



“Effective Strategies for the success of Pacific social work students in a Neo-liberal tertiary education system”

**Jason Hallie
and
Craig Tunncliffe
Unitec/Te Pukenga**

Ko wai au?

- Jason Hallie
- Senior Lecturer Social Practice
- Jhallie@unitec.ac.nz
- Teaching two 1st year papers
- Teaching for 4 years

- Craig Tunncliffe
- Lecturer Social Practice
- Ctunncliffe@unitec.ac.nz
- Teaching one 1st year paper
- Teaching for 10 years

Outline of Presentation

- Setting the scene – Micro- Meso-Macro (Bronfenbrenner, 1994)
 - Neo-Liberalism (as process and as ideology)
 - Neo-Liberal Education
- Change and Opportunity
- Effective Strategies for Pacific Learners
- Strategies for the classroom

Setting the Scene

Micro

- Pacific not a homogenous term.
- Teaching into a Bachelor level degree program (4 years of study).
- Students in Bachelor of Social Practice are diverse, high percentage identify as Pacific and/or Māori.
- Ethnicity, age, gender, class, religion, sexual orientation (all may enable or cause challenges).

Setting the Scene

Meso

- Education is increasingly politicised
- The election of a 'Centre Right' coalition
- Election topics included debate on individual rights, privilege, social justice and the place of Te Tiriti O Waitangi, and educational reform.
- A move away from outcomes (e.g. parity) to individual rights and opportunities?
- Te Pūkenga (to be or not to be?)
 - Collaboration or more competition?
- Change, change and a continuation of change

Neo-Liberalism

- From Keynesianism (1935 to 1984) to Neoliberalism (1984 to Present)
- Neoliberalism, according to Berdayes & Murphy (cited in Ruth, 2018, p. 203) justifies "the complete reorganization of social existence in pursuit of narrow economic interests"
- "Free market" fundamentalism (markets seen as the best way to distribute resources)
- Reduction of government involvement (except in supporting the market, "making the market more efficient")
- Individual responsibility
- Survival of the fittest, fastest, strongest

Neoliberalism and Education

Meso


- Under the Keynesian model for funding tertiary education government funding was sufficient to keep tuitions fees very low, provide universal living allowances and ensure that students could complete their tertiary education without having to borrow large sums of money (Roper,2018)
- Under Neoliberalism Education is seen as a private investment (justifying increased cost (fees), student loans). Successive governments have enacted legislation and policy directives to create our current user pays model.
- Increased focus on employability (market specific), the acceptance that the market, not the state, should inform policy and approaches around education.
- A discourse of individual attainment (education to "get a job", rather than to learn)
- Increasing pressure on akonga to produce (semesterisation, workload, constant evaluation) – where is the time to reflect, to engage in student politics.
- Increased pressure on staff to continually assess, to monitor, to report.
- Increasing emphasis on sustainability of programs (i.e. is it profitable?).

Neoliberalism and Education

Meso

"At the core of the neoliberal view of tertiary education is the idea that education is a commodity, not a citizenship right..." (Roper, 2018, p.17)

- If our classes/courses are products does this mean students are consumers?
- What does this mean for the akonga learning (when education is seen as a commodity, and importantly for the kaiko/akonga relationship? Does it become a transaction?
- As Ruth (2018, p. 213-214) observes "The student is a customer, the lecturer is a service provider and auditor and the university is a credentialing service. As a lecturer/service provider, I specify certain auditable performances in line with the guarantees of my employer (the certifying body). This is the deal."
- They continue, "Where is the educational process here? If education is related to personal development, where is the person? How could it possibly be relational, contextual, holistic, exploratory and caring?"
- Our question: How do we remain relational in a neoliberal educational context?



Challenging the System

People NOT Products

Challenges for Pacific learners under Neo-Liberal systems

- **In a nutshell: Collective cultures vs Individualism**



Opportunities in Neo-Liberal systems

- **Education a driving force for migration.**
- **Pacific Students are hard workers, skilled and have the knowledge so can and will succeed!**
- **Often walk in two worlds and maintain these spaces well**
- **Communities take ownership of their learning needs**

Effective Strategies for Pacific Learners

- **Recognising that students are parts of aiga and communities**
- **Be relational in your teaching – Pacific students are connectors**
- **To place Pacific students as experts in their own lives and draw upon this knowledge**
- **To have content which Pacific students can see themselves in and relate to**
- **To actively support and encourage success**
- **To recognise the additional challenges that Pacific students have and put strategies in place to address**

Classroom Strategies

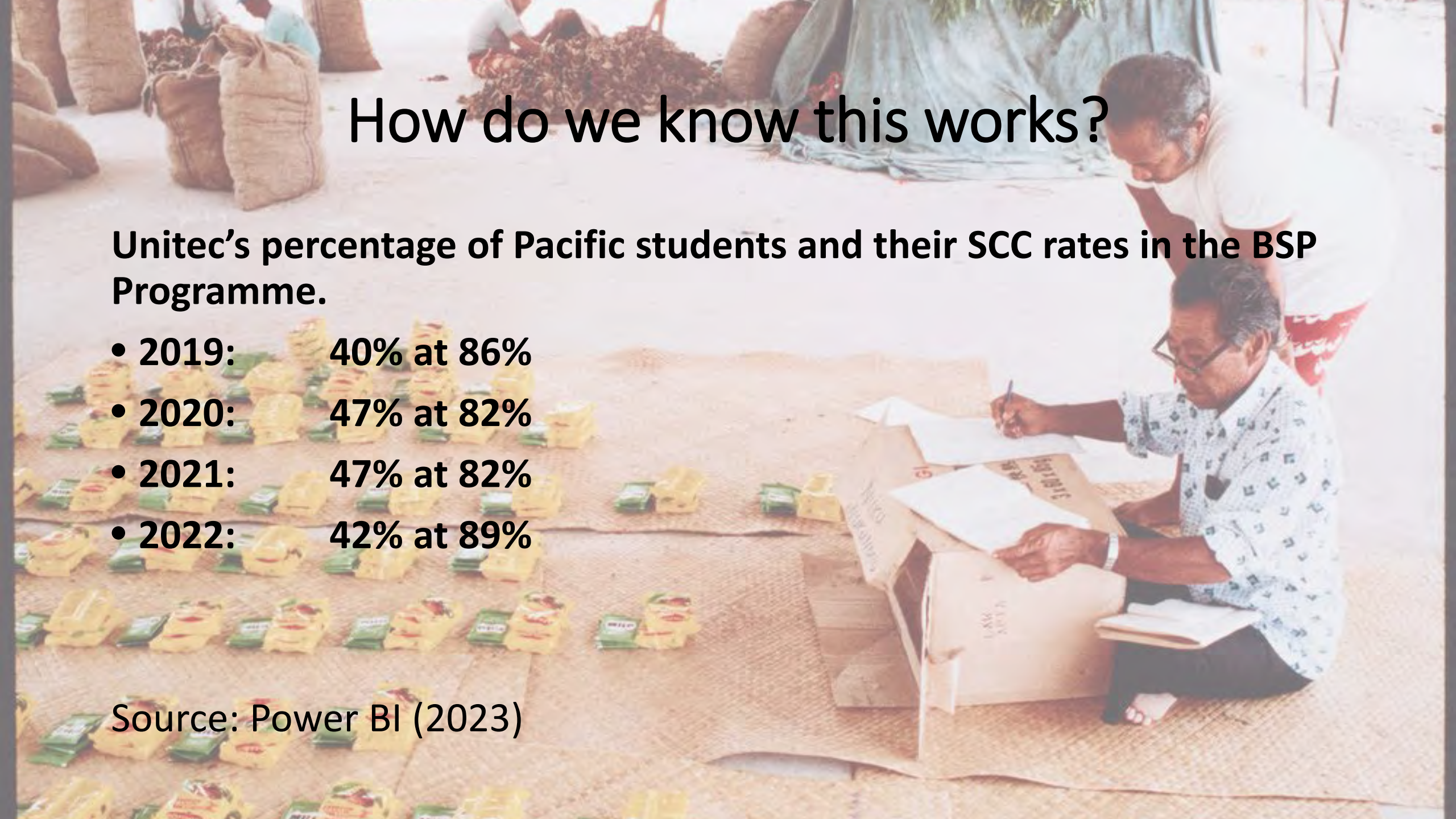
- **Use concepts like Fekau'aki (Mafile'o, 2004)**
- **Introduce more Pacific content in your teaching**
- **Align outcomes to community improvement**
- **Make yourself available outside of class time**
- **Espouse Pacific values in your class**
- **Have Pacific themed support outside of the classroom**
- **Engage senior Pacific students to provide mentoring – you can be it if you can see it**
- **Train staff on ways in which Pacific people learn best**
- **Humour**

How do we know this works?

Unitec's percentage of Pacific students and their SCC rates in the BSP Programme.

- **2019: 40% at 86%**
- **2020: 47% at 82%**
- **2021: 47% at 82%**
- **2022: 42% at 89%**

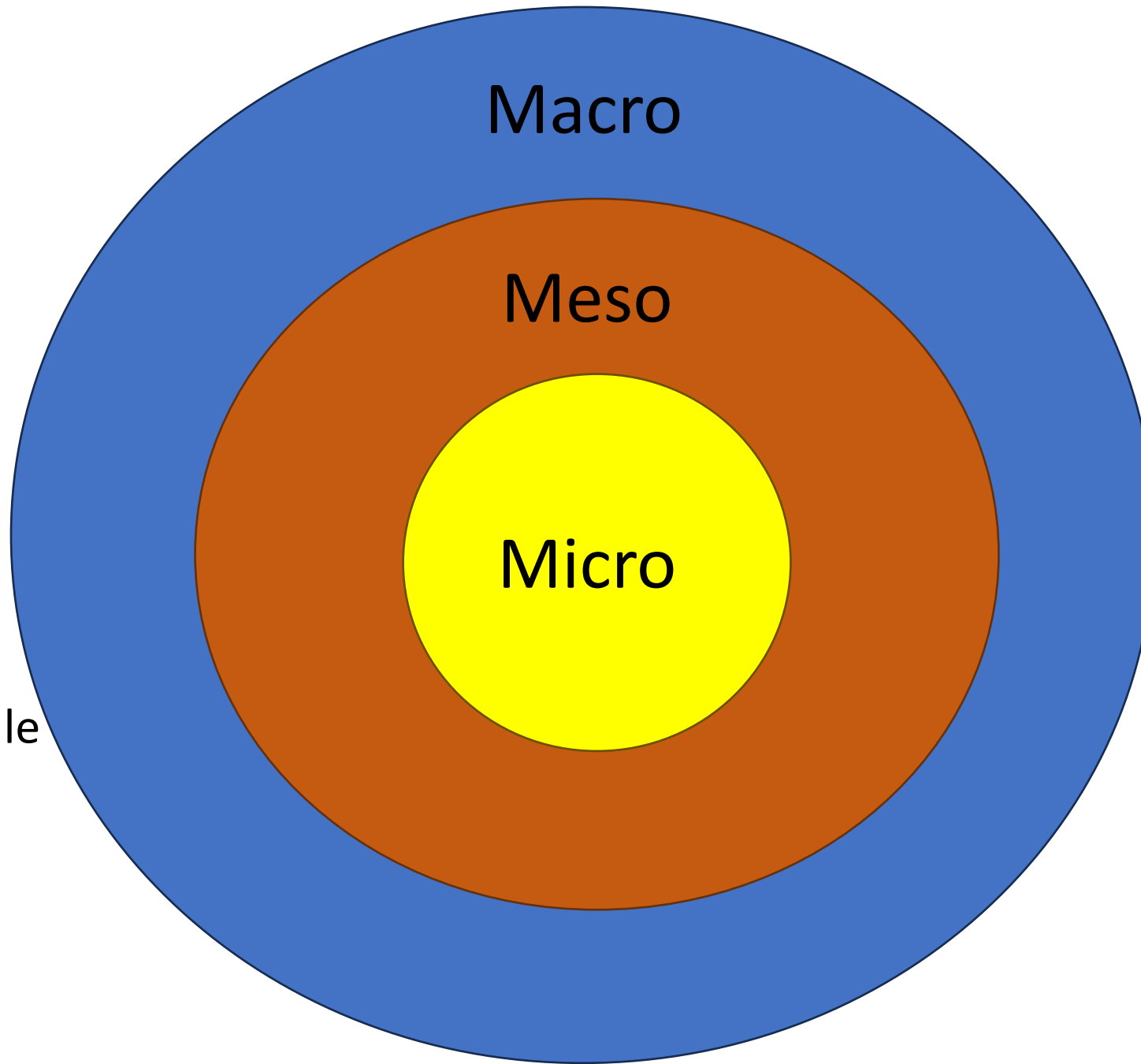
Source: Power BI (2023)





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Micro: small scale system:
Family, Aiga, Whanau
Individuals
Relationships

Macro: large scale systems:
Economics
Nations
Politics
Ideologies

Meso: medium scale system:
Organisations
Institutions
Political parties
Ethnic Groups

To Paraphrase
(or blatantly rip
off) George
Orwell, (2001)

**All are born equal, but
some are born more
equal than others**

Success is still reality!