominant European culture. Ferguson et al. (2008) and Alton-Lee (2003) identify the match or mismatch of student and school cultural capital as vital to student academic outcomes, stating that schools need to bridge the gap in order to make learning relevant. This indicates the importance of school leaders and teachers working with Pasifika students and their families to build on the cultural capital that currently exists.

Te Kotahitanga was praised and attributed to highlighting the value of cultural capital by a small number of senior and middle leaders. One senior leader describes how *Te Kotahitanga* educated teachers and leaders about cultural capital: "*Te Kotahitanga really taught us to think seriously about cultural capital and in fact, if there was anything good about having Te Kotahitanga at our school, it was us realising the cultural capital that we have and then trying to make a diligent effort in the classroom to use that cultural capital*" (Senior Leader: School B). The literature reviewed supports the usefulness of cultural capital in the classroom in fostering teacher attitudes, skills, knowledge and practices and using student prior knowledge to reduce disparity and raise achievement outcomes (Alton-Lee, 2003; Ferguson et al., 2008; Robinson et al., 2009; Samu, 2006). These findings and the literature indicate the importance of leaders and teachers understanding and valuing the cultural capital that exists amongst the diverse range of students in each school, recognising and accepting differences in order to create an inclusive schooling system for all students.

An additional challenge identified by all senior leaders interviewed in this study was that of changing the commonly held deficit theory beliefs about Pasifika underachievement that were prevalent amongst students, teachers, the community,

the media and even the Ministry of Education. However, although almost all senior and middle leaders interviewed acknowledged that there was an issue with the underachievement of some Pasifika students, four senior leaders emphasised the substantial amount of high academic achievement and success of Pasifika students that was not recognised enough by the community, the media, or the Ministry of Education. Almost all senior leaders felt that it was therefore up to them, as part of their leadership role, to work with staff and students in order to change thinking around this deficit theory and focus on the positive academic achievement by many Pasifika students. One principal explains: *“changing the deficit thinking... that thinking that everything was as it was because the students were Pasifika and it was acceptable and you have to change it around straight away” (Principal: School A).*

The literature reviewed support these findings and emphasise the negative impact deficit theory has on Pasifika achievement. Nakhid (2003), states that cultural deficits contribute to putting ethnic minority students at risk of not succeeding and Bishop (2010), calls for teachers to leave deficit thinking behind in order to make positive change, taking responsibility for student achievement. Bishop (2010) suggests that deficit theorising creates a self-fulfilling prophecy of underachievement and failure and generates evidence to substantiate bias, forming a vicious cycle. Therefore, breaking this negative cycle of deficit belief and replacing it with a positive one is an important factor in creating successful future academic outcomes for Pasifika.

In order to continue to raise Pasifika students' academic achievement, two senior leaders felt that they needed greater support through way of funding, resources and guidance to enable the development of individual school-wide programmes. As funding is currently based on the decile rating of the school, schools with a lower decile often struggled and were not able to resource and provide staffing for initiatives they wished to implement. What was proposed by these leaders was a funding system that was based on the number of under achieving students rather than the decile rating of the school. Senior leaders at two schools (B and C) expressed real fears about what the future held, citing current models provided by

the Ministry of Education which did not work and a lack of support in the foreseeable future. One principal voiced his concerns: *“so we’re going to move into a whole lot of nothing and that is a really flawed vision by Government in terms of policy and the Ministry” (Principal: School C).*

SUMMARY

This chapter has discussed the four themes that emerged from the data in relation to the literature presented in Chapter Two. The discussion has been centred on the themes of; leadership, school culture, practices, and challenges. In the following Chapter Six, I will summarise the key issues identified in the findings, drawing conclusions in response to the three original research questions. Limitations of the research project will be considered and recommendations for future practice and research made.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Five, the findings were discussed with support from the literature reviewed and the overall aim of this research. This final chapter will provide an overview of the research study, draw valid overall conclusions, evaluate any limitations of the research and make recommendations for further research.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The overall objective of this research project was to investigate senior and middle leaders' perceptions of the practices and challenges that influence the academic achievement of Pasifika secondary school students. The research aimed to examine the relationship between leadership, school culture and Pasifika achievement. The study objective was encapsulated in three research questions, which formed the basis for this study.

Three key questions were asked:

1. Why are school leadership actions important to the improvement of Pasifika student achievement?
2. What do leaders perceive as the practices and challenges that influence the academic achievement of Pasifika students (either positively or negatively) within THEIR secondary schools?
3. What specific elements of school culture have enhanced Pasifika students' achievement?

CONCLUSIONS

Why are school leadership actions important to the improvement of Pasifika students' academic achievement?

This research concludes that leadership actions are critical in making a difference to student achievement and well-being and are vital to the improvement of Pasifika student achievement, as supported by the literature (Education Review Office, 2012b; Ministry of Education, 2013b; Robinson et al., 2008; Southworth, 2004; Waters et al., 2004). Findings in this study indicate that leadership needs to be based on best evidence; in particular, leadership practice must clearly link back to research about what good leadership looks like, in order to achieve positive student outcomes. Furthermore, this research illustrates the direct influence leaders have on Pasifika achievement. These findings are supported by the Education Review Office (2012b), who identify leadership as one of the most important factors in creating positive change for Pasifika achievement within schools. As senior leaders are largely responsible for the strategic direction of a school, it is leaders who must support and drive Pasifika achievement, making it a priority in schools.

The findings also conclude that middle leaders' actions are equally important in raising Pasifika student achievement, as middle leaders are responsible for implementing these initiatives within the classroom, working directly with staff and students, fine tuning and giving on-going feed-back to senior leadership on progress. These findings are echoed by Robinson et al. (2008) and Seashore Lewis et al. (2010) who believe that leadership is the responsibility of leaders at all levels and is valuable in the development of teaching and learning and the improvement of instruction. Furthermore, the findings of this study indicate that without the support of middle leaders, senior leadership actions would be fruitless, therefore working as a team of leaders with clear objectives and methods of implementation is important, in order to ensure that initiatives are adopted by teachers and students and are successfully executed and sustained over time.

The findings from this study also highlight the importance of leadership in the development of an inclusive school culture which is focused on learning and academic achievement. It is leaders who set the tone of the school by prioritising the development of positive learning relationships, inclusiveness and high expectations of academic achievement. This research is in agreement with the literature (Deal & Peterson, 1990; Dimmock & Walker, 2005; Lumby & Foskett, 2010; Robinson et al., 2008; Starratt, 2003) in concluding that a positive shared culture is vital to the successful implementation of processes and conditions that impact positively on Pasifika students' academic achievement. Subsequently, this research and the literature (Alton-Lee, 2003; Blackmore, 2006) agree that leaders must ensure diversity is valued and coupled with the development of teaching and learning and a culturally responsive curriculum in order to increase academic success for Pasifika students. Consequently, the absence of a positive shared culture may result in any initiatives to improve Pasifika academic achievement being futile as Pasifika students need to feel that they are valued and belong within a school before fully engaging in their learning, as supported by the literature of Nakhid (2003).

What do leaders perceive as the practices and challenges that influence the academic achievement of Pasifika students (either positively or negatively) within THEIR secondary schools?

The findings of this study conclude that leaders play a vital role in developing and supporting practices that influence the academic achievement of Pasifika students within their own schools. This research consistently highlighted practices that were perceived to be a positive influence on Pasifika academic achievement; the development of positive relationships, robust teacher professional development and appraisal based on inquiry, the development of culturally responsive curriculum and the use of data for strategic review and monitoring of student academic achievement.

The development of positive teacher/student relationships was highlighted in this research as a significant practice that positively influences Pasifika students' academic achievement. Relationships based on mutually respectful teaching and

learning interactions, not just congeniality, were emphasised by many senior and middle leaders as being of crucial importance to on-task student engagement and academic achievement, creating a base for effective learning. These findings are in agreement with the literature of Alton-Lee (2003), Bishop (2010), Blackmore (2006), Castagno and Brayboy (2008) and Ferguson et al. (2008) in concurring that the development of positive, inclusive relationships have the greatest influence on student success through improved student engagement. Consequently, this research indicates that positive teacher/student relationships have a significant influence on Pasifika academic achievement, therefore relationships need to be placed at the very heart of school culture.

This research concludes that quality pedagogy based on good practice and the development of a culturally responsive curriculum is the most effective way to raise Pasifika achievement. The findings in this study indicated that the development of specific pedagogy for Pasifika was not a necessary condition for academic success. Rather, it is the practice of quality teaching that makes a difference and is the driver for effective learning. This finding is therefore in disagreement with literature of Alton-Lee (2003), Amituanai-Toloa et al. (2010), Ferguson et al. (2008), Fletcher, Parkhill and Harris (2011), Gorinsky and Fraser (2006), Nakhid (2003) and Sheets (2009) who call for the development of specific pedagogy for a diverse range of students. The findings do however indicate that the construction of a culturally responsive curriculum which is developed in response to student needs, interests and cultural heritages is more likely to result in students who are engaged in their learning and succeed academically, as supported by literature (Amituanai-Toloa et al., 2010; Education Review Office, 2012a; McNaughton & Lai, 2009). The findings also highlighted the need for professional development to be reinforced through a robust teacher appraisal system based on inquiry in order to support teachers professionally and identify areas for future development. Consequently, the findings showed that the professional development of teachers and the creation of a culturally responsive curriculum might have a significant effect on increasing Pasifika academic achievement.

The findings of this study also showed that the use of data as a tool for informing teaching and learning and monitoring Pasifika student achievement is an effective practice for raising Pasifika students' academic achievement. Data was used in the three schools studied to; review the effectiveness of initiatives, identify areas for development, analyse and evaluate programmes of work, develop a culturally responsive curriculum, facilitate learning conversations between teachers and students and aid dialogue with Pasifika families about students' academic progress. Using data to monitor student achievement enabled academic progress to be tracked closely and facilitated ownership for academic achievement from both teachers and students. Two schools in this study made achievement data accessible to students, resulting in greater motivation and commitment from students. The findings from this research and the literature (Alton-Lee, 2003; Education Review Office, 2012b) suggest that data is an important tool in the development of effective teaching and learning, enabling valid assessment while avoiding assumptions about student academic ability. What is evident in the challenges outlined in the following section is that assumptions about student achievement can create deficit thinking amongst teachers, resulting in low self-esteem and academic performance by students in the classroom.

The final major practice identified by this research as one which influences Pasifika achievement positively, was the use of Pasifika role models, which included; Pasifika teachers and leaders, Pasifika student leaders and Pasifika role models from within the community. Pasifika role modelling was reported to have a positive effect on Pasifika students through examples of academic and social success. This research and the literature of Nakhid (2003) and Alton-Lee (2003) suggests that role modelling enables Pasifika students to see themselves as fitting in and enhances their motivation and aspiration. Pasifika role models provide an example of what success looks like, while at the same time reinforcing the message of an inclusive school culture through representation of diversity.

This research highlighted many challenges leaders face when trying to raise Pasifika student achievement. Some of the challenges identified were thought to be outside

of school control, such as regular school attendance, student prior knowledge and skills, and the lack of self-esteem and confidence in some Pasifika students. Many of these challenges were addressed through contact with Pasifika parents and good teaching and learning practices that engaged Pasifika students, helping to increase self-esteem in students and filling any gaps in knowledge.

The findings in this study highlight the continued development of pedagogy as a challenge for almost all senior leaders interviewed. This was due to perceptions that some staff were reluctant to become involved in professional development and the inadequate funding and resourcing that was made available from the Ministry of Education. The findings of this study concur with the research of Alton-Lee (2003) and Robinson et al. (2009) in stressing the importance of continued teacher professional development in order to raise Pasifika achievement in the near future. This research concludes that leaders must maintain a focus on the effective development of teaching and learning and is in agreement with the literature of Southworth (2004) and Starratt (2003) who propose that the development of pedagogy is at the heart of transforming teaching and learning to improve student outcomes. However, this may prove to be difficult, as although leaders are granted the freedom and autonomy to create professional development programmes based on the needs of their Pasifika students within their specific school context, little guidance is given to them by the Ministry of Education. Although the *Pasifika Education Plan* outlines the importance of professional development for teachers in order to raise Pasifika achievement, resources and directives to help leaders develop this within their own schools are scarce. This indicates the need for the Ministry of Education to review the effectiveness of the support, professional development and funding that is currently available to schools.

The lower social capital of some Pasifika students, when compared to other students within the school was a further challenge identified by the majority of senior and middle leaders. Lower social capital was viewed by most leaders as a disadvantage, as these Pasifika students often did not have the support at home due to parents not knowing 'how to play the educational game'. However, interviewees perceived

valuing the cultural capital that currently existed amongst Pasifika students as an important part of an inclusive school culture. This research and the literature (Alton-Lee, 2003, Ferguson et al., 2008; Nakhid, 2003; Robinson et al., 2009, Samu, 2006) are in agreement that understanding, valuing, and building on the cultural capital of Pasifika students and matching the cultural capital of the school and home is vital for continuity of learning. Consequently, *Te Kotahitanga* was identified by a few senior and middle leaders as a project that had added value by educating teachers about the benefits of valuing the cultural capital of diverse students.

An additional challenge, highlighted by this research, was that of deficit theory. All three principals and two senior leaders reported on the continuous battle to change the commonly believed perceptions about the deficit in Pasifika academic achievement held by many staff, students, the community, the media and the Ministry of Education. The findings of this study and the literature (Bishop, 2010; Gorinsky & Fraser, 2006; Nakhid, 2003) suggest that perceived cultural deficits can put ethnic minority students at risk of not succeeding. Many senior and middle leaders interviewed felt that while there was a belief in this deficit theory, it would be self-perpetuating, resulting in Pasifika students and teachers continuing to believe that academic success was out of reach.

What specific elements of school culture have enhanced Pasifika students' academic achievement?

This research highlights the development of an inclusive school culture as the most important element in enhancing Pasifika students' academic achievement. Analysis of the findings concludes that school culture enables leaders to impact positively on the educational outcomes of Pasifika students and has the ability to move schools in affirmative directions, as concurred by research (Lumby & Foskett, 2011). Therefore, an inclusive, shared culture is vital to the successful implementation of conditions that impact positively on Pasifika students' academic outcomes. An inclusive school culture acknowledges, values and respects Pasifika students, not as one group, but as individuals from a range of cultural backgrounds. This research agrees with the literature (Education Review Office, 2012a; Ferguson et al., 2008;

Fletcher et al., 2011; Gorinsky & Fraser, 2006) that it is through an inclusive school culture which is genuine, warm and welcoming that Pasifika students are able to feel that they belong and can contribute, academically and to the wider life of the school. These findings concur with Fletcher et al. (2011) and Nakhid (2003) and propose that inclusiveness is a necessary condition for the success of Pasifika academic achievement through the provision of learning and support. The two main critical elements of school culture identified in this research as having a substantial impact on Pasifika achievement are high expectations and positive relationships.

High expectations are identified in this research as an element of school culture which enhances Pasifika students' academic achievement. The findings show that almost all leaders interviewed perceived that high expectations, affirmed through frequent positive messages about Pasifika academic achievement to students, teachers, parents and the community, would become self-fulfilling. This research highlighted the importance of leadership in the creation of school culture therefore, it is imperative for leaders to develop a school culture of high achievement, positive engagement, and self-confidence for Pasifika students in order to raise achievement. These findings are in agreement with the literature of Weber (1996) and concur that leaders are key in erasing the deficit thinking and low expectations that are common amongst teachers, students, parents and the community. Celebrating Pasifika success was identified in this research as reaffirming the message of high expectations and raising the profile of Pasifika students' academic achievement. The majority of leaders interviewed in this study spoke of profiling and celebrating Pasifika success as 'creating a wave of success' as other students saw the success and wanted to be a part of it too.

The development of positive relationships was highlighted in this study as an integral part of school culture. Relationships at all levels of the school are vital, particularly in supporting positive teaching and learning connections and developing a sense of empathy for others. Positive relationships between teachers and students were referred to in this study by almost all those interviewed as a way to demonstrate that teachers cared about students, creating the foundation for a positive learning environment. These findings concur with the research of Bishop (2010) who cites

the building of positive relationships as paramount in improving student engagement and learning. The notion of positive relationships being vital to academic success is further supported through the perceived success in this study of *Te Kotahitanga*, a project centred around valuing diversity and developing positive relationships to enhance student engagement. Further supporting relationships between teachers and students was the development of relationships with Pasifika families and the community, which were reported to enhance two way communications between school and home and often opened channels for Pasifika parents to become involved in the decision making. This research and the literature (Alton-Lee, 2003; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Gorinsky & Fraser, 2006; Samu, 2006) highlights the importance of relationships between Pasifika families and schools in order to achieve equity for Pasifika students, developing reciprocal sharing of knowledge which impacts on student motivation and academic skills. Almost all leaders interviewed for this research cited relationships as being the most important aspect in raising Pasifika achievement. As one principal said: *“relationships are number one, number one!” (Principal: School C).*

Model to raise Pasifika students’ academic achievement

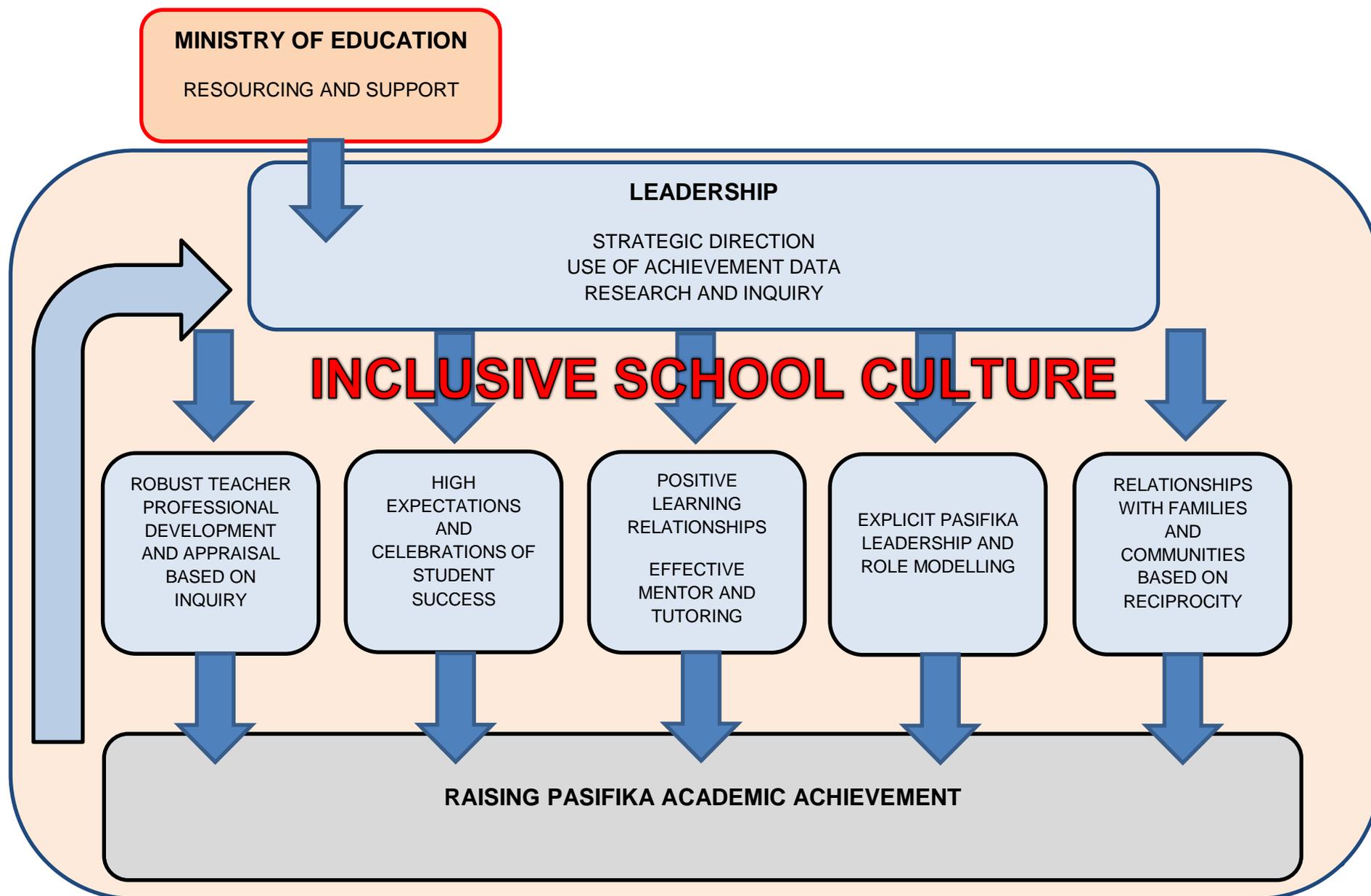
The model depicted overleaf (Figure 6.1) has been developed from the successful practices and conditions for raising Pasifika academic achievement, as reported by senior and middle leaders from the three secondary schools in this study. This proposed model is based on the concept of whole school alignment focused on academic achievement and centred around an inclusive school culture. This research and the literature (Alton-Lee, 2003) concludes that whole school alignment enables a collective perspective between teachers and leaders and assists teachers and students to work together more collaboratively, enhancing and sustaining quality teaching, resulting in increased opportunities for diverse students.

This model clearly shows that direction must come from senior leadership, supported by middle leadership and teachers in order for initiatives to be accepted, implemented effectively and sustained over a period of time. Underpinning this is an inclusive school culture based on acknowledging, valuing and respecting Pasifika

students' individual cultures and backgrounds and developing positive teacher/student learning relationships. Together, leadership and school culture provide the foundation for the implementation of practices which were identified through this research as being important in raising Pasifika student achievement; robust teacher professional development and appraisal based on inquiry, high expectations and celebrations of student academic success, positive learning relationships, effective mentoring and tutoring, explicit Pasifika leadership and role modelling, and relationships with families and the community based on reciprocity.

This model proposes continued support for school leadership from the Ministry of Education, through funding and resourcing to schools, enabling leaders to select and focus on the development of initiatives to raise Pasifika achievement, informed by the use of data, research and inquiry. This model depicts an ongoing cycle, much like the cycle of inquiry, where there is constant review and analysis of practice and Pasifika academic achievement results, informing the next steps for the development of initiatives by leadership. The model also illustrates the cycle of high expectations and academic achievement of Pasifika students, reinforcing an affirmative message to students, staff, families and the community in order to dispel the deficit theory so prevalent in New Zealand education in the current climate.

Figure 6.1: Model to raise Pasifika students' academic achievement



LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researcher is not of Pasifika descent and this may have been perceived as a limitation when dealing with Pasifika senior and middle leaders. This limitation was mediated through the researcher's wide educational experience with Pasifika students and through the building of common ground and understanding with participants. The equitable representation of Pasifika leaders was also a limitation, which is often reflective of leadership throughout New Zealand secondary schools, however this was overcome through active invitation by the researcher to have Pasifika leaders be included wherever possible in this research, in order to gain a fair and equitable Pasifika perspective. Of the 21 participants involved in this research, six were of Pasifika descent.

This research did not include the gathering of data from Pasifika students within these three schools, due to time and resource constraints. It may have been useful to gain Pasifika student perspectives on what engages students in learning, motivates them to succeed and helps them to raise their academic achievement.

The ability of the research project to meet the study objective and to answer the research questions confirms that the methodology and methods outlined in Chapter Three were a relevant choice for this study. However, constraints of time and resources limited the sample size and location.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study have produced seven recommendations for senior and middle leaders within the secondary education sector in New Zealand. These findings will also be of relevance for teachers, Boards of Trustees and the Ministry of Education (most notably, personnel responsible for the *Pasifika Education Plan*).

Recommendation One

Principals, senior leaders and middle leaders must work together to develop cohesive school wide strategies in regards to raising Pasifika achievement.

This research emphasises the importance of principals, senior leaders and middle leaders working together to create cohesive school-wide strategies based on the needs of Pasifika students identified through data, research and best practice. Principals must ensure that school leaders at all levels work as a unified team, identifying gaps between Pasifika learners and other learners and supporting the implementation of initiatives to raise Pasifika achievement. Senior leadership teams must plan strategically to design and implement programmes that meet the needs of Pasifika learners. It is imperative that leaders develop strategies to align the whole school with focus on student achievement and the development of pedagogy, as this will support effective collaborative teaching and learning relationships and the development of an inclusive school culture.

Recommendation Two

Leaders must focus on the development of an inclusive school culture that emphasises high expectations and celebrates the positive achievement of Pasifika students.

The findings of this research show that celebrating student success, alongside a culture of high expectations, supported by quality teaching practices will positively influence Pasifika student outcomes. A significant finding is that high expectations by leaders and teachers result in greater levels of engagement and academic success of Pasifika students. This research also indicates that developing a cohesive and inclusive school culture significantly adds value to student outcomes through encouragement, shared beliefs and a sense of community. The fostering of an inclusive school culture is one of the most significant roles of leadership, therefore it is vital that leaders are conscious of how others perceive the school culture and strive to ensure that it is based on genuine caring, not just a token gesture.

Recommendation Three

Leaders must focus on and prioritise the development of teaching and learning based on best practice.

This research has highlighted the importance of the development of good teaching and learning based on best practice, as an inclusive culture and high expectations must be supported by good pedagogy in order to raise academic achievement for students. Leaders must prioritise professional development for teachers, developing programmes tailored to their individual school needs. This research has indicated that professional development must be supported by a robust appraisal system based on inquiry in order that teaching and learning be analysed, reviewed and supported through leadership. This research has also shown that the single most effective thing a leader can do to enhance student achievement is support and engage teachers professionally and develop a school culture which encourages a collaborative responsibility by teachers. School-wide professional development programmes with a focus on raising achievement will make a difference to student outcomes therefore, leaders must make this their priority.

Recommendation Four

Regular access to data is vital for the tracking and monitoring of Pasifika student academic achievement.

This research highlights the benefits of making academic achievement data explicitly available to leaders, teachers, Pasifika students and their families. While making data available will enable leaders and teachers to review programmes of work and identify gaps in learning, it will also allow Pasifika students and their families to monitor closely and track academic progress throughout the year, motivating students and empowering them to take responsibility for their own achievement. Leaders must ensure that data is regularly updated, monitored and made available in order to facilitate ongoing dialogue between classroom teachers and Pasifika students about academic progress.

Recommendation Five

The continued development of relationships between schools, Pasifika parents, students and the community is vital.

This research indicates the inclusion of Pasifika parents and communities in school events and initiatives is a critical tactic to close the gap in cultural capital while nurturing positive relationships and partnerships between school and home. Strengthening relationships and the use of co-constructed agendas will enable schools and Pasifika families to develop reciprocal connections, in order that schools better understand Pasifika students, their cultural backgrounds, and their needs. Leaders must provide opportunities for Pasifika parents to have a greater say in the knowledge they wish to acquire to enable them to better support student learning in the home. Reciprocating through shared knowledge and resources will greatly improve Pasifika student outcomes.

Recommendation Six

Schools require greater funding, resourcing and provision of professional development models that work in order to develop pedagogy and raise Pasifika students' academic achievement.

This research highlights the need for greater funding, resourcing and provision of successful models for teacher professional development in order to provide good teaching and learning for Pasifika students. Schools are left to their own devices when designing professional development programmes which improve learning outcomes and therefore have little guidance on what has been proven to work within other schools in similar contexts. Therefore, the Ministry of Education must examine the way in which school funding is allocated and research and report on professional development models based on best practice that have been proven to raise achievement for Pasifika students. Only through adequate resourcing can leaders implement and apply effective teacher professional development programmes which are unique to the school's context and tailored to the needs of their students. Professional development is critical if the Ministry of Education wish to raise Pasifika academic achievement.

Recommendation Seven

The Ministry of Education must abolish the current decile rating system of funding secondary schools in order to make education fair and equitable for all students in New Zealand.

This study has shown that allocation of funding to secondary schools based on the socio-economic status of the community is inequitable in the current climate. This study has confirmed that resourcing of initiatives by the Ministry of Education should be based on the number of underachieving students rather than the school decile rating. It is imperative that schools be on a level playing field with adequate resourcing to meet the needs of individual students and improve academic achievement, rather than perceived requirements based on deficit theory.

Recommendations for Future Research

In order that New Zealand secondary schools develop and adapt pedagogical practices that prepare Pasifika students for moving in different worlds, guidance is needed. In particular, this research has indicated that good teaching and learning practice is what makes a difference to Pasifika achievement, while literature indicates that specific pedagogy may be required (Alton-Lee, 2003; Amituanai-Toloa et al., 2010; Ferguson et al., 2008; Fletcher, Parkhill & Harris, 2011; Gorinsky & Fraser, 2006; Nakhid, 2003; Sheets, 2009). It is imperative then that further research be conducted to explore whether specific teaching practices are required in order to make a difference, providing a guide for educational leaders and teachers.

It would be useful to research the impact of programmes such as *Te Kotahitanga* on Pasifika student achievement. This research highlights the usefulness of *Te Kotahitanga*, particularly in the development of teaching and learning relationships, co-constructed learning, and the appreciation of cultural capital. The three schools in this study espoused the benefits of the *Te Kotahitanga* programme when applied to Pasifika learners, therefore it is important that further research be done in order

that a specific programme for Pasifika students be considered for use throughout New Zealand schools.

Finally, this study recommends that more research be done on specific school conditions that effect the engagement and academic achievement of Pasifika students in New Zealand secondary schools. There is potential to expand this research, in order to investigate a broader range of perspectives through study at a larger number of schools and geographical locations and the inclusion of Pasifika students in the research.

FINAL CONCLUSION

This research has added to the very small body of literature on Pasifika academic achievement in New Zealand secondary schools by considering senior and middle leaders' perceptions of the practices and challenges that influence Pasifika academic achievement. The study suggests that Pasifika academic achievement can be significantly enhanced through leadership that is focused on the implementation of school wide strategies that raise the academic profile of Pasifika students. These strategies include; an inclusive and supportive school culture, a focus on high academic expectations of Pasifika students, culturally responsive curriculum and the continued development of pedagogy that is based on best practice. It is important that the positive work, accomplished by many New Zealand secondary schools to raise Pasifika academic achievement, be shared and celebrated rather than focusing on deficit theory, in order to create a positive cycle for Pasifika learners of the future.

REFERENCES

- Amituanai-Toloa, Meaola, McNaughton, Stuart, Lai, Mei Kuin, Airini, Turner, Rolf, Widdowson, Deborah, . . . Pale, Maryanne. (2010). *Ua Aiona le Manogi o le Lolo: pasifika schooling improvement research - final report*. New Zealand: Retrieved from http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/pasifika_education/ua-aoina-le-manogi-o-le-lolo-pasifika-schooling-improvement-research-summary-report/feiloaiga.
- Alton-Lee, A. (2003). *Quality teaching for diverse students in schooling: Best evidence synthesis iteration*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education, Retrieved from <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2515/5959>.
- Banks, J. A., Cookson, P., Gay, G., Hawley, W. D., Irvine, J. J., Nieto, S., . . . Stephan, W. G. (2005). Education and Diversity. *Social Education*, 69(1), 36-40.
- Bedford, R., Macpherson, C., & Spoonley, P. (2000). Fact or Fable? The Consequences of Migration for Educational Achievement and Labor Market Participation. *The Contemporary Pacific*, 12, 57.
- Bishop, R., & Glynn, T. (1999). *Culture counts: changing power relations in education*. Palmerston North, New Zealand: Dunmore Press.
- Bishop, R. (2005). Freeing ourselves from neo-colonial domination in research: A Kaupapa Māori approach to creating knowledge. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 109 – 138). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Bishop, R. (2010). Commentary on 'Family obligations in Micronesian cultures: implications for educators'. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education (QSE)*, 23(6), 691-698. doi: 10.1080/09518398.2010.519359

- Bishop, R., & Berryman, M. (2010). Te Kotahitanga: culturally responsive professional development for teachers. *Teacher Development*, 14(2), 173-187. doi: 10.1080/13664530.2010.494497
- Bishop, R., Berryman, M., Wearmouth, J., Peter, M., & Clapham, S. (2012). Professional development, changes in teacher practice and improvements in Indigenous students' educational performance: A case study from New Zealand. *Teaching & Teacher Education*, 28(5), 694-705. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2012.02.002
- Blackmore, J. (2006). Deconstructing diversity discourses in the field of educational management and leadership. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 34(2), 181-200.
- Bryman, A. (2004). *Research Methods and Organization Studies* Retrieved from <http://unitec.ebib.com.au/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=179346>
- Bush, T. (2003). *Theories of educational leadership and management* (3rd ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Cardno, C. & Collett, D. (2004). Curriculum leadership: Secondary schools principals' perspectives on this challenging role in New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Leadership*, 19 (2), 15-29.
- Castagno, A. E., & Brayboy, B. M. J. (2008). Culturally responsive schooling for indigenous youth: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(4), 941-993.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2000). *Research methods in education* Retrieved from <http://unitec.ebib.com.au/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=170477>
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education* (6th ed.). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research methods in education* (7th ed.). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W. (2002). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

- Davidson, C. & Tolich, M. (2003). Competing traditions. In C. Davidson & M. Tolich (Eds.) *Social science research in New Zealand: Many paths to understanding* (2nded.) (pp. 23-38). Auckland: Pearson Education.
- Deal, T. E., & Peterson, K. D. (1990). *The Principal's Role in Shaping School Culture*. Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/detail?accno=ED325914>.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.) *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.), (pp.1-32). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dimmock, C., & Walker, A. D. (2005). *Educational Leadership : Culture and Diversity* Retrieved from <http://unitec.eblib.com.au/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=334380>
- Education Review Office. (2012a). *Evaluation at a glance: priority learners in New Zealand schools*. Retrieved from <http://www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/Evaluation-at-a-Glance-Priority-Learners-in-New-Zealand-Schools-August-2012>.
- Education Review Office. (2012b). *Improving Education Outcomes for Pacific Learners May 2012*. New Zealand: Retrieved from <http://www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/Improving-Education-Outcomes-for-Pacific-Learners-May-2012>.
- Ferguson, P., Gorinsky, R., Samu, T. W., & Mara, D. (2008). *Literature review on the experiences of Pasifika learners in the classroom*. New Zealand: Ministry of Education Retrieved from http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/pasifika_education/27772/27574.
- Fletcher, J., Parkhill, F., & Harris, C. (2011). Supporting young adolescent students from minority cultural groups who are underachieving in learning. *British Journal of Learning Support*, 26(3), 1 - 5.

- Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (2005). The interview: From neutral stance to political involvement. In N.K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln, *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.), (p.695-727). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gorinsky, R., & Fraser, C. (2006). *Literature review on the effective engagement of Pasifika parents & communities in education*. Wellington, New Zealand: Retrieved from http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/pasifika_education/5907.
- Gunter, H. M. (2006). Educational leadership and the challenge of diversity. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 34(2), 257-268.
- Hinds, D. (2000). Research instruments. In D. Wilkinson (Ed.), [*The researcher's toolkit: The complete guide to practitioner research*](#) (pp. 41-54). London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Jahnke, H., & Tiapa, J. (2003). Maori research. In C. Davidson & M. Tolich (Eds.) *Social science research in New Zealand: Many paths to understanding* (2nd ed.) Auckland: Pearson Education.
- Keeves, J. P. (1997). Methods and Processes in Educational Research. In J. P. Keeves (Ed.), *Educational Research, Methodology, and Measurement: An International Handbook*, pp. 277-285. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Krueger, R. A. (1994). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Lashway, L. (2006). The effects of leadership. In S. C. Smith & P. K. Piele (Eds.) *School leadership: Handbook for excellence in student learning*, (pp. 38-49). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Leithwood, K., Patten, S., & Jantzi, D. (2010). Testing a Conception of How School Leadership Influences Student Learning. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 46(5), 671-706. doi: 10.1177/0013161X10377347
- Lofland, J., Snow, D., Anderson, L., & Lofland, L. H. (2006). *Analyzing social settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis* (4th ed.). Belmont:Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

- Lumby, J., & Foskett, N. (2011). Power, Risk, and Utility: Interpreting the Landscape of Culture in Educational Leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 47(3), 446-461. doi: 10.1177/0013161X11400187
- McNaughton, S., & Lai, M. K. (2009). A model of school change for culturally and linguistically diverse students in New Zealand: a summary and evidence from systematic replication. *Teaching Education*, 20(1), 55-75. doi: 10.1080/10476210802681733
- Ministry of Education. (2013a). *Effective Governance: Supporting Pasifika Success*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education Retrieved from <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/Boards/EffectiveGovernance/PublicationsAndResources/SupportingPasifikaSuccess.aspx>.
- Ministry of Education. (2013b). *Pasifika Education Plan 2013 to 2017*. New Zealand: Retrieved from <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/PasifikaEducation/PasifikaEducationPlan2013.aspx>.
- Nakhid, C. (2003). "Intercultural Perceptions", Academic Achievement, and the Identifying Process of Pacific Islands Students in New Zealand Schools. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 72(3), 297-317.
- Nusche, D., Leveault, D., MacBeath, J., & Santiago, P. (2011). *OECD reviews of evaluation and assessment in education: New Zealand 2011*. OECD Publishing Retrieved from [http://search.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=EDU/EDPC/EA\(2012\)4&docLanguage=En](http://search.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=EDU/EDPC/EA(2012)4&docLanguage=En).
- Pilbrow, R. (2011). *Influences on Pasifika Student Academic Achievement in New Zealand Primary Schools*. A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Educational Leadership and Management, Unitec Institute of Technology, New Zealand
- Ramsden, P. (1998). *Learning to lead in higher education*. London: Routledge.

- Robinson, V., Lloyd, C., & Rowe, K. (2008). The Impact of Leadership on Student Outcomes: An Analysis of the Differential Effects of Leadership Types. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(5), 635-674.
- Robinson, V., Hohepa, M., & Lloyd, C. (2009). School leadership and student outcomes: identifying what works and why. *Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration (BES)*. Wellington, New Zealand Ministry of Education: Retrieved from <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2515/60169/60170>.
- Samu, T. W. (2006). The 'Pasifika umbrella' and quality teaching: understanding and responding to the diverse realities within. *Waikato Journal of Education*, 12, 35-49.
- Seashore Lewis, K., Leithwood, K., Wahlstrom, K. L., & Anderson, S. E. (2010). Learning from leadership: Investigating the links to improved student learning. New York: The Wallace Foundation. [This reading is an extract: Instructional leadership: Elementary vs. secondary principal and teacher interactions and student outcomes. (pp. 77-93). The whole document can be downloaded from the Wallace Foundation website at <http://www.wallacefoundation.org>]
- Sheets, R. H. (2009). What is diversity pedagogy? *Multicultural Education*, 16(3), 11-17.
- Southworth, G. (1993). School leadership and school development: Reflections. *School Organization*, 13(1), 73.
- Southworth, G. (2004). Primary school leadership in context: leading small, medium and large sized schools. London: RoutledgeFalmer. [This reading is Chapter 5 – Learning-centred leadership: Influencing what happens in classrooms (pp. 97-118).]
- Starratt, R. J. (2003). Centering educational administration: Cultivating meaning, community, responsibility. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Statistics New Zealand, & Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs. (2010). *Education and Pacific Peoples in New Zealand - Pacific Progress 2010*. Wellington, New Zealand: Statistics New Zealand, Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, Retrieved

from <http://www.stats.govt.nz/~media/Statistics/browse-categories/people-and-communities/pacific-peoples/pacific-prog-education/education-pacific-progress.pdf>.

- Timperley, H. S. (2005). Instructional Leadership Challenges: The Case of Using Student Achievement Information for Instructional Improvement. *Leadership & Policy in Schools*, 4(1), 3-22. doi: 10.1080/15700760590924591
- Waters, T. J., Marzano, R. J., & McNulty, B. (2004). Leadership that sparks learning. *Educational Leadership*, 61(7), 48-51.
- Weber, J. (1996). Leading the instructional programme. In S. C. Smith & P. K. Piele (Eds.) *School leadership: Handbook for excellence*. (pp. 253-278). University of Oregon: Clearinghouse on Educational Management.
- Wilkinson, T. M. (2001). The core ideas of research ethics. In M. Tolich (Ed.), *Research ethics in Aotearoa New Zealand* (pp.13-24). Auckland:Longman.
- Yin, R. (2011). *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish* Retrieved from <http://unitec.ebib.com.au/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=593773>

APPENDIX A



INFORMATION SHEET FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Title of Thesis: Leaders' perceptions of the challenges involved in improving Pasifika achievement in secondary schools

My name is Monette Atkinson and I am currently enrolled in the Master of Educational Leadership and Management degree in the Department of Education at Unitec Institute of Technology. I am seeking your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aim of my project is to:

- To investigate leaders' perceptions of the importance of school leadership actions in raising Pasifika achievement
- To investigate leaders' perceptions of the practices and challenges that influence the academic achievement of Pasifika students (both positively and negatively) within THEIR secondary schools
- To identify specific elements of school culture that leaders report as enhancing Pasifika students' achievement

I request your participation in the following way. I will be collecting data using an interview schedule and would appreciate being able to interview you at a time that is mutually suitable. I will also be asking you to sign a consent form regarding this event.

Neither you nor your organisation will be identified in the Thesis. I will be recording your contribution and will provide a transcript for you to check before data analysis is undertaken. I do hope that you will agree to take part and that you will find this participation of interest. If you have any queries about the project, you may contact my supervisor at Unitec Institute of Technology.

My supervisor is Dr Jo Howse and may be contacted by email or phone. Phone: (09) 815 4321 ext 8348. Email jhowse@unitec.ac.nz

Yours sincerely

Monette Atkinson

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2013 - 1033

This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from 25 July 2013 to 25 July 2014. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

APPENDIX B



CONSENT FORM

Research event: Semi-structured interview

Researcher: Monette Atkinson

Programme: Master of Educational Leadership and Management

THESIS TITLE: Leaders' perceptions of the challenges involved in improving Pasifika achievement in secondary schools

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research and I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that neither my name nor the name of my organisation will be used in any public reports.

I also understand that I will be provided with a transcript for checking before data analysis is started.

I am aware that I may withdraw myself or any information that has been provided for this project up to the stage when analysis of data has been completed.

I agree to take part in this project.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2013 - 1033

This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from 25 July 2013 to 25 July 2014. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

APPENDIX C



INFORMATION SHEET FOR FOCUS GROUPS

Title of Thesis: Leaders' perceptions of the challenges involved in improving Pasifika achievement in secondary schools

My name is Monette Atkinson and I am currently enrolled in the Master of Educational Leadership and Management in the Department of Education at Unitec Institute of Technology. I am seeking your help in meeting the requirements of research for a thesis which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aim of my research is to gather data on what leaders perceive to be the challenges involved in improving Pasifika achievement in secondary schools.

I would like to request your participation in the form of a 30 minute focus group to discuss

- what you believe to be the practices and challenges that influence the academic achievement of Pasifika students within your own school
- how you, as a middle leader, influence the improvement of Pasifika achievement
- specific elements of school culture and practices that you would perceive as having enhanced Pasifika students' achievement within your own school

The discussion will be recorded, transcribed and then deleted. Throughout the research neither you nor your organisation will be identified. At your request, I am able to provide you with a copy of your portion of the transcript from the focus group.

I do hope that you will agree to take part and that you will find this participation of interest. Your contribution would be greatly appreciated. If you have any queries about the project, you may contact my supervisor at Unitec Institute of Technology.

My supervisor is Dr Jo Howse and may be contacted by email or phone. Phone: (09) 815 4321 ext 8348. Email jhowse@unitec.ac.nz

Yours sincerely

Monette Atkinson

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2013 - 1033

This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from 25 July 2013 to 25 July 2014. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

APPENDIX D



PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Research event: Focus Group

Researcher: Monette Atkinson

Programme: Master of Educational Leadership and Management

THESIS TITLE: Leaders' perceptions of the challenges involved in improving Pasifika achievement in secondary schools

I have had the research project explained to me and I have had an opportunity to have my questions answered. I understand that everything I say is confidential and none of the information that I give will identify neither myself nor my organisation. I am aware that I have the right to withdraw myself or any information that I provided for this research and may request a copy of my portion of the transcript from the focus group if required.

I agree to take part in this project.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2013 - 1033

This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from 25 July 2013 to 25 July 2014. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

APPENDIX E



Leaders' Perceptions of the Challenges Involved in Raising Pasifika Achievement in New Zealand Secondary Schools

Outline of questions for semi-structured interviews

4. What is the cultural composition of your students within your school?
5. What are your perceptions of the academic achievement of Pasifika students compared to other students within your school?
6. How do you think school leadership actions impact on the improvement of Pasifika student achievement?
7. What are the leadership practices and challenges that influence the academic achievement of Pasifika student achievement (both positively and negatively) within your school?
8. What specific elements of school culture have enhanced Pasifika students' learning in your school?
9. What specific practices in your school raise the academic achievement of Pasifika students?

APPENDIX F



Leaders' Perceptions of the Challenges Involved in Raising Pasifika Achievement in New Zealand Secondary Schools

Outline of questions for focus groups

1. What are your perceptions of the academic achievement of Pasifika students compared to other students within your school?
2. As a middle leader, what do you perceive to be the practices and challenges that influence the academic achievement of Pasifika student achievement (both positively and negatively) within your school?
3. How do you, as a middle leader, influence the improvement of Pasifika achievement?
4. What specific elements of school culture have enhanced Pasifika students' learning in your school?
5. What specific practices in your school raise the academic achievement of Pasifika students?

APPENDIX G

GAINING ACCESS TO A RESEARCH SITE

Template for an organisation to provide a letter giving permission to conduct research

[Organisation's letterhead]

Date

Address letter to: Monette Atkinson

RE: Master of Educational Leadership and Management thesis

THESIS TITLE: Leaders' perceptions of the challenges involved in improving Pasifika achievement in secondary schools

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project and I give permission for research to be conducted in my organisation. I understand that the name of my organisation will not be used in any public reports.

Signature

Name of signatory

Title of signatory