

Enhancing Education Success through Talanoa: A Framework for the Pacific

Dr Semisi M Prescott *
Department of Accounting and Finance
Unitec Institute of Technology
Private Bag 92025
Auckland
sprescott@unitec.ac.nz
Tel: 64-9-8154321 ext 8347

Dr Seu'ula Johansson Fua
Kaumatua Parekura
Director Institute of Education
University of the South Pacific
Email: johanssonfua_s@usp.ac.fj
Telephone: +676 30-192; +676 878 1170

*Corresponding Author

Subtopic Area: Talanoa, Oral Education, Educational Success, Teaching and Learning

Abstract

Talanoa is a traditional means of oral communication common to the Island nations of the Pacific. This paper introduces a framework for alleviating student success and retention at early childhood education, primary and secondary schools for Pacific students learning in a social context outside of their own culture. The framework is based on traditional talanoa as a research tool and methodology. In particular, the paper discusses the application talanoa as part of the assessment process, curriculum development, teaching and learning, and evaluation. The proposed framework draws on the experiences and design of the Te Kotahitanga project introduced in New Zealand in 2001 and will be relevant to the ongoing aim to improve educational success and retention among Pacific students. Given the discussions draw on experience in New Zealand over the past twenty years, it will be of particular relevance to local policy developers.

Introduction

The educational success and retention of Pacific students has been a concern of the New Zealand government for the past 30 years. This has been largely prompted by the relatively poor achievement rates among both Maori and Pacific students in New Zealand. In 2008 76.3% of Pacific students achieved NCEA level 1 compared with 82.3% for non-pacific. For school leavers completing the requirement to enter university, the rate for Pacific students is 20.3% compared with 40.1% for non-pacific students. Although these rates were for state schools only, the level of discrepancy for private/integrated schools is similar (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). The relatively low rate of educational achievement has translated to comparatively low achievement rates in employment and economic prosperity. Pacific people in New Zealand are also over represented in relation to poor health, crime and imprisonment. While these latter statistics are not exclusively linked to education, the correlation between poor educational achievement and these other indicators is significant.

While the evidence regarding poor educational achievement is abundantly available, the reasons for the existence of such a sustained discrepancy between Pacific students and the rest of the New Zealand student population continue to be sparse. This paper aims to provide a framework for understanding the potential cause of this discrepancy. The paper also suggests how *talanoa* together with a number of traditional practices in teaching and learning may be able to assist in addressing this discrepancy.

This paper is divided into three sections. The first section reviews the reasons offered to date in relation to the discrepancy in educational achievement rates. The second section discusses the Te Kotahitanga model introduced in 2001 together with a number of cultural practices that have been used in the church Sunday school setting. The third section discusses the proposed framework for enhancing educational success for Pacific students. This section also includes the specific application of *talanoa* as a tool and methodology in the assessment, design and implementation and evaluation of the proposed framework.

Section 1: Reasons for Discrepancy – A review of work to date

The Impact of Parent and Community Engagement

A number of writers have suggested possible causes for the discrepancy in educational achievement. Biddulph et al (2003) suggest parents and community involvement contributes positively to educational success. Parent and community involvement in the child's education has taken on a number of forms. In the New Zealand setting, Pacific parents will certainly encourage their children to go to school in recognition of the future benefits that will come from it. This will normally take on the form of taking them to school and providing the resources needed. However, only a small proportion of Pacific parents will have an active role during their primary, intermediate and secondary school years. Many Pacific Island communities, particularly churches, have spearheaded the drive to encourage education success. This has taken on the form of homework centres and specific celebrations during the year to recognise and encourage students and parents alike. Parents and community participation is most pronounced once the child has successfully reached the end of their academic journey. Active participation during the child's academic journey is often not present.

McDowall et al (McDowall, Boyd, Hodgen, & Van Vliet, 2005) and Madjar et al (Madjar, McKinley, Jensen, & Van Der Merwe, 2009) suggest Parent and community involvement is limited by their ability to participate in the learning process. Some parents feel their own personal educational achievement is insufficient to support their child. While this may be the case for some parents, their ongoing encouragement and support is needed to raise the child's sense of confidence. Although parents may not be able to appreciate the specific knowledge base in some of the more technical subjects, they are nevertheless able to participate in the basic literacy and numeracy development which is the foundation for the child's future educational success.

Robinson et al (Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009) suggest reading projects involving parents and teachers have had successful results where such programmes have been implemented. A study in Auckland revealed that in the case of St Joseph School in Otahuhu, where parents engaged with their children through talking and reading with them at home helped in raising achievement levels in both literacy and numeracy. Homework centres based in the community and through the churches have increased the educational success of the students who are part of these communities. The United Church of Tonga in Auckland has been running an education

programme across its various branches in Auckland over the past 20 years. The programme has resulted in this relatively small part of the Tongan community showing a higher than normal academic success rate per head than other similar church congregations in the region. These initiatives and studies indicate parent and community involvement in the student learning have a positive impact on educational success but that the degree of this positive impact is likely to be greater if the specific role of parents and teachers is better understood.

While there are examples of high levels of parent involvement in student learning, in some schools in New Zealand, many continue to display parent engagement practices that are at best superficial. Evaluation of schools in New Zealand by the Education Review Office (ERO) in 2008 revealed that for many schools, Pacific parents are only contacted by the school when something bad happens (Education Review Office, 2008b). Furthermore the ERO report highlighted that the information provided to parents through newsletters and reports were insufficient to provide a clear picture of poor student success and engagement for many Pacific parents (Education Review Office, 2008a). These results are despite Pacific parents showing a significant interest in the educational success of their children (Biddulph et al., 2003). These studies indicate that parent and community engagement in the child's education needs to be complemented by having effective and relevant information flows.

In the last five years, advances in technology and greater access to such technology by Pacific peoples has improved the communication flows between parents and students. Many schools in Auckland, including those with high Pacific student enrolment and low decile ranking, will collect the mobile telephone numbers and emails of parents and will contact them during the day when their child is absent from school without prior notification. The system is automated and provides a window into knowing what the child is doing during the school day¹.

The Influences and Impact of Culture

Some authors have identified differences in culture as a driver of disparities in educational success for Pacific students (Meade, PuhīPuhī, & Foster-Cohen, 2003). Ferguson et al (Ferguson, Gorinski, Wendt-Samu, & Mara, 2008) suggest that respect for one's elders in the form of not challenging authority has had the effect of disengaging Pacific students in the classroom. These studies have revealed an issue that requires some contextualisation. Respect for elders is indeed a well-entrenched value within many Pacific cultures. The foundations of

this is grounded in the traditional social hierarchical structures of the Pacific and in Christian dogma. In the early years of educational development, this entrenched value base may actually benefit the learning process. As Students progress through to more senior levels of study, where critical reflection and independent learning are present, the challenge becomes one of self-confidence rather than hierarchical boundaries of respect. Pacific Students in the New Zealand context are capable of learning through critical reflective techniques provided they are in an environment where this is encouraged and that they feel safe to participate. The Te Kotahitanga framework discussed in section two below is an example of such an initiative.

A number of studies indicated that Pacific students were more than twice as likely to be the hassled about their culture compared with European and Asian students (Wylie, Hodgen, Hipkins, & Vaughan, 2009). In response, some Pacific students has suppressed their Pacific culture in an effort to better fit into the school environment. These observations and study echo practices in education that go back many decades. The introduction of education in the Pacific Island nations was carried out with the assumption that educational success required a wholesale shift away from the indigenous culture in favour of adopting the one upon which the education system was built and administered. Students were encouraged and sometimes forced to speak English only at the cost of losing both their native language and their culture. Students were expected to mould themselves to suit the education system rather than the system adapting to meet the specific needs of the target audience. In New Zealand only 14% of New Zealand schools have been identified as being effective for Pacific students (Education Review Office, 2007). Although this is an examples of changing the system to suit the needs of the target audience the relatively small percentage suggests that there is still a long way to go.

Zyngier (2008) outlines that students from home backgrounds that are similar to those of the predominant culture of the school are more than likely to succeed academically. This raises the challenge of when the dominant culture of the school no longer reflects the home culture of the students of the school. The logical solution to increasing student success where the home culture of the majority of students is not that of the school then it is the school that needs to change.

Learning a new language uses the first language as the foundation towards achieving this. A government report by the Ministry of Education outlines that “a child’s first language is the foundation on which to build their knowledge of English”, (Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 4) Contrary to this, Pacific students in an effort to be more accepted in a western learning

environment have suppressed their Pacific culture through abandoning their native language (Franken, May, & McComish, 2005). The disconnect between learning English through the first language and enhancing learning through adopting a western cultural framework has been detrimental to Pacific student success. Consequently, reading and writing skills among Pacific students continue to lag behind non-Pacific students (McNaughton, Phillips, & MacDonald, 2000).

Bilingual students have been identified as achieving a greater depth of learning experience. Franken et al (2005) suggest that students who are bilingual experience a greater depth of learning experience as they are able to process information from multiple language dimensions. In learning environments where bilingualism has not been encouraged, the opportunity for Pacific students to realise this is lost. Although there continues to be a lack of specific research in the effect of bilingualism for Pacific students, achievement statistics indicate that students who spoke their native language at home generally were more likely to be low achievers (49%) compared to those who spoke English at home (20%). This suggests that parents and teachers who maintain a rigid demarcation line of speaking English only at school and parents insisting that their Pacific language only be spoken at home potentially decrease the depth the learning experience for their children. The conflicting messages indicated by this anecdotal evidence highlights the need for further more targeted research in bilingualism in the Pacific context.

The Impact and Influence of Early Childhood Education

The impact of early childhood education (ECE) on the educational success of Pacific students is well documented and for the most part, positive. While not unique to Pacific families, the experiences that children have during their early development (years 1-5) creates a firm foundation upon which the future educational success of the student is significantly dependent on. Establishing a firm foundation in terms of attitudes to learning, confidence, perseverance, curiosity, questioning and critical thinking is important for the child's ongoing educational development. The New Zealand experience in childhood education has been mixed. Good practices that embrace the culture of the child often lack the notions of confidence building, curiosity, questioning and critical thinking. Furthermore, some early childhood centres do not recognise the pathways to learning which many Pacific children follow. Future development

in this area requires a shift in the partnership responsibilities of the ECE centres, parents and regulatory authorities.

Many Pacific families do not take their children to ECE learning environments. The reasons for this are not clear although a lack of understanding as to the benefits that these centres hold for their children is probable. ECE centres focusing on the needs of Pacific children will need to incorporate the key role that they have in the child's education life cycle while further communicating the value that they add to the process.

Attendance Engagement and Success

Engagement in the class room has been identified as a potential contributor to educational success. Recent trend in New Zealand indicate that truancy rates have dropped in the past 10 years so that attendance is no longer the leading reason for non-engagement. The focus is now on increasing engagement in the classroom. While this paper does not attempt to provide a summary of the extensive literature that has been carried out in this area of student engagement, a number of important findings are captured here for the purposes of creating the setting for the proposed framework discussed later.

A number of studies support the notion that student engagement is a precursor for academic success (Harris, 2011; Zyngier, 2008) and reducing the rate of dropouts (van Uden, Ritzen, & Pieters, 2013). Although these studies discuss student engagement in a non-ethnic specific context, the principles are applicable and accentuated for ethnic minority populations. The relatively low educational achievement levels for Pacific students is linked to low levels of engagement. Strategies to increase Pacific student engagement will therefore contribute positively to closing educational disparity.

The nature and depth of student engagement is also important for educational success. Attendance in the classroom is one level of engagement but may not translate to student engagement at the cognitive level and in the learning process (Zyngier, 2008). Harris (2011) differentiates between behavioural and psychological engagement and the more important cognitive engagement that is essential for effective teaching and learning. For Pacific students, their presence in the classroom is not correlated with their academic achievement rates suggesting that they are not mentally engaged. Furthermore, the added complexity of ethnicity and culture can result in Pacific students not engaging (Kelly, 2008).

The role of the teacher and their skills in encouraging and facilitating engagement in a multi-ethnic context has been the topic of a more recent line of inquiry (Ecclestone, 2007; Kelly, 2008; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Harris (2011) acknowledges the importance of teacher understanding of what makes for effective engagement. Van Uden et al (van Uden et al., 2013, p. 52) suggest that “teachers’ perception of their interpersonal behaviour, their feelings of self-efficacy and their understanding of the importance of didactic and pedagogical competence are related to perceived student engagement.” They suggest that their findings support the development of a teacher profile that is associated with greater levels of perceived student engagement. This concept of a teacher profile is consistent with that developed in 2003 as part of the Te Kotahitanga initiative discussed in the section two below. While there is evidence that initiatives aimed at increasing student engagement through teacher profiling is present in some schools in New Zealand, the majority of teachers are not equipped to address effective engagement strategies for Pacific students (Education Review Office, 2009).

Section 2: Te Kotahitanga

This section briefly introduces the Te Kotahitanga framework and how it has incorporated traditional values and beliefs from the Maori Culture into the teaching and learning environment. Bishop et al (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2009) suggest that the reason for why there continues to be significant disparity between educational achievement for Maori students compared with students from a largely European ancestry is that the current education system is built on a neo/colonial framework that ignores the presence and role of other cultures. They suggest that the present system has been developed “to serve the interests of a mono-cultural elite” (p. 2). Furthermore, they argue that the solutions to lifting the educational success of students that sit outside this “elite” group are not to be found in the mainstream culture but rather from those cultures and communities from to which these individuals belong. Although the study specifically addresses disparities between Maori and Non-Maori students, the findings are relevant to other minority student groups including those from the Pacific.

The Te Kotahitanga initiative began with interviewing students, parents and teachers to determine the need and demand from a Maori student perspective. The data was then analysed and used to determine three key issues. The first included identifying the key areas of concern

from a student perspective. The data was also used to update and increase the teacher's awareness of the specific struggles that Maori students were experiencing. This would in turn allow teachers to see education through the eyes of the student. Lastly the data was used in conjunction with other studies to create a dynamic and collaborative learning environment (Bishop et al., 2009). The project then turned to developing a framework that reflected the issues raised in the interviews together with Maori culture. The outcome was the creation of the Effective Teaching Profile (ETP) which is characterised with the following core components.

1. *Manaakitanga* – teachers care for the students as culturally located human beings above all else
2. *Manamotuhake* – Teachers care about the performance of their students
3. *Whakapitingatanga* – Teachers are able to create a secure and well managed learning environment through incorporating routine pedagogical knowledge with pedagogical imagination.
4. *Wananga* – Teachers are able to engage in effective teaching interactions with Maori students as Maori
5. *Ako* – Teachers are able to use a range of strategies that promote effective teaching and relationships with learners
6. *Kotahitanga* – Teacher promote, monitor and reflect on outcomes that in turn lead to improvements in educational success for Maori students.

(Bishop et al., 2009)

These six core components represent the value base for the effective teaching profile and are administered with the following strategies.

- Anti-deficit thinking
- Acknowledgement and fostering relationships
- Adopting innovative and culturally appropriate teacher student interactions
- Challenging the dominant traditional interactions between teachers and learners

The Te Kotahitanga project was then implemented in 2004 and 2005 via a teacher professional development programme involving 12 schools and 422 teachers. Although the evaluation of the project is ongoing, the early indication is that it has lifted both the level of student

engagement in class and achievement levels. Kelston Girls College, one of the participating schools in West Auckland has experienced an increase in student achievement rates above the national average following the successful implementation of the programme. The results however are not specific or unique to Maori students as the effective teaching profile was implemented school wide and embraced by students in general. In the case of Pacific students attending the school, the Te Kotahitanga philosophy appeared to resonate well with them. As with the other ethnic cohorts, Pacific student achievement levels are now above the national average.

Section 3: A framework for Enhancing Educational Success through Talanoa

This third section of the paper brings together the threads of literature discussed earlier including the Te Kotahitanga initiative introduced in 2001. These threads are discussed in the context of Pacific educational success and retention. The discussions also draw on *talanoa* as a means for carrying out the process including planning and design, implementation through to evaluation. A number of cultural and traditional practices are introduced here as a specific pathway forward for enhancing Pacific student educational success.

The education system in New Zealand is both complex and involves many participants. At the Government agency level are the following;

- Ministry of Education (MOE),
- Education Review Office (ERO),
- Tertiary Education Commission (TEC),
- New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA),
- Various public schools at the primary, intermediate and secondary school level.

Delivery of education services or courses are by registered educators across the public and private education sector. The curriculum and assessments tools are created and moderated at a national level and yet delivered to an audience that is regionally based, diverse and multicultural. The design and implementation of education services and programmes has been largely authored by government agencies, professional third parties with little input from the audience that it is supposed to most benefit. The Te Kotahitanga initiative is an example of a programme that has re-engineered the education process to directly involve the views of students, parents and community in the design, implementation and review of the teaching and

learning experience. For Maori this has meant a wholesale review of the teaching pedagogy to ensure the inclusion of Maori culture, traditions, values and beliefs. The accumulated literature on education by 'Maori for Maori' has created the 'tipping point' for change to happen. For Pacific education this initiative should encourage change and development to in education to address the disparities in educational achievement that current exist for Pacific students.

Researcher and academics in the area of education are perhaps partly to blame for the lack of development in the Pacific education frontier. Helu-Thaman (2003) recognised the possibility that Pacific researchers who are partly responsible for guiding the development of Pacific pedagogy and educational success are themselves the product of the same education system they are now obliged to review and challenge. Never the less she admits that this is possible provided that such researchers are aware of this potential bias.

The Proposed Framework for Change

The proposed framework for adapting the education system with a view to improving the educational achievement of Pacific students is based on the process used in the Te Kotahitanga initiative. This process involved directly engaging with students, parents and community to determine the needs and demands of students. This was done in such a way as to reach a level of understanding that would in turn inform the development of tools and methods that are suited to the specific audience that participated in its design. The effective teaching profile that was developed for Maori may be suitable for other student groups. However, this is a dangerous presumption to make and defeats the purpose of designing a system to suit a Pacific student audience. Although the eventual outcome may be a profile that similar to that developed through the Te Kotahitanga initiative, this will only be known once the process has been carefully and diligently worked through.

The process used in the Te Kotahitanga initiative is not new to the commercial sector. In the 1980's accounting researchers including Kaplan and Norton (1996) extended financial measurement to incorporate non-financial measures including innovation and customer satisfaction. During this period, businesses adopted a more customer focused and invested in ongoing surveys mechanism to ensure that they maintained a clear and current understanding on customer preferences and demand. The shift towards better understanding the preference and demands of the target market is not only good business practice but one that can help

improve education achievement. The process including data collection from the target market, analysing the data and developing innovating strategies based on this data is applicable to any situation. In the context of Pacific education, it is the manner in which these three generic steps are carried out that is important. Talanoa is discussed below as a mechanism for the effective collection and analysis of the data needed to develop the tools for improving educational success.

Talanoa

Talanoa is a traditional form of communication shared and common across the Island nations of the South Pacific (Prescott, 2008). Although it is mainly oral, the term includes other mediums of communication. The term is however more than a simple form of communication and is underpinned by a number of entrenched values and aspirations (Halapua, 2003). Halapua suggests that *talanoa* is laced with cultural protocols and is carried out in an environment of trust, respect, cooperation and a willingness to reach a status of understanding and relationship. Halapua has successfully used *talanoa* as part of the process of bringing groups and parties in conflict. In 2003 the *talanoa* process, facilitated by Dr Sitiveni Halapua, was successfully used to bring together the political opponents to the 2000 Fijian coup, the public servant strike in Tonga in 2005 and more recently in the National Committee on Political Reform in Tonga.

The suggested framework from this paper includes the use of *talanoa* to engage with Pacific students, their parents and communities. Talanoa with students and community will provide a dataset that will ensure that an understanding is reached between the student and parent participants and the researchers. In the Te Kotahitanga project, semi-structured interviews were used to capture the data. Traditional talanoa is more than an unstructured interview but a communication medium that is built on a cultural foundation (Prescott, 2008).

The second phase of the framework is the analysis and use of the data to develop tools and models that reflect the needs and demands of the student. It is important to recognise that the data will inform both the content and the method of delivery and engagement. As with the Te Kotahitanga initiative, the data was analysed in conjunction with existing research in Maori culture and traditions. The ETP (effective teaching profile) was therefore a product of the data collected from the student interview and existing literature and indigenous Maori knowledge.

This paper does not provide a summary of the wealth of culture and traditional practices that may be used together with data from the *talanoa* with students. However, they are an example of how Pacific culture, practices and beliefs can be used in a Pacific pedagogical context. It should be noted at this point that the subtle differences in the Pacific cultures will need to be incorporated into the design and development process so that the models and tools may be different for each ethnic Pacific culture. It may therefore be worthwhile to consider dividing the tools and methods into generic and specific allowing for greater variety in its application.

Examples of Pacific practices to be used in conjunction with the *talanoa* data.

The following are examples of Pacific events and practices that may be used in conjunction with the *talanoa* data. The eight components listed below are discussed in the context of how they may be used to enhance Pacific student educational success.

1. Event mentality
2. Relationship and reciprocity
3. Kinship and community
4. Learning through doing
5. White Sunday
6. Celebration
7. Respect
8. Church and Faith

1. Event mentality

Many Pacific island cultures are characterised with an event mentality (Prescott, 2009). Prescott suggests that Tongan people are driven as if by an event mentality. Events such as birthdays, weddings, church events and national celebrations provide a focal point for drawing together the efforts of the family and community towards the fulfilment of a single event. Individuals and groups alike commit significant time and resource to meeting the demands of these events. Given the power of these events, structuring education around this model may be a means for encouraging greater family and community engagement in education.

2. Relationship and Reciprocity

The importance and observance of relationships and reciprocity is shared among the Island nations of the Pacific. Coupled with the collective social identity these countries also share, maintaining healthy relationships and nurturing this through reciprocity has been the strength of Pacific communities and also the source of why they have continued to hold together. Sharing knowledge and using it for the collective wellbeing of the community is likely to elevate education as a priority. Although this will not be new to many Pacific families who migrated to New Zealand and Australia for education reasons, the notion is worth applying to a broader context and just elevating the importance of education.

3. Kinship and Community

Pacific Island people share a sense of community identity. This identity is centred on the family and community. Kinship and community are therefore important aspects of the individual's sense of being. These kinship and community links may also be used to leverage student educational success. Identifying individual student success as part of lifting the status of their kin is important. This may help Pacific students realise that their education journey is one that they do not need to face alone. This in turn will help lift their confidence as a capable and contributing member of their extended family.

4. Learning through doing

Much can be learnt through doing yet many academic subjects have not connected the learning objectives in the classroom to the real life context and experience that Pacific students relate to. Pacific children learn to fish and weave through observation and hands on experience with their siblings or parents. The context, illustrations and practical application used in the classroom need to connect with the experience of Pacific students. Developing material and tools that allow this type of learning to occur is likely to resonate well with Pacific students.

5. White Sunday

White Sunday is an annual celebration for many church communities in the Pacific. The event will normally entail children memorising Bible verses and participating in biblically based dramas. The preparation for this event includes building the child's confidence to speak or sing in public, remembering the narrative or lesson to be delivered and preparing the costumes and

clothing to be worn on the day. Many of these celebrations are also accompanied by a feast that the community contribute towards. The preparation will normally involve the children, parents, siblings, aunts and uncles and grandparents together with the Sunday school teacher. The event is an example of how the family and community can work towards achieving a single goal. This same approach can be used in an education context provided the course or programme that the student is undertaking is embraced by the family and community.

6. Celebration

Celebrations are not uncommon in the Pacific. They are an opportunity to bring the community together and to recognise and reward achievement. While a number of families have started to recognise student achievement through celebration it has not been included as widely observed celebration on the community calendar.

7. Respect

Respect and humility are encouraged qualities of the human character. Although some authors have identified this as a potential barrier to student learning, this need not be the case. The application of respect and humility in the education context can contribute positively to student success. Respect in the classroom that extends in both directions between student and teacher and student and student is likely to create a more positive learning environment where students feel safe to share their views without fear of being ridiculed. The study by Ferguson et al (Ferguson et al., 2008) that suggested students did not engage in the classroom through respect are possibly mistaking it for fear.

8. Church and Faith

Church and faith are an entrenched part of the Pacific students' sense of identity. Their faith is not only an important part of their identity but a source of their confidence and perseverance. Schools that have adopted a secular learning environment unconsciously extinguish the students sense of belonging together with their source of endurance. Schools in New Zealand struggle with the competing religious divisions present in their community. As an alternative to taking a totally neutral stance, opportunities to allow them to co-exist may result in improved student success across all ethnicities and beliefs.

Conclusion

This paper identifies a number of challenges facing Pacific students studying in New Zealand. The challenges facing Pacific students are not dissimilar to those faced by Maori students. The Te Kotahitanga initiative introduced in 2001 has paved a way forward for both Maori educational success and other minority ethnicities studying in New Zealand. The paper suggests the adoption of a modified version of the process and framework used by the Te Kotahitanga project. The use of *talanoa* as the mechanism for collective and analysing the data will ensure the developed outcome reflects the needs and learning requirements of the student. The cultures, values and beliefs of the Pacific nations is the final component of the framework and is intended to provide the foundation upon which the specific tools and models are created.

References

- Biddulph, F., Biddulph, J., & Biddulph, C. (2003). *The Complexity of Community and Family Influence on Children's Achievement in New Zealand: Best evidence synthesis*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Bishop, R., Berryman, M., Cavanagh, T., & Teddy, L. (2009). Te Kotahitanga: Addressing educational disparities facing Maori students in New Zealand *Teaching and Teacher Education*, XXX, 1-9.
- Ecclestone, K. (2007). Resisting images of the 'deminshed self':the implications of emotional wellbeing and emotional engagement in education policy. *Journal of Education Policy*, 22(4), 455-470.
- Education Review Office. (2007). *The Achievement of Pacific Students*. Wellington: Education Review Office.
- Education Review Office. (2008a). *Partners in Learning: Parents voices*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Education Review Office. (2008b). *Partners in Learning: Schools Engagement with Parents, Whanau and Communities*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Education Review Office. (2009). *Progress in Pacific Student Achievement: A pilot evaluation of Auckland Schools*. Wellington: Education Review Office.
- Ferguson, P. B., Gorinski, R., Wendt-Samu, T., & Mara, T. (2008). *Literature Review on the Experiences of pacific Learners in the Classroom* Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Franken, M., May, S., & McComish, J. (2005). *Leap (Language Enhancing the Achievement of Pasifika): Literature Review*. Retrieved from <http://education.waikato.ac.nz/research/report/index.php?id=64>
- Halapua, S. (2003). Walking the Knife-Edge Pathways to Peace - Commentary: Address delivered at the inaugural public lecture of the Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara Friendship Foundation.(7th-8th July 2003).
- Harris, L. (2011). Secondary teachers' conception of student engagement: Engagement in learning or in school. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27, 376-386.
- Helu-Thaman, K. (2003). Decolonizing Pacific Studies: Indigenous Perspectives, Knowledge, and Wisdom in Higher Education. *The Contemporary Pacific*, 15(1), 1-17.

- Kaplan, R. S., & Norton, D. P. (1996). *The Balanced Scorecard: Translating Strategy Into Action*. Boston Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press.
- Kelly, S. (2008). Race, social class, and student engagement in middle school English classrooms. *Social Science Research*, 37, 434-448.
- Madjar, I., McKinley, E., Jensen, S., & Van Der Merwe, A. (2009). *Towards University: Navigating NCEA course choices in low-mid decile schools*. Retrieved from New Zealand:
- McDowall, S., Boyd, S., Hodgen, E., & Van Vliet, T. (2005). *Reading Recovery in New Zealand: Uptake implementation and Outcomes, especially in relation to Maori and Pacific students*. Wellington: NZCER.
- McNaughton, S., Phillips, G., & MacDonald, S. (2000). Curriculum channels and literacy development over the first year of instruction. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 35(1).
- Meade, A., PuhīPuhī, H., & Foster-Cohen, S. (2003). *Pacific Early Childhood Education Priorities for Pacific Early Childhood Education Research*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education. (2003). *Best evidence synthesis: Characteristics of professional development linked to enhanced pedagogy and children's learning in early childhood settings*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Prescott, S. (2008). Using Talanoa in Pacific Business research in New Zealand: Experiences with Tongan Entrepreneurs. *Alternative: An International Journal of Indigenous Scholarship*, 4(1), pp. 127-148.
- Prescott, S. (2009). *Pacific Business Sustainability in New Zealand: A Study of Tongan Experiences*. (Doctor of Philosophy), Auckland University of Technology, Auckland.
- Robinson, V., Hohepa, M., & Lloyd, C. (2009). *School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying what works and why. Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Statistics New Zealand. (2013). Education and Pacific Peoples in New Zealand.
- van Uden, J. M., Ritzen, H., & Pieters, J. M. (2013). I think I can engage my students. Teachers' perceptions of student engagement and their beliefs about being a teacher. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 32, 43-54.
- Villegas, A. M., & Lucas, T. (2002). Educating culturally responsive teachers: A coherent approach. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(1), 20-32.
- Wylie, C., Hodgen, E., Hipkins, R., & Vaughan, K. (2009). *Competent Learners on the Edge of Adulthood: A summary of key findings from the Competent Learner @16 project*. Wellington.
- Zyngier, D. (2008). (Re)conceptualising student engagement: Doing education not doing time. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24, 1765-1776.

ⁱ The automated texts and emails to Parents system is currently being used in Kelston Boys High School and Kelston Girls College. Both these schools have a high proportion of Pacific students and are decile 3 and 2 respectively.