

**CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON THE RETENTION OF
PASIFIKA STUDENTS IN AN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
TRADES PROGRAMME**

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

Unitec Institute of Technology

Declaration

(refer Academic Policy 12d Guide to the Presentation of Theses/Dissertations/
Research Projects)

Name of candidate: Jone Valevou Tawaketini.

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IN AN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY TRADES PROGRAMME is submitted in partial fulfilment
for the requirements for the Unitec degree of Master of Education Leadership and
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CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

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- This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project represents my own work;
- The contribution of supervisors and others to this work was consistent with the
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ABSTRACT

Pasifika success in education has been identified as critical for the future of New Zealand. In the tertiary institution, the sustainability for the retention of Pasifika students is seen as problematic because of the lower achievement rate. Research has identified that culture, family obligations language barrier and learning support are some of the key contributing factors. This study is set out to investigate the cultural influences that contribute to the retention of Pasifika students currently enrolled in an institute of technology trades programme. A qualitative methodology was used for this study. A semi structured interview was conducted with three Pasifika leaders in the trade programmes. There were two *talanoa* focus groups conducted, the first *talanoa* focus group included five Pasifika students and the second *talanoa* focus group included five Pasifika tutors.

The data analysis revealed three major themes: (i) culture and family obligations influence the Pasifika students' learning style during their educational journey, (ii) the recognition of the Pasifika students learning styles and providing academic support by the Pasifika tutors contributes to the retention of Pasifika students, (iii) providing sound leadership, effective communication process and a strong visibility of Pacific Centre. This research study suggests that although cultural influences contribute to the retention of the Pasifika students in the trade programme, the institutional support within the Pacific Centre is critical for the sustainable retention of Pasifika students.

The recommendation arising from this research can be validated by the tertiary institute studied, however, it can have a genuine intention for other tertiary institutions and also the Ministry of Education for the improvement and sustainable retention of Pasifika students.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis has been inspired by struggles and the silent battles that Pasifika students encountered while enrolled in the trades programme which I had seen through the years of my teaching in the trades programme, here in Aotearoa.

This thesis would not have been completed without the wisdom, knowledge and understanding that comes from the God that I serve. Thank you Jesus, all glory and honour belongs to you.

A big *vinaka vakalevu* to my wife Janet Berenia Christopher Tawaketini for her unwavering support and *veilomani*, love and consistent encouragement in my journey to complete this thesis.

My supervisors, Dr Josephine Howse and Dr Falaniko Tominiko, I cannot say *vinaka vakalevu*, *faafetai lava*, and thank you enough. Your combined visions and guidance in directing both the contents and context of this thesis has pushed me to broaden my knowledge and understanding on the influences of Pasifika culture on our Pasifika students' educational journey. I am grateful for the patience, wise advice and most of all the flexibility of time given to me in the process of supervising this thesis.

Thank you also to Dr Mary Panko and lecturer, Cindy Wee for proof reading and supporting me academically. Adrian Jenkins, our knowledge Specialist, I am grateful for your support with sourcing of literature.

A big *malo vakalevu*, *oue tulou* to all the participants: the Pasifika students, the Pasifika tutors and the Pasifika leaders for your valuable feedback that came from your hearts as true Pasifika people. Without you this thesis would not have eventuated.

Finally, I would like to thank Reverend Atunaisa Lagi and Radini Talatala Frances Lagi for supporting me spiritually in prayers while writing my thesis.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my *Tua*, Joni Saula Ledua, my grandfather and namesake, as well as to my grandmother, *Pu Sera Caginitoba Dilo* Ledua. *Tua Joni*, I still remember vividly the evening you call one of your sons (my uncles) to prepare a *tanoa* of *kava* for you but none responded. You called me as your *Yaca* (namesake) to prepare your *tanoa* of *kava*. I was only 10 years old and on that evening you gave your blessing upon me, that I will prosper in my life and go far in education. Together with *Pu*, your prayers over my life have been an overflowing blessing. This thesis confirms that the words of our elders are powerful.

May you both Rest in Peace *Tua* Joni Saula Ledua and *Pu Sera Caginitoba Dilo* Ledua.

I would also like to dedicate this work to my parents, Filipe & Repeka Tawaketini, my ancestors and members of my Clan, the *Mataqali Korovou of Keteira village, Moala island, Lau*. Today I have reached another milestone as the first member of the *Mataqali Korovou* to complete the Master of Educational Leadership and Management. It has indeed taken the village to raise a child.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Many Pasifika students enrolled in the trade programme find it difficult to engage with their tutors especially if the tutors do not have a Pacific island origin. Pacific people arrived in New Zealand with the intent to search for a better life that the new country would offer (Fairbairn-Dunlop & Makisi, 2003). However, at the same time they would bring with them their own ethnic culture, language and beliefs to the resettlement. Clifford (1994), describes this as maintaining communities or having homes away from home. As a diaspora community, Pacific people face the dilemma of holding on to their own elements of ethnic and cultural identity, while at the same they have to adopt the language and beliefs of the dominant culture. In the process “children and youth [were] stating to question the duality of their lives including their understanding of the customary ways” (Fairbairn-Dunlop & Makisi, 2003, p.15).

The migration of Pacific Islanders into New Zealand increased between 1960 and 1970 due to the demand for “blue collar” unskilled and semi-skilled labour. The colonial political relationship of New Zealand with the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau allowed these three Pacific populations to enter New Zealand easily and they rapidly filled the labour market needs. During the period from 1980 to 2006, other Pacific nations such as Tonga, Samoa, Fiji, Tuvalu and Kiribati came under New Zealand’s immigration policies (Bedford & Hugo, 2012). This door opened opportunities, provided employment, a better education for Pacific children and at the same time, generated income for themselves as well as for their families back in the homeland.

New Zealand’s population of “Pasifika people” is a multi-ethnic, heterogeneous groups comprising of different languages and cultures. Pasifika people is a collective term to refer to men, women, and children who identify themselves with the islands and/or cultures of Samoa, Cook island, Tonga, Niue, Tokelau, Fiji, Solomon, Tuvalu and other Polynesian, Micronesian and Melanesian islands or from a mixed heritage. Even though they are known as Pasifika people, they still maintain their unique ethnic identity and culture when they migrated to New Zealand (Ferguson, Gorinski, Samu &

Mara, 2008). Pasifika has become a politicised term to commonly unify all New Zealand Pacific Islanders as a collective to make it easy for political decision making in regards to the growing Pacific populations. One of the significant importance of the term "Pasifika" is that it can be used as a voice of a particular group of people. These group of Pasifika people have some common Pasifika values such as: respect, spirituality, belonging, love, reciprocity, humility, communalism, leadership and collective responsibility (Anae, Coxon, Mara, Samu, & Finau, 2001). The Ministry of Education (2009) *Pasifika Education Plan 2009-2012* also acknowledges that Pasifika people are not homogenous and states that the term Pasifika does not refer to a single ethnicity, nationality, gender, language of culture. In this study I have used Pasifika as a generic term that includes the Pasifika students in a trade programme because they represent the different ethnic groups.

Research has shown that while Pasifika students are studying at Bachelor degree level and above, they are still over represented in lower level study in New Zealand tertiary institutions (Chu, Abella & Paurini, 2013). This shows that Pasifika students are more comfortable in collective learning, which is more evident in primary and secondary schools, and certificate courses in higher education where practical sessions are group oriented. Collective learning is part of Pasifika students' cultural backgrounds seen in song and dance performances and shared everyday activities. Therefore, it is important to note that culture plays an important role in Pasifika students learning style. Thaman (1998) suggested that culture is a way of life of a discrete group, which includes a language, a body of accumulated knowledge, skills, beliefs and values. I believe there is a gap between the teaching styles and the learning styles of Pasifika students in higher tertiary education.

The intention of this research is to investigate the cultural influences that contribute to the retention of Pasifika students currently enrolled in an institute of technology trades programme and the significance of a Pasifika social cultural context in a trade programme learning environment. The researcher is interested investigating the retention of Pasifika students, but realize that it is important to understand the cultural background of our students and how their culture can play a crucial role in the delivery

of teaching and learning in an institute of technology trade programme. It is anticipated that the research could offer some insights and practical strategies in relation to one of the government priorities to raise Pasifika students' achievement levels in higher education.

Rationale

My personal experience as a trades tutor has shown that Pasifika students enrolling in an institute of technology trades programme are confronted by a new learning culture, new educational systems and different teaching and learning styles. Their school experiences in their home countries are very different from the New Zealand school systems and, if they have recently arrived in New Zealand, Pasifika students often experience a culture shock. Thus Pasifika students often struggle to adapt to a new learning environment in an institute of technology trades programme in New Zealand.

Chu, Abella and Paurini's (2013) observations have shown that while Pasifika students in tertiary level are studying at bachelor level or above, "they are still over represented in lower level study" (p. 17). This observation proved that there was a gap between the teaching styles and the learning styles of Pasifika students.

The term learning style is closely associated with a higher level of participation of learners (Entwistle, Hanley & Hounsell, 1979). This is seen in Fleming's VARK (Visual, Auditory, Read/Write, Kinesthetic) which is used to depict New Zealand students' learning style and thus students would participate highly when given activities in which they can use their particular learning style and actually excel (Fleming & Mills, 1992). Learning approaches on the other hand refer to the more situation specific competencies where a student prefers to tackle a learning task in the light of the perceived demands (Entwistle, Hanley & Hounsell, 1979).

Research Aims

To examine the dynamics and nature of cultural influences on the Pasifika students studying in a New Zealand institute of technology trades programme.

To examine how cultural influences impact on the learning style of Pasifika students in an institute of technology trades programme

To identify ways in which these cultural influences and learning styles can be integrated into the New Zealand curriculum to increase the retention of Pasifika students.

Research Questions

How do the dynamics and nature of cultural influences impact on the Pasifika students enrolled in an institute of technology trades programme in New Zealand?

How do cultural influences impact on the learning styles of Pasifika students in an institute of technology trades programme?

How can Pasifika culture and learning styles be integrated into the curriculum in order to improve the retention of Pasifika students at an institute of technology trades programme in New Zealand?

Thesis organisation

This thesis is set out in five chapters.

Chapter One is an introduction to the research project. It describes the rationale for the investigation and lists the research aims and the questions that guide the aims.

Chapter Two is the literature review which explores relevant theories by credible authors on the research topic.

Chapter Three describes the rationale in selecting as qualitative methodology and the data gathering method for semi structured interview and the *talanoa* focus groups. The data analysis procedures used for the semi structured interviews and the *talanoa* focus groups, aspects of validity and ethical considerations are also discussed.

Chapter Four presents that research data and analysis from the semi- structured interviews and the *talanoa* focus groups.

Chapter Five contains a discussion of the findings based on the emerging themes. The key findings of the research project are critically examined and linked to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. Recommendations are made to Institute Leaders, Staff and Director of Pacific Success. Limitation of the research and recommendations for future research and recommendations for future research are also discussed.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature review explores the dynamics of cultural influences on the Pasifika students in the New Zealand education context with particular focus on those who are engaged in the polytechnic sector. The issues raised within the literature reviewed, provided the following headings: Learning styles of Pasifika students, Power Distant Society, Code of Silence, Cultural Pedagogy, Cultural Differences, Cultural Space, Pasifika Time, Church Commitment and Home & School Partnership

Learning styles of Pasifika students

Felder and Silverman (1988) briefly define learning styles of students (in general), as learning by seeing, hearing, reflecting, group activities, reasoning logically and visualising, with teaching methods that match the learning style. These authors also noted that teaching methods include: discussion, focusing on principles, practical applications, some emphasis on memorisation and on understanding. Furthermore, Felder and Silverman (1988), expressed that while a teacher has to cater for an individual student's learning style in their teaching methods, how much a student learns in a class is also dominated by the student's cultural background and prior knowledge, and interestingly, visual learners remember best what they see (action or performance) and will probably forget if something is simply said to them. Similarly, for the Pasifika culture most legends and history are transferred from one generation to generation through cultural songs and dances as well as daily activities are learned through seeing and doing how the older people do things. Therefore, we can say that Pasifika students would also prefer to learn through visualisation and performance, such as hands on activities in the classroom.

The learning style model VARK (Visual, Auditory, Read/Write, Kinesthetic) developed by Fleming and Mills (1992) is commonly used to depict the learning style of New Zealand learners. It is important to note that culture plays an important role in Pasifika students learning styles. Given that Pasifika People traditionally passed on knowledge

verbally and visually, the same can be said for their ability to learn information that includes pictures, diagrams, charts and animations. Another strong learning style is that of auditory information which includes spoken words and sounds, listening and cultural performances in groups or individual dance. Felder and Silverman (1988), insisted that in a visual learner, a picture is truly worth a thousand words, whether they are spoken or written. They also highlighted that kinesthetic where taste, touch or hands on is a critical learning style. Pasifika students would respond to this learning style as it is an essential part of learning and perfecting skills needed for daily activities in their culture.

Studies indicate that there are differences in the way children of different cultural groups communicate, learn and interact. Hofstede (2011) noted different dimensions that distinguish culture which includes *Individualism versus Collectivism*. Children tend to reflect the distinguishing dimension in the way they learn. Pasifika culture recognises collectivism over individualism. For instance, Au (1993) found that native Hawaiians have a strong tradition of group story telling called talk story, and many Hawaiian students excel in activities that require group cooperation and a lot of talking. This author also noted that Hawaiian students become frustrated with activities that ask for silence and that are completed individually.

The talk story method is similar to Fijian story telling known as *tukuni* which literally means, “to tell” as expressed by Mateiviti-Tulavu (2013). *Tukuni* therefore, is a form of passing information down from one generation to another and in most cases is not written but retold through memory. Older people use the medium of *tukuni* not only for story telling of myths and legends but it includes the reinforcing of genealogy, social hierarchy, protocols, land ownership, family connections and relationships with other extended families, stories unique to individual clans and tribes.

A distinctive characteristic of Pacific island cultures is participation in communal work where tasks are shared and the chief or leader supervises and ensures that tasks are completed. Because of these cultural practices, most Pasifika learners prefer to

engage in a group environment. Darling-Hammond's (2001) ideas of learning practice support the notion of collaboration opportunities where students can learn from each other in small group activities. The communal notion therefore is seen in Pasifika students preferring to engage in group activities because it provides the feeling of being important in contributing as part of a group. However, grouping can camouflage weakness within the group without being noticed until assessment time when individual performance is assessed and the weak individual is shown up when their results are below standard (Ministry of Education, 2010).

Ferguson, Gorinski, Samu & Mara (2008) expressed how Diversity Pedagogy Theory (DPT) links culture, cognition and schooling as a single unit. They highlighted the deep understanding of how the role of culture is not only the social development of children but also their cognitive development. They further suggested the importance of teacher and student relationship and the quality of how they interact. This includes students bringing their cultural knowledge, practices, values and skills to school, and teachers, by observing such behaviours, can provide valuable insights to who they are and how they act in addition to what they know.

Darling-Hammond (2001) advocates the use of team teaching where, instead of one teacher, there should be two teachers teaching a large number of students. These forms of collaboration include supervision opportunities, sharing of ideas, teaching methods and developing approaches for meeting the needs of individual students. When teachers collaborate in a team, they share their knowledge of individual students with one another and if appropriate, relay that knowledge to the student's family. Darling Hammond's notions of collaboration includes collaboration of students with their peers and with their teachers. Personal experience of working in the trades programme where team teaching is being practised, proves that most Pasifika students collaborate effectively with their tutors, particularly, when one of the team teaching tutor is a Pasifika tutor. Benseman, Coxon, Anderson and Anae (2006) highlighted that the presence of Pasifika staff who act as role models, mentors and providing support for Pasifika students is crucial, however, they were concerned with the low number of Pasifika academic staff in most tertiary institutions.

Gorinski & Fraser (2006) noted that establishing a partnership with parents and teachers with their complimentary roles affect the children's education by highlighting the importance of relationships amongst teachers and learners and families, working in collaboration to generate optimum learning and teaching contexts. When teachers actively facilitate the contribution of Pasifika parents through the cultural, linguistic, cognitive, social, and physical dimensions of the classroom context, Pasifika students show a higher retention and success rate.

A method of learning practice established by the University of Auckland, the *Tuakana* Programme, employs student mentors who are ethnically Pasifika and Maori. These high achieving senior students in their final year of under-graduate or post graduate programme worked with groups of first year Pasifika and Maori students (Anae, Anderson, Bensemen & Coxon, 2002). The *Tuakana* programme used group workshops for students to collectively share ideas and thus the students benefit from the group rather than struggling to read and study alone, resulting in higher success and retention rate for Pasifika students at the university. The idea of using the *Tuakana* Programme augurs well with the Pasifika students at the University because of the similarities of their cultural backgrounds by providing an environment where they can develop their learning comfortably. Besides it removes any fear of the hierarchical relationship between a student and teacher.

Chu, Abella & Paurini (2013) discussed a similar learning practice to the *Tuakana* model where a group of Pasifika students created a community practice of learning, the *Manukau Initiative*. This community practice of learning provided a sense of closeness where they all work together, free from hierarchical constructs and this enables novices and experts to learn together. While the group studied together they work cooperatively and share their areas of strength. For example, during traditional lectures, the lecturer does not allow discussions but literally throws information for students to listen to and take notes; some students have the skills to take notes and understand the lecture. However, some students may not have the skills to take notes

and also do not understand some parts of the lecture. In this instances, the *Manukau Initiative* practice brings students to share information amongst themselves and this benefits the whole group. Structural learning communities as described by Chu, Abella and Paurini (2013) from the outcome of Alexandra McKegg's (2005) research on the *Manukau Initiative* may help Pasifika students by attaining a higher retention and achievement by providing collaborative learning where all students have a voice and also students can be grouped together and study together across various subjects. In this way, the students can learn together and know each other, which may provide a comfort zone for Pasifika students as they learn about their new learning environment.

The theme on *Learning Styles of Pasifika Students* is summed up well by *The Pasifika Education Plan Monitoring Report 2010* (Ministry of Education, 2012), which highlighted the importance of effective teaching because it makes a difference to students' learning and achievement outcomes. It also strongly emphasised that teachers need to know their Pasifika students, the students' goals, priorities and cultures that can contribute to their success. "Teachers' effectiveness also involves building strong relationships with parents, families and communities to raise Pasifika achievement." (p.35).

Power Distant Society

Hofstede (2011) highlighted the dimension of *Power Distance*. A highly power distant society expresses certain social hierarchies that are acceptable to the society. Therefore, teachers are ranked higher than their students in terms of the knowledge and authority vested in them. Their 'wisdom' and teachings are taken as highly authentic and are not questioned. Pacific societies are hierarchical where chiefs, church ministers and teachers are highly ranked and given utmost respect. Thus, debating with one of the ranks is unheard of in Pacific culture. Students 'look up' to their teachers as having the last word in everything they teach. This trait is inherent in Pasifika learners in New Zealand as Jones (1991) noted that Pasifika students in the secondary schools cannot engage in reflective discussion with their teacher because

they expect the teacher to be the source of knowledge rather than a facilitator of discussion and debate. Therefore, New Zealand educators must understand that Pasifika students are not playing dumb when they seem rather quiet during class discussions or when the tutor expects answers from them.

In order for teachers to understand Pasifika students and their culture, Lei (2006) and Samu & Siteine (2006) suggested that professional development is important for teachers, where a strong emphasis on culture and ethnic values are being discussed. Professional development needs to focus on challenging teachers' epistemological positioning that will develop their understanding of their cultural competencies with Pasifika students. The pedagogical practices that educators use can affect not only classroom interactions but also student's chances of success in educational assessment. Alton-Lee's (2003), *Best Education Synthesis (BES)* report, highlighted that, "even when teachers are focussed on the student learning, inappropriate teacher expectations can undermine a student, or constitute a barrier to effective practice" (p.16). These inappropriate teacher's expectations might be due to the student's ethnicity, disability, gender and other student characteristics unrelated to a student's actual ability. Alton-Lee (2003), stated that there was evidence to demonstrate that different expectations for treatment of Maori and Pasifika students continue under the guise of a learning style approach. New Zealand educators need to disregard the assumption that Maori and Pasifika learners are low achievers and teachers need training to change their attitudes towards Maori and Pasifika students (Alton-Lee, 2003).

Other cultural aspects include inherent behaviours. Gorinski (2005) found that during Parent Mentoring Evaluation, the Pasifika parent's notions of obedience and respect for authority can impede their engagement in the inquiry focused dialogue with teachers and the school personnel, which can be perceived by the school as a lack of interest by the parents. This behaviour is common amongst Pasifika people because of the cultural respect given to elders, church ministers and people in authority where it is disrespectful to question any person in authority. This behaviour is inherent in Pasifika children who are strongly raised with this code of respect and they bring it into

the classroom. This action affects teaching and learning where Pasifika students are afraid to directly answer the teacher or stand up and speak to an audience. On the other hand, parent teacher conferences are not attended by parents because they do not speak English well and do not want to embarrass their children. To address this cultural barrier, Gorinski (2005) highlighted that some nominated Counties Manukau schools adopted a holistic approach to building the home school relationship. This includes parents' involvement in workshop sessions on how parents can comfortably discuss their children's performance with their teachers and having parent support groups and family days. As a result, it provides a smoother transition to school processes for Pasifika students and also increases the number of students' participation and involvement in learning. This is seen in the secondary schools' Polyfest where cultural narratives, history, technologies and value systems are incorporated in song and dance performances and many parents proudly get involved in their children's education.

This is similar to Lawrence Stenhouse's theory on academic programme, cited by Aubrey & Riley (2017), that there should be a formal approach between teacher and students where teachers are facilitators and there is a contractual nature of learning and teaching. The contract will require the students to be responsible for their learning while the teacher in the role of facilitator encourages students to access knowledge. This seems to contradict the notion that Jones (1991) observed about Pasifika students (at secondary level), not proactively engaging in reflective discussion with their teacher because they expect the teacher to have the last word. While Stenhouse's theory takes Pasifika students onto another level which is worth noting, that at tertiary level, educators need to allow Pasifika students to explore and engage in independent learning.

Pasifika students always love to be recognised, and one practice that can be used in the classroom is to allow Pasifika students to conduct a case study or a topic that is centred around their culture, their favourite sports and or share their areas of interest. This, then confirms Stenhouse's (cited in Aubrey and Riley, 2017) ideas where he did not see the teachers' roles as being the expert who deliver knowledge to the students

but that teachers should also see themselves as learners alongside their students rather than experts. He reiterated that teachers should not use their own standing to promote their view point and influence the students' thinking but the teacher should facilitate a discussion with the students where divergence of views is defended without trying to gain a compromise with the teacher acting as a chairperson to ensure that learning is taking place.

Code of Silence

Ferguson et al (2008) noted that the development of an authentic form of caring gives emphasis to reciprocal relationships between adults and the young people they serve and that Pasifika learners excel when they are given a sense of belonging and inclusiveness. Whereas, Jones (1991) and Tupuola (1998) have a different view. They said that Pacific learners' inclusiveness can also be problematic where the presence of male students in a class can hinder open discussion by female students. In Fiji, Samoa and Tonga, there are taboos between brothers and sisters or female and male cousins (Nayacakalou, (1955); Volkel, 2010). These relational taboos allow conversations only via a third person, so if they are in the same classroom, their learning may be affected. Cultural restrictions (taboos) for the opposite gender include space or personal distance and boundaries such as restriction on discussions of certain topics, in particular of sexual content (in human biology). Silence or withdrawal of Pasifika students in this context needs to be understood by teachers and catered for. Tupuola (1998) further stated that because of this example the teachers then will face a dilemma where a complex interplay of culture, gender and individual learning styles may impact upon learner's needs in the classroom.

When teachers understand their Pasifika learners and aim to cater for them, they show a caring attitude, then Pasifika learners can go a long way if a platform of a good relationship between teachers and learners is being maintained.

Understanding that Pasifika students tend to carry the *madua* attitude which is a burdensome feeling of stress, often related to things undone and that knowing shame is closely related to knowing respect and this is the very essence of being a Fijian (Williksen-Bakker, 2004). Being ashamed can include the fear to speak in a foreign language such as English as it can bring shame to the students and the family if they do not speak the language well, however one may gain respect if they speak English fluently. The *madua fever* can also be evident when one is allowed to speak because of his high status while the others may be silent and will not speak (keep silence) because of their lower social status. Jenny Seeto in the *Fiji Times*, 5 November, 2002 (as cited by Williksen-Bakker, 2004) believes that the Fijian race can move forward if the culture of silence is broken as Fijians were often reluctant to speak out when they have a conflicting point of view. The *madua fever* is prevalent amongst Pasifika cultures (notions of *fakama*).

Chu, Abella and Paurini (2013) confirm the *madua* attitude where Pasifika students are reluctant to ask for help and that is often rooted in their cultural beliefs surrounding the notion of “face saving” or being afraid or being embarrassed in front of the class. Chu, Abella and Paurini (2013), stated that silence can be perceived by other students as a sign of politeness whereas, asking questions was construed as impoliteness. Knowing your students means knowing their fears and therefore a cultural responsive teacher would need to be able to make the students trust that s/he understands their feelings of *madua* or *fakama*. Pasifika teachers’ presence in all levels of education is needed because they know what it is like to be in the Pasifika students’ shoes.

Philosophies of caring in student-teacher relationships show that learning is supported when structures for caring, opportunities for collaborative learning and appreciation for diversity are established in classrooms (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Wentzel, 1997; Noddings, 2002). According to Hook (cited in Aubrey & Riley, 2017) her experiences of early education in a segregated school and being taught by black teachers showed that black children who were deemed exceptional and gifted, were given special care. She commented that, “Teachers worked with us to ensure that we would fulfil our intellectual destiny and by doing so uplift the race.”, (p. 179). As her teachers were of

her own racial group, they knew the students' backgrounds. In this way there is a sense of cultural understanding and therefore, school, for students like Hooks should be a place where one can enjoy and find new things as she stated, "where I could forge and through ideas, reinvent myself" (p. 180). Pasifika students often come with issues to school and rather than labelling them because of their backgrounds, teachers need to create spaces where they could forget the realities of home-life but rather enjoy school through ideas and reinvent themselves.

One of the major factors of having a communication barrier between Pasifika learners and their teachers is the students' shyness to communicate in English, in particular if English is the learners' second or other language. Benseman, Coxon, Anderson and Anae (2006) highlighted in their report that language issues are not problematic because of the increasing number of Pasifika speaking English from an early age. This is true of New Zealand born Pasifika students. However, it is the Pasifika students born outside of New Zealand who feel that they were disadvantaged when comparing themselves with their English-speaking peers whom they thought were able to communicate better with the teachers.

Cultural Pedagogy

Cultural pedagogy has been seen to be critical in providing teaching and learning methods for students to engage in learning (Savage, Hindle, Meyer, Hynds, Penetito & Sleeter, 2011) and "effective pedagogy requires that teachers inquire into the impact of their teaching on their students." (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 35). Cultural responsiveness is a framework through which teachers are able to better-meet the needs of specific learners of minority cultures in their classroom (Samu, 2006). Culturally responsive pedagogy is synonymous with concepts of culturally responsive teaching and learning for students from diverse cultures and background (Alton-Lee, 2003). These authors all agree on the fact that culture plays a crucial role in the teaching and learning of the minority and the diverse cultures. This shows that in New Zealand, teachers need to develop their cultural competency by developing and

demonstrating their understanding of core values of the minority and diverse Pasifika people's cultures.

According to Porter-Samuels (2013) teachers need to be aware that the term Pasifika lumps all the different Pacific cultures as one and Pasifika is a minority in New Zealand. Pasifika is diverse and includes people from: Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Niue, Cook Islands, Tokelau; and now Tuvalu and Kiribati who are becoming significant in Aotearoa. Each island group has its own cultural identity. Therefore, Pasifika cannot have a 'one size fits all' cultural responsive pedagogy. As there are many Pacific Island nations there will always be debate about what is taught, how it is taught, and how learning is assessed and evaluated. Personal experience of conference attendance conducted by Ako Aotearoa (2017) on Pasifika educational matters has reflected this contention amongst the heterogenic Pasifika educators where questions arise such as, what Pasifika curriculum? This Pasifika identity issue is also experienced by students when it concerns non-recognition of their culture (Robinson et al., 2004).

Dickie (2008) and Samu & Siteine (2006) are adamant that there needs to be a teacher's understanding of the cultural differences of their students. As culture plays a critical role in a Pasifika students' learning style, *the concept of Teaching as Inquiry*, involves teachers inquiring into the relationship between their teaching and their students' learning. In this way, they (teachers) add to the knowledge and skills they can use to respond to the particular needs, interests, and strengths of the culturally diverse students in their classes (Ministry of Education, 2007).

Teachers need to understand how a Pasifika student's cultural ways of thinking, knowing and doing can become a barrier to what the teacher wants the student to think, know and do. Rather than struggling or resigning to label a Pasifika student to stereotypes, the teacher needs to consider the cultural capital he has. The dominant culture's cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977) has always been accepted in the education systems. (Ferguson et al., 2008) note the use of two dimensions: cultural distinctiveness and culturally responsive pedagogical practice and contents. They

identified that engagement in critical discussion for students and teacher may pose hidden difficulties for students whose cultural background emphasises that teachers are the source of all knowledge, and that students do not engage in a critical discussion. How then can teachers engage Pasifika students in critical thinking? To encourage students to talk openly, a teacher involved in the *Quality Teaching Research and Development Project (QTR&D)* shared that in understanding the notions of oratory culture used by Samoans as a reflection of status of power, she decided that:

By letting go of the power in my class, I enacted a shift in my pedagogy. I was able to share decision making with the students and class by creating our sharing circle. Students were encouraged to make use of sustained opportunities to participate in creating discussion with their peers and myself. They have taken on a variety of roles in which they share the power with me (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 16).

This Project was conducted in Samoan bi-lingual classrooms in primary and secondary schools.

Student engagement is important for Pasifika students because it provides an opportunity to learn as it allows students to reach their education potentials. Engagement encompasses attendance, a sense of belonging and well being and enjoyment which most Pasifika students would be happy to participate or provided the environment that suits them. Pasifika cultural responsive pedagogy seems to be the focus of many initiatives seen in the ECE, primary and secondary educational sectors. It is no wonder that:

Pasifika are significantly under-represented in fields of study that have very good employment outcomes and financial returns, such as ICT and Engineering. Yet, at the same time, they are often over-represented in fields that have poor labour-market returns (Tertiary Education Commission, 2016, para.3).

The Tertiary Education Commission's focus to support the priorities of the Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019 includes boosting achievement of Pasifika (Tertiary Education Commission, 2016). The TEC has realised that while it is a necessity to increase Pasifika student numbers in levels and fields that present genuine work and life opportunities, there is also a need for Tertiary Education Organisations (TEO) to ensure that once there, Pasifika learners should be given the support and quality education to allow them to move into higher levels of study and complete their qualifications (Tertiary Education Commission, 2016). To boost the achievement of Pasifika, TEC has developed The Pasifika Operational Strategy 2017-2020 in consultation with various stakeholders to improve Pasifika success. (Tertiary Education Commission, 2016).

Cultural Differences

Konai Thaman, a noted Pasifika educational scholar and researcher defines culture as:

a way of life, a definition that... is derived from Pacific vernacular notions of life as all-embracing and interconnected, not easily disassociated from ideas about economy, environment, politics or indeed education itself. Culture, for me, is an all embracing framework that helps define particular ways of knowing and knowledge, as well as different ways these are stored, communicated and shared (Thaman, 2002, p. 25)

In New Zealand the Western (Pakeha) teaching and learning culture is dominant and Pasifika ways of doing and knowing is marginalised. Historically, Pasifika peoples have been restricted to include their cultural ways of knowing and doing in educational formal systems throughout the Pacific and New Zealand, as a result of colonialism (Thaman, 1992, 1993). Pasifika peoples have a strong culture of teaching and learning and since culture plays an important part of anyone's life, there is a need to understand the Pasifika way of doing and knowing. This is supported by Bishop (2003) who suggested that due to the dominance of Pakeha knowledge codes in education, most minority groups are reluctant to participate in school activities. He suggested that it is

important to value the Pasifika cultural sense of making processes or the way of knowing and that involves acknowledgement of the cultural knowledge students bring to school.

Whereas Bourdieu's Theory;1,2 and 3 (Aubrey and Riley (2017), in their review of Pierre Bourdieu's life and work found that he was well known for his research on education and culture, through first-hand experience while being educated. Bourdieu gained his first insight into different cultural attitudes when as a rural boarder, he was made to wear a grey smock while his classmates wore the latest fashionable attire. Bourdieu was also made fun of because of his accent. Bourdieu began to see education as a double-edged sword, one side of the sword highlighted idiosyncrasies while the other side offered a means by which to escape. If we put this into the context of Pasifika students, the impact of their own culture can be a contributing factor that may determine their success or failure. Bourdieu gave two good examples which are dress code and language accent. Pasifika students who have just recently arrived in New Zealand are sometimes branded as "fresh off the boat" (FOB) because of the way they dress and also have a strong Pasifika accent. These labels however are generally used for all Pasifika peoples in New Zealand (Airini, Anae & Mila-Schaf, 2010.)

In New Zealand, the dominant cultural language is English. The lack or unfamiliarity with the use of English language can create a barrier which will directly impact on a student's ability to fully engage in the classroom. "This is an issue that intensifies further up the education ladder one climbs" (Aubrey and Riley, 2017, p.85). Most Pasifika students tend to look at higher education as fit only for the elite clever ones who have better academic English language acquisition. Elite also in the sense that Pasifika peoples are a minority and since cultural capital theory is class related, Pasifika people are always classified as on the lower end of the socio-economic scale in New Zealand (Gorinski & Frazer 2006). Whereas, Sullivan (2001) rated that Bourdieu believed that linguistic competence and cultural activities do lead to the development of knowledge or skills, which in turn enables pupils to succeed at school.

Podmore, Sauvao and Mapa (2003) support Bourdieu's theory on the importance of language and cultural activities in school. In their research they identified that there was a lack of Pacific language visibility either printed or oral in schools and this provided further evidence that teaching and learning resources represent the mainstream culture only which resulted in suffocating other cultural languages, and marginalising the minority Pasifika children. Some of the cultural activities that have been developed to address the Pasifika language and reading deficiencies include celebrating individual Pacific cultural language week during respective Independence Day's celebration. As the Pasifika population is growing significantly in New Zealand, the Ministry for Pacific Peoples works closely with Pasifika communities to support their language weeks in order to maintain and promote heritage languages. This idea came about when the 2013 Census recorded that while the Pasifika population was significantly growing in New Zealand, there was a "substantial decrease in our Pacific people's ability to speak their language fluently." (Ministry for Pacific Peoples, (n.d., para 2).

Today, Pasifika languages are becoming more visible only during respective language weeks in various areas of the community, schools and workplaces. However, while the New Zealand education system is embracing culture and language, particularly as part of the curriculum in the Early Childhood to the Secondary School sectors, the tertiary sector does not have Pacific language studies as a prominent subject or programme apart from being part of Pacific studies and this programme is only available in some New Zealand universities.

Ferguson et al (2008) analysed that the responses and behaviours of second or third generation New Zealand born Pasifika learners may be different from those students brought up outside New Zealand. Yet many New Zealanders place all Pasifika learners in the same box. Nakhid (2003) found that Pasifika learners were continuously seen by their teachers as newly arrived immigrants from the Pacific with poor English skills that detracted from their learning. This perception did not find favours with the students

as the majority of the students that were involved in the research were born in New Zealand. Nakhid (2003) also noted that few opportunities were given to Pasifika learners to construct their own identities and instead they were resigned to conforming to or rebelling against the norms at school because of their identities. Labelling can be a catalyst to young Pasifika learners' internalisation of society's lesser expectations of them.

Cultural Space

Understanding that Pasifika identity is diverse and allowing Pasifika students a space to develop their own unique identities has been recognised by the Ministry of Education. However, this diversity is practised most at Early Childhood Education, primary and secondary sectors. The establishments of various Pasifika language nests and Early Childhood Centres is prominent or visible. The first Pasifika Early Childhood Education Centre was established in 1998 and by 2008 there were 115 Pacific ECE services, most are managed by Pacific communities (Statistics New Zealand & Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2010). Cultural appropriateness and cultural connections in ECE are very important for Pacific families (Robertson et al., 2007) which is confirmed by families enrolling their Children in an ECE that is linked to their own culture (Dixon et al., 2007). The literature on ECE development and how culture is shown to be crucial in the education of young children is varied (Bishop, 2003; Meade, Puhipuhi & Foster-Cohen, 2003; Robertson et al., 2007).

A classroom or space within an institute that makes students feel at home is necessary for success and retention of students. Chu, Abella and Paurini (2013) highlighted that, "the creation of culturally thoughtful and nurturing teaching spaces is vital to the learning experience of students" (p.8). Providing access to space that supports students' learning outside the formal lecture room or theatres, where specific cultural values of learning collectively, embracing relationships, identity and togetherness can enhance the Pasifika student's journey to success. These authors recorded students' feedback in having their own space, is that, it provides a space where it nurtures their

identities. Having a home away from home provides students with a culturally homely environment for them to work on their studies without fear of being bullied or victimised. Providing a space for Pasifika students which most institutions have adopted is very effective because Pasifika students largely come from communal cultures and it is critical that they be connected to other Pasifika students to avoid isolation within the institute.

McKegg (2005) states that “all students need a space that makes them culturally safe, that is, in order to provide a context that facilitates their learning” (p.32). This is true in the sense that in the Pasifika culture, providing a sense of belonging for the students can lead to their success in their studies because of the presence of a homely environment and most students will feel at ease when they meet other Pasifika students within the group; and in most cases, the birth of strong friendship and bonding is established.

Sullivan (2001) also highlighted the notion of participation in cultural activities that can lead to the development of knowledge and skills, which in turn enable pupils to succeed in school. In this sense, an effective teacher would practice effective teaching practice when the Pasifika world view is incorporated into the classroom learning. For Pasifika students, this can be valid in the sense that most Pasifika learning is associated with cultural activities in a group. On the negative side, the student may not perform well when they participate individually with a different language. Therefore, it is vital to ensure that cultural activities, cultural knowledge and the different language used by the students and teachers should be compatible.

This Pasifika cultural capital is mostly recognised at secondary schools with the Polyfest. Students performing at Polyfest are now able to gain NCEA credits as they are assessed on factors such as dance choreography, movement, technique and co-ordination (Tapaleao, 2012). Polyfest has also shown a co-relation with academic success as students note, that the Polyfest experience gives them a sense of belonging, learning together where there is no junior or senior class, their memory

skills are enhanced due to memorisation of songs and dances, being part of a group where they are pushed to succeed becomes a motivating factor to also succeed academically (Pasifika Education Community, n.d.).

Pasifika Time

Time has different shared meanings for different socio-cultural groups (Ancona, Okhuysen & Perlow, 2001). This time concept is exemplified in the difference between a clock time vs. an event time orientation, which Brislin and Kim (2003) present as arguably the most pronounced cross-cultural difference with respect to time orientation. For example, people who make appointments and organize their schedules according to pre-designated times operate on clock time while people who organize their time around the natural flow of events, function on event time. Through this theory Brislin and Kim (2003) argued that more industrialized cultures operate on clock time, while less industrialized cultures move on event time. As the education system in New Zealand operates on the clock time, Pasifika students who come from cultures that tend to depend on event time, often have problems with punctuality in terms of attendance to class and meeting deadlines.

The concept of time is confirmed by Davidson-Toumu'a and Dunbar (2009) who see the Pasifika concept of time as inconsistent with the Palagi (or Western) concept of time underpinning a New Zealand educational environment. The misconception of Pasifika time concept between Pasifika students and non Pasifika academic staff is always problematic. For example, when it comes to a student's assessment due date, the academic staff will expect that all students hand in their assessment work on the due date which is a western time concept. However some Pasifika students will assume that it will be okay to ask for extensions which can create friction between the two parties because of the difference in the cultural time concept.

Chu, Abella and Paurini (2013) also highlighted that “Pasifika students described how they felt that there was never enough time in the New Zealand education model” (p.29). This sense of not having enough time for Pasifika students is related to Kim and Brislin’s (2003) theory on depending on event time. This time concept is well demonstrated by a Swedish scientist’s experience in Fiji where he noted, that the Fijians always have time for people and do not worry about getting things done today. He commented, “A common saying in Fiji is ‘Fiji time’, meaning, Don’t worry about time, it will eventually get done, and if it doesn’t, it is not a big problem anyway.” (Hay, 2011). Adapting to the Western time concept or clock time for most Pasifika students will not be an overnight changeover; it will need a lot of practice because the Pasifika peoples’ time concept is more relaxed, fluid and unlimited and time is not forced upon people.

Church Commitment

An important aspect of Pasifika people’s daily life is the influence of Christianity. The Christian tradition that was introduced in the early 19th Century has been embraced by most of the Pacific Islands to the point where it has become the dominant religion and is a great factor in Pasifika people’s attitudes to learning (Kamu, 1996; Kavaliku, 2007; Mulitalo Lautu, 2001; Tiatia, 1998). Christianity has progressed as an integral value with a strong link to Pasifika culture. Today the Pasifika people have embraced and practised Christianity as part of their identity. A phrase that is commonly expressed in the Fijian language: *Noqu Kalou, Noqu Vanua* which literally means, My God, My Land, can be interpreted as God first in everything we do in this land, and this is seen in every aspect of the Fijian culture from family life to the village as well as in the schools and government sectors. Only recently, when the current government came into power following the 2006 coup, that the practice of the values of Christianity is becoming minimised, particularly in government departments. The notions of secularism have been introduced in Fiji, however the Christian faith remains strong and is still an influencing factor in education. Many other Pacific countries uphold the Christian faith and this is carried through to New Zealand. Today Christianity can be seen as both a positive and negative influence on Pasifika students in New Zealand.

Havea (2011), described that some students indicated that their relationship with God not only enhanced their self-confidence but also gives them a clear sense of direction, discipline and commitment. She described how she grew up in a culture where “*lotu* (spirituality/faith/church) and *ako* (formal education)” were embedded into her inner self that was worth pursuing. This is true with most Pasifika students whose upbringing is centred around the church in their village or family environment outside of New Zealand. She also noted that most Pasifika students interviewed stated that they grew up in a family where their parents had no formal educational qualifications, but they came to the land of Aotearoa with huge dreams and to provide better education opportunities for their children. These Pasifika parents have dedicated their lives by working long hours to earn and provide for the physical needs of their family, but their church commitment is also a strong part of their life to meet the spiritual needs. These are the two ingredients that will provide a better pathway for their children in order to venture into education and be successful in life.

Pasifika people's belief in Christianity as a basis for education is historically ingrained and there is evidence to show its positive impact. However, Christianity can also impact children's education negatively. (Benseman et al., 2006) highlighted that Pasifika students have to abide by their parents' expectations that they should attend church activities, family activities as well as study. In most cases these over-commitments in church and family functions have affected Pasifika students in their studies because they are worn out from trying to meet all their obligations.

Home School Partnership

The significant importance of valuing the cultural capital of home environments and developing positive relationship with parents is a theme supported by Alton-Lee, (2003) and Samu & Siteine (2006). In the Pacific culture, relationships are paramount because it develops and strengthens the core family togetherness or inclusiveness where learning is practised in groups working together.

Providing a reasonable relationship building between teachers and students can be more effective when freedom is provided to the students to encourage and enable them to meet the challenges with confidence (Aubrey & Riley, 2017). Furthermore, they stated that creating freedom for the student to venture into what they desire or aspire to do and there should be no repression by adults. In the upbringing of Pasifika children, the parents play a vital role in their children's education where their influences will determine the career their children will undertake.

Alton-Lee (2003) reports that quality learning is amplified when maintained by effective home school partnership practices. When teachers and parents work together to ensure common understandings, they result in positive academic outcome for the students. The significant importance of valuing the cultural capital of home environments and developing a positive relationship with parents is a theme supported by many authors (e.g. Alton-Lee, 2003; Bourdieu, 1977; Samu, 2006). In the Pacific, a cultural relationship is paramount because it develops and strengthens the core family togetherness or inclusiveness where learning is practised in groups and less on an individual basis. Lareau and Weininger (2003) in their views on the critical aspect of cultural capital note that it allows culture to be used as a resource that provides access to the uncommon returns such as education or school learning. It is also subject to monopolization, and under certain conditions, may be transmitted from one generation to the next. For example, Pasifika parents who work closely together with their children to ensure that they do well in school will see their children succeed because of the cultural awareness and respect instilled in each other. It is important that the parents and students work together in order to meet the standards held by the educators and this can be achieved.

Lareau and Weininger (2003) further suggested the importance of the responsibilities of parents covering different aspects of children's lives and how they should be, "active, involved, assertive, informed as an educated advocate for their children" (p. 598). Pasifika students under achieving has been linked to their parents being

disengaged when it comes to being involved in their children's education (Thomson et al., 2009). This disengagement does not mean Pasifika parents do not care. At primary and secondary schools, parents would still receive a report on their children's attendance and achievements. However, at tertiary level, the policy on confidentiality is one factor that restricts Pasifika parents from enquiring about their children's academic progress.

Understanding Pasifika values such as their belief in Christianity and the church as central to Pasifika peoples' lives is necessary for teachers to know. The church in this sense is not just a physical building, it is a community. For the Samoans in New Zealand, their church has replaced the village because it becomes the place for performing and maintaining traditional leadership and community values (Mamea, 2007). She further stated that understanding the church is just as important as cultural functions which are also a medium for learning in young Pasifika students. Some Pasifika ECE centres are established by the churches. Because of the influence of church operations here in New Zealand, most Pacific parents hold aspirations for their children, based on their cultural values and historical ways. This is sometimes misunderstood by the mainstream teachers and school leaders. Therefore, it is important that a strong and positive relationship needs to be established based on the understanding and appreciation of Pasifika culture and an awareness of the monoculture paradigm that currently influences teaching and learning in school (Pilbrow, 2011).

Relationships are important in any classroom. When a positive relationship exists between teacher and student, students are more motivated to learn, participate more in their learning, and the learning is likely to be more effective (Hawk, Cowley, Hill & Sutherland, 2002). Chu, Abella and Paurini (2013) also highlighted the importance of building a good relationship between Pasifika students and their lecturers where students' specific needs around their learning can be catered for by the tutor, provides a sense of acceptance and thus encourages the students to focus on their work because they know that there is support available.

The literature review has been reviewed under the following headings: Learning styles of Pasifika students, Power and Distant Society, Code of Silence, Cultural Pedagogy, Cultural Differences, Cultural Space, Pasifika Time, Church Commitment and Home School Partnership. This critique provided a sound foundation for the development of the research qualitative approach and the development of the two research methods of semi structured interviews and talanoa focus groups. These are discussed in the following Chapter Three Research Methodology.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter begins with an overview of the research methodology and outlines the interpretive epistemological position. The selected qualitative approach, the two research methods of semi structured interviews and two *talanoa* focus groups, the analysis of data and ethical issues are discussed.

Theoretical Perspectives

This research was based on inquiry where I used my own observations, experiences and conversation, in order to be clear with my paradigm. The term 'paradigm' is used to illustrate an entire way of looking at the world where a particular set of philosophical assumptions are made about what the world is made of and how it works (Davidson & Tolich, 2003).

As a researcher, I come to my inquiry with my own set of belief systems and worldview. However, it is important to understand how a paradigm works. Guba & Lincoln (1994) for instance, describe three aspects of a paradigm. The first aspect notes that a paradigm has an ontology: dealing with questions about what things exist in the real world. The second aspect is that a paradigm has an epistemology: a set of assumptions about the relationship between the knower and the known. Bryman (2012) states that epistemology issues are to do with what is regarded as appropriate knowledge about the social world while Davidson & Tolich (2003) define epistemology as the branch of philosophy that deals with "how we know what we know" (p.25). However how you align yourself epistemologically affects how you will go about uncovering social behaviour (Bryman, 2012; Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2007). The third aspect is that; a paradigm must contain a methodology: a way of gathering data. Bryman 2012, re-enforces my selection of methodology where he stated that an interpretive paradigm emphasises the importance of gathering data to interpret and understand social interactions, social meaning and social context in which people act.

Burns (1990) outlines the importance of using qualitative research methods because it focusses primarily on the kind of evidence that people tell the researcher which enables him and he to understand the meaning of what is going on. Furthermore, Burns (1990), added that there is a need for the researcher to know the research participants because it gives the researcher an insider's view of the background or experiences of the participants.

The selected methodology will determine the choice of tools to be used for collection of data. This is confirmed by Burns (1990) who defines research methodology as an organised approach to explaining a problem that involves ongoing collection, analysis and interpretation of data. On the other hand, Davidson and Tolich (2003) maintain that, "when we talk about methodology, what we are really talking about is a certain order of philosophical commitment" (p.25). Cohen, Mannion and Morrison (2007) suggest that the research that uses an interpretive paradigm approach looks at different components of an environment as well as how these components interact and connect to form a whole.

Qualitative research approach

According to Cresswell (2007), a qualitative approach can be instigated by an assumption, a worldview, the possible use of theoretical lens, the study of research problems an inquiry into the individual groups assigned to a social or human problem. Since this research is biased towards interpretive inquiry, it augers well with the description by Cresswell (2007) that qualitative research is a form of inquiry whereby a researcher's interpretation of what they see, hear, and understand cannot be detached from their own background, history, context and prior understanding.

Cresswell (2002) also notes that in a qualitative approach, the selection will be based on the research problem, personal experience and the audience. A further suggestion by Cresswell (2002) is that if a concept or phenomenon needs to be understood due

to the limitation of research being done, then a qualitative approach works well as it is explanatory and uses open ended questions.

Merriam (2009) also highlighted that one of the qualitative researcher's main aim is to capture their participants' interest in understanding how participants interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences. Interpretive research which is another name for qualitative research, is most often interpreted or accepted as a reality and is socially constructed; that is, there is no single, observable reality. Rather, there are multiple realities, or interpretation of a single event. Merriam (2009), argues that "researchers do not find knowledge, they construct it" (p.154). This is supported by Cresswell (2007), who comments that constructivism is a term often used interchangeably with interpretivism. Merriam (2009) summarised, "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p.158). Sharing experiences, whether through semi structured interviews or through collective views via a *talanoa* focus group, is the approach I will use in my inquiry.

Sampling

Since the research study is about experiences and perspectives of Pasifika tutors in a leadership role, Pasifika tutors and Pasifika students, I employ the use of purposive sampling. The aim of purposive sampling is to sample participants in a strategic way so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions being imposed (Bryman, 2012). A purposive sampling technique is a type of non-probability sampling that is most effective when one needs to study a certain type of cultural domain with knowledge experts within (Tongco, 2007). One of the advantages of purposive sampling was that I had to choose who I knew would be beneficial to my study and therefore should be in the study. The criteria for selection was based on: (1) Pasifika Leaders in the trades programme, (2) Current Pasifika tutors in the trade programme, (3) Current Pasifika students enrolled in the trade programme.

In order for the researcher to be removed from the selection process, a Pasifika Academic leader nominated the participants who had to give their consents to participate in the study.

Research Methods

In the semi structured interviews, three Pasifika staff holding leadership roles in the trades programme were nominated to participate. In the first *talanoa* focus group, five Pasifika students were nominated while in the second *talanoa* focus group five Pasifika tutors were selected.

Semi structured interviews

All interviews share common features like the prompting of information by the interviewer from the interviewee. Interviews can be an important source of information in educational research because the interview will be determined by the sort of information that the researcher wishes to collect and the relationship with the interviewee (Emerson, 2007). For this research, I used interviews as a method and the approach is the semi structured interview, using a combination of pre-defined questions and some discussion between the researcher and the participants. Bryman (2004) states that a semi structured interview “refers to a context in which the interviewer has a series of questions that are in the general form of an interview schedule but is able to vary the sequence of questions” (p.113). This means that there may be some pre-defined questions, however, the researcher is able to ask further questions depending on the answer/s of the participant/s.

Using the semi structured interview allowed me to design an interview guide with topics that are clearly related to the research questions, whilst still having freedom to add questions as needed and allowing the participants plenty of freedom in their responses. My interview questions were designed by using a combination of pre-

defined questions and some discussion between the researcher and the participants who are three Pasifika leaders in trade programmes of the institute of technology. At the same time, I had to be careful not to make the questions too specific, to use language that the participants understood, and to avoid asking leading questions.

When planning for the interviews, I took into account practical procedures suggested by Bryman (2012), Frey & Fontana (2005) and Hinds (2000). The participants have to sign a consent form that formalised their willingness to participate, and acknowledge they had a clear understanding of the research aims and process and their rights to withdraw from the study at any time prior to the completion of the project.

Another practical consideration before conducting the semi structured interviews was the context of interviews. Before the participants signed the consent form they were informed verbally and through the information sheet about the expectations of the interview. Before the interviews with the leadership participants, I welcomed them, individually in both my Fijian language and in English without cultural formalities. The interviewee/s had the freedom to reciprocate my welcome in their own language before participating in the interview. Frey & Fontana (2005) agree that each interview context is one of interaction and relationship, therefore the results are not just the responses to the interview questions but also the social dynamics of the interview.

A neutral location for the interview was selected to conduct the semi structured interview. This is supported by Bryman (2012) who highlighted that the interview location should be in a place that is quiet and private so the interviewee does not have to worry about being overheard. The interview took place in a nominated meeting room within the institute, away from my office and the interviewee's office.

Talanoa focus groups

Vaioleti, (2006) breaks *talanoa* into two words to define it. *Tala*: which literally means to inform, tell, relate, command, ask and apply. *Noa* means any kind, ordinary, nothing in particular, purely imaginary. It is also notable to mention that "in a good talanoa

encounter, *noa* creates the space and the condition” (Vaioleti, 2006, p.24). *Talanoa* then is a face to face conversation, whether formal or informal and it is commonly practised across island nations such as Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Niue, Hawai’i, the Cook Islands, and Tonga as it is rooted in their oral tradition and stems from their culture in which oratory and verbal negotiation have deep traditional roots (Tavola, 1991; Prescott, 2008). Capell (1991) defines *talanoa* as “to chat” to tell stories, to relate to something, to chat to someone, to chat together, to chat about a story or account a legend. According to Nabobo-Baba (2006) it can be perceived as to ‘off load’, or to share what you already know.

Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba (2012) highlighted that there are different forms of *talanoa* which can be formal or informal, depending on the seriousness and environment surrounding the *talanoa* session. They further stated that a variety of protocols and expectations need to be followed. Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba (2012) suggested that “talking straight from the heart opens up space for greater empathic understanding- this is the emic perspective sought by all good ethnographic researchers” (p.3). *Talanoa* is also employed as a research methodology where participants are allowed to speak straight from their heart to open up greater empathic understanding and is a perspective needed by good researchers as Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba (2012) confirmed.

Otsuka, (2005) described that in the *talanoa* research, researchers and participants share not only each other’s time, interests, and information, but also emotions. In fact, “*tala* holistically intermingles researchers’ and participants’ emotions, knowledge, experiences, and spirits” (Vaioleti, 2006, p.24). Hence, *talanoa* research is collaborative, and removes the distance between researchers and participants, and provides respondents with a human face they can relate to (Vaioleti, 2006), since *talanoa* research is all about “sharing”, based on face-to-face verbal interactions between researchers and participants. The value of *talanoa* supports the concept of rapport in Western social research. Burns (1990) states, “a face-to-face interaction assists in the establishment of rapport and higher level of motivation among respondents” (p. 302).

In addition, Fairbairn-Dunlop & Coxon (2014) highlighted in their research that, “the participation data and the fact that the *talanoa* have maintained their momentum over six years, shows quite compellingly that *talanoa* have achieved their purpose as an effective Pacific research discussion space” (p.25). Prescott, (2008) stated that in *talanoa*, the researcher and participants are considered as being equal and inseparable because they both contribute to the discussion and will benefit and gain experience from it. The fact that *talanoa* considers equality between researcher and participants and has been seen to be an ongoing effective Pasifika way of doing and knowing are reasons for using *talanoa* as my research methodology.

From a Tongan point of view, the word *talanoa* usually refers to an informal conversation, it also looks at relationship building because without relationship building then it can be classified as a superficial meeting or *fakatalanoa* (Fa’avae, Jones & Manu’atu, 2016). They further highlighted that the concept of *talanoa* in Tongan can be categorised into: “*pō talanoa*, a process whereby parties know each other and tell stories and relate their daily experience, the *talatalanoa*, is centred around the people talking about selected topics endlessly and the likely participants will be Tongan elders, ministers and teachers who often engage in the *talatalanoa* which can be somewhat profound in nature” (p.140). Finally, the *fokotu’u talanoa* is normally used during a formal setting where important and official concerns are being discussed.

Vaioleti (2013) highlighted that *talanoa faikava* concept is similar to the Fijian *talanoa* session around the kava bowl. The Fijians name for *kava* is *yaqona*. It is the piper methysticum plant, the roots of which are prepared and used by ethnic Fijians as either a formal or a casual social and ceremonial drink. *Yaqona* is a sacred drink in ethnic Fijian culture (Ravuvu, 1983). Other Pacific cultures such as Tonga, Samoa, Vanuatu, also use this plant roots for drink in formal and or informal occasions. The term *kava* is commonly used in New Zealand and will be referred to from here on.

The Tongan *talanoa faikava* is normally restricted to all males in comparison to the Fijian *talanoa* session around the kava bowl which includes the *Vanua* or inclusive of everyone associated in the *talanoa* session. In Fijian, “*Vanua* literally means land but it also refers to the social and cultural aspects of the physical environment identified with a social group” (Ravuvu, 1983, p. 76). To drink kava infers the taking in of what represents the land, people and culture. To use *talanoa* around the kava bowl is appropriate then for me to use with my focus groups as Farrely and Nabobo-Baba, (2012) note that “*talanoa* research needs to deal with deeper epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the lived realities of our individual participants within their specific cultural context” (p.4).

The custom of *talanoa* encourages and enhances people’s sense of “sharing” and “caring” within their communities. As an indigenous Fijian, I believe that in respect to Pasifika ways of doing things, before proceeding with the *talanoa focus group session*, it is crucial to conduct a formal kava presentation of asking participants’ permission or consent to be involved in the *talanoa* focus group.

As *kava* and its associated ceremony is common to the Pasifika cultures of my participants, its use allowed the live realities of our individual participants within their specific cultural context (Farrely & Nabobo-Baba, 2012). The Pasifika tutors *talanoa* focus group was conducted around a kava bowl which provided an atmosphere where everyone was welcomed, acknowledged according to their ancestral roots and backgrounds and taboos lifted, then participants were thus able to *tala noa*, speak freely.

The *talanoa* focus groups explored the different perceptions of both staff and students within their culturally sensitive environment to elicit information which could contribute to answering the research questions. The first *talanoa* focus group involved five Pasifika students currently enrolled in the trades programme. The second *talanoa* focus group involved the participation of five Pasifika tutors. As discussed earlier from perspectives of researchers on *talanoa*, the *talanoa* focus group is a forum where

participants may show their emotions through discussion or a passionate feeling towards the topic of discussion and this may result in some positive feedback and also some negative feedback depending on the content of the conversation. *Talanoa*, then, can be viewed as an informal session where participants are free to speak without restrictions in what they want to say and how they say it, which includes their emotional feelings, hence my choice of this research methodology.

Process of consent- Fijian kava ceremony

The permission to participate in the *talanoa* focus group was conducted through two separate kava ceremonies for the Pasifika tutors and the Pasifika students respectively. Ethics approval was sought for this and was granted. Fiji is a multi-ethnic society and Fijian cultural protocols will be used in this research to acknowledge indigenous Fijian and their culture. For example, the kava ceremony relates to indigenous Fijian people's culture. In Fiji, it is used for ceremonial purposes, for example, birth and death ceremonies, wedding ceremony, request and reconciliation work, welcome and farewell ceremonies.

At the beginning of the *talanoa* focus groups, the kava ceremony was conducted in the Fijian protocol known as *sevusevu*, (yaqona mixed in a *tanoa* wooden bowl). The *sevusevu* is always conducted preceding most special occasions, including entering a village for the first time, or seeking permission for anything. As the researcher is Fijian, the *sevusevu* was conducted to seek permission or consent from the participants to participate in the *talanoa* focus group. I am fully accustomed and comfortable to conduct the kava presentation in my own *Lauan* dialect which is slightly different from the main Bauan dialect. The language used in the process of kava ceremony was a mixture of Fijian and English in order for the non-Fijian speaking participants to understand the purpose of the kava ceremony.

Ravuvu (1983) described that *sevusevu* as the ceremonial offering of *yaqona* (kava) by the host (in this case, the researcher is host) to the guest (the participants), or the guest to his host and done in respect of recognition and acceptance of one another. According to Nabobo (1996), the acceptance of *sevusevu* by the host from the visitor is being granted with temporary status. In other words, he/she is welcomed and is part of the unit. The ceremony symbolises trust in the visitor, in particular when visiting a Fijian village.

Prior to the *sevusevu* ceremony, I advised the Pasifika students of the protocols of accepting the kava cup (coconut shell) to drink. They were encouraged to participate in the first serve of the kava cup as part of the formalities where they were introduced by their *matanivanua* (spokesperson). The *matanivanua*, a Fijian nominated by the participants. His duty included accepting the *sevusevu* and reciprocate or reply in Fijian language (translated in English) on behalf of the participants during the *sevusevu* presentation.

Upon completion of the *sevusevu* presentation speech, the *matanivanua* reciprocated and the first bowl of kava was served to the participants. Those who did not wish to drink kava for personal reasons would have had their wishes known prior to the ceremony and were exempted. However, they were represented by those who accepted the kava to drink and were also mentioned in the formal introductions by the *matanivanua*. In accepting the first bowl of kava the participants gave consent to the researcher to fully participate in the *talanoa* focus group.

The *sevusevu* not only provides a platform for each participant to be introduced formally but is given the assurance that all information discussed will be treated with confidentiality. In addition, the ceremony lifts any *tabu* (taboo) particularly which surrounds chiefly status, in case of misconduct or unethical behaviours. This simply means that all participants are equal. Once the *sevusevu* ceremony is completed then the *talanoa* focus groups session may commence. At the end of the formal part of the kava ceremony, kava drinking continued for the Pasifika tutors only. This is because

a *talanoa* session is always a part of a social gathering around the kava bowl, especially in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and the other Pacific islands. For the students, the kava drinking was applied during the formal part of the ceremony only. Usually the kava bowl is filled with sufficient kava quantity for the amount of people that will participate.

Analysing the data

The process of gathering data and making the data reveal information in relation to the research topic is a vital part of the research study. Davidson and Tolich (1999) state that “analysis is about searching for the patterns and regularities in the data collected” (p.143). Interviews and *talanoa* focus groups were recorded using audio recording device and transcribed by the researcher. The participants were given the opportunity to view the transcripts.

The analysis of data was conducted systematically using thematic coding. On the completion of the interviews and *talanoa* focus groups, the data was transcribed and analysed using thematic coding. Thematic coding was used to seek the meanings that are behind the experiences and perceptions of the participants in order to minimise the problem of losing the context of what was said. By removing some critical words or ideas, context from the original interview statement or feedback, the social setting can be lost and may impact on the validity, integrity and reliability of the report. The notion of validity is concerned with the degree to which the research questions, data collection methods and findings will accurately indicate the concept that the researcher will examine (Davidson & Tolich (1999)).

In regard to validity, it was ensured that internal validity was fulfilled with the two methods selected which answered my research questions; and the cultural validity which was taken into account, the commonly accepted Pasifika values of: respect, reciprocity, communalism, collective responsibility, humility, love, spirituality and

service. To strengthen the internal validity of the collected data, Bryman (2004) and Davidson and Tolich (2003) define triangulation as the use of more than one method of producing data for the purpose of confirming or not confirming a finding. Triangulation was achieved with the selection of the two different methods and the three different cohorts to participate in the study.

Ethical Issues

The research has the potential to help people improve their lives, and therefore, while designing the semi structured interviews and *talanoa* focus groups, I need to ensure that it did not interfere with human rights. Fontana and Frey (2005) maintain that ethical concerns be focused around the topic of informed consent (consent by the respondent after the researcher has carefully and truthfully informed him or her about the research) and the right to privacy by protecting the identity of the respondent. Research that involves humans can provide benefits to the participants themselves, the researcher and the community. It can also cause harm to those who have participated (Tolich, 2001). Tuckman & Harper (2012) highlighted that all participants in a study enjoy the right to keep from the public certain information about themselves. Confidentiality is important when it involves people's private information because it is vital that there should not be any invasion of privacy for any person involved in the research interview or focus group,

In this research, the semi structured interview participants were contacted via email and once they agreed to participate, they signed the consent and confidentiality forms. Cardno (2003) highlighted that in order to protect those people who will be involved in the research, she recommended the adoption of Davidson and Tolich's four ethics principles. The first is to ensure that voluntary participation is consented. Cardno claims that research can be an intrusion and is a major problem in social research, that participation must be voluntary. In order to attain this, the project information should be given to the volunteers, ensure there is no pressure on them while attending

the interview and focus groups, gain formal consents from participants and gain consent from their institutional leadership to participate.

Furthermore, Cardno (2003) states confidentiality is about not making identities or connections public or for other people to know, thus it is important to discuss the degree of confidentiality at the initial meeting before venturing into the research. Tuckman and Harper (2012) also share a similar view where concerns over privacy and anonymity is the concern for confidentiality. They highlighted that in order to guarantee confidentiality, the researcher should roster all data by number rather than by name, destroy the original test protocol as soon as the study is completed and if possible provide participants with stamped, self-addressed envelopes to return questionnaires directly. Bryman (2012) insists that in order to maintain confidentiality, participants' names and personal information should not be stored in hard drives, use identifier codes on data files and keep copies of transcripts and other confidential documents in a locked cabinet for the prescribed number of years.

Cultural and social sensitivity

Vaioleti (2006) suggested that, "if researching ethically is about respecting human dignity, then it is critical that the process is culturally appropriate for the participants" (p.29). As an indigenous Fijian, I had sought confirmation from my elders to ensure that the Fijian protocol of kava presentation was being adhered to during the *talanoa* focus groups and also ensure that each participant's cultural values and protocols were respected. To ensure that the interview questions were culturally appropriate for the Pasifika participants, I sought clarification from other Pasifika colleagues to ensure that the questions were not culturally offensive. The actions I have taken in regards to cultural and social sensitivity are also based on the values of the "Pacific Way" (Crocombe, 1975) outlined in the Pasifika Education Research Guidelines (Anae, et al., 2001).

Avoidance of Conflict of interest

To avoid conflict of interest, the participants in the semi structured interviews and the two *talanoa* focus groups do not have direct involvement with the researcher. It was clearly outlined in the Ethics application form that if a cultural or teaching and learning issue arises that may have deemed as a conflict of interest, the session will be suspended immediately. As a researcher, I was aware of this and made sure that all the regulations were followed to avoid a conflict of interest.

Summary

The methodology outlined in this chapter confirmed the adoption of the semi structured interviews and *talanoa* focus groups that were conducted. The findings are reported in the following Chapter Four Findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings gathered from the five Pasifika students who participated in the first *talanoa* focus group, the five Pasifika tutors who participated in the second *talanoa* focus group and three Pasifika leaders who attended a semi structured interview. This research is organised in three sections based on the three research questions:

How do the dynamics and nature of cultural influences impact on the Pasifika students enrolled in an institute of technology trade programme in New Zealand?

How do cultural influences impact on the learning styles of Pasifika students in an institute of technology trade programme?

How can Pasifika culture and learning styles be integrated into the curriculum in order to improve the retention of Pasifika students at an institute of technology trade programme in New Zealand?

Interview Findings

In order to protect the participant's identities, a coded identification had been established using the letters of the alphabet and numbers. The five Pasifika students code will be known as S1, S2, S3, S4 and S5. For the five Pasifika tutors they will be coded: T1, T2, T3, T4, and T5. The Pasifika Leaders in the semi structured interviews will be coded as: L1, L2, and L3.

The five Pasifika students participant: Tokelaun/Fijian female (S1), Samoan male. (S2), Cook Island male (S3), Tongan male (S4), and Samoan male(S5).

The five male Pasifika tutors' participants: Fijian/Samoan (T1), Indo-Fijian (T2), Tongan(T3), Fijian (T4) and Indo-Fijian (T5).

The three Pasifika Leaders participants were: Head of Department trade programme, Niuean male (L1), Academic Leader trade programme, Indo-Fijian female (L2) and Academic Leader trade programme, Tongan male (L3).

The data collected from the participants has been presented under the headings of the three research questions.

Question One: How do the dynamics and nature of cultural influences impact on the Pasifika students enrolled in an institute of technology trade program in New Zealand?

Talanoa Focus Groups

Perspectives of Pasifika Students -Family influence

The five Pasifika students in this study have highlighted how their culture and family aspirations had strong influences on their decision to enrol in the trade programme. They shared experiences on how the current situation in their lives and the strong influences from their family and community dictated their decision on the career pathways they should follow. There were two mature students (S2, S5) and three younger students (S1, S2, S3). It was also noted that student (S1) is the only female in their group.

The responses from the mature students (S2, S5) differ from the younger students (S1, S3, S4) because their focus was more on how they can support their family while the younger students' views were focused on the influence by their parents on the pathway they have to take.

One Student (S5), responded that the pressure from his wife and children influenced his decision to enrol in the trade programme so that he can support his family comfortably once he successfully completed. Another student (S2), responded by stating that supporting immediate and extended families in the island via remittance can be perceived as an obligation for Pasifika people living in New Zealand. He aims

to complete his educational aspirations in order to secure a suitable employment so he can provide some remittance for his families in the island. Two students commented:

I had problem with my family. I need a good qualification so I can get a good pay and also can help my family in the island by sending money to them (S2).

As a mature student it's a challenge and my family at home are looking forward to seeing me return with my degree (S5).

While a female student (S1) was shy at the beginning of the discussion, but once she became comfortable with the surrounding she was very responsive and participated freely as the *talanoa* focus group session progressed. She commented that:

I did not finish school because I had a baby. I wanted to do some practical work. (S1).

The five Pasifika students responded that in their Pasifika culture, the parents have a strong influence on their career inspirations. They have to honour their parents' wishes and follow the career pathways their parents intended them to follow. This is exemplified by a student (S4), who respected his parents' wishes to maintain the family trend that has been part of the family for many years. He noted:

I grew up with a family who are all motor mechanics. My dad wanted me to learn automotive engineering so I can help my family financially once I complete my studies. (S4).

Perspectives of Pasifika Tutors- Building the bridge

The five Pasifika tutors in the *talanoa* focus group agreed that the learning environment is critical for Pasifika students on the first day of class or at the start of a new trade programme. Three Pasifika tutors (T1, T4, T5), agreed that providing a more Pasifika friendly learning environment for new Pasifika students will help them to adopt into a new leaning environment when they enrolled in the trades programme. They believe that by establishing communication between tutors and Pasifika students on the first day, they can establish a friendly learning environment. A tutor (T4), highlighted that:

The learning environment is very important for Pasifika students; it makes them feel at home once they are given that space. (T4).

Pasifika students who are known as “fresh off the boat” (FOB), born outside of New Zealand, bring with them cultural respect for elders or a person with authority. This is shown in their mannerisms whereby they do not speak up in class, they do not ask questions because it can be seen as disrespectful. On the other hand, a critical issue that the FOB Pasifika students bring with them is a language barrier, where generating a conversation with them can be difficult as English is their second language. Their consciousness of their island accent can cause shame and humiliation when other students in the class start commenting or making fun of them or even bullying them. One tutor commented that:

Those students who are brought up here are more open and can communicate easily but the FOB/international students they are more shy and very respectful. They don't ask questions in a big class because they don't want to be seen asking the tutor but if you give them group activities to do they will engage. We need to engage them in conversation and they will open up (T1).

Providing a homely environment for Pasifika students as soon as they enter the campus can influence their confidence in trying to fit into the new learning environment where the teaching and learning is conducted in English. Pasifika students are known to be quiet in a classroom environment compared to non Pasifika students. Two tutors

(T2, T4) noted that organising some ice breaking activities is an effective way to engage with other students. This includes introductions in the cultural way. They were also critical that most trade courses have a short duration because the longer the Pasifika students stay in a group, this will allow the staff to know their Pasifika students, their stories and their backgrounds. Most Pasifika students tend to speak and participate in a group when they know that their learning environment suits them best.

We see different level of students. The fresh ones FOB, you can notice the difference, the Maori and Pakeha and non Pasifika, they ask questions and are open but most Pasifika students and Asian students, they tend to be quiet, breaking the ice will continue and once that barrier is broken the Pasifika students will open up because they are more comfortable now. For short courses it is very difficult to know them. the longer you keep them (one semester or one year) you build that relationship. (T2).

When we introduce ourselves in the traditional way it quickly gives that connection with the Pasifika students. The icebreaking sessions gives them a quick guess who I am. Sometimes you see the cultural behaviour, things like interacting, openly asking questions, because when we deliver, we deliver standard instructions, sometimes they will say, "Yes", but in reality they have not understood anything. When you do a one to one discussion they will respond, but you will have to make yourself approachable. (T4).

Constraints for learning

All of the five Pasifika tutors agreed that most Pasifika students maintained their obligations to their family, their culture, their community, and church above their academic studies. This family priority is a problem that the Pasifika tutors encounter with the Pasifika students in the trade programme.

The impact of family values, culture and other commitments is strongly embedded in the Pasifika students' learning environment which affects their performance. If the issues surrounding these factors are not dealt with diligently, it can result in a negative impact on the Pasifika students. The tutors also raised how the *Palagi* culture is a

different culture from the *Pasifika* culture. An example of the differences in the two cultures is “time”. In the education context, the *Palagi* time is meeting the assessment deadline while in the *Pasifika* time it is acceptable not to meet the deadline by asking for an extension or a late submission of assessment. As said in Fijian, *Vakavanua* fever is when the person takes his own time to complete the task given to him but in the education context, it is critical that assessment deadlines are met because it is a component of time management. In most cases, some *Pasifika* students find it difficult to adjust to the *Palagi* time while studying. The tutors need to understand the *Pasifika* students’ cultural obligations about studying that when it is approaching to assignment deadlines, they can remind students that besides the importance of their cultural obligations, time management is an important element to success. One tutor noted:

Their cultural elements they are brought up with drives their studies. It’s the seriousness and having the right priority and commitment with very deep cultural respects. All tutors have to be strict with time management from day one and should be firm with it, having said that we don’t have to brand it as poor time management but it needs to be visible to young students (T4).

One tutor (T3) expressed that some *Pasifika* students were affected by their personal commitments and family demands that were first priority. This resulted in missing class and getting behind in their academic work. By the time they re-joined the class they have missed a lot of course information as well as some ongoing assessments, resulting in a request for extension. The *Pasifika* tutor has to work with the students in order to catch up on their work. In some instances, some *Pasifika* students will not be able to recover from the amount of school work being missed and as a result, they will quit the course altogether.

Culture becomes the main obstruction in education. For example, attending a 6th or 7th cousin’s wedding is an obligation, but we have to accommodate that too because when they come back they will be behind with their school work. If there is a wedding of a friend, they will go, so how do we accommodate this? We need to give them extra time to complete their work or assessment. Education is a culture in itself- it is totally new to us, we can look at the western and modern education (T3).

While two tutors (T2, T5) responded that they had to facilitate or re-engage the Pasifika students because of not attending classes due to fulfilling their family commitments. The Pasifika students had to negotiate a time with the Pasifika staff concerned in order for them to complete their school work because there is no such thing as an allocated time for catching up on school work;

They have family commitments, look after their siblings. We have to negotiate with them to ensure that they drop off their kids or attend to their commitment and make time by having extra session for them to ensure that they catch up with their work. We understand the family concept and facilitate it. Another example, a student who goes home during lunch hour to breast feed her baby and returns to class (T2).

Family commitment is a major issue, for example the grandma is admitted in the hospital, the granddaughter (Pasifika student) will be in the hospital every night looking after her grandma and thus affects her school work. Pasifika students lack the motivation of setting their priorities right, it is an issue (T5).

In order to address these Pasifika students' family commitments, the Pasifika tutors have to facilitate their needs for the purpose of retaining them. The Pasifika tutors have experienced that by listening to the Pasifika students' stories and facilitating a system where they can be academically supported. This gives the students a sense of belonging because their voice or request had been heard and taken care of by the Pasifika tutors.

Most Pasifika students are burdened with family responsibilities which affects their performance in class. The five tutors agreed that Pasifika students have a huge amount of family and social responsibilities which they are expected to perform diligently, without question. On top of their social and family responsibilities the Pasifika students are expected to successfully complete their studies. If they are not successful in their studies, then their parents will discontinue their studies and send

them to find work to help the family financially. Below is an example of what three tutors said.

Social and family responsibility comes first for a Pasifika Islander and education is always the secondary one. It's the island way and survival was the main aim (T1).

When they fail their exams, their parents send them to go and work and not continue with their studies. Sharing my life to the student can motivate them not to fail (T5).

Having an extra class as part of the support and mentoring, for example, a very good student told me that he can only come to class for 3 days in a week and further discussion with him, he told me that he looks after his little sister while their mother goes to work. This is a good example of a Pasifika family while in a Palagi way the mother will put the little daughter in the day care so that the son can attend his course (T3).

Two tutors (T1, T3) agreed that due to English as their second language, some Pasifika students will easily get disengaged. They commented:

The language too can be a problem, where most students shut themselves off if they are not engaging in class, it is difficult to motivate them to engage in class activities (T1).

Language can also be a barrier. Sometimes the mode and tone of instruction can put the Pasifika student off because they are culturally sensitive, so you have to make sure that they understand you and you can always have a conversation with them at the end of the class just to ensure that they understand the discussion (T3).

Financial difficulty is an issue with Pasifika students because they need their daily bus/train fare to attend class. Their allowances or earnings from their employment are controlled by their parents or guardians. If the family is struggling financially, then the Pasifika student may not be able to attend class until there is adequate finance

available for them. A tutor (T2) agreed that in most cases they have to facilitate the student's needs, to provide mentoring and provide support in guiding them in their school work in order for the students to complete the course. He commented that:

We facilitate their needs and accommodate some of the factors that may stop them from attending class because of family commitment, financial support- providing support and mentoring so that they don't have an excuse not to come to class. (T2).

Semi Structured Interviews

Perspective of Pasifika leaders- Institutional Support

Two Pasifika Leaders (L1, L3) acknowledged that there is specific support provided for Pasifika students while another Pasifika Leader who is a female (L2) disagreed. She responded that there is no specific support provided for Pasifika students but the support provided is for everyone. Pasifika students are communal, they do not seek special individual attention and they are the most respectful. However, cultural respect can be a barrier to receiving support. She commented:

There is no specific support that we provide for them but because we deliver and we've got a multi-cultural group and we have international students as well, so we pitch our class in a way that probably applies to everyone, but we are definitely open and tell them that if they need help of any kind, please come and see us. During class when we have group discussion- we can see Pasifika students will group together and form a group. I go to them because they are our target group and ask if they need help but they are too shy to express themselves. They will not stand out of the crowd, example one Pasifika student asked me if there was a microwave around, I replied that there was none around but I will do it for you. I can go and heat up your food in the staff tea room. He quickly replied, "No, no it's okay.". He was shy, but it was out of respect that I was the lecturer and it was not good for me to assist him. That's the respect they give you. "That's my teacher I cannot get her to do other things for me"- it's the barrier for them due to the respect (L2).

One Leader (L1) responded that in his department he provided extra staff to work with Pasifika students who fall behind with their school work. The department works collaboratively with the Pacific Centre to ensure that all Pasifika students are provided with all the support needed while enrolled in the trade programme. He also highlighted the importance of setting some key performance indicators in their annual departmental plans to ensure that they meet the institute annual targets in maintaining a high Pasifika success and retention rate. He highlighted that:

Yes we provide support to the students - we do allocate staff to do remedial work, catch up work with the our Pasifika students, that's one, and two we work collaboratively with the Pacific Centre and Te Puna Ako and it's important that the department, the Pacific Centre and Te Puna Ako are working together and that is the support we provide so it's one of our Key Performance Indicators (KPI) ensuring that our Pasifika students are provided with that support and to ensure that it improves our success and retention through providing that support and services and by doing that we can have some sort of analysis of your group because it all comes in different levels. Meeting annual objectives is critical (L1).

One of the successful initiatives implemented by the Maori Pasifika Trade Training programme (MPTT) is the availability of Pasifika students' scholarships. The scholarship provides a financial pathway for the Pasifika students paying for the tuition fees and allowance to assist the student financially while enrolled in the trade programme. This was confirmed by a Leader (L3) who was proud to mention that he was one of the pioneer recipients of the Maori & Pasifika Trade Training (MPTT) Programme. He also highlighted his disappointment with some scholarship recipients who did not complete the programme. He stated that:

I am an ex carpentry scholarship student, the director of Pacific Centre and her staff provided really good programmes for us, provided support for us and you may already know that we have the MPTT Maori Pasifika Trade Training programme who provide the scholarships. You apply for the scholarship and they pay now you apply and pay yourself and if you pass at the end of the year, you

get reimbursed in the past as you know we have funding, they will be given a scholarship to Maori/Pasifika students and some of these students they just give up and it's a waste of space and a scholarship (L3).

On the retention of Pasifika students in the trade programme, the three Pasifika Leaders (L1, L2, L3) agreed that support should be provided for the Pasifika students from day one. This also includes spending time on a one to one conversation with the Pasifika students to monitor how they are progressing with their school work. If there are issues, they can discuss them with the student to maintain a smooth progression with their school work. They further agreed that providing a specific learning space for Pasifika students could benefit their learning because it is a space that they are free to discuss and work collaboratively with other Pasifika students. Below is an example of what a Leader said.

Some of the issues for Pasifika students, if we talking about top students, some of the barriers is really the cultural environment for them, coming to New Zealand is one part of it, the other part is coming to a big institutional place because it is a totally different culture, and sometimes does not actually transition or accommodate them- thus the Pasifika Centre is a place where they can come and seek advice or to feel at home- it's a new scary place to be in (L1).

One Leader (L2) highlighted that providing a constant conversation with Pasifika students is an effective way of knowing them and their issues. However, when the student support centre was recommended for them for further help they did not pursue it. She stated:

The best thing in terms of retention after completing an assignment and scoring low marks but having a one to one conversation always encourages them sometimes when we direct them to the learning centre they tend not to seek help from them but they will do better if we keep a constant conversation with them- sending a reminder email if they have been missing from class (L2).

While another Leader (L3) responded that Pasifika parents do want an education for their children, yet at the same time, the expectation of Pasifika parents on their children is to bring money home. He also highlighted that in most cases Pasifika students tend to throw a wall in front of them, however once they are comfortable and trust their tutors, they will open up by telling their life story. He commented:

I think peer pressure from parents. My mum did not want me to become a trade person but a doctor, but I became a carpenter. Culture especially in Tongan my mum comes from a poor family, they want money first, they don't really see the value in education, yes we have bills to pay and mouths to feed. I was pushed to go and work in the factory rather than coming into education, it is tough-struggling for bills to pay. I don't know how to say this but Pasifika students, they throw up a wall, meaning that they are really shy and unless you get to know them, they won't open up (L3).

Pasifika students tend to receive conflicting messages. First their parent/s want them to choose a career path that seem to be a high income earner, but the student chooses their own career path which probably does not look lucrative to the parent/s. Then the value of education is questioned. Pasifika parents equate education with white collar jobs, not blue collar ones. Thus finding a job in the factory is the alternative to earn quickly to pay bills.

Question Two: How do cultural influences impact on the learning styles of Pasifika students in an institute of technology trade programme?

Talanoa Focus Groups

Perspectives of Pasifika Students - Barriers to Learning

The five Pasifika students (S1, S2, S3, S4, S5) shared their experiences on how family, church, village and community influence their choice to continue their journey into higher education. They all responded by stating how the pride of their Pasifika parents impacted on the choices in their life. The parents wanted the best in life for their children. The anticipation by the Pasifika parents that if their children do not successfully complete their studies then it will have serious consequences for their children in terms of bringing shame to the family. In the Pasifika culture, when a child brings fame to the family either by successfully attaining an educational achievement or sports achievement, the immediate family, the extended family, the whole village will be proud and celebrate the success. On the other hand, when a child brings shame to the family, the negative consequences will be felt by the immediate family, the extended family and the village members. As a result, the child can be sent into exile or summoned to go and look for any employment in order to contribute financially to the family. They responded positively by stating that the biggest influence and motivation to continue with their studies comes from home (their parents or wife and children). One student (S1), stated that it takes a village to raise a child and also said that her parents always have a silent battle with other family members, church family, neighbours and friends regarding their children's achievements and success in life.

Two students shared their views:

I think it is the biggest factor, it's not yourself only, you know how it takes a village to raise a child, as for me, my village raised me. I have to make the village proud. I make sure that I have to pass my studies and because of the shame that I will bring to my dad my mother and the village. My parents always have a silent battle, when I fail, my mum will say, what am I going to say to the other people

when you fail, you did get into this school while the other girls from church are going to University (S1).

To me the biggest influence that keeps me going is my wife and children, there is no escaping in the Pacific culture, your community, your family, your church members, your workmates and your friends look up to you (S5).

The fear of Pasifika students not completing their educational journey can be an ingredient in motivating them to commit to hard work. This is to prove to their parents that they are capable and can make them proud parents at the end of their journey. The internal silent battle that occurs amongst Pasifika parents within the community, church group, village and families can bring fame or shame to the family depending on their children's progression in tertiary education. The high expectations from the parents for their children can result in a disaster if their children's academic capabilities are below the required standard for the career pathway being followed. Two Pasifika students shared their views:

Family is the biggest influence. Before, I don't want them to know I am studying but some of them knew and they asked me, are you still studying? They will talk negatively about me (S4).

I am a slow thinker, very bad for my people, my family not happy why I come to study and if I fail they will blame me that I am wrong but if I pass then I have proven them wrong. Big influence from my parents, mum make me to compete with other kids, it's worse here in Auckland because they compare me with other kids (S2).

In the Pasifika culture, children have to abide by their parent's instructions because it is disrespectful to go against their parents' wishes. The consequences of not honouring the parents' wishes can result in a family conflict where the parents may not support their children during their studies either financially or providing accommodation.

Perspectives of the Pasifika Tutors - What can be done differently?

The Pasifika tutors agreed that providing support for our Pasifika students is critical during their journey in the trade programme. It was also expressed by a tutor (T2) that establishing a network between Pasifika staff across the institute will create a network where they can communicate with each other and help those Pasifika students facing difficulties with their studies. One tutor commented that:

It is important to create a network between departments because they are not talking to each other to identify Pasifika students who need help. Even keeping the Pasifika students in a group is very good because they work better with their own kind and once separate we will lose them. Keeping them in a group for the year, but the danger is if one fails than they might all fail (T2).

An example given by another tutor (T3), involved a cultural engagement process to provide support known in Tongan language as *Tokoni'i*. This tutor was appointed as the project team leader to re-engage students who were at risk of not completing their trade programme. He established a pool of trade tutors who worked collaboratively to address those Pasifika students who were falling behind in their school work. According to him, the initiative was successful until the support was phased out. He mentioned that:

I introduce this, Tokoni 'i (Tongan word meaning support) methodology to provide an extra support for the students who failed during the semester with a high number of Pasifika students. They did not complete the programme so we allowed them to come back and complete, thus in 2014 we had the highest number of Pasifika students graduating, by providing support and incentives in order to lift them up from where they were below the passing mark. You lift them up and let them run, then you remove your support (T3).

One tutor (T4) suggested that it is important to promote cultural awareness to encourage non Pasifika tutors to understand the Pasifika culture. This is to eliminate the misconception by the non Pasifika tutors that the Pasifika students will not succeed academically while enrolled in the trade programme. It is necessary to provide a

working relationship between the non Pasifika tutors and Pasifika students by providing genuine support for them. The tutor commented that:

Encouraging non Pasifika Island tutors to understand the Pasifika culture can avoid clashing with students. Having a role model is important and having a peer mentor is critical for the students because this can create networking amongst students and non Pasifika tutors (T4).

The Pasifika tutors (T1, T2, T3, T4, T5) agreed that it was critical to develop a bond with Pasifika students. If there is no bonding with Pasifika students, then the students may feel neglected which can lead to problems such as missing classes or a failure to hand in assessments on time. They also suggested that organising a monthly or bi-monthly get together with Pasifika students and staff can be beneficial in providing support and bonding. Below is an example of what a tutor said.

It is important to create a network between departments because they are not talking to each other to identify Pasifika students who need help (T3).

Semi Structured Interviews

Perspectives of Pasifika leaders -Home and family obligations, a barrier to learning

The three Pasifika Leaders (L1, L2, L3) agreed with the five Pasifika tutors (T1, T2, T3, T4, T5) that the Pasifika students' highest priority is their home (family) obligations while their educational studies comes second.

Secondly they agreed that apart from home obligations they also have the extended family obligations, their village commitment, church commitments and social obligation that they have to juggle with their studies.

Thirdly they highlighted that Pasifika parents have high expectations of their children that they should do well in their studies while ignoring the vast responsibilities and obligations they put on their children's shoulders. The parents' expectations on their

children can sometimes be a mismatch in the sense that their children are overloaded with their home obligations on top of their study obligations. Two leaders stated:

A lot of attachment to the family and family commitments and sometimes that commitment comes above and beyond or before their education- they will try to fulfil those family commitments/requirements compared to coming to class and passing. I think that one of the biggest things that affect their success is their family, because they are so close to their family and must listen to what their parents, grandparents want as they're in higher authority. Family commitment is so strong. A lot of barriers for them to tackle (L2).

I think in a nutshell we do have a high percentage of our students who have home obligations and we call them *falavelave* in Samoan and it becomes priority. Then you've got the influences around their family *falavelave*, in addition to them, they have church obligations, home and church can actually become more a priority for them. So come back to home, part of that is around supporting the wider family, someone's got to look after mum and dad, so there's a lot of expectation at home from Mum and Dad (L1).

Pasifika people are known for supporting their extended family where family obligations can extend to first, second, third, fourth, and fifth cousins. Supporting a wider family of cousins sometimes can be problematic especially when it concerns extended family birthday celebrations, family funerals, church activities, a village commitment. All of these require time and money. One Pasifika Leader (L3) responded strongly on how poor time management by the Pasifika students affects their performance because of the external commitments that they have to fulfil before their studies. The notion of Pasifika time is embedded in the Pasifika students where it is normal to seek extension on their assessment work because they had been away on extended family commitments. As a leader it is a complex topic because the consequences of the decision may affect the Pasifika students' future. The Pasifika leader commented that:

If there's a Tongan funeral, they drop everything, some kids go to this funeral, they don't need to be there, they should be in school. Culture plays a huge part in a funeral and other occasions. If you have money then it is okay, it's like you are obliged to be there, it will look bad for your parents, grandma, your family if

you do not attend or contribute. Setting priorities right means family first. Tonga time, no urgency, affect their performance in school and also at work. Their boss gives them a warning (nothing personal) and they take it personally (L3).

Question 3: How can Pasifika culture and learning styles be integrated into the curriculum to improve the retention of Pasifika students at an institute of technology trade programme in New Zealand?

Talanoa Focus Groups

Perspectives of Pasifika students -Classroom engagement and communication

The Pasifika students (S1, S2, S3, S4, S5) stated that they were satisfied with the support provided by some of the tutors while enrolled in the programme. They indicated that some Pasifika tutors do communicate with them to check if they were falling behind in their school work and they will provide or organise necessary support for the Pasifika students to keep up with their school work. They commented that in most cases it was difficult to communicate with some non Pasifika tutors when they need assistance.

They also highlighted that they were satisfied with some of the support services provided by the institute to enhance their learning. They shared their views on the importance of engaging with their tutors in the classroom. They mentioned that once they establish communication with their tutors, it creates a space for them and they can feel a sense of belonging and being grounded to the course and focus on their school work. They also responded that it was easier to communicate with Pasifika tutors because they can listen to their personal stories and understand them rather than non Pasifika tutors as sometimes it was difficult to approach or to engage with them. Developing a good connection with the tutors also helps the students to focus

on their studies and remove any barriers that may stand in between them. One Pasifika student commented:

Here I enjoy my class because of the Pasifika tutors, they understand our values and morals and the relationship is good. I was in another provider and the non Pasifika staff did not understand me. I didn't know how to ask questions because I was afraid and it's hard because we did not understand each other. They are hard and fast- whether you're in or out, they will not care (S1).

Some positive points shared by the Pasifika students (S1, S2, S3, S4, S5) such as when engaging in discussion with other students or friends, they help each other to understand what is being taught in class. It was also discussed that having a good relationship with tutors does help them during their learning and at the same time develop their confidence to participate in class activities and collaborate with their peers. They also responded that it was difficult to adjust to the new learning environment. However, once communication is established with the tutors, especially with Pasifika tutors, then the door is opened for collaboration, sharing of information and ideas. One student stated:

Having a better relationship with the lecturers feels more supportive and welcome and the support that they provide to help you always encourage me to work harder (S3).

Another student (S1) suggested that providing more one to one discussion is important in building a healthy relationship with the tutors and because of her shyness, due to her language accent, she prefers a one to one discussion. She also highlighted that life skills are important and the basic engineering learning skills should be introduced in schools so that intended students grasp some basic engineering knowledge before they enter trade programmes. She commented:

Having more one on one discussion and life skills is important because of the need to have students learning basic engineering from school before they come to do the trade programme. Just to set up the kids before coming across, especially when our parents keep on pushing us to be a nurse or doctor (S1).

While a student (S3) shared their classroom experiences as rather challenging because of trying to understand how the non Pasifika staff operate in the classroom, or there is a feeling of frustration that the non Pasifika staff does not understand them.

Student (S3) noted:

It's difficult understanding non Pasifika staff. Sometimes we enter the classroom and want to run away again. Sometimes half of the class are smart and the other half are struggling. Some of the lecturers I come across they rush their work and everyone had to keep up to it and the way they teach us, we try to keep up- they deliver their learning for us and sometimes the lecture is too long, sometimes the information come from this ear and goes out the other ear, the next day they repeat the same thing again. For me it best to take little step by step so we keep in our mind what we have learnt (S3).

Another Student (S4) responded:

To me it's hard because only two tutors who supported me and sometime I have difficulty working with non-Pasifika tutors because I go one way and they go the other way. For example, I ask for help and he said yes but he has no time for me because he did not give me an appointment time to meet with him. These non Pasifika tutors need to understand us because they don't know that with a little extra help from them will mean a lot for us (S4).

Two students (S1, S2) found that the language barrier and shyness can be a challenge to their learning and understanding. Learning through other sources gives them an alternative but they need to study hard:

I think it is really good because of the different options how you can learn. If I can't understand the lecturer I can go into YouTube, or go into Moodle. I try and look at any other way in order to understand the subject, maybe the way he teach is not clear. The other big thing for me is shyness which is my problem and being a female it is hard because some boys understand the subject but for me I don't. Our shyness is a big problem; we can say yes to the teacher but yet we still don't understand (S1).

The way the tutor teach is very fast for me. I learn English from the island, that's the problem. For those students who are born here they find it easy; if you understand the language then learning is very easy. The lecturers expect us to know all but my language is very bad and sometimes I want to ask the tutor because I can't understand what they were saying. If I don't study hard I will fail (S2).

Institutional Support

Perspectives of Pasifika students

The Pasifika students appreciated the support available from the Pacific Centre, the library, and Te Puna Ako. However, two students (S2, S3) mentioned that sometimes there is a lack of communication between students and tutors and even the Pacific Centre had failed to support them. One student (S2) stated that:

The institute provides a lot of support for the students but there is a lack of communication between the lecturers and the students. Sometime I ask the teacher but they don't help so I walk away. I went to the Pacific Centre if they can help me look for a job but they can't help even though I am a Pasifika student (S2).

Student (S3) added:

The Pacific Centre was very good before, but after that they went missing (S3).

There were positive comments about other support services as students (S3, S5) acknowledge the presence of a dedicated resource person in the library who looks after the engineering students and Te Puna Ako. Two students commented:

The library is good, just found out that a person dedicated to our area is there and can help us when we need to (S3).

I attend every session provided by Te Puna Ako to help me with writing, referencing, eBook and mathematics- they are very helpful (S5).

Perspectives of Pasifika tutors

The five Pasifika tutors (T1, T2, T3, T4, T5) highlighted that the Pacific Centre is not visible enough to everyone since their relocation, resulting in Pasifika students not seeking assistance from them. It was also highlighted by a tutor (T2) that some Pasifika students normally visit the Pacific Centre but are left to do what they want to do without any guidance or assistance.

The lack of established processes and procedures to deal with Pasifika students' issues are a problem. The tutors are not aware of the procedures to follow when dealing with Pasifika students issues. During the institution transition period last year, a Leader's position was established to look after Maori and Pasifika students. The Leader was the point of contact for Maori and Pasifika student issues. The position has not been filled since it became vacant in the middle of 2016. Currently if there is a Pasifika student issue, the tutor should refer them to the Pacific Centre. However, they mentioned that in most cases there is a lack of communication or feedback from the Pacific Centre regarding the issues being raised. The tutors (T1, T2, T3, T4, T5) strongly agreed that there is a breakdown in communication between the departments and the Pacific Centre. Two tutors commented:

They have a structure but not working. The Institute is doing some work but the support by the Pacific Centre is not very effective, currently when we have an issue with the Pasifika students we send them to the Pacific Centre but not sure if they had provided the help or assistance needed, so how can we help or guide them (T3).

I always advice students to go and get help from the Pacific Centre. The support is there but how effective, am not sure, but can be better. One group went to seek help and was given some help (T4).

Semi structured interviews - Pasifika Leaders Perspectives

What can be done differently?

The Pasifika leaders responded by stating the importance of Pasifika students having access to the students' services that are available in the institute to provide support in their educational journey. The support services should be easily visible for Pasifika students so that they can utilise the facilities. One Leader stated:

They need support from other Pasifika Islanders or family. You can direct them to the support groups, by directing them to the support people who may help them because it makes a difference, inviting Pasifika support staff who can come and talk to them, having a chat session or informal conversation and showing support for them can enhance their learning. Having Pasifika Islanders mentoring system will make students more comfortable. Currently, students lack avenues where Pasifika students can go and express their problem and having Whanau evening, informal environment and conversation (L2).

One Pasifika leader (L1) responded by stating the importance of employing more Pasifika staff in all the departments so that their visibility can be noticed. These Pasifika staff can engage better with the Pasifika students in their respective programme areas or departments and establish networks that could benefit Pasifika students. The leader (L1) noted:

I think, one, actually having a Pasifika person in every department, this can actually break down some of the barriers. The other one is to have influence to put strategies forward to the institute around additional support or scholarship but also in the leadership team and be able to be influenced externally, have connections with agencies, government bodies and be able to actually lobby support and money for students and so all that actually helps to funding the program, funding the support, so you get better opportunities, so all that will actually help towards the learning. But someone needs to do it, like a Pasifika Islander with the passion (L1).

The same Pasifika Leader (L1), also added that there is a Pasifika Council known as “Fono *Faufautua*” who are part of the wider institute Council Working Group who advises the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). He also mentioned that the institute has to align its strategic plans with the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) annual plans regarding Pasifika and Maori students. A “Whanau evening” which occurs annually is a forum that the Pasifika communities, potential students and parents attend to assess what is available at the institute which may inspire the potential Pasifika students to register their interest on the trade programme of interest. He further highlighted how engaging with the community and families in sports events organised by the institute and during the beginning of the semester’s orientation is also another medium where Pasifika students and Pasifika staff can meet and build a network together. Leader (L1) commented:

There is a *Fono Faufautua*, a Pasifika Council and they are part of the wider council working group. We have reps from the community who sit in *Fono Faufautua* group and they advise the CEO regarding Pasifika Island issues and concerns. We have an obligation under TEC to actually provide strategies to increase recruitment and retention of students and success is part of the strategy is having a Pacific Centre working with the Deans, Head of Departments and staff. This includes the importance about teaching and learning and looking at different styles taking the Pasifika Islanders into consideration of some of the outcome of that is, having the Pasifika day. The Pasifika Whanau evening is where we engage with our community and students and Pasifika orientation. Organising special Pasifika Island events such as sports events and social evenings, establishing a new Samoan student’s association and the recruitment of more Pasifika staff (L1).

This Pasifika Leader (L1) also discussed the availability of scholarships for the Pasifika students who are from the island nations that are self -governing under the New Zealand government:

I actually put a proposal to our Pasifika communities in New Zealand and overseas around offering our students, scholarships. So with this scholarship, we bought tools and work collaboratively with sponsors and their families. We bring students to New Zealand from the islands and we monitor them and provide them with employment.

We have six carpenter students in Diploma level from Niue and they work for the government, also from Cook Islands who are qualified carpenters who come here to complete their final year qualification and also Tokelau island government staff. They return to their islands after completing the Diploma (L1).

Leaders (L2, L3) suggested that there should be a specific space for Pasifika students. They commented:

The high priority group, Pasifika students to be provided with their own space within the area (L2).

Having a Pasifika place drop in space, having food that they can go and help themselves (L3).

Pasifika students are easily distracted and there is a need to encourage them in order to retain them. This is voiced by Leader (L3):

Finally, I want to add this, Pasifika students get distracted easily, whether it's money or friend. Their friends will lure them to go and work then they will drop out of their studies to get some money to just buy mobile phones or a flash car. I think some of them walk out from their studies, but people like you who went through high education can talk to the Pasifika students to stick to their studies and they can have a better future (L3).

Summary

The data findings identified how the Pasifika students' culture and family aspirations had strong influences on the career pathway that they should follow. In the Pasifika culture, it is disrespectful for children to disobey their parents' wishes and their aspirations. Culture is also a strong factor for successful learning outcomes of Pasifika students. Therefore, there is a need to integrate Pasifika culture into the trades program in the institute of technology.

Pasifika students struggle with the dilemma of family expecting them to be high achievers and at the same time they have to shoulder all kinds of family responsibilities, cultural and religious obligations. By trying to fulfil the responsibilities and obligations put on them, Pasifika students' learning is impacted, resulting in irregular attendance, being behind in course work and not meeting some academic deadlines which raises concerns by the Pasifika tutors.

The data findings also identified suggestions from Pasifika tutors to bridge the gap in Pasifika students' learning. These include providing a more Pasifika friendly environment for Pasifika students, establishing a connection with Pasifika students on the first day of class to allow teacher and student bonding as well as creating ice breaker activities for bonding with other students. Understanding of Pasifika cultures by non Pasifika staff is also crucial to the engagement of Pasifika students. One cultural aspect that tutors face with Pasifika students is the culture of silence where a Pasifika student is quiet, does not ask questions and seems shy, it is simply a show of respect for elders and the person with authority.

The impact of family values, culture and religion is strongly embedded in the Pasifika students' learning attitude or style which affects their performance and engagement. The Pasifika tutors and Pasifika Leaders highlighted the importance of creating a learning space for Pasifika students. The learning space will allow Pasifika students to meet and discuss with other Pasifika students, have one to one discussion with Pasifika tutors, learning the diverse Pasifika cultural activities and also celebrate respective Pacific Island independence days and Language Weeks.

The data findings highlighted some gaps in the responsibilities of the Pasifika tutors, the Pacific Centre, the institute's learning support services and the leadership institutional support for Pasifika students to maintain a sustainable retention of Pasifika students. The Pasifika students voiced their concerns on some tutors' attitudes towards them, the tutors commented on the breakdown in communication with the

Pacific Centre and the departments concerning Pasifika students, while the leaders pointed out that the institution will provide support for Pasifika students to ensure that the institution meet their annual Pasifika students' retention rate.

The following chapter will discuss some of the key findings with reference to the literature reviewed in Chapter two and make recommendations for future practices and the research on Pasifika students' retention in the trade programme.

Common findings of Pasifika students, Pasifika tutors and Pasifika leaders

Findings	Pasifika Students	Pasifika Tutors	Pasifika Leaders
Family Influence in choices of life	Parents aspirations (silent battle with other community members)	Strong family values and cultures embedded in Pasifika student learning environment.	Conducting family Whanau evening.
Cultural influence and family obligations (silent battle)	Family obligation has higher priority than academic work.	Students obligations affecting school work- provide extra support.	Provide necessary support to ensure students are looked after.
Communication and Pasifika time	Lack of communication with teachers. Late hand in date for assessment.	Ice breaking activities to generate communication. Negotiate with shy students regarding assessment work due dates	One to one communication is critical to student learning. Pasifika time concept a problem to deal with.

Learning environment & support	More comfortable to work effectively when learning environment suites them.	Supporting learning and learning space.	Creating space for Pasifika students – Family Whanau evening.
Non Pasifika tutors & course delivery	Students concerns on non Pasifika tutor overlooking their request for assistance- put them off.	Hearing their stories and providing support accordingly.	Employing more Pasifika Tutors to cater for Pasifika students.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter discusses key findings from chapter four in relation to the literature reviewed in chapter two. I have also drawn conclusions and recommendations for best practices for Pasifika students' success and retention in a trade programme. Examples of these are: a recognition of the effective learning styles that suit Pasifika students; the support provided by Pasifika tutors; provide cultural awareness of non-Pasifika tutors and the institutional support systems provided for Pasifika students.

Discussion

The discussion is organised in relation to the following themes in the findings.

Theme One: Learning styles of Pasifika students.

Theme Two: Cultural influences in teaching and learning

Theme Three: Integrating culture and learning styles of Pasifika students in the New Zealand tertiary context.

The discussion will examine the responses provided by the Pasifika students, the Pasifika tutors and the Pasifika leaders in relation to the three themes within support from the literature reviewed.

Theme one: Learning Styles of Pasifika students

Visual and Kinesthetic learners

The findings in this research confirmed that all the Pasifika students in the *talanoa* focus group had specific learning styles that they commonly shared. The most common being that of visual, practical or hands-on activities. These findings are

supported by Fleming and Mill (1992) who developed the learning style model VARK (Visual, Auditory, Read/Write, Kinesthetic) and Felder and Silverman (1988) whose learning style model looks at different dimensions that indicates particular preferences for learning. Felder and Silverman assume that most people learn best when both the verbal and visual are used in instruction. They also claim that most learners prefer to learn with visuals (graphs, diagrams, illustrations) as learners remember best what they see and will probably forget if something is simply said to them.

My research findings noted that one student said, "If I can't understand the lecturer, I can go into You tube. I try and do any other way in order to understand" (S1). This learner reflects that she is a visual learner and another student agreed that, "delivery by some tutors is a bit boring, they need to show learning outcomes on the board. The class is too long, sometimes the information comes from this ear and comes out the other ear" (S5). Another student stated that, "the best part is the practical class" (S3). One student calls it, "walk the talk" (S2), showing that Pasifika learners prefer the three learning styles of listening, visual and kinesthetic. These learning styles reflect cultural ways of learning as in the Pasifika culture, learning encompasses the verbal and illustration by a tutor/parent and the children/learners listen and do. A learner exemplifies this when he stated that, "A lot of influence comes from my dance group" (S3). Pasifika learners who come from a dancing background will need to have a visual matched to their listening, for example in a Pasifika cultural dancing class, a choreographer shows the actions to match the song and then the learners sing and perform. In the classroom, the tutor is the choreographer who needs to show and tell and then he must include the practical for students to perform, in order for students to totally understand and remember. One tutor succinctly noted, "the cultural elements they are brought up with drives their studies" (T4). Tutors therefore need to understand the cultural elements that drives Pasifika students' learning styles.

Communalism: cultural inherent

All of the Pasifika students in the focus group consistently showed that they preferred to work in groups because they did not want to stand out as individuals. One student noted, "When I struggle to understand, I ask other friends and then we discuss and I understand what was taught in class" (S2). Another student agreed, "It's not yourself only. You know it takes a village to raise a child" (S1). A tutor confirmed these students' comments as, "They don't want to be seen asking the tutor questions, but if you give them group activities, they will engage" (T1). This group notion is culturally inherent and is consistent with literature findings. Hofstede (2011) noted that there are different dimensions that distinguish culture which includes *Individualism versus Collectivism*. Pasifika learners prefer collectivism as reflected in the research by Au (1993) whose study on native Hawaiian students showed that they excel in activities that require group cooperation and talking together. Anae, Anderson, Bensemen & Coxon, (2002) also confirmed that communalism worked for tertiary students as in the *Tuakana* programme at the University of Auckland.

The *tuakana* is a senior high achieving student in their respective programmes who lead group workshops to collectively share ideas to benefit the new students. This *tuakana* (older sibling), brings together new students (younger siblings), in a typical Pasifika way of doing things where older siblings are left in charge of the younger siblings to show and tell them and to engage them in sharing ideas for the whole group to learn. The *tuakana* idea has not been practised officially in this institute but it has been observed by tutors that in a class, the mature Pasifika students who have had industry experience and have returned to gain formal qualifications, often lead group discussions, but also learn from the younger students in areas of new learning technologies. A mature student confirmed, "I have not been to school for a long time but the younger students teach me how to use E-learning such as Moodle and using computers" (S5).

Notions of respect: shyness and quietness

My findings have revealed that another cultural element that reflects the learning style of Pasifika students is the notion of respect seen in their shyness and quiet attitudes. One student noted, "Being the only female is hard. Sometimes shyness is a problem for me." (S1). In the Pasifika cultures, females and males have distinctive roles; female students who enrol in a male dominant programme will find that they may have difficulty to interact confidently in class. Jones (1991) and Tupuola (1998) concurred that the presence of male students in a class can hinder open discussion by female students. In Fiji and Tonga, there are gender restrictions regarding brothers and sisters or parallel cousins. The female student in this sense is being respectful to her male counterparts and to the male tutor as well. Tupuola (1998) highlighted that there is a complex interplay of culture, gender and learning styles that may impact upon the learner's needs and pretences in the classroom.

This notion of respect is confirmed by a leader who noted that, "They [Pasifika students] are more shy and very respectful, they don't ask questions because they don't want to be seen asking the tutors" (L2). Jones (1991) in his study on Pasifika students showed that they do not proactively engage in reflective discussion with their teacher because they expect their teacher to have the last word. Hofstede (2011) concurs that teachers are ranked higher than their students and their teachings are taken as highly authentic and are not questioned. The Pasifika societies are hierarchical where chiefs, church ministers and teachers are highly ranked and given the uttermost respect. To question these leaders is being disrespectful. Therefore, when Pasifika students are being quiet and shy in the class, it is not that they do not want to engage or that they seem to have grasped what has been taught, it is inert in them as part of their cultural way of learning and respect for those in authority.

Theme Two: Cultural influences in teaching and learning

This research indicated that cultural influences include family, religion and social obligations and expectations which are strongly embedded in the Pasifika students'

learning attitude and style. Within these influences is a silent battle that parents and students both go through in order to meet obligations and expectations. In addition, there is the concept of time between Pasifika versus *Palagi* time. These factors influence the progression and the academic performance of Pasifika students in the trade programme.

Thaman (2002) defined culture as:

a way of life...[it] is derived from Pacific vernacular notions of life as all-embracing and interconnected, not easily disassociated from ideas about economy, environment, politics or indeed education itself. Culture for me, is an all embracing framework that helps define particular ways of knowing knowledge, as well as different ways these are stored, communicated and shared (p. 25).

In relation to Thaman's definition, my findings revealed that students' cultural ways of knowing knowledge are embedded in the interconnections of family obligations and expectations, religious beliefs and social obligations. Within these is the silent battle that both parents and students wrangle with in order to meet their obligations and expectations.

Pasifika students' choices for study are often dictated by their family and especially that of their parent/s. One student noted, "I grew up with a family who are all motor mechanics. My Dad wanted me to become a motor mechanic" (S4). Another student stated that "our parents keep on pushing us to become a nurse or a doctor" (S3). Pasifika parents have a strong say in their children's educational choices and out of respect, Pasifika students usually comply. In essence therefore parents need to be involved in what goes on in their children's educational journey. Lee and Bowen (2006) support the idea that the parents' involvement in their children's education and home learning environment can impact on the students' performance.

Family obligations also impact on Pasifika students' educational journey. For example, one tutor commented, "One student told me he can only come to class three days a week because he has to look after his little sister when the mother goes to work" (T3). Another tutor agreed, "They have family commitments to look after their siblings, drop

them off at school before coming to a course. “Another student has to go home to breast feed her child during lunch and return to class” (T1). Looking after the older members of the family is also noted by a tutor, “Family commitments is a major issue. One student could not come because grandma is in hospital so the granddaughter has to be in hospital every night and this affects her school work” (T5). Attending to other family obligations can hinder Pasifika students’ progress, as one tutor stated, “attending sixth and seventh cousin’s wedding and other family functions can cause them to be behind in their school work. How do we accommodate this?” (T3). It is important to understand that while we may look at cultural impacts as having a negative influence on Pasifika students’ learning, it is also important to understand that culture is fundamental to Pasifika students’ way of life.

The inter-connectedness of culture and religion is succinctly noted by a student who said, “For me the biggest influences that keeps me going and there is no escaping, in the Pasifika culture is your community, your family, your church, your workmates and friends” (S5). Another student who is raised in the islands noted, “Family is the biggest influence. I was very young when I left my island; today I am still following all the cultural activities” (S4). Tutors and Leaders also confirmed how culture and family and social life are interconnected and impacted on the students’ learning. One leader stated, “If you’re looking at cultural influences, you’re talking about home. In a nutshell we do have a high percentage of our students who have home obligations called *falavelave* in Samoan. Then they also have church obligations and so our students make home and church a priority over their education” (L1).

It should be noted that literature reviewed on religious obligations showed that Pasifika students who are involved in church actually have better academic outcomes than students who do not have church affiliations (Tiatia, 1998; Havea, 2011). Other literature reviewed, (Alton-Lee, 2003; Samu, 2006) discussed Pasifika students’ cultural capital and home environments and the need to develop a positive relationship with parents to counteract any negative impacts on students’ achievements.

Silent battle

At the centre of all these cultural, family and religious obligations, there are the expectations by both parents and children that need to be met and this is reflected in a silent battle. One student described this as, “My family always have a silent battle. My mum says, what am I going to say to other people when you fail. You got yourself into this school while the other girls from church are going to university” (S1). Another student agreed, “Mum makes me compete with other kids” (S2).

An adult scholarship student who is married and whose wife is back in Samoa added, “My wife always tells me that I am not going for vacation” (S5). These comments by Pasifika students reflect the silent battle they and their families go through because achievement in education is a mark of pride. When a student receives a scholarship, it is not only the family but the village that also takes pride in raising that child to where he is now, as one student said, “It’s not yourself only. You know how it takes the village to raise a child” (S1).

The literature reviewed supports these findings of commitment to study because of family expectations and the fear of failing as a shame to the family, the community or village one comes from. These fears have caused students to become resilient and apply themselves to their studies (Chu, Abella and Paurini, 2013).

Concept of time

One cultural belief that has an impact on Pasifika students’ learning and is worth noting is the concept of time. Punctuality to class and deadlines to be met for assignments are measured by time. This includes attendance and handing in assignments or projects within timeframes. All tutors agreed that Pasifika students have an issue with time management. For example, they raised their concerns on the high frequency of Pasifika students missing classes, arriving late to classes because of their external

duties that they have to perform first before they can attend their class and asking for extension to assignments or not handing assignments in at all. This is confirmed by one student who commented, “Sometimes there is just not enough time to meet the deadline for assignments” (S5). One tutor agreed, “We need to give them extra time to complete their work” (T2). Another tutor said, “You have to be strict with time management from day one and you should be firm” (T4). A leader called it, “The Tongan time, there is no urgency and it affects their performance in school” (L3). This notion of time is common in the Pasifika cultures.

In New Zealand we simply call it Pasifika time, but each culture relates to time in their own ways of knowing and doing. For example, in the Pacific Islands, time is measured according to the sunrise and sunset and not the clock face or calendar time. Literature confirmed that the Pasifika concept of time is inconsistent with the *Palagi* or western concept of time (Davidson-Toumu’a & Dunbar, 2009).

Furthermore, Chu, Abella and Paurini (2013) found that, “Pasifika students described how they felt that there was never enough time in the New Zealand educational model.” (p. 29). Therefore, the concept of time should not be seen as poor time management on the students’ part, but needs to be understood in relation to their cultural ways of doing.

Theme three: Integrating culture and learning styles of Pasifika students in the New Zealand tertiary context.

Culture a barrier to success: what can we do about it?

In my findings, all the tutors and leaders agreed that cultural obligations and expectations have impacted on the learning styles of Pasifika students and this has become an issue in Pasifika students’ efforts to achieve highly in their course programmes. This is exemplified by comments such as; “family commitment is a major issue...setting their priority right is an issue (T5),” culture becomes the main

obstruction in their education” (T3). One leader sums it up as “when we talk about students, some of the barriers are the cultural environment has changed by coming to New Zealand and then coming to a big institutional place...it’s a new scary place” (L1).

I reiterate Thaman’s (2002) definition of culture to remind us how important culture is to Pasifika students:

Culture is...all-embracing and interconnected, not easily disassociated from ideas about economy, environment, politics or indeed education itself ... an all embracing framework that helps define particular ways of knowing knowledge, as well as different ways these are stored, communicated and shared (p. 25).

This research indicated that there is consideration of Pasifika students’ ways of doing and knowing provided by the trade tutors, in particular the Pasifika tutors to enhance the Pasifika student’s learning. These include integrating Pasifika cultures and Pasifika students’ ways of doing and knowing such as: Pasifika way of introductions to make connections and understanding diversity, creating nurturing relationships between tutors and students, celebrating Pasifika cultural days and language weeks, understanding that Pasifika students culture is the foundation of everything they do and finding a balance between culture and educational achievement.

Diversity and cultural introductions

One tutor insisted that, “When we introduce ourselves in the traditional way, it quickly gives that connection with the Pasifika students. It gives them a quick guess of who I am” (T4). Another tutor agreed, “When I deal with Pasifika students, they know I am Tongan...they show me respect because they know I am one of them too. It is easier for them to open up, they do not hold back” (T3). Several authors agree that cultural responsive pedagogy is crucial to successful learning outcomes. (Alton-Lee, 2003; Samu, 2006). Pasifika is a diverse culture allowing students and staff to introduce themselves in their own ways of cultural introductions such as using your language and ways of presenting yourself, to establish the connections of who is who and this allows students to suss out who they may be able to open up to. This cultural method

of engagement is supported by Ferguson et al (2008) that the Pasifika learners excel when they are given a sense of belonging and inclusiveness.

Creating nurturing relationships between tutor and students

It is important to create nurturing relationships between tutor and Pasifika students. All the Pasifika tutors and leaders agreed that it is critical to get to know the Pasifika students by having one to one sessions with them, listen to their stories and go out of your way to cater as much as you possibly can, to assist them in order to maintain success and retention.

As stated earlier, Pasifika students have been seen to be quiet and not forthcoming to ask questions in class. Given that cultural notions of respect for someone in authority is shown in not questioning the tutor/s, this does not mean that Pasifika students do not like to be heard. They actually respect the tutors who go out of their way to see them on a one to one basis or to reach out to them and ask if they need assistance in any way. One student said, "I had been away from school for a long time and some tutors expect me to know it all. Some ask me questions and give me feedback. Having student and lecturer feedback is very effective for me" (S2). Another student confirmed, "I enjoy my class because of the Pasifika tutor. He understands our values and morals and the relationship is good" (S5). The literature has shown the value of philosophies of caring and practising it in student-teacher relationships. Over the last two decades Darling-Hammond (1997); Wentzel, (1997); Noddings, (2002) have shown that learning is supported when structures for caring, opportunities for collaborative learning and appreciation for diversity are established in classrooms.

The Pasifika Education Plan monitoring report (2010) also supports the idea that teachers need to know their Pasifika students, the students' goals, priorities and cultures that can contribute to their success. Benseman, Coxon, Anderson and Anae (2006) highlighted the importance of the presence of Pasifika staff who can act as role

models, mentors and provide support for Pasifika students, but they are concerned that the number of Pasifika staff employed in tertiary institutes remains low. Having staff of the same ethnicity as the students is also supported by Hooks theory cited in Audrey and Riley (2017) that Hooks' own school experiences were enhanced by the presence of black teachers who nurtured the gifted black students by ensuring they fulfil their intellectual destiny to uplift the black race and by doing so uplift the race.

Celebrating Pasifika cultural days and language week

Pasifika is not a monoculture. It is diverse, representing the many cultural groups of the Pacific. Each cultural group has its own unique language and cultural ways of doing and knowing. Most of the Pacific countries that have gained independence or self-government celebrate their independence day both in their home country as well as in their adopted home such as New Zealand. It is now recognised by the New Zealand Government through the Ministry of Pacific Peoples to designate on their annual calendar of events, a language week as part of a Pacific country's independence celebration. This language week, dedicated to a specific Pacific country as well as other forms of Pacific cultural activities, such as the Polyfest, are not very visible in the tertiary institutions. The need for Pasifika students to feel a sense of belonging within the institute is when their cultural celebrations become part of the institute of technology's annual calendar of events.

My research showed that all the Pasifika students experienced difficulties coping with their studies because of the language barrier. They were very conscious of speaking English with an accent and always comparing themselves with their New Zealand-born counterparts, not having the vocabulary to express themselves and not understanding what the tutor was teaching. One student said, "I learn my English from the island, that's the problem. For the students who are born here, they find it easy, they understand the language. My language is very bad. Sometimes I want to ask the tutor but I don't know how" (S2). Issues of language barrier has been discussed by Aubrey & Riley (2017) on Bourdieu's life at school where he was made fun of because

of his accent. For Pasifika students English is their second or other language and when they come from the islands, they are teased as Fresh off the Boat (FOB), because of their accent or broken English (Airini, Anae & Mila-Schaaf, 2010).

When Pasifika languages are given a platform to be celebrated within the tertiary institute, the fear of not speaking English fluently could be minimised as Pasifika students realise that their own languages are just as important.

Challenges and Issues while dealing with Pasifika students

The research showed that providing learning support, mentoring, cultural support and spiritual support is critical for the Pasifika students' journey in the trades programme. The Pasifika tutors highlighted that there is a lack of communication between Pasifika tutors within the institute which makes it difficult to connect with each other if there is a Pasifika student's issue to be addressed. The Pasifika tutors stressed that even though the institute has a Pacific Centre, they believe that a breakdown in communication still exists between the Pasifika tutors and the Pacific Centre when dealing with Pasifika students. A Pasifika tutor (T3) who sent a Pasifika student to the Pacific Centre for referral did not receive any feedback whether the student had been looked after or not. The study showed that Pasifika tutors suggested establishing a framework of a Pasifika Learning Community across the Institute that will provide a platform for a greater support for Pasifika students. The Pasifika Learning Framework will enhance the freedom of access in learning within the institute to ensure success and retention of Pasifika students. The Ministry of Education (2014) report stated that creating a strong and energetic environment for Pasifika communities will help increase productivity.

The study highlighted that Pasifika students have difficulty while engaging with non-Pasifika tutors because of a lack of appreciation of cultural awareness, the different interpretation of English language used and concept of time which differs between the two parties. The Pasifika students suggested that by conducting professional development workshops for non-Pasifika tutors on the diversity of Pasifika culture will

develop their understanding and appreciation of Pasifika culture. This is a tool that can be utilised to maintain a higher retention rate for Pasifika students in the trade programme and remove the misconception by non-Pasifika tutors. This is supported by Nakhid (2003) where she found that Pasifika learners were continuously seen by their teachers as newly arrived immigrants from the Pacific with poor English skills that weaken their learning. The understanding of Pasifika cultures by non Pasifika tutors is also critical for the engagement of Pasifika students.

The Pasifika tutors agreed that developing a good team and bonding with the Pasifika students will provide a positive learning environment. The bonding should commence on day one to encourage and build their confidence with the tutor and the class to actively engage in class activities which will remove the Pasifika shy culture behaviour of shyness. The study showed that when there is a lack of bonding between Pasifika students and the Pasifika tutors at the initial stage of the course, the consequences will affect both parties especially the Pasifika students who may start to feel unwelcome in class which can result in missing classes or dropping out of the programme.

The Pasifika Leaders highlighted that the cultural obligations and strong home environment impacted on the Pasifika students' lives and academic success. The response from one of the Pasifika Leaders (L3) showed that the home environment is very strong and that they still live with their parents because in their cultural beliefs, they will inherit their parent's status and will be obligated to look after their parents when they grow old. There is no separation between the family, the extended family, the church family and their association to their village. The Pasifika Leaders agreed that the dominance of their cultural structures has enabled the Pasifika students to accept whatever obligations or tasks are directed to them while at the same time they have to manage their academic studies. If there is an imbalance in their academic achievement and their social obligations, then there will be consequences that may have a long term effect on them. The Pasifika leaders highlighted that providing the necessary support for Pasifika students will reduce the imbalance of cultural obligations on their academic load.

One Pasifika leader (L3) stated that Pasifika students are very easily distracted and sometimes it is difficult to engage them in some class activities because they are pre-occupied with their personal lives. On the other hand, he mentioned that Pasifika students are well behaved and friendly while in class but at the same time they can shut themselves off from participating in class if they are uncomfortable with the learning environment.

This study also indicated the dissatisfaction of Pasifika students with some of the non-Pasifika tutors' classroom attitudes. They saw themselves as disadvantaged due to their ethnicity, being perceived as slow learners, having communication difficulty due to language barriers, and sometimes providing slow responses in meeting assessment time deadlines. According to Alton-Lee (2003), New Zealand teachers need to develop their cultural competency by developing and demonstrating their understanding of the core values of the minority and diverse Pasifika peoples' culture. The research also indicated that there is a misconception of who is responsible for the retention of the Pasifika students in the trade programme, the limited cohesion with the Pacific Centre, lack of communication with Pasifika tutors, and a need for institutional leadership support.

The findings from the Pasifika students highlighted the importance of engaging and having regular communication with their tutors. They also commented that it was easier to communicate with the Pasifika tutors rather than the non-Pasifika tutors. They said that the Pasifika tutors do take time to listen to their stories or issues and provide support or negotiate workable study plans in order to keep up with their school work. A non-Pasifika tutor will strictly adhere to the programme outline which may affect the Pasifika students' academic progress on the trade programme. This is supported by Ferguson, Gorinski, Samu and Mara (2008) who identified that engagement in critical discussion for students and teachers may pose hidden difficulties for students whose cultural background emphasises that teachers are the source of knowledge.

The Pasifika students highlighted that while it was difficult to communicate with some non Pasifika tutors they have to resort to engaging with other students to share information to help them understand the contents that were delivered in class. The data also highlighted some key areas in classroom management and tutors' attitudes that affected their classroom learning. The response from the Pasifika students is that the class duration was too long and therefore they get bored listening to the tutor. They said that a lack of bonding with some tutors affects their learning morale. They commented that some tutors will focus on clever students while ignoring the weaker students who were frequently Pasifika. The language interpretation and pronunciation sometimes restricts Pasifika students to participate in large classes because they are conscious of their island English accent that can be laughed at by other students and tutors.

This research showed that the Pasifika tutors acknowledge the presence and the support provided by the Pacific Centre. They commented on the location of the Pacific Centre that was no longer convenient for students to access. The institution needs to host a campus institutional celebration of different Pacific Island Independence days together with the Language Week with the support of the Pasifika tutors and Pacific Centre. This idea is supported by Sullivan (2001) who notes that participation in cultural activities can lead to the development of knowledge and skills, which in turn enable pupils to succeed in school.

The findings also highlighted the vagueness of the responsibility of the different trade Practice Pathways and the trade tutor's responsibility regarding the welfare of the Pasifika students. One Pasifika tutor (T3), described how he was appointed by the institute to carry out a re- engagement process (*tokoni'i*) with the Pasifika students who were not progressing with their academic learning. He created a pool of trades tutors who were willing to give their time and worked collaboratively with their students that were mainly Maori and Pasifika students. The result of the re-engagement recorded a high success and retention rate for that academic area but unfortunately,

the re-engagement was not supported by the leadership team. This resulted in the concept of re-engagement being phased out rapidly.

The findings by the Pasifika Leaders highlighted the importance of providing adequate access to the Support Services for Pasifika students to utilise and enhance their learning. One Pasifika leader (L1) highlighted the importance of employing more Pasifika tutors within the departments will increase the visibility of Pasifika tutors with whom they can engage better with the Pasifika students. He also commented on the importance of networking with external donors who are involved with Pasifika students for grants and scholarships. The provision of a scholarship is an incentive for Pasifika students to pursue their trade qualification and a pathway to employment. The presence of the Pasifika Council known as the *Fono Faufautua* in the institute that advises the Chief Executive Officer on the Pasifika Strategic Plan is to ensure that the Institute provides the relevant support for Pasifika students success. This will enhance the retention of Pasifika students, while also meeting the requirements of the Tertiary Education Commission Annual Strategic Plan, supporting the Pasifika Community through the Whanau evenings and Pasifika sports events.

The findings by the Pasifika Leaders highlight the importance of creating a “drop-in space” for Pasifika students that can be used for meetings with other Pasifika students, a space for discussing school work with other Pasifika students who may need help, and a space for sharing cultural practices and cultural celebrations. The drop in space will elevate the Pacific Centre presence and will allow more cohesion with the Pasifika students and also the Pasifika tutors. One Pasifika leader (L3) believes that by continuously inviting successful Pasifika tutors to provide motivating public speaking sessions the Pasifika students will be encouraged and motivated to focus on successful completion of their academic studies.

The Pasifika leaders commented that they contribute to the formation of the institutional strategic plan to ensure the success and retention of Pasifika students meets the institutional targets and also address the Tertiary Education Commission’s

Strategic Plan for Pasifika students. They commented on the significant importance of the Whanau evening held annually because it involves the Pasifika students, the Pasifika tutors, the institution leaders and the Pasifika community in ensuring that they work together so that the Pasifika students enrolled in the trades programme are provided with the best support to enable them to complete their courses.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has shown that Pasifika students have their own silent battles within themselves during their educational journey that has affected their learning. The impact of their silent battles through their cultural obligations, their family commitments and their religious duties affected their academic learning, causing them in many cases either to quit or take longer to complete their trades programme. The distractions that Pasifika students face have resulted in them having irregular attendance that affects their studies by missing critical information shared in class, failing to submit assessments on time, or requests for extension on assessment dates in order to catch up with their studies. The Pasifika tutors shared that the Pasifika students should take responsibility for their academic journey to ensure that they achieved in what they have committed themselves financially to and taken the time to complete it.

The research revealed that there are many challenges facing Pasifika tutors when dealing with Pasifika students. They agreed that the importance of building relationships with Pasifika students from day one is critical in order to support the Pasifika students to fit into the new environment. They know that they have a Pasifika person (father/mother figure) to talk with, share their problems and seek advice that will help them focus on their academic studies. The relationship will allow a bonding between the Pasifika students and Pasifika tutors where Pasifika students will show respect to their Pasifika tutors. This bonding will reduce the cultural practices of shyness, being silent and not collaborating in class activities due to their English accent, practice time management and lessen their concept of Pasifika time. The

Pasifika leaders face a challenge by ensuring that Pasifika students are provided and have access to the institute's support services to enhance their academic learning, provide mentoring and pastoral care to address students' issues that affects their progression in their academic studies. The Pasifika leaders currently contribute to the institute strategic plans to ensure that the retention of Pasifika students is maintained within the institutional annual target.

The findings indicated that a lack of accountability, access and responsibilities within the institute impacted on the support and mentoring of students and their progression in the trades programme. The findings also highlighted that individual Pasifika tutors have to sacrifice their own time to provide academic support for Pasifika students before they fail or quit their studies because of lack of institutional support.

The Pasifika tutors used their own initiatives to re-engage with Pasifika students in order to update their course work and meet the deadlines for their assessments in order to complete their educational journey.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation One: Institute Staff

My first recommendation is for teachers, staff within the institute should be responsible for the success and retention of Pasifika students studying in the trades programme. The Pasifika students will be personally responsible for their academic learning in order to successfully complete their trades programme with the support from the Pasifika tutors, Institutional staff, the Heads of Departments, the Pacific Centre and the institute.

The cultural celebrations of Pasifika students need to be recognised *by* the institute so that they can participate in organised Pasifika cultural activities and celebrations. The Pasifika tutors should be supported by their Head of Departments to have access in supporting the Pasifika students to enhance their learning. The Pasifika tutors should be able to participate with the Pasifika students during the institutional cultural celebrations.

Recommendation Two: Senior: Leadership and Director Pacific Success

My second recommendation is to establish a Pasifika Learning Community, similar to other existing Learning Communities but to be facilitated by the Pacific Centre. The participants of the Learning Community will be, Pasifika students, Pasifika teachers and support staff. The Pasifika Learning Community will provide support for students' pastoral care, mentoring, literacy, numeracy support and facilitate cultural activities. The Pasifika Learning Community will reach out to the Pasifika Community through the Pasifika churches. The Pasifika community will be educated on the importance of supporting their Pasifika children while they are enrolled in higher education. The Pasifika Learning Community with the support of the Pacific Centre will provide a Pasifika Learning Space. The Pasifika Learning Space to be located within the Pacific Centre, easily accessible by Pasifika students and managed by the Pacific Centre. The Pasifika Learning Space will be the space where Pasifika students can gather for academic and cultural discussions, meeting and connecting with other Pasifika students. The learning space can be used for cultural activities, whanau evenings, respective Pasifika country independence celebrations and language weeks' activities. The institution will grant access to use the Pasifika Learning Space for different Pasifika student's groups, for example, the Samoan Students Association.

Recommendation three: Pasifika Staff

My third recommendation is to establish a Pasifika staff communication network. The Pasifika staff communication network will allow teachers and staff to get connected through the Pacific Centre for regular updates on the institutional and Pasifika events. The Pasifika staff communication network will be a forum for meetings, addressing Pasifika students' issues and share learning practices to enhance Pasifika students learning. The Pasifika staff communication network will develop and conduct workshops for non-Pasifika staff to understand the diverse Pasifika cultures and support the Pacific Centre for organising Pasifika cultural events for the Institutes. The

Pasifika communication network will connect with the Institute Pathway College and organise Pasifika support and promotional workshops for potential Pasifika students in Secondary Schools engaged in the Pathway College at the institute.

Limitation of this study

The study was conducted in an Auckland tertiary institution where there is a mixture of students from different ethnic groups. Due to the restrictions of limitation to one institute of higher education, this affected the selection of the variety of samples for Pasifika students who were born outside of New Zealand. It also affected the selection of Pasifika Leaders due to a low number holding leadership roles in the Institute.

Time constraints prevented me from interviewing certain Pasifika leaders due to the institutional transformation and resignations. This resulted in a reduction of participants from four to three. Due to the limited number of Pasifika tutors in the trade programme and their availability to participate during the *talanoa* focus groups, the target number of participants was reduced from six to five. The changes on the number of participants was approved by my supervisors.

Recommendation for further research

The study has identified a number of gaps in the literature and suggests that further research should be conducted to gather a wider range of data on:

An awareness of the social impact of Pasifika culture in tertiary education.

The conception of Pasifika time by Pasifika students that affects their academic studies.

To explore the notion of the Silent Battles concept by Pasifika students during their higher educational journey.

To identify the different learning styles and academic achievements between the school leavers and the mature adult learners enrolled in the trade programmes.

To identify the external influences in the wider community that impact on the students learning outcomes.

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Glossary

ako	education or learning process
faafetai lava	Samoan greetings
fa'a Samoa	the Samoan way
fakama	shy or shame
fakatalanoa	superficial meeting
<i>fokotu'u talanoa</i>	normally used during a formal setting where important and official concerns are being discussed
lotu	spirituality/faith/church
Madua	shy or shame
Malo vakalevu	Fijian- Lauan dialect for -thank you very much
<i>matanivanua,</i>	spokesperson
Noqu Kalou Noqu Vanua	My God and My Land
oue tulou	Excuse me
Palagi	Polynesian term for European - Samoan known as Papalagi- Fijian known as Kai valagi
<i>pō talanoa</i>	process whereby parties know each other
Pu	Grandmother (Lauan dialect)
Radini Talatala	A church Ministers wife
<i>sevusevu</i>	the ceremonial offering of <i>yaqona</i> (kava)
talanoa	informal conversation or discuss
talanoa	face to face conversation
talanoa faikava	conversation around a kava bowl
<i>talatalanoa</i>	centered around the people talking about selected topic
<i>tanoa</i>	large woden bowl for mixing <i>yaqona</i>
tokoni 'i	support (Tongan)
Tua	Grandfather (Lauan dialect)
Tuakana	older sibling
tukuni	to tell
Vakavanua	Relax
Veivosaki	having a conversation or discussion
Vinaka- vakalevu	thank you very much
yaqona	piper methysticum plant, the roots of which are prepared and used by ethnic Fijians as either a formal or a casual social and ceremonial drink.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Information sheet for semi structured interviews and Talanoa Focus Groups participants

Master of Educational Leadership and Management

Title of Thesis:

CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON THE RETENTION OF PASIFIKA STUDENTS IN AN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY TRADE PROGRAMME

Ni sa bula vinaka, my name is Jone Valevou Tawaketini. I belong to the *Dela ni Yavu* (family) of *Nai vakacokolagi* in the *Mataqali Korovou* (tribe) from the village of *Keteira* in the island of *Moala* from the Province of *Lau* in the Fiji Islands. My Pasifika ethnicity is a mix of Fijian and Tongan. I am the fifth generation from a Tongan woman, Wai Pohiva from the island of Ha'apai in the Kingdom of Tonga who married a Fijian, Roko Savenaca Cavalevu from *Nayavutoka*.

I am currently enrolled in the Master of Education Leadership and Management degree in the Te Miro Post Graduate.

Summary of my proposal

My personal experience as a trade lecturer has shown that Pasifika students enrolling in an institute of technology trade programme are confronted by a new learning culture, new educational systems and different teaching and learning styles. The aim of my research is to investigate the cultural influences that contribute to the retention of Pasifika students studying in an institute of technology trade programme.

I request your participation for the following:

Semi structured interviews with Pasifika leaders:

For Pasifika leaders in a leadership role, I request your permission to interview you on a mutual date and time agreeable between the two parties. A consent form will be available for you to sign in agreement with my request. The interview venue will be building 107meeting room, Mt Albert Campus and the duration of the interview is

unlikely to be more than 45 minutes. All information shared during the interview will be treated as confidential.

During the semi structured interview, I will be audio recording the conversation that takes place to the best of my ability and a full recorded transcript will be distributed to each participants prior to commencement of the research data analysis. If you have concerns or need further clarification you contact my supervisor.

As a participant, you will be invited to sign a consent form and have the right to withdraw your data up to 7 days after the interview has been conducted.

Results of this research:

Note: You have the right to withdraw your contribution within 14 days from the date of data collection

My supervisor is Dr Josephine Howse

Phone: 09 8154321 Ext: 8348 Email: jhowse@unitec.ac.nz

[My contact details: Phone: 02102386425 and email: jtawaketini@unitec.ac.nz](#)

Yours sincerely

J Tawaketini

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (2016-1071)

This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from (date) to (date). 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: Participant consent Form

Research Project Title:

CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON THE RETENTION OF PASIFIKA STUDENTS IN
AN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY TRADE PROGRAMME

I have had the research project explained to me and I have read and understand the information sheet given to me.

I understand that I don't have to be part of this research project should I chose not to participate and may withdraw at any time prior to the completion of the research project.

I understand that everything I say is confidential and none of the information I give will identify me and that the only persons who will know what I have said will be the researchers and their supervisor. I also understand that all the information that I give will be stored securely on a computer at Unitec for a period of 10 years.

I understand that my discussion with the researcher will be taped and transcribed.

I understand that I can see the finished research document.

I have had time to consider everything and I give my consent to be a part of this project.

Participant Name:

Participant Signature: Date:

Project Researcher: Date:

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (2016-1071)

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 02/12/2016 to 02/12/2017. 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 8551). 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 participants

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Master of Educational Leadership and Management

Title of Thesis:

CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON THE RETENTION OF PASIFIKA STUDENTS IN AN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY TRADE PROGRAMME

Results of this research:

Note: You have the right to withdraw your contribution within 14 days from the date of data collection.

My supervisor is

Phone: (09) 815 4321 ext: 8406

Email:

Yours sincerely

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (2016-1071)

This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from (date) to (date). 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: Participants confidentiality form

Research Project Title:

Participant's Name:

Phone number:

Email:

I _____ (*full name - please print*)

Agree to treat in absolute confidence, all information that I become aware of during the course of participation in the above research project. I agree to respect the privacy of those involved and will not divulge in any form, information with regard to any participating person or institution and agree to not retain or copy any information involving the above project.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement and for any harm incurred by individuals or organisations involved, should information be disclosed.

Signature: Date:

.....

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2016-1071

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 02/12/2016 to 02/12/2017. 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 8551). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix E: Talanoa focus group schedule - Pasifika tutors

Master of Educational Leadership and Management

THESIS TITLE:

CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON THE RETENTION OF PASIFIKA STUDENTS IN AN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY TRADE PROGRAMME

RESEARCHER: Jone Valevou Tawaketini

Talanoa focus group- Pasifika tutors

Activity	Notes
<p>Confirmation of involvement</p> <p>Outline of research project.</p> <p>Potential benefits to participants.</p> <p>Questions and answers.</p> <p>Confirmation / withdrawal of participation.</p> <p>Completion of consent forms.</p>	
<p>Learning style and expectation of Pasifika leaders.</p> <p>Do you have a different teaching approach when you deal with Pasifika students?</p> <p>Learning style is an issue with Pasifika students- As a Pasifika academic staff teaching in the trade programme, briefly explain some of the constraints that you encounter when engaging with Pasifika students?</p>	

<p>Cultural influence</p> <p>Do you believe that cultural influence is one of the driving factors that affects Pasifika student's retention in the trade programme?</p> <p>As an academic staff how do you use your cultural experiences in assisting our trade programme Pasifika students.</p>	
<p>Integrating culture and learning style</p> <p>As an academic trade staff with wealth of cultural and technical experiences, what can you do differently to improve retention of Pasifika students in the programme?</p> <p>Is the institute addressing the issues that affects Pasifika students in terms of maintaining a sustainable student retention?</p>	
Sum up and confirmation of information	
Feedback on information	

Appendix F: Semi structured interview schedule

Master of Educational Leadership and Management

THESIS TITLE:

CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON THE RETENTION OF PASIFIKA STUDENTS IN AN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY TRADE PROGRAMME

RESEARCHER: Jone Valevou Tawaketini

Activity	Notes
<p>Confirmation of involvement</p> <p>Outline of research project.</p> <p>Potential benefits to participants</p> <p>Questions and answers.</p> <p>Confirmation / withdrawal of participation.</p> <p>Completion of consent forms.</p>	
<p>Theme 1: Learning style and expectation of Pasifika leaders.</p> <p>How do you meet the institute's annual strategic target of Pasifika student in the trade programme?</p> <p>Learning style is an issue with Pasifika students- As a Pasifika leader, briefly explain some of the constraints in teaching and learning of Pasifika students in the trade programme.</p>	

<p>Theme 2 Cultural influence.</p> <p>Do you believe that cultural influence is one of the driving factors that affects Pasifika student's retention in the trade programme?</p> <p>As a leader how can you use your cultural experiences in assisting our team to maintain or increase the student's retention in the trade programme.</p>	
<p>Integrating culture and learning style:</p> <p>What is the strategic plans for Pasifika students for the next 5 years in the institute of Technology?</p> <p>Is the institute addressing the issues that affects Pasifika students in terms of maintaining a sustainable student retention annually?</p>	
<p>Sum up and confirmation of information</p>	
<p>Feedback on information</p>	