

Teachers' misunderstandings that affect the learning of their Pasifika students

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A thesis

submitted to the Victoria University of Wellington

in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

Victoria University of Wellington

2013

Abstract

Much current Pasifika research has a focus on looking at traditional Pasifika ways of learning to find an answer for low achievement among Pasifika students. Non-Pasifika research seems to see the solution as entailing teachers learning about their Pasifika students' lives. Yet neither of these approaches seems to make a difference for Pasifika student achievement. This study has shown that what does make a difference is the employment of good pedagogy by teachers who like and believe in their Pasifika students' abilities to succeed in the palagi education system. This study has also shown that what impedes progress for Pasifika students' achievement is the beliefs that teachers hold about "Pasifika ways of learning".

For two days per week over a six week period a group of Year 9 Pasifika students were observed across a range of their classes in a medium sized, urban, low decile college which has a high proportion of Pasifika students. Observations and focus group interviews with Pasifika students and their teachers were conducted to explore the Pasifika student's engagement level and learning. A research methodology of mediated dialogue allowed the participants to be heard as authorities on their own experiences. The Pasifika students and their teachers were supported to hear the meanings each had given to the words and actions observed in the classroom. The Pasifika students were involved in the research as they co-constructed [with the researcher as scribe] the information they wanted their teacher to know. Teachers were able to respond to their Pasifika students' words and the Pasifika students were able to hear their teachers' responses.

The findings were shaped as four vignettes and interpreted using the metaphor of an enzyme reaction. Each vignette described the type of learning and different engagement levels observed in a specific classroom. The vignettes included three classrooms where: students were not engaged at all with their learning because the relationship between the teacher and the students was poor; there was an appropriate relationship between the teacher and the students but the teachers' practice was poor; and the relationship between the students and the teacher was good but the teacher's expectations of the Pasifika students were low, and Pasifika learning was poor. In one vignette the relationship between the teacher and the students was one of trust and the teacher used teaching strategies that engaged and challenged the Pasifika students. In this classroom Pasifika learning was happening for a time.

The study found that good Pasifika learning requires that the teacher must have all three of the following teaching strategies: allowing Pasifika students respect as a learner; being able to scaffold Pasifika learning at the right level and engaging their Pasifika students in active learning. The Pasifika student must have confidence and trust in their teacher to engage with the teacher in the active pursuit of learning. The classroom teacher must also have confidence in the Pasifika student's ability e.g., high expectations. If any of the parts described above are missing Pasifika learning is poor. The study demonstrates that the ways in which teachers fall into poor relationships and poor teaching practices can be related to their beliefs about Pasifika values and "Pasifika ways of learning".

Acknowledgements

The rich experiences that this study produced were only possible because of the special character and welcome of the school involved. For that I am very grateful to the Principal, the teacher participants and my colleague who is a teacher at the school and who oversaw my study there. My thanks go to all the teachers and students who let me into their world. I am especially grateful to the students [Pasifika and non-Pasifika] who let me into their classrooms and to the Pasifika student participants who so willingly shared their experiences with me. It has been a very humbling experience and one that I will always remember.

I also wish to acknowledge two very special work colleagues who helped this thesis make sense. To both of you my huge thanks for your expertise and guidance throughout the two years in helping me to shape and believe in my ideas. Also a big thank you for your support with editing and your writing guidance in the last few weeks so that the thesis could be ready to submit.

Finally I wish to acknowledge my supervisor Kabini Sanga for his guidance in Pasifika matters and his belief that I had something worthwhile to say.

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Chapter One: Introduction to the study

Many teachers of Pasifika students work very hard to engage their students in the classroom and to prepare them for success in their examinations. However, despite teachers' best intentions, many Pasifika students are still not engaged and are underachieving (Siope, 2011). Research has explored deficit theorizing by teachers, students' identity issues, and aspects of effective pedagogy including teacher-student relationships as some of the possible reasons. Current Pasifika research is also exploring traditional Pasifika ways of learning (Ferguson, Gorinski, Wendt Samu, & Mara, 2008). This thesis will argue that underlying each of these possible explanations [and associated solutions] lies a cultural misunderstanding of Pasifika students by their teachers and their schools. The nature of these misunderstandings and how they affect pedagogy and Pasifika learning is the focus of this study.

Pasifika people are defined as those who self-identify as belonging to one or more of the seven major Pacific ethnic groups: Samoan; Tongan; Niuean; Cook Islander; Tokelauan; Tuvalun; and Fijian. All these groups are represented in the Pasifika student population of New Zealand. Although it is acknowledged that there are inter and intra-ethnic variations in the cultures of peoples from the different Pacific nations, it is also generally felt that there are some common Pacific values and beliefs (Anae, Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu, & Finau, 2001).

Pasifika people identify themselves with their indigenous Pacific countries of origin. The 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 or culture. However in this study I have used Pasifika as a generic term that includes all the Pacific Island student identities for two reasons. First this study is about the lived experiences of Pasifika students in their classrooms. In New Zealand schools it is through the eyes of the teachers that Pasifika students are taught and in this study the teachers' beliefs and assumptions about Pasifika values and Pasifika "ways of learning" are viewed and acted on as one Pasifika entity.

Second the belief that Pasifika students do share understandings that relate to some shared Pacific values and beliefs is a belief I also hold as a person brought up in a Pasifika home. As a child brought up in New Zealand with a Samoan mother and English father my mother's strong Pasifika world views and values predominated in our house. These views and expectations were similar to many of my aiga (extended family) many who were from

different island countries. As a teacher of Pasifika students I recognized these same values in my Pasifika students whether they identified with different island countries or not and I could often respond to their unspoken concerns and needs. The students verified this common understanding as they would often say to each other “she really does understand us”.

During a personal discussion in 2007, Margaret Southwick, Director of Pasifika nursing at Whitireia Polytechnic explained to me that understanding the Pasifika culture could include something as simple as recognising an imperceptible slight. For example, when the Pasifika nursing students suddenly avoided classes or did not complete assignments, Margaret would tell her tutors to talk to the students. She explained that the problem would be something that was said or an action as simple as a shrug of the shoulders. To the tutor it may have no significance but it could be very damaging for the Pasifika student. Teachers may find it difficult to understand their Pasifika students’ cultural ways of being until they can understand and interpret how their particular words and actions are understood by their students. How can this shared cultural knowledge be accessed and used to support the Pasifika student to achieve in our New Zealand schools?

This study aimed to show teachers some of the Pasifika “ways” of their Pasifika students so that they might build better relationships with them, and better understand what is needed to support their learning. Teachers heard how particular words and actions were interpreted by their Pasifika students and how these interpretations affected their learning. Pasifika students heard their teachers’ responses to their thoughts about their learning. The students were surprised by the interpretations their teachers’ made about their behaviours. The teachers in turn found it difficult to let go of their assumptions about their Pasifika students, which made it difficult for them to see the types of change that might be needed. These findings are used to suggest changes to teaching pedagogy.

1.1 The significance of this topic

Pasifika students have a record of under-achievement or outright lack of achievement. The New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA) annual report (2010) states that Māori and Pasifika candidates have been consistently less successful, over the seven year period from 2004 to 2010, than European and Asian candidates in attaining all three levels of NCEA (National Certificate of Educational Attainment) and University Entrance (UE). However it also states that Pasifika attainment is consistently higher than it was in 2004 and

the attainment gap between Pasifika and other ethnicities for NCEA Level 1–3 has reduced although not for University Entrance (NZQA, 2010).

Although Pasifika student attainment in NCEA is improving in comparison to European students the gap is still considerable. For example in 2010 the percentage of Pasifika students in Year 11 attaining NCEA Level 1 was 54% (38% in 2004) compared to 83% for European students. At NCEA Level 2 the Year 12 Pasifika student percentage was 62% (48% in 2004) compared to 85% for European students. At NCEA Level 3 the Year 13 Pasifika student percentage was 52% (41% in 2004) compared to 79% for European students. These improvements in Pasifika attainment are not the case when considering the UE results. In 2004 about 38% of Year 13 NCEA Pasifika students attained UE compared to 72% of the European students. However in 2010 the Pasifika percentage reduced to 36% whereas the European percentage remained at 72% (NZQA, 2011).

This record matters because Pasifika students are becoming a larger percentage of the population. The Starpath Annual Report (2007, p. 5) noted that “In the next 40 years it is predicted that 57% of the New Zealand population will identify as Māori or Pacific Island, while more than two thirds (68%) will identify as non-European/non-Pakeha.” This will have a huge impact on our schools and the inequality of the present educational system. If Māori and Pasifika students are not succeeding in the present educational system their increasing numbers will put even more pressure on our schools. The cost for these students is high in terms of personal fulfilment and lost opportunities. It is also high for our communities and economy.

Educational research that has investigated the reasons for these poor Pasifika achievement rates has identified three broad areas of explanations. First, certain types of assumptions built into the present schooling system act to continue the educational inequality of Pasifika students. Second, researchers say the perceptions that Pasifika students and their teachers have of themselves and of each other can cause misunderstandings in their relationships. These misunderstandings impact on the students’ learning. Third, some research argues for a Pasifika pedagogy which is different from what happens in classrooms now. Literature based in these three areas was drawn on for this research, as outlined in the next section.

Chapter Two: The problem in the research content

2.1 The focus of Pasifika educational research to date

The literature reviewed in this chapter explores previous research of Pasifika education problems. Three broad questions are used to structure the review: why the structure of the present education system doesn't work for Pasifika students; how the beliefs and perceptions of teachers and educators about Pasifika students impact on Pasifika learning; and what a Pasifika pedagogy might look like.

Why the structure of the present schooling system doesn't work for Pasifika students.

Whether Pasifika students are educated in their home countries or in Western countries, their learning is based around the Western education system. Thaman (2000) states that education systems of Pasifika countries have been influenced by the Western values of developed nations such as New Zealand, Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, and France, through the financial and intellectual contribution these nations have made for the last few generations. This Western education system does have advantages: it offers Pasifika students international standards that allow them to compete on the world stage. However it is not working well for Pasifika students, wherever they are being educated (Thaman, 2000).

Penetito (2009) asks if the formality that characterises the Western education system is what Pasifika nations would see as best for them. Pasifika nations have yet to develop their own educational systems, encompassing their specific values and epistemologies, yet still able to measure success in ways that meet international standards. Until they have done this Pasifika students still need to succeed in the current system. Yet, even with a unique Pasifika education system in Pasifika countries, many Pasifika students will still need to find success in a Western educational environment because they don't all live in the island countries. Finding out how to help Pasifika students gain this success is the issue. Since the overall problem can be so clearly stated why is it so difficult to achieve change?

In New Zealand we pride ourselves on an education system that is fair and equitable for all, yet it is not working for many of our students, particularly our Pasifika students (Educational Review Office, 2009). Many researchers argue this is because of the assumptions built into the present schooling system. These assumptions include: the superiority of the Pakeha way of learning (Drewery & Monk, 1995); equity interpreted as

meaning sameness; and “ways of knowing” or difference being reconstructed as deficit (Bolstad and Gilbert, 2008; Gilbert, 2010; Jones, 1991; Bishop and Glynn, 1999).

Pakeha values have always underpinned the policies and practices of the school system. Gilbert (2010) outlines how in the 1930s these policies and practices sorted each student into the role that some-one else decided they were best fitted for. This sorting ensured that existing social structures and roles at that time remained. As T.B. Strong (Director of Education in 1929) put it, Māori education should “lead the Māori lad to be a good farmer and the Māori girl to be a good farmer’s wife” (cited in Gilbert 2010, p 2). This meant a ‘native schools’ system for Māori until the 1960s and a gender differentiated mainstream curriculum (Gilbert, 2010).

Later efforts were made to counter the tacit racism in the assumptions behind the sorting. However existing attitudes were instead reinforced by adding new skills and new processes to existing practices. For example, programmes were designed to help disadvantaged groups “measure up” to white, male, middle-class norms rather than the Pakeha schooling system examining the practices themselves (Gilbert, 2010). More recently ideas of diversity and inclusiveness have been introduced, with Māori “programmes for all” developed and a call to include “ways of knowing” of other groups in the taught curriculum. Yet, despite a change of focus from fixing deficiencies in individuals to fixing deficiencies in the system, there are still different achievement levels of different social groups (Gilbert, 2010). Either the new focus is being ignored or misinterpreted, or other influences are at work.

One such influence is socio-economic. The schooling system, despite many changes, continues to benefit the middle class groups (Gilbert, 2010; Jones, 1991; Bourdieu, 1997) to which few Pasifika families belong. Certain characteristics of Pakeha middle-class families, such as their ways of speaking, their ways of seeing the world, and their ways of doing things, are those which operate in classrooms and which reward students with credentials (Jones, 1991; Bourdieu, 1997; Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003; Nahkid, 2006). This dominant group controls education because its culture must be assimilated for a person to become “educated”. Access to school knowledge and academic success requires the “cultural capital” of this one group, and this requirement perpetuates the existing social order. Some have argued that this continues a process of “symbolic violence” in daily

classroom life (Bourdieu, 1997). All other cultural groups have to adapt to the Pakeha way of viewing the world.

One way of changing this situation could be to include Pasifika “cultural capital” in our educational policies and practices. Research has mostly looked for success in initiatives whose aim has been to understand Pasifika “cultural capital” and use this knowledge to build better relationships between the teacher and the student. However the intent of such initiatives is often misunderstood by teachers. How these misunderstandings occur is discussed next.

How teacher beliefs and perceptions of Pasifika students impact on Pasifika learning

Research that explores low academic outcomes for Pasifika students has mostly focused on deficit theorizing and the deficits that teachers perceive Pasifika students bring to the classroom. Research that frames underachievement issues in deficit terms typically looks at what might be needed to overcome them. Most such research looks at this problem through the lens of relationships. Teachers are required to build successful relationships with their Pasifika students, making efforts to understand their students’ Pasifika identity and Pasifika values. More recently the focus has shifted to the success of these relationships and understandings in supporting Pasifika learning. The following discussion expands on these arguments.

- ***Deficit theorizing and the nature of perceived deficits***

Deficit theorizing by teachers blames students. Their underachievement is attributed to either: a lack of ability; a lack of cultural appropriateness; or limited to access to resources. Some researchers (Bishop et al., 2003) believe that teachers who take a “deficit” viewpoint consciously or unconsciously have lower expectations of these students, contributing to lower achievement and failure. Others (Carpenter, McMurchy-Pilkington, Sutherland, 2000; Delpit, 2006; Jones, 1991) agree that when teachers don’t know the strengths of their students they “teach down” to them. Those arguments imply that supporting teachers to be aware of, and rethink, their deficit theorizing, will help solve the problem. The experiences of those who have tried to do this are discussed next.

Bishop et al. (2003) designed the Te Kotahitanga project to address teacher deficit theorizing about Māori students. They claim that their Effective Teaching Profile programme should improve indigenous student performance. They believe this can be done by “placing teachers in non-confrontational situations where, by means of authentic yet vicarious

experiences, they can critically reflect upon their own theorizing and the impact such theorizing has upon the Māori students' educational achievement" (Bishop et al., 2003, p. 204). However, when they put their programme into action, teachers rated their perceptions of *all* their students as either improved, slightly improved or the same *regardless* of their students' ethnicity. This similarity of outcomes suggests that the programme made no specific difference to the achievement of Māori students. This suggests an interesting dilemma. If an indigenous research team working with an indigenous programme does not selectively improve achievement for those indigenous students, perhaps teacher deficit theorizing is not the main or only reason for student underachievement.

This is not to say that deficit theorising should not be considered as one contributing factor to underachievement. Deficits are real (Miller, 2001). Hipkins et al. (2002) report that international tests and New Zealand's National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) show that factors that correlate with poor achievement include ethnicity, home language, socio-economic status and home and family resources. For example the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2006 report states that the higher the number of books in a student's home, access to educational aids such as a computer, study desk, dictionary and a parent's high level of education all increased the achievement level of the student. So teachers would argue that students do enter the classroom at a lower level (deficit position).

However some Pasifika students are successful regardless of these potential limitations. According to Swartz (1997: 201, cited in Nakhid, 2002) these successful students have overcome the deficit view and lack of cultural capital by acquiring scholastically based cultural capital through exceptional intellectual ability, individual effort, and unusual or social circumstances. But these circumstances are not available to all and they do come at a cost.

Martin (1996) interviewed ten successful Māori people with careers in science, mathematics or technology. The life-histories that resulted documented how each participant reflected on their school choices, what influenced their decisions and the barriers they overcame to gain their success. Martin found that those who succeeded had needed to put aside aspects of themselves. They were focused people who accepted the Western education system and learnt to succeed in it. However they felt a strong sense of loss that their success

came at the expense of their culture. There was a “hidden cost”. This hidden cost is also noticed in Pasifika countries.

Taufe’ulungaki, (2009) says that educational success in a Western education system comes at great cost to many families and communities. Koloto (1998) agrees that Tongan traditional culture breaks down through the “wholesale adoption of westernized education”. She points out that in the traditional setting, roles are ascribed and individuals valued whereas in the western context value is lost and hierarchy dominates. In Tonga, Koloto (1998) sees this hierarchy as another elite social class. She explains that a more formal education and achievement has elevated people with university degrees into a society where they are addressed by the same greeting reserved for members of nobility. Helu Thaman (1993, cited in Koloto, 1998) says that fitting into this Western class-based hierarchy is only worthwhile because it enables people to fulfil their social obligations to their family, community, school, church or country.

Would it make a difference if this type of “hidden cost” was understood by teachers? Might they then be able to build relationships with their Pasifika students that help them overcome their deficits and prevent this “hidden cost”? Recent curriculum development in New Zealand has included an emphasis on developing students’ identities. This implies that doing so will help lift achievement. But is there any evidence to suggest that this “solution” will work? This question is addressed next.

- *Pasifika identity/Pasifika understandings*

Today, New Zealand teachers are charged with ensuring “that students’ identities ... are recognized and affirmed” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 9). New Zealand education policy also outlines a vision that students are “positive in their own identity” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 8). While this curriculum policy is a step in the right direction it is still problematic because it assumes a single identity. I next review research that makes it clear that this assumption is problematic.

Pasifika world views are influenced by gender, cross-generational relationships, socio-economic status, where for example people were born and raised, their specific religious background, and level of personal engagement with this religion. Illustrating this complexity, in a small scale M.Ed. study, Samu (2006) states that there is now a new ethnic identity. To be Pasifika, it is okay not to be fluent in the mother [or father] tongue, not to be an expert in traditional art forms and it is okay not to be knowledgeable of cultural based protocols. So

Samu (2006) asks, if Pasifika identities reflect many different Pasifika experiences, how can there then be a one Pasifika identity?

The case for multiple Pasifika identities is also argued by others. Cornell and Hatmann (1998 as cited in Siteine, 2010) ask how the complex power relations through which identity is constructed, or the new and complex changes that identity embodies in a world that is in constant flux (Parekh, 2008 as cited in Siteine, 2010), can be known and understood by teachers. If there is no one Pasifika identity, what can teachers do to understand their Pasifika students?

One solution has suggested that teachers to build respectful relationships with their Pasifika students'. Some research (Bishop et al., 2003; Samu, 2006; Tuioti, 2002) has asserted that by building respected relationships teachers will learn about their students' Pasifika values and experiences and thus be able to understand their specific identity. Bishop et al. (2003) and Samu, (2006) say that this is possible when teachers find out about their Pasifika students "ways of knowing" about the world. According to Samu (2006) developing teacher understandings helps teachers develop a richer "image of the Pasifika child". Tuioti (2002) says this happens in the teachers' day-to-day interaction with their Pasifika students. However with teachers and students bringing their different experiences to the relationship, each relationship can be expected to have different complexities. How these relationships are interpreted is discussed next.

Some research (Allen, Taleni, and Robertson, 2008; Erb, 2010; Brooking, 2010) found that building relationships can have different interpretations. Teachers might take this to mean: using cultural contexts in the classroom; taking an interest in students' lives outside the classroom; or making connections with families. These teachers' perceptions may not be what the students require. Yet changing these interpretations can often be difficult and may require teachers to have new experiences. One recent professional development study, described how teachers did change their beliefs. Allen et al. (2008) found that, after spending time in a Samoan village, teachers changed their ideas about how to incorporate Pasifika culture in their classrooms. Prior to the trip these teachers felt they met the needs of their Pasifika students by using discussion and group work prior to individual tasks and by showing an interest in students' out-of-class activities. They incorporated Pasifika themes and materials into their programmes and were highly sensitive of these students needs. After the experience, the teachers changed their teaching strategies to include using the Samoan

language more often in class, treating each student as an important individual, and by employing their new understandings of mannerisms that they had been trying to change.

For most teachers, experiences such as those described in the initiative above are not available. Without these experiences it is likely that teachers will continue doing what they believe is “cultural understanding” not realising that their actions actually fall short of the complexities of cross-cultural communication. Yet is it just the teachers who misunderstand? Some research suggests that appropriate ways to respond to cross-cultural misunderstandings goes two ways.

In Jones’ (1991) study, Pacific Island girls interpreted “doing school work” as recording “good notes” from the teacher. They believed the teacher had the relevant knowledge and “good notes” were the entire knowledge they needed to learn. Working hard was studying these “good notes” and failure occurred because they “didn’t work hard enough”. Other forms of teaching interactions were resisted as unnecessary and so the teacher conformed to this style of teaching as the one the students would accept. By contrast, Pakeha students believed the teacher’s purpose was to ensure their students had the understanding and the knowledge necessary to successfully pass exams and this also determined the style of teaching in their classrooms.

In Nakhid’s (2006) research the teacher’s perception was that Pasifika students prefer one-to-one teaching. However the students of this teacher said they felt uncomfortable with the attention. They said they left asking for help until they were really lost, and that to them signalled that they hadn’t been listening properly. They did not want to show themselves up in front of their peers or the teacher. They explained that when they did continue to ask questions they got rude sounds or gestures from classmates, which the teachers ignored or approved of.

Pasifika understandings *are* important for teachers to build into their relationships with Pasifika students. Both the teachers and the students agree that this is so. It is building the right sort of relationship which is so difficult. Research asserting that assumptions about Pasifika pedagogy might be behind these difficulties is discussed next.

What might a Pasifika pedagogy look like?

Many teachers draw on research to form their ideas about how Pasifika students learn. Most of this research (Greenfield & Bruner, 1966, and Whiting & Whiting, 1975 as cited in

Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, Trumbull, Keller, and Quiroz, 2010) describes cultural pathways of learning and development as collectivistic or individualistic. The Pasifika cultural pathway, along with those of other non western cultural communities, is described as the collectivist pathway. This pathway has arisen as an adaptation to a small-scale, face-to-face village environment based on a subsistence economy and informal education (Greenfield, Trumbull, et al., 2006 as cited in Rothstein-Fisch et al., 2010). In contrast the individualist pathway arises as an adaptation of a complex, urban, wealthy environment featuring a well-developed system of formal education and advanced technology (Keller, 1997, 2003 as cited in Rothstein-Fisch et al., 2010).

Collectivistic cultures value social intelligence as it relates to people, not facts and things: collectivistic culture is situated in a social world where knowledge about people's experiences is highly valued. Children are socialized to become interdependent with others. Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull (2008 as cited in Rothstein-Fisch et al., 2010) say people in these cultures work together to help and share with other members of the group, instead of being showcased for their individual achievement. Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raef, (2000 as cited in Rothstein-Fisch et al., 2010) say that praise may also make people from collectivist cultures feel singled out and uncomfortable rather than make them feel good about themselves.

In more individualistic cultures cognitive, academic, and scientific knowledge is highly valued, especially accumulating factual knowledge. Rothstein-Fisch et al. (2010) say that independence is demonstrated in school when children work alone, show what they know through speaking out and expressing themselves, and expect praise or other tangible rewards for doing so. Materially personal ownership is valued.

Teachers identify the collectivist cultural pathway as the learning pathway of their Pasifika students and this determines the teaching strategies they use with these students. These teaching strategies have so far proved unsuccessful at improving Pasifika achievement. Yet if Pasifika values are different from non Pasifika, and teachers are attempting to accommodate this difference, why aren't these different teaching strategies successful?

Some research (Samu, 2006; Siteine, 2010) suggests the assumption that a particular cultural learning pathway requires certain strategies to support learning might be the problem because it assumes a single Pasifika pedagogy. Samu, (2006) and Siteine, (2010) argue that as there is no one Pasifika identity so there can be no one Pasifika pedagogy for quality

teaching of Pasifika learners. Accepting this view might pose a challenge for teachers because there is little evidence to show what does work for these students. Some recent research suggests that Pasifika achievement might simply be a matter of good teaching.

For example Carpenter et al. (2000) argue that it is the teacher's practice that makes the difference to Pasifika achievement, even when the teachers do not share the same ethnic and/or social background. They say that successful teachers can be recognized by their beliefs and attitudes e.g., they have high expectations of children and are seen as learners themselves. When research reports that poor achievement occurs in low decile schools in which the majority of Pasifika students belong, some researchers blame poorer teacher recruitment and retention rates (Carpenter et al., 2000). What underachievement might mean for Pasifika students could simply be a lack of quality teaching. Some researchers say quality teaching begins by students learning the basics.

For example Delpit (2006) found that Black teachers in America believed Black students need to learn the basics so they could gain entry to higher status colleges e.g., "White kids learn how to write a decent sentence. Even if they don't teach them at school their parents make sure they get what they need. But what about our kids? They don't get it at home and they spend all their time at school learning to be fluent" (Delpit, 2006, p.16). Pasifika students might also need to spend time learning the basics before they too can improve their learning.

Learning the basics is about sustained hard work (Willingham, 2009) which our Pasifika students prove they can do. Evidence they have the determination required for achievement is seen in the increasing attainment of NCEA Level 2 by Pasifika students a year later than is usually expected. For example by Year 13 a further seventeen percent of the original Year 11 Pasifika cohort of 2008 attained NCEA Level 2 compared with seven percent of the Māori and Asian cohorts, and five percent of the European cohort (NZQA, 2010). The challenge for teachers is therefore how to get their Pasifika students to practice the basics required without boredom.

The argument that improving Pasifika achievement requires quality teaching needs further careful thought. What "quality teaching" means can be interpreted differently. Samu (2006) advocates for tailor-made contextualized teaching for Pasifika students. Others ask that teachers understand the Pasifika "learning identity". There is a contrast in these two arguments between personalised and generic assumptions. However for this study as most of

the research supports the generic idea of a “learning identity” it is this research that will be investigated further.

Recent research that is looking for a learning identity is doing so in two ways: by looking at ways to overcome barriers to Pasifika learning; or by exploring traditional learning techniques. One example of a barrier to Pasifika learning involves the struggle Pasifika students can have in learning to cross into the western educational world (Tuioti, 2002; Aikenhead, 1996). To do this requires teachers to understand the Western “culture of power” (Delpit, 1988) and to teach this to their Pasifika students. Delpit (1998) describes “the culture of power” as rules or information that members of a culture transmit to each other implicitly. Those in the culture of power have had a lifetime of “immersion” to learn the rules of this culture. However those not in the “culture of power” need to be told explicitly the rules of that culture to make acquiring the same power easier. This concept is already a focus for some educators e.g., those who work in the Whitireia Polytechnic Pasifika nursing programme.

Other research (Gegeo & Gegeo, 2000; Thaman, 1993; Sanga, 2009; Fua, 2009) is exploring traditional Pasifika “ways of learning” to help develop a Pasifika “learning identity”. For example Gegeo and Gegeo (2000), in a Solomon Island educational study, found that a teacher was able to teach his students English by using teaching techniques that were traditional learning techniques of the village. This philosophy of making the learner’s own culture central to their learning has been successful in other indigenous educational institutions such as the Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Curtin University of Technology in Western Australia (Abdullah & Stringer 1999) and the Te Wananga programmes and Māori medium institutions.

Finally understanding a Pasifika “learning identity” is being given important consideration at government level. The Pasifika Education Plan 2009–2012 emphasizes this focus by aiming to increase the number of Pasifika teachers in schools. It states that this “will provide more role models for students and grow schools capability in understanding Pasifika contexts, influencing and impacting in teacher practices more rapidly, being present across curriculum areas and providing Pasifika leadership” (Ministry of Education, 2009, p.11).

This is one way to understand how to find a Pasifika “learning identity”. This study will consider other possible ways.

2.2 What is missing in the research?

Much of the research (Allen et al., 2008; Bishop et al., 2003; Carpenter et al., 2000; Jones 1991) has just addressed the first step of recognizing the importance of building relationships between the teacher and the Pasifika student. Others (Carpenter et al., 2000; Delpit, 2006) say quality teaching is also important. However quality teaching of Pasifika students also needs to include knowing the Pasifika “learning identity”. It is this step of understanding what the “learning identity” of the Pasifika student really might be that is missing. Some research (Nakhid, 2006; Gegeo & Gegeo, 2000; Koloto, 1998; Sanga, 2009; Thaman, 2009; Taufe’ulungaki, 2009; Thaman, 2000) has begun to investigate the “knowledge systems” and learning styles of Pasifika students from their perspective. This is one way of exploring what the Pasifika “learning identity” might look like.

Another way to find out about the Pasifika “learning identity” involves the teacher building both an understanding of the Pasifika student and of their learning. Teachers can support students when they can gauge what the student does not understand. When teachers don’t understand their Pasifika students’ meanings and actions they don’t know how to respond to their learning (Jones, 1991; Nakhid, 2006). This argument suggest that if teachers *do* understand the meanings they and their Pasifika students give to particular words and actions, learning might be improved.

This study aims to address the idea of a Pasifika student “learning identity” by building an understanding about how the teacher and the Pasifika student interpret cultural meaning in the various words and actions they say and do. This involves exploring the meaning of different words and actions for both the teacher and the Pasifika student, how the words and actions impact on the learning of the Pasifika student, how the words and actions impact on the teaching strategies the teachers use and what strategies the Pasifika student and the teacher can develop to support the Pasifika “learning identity”. To find out about this idea of a Pasifika student “learning identity” this research asked the following research questions.

2.3 Research Questions

1. What teachers’ words and/or actions in the classroom affect Pasifika student learning?
 - a) How do Pasifika students respond to these words/actions?
 - b) What do the Pasifika students understand by these words/actions?
 - c) What do the teachers understand these words/actions to mean?

How do these words and actions influence the pedagogy teachers believe support Pasifika students learning?

2. How do Pasifika students respond to their teachers Pasifika teaching strategies?
3. What recommendations can be made to improve Pasifika student learning.

Chapter Three: How the study was carried out

3.1 Theoretical Framework, Methodology, Method, Ethics

3.2 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study is social constructionism. Many scholars agree that the central premise of social constructionism is that meaning is not inherent in any situation and that the central concerns of constructionist inquiry are to study what people “know” and how they create, apply, contest, and act upon those ideas (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 15; Best 2000, 4; Blummer 1969, 2–5; Gubrium and Holstein 1997, 38, cited in Harris, 2006).

What people “know” involves how they interact in their world. Social constructionism interprets “knowing” the meanings of human actions as more than the conscious intentions of individuals because it also involves an understanding of the social context within which the intentions make sense. Therefore meanings arise from the individual’s past history and present social order and act to structure their interpretation of “reality” in a certain way (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

Reality is defined as how people understand themselves, which may be quite different to how others understand them. The meanings we make about ourselves are restricted by the language and understandings that are part of our “world”. Meanings are also limited by what can and cannot be said. It is these meanings we have learned to use, in our family, school, village, country that shape our understandings. This understanding comes about through the mutual knowledge and recognition of the cultural group we belong to, and by consensus within particular contexts in relation to particular purposes (Bourdieu, 1997; Rorty, 1980, 1982, cited in Drewery and Monk 1994). Therefore people of different cultures have different meanings about certain things and it is important for people to understand the meanings that they make about themselves and for others to listen to how they make these meanings. In this way people from different cultural groups may learn how others interpret and understand in particular ways.

A constructionist theoretical framework works well for this study because it lets participants explain their own meanings and find their own realities rather than the researcher imposing his/her meaning onto their lives. It may also influence practice by influencing the ways in which individuals comprehend themselves and others in their situation. Making the

meaning of actions transparent to the individuals involved may reduce communication problems between them. They may then be open to alternative ways of interpreting their actions and defining their “reality” (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

3.3 The research methodology

Much research is written about Pasifika people where the researcher is the person who interprets the meaning of the Pasifika person’s words. Yet how can we know that what the researcher interprets is what the participant really meant? Nakhid (2002) says research participants should be heard as authorities on their own experiences, on the procedures involved in the analysis of their accounts, and in the reporting of results. Other researchers (Bishop, 2003; Wellington, 2006) also believe that student participants are not only able to articulate and conceptualise their experiences and offer explanations, but that this authorizing of student voices is the only way to legitimate the research.

To allow the participants to be the experts, and involved in the processes identified by Nakhid, the methodology in this research was an interpretive case study. An interpretive case study gathers thick data sources and uses descriptive data which can be used to challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to the data gathering (Merriam 1988, p. 28 as cited in Willis, 2007).

The data was collected by: observation of certain behaviours and attitudes of Pasifika students and their teachers to inform the focus group interviews; focus group interviews to discuss the meanings of these behaviours and attitudes, and mediated dialogue between the two groups of participants so that each group heard the perceptions of the other.

Focus groups were used in preference to interviews or questionnaires because they allowed the participants to talk about their experiences in their own way. Interviews can be dominated by the questioner and may not lead to the true feelings of the respondent being expressed (Anderson and Arsenault, 1998: 200 as cited in Nakhid, 2002). Questionnaires provide little opportunity to clarify questions or elaborate the respondent’s ideas by sharing and comparing them with others. However focus groups can gain a powerful insight into the opinions, beliefs, and values of particular groups (Waldegrave, 1999 as cited in Nakhid, 2002). Focus groups [separated into teacher and student groups] allow in-depth discussion of the issues with others in the group who have similar affinity and attitudes. The interactive nature of the focus group also minimizes the possibility of reluctant responses which can be a problem for face-to-face interview method. Therefore focus group interviews were regarded

as the most useful in this study for obtaining authentic data and allowing participants the opportunity to corroborate and check the accuracy of the data. This strategy of collaborating with the student participants is also considered an appropriate methodology for Pasifika research, as recommended in Pasifika Research Guidelines (Anae et al., 2001).

Mediated dialogue involves the researcher conveying comments between the two groups about behaviours and attitudes present in each group. This allows the two groups to “hear” the beliefs and perceptions of the other group. In this way the mediated dialogue allows for clarification of issues in a way that standard interviews could not, and provides “participant” accounts rather than “observer” accounts of practices (Nakhid, 2002: p157). Taking the understandings back to the teachers and students allows the participants to decide what is important rather than the researcher seeing or ignoring meanings that do not fit with the study (Griffiths, 1998 as cited in Nakhid, 2002). It also helps the researcher to avoid giving priority to the understandings of one group.

The mediated dialogue interviews were based on the structure and approach of the “active” interview design of Holstein and Gubrium (1995, as cited in Nakhid, 2002). These interviews become conversations in which the participants are “active” in their construction of knowledge in collaboration with the interviewer. They also become social interactions where more than what is said or conveyed is taken into consideration. The meaning of what is said unfolds via “interactional, narrative procedures of knowledge production” (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995 as cited in Nakhid, 2002 p. 4).

Using three methods for data collection [focus group interviews with Pasifika students, focus group interviews with teachers, and class observations of teachers and Pasifika students] triangulated the data and enhanced the reliability of the study.

3.4 Personal justification for the study

As a teacher of science in a multi-cultural high school for eleven years, I was aware that Māori and Pasifika students were under represented in all senior science classes. In the last two years of my teaching career I asked to be assigned the lower achieving junior science classes, which were predominantly Māori and Pasifika students. My aim was to really focus on what was happening to disengage these students from learning science. My experiences in these two years changed my focus from being a teacher of knowledge to a teacher who helps students learn. My own Pasifika upbringing—I have a Samoan mother and although she tried

to bring me up in the palagi¹ way the Samoan culture predominated—allowed me to really listen and understand what these students were and were not saying and feeling.

I feel I need to share this understanding with my teaching colleagues so that they too may listen to and understand what their Pasifika students are saying about their learning.

3.5 The research design

The data-gathering stages for the case study were designed as three sequential parts. First the study focused on observing the behaviours and practices of one class of Pasifika students and their teachers in their core subjects [English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and Physical Education] and in the option classes of Samoan language and art. Next the perceptions Pasifika students had of their teachers' behaviours and practices were recorded. Then the teachers who had been observed were asked what their perceptions were of their Pasifika student behaviours and their own teaching practices.

The school chosen was a local, medium sized [585 students], decile one urban college in which approximately 70 percent of the students identified as Pasifika. A teacher at the school had been a colleague of the researcher [at a previous school] which made access to the class and teachers possible. A large Pasifika population at the school ensured that the sample was reflective of the Pasifika student community and the Pasifika behaviours and attitudes were noticeable because they were the dominant culture in the class.

The group of Pasifika students were observed in their classes over the last six weeks of the 2010 school year for two school days [Thursdays and Fridays] each week. The behaviours and attitudes of the Pasifika students and their teachers informed the focus group interview questions. The researcher attended the class for a day prior to the start of the study to practice recognizing and recording accurately the data to be collected.

The participants

Seven Pasifika students from one Year 9 class and their five core subject teachers [English, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science and Physical Education] were the participants in the study. Year 9 students were selected as there is a noticeable drop of engagement in students between Years 8 and 9 where students are in transition to a much larger school,

¹ Palagi refers to non-Pasifika although technically it means white people. In this class there were no white students but non-Pasifika included Indian and Maori students who were treated differently by these teachers.

usually with very different organizational structures and patterns (Darr, 2009) so there may be more behavioural and attitudinal data to observe. The class was selected by the colleague of the researcher [a Head of Department] as one that had both Pasifika and non Pasifika teachers and in which the teachers were willing to participate. The participants were selected by the five core subject teachers of the class determined by: their willingness to participate in the study; identifying as Pasifika; gender [both to be represented]; having good communication skills and a good attendance record.

The seven students selected included four females and three males [two females and one male identified as Tokelauan, two males and one female identified as Cook Island and one female identified as Samoan]. During the observation period the seven students were observed in all their core classes [English, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science and Physical Education] and some of these students were also observed once in their option class of Samoan or art. As the study was conducted around examination time the teacher who taught many of these students extra English was justifiably reluctant to have any class disturbance.

The teacher participants included two female Pasifika teachers and three male non Pasifika teachers. One Pasifika female teacher taught English and the other taught Social Studies and the option class of Samoan. The male non-Pasifika teachers taught science, physical education and mathematics. Three of the teachers were young teachers [less than 30 years old].

Data collection

During the study a digital recorder was used and notes taken. The researcher listened and looked for behaviours, words and attitudes that the participant students made that affected their learning. The teacher's reactions and further discussions related to each incident were also noted.

During and after the observation period focus group interviews were held. Student focus group interviews were held in week three and week five and teacher focus group interviews in week five and week six. Week four was examination week and it was difficult to organize an interview with the teachers during this time. Teachers were very willing to support their Pasifika students and shared their understandings often with the researcher. These observations were recorded both by digital recorder and notes during and after their class had been observed. On some occasions students withdrew with me for informal focus group interviews when things happened in the classroom.

Student interviews were both formal and informal. Informal interviews included one-on-one interviews in week one with a selected male participant [who later withdrew from the research, as discussed in the ethics section] and a female student who was not selected for the study. In week three a focus group of three male students took place. They were all selected participants in the study. Throughout the six weeks there were many quick chats with both male and female, selected and non selected, student participants, during or at the end of class. The two formal focus group interviews included six of the seven selected student participants [one withdrew]. All the interviews were held during class time and once at lunchtime in an empty classroom. At the lunchtime interview food was provided. The formal interviews took approximately an hour and the informal interviews approximately half an hour, except for the quick chats which took about five minutes.

In the first formal focus group interview the students were made aware that their understandings would be told to their teachers and their teachers' responses and understandings would be related back to them. Having a group response ensured some confidentiality and the students [with the researcher as a scribe] drafted the understandings they wanted the teachers to hear from them (refer Appendix Two). In the second student formal focus group interview the students heard their teachers' responses and understandings (refer Appendix Three) from the first teacher focus group interview and again shaped the responses they wanted the teachers to hear from them with the researcher as scribe (refer Appendix Four).

The first interview began by asking students questions that related to particular incidents (refer Appendix One). These questions had been shaped from incidents based on the researcher's observations. They were also asked if there had been any previous times when their teachers' words or actions had affected their learning. This opened the discussion to situations they felt were of more significance than those that the researcher had witnessed. In both situations [observed and recounted] the students were asked how they responded to these words/actions and what they understood by these words/actions. At the end of the interview the students agreed on the meanings of the words/actions that they wanted the researcher to report back to the teachers.

The students said they were very pleased to be listened to and freely give their opinions. However they did need to be assured many times that their comments would not identify them to their teachers. It was noticeable in the second student focus group interview

that their responses were more forthcoming. Once the teachers' responses to the students' understandings were discussed the participants felt they could trust the research methodology. In the second focus group interview students were also asked the following two questions:

1. What could you do to help your teachers understand you better?
2. What could your teachers do to help understand you better?

The teacher group interviews were conducted in week five and week six. These interviews were held in a classroom after school hours and took an hour and a half each time. As per Pasifika protocol, food was provided at both meetings. Teachers were asked about their understandings of the same incidents the researcher had previously discussed with the students. The researcher then related the agreed students' responses to the teachers. Teachers were asked to reflect on the student responses for discussion at the second focus group interview.

In the second teachers' focus group interview the teachers discussed their reflections about the students' responses. They were also asked the same questions as the students had been asked. The students' responses to these questions were then related to the teachers.

Analysis of the data

In Pasifika culture, speech is an art and what is said is carefully considered. For Pasifika students' thoughts are not always spoken so long pauses allow them to formulate and decide if they will express them. Thus silences and gaps in the conversation are expected and are comfortable. These silences are considered respectful and allow the speaker the opportunity to complete their message. I was therefore alert to these considerations in the analysis of the meaning making.

I also found that I identified with: the teachers by recognizing and understanding particular teaching strategies and; the students by identifying with practices in Pasifika homes. Thus when teacher and student responses seemed angry in response to the information they received from each other I was quickly able to clarify the meanings each group was making. This allowed these meanings to be explored more deeply.

Each of these considerations leads to the challenges of presenting the interview data in a way that conveys each participant's true meaning.

Presenting the data and further analysis

After transcribing the tapes, the comments were coded into two main areas: the teachers' perspectives of Pasifika student learning; and the Pasifika students' perspectives of their learning. Within these areas the comments were then coded into themes. For the teachers the themes included: the teacher's role in relation to Pasifika students; how behaviours in Pasifika homes impact on Pasifika learning; and how Pasifika values affect Pasifika learning. For the Pasifika students the themes included: their teachers' different behaviours towards them as Pasifika compared to their non Pasifika peers; their teachers' low expectations of them as learners; and their own beliefs of themselves as learners. Detailed explanations of the teachers and students relevant comments were included in each area.

This first analysis revealed many mismatches in the perceptions of the students and the teachers. A further analysis of the data was undertaken with the aim of explaining these mismatches. This further analysis involved the shaping of four vignettes to describe four different types of classrooms. The complex interactions in the classrooms could then be described. Each identified interaction was then explained from the teacher and/or the student perspective and by using a metaphor as an analysis tool.

An enzyme metaphor as an analysis tool

Because much of the data involved many complex interactions and reactions which were difficult to describe in relation to each other a metaphor of an enzyme was used as an analysis tool. The enzyme metaphor was able to explain which things were essential and how they interacted to produce good Pasifika learning thereby bringing all these complex actions and interactions into a clearer relationship. For example one complex interaction included the need for certain things to be present for good learning to occur yet, even if in some cases these things were present, they might still not be effective. (For a description of how an enzyme works see the enzyme reaction box on page 41).

This metaphor worked well for the analysis because enzyme-mediated reactions require many interactions to succeed. In an enzyme reaction the parts move and bump into each other. However the reaction does not occur unless there is a certain impact level when the parts connect. This requires a particular amount of energy. So there is activity but it is not always successful. This is similar to many of the teaching examples where there is activity but Pasifika learning is poor. However the *amount* of activity needed for a reaction is not the only consideration.

For a successful enzyme reaction *all* the relevant pieces must be present, and there is a need for an activation energy level to be reached. The reaction can also be stopped by another substance e.g., an inhibitor attaching to the enzyme. These aspects of enzyme action are a good metaphor for Pasifika learning because this requires: enough energy for the reaction to start [energy from the Pasifika student to engage in their learning]; the presence of the substrate [quality teaching strategies]; and the absence of an inhibitor [teachers' low expectations which detrimentally change the teaching strategies used] for successful Pasifika learning. If any of the reactions are interrupted or absent the learning is poor.

Success of the research methodology

Because this research was directed by the participants in this study, they felt engaged in the research rather than being participants who were just 'researched'. They decided what meanings were to be presented to the other group and the results of the discussions helped them have better understandings of each other. They also felt they were being listened to. Using focus groups and talking with each group separately allowed participants to feel comfortable. The information was obtained in a non threatening environment and was corroborated by the rest of the participants within the focus groups. Talking with the teachers separately also avoided having the students feel inhibited by the presence of their teachers and likewise prevented the teachers feeling challenged by their students.

It was also likely that separate groups allowed more frank and open discussions and dialogues. Participants seemed to feel more at ease responding to each other's observations, particularly on those questions that related to sensitive topics such as teachers' teaching practices and students' abilities. Students seemed to be confident to speak about controversial issues in the presence of other students with similar backgrounds and experiences. The teachers were also willing to speak freely [regarding me as a colleague] and were also willing to hear the opinions of their students.

Ethics

This study was subject to the requirements of the Victoria University of Wellington Research Ethics policy as well as those of New Zealand Association for Research in Education.

The Principal of the college in the study was informed about the research in a personal meeting with the researcher and in an information letter. She was made aware of what would be expected from the school, the teachers and the students involved. The

Principal gave permission for the research on the understanding that the researcher's colleague, who was a teacher at the school, would be responsible for the conduct of the research.

A meeting was then held with the researcher, her colleague at the school and the five core teachers of the class selected for the study. The purpose of the study was explained to them. They were told what would be required of them and of the student participants. Information letters and consent forms were handed out. The five teachers accepted the invitation to participate in the study and then they selected the seven student participants. The five teachers returned signed consent forms.

A meeting was held with the student participants and the purpose of the study was explained to them. All seven students agreed to participate in the research and permission slips and information letters were given to them to take home. The researcher phoned each of the student participant's parents/caregivers to explain the research project. Approval was obtained verbally from the parents of the student participants and in written consent forms from some parents/caregivers. All student participants also signed written consent forms agreeing to be participants in the study.

At both meetings the researcher also made the teachers and students aware of the following:

- To assure the participants that their comments and understandings would be treated with care and respect the researcher explained her teaching and ethnic background to show that she had some similar understandings and empathy with both groups.
- During the study participants would have the opportunity to hear and give feedback [they would be asked to confirm their interpretations] on the data that was about them.
- The participants would select and agree which of their comments would be told to the other group.
- No names would be used in the interviews to try to ensure confidentiality for participants.
- Participants could withdraw from the study at any time until the data was analysed.

One student did withdraw during the study. This student had been identified by all the teachers as one that they were concerned about. The teachers agreed that participation in the study might help the student to voice his concerns. The student did talk comfortably in a one-

on-one interview for half an hour about his concerns. However when the first focus group interview began he was quiet and restless and asked to withdraw. He was very polite and concerned that he gained permissions to leave. This was given without hesitation and his earlier contribution acknowledged.

Limitations of the study

Two main limitations in this study were: the limited number of primary studies I was able to source when justifying the overall problem; and the absence of the voices of parents. Few research studies, particularly those located at entry level secondary schools, have been written about Pasifika learning. Those that have been written mostly look at Pasifika “identity” and teacher student relationships. Present Pasifika research focuses on looking at Pasifika learning styles and “knowledge systems” from the Pasifika perspective. This study’s focus was to seek and analyse the voices of Pasifika learners and those who teach them and here the body of literature was very small.

The second main limitation was the absence of the voices of parents. Some of the Pasifika parents were initially telephoned to ask for permission for their children to participate in the study. During these brief telephone conversations the parents expressed their desire to support their children. However the study’s focus was to explore the understandings between the teachers and the Pasifika students so only their voices were heard. The parents’ assumed views were told through the understandings of the teachers and the students.

A further main limitation which has already been discussed in the introduction section of this study is my assumption of one generic Pasifika culture.

Chapter Four: The classroom interactions observed

4.1 The teachers' and students' perceptions of each other's words and actions

This research was conducted at the end of the school year. A Year 9 class was observed in their core subjects for two days a week [Thursdays and Fridays] for six weeks. Focus group interviews and one-to-one interviews were held with the Pasifika student participants and their teachers.

The themes that emerged from the data were formed from the student participants' concerns. From the class observation the students were asked at the time of the incident, in casual interviews and/or at the first focus group interview, about particular behaviours and responses that were observed by the researcher. From these responses, a set of questions were co-written by the student participants and the researcher, to ask the teachers. The teachers' responses to these questions were recorded. These recordings were transcribed and the data was read many times. A summary of these teacher responses was reported to the students at the second focus group interview. In reply a summary of the student responses [co-written by the students and the researcher] was presented to the teachers in their second focus group interview and the teachers' responses were again recorded.

From the original set of concerns by the students, both the teachers and the students were able to hear and reply to each others views. The large amount of data was read many times and the following three themes related to what the teachers believed emerged. These themes include: the role of the teacher automatically grants respect; behaviour expected at home is also expected at school; and Pasifika values include passivity, perfection, humility, laziness. Teachers believe it is these values added to perceived low ability, that affect Pasifika behaviour and achievement. In reply the students' themes included: their teachers attitudes and responses to them; teachers' low expectations of them; and their beliefs of themselves as learners. Each theme will be discussed from the teachers' perspectives and then from the students' perspectives. Some vignettes on which observations were based will be described in Sections 5.

4.2 The teachers' perspectives

The teachers blamed poor Pasifika student achievement on poor behaviour. They explained that some Pasifika students behaved poorly because they did not respect the role of the teacher.

A teacher's role grants them the right to respect

The teachers believed that they have the knowledge students need and so the students should listen and learn from them. Teachers' comments included:

If we can't explain things for them to do how will they know? (Teacher A).

We've got stuff to get through (Teacher B).

How can we teach them when they won't listen? (Teacher B).

One of the Pasifika teachers felt that students needed to learn that being at school and having access to teachers was a privilege:

Students should be grateful for what we are doing here. We deserve respect (Teacher A).

Behaviour at home should be expected at school

These teachers believed that there were two ways in which Pasifika homes dealt with discipline and that these affected Pasifika student behaviour. First they assumed Pasifika parental discipline was strict. When Pasifika students showed a "lack of respect" for the status of the teacher and the school, this was taken to mean that their home had lowered its discipline standards. One Pasifika teacher stated that the Pasifika student's poor behaviour:

...relates to their upbringing, families with no rules, no boundaries and no discipline (Teacher A).

She also said that the school was "loose with consequences" which she believed allowed the poor behaviour to continue.

Second, when Pasifika homes did have strong discipline the teachers believed this meant that Pasifika students "choose" to behave badly as a reaction to the "loosening of constraints" at school. They believed that Pasifika families use physical methods to control poor behaviour whereas at school "consequences" are non physical. Teachers said:

At school these students suddenly find freedom (Teacher D).

They know teachers can't hurt them so they can vent on us (Teacher C).

For other teachers however less discipline at school meant a chance for these students to be themselves:

If kids are physically and verbally being put down they come to school and they know teachers can't talk to them that way, physically intimidate them. Some of them take it as a way to rebuild some of their own self esteem that has been crushed. It becomes as a teacher "why is he being aggressive towards me?" (Teacher E).

This loosening of constraints was also viewed in other ways. For example teachers in the study believed that in Pasifika homes these Pasifika students were expected to do a lot of household chores whereas at school they had a choice. Teachers said:

They don't help each other. It is strange for me that these Pasifika kids don't help as much—like they help in the kitchen (Teacher B).

Probably tired of all the helping (Teacher C).

Too much (Teacher E).

In yet another way the teachers believed their Pasifika students were reluctant to allow the lack of power they experienced at home to follow them to school. They explained this by noting that when they raised their voices students made comments such as:

"You're not my Dad" (Teacher E).

"You're not my teacher" (Teacher B).

The teachers blamed these reactions on the experiences of the students outside the classroom:

...behaviour that is largely related to off site (Teacher E).

Pasifika values that affect behaviour

The Pasifika cultural ideal of collectivism stresses social goals related to loyalty to family, respect for elders, politeness, and responsibility for social and cognitive domains (Harwood, 1992 as cited in Rothstein-Fisch et al., 2010). Thus some Pasifika values include: working together to help and share with other members of the group; respect for those who have earned their status through experience; humility so that each person's contribution in the group has equal value; and family respect and honour that each task be achieved to perfection. Each of these values is discussed next.

Passivity

Most of the teachers in the study agreed that Pasifika students were not assertive in their classes. Unlike their palagi counterparts they did not ask questions or ask for help. One

Pasifika teacher believed this was because Pasifika students had no stake in the decision making in Pasifika homes:

Probably because they are not used to being consulted in their home so are not equipped with the know-how [the knowledge of how to ask questions] (Teacher C).

Perfection

The teachers agreed that Pasifika students did not often try in class because they did not want to make mistakes. They said Pasifika students don't try because they wanted a level of "perfection" which is often too hard to achieve.

I think it's that fear of failure because I think they hold onto such high standards in other parts of their life. I assume they aren't allowed to get anything wrong—that if they don't know something completely they just won't try. Otherwise you are proving you don't know something. If you don't try people will never know what you don't know (Teacher D).

One teacher explained this could be seen in the traditional way they learnt to recite bible passages in Sunday school [reciting the passage without a mistake is highly regarded by Pasifika families].

Another Pasifika value that the teachers noted was that Pasifika students did not try to find out what they had got wrong in a test, unlike their palagi counterparts:

Pakeha kids find out what they did wrong so not to make the same mistake next time. These guys don't (Teacher D).

When asked why he thought this, Teacher D said that Pasifika students felt they could not change their mark so there was no point in looking at what was wrong. It was noticeable that both teachers and students expressed a very summative framing of achievement.

Humility

Finally the teachers talked about the Pasifika value of humility. They believed that because their Pasifika students did not want to look clever in front of their peers they lowered their chances of achievement. Teachers noted that students called each other derogatory names:

What a brainy guy-bots. [Bots from the Samoan word fiaboto which means you think you are clever or you are a know it all] (Teacher E).

They try to shame each other when they do what you ask them to do (Teacher A).

All the teachers noted that these students would feel “ashamed” if they were getting an award in an award ceremony. One teacher said:

[name of a Pasifika student] would not attend the award ceremony because she was ashamed to collect a certificate (Teacher A)

Another teacher said she felt that this was because:

Learning did not get enough kudos (Teacher C).

This teacher also noted that students in her class asked for accolades to be told to them quietly so that their peers would not be thinking:

Here we go again. So and so has topped (Teacher C).

Laziness

All the teachers in the study said that their Pasifika students would not take responsibility for their own learning. They felt the students did not try because they did not understand the importance of their education. One teacher noted that the “kids’ just cruise” when she knew that in Pasifika families these students would be constantly told that:

Only stupid girls leave school with no qualification (Teacher C).

Teachers did recognise that the “cruising” in some cases related to their Pasifika students’ belief that they were already achieving at the required level. This perception is discussed next.

Low ability

When the interviewed teachers were asked how well the students were achieving in their class they all agreed there were about eight who were working above “the level”, about twelve at the level and about six below the level. However when this level was compared to the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) the teachers all agreed this would be level 3 (Year 9 is usually aligned with level 4).

The teachers were aware that the students believed they were working at the achievement level appropriate for their year level and that this belief was affecting their learning:

They compare themselves to others and say sweet I’m excelling even though if we were to compare them to their cohorts they are not really excelling at all and then they just coast. They don’t have that yard to measure against (Teacher C).

Another teacher said:

I think it will be all right in unit standards² but if any of them are going to do a lot of exams ...I think they would struggle (Teacher D).

Unit standards are being phased out and will be fully replaced with achievement standards at the end of 2012, just when these students will be trying to acquire them. The teachers were unsure of how this would affect these students.

These Pasifika students were unaware of their underachievement. It seems that the teachers are not telling them. What is striking is how little awareness the teachers seem to have that their comments reflect on their *own* failure to do certain things. These failures will be discussed in Chapter 5.

4.3 The Pasifika students' perspectives

Pasifika students were genuinely surprised to hear that their teachers believed their poor behaviour resulted from issues they brought from home or from their Pasifika values. Instead they blamed their poor behaviour on their teachers' actions and attitude towards them. The students felt they were continually being punished by their teachers. They explained these punishments as: not being listened to; having hurtful comments made about them; and having fun learning activities taken away. In response to teachers' comments about their learning they replied that they felt disappointed in their teachers' lack of belief in them as learners. They also said that they did try and they believed they did have the ability needed to achieve success. Each of these perspectives is discussed next.

² In New Zealand, National Certificates include: the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) levels 1–3 and; National Certificates recognizing achievement in a variety of industries and subjects. Gaining these qualifications requires students to collect credits from unit standards or achievement standards. Standards describe what a student must be able to achieve, in order to meet the standard. Unit standards are competency based and achievement standards are New Zealand curriculum based. Unit standards are different to achievement standards in the complexity of the skills and knowledge recognized and in the learning time required by the standard. In Unit standards the lesser complexity is reflected in the passing grade which is either achieved or non achieved whereas in achievement standards there are three levels of attainment: Achieved; Merit and Excellence. In an alignment project now underway, unit standards are being aligned with achievement standards which mean they will require the three levels of attainment and the equivalent complexity in skills and knowledge as the achievement standards (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, n.d).

Teachers don't listen

When the Pasifika students were asked how they felt about talking about their learning they said they valued being “listened to” and that “lots [of people] will hear them [tell their stories] and learn [from them]”. This was something they felt they did not get from their teachers. They said that not being listened to made them angry, and this anger can be heard in many of the students’ comments that follow.

According to the Pasifika students their teachers did listen to some students, though not to them. One student summed up the feelings of the others when she said:

You know [teacher] she talks soft as to [non Pasifika student]. Like to us [Pasifika students] she’s like “do your work and shut up” (Student C).

This inequality was of great concern to these Pasifika students and they gave many examples of being unjustly accused of some action and not being believed when they denied involvement. To them this was deeply hurtful.

Teachers don't respect us

When asked why they continued to talk when the teacher was obviously waiting for them, one student said “they do it to us” (Student F). Students said some of their teachers had no respect for them. They gave examples such as teachers continuing to say their names incorrectly. When the student corrected the pronunciation the teacher might reply “I don’t care” and make hurtful comments such as “stupid islander”. This specific comment had been made at the beginning of the year but was not forgotten by this group of Pasifika students and continued to spoil their relationship with the teacher who said this.

Pasifika students say respect must be reciprocal and they were very sure what it looked like. They explained that the teachers who respected them treated them well and believed in them:

“They [the teachers] are kind, don’t raise their voice, know how we feel and made you feel you could do it” (many responses).

“We are in lockdown”

Contrary to the teachers’ thinking that the Pasifika students had suddenly found freedom compared to the constraints in their homes all the interviewed students said they were more restricted at school. Phrases they used suggested that school was “like a prison” or “we are in lockdown” (Student E). As specific evidence of this punitive approach the students complained that:

- they were not allowed to do laboratory work
- they had no Year 9 camp
- there were no school trips
- every period they had “to do time” [detention]
- they were not allowed music in class
- they “had growlings everyday”

The students said that at least at home they were able to walk away from a lecture and play their music. The students did retaliate. They did agree that some things they did at school they would not dare do at home and one student admitted she misbehaved because she liked the reaction she got and because she could. However it was evident that this type of behaviour only occurred in classrooms of teachers whose relationship with their Pasifika students was poor.

We do try

In response to the teachers’ ideas about Pasifika values these students said they knew that asking questions was a valuable part of learning. In some classes they said they did ask a lot of questions. In others they said their questions were ignored so they stopped asking. They also agreed with their teachers that making mistakes was part of learning and that they did not look at what they got wrong if it did not alter their mark. However they did say that they looked at what they got right. So in their view, *learning* is about “getting” things “right or wrong”.

These Pasifika students also agreed that they did not want to fail. One student said that seeing another student “fail” was like seeing their “misery”. She said:

It makes me think your life’s like mine or mine’s not so bad” (Student C).

This feeling and peer pressure was the reason these Pasifika students said they didn’t like to be singled out particularly in ceremonies. They said:

I don’t want them [friends] to be sad and

I don’t want them to put you down (Student C).

These students felt it was acceptable to be recognized as a high achiever in class but not in the school community. They summed it up as:

Just the class is fine (Student E).

It's cool when you are a smart girl (Student G).

You are proud when you are not in front of your friends (Student C).

Contrary to their teachers' belief that they would not take responsibility for their learning, Pasifika students said they did work when they believed it counted. The students said they worked in exams because they were important to them. This was also an observation made by one of the interviewed teachers who said he was surprised that students who had done little all year worked very hard for the exams.

We will all pass

The Pasifika students believed that they were working at the same level as their peers and they had confidence in their academic ability. They all said that everyone in the class was capable of passing the exams and they would all probably pass. Even students who were considered to be in the lower achievement bracket felt they would pass. One student summed up the feeling of the group when he said:

If I fail, I fail, I don't know if I will fail (Student I).

These Pasifika students trusted that the work they were being given was everything they needed to achieve. For them their responsibility was to learn it. When asked why they were not learning the work they were given they blamed themselves:

You're just looking for the main answers (Student E).

You're not putting it in your brain (Student C).

Because it means you don't really want to learn (Student D).

I do the work if I need to

The students in the study all made conscious decisions about whether they needed to do the set work. They would look at the tasks and decide how difficult these were or how much time they needed to complete them. Sometimes, some students saw no need to complete the work if it was too easy:

I wait for the work. If it's easy sometimes I'll do it sometimes I don't (Student I).

Others became serious about their work near the end of a lesson and were still able to complete what was required.

They think we are “dumb”

In fact the Pasifika students said that when teachers made the work too easy they were implying that they thought they [the students] were “dumb”. The students used this word a lot. They said they felt insulted when given trivial tasks such as “word finds” or work that they could already do. They would say:

It’s boring (Student I).

Work’s just boring (Student M).

When I asked them why the teacher gave them this type of work they said:

Might think we are dumb (Student M).

Being singled out was also an issue for these students. One student felt insulted that the teacher gave him easier work than the others in the class:

He always treats me like I’m dumb. He gives me easier work than the others. He keeps coming to me, just me” (Student I).

Attention from the teacher indicated to these Pasifika students, and the rest of the class, that the teacher thought they were not capable. In some situations the teacher would take over and do the work for the student. To the students this signalled that the teacher was indicating that they were dumb. One student said:

[The teachers] randomly come up to help us without asking. It is annoying. We can do it ourselves. They should wait. (Student A).

The students said they tried to tell their teachers but they would not listen. In one class three students said they were continually being singled out, despite them continually telling the teacher to go away:

I tell him to stay away but he keeps on coming (Student I).

Another student said that by doing this the teacher:

Doesn’t say it [dumb] but he treats me like it (Student L).

The students said they appreciated the teachers who listened to them. One student said:

In other classes the teacher asks if I am all right. In this class the teacher comes and does the work for me (Student I).

Students also felt that the teachers' continual repetition of instructions, or the nature of the instructions themselves, signalled that the students were stupid. For example:

Sit down and take your books out so you are told what to do even though you know what to do (Student F).

Yeah and then they repeat it like we are deaf or something. They think you don't know anything" (Student C).

One student summed up the feelings of the rest of the group when he said:

No one made me feel dumb at primary school. It was all good (Student K).

4.4 Corroborating the students perception of events

Observing the teachers' and the Pasifika students' many interactions in their classrooms meant I was able to corroborate certain events. One particular example related to a student's perception that their teachers did their work for them. This was evidenced in one class when the teacher approached a group of students who appeared to have completed little work. The teacher noted which question one of the students was working on and showed him how to complete it and the next question. The student turned to me and said "see Miss he's done it for us" (Student D). The students in this group were close to having completed the task and then raced through the remaining ones to show me they could do the questions easily. When I asked them what they wanted to tell the teacher they all agreed they wanted to be allowed do the work themselves and they wanted to be allowed to ask for help [from their friends first] rather than be singled out. Other incidences seen in the classroom observations will be discussed in the following chapter.

4.5 How the teachers reacted to the students perspectives

In the second teacher focus group interview the teachers heard their students' views. Some of the views surprised the teachers but they agreed that they appreciated the opportunity to hear them. Some of the teachers also said that the students' comments had made them think that they needed to look more carefully at their teaching practices. For example when they were told about their Pasifika students fear of being "singled out" one teacher acknowledged that he often unconsciously used this as a strategy:

I think I know this because I circle the room and stop by ones who aren't working so they will be shamed and start working. This is because when I was at school I never wanted the teacher near me so when the teacher started toward me I started doing my work. I don't think they are dumb but I did use that in a negative way (Teacher D).

These teachers were also concerned that they had misinterpreted their students' behaviours which they used as a guide to determine the tasks they asked of the students. For example:

I associated their behaviour with what they are able to do in the classroom. Because of their behaviour it makes me think they are not ready to be challenged. Maybe I needed to try more. I need to be a more efficient communicator. I need to know how to pitch the questions (Teacher E).

Maybe you do give your kids the challenging work and they do step up to the mark (Teacher C).

These teachers were also very concerned about the students feeling that they were being constantly berated in their school life:

I don't think it is the growling. I think it is the sense of freedom—the nagging—having that on your back all the time—they don't get that at home, constantly. I know I do that—nagging. It's a survival technique for us teachers but for them it is suffocating so they get home and they can go in their room and zone out all the noises (Teacher C).

It would be terrible to be yelled at everyday (Teacher D).

They were also willing to try and make changes:

I am normally reflective but stress has increased my emotions. I lumped them as a collective. It marred my whole view. I need to go back. I haven't enjoyed this term too much. This is the rocket—wake up call I needed. I forget that teaching is individual. These kids are individuals. (Teacher C).

Some of their behaviour makes me think they are 12 year olds but cognitively it's another thing. How do we get the behaviour to change? If we respect their mind more maybe the behaviour will change (Teacher E).

Some of the teachers, however, said that the students responses made no difference to their beliefs about their Pasifika students. These teachers were still convinced that these students needed to accept a shared responsibility for the behaviours in the classroom. Some of their comments include:

Well they know who did it. They should tell us. They don't take responsibility for how the class is running (Teacher B).

So it's all right to say when we teach them they are dumb but if they shared their knowledge then we wouldn't have to go round. We come around as that is the only way we get to know the level they are at. I mean that is our job—to find out what level they are at even if they have done it before or not (Teacher B).

They do carry baggage. I heard them talk about their brothers and girlfriends are beaten up at home (Teacher A).

An analysis of the teachers' beliefs and assumptions follows in the next chapter.

Chapter Five: Critical thinking about the meaning of the classroom interactions

5.1 Analysis: Why teachers are not getting it right

Each of the four subject classrooms [Science, English, Social Studies and Mathematics] exhibited a distinctive culture, identified by different student behaviours. In some classrooms engagement and learning was taking place and in others it was not. Behaviours ranged from poor behaviour where students were not engaged with their learning, to on-task behaviour where students were cognitively engaged with the subject matter. The students' types of behaviour and engagement with their learning were linked e.g., when behaviour was poor, engagement was also minimal. Where behaviour was good, engagement was high. However appropriate "on task" behaviour did not necessarily result in good learning. Students also needed to be *cognitively engaged* with the subject matter for good behaviour and good learning to occur. Also noticeable was that in every classroom, despite every effort from the teacher, behaviour and engagement regressed from initially being at least somewhat engaged to being disengaged by the middle to the end of the lesson.

What was happening in these classrooms to cause this disengagement? The teachers were trying very hard to engage their Pasifika students in their learning. The Pasifika students arrived at the classroom everyday ready to trust their teachers and learn from them. The teachers believed they were building culturally sensitive relationships with these students and identifying ways to support their learning. Yet despite their best intentions, and calling on all their teaching strategies, their Pasifika students were not learning.

This chapter will use the classroom observations, together with the mismatch of the teacher and student perceptions, to build the case that the teachers are not getting it right. To understand and think through the complex interactions and reactions that are involved I have used a metaphor as an analysis tool. The metaphor chosen is an enzyme reaction. The explanation of how this metaphor "works" follows.

The enzyme reaction

Enzymes speed up a reaction. In an enzyme reaction a substrate [a molecule on which an enzyme acts] binds to an active site on the enzyme and the reaction occurs. The reaction changes the substrate into a different substance now called a product which is released. The active site is now available to accept more substrate and the reaction continues until enough product has been made. Two things influence whether the reaction will proceed. First the substrate requires a certain amount of energy to bind at the active site and second an inhibitor can bind to the enzyme which stops the substrate from entering the enzymes active site. Enzymes are selective for their substrates and the concentration of the substrate must be correct for activity to occur. Enzyme reactions are complex and all the parts need to be present in the correct amount for the reaction to proceed.

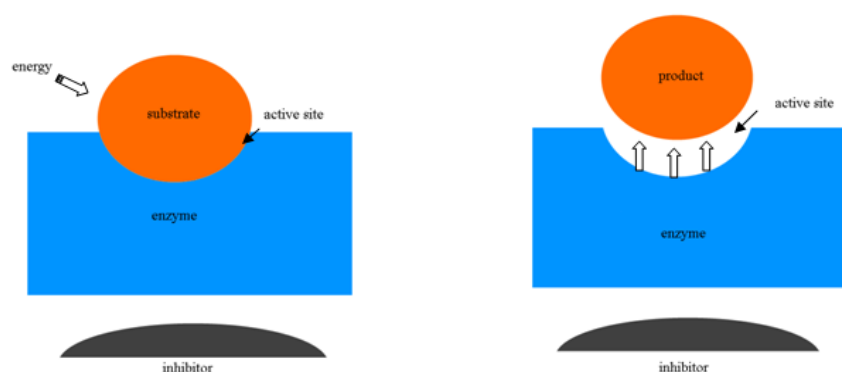


Figure 1: The enzyme reaction

For Pasifika learning if we imagine the enzyme as the teacher who holds the teaching strategies, the substrate as the Pasifika student then the active site is the connection of the teacher and the Pasifika student in the classroom and the product is the Pasifika student's learning. For Pasifika learning the teacher [the enzyme] must also have all three of the following teaching strategies: allowing Pasifika students respect as a learner; being able to scaffold Pasifika learning at the right level and engaging their Pasifika students in active learning. The Pasifika student [the substrate] must have confidence and trust in their teacher [the energy] to engage with the teacher at the active site. If these things are all in place the reaction occurs and good Pasifika learning [the product] results. The process is continuous [the product is being made constantly] throughout the lesson. To avoid the inhibitor the classroom teacher must have confidence in the Pasifika student's ability e.g., high expectations. If confidence in the Pasifika student's ability is low the teachers teaching strategies change and become ineffective.

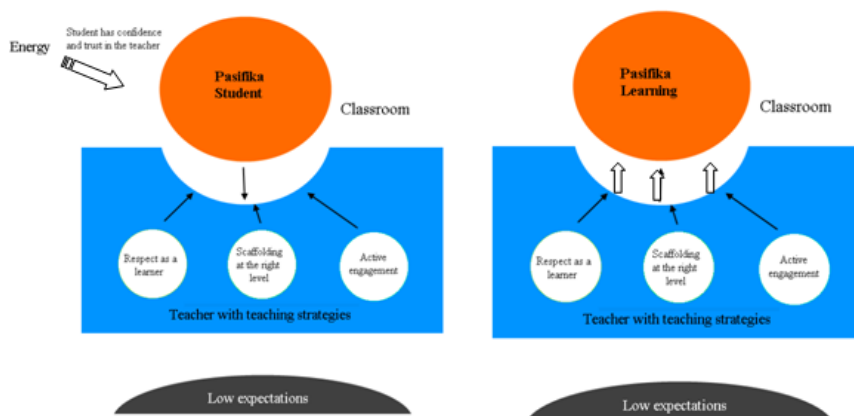


Figure 2: Pasifika learning

Why every one of these parts is important for Pasifika learning is explained by looking at what happens when pieces are missing and when teacher beliefs interrupt the system. How the absence of each part affects Pasifika learning in the classroom is described and explained in each of the following sections. Each section begins with a vignette that describes what was happening in the classroom. An analysis of the vignette using the enzyme metaphor follows. Finally a detailed analysis of why this particular set of instructions developed in the first place is then presented.

5.2 The energy

An enzyme requires energy to begin a reaction.

5.3 Vignette One

What the classroom looked like

Eighteen students [from a class of twenty three] entered the classroom and decided where they would sit [students continually moved seats throughout the hour long lesson]. Three boys began to play a game of cards despite many instructions from the teacher to put the cards away. The noise level was high. The teacher asked for students to take out their homework. No one responded. The teacher sent a student around the room with exercise books and paper [very few students had a book or pen] as he moved around the room giving each student a worksheet. The noise level continued so the teacher talked over the noise and gave the instruction that students were to complete the questions on the worksheet [revision from the previous lesson] and once finished there would be a game for the second activity.

Eight minutes into the lesson a few students had looked at the worksheet. Others were still talking to each other or playing on their cell phones. The teacher moved from student to student asking if they needed help and trying to persuade them to start. Many of the students did not respond to the teacher or acknowledge him. One student rocked back on his chair and averted his eyes. The teacher then asked the class to try just one question from the worksheet. He asked one student to help another. The student asked this student if he wanted help. The answer was no.

Twenty minutes into the lesson the teacher explained the second task. The teacher moved from group to group explaining how to do the second task. Fifteen minutes later three groups [about eight students] were working on the second task. Two students began the first worksheet. A group of five boys had their heads down but were discussing meeting after

school at the back of the gym. Not one of these boys had attempted either worksheet. Two of them were playing on their cell phones. On the other side of the room two boys were fun-fighting and another two were playing their own game. The noise level continued to increase.

Forty minutes into the sixty minute lesson the boys playing their own game got louder and louder. They began arguing with each other. The teacher moved to them and tried explaining the game. They ignored him. The teacher moved to the group of five who also ignored him. Many of the students refused the teacher's help. Eventually the teacher asked for the winners of each group. Students began leaving the classroom. They were called back. Others screwed up their paper and tossed it in the bin as they also left. Some students stayed by their desks until finally the bell rang.

Analysis of this vignette

Analysing what happened using the metaphor of the enzyme reaction, it appears that there was no “activating energy” present to get learning started. For Pasifika students to engage in their learning the teacher must like them. Pasifika students know when they don't.

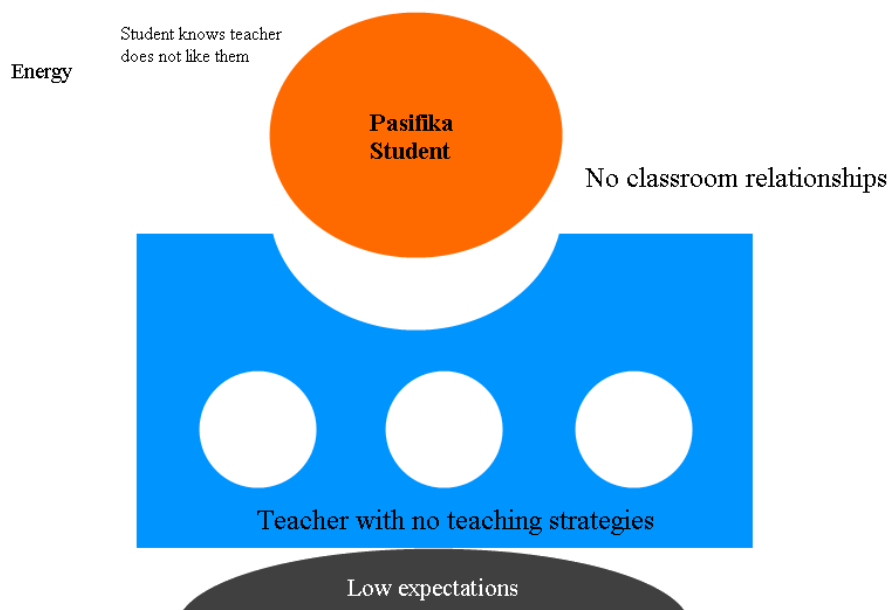


Figure 3: Enzyme is not reacting. Learning is poor

What was happening?

In this type of classroom the relationship between the teacher and the students was poor. Some students entered the classroom not intending to participate in the lesson at all. Those who did participate were soon deterred from their learning by the sabotaging

techniques of those who were disengaged. The students' poor behaviour occupied most of the teacher's time so that those students who were engaged, and in need of the teacher's expertise, did not receive it. Eventually the engaged students also became disengaged. Even the continual hard work of the teacher to provide interesting activities did not prevent this regression. So what had happened to cause such a poor relationship between the teacher and the Pasifika students?

The Pasifika students said they felt the teacher did not like them. They said they recognised dislike when the teacher: shouted at them; did not listen to them; used hurtful names; singled them out as "dumb"; and unjustly accused them of misbehaving. Normally Pasifika students would not show their disrespect. Instead they would use avoidance techniques, but these Pasifika students were deliberately using avoidance techniques to flout their disrespect. For them the situation had become unavoidable [they had tried to avoid class but were being picked up by senior management] so they reciprocated their teacher's dislike of them by showing their dislike in return.

Pasifika students show disrespect with actions

Pasifika culture values a social world where communication is about comprehending rather than speaking, and speech is respectful rather than self-expression. In Pasifika culture to show respect means to listen carefully and not speak. Interrupting or contradicting a teacher would be regarded as unacceptable. Pasifika students would only speak out if they felt there had been a miscarriage of justice but they will not interrupt the teacher. Instead they will wait for an opportunity to give their point of view. If no opportunity presents itself they will remain quiet. For Pasifika students, showing disrespect is done in a non vocal way such as ignoring their teacher, both when they talk to them and by their non participation. Both of these behaviours are recognized in this first vignette.

Despite knowing that these behaviours would prevent them from learning, some Pasifika students felt so hurt by their teacher's actions that they were willing to accept the consequences.

So why did this teacher get it so wrong?

Teachers get it wrong when they interpret Pasifika behaviours and values through their "palagi" lens. Teachers in this study believed that at school they held the position of authority for their Pasifika students, just as their parents did at home. This authority in the classroom was theirs by virtue of their position and they saw this belief as being affirmed by

Pasifika values. However teachers who hold such beliefs are misinterpreting what Pasifika people mean by authority and the responsibility Pasifika people place on this position. How this misinterpretation can arise is explained next.

Teachers misinterpret authority

The teachers in this study valued the rules of school because they believed that by following these rules their Pasifika students would succeed. At school they were the authority figure so they assumed they had the authority of a Pasifika parent. This allowed them to berate these students and to enforce punishments to change “inappropriate behaviour”. They assumed students would respond as expected at home. When told that Pasifika students were negatively affected by them raising their voice they responded by saying this was because:

...it brought back something they might have heard [at home] (Teacher A).

...can that be the subconscious of the student (Teacher E).

Rather than seeing such actions as an inappropriate way to change behaviour they explained their actions away by locating the problem elsewhere in the students’ lives. In fact they continued to insist that it was an appropriate method of managing poor behaviour:

If they are talking I will say two names [because they are talking to each other] stop talking and listen. If they do it again I will raise my voice (Teacher E).

Two of the other teachers agreed they would do the same.

The Pasifika students, however, did not want their teachers to act as if they were substitutes for their parents. They were very aware of the teachers’ assumed right to do this and they looked on it as an insult:

They are not our parents (Student E).

They disrespect us (Student F).

When the students were asked what message they wanted to give to their teachers they all agreed it would be:

Don’t treat us like you are our parents (Interview 1).

For Pasifika students the respect they afford their parents has been earned throughout their entire lives and continues to be earned. Teachers cannot expect to be granted this status by virtue of their job.

The Pasifika students were also reluctant to trust their teachers with personal aspects of their lives. One student explained:

[Teacher's] they're nosey.....they ask if there is anything happening at home and you are not going to tell her. She might go and tell the whole world (Student C).

It is not surprising that there was a trust issue between the Pasifika students and their teachers because, as outlined above, even when teachers were told that the students disagreed with their assumptions they still believed they were right.

So why, when this authoritarian stance does not work, and the Pasifika students' actions tell them so, do teachers still believe in their authority over these students? I wonder if it is because teachers are afraid of their Pasifika students. Afraid because they do not understand their behaviours and these students are mostly physically larger and louder than their non-Pasifika peers. I have noticed that teachers who have poor relationships with their Pasifika students seem to do everything they can to avoid confrontations. They allow students to move around the room as they please, attend the lesson with no equipment and ignore instructions. They accept off task behaviour and unacceptable behaviour towards them and other students. Sometimes teachers will also try to become a friend to their students, but for Pasifika students this just results in worsening behaviour and even less respect for the teacher. Delpit (2006) says that in Black classrooms teachers that become "chums" send the message that they have no authority and the children react accordingly. I believe the same is true for Pasifika students.

Pasifika students do expect their teachers to be the authority figure. They often complain that the teacher "can't control us" and there is "no discipline" in the class. However Pasifika people view authority and power differently to non Pasifika people. Authority is earned by personal efforts and exhibited by personal characteristics (Delpit, 2006). As one Pasifika teacher explains:

We are the person in authority. The teacher is the be—end and end—all. Because she went to school—she went to university—now she is the bomb—she knows everything—she might as well be Einstein in their eyes (Teacher C).

But teachers need to realize that authority in the classroom is not just there by virtue of their position. For Pasifika people being the "authority" is a respected position and needs continual effort.

Teachers misinterpret Pasifika parents' views of success

A second consideration is that schools and teachers often feel Pasifika parents do not support their children appropriately in their education. Yet Pasifika parents do want a good education for their children and they do everything they can to support them. Many Pasifika people migrated here especially because New Zealand was seen to provide greater educational opportunities for their children (Krishnan, Schoeffel and Warren, 1994). However the manner in which they support their children is where the misinterpretation occurs.

For Pasifika parents helping their children to be educated is done by supporting the teacher as the authority, the person with the knowledge that will be imparted to their son or daughter. They ensure their children are respectful to the teacher by listening and doing the work required. Non-Pasifika teachers read this differently. One teacher said:

At parent teacher interviews I always hear about the need to make sure my son or daughter is being respectful to you. They are not too worried about whether they are learning anything in class. So I think coming to school is the goal. It's not actually achieving anything. If you stay all the way through school you have done what you need to do so that way sometimes it is more social when you get here. That's why certificates aren't such a big deal for them just so long as no one rings up and says you have been misbehaving in class (Teacher D).

By contrast with their peers Pasifika teachers were aware that this form of respect by parents meant that Pasifika parents read good behaviour as achievement. In fact Pasifika parents could not understand when good behaviour did not result in success. One Pasifika teacher explained:

Even my Aunties and Uncles say I don't know why she fails because she's so good. She does everything. She ticks all the t's and they would compare that to someone who chats a lot (Teacher C).

This teacher was aware of the contradictions for Pasifika students:

Cheeky, chatting, laughing in the corner are qualities that don't associate with academic success in the eyes of our culture. In contrast to what we are trying to say here that chatting and being engaged are the qualities of a powerful learner. You can see it too when you don't "growl off" a student because they are learning when the quiet ones will notice (Teacher C).

This teacher recognized that Pasifika students were confused with the messages teachers send when in some situations they do not challenge students who are loud or noisy whereas in other situations they do. Even when Pasifika teachers can see the contradiction, they still

accept the non Pasifika way. By doing this these teachers have allowed the quiet nature of the Pasifika parent to indirectly lower their expectations for their Pasifika students.

Lowering expectations occurs because Pasifika parents trust and accept that the school and the teachers are helping their children to achieve. They believe this because the teachers have been chosen for this role and they have been given the expertise to make it happen. Parents do not challenge teachers' expertise. Yet not challenging either the teachers or the school allows both the teachers and the school to assume that poor learning for their Pasifika students is acceptable or expected. This lack of accountability also allows teachers to blame Pasifika values and deficits on Pasifika underachievement. They can abdicate their responsibility for the continued low level of achievement of Pasifika students by saying they entered with low levels of literacy. These teachers are already saying at Year 9

Some [Pasifika students] will really struggle because NCEA is so much a test of literacy and I think our kids struggle with literacy and they hide it by not doing any work (Teacher D).

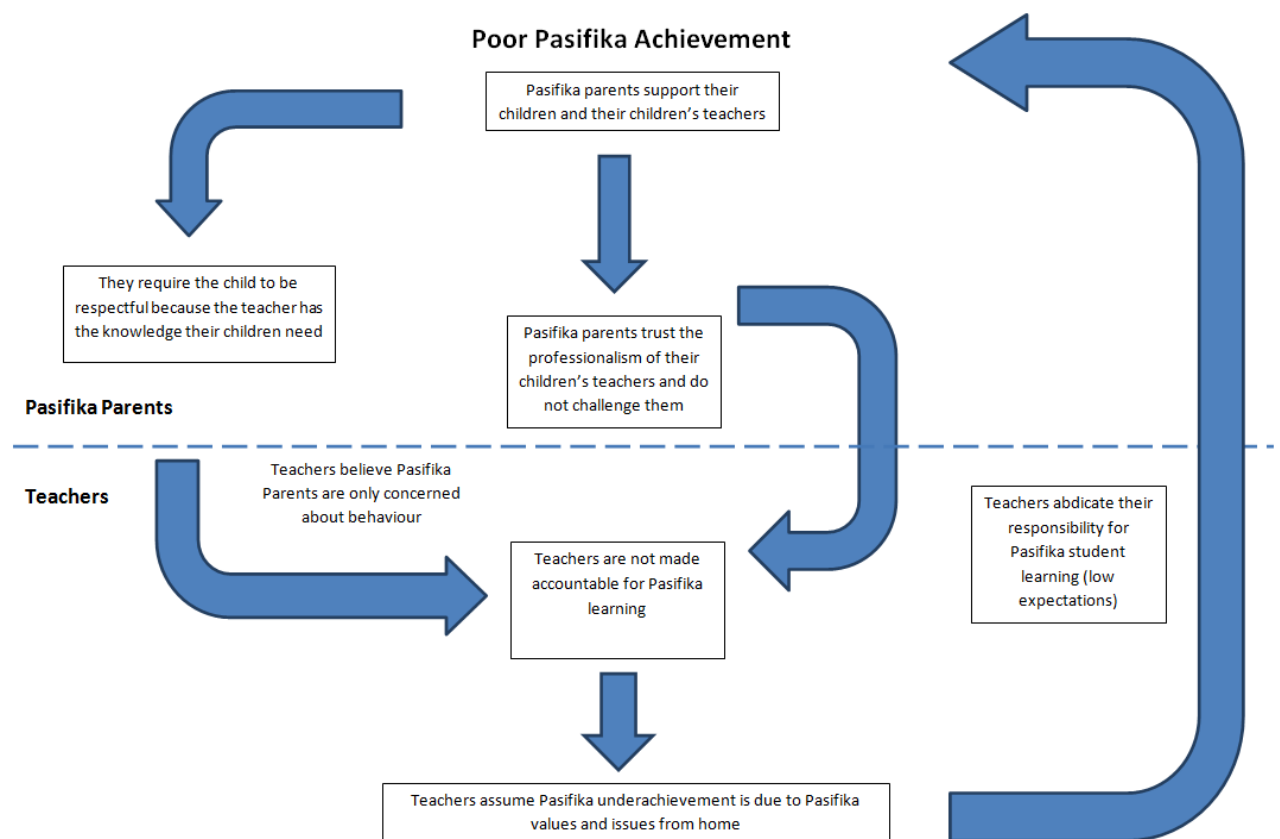


Figure 4: Cycle of poor Pasifika learning

For Pasifika people responsibility for the classroom belongs to the teacher and the teacher begins the year with total Pasifika respect (parents and students). For Pasifika students respect means liking. Pasifika students begin with total trust that their teacher likes them and wants them to achieve. It is the teachers who lose this trust. A relationship between the teacher and Pasifika student that is built on liking and trust is needed for Pasifika learning, but is that all that is needed? The next vignette suggests not.

5.4 When teaching strategies are missing

Assuming the activation energy is present what is the next thing needed for Pasifika learning?

5.5 Vignette Two

What the classroom looked like

Seventeen students entered the classroom. For the first activity the teacher had word-find sheets. Students complained as they collected them. The teacher explained that this activity was to settle them down. Some began working while others just drew pictures on the sheet. Ten minutes later the teacher gave the class instructions about the next activity. All the students listened. They knew what they needed to do. Throughout the lesson the students appeared to be working on their workbooks. Some asked each other and the teacher questions. Gradually the noise level rose. The teacher asked for quiet and called out the names of certain students asking how much “work” they had done. The teacher then moved to various students asking if she could help them. A few covered their work and said they were “OK”. Others told her to go away.

Ten minutes before the end of the lesson the teacher moved to two girls who had been working quietly the whole lesson and realized they were still doing the word find they had collected at the start of the lesson. One group of students had just been drawing pictures. Another student had spent the whole lesson copying the workbook of another. This workbook had been moving around the table and presented as lots of different students’ work when the teacher asked to see what they had done. The teacher called out the answers to the section of the workbook that was the focus of the day’s lesson. The lesson ended.

Analysis of this vignette

There appears to be “activating energy” to get learning started but there is little substance to the enzyme so the substrate does not connect properly to the active site and the reaction does not proceed.

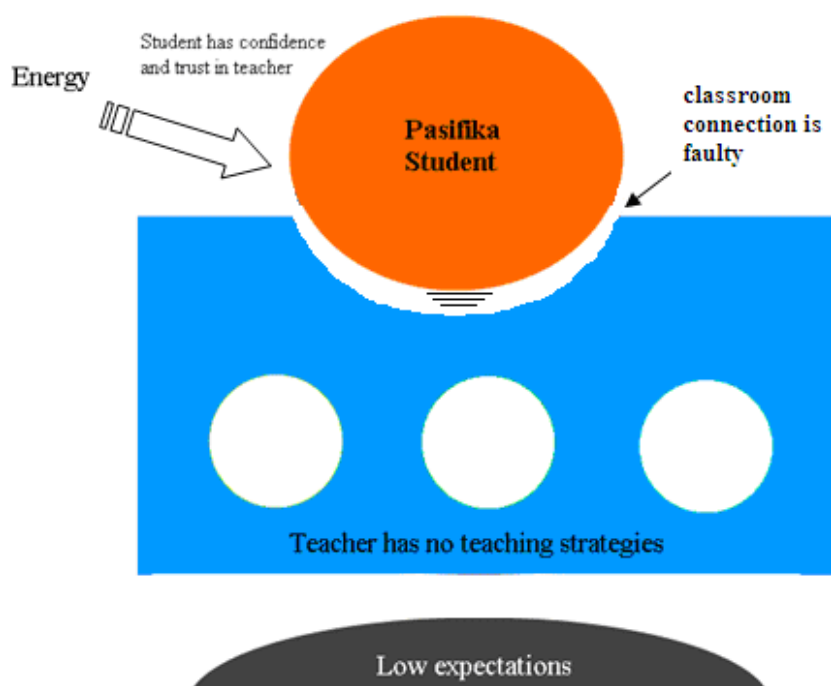


Figure 5: Enzyme connection is faulty. Learning is poor

What was happening?

In the lesson outlined in Vignette 2 the students recognized the teacher as the authority in the classroom. Students were mostly “on task” and behaviour was appropriate. However learning was poor. Some students tried engaging in the task while others opted out, although not obviously. As the lesson progressed even those who began well eventually opted out.

Teachers with this type of classroom felt they had “control” of the classroom, an appropriate relationship with the students, and that the learning was now the responsibility of the students. These teachers said they could not change the nature of the “work” the students needed to learn. That was “set” and therefore non negotiable. Teachers agreed that they are—and need to be—assessment driven. They felt their responsibility was to “control” the classroom so that learning toward these assessments could occur. One teacher said:

If we don’t demand they don’t learn (Teacher B).

Teachers were demanding their Pasifika students learn but the problem appeared to be *how* these Pasifika students and their teachers thought about what learning entails.

Why were teachers getting it wrong?

Teachers in this type of classroom talked about learning as doing “work”. As Jones (1991) found, Pasifika students see work as having a lot of notes written in your book. Teachers in this study also believed that having notes, mostly accumulated by completing work books, is a skill needed for learning. Students need this written record to remember things that will be examined at a later time. Pasifika students also believe that this is what learning entails because they trust their teachers and this is the method of teaching they are given. So Pasifika students believed their teachers were asking them for an “amount” that indicates learning for example:

You just want to make your book look like you did heaps of work (Student E).

You write them down (notes) but you still don’t understand them. You just want to be finished (Student F).

Note-taking is a problematic teaching strategy for a number of reasons. Pasifika students said that they could take notes while they talked and/or listened to their music. The teachers however felt that these behaviours indicated the students were not learning. The students felt frustrated that despite doing what the teacher had asked of them, their compliance was not recognized:

I feel annoyed cause she just looks at me but she doesn’t look at the sheet at the work you have actually done. She still says you are still talking (Student D).

Jones (1991) found that Pasifika students believed the notes held all the knowledge needed and it was their responsibility to know them. Pasifika students in this study agreed. For example when asked if getting all their notes written down meant they would pass their tests the students said this would be the case. If they failed they said it would be their own fault:

You need to use your notes wisely. If you don’t, you suck (Student E).

You’re not focusing. It’s not an open book test (Student C).

Because it means you don’t really want to learn (Student D).

Both the teachers and the students in this type of classroom believed responsibility for learning belonged with the students.

Yet teachers *know* this is not how Pasifika students like to learn or can learn successfully:

...[Pasifika students do not have the] self discipline or the skills to take notes, keeping books for revising or studying for exams (Teacher D).

They [Pasifika students] are good at doing things when you ask them like straight away or even comprehending but with revision a lot of that class would struggle with [taking notes] because of self discipline (Teacher D).

Nevertheless teachers still continue to make note-taking the major part of their lessons. Contrary to Jones' (1991) belief that the Pasifika students dictated this form of teaching as the one they would participate in, it was the teachers in my study who continued to enforce this model. These teachers appeared to hold no other model for teaching. They were sure that the one they were using was the way to success. They therefore read poor behaviour by Pasifika students as reluctance to learn. This caused the teachers to try to cajole these students and if this did not work they berated them. Pasifika students labelled this as bullying:

Then they move onto another student to bully (Student E).

So if teachers did have good teaching strategies would Pasifika achievement follow? The next vignette is used to explore this question.

5.6 Low expectations

If the enzyme is intact and the right amount of “activation energy” is present what else is needed for Pasifika learning?

5.7 Vignette Three

What the classroom looked like

The students entered the classroom excited. The teacher welcomed them all individually. She asked after students who were absent. She listened to their responses. Students settled into a seat and found their books and pens. The teacher informed them that the lists of tasks were written on the whiteboard. Students settled into the first task. The classroom was quiet. The teacher thanked them for their on-task behaviour. She reminded them again about what was expected and ran through the tasks a second and third time. She then explained what descriptive words were. Finally she discussed what students could use to complete the tasks.

A short time later the teacher handed out an instruction sheet. The students became restless but eventually settled again. The teacher continued to talk to the students encouraging them to produce more. She asked if anyone would like to share their work with the class. Some did. Near the end of the lesson the teacher recognized that some students had achieved very little. The teacher then said that “just two sentences” would be enough. Students stopped working and talking began. Ten minutes later the lesson ended.

Analysis of this vignette

Even when the enzyme is intact an inhibitor may attach to the enzyme and affect the ability of the enzyme to allow the substrate to connect properly. Teachers can possess good teaching strategies but can be influenced in their teaching practice by their assumptions of the ability level of their students.

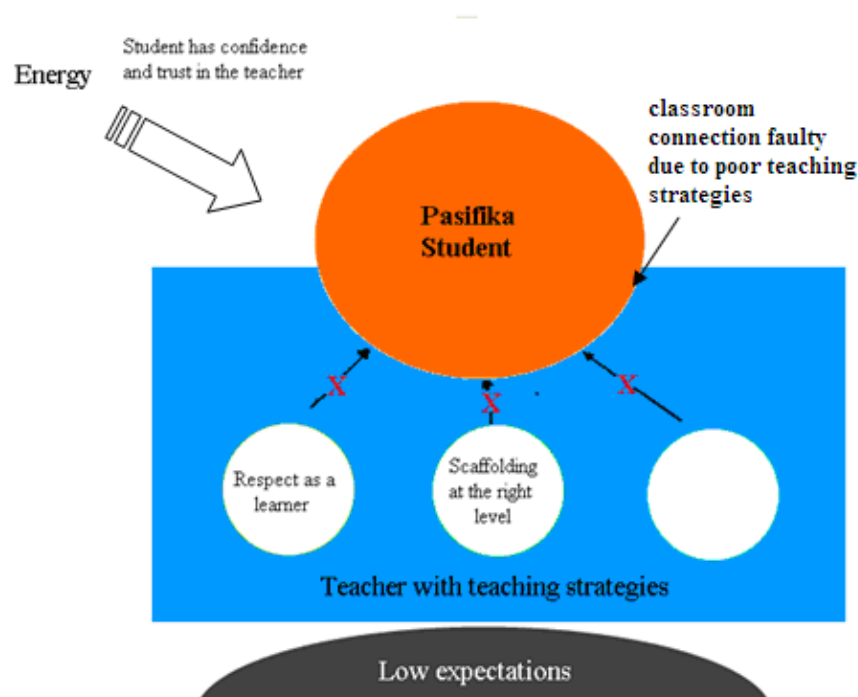


Figure 6: Enzyme reaction is inhibited. Learning is poor

What was happening?

In this classroom the students really liked their teacher and were trying very hard to “please” her. This teacher had a relationship with the students where there was mutual respect. So much so that in the lesson described above the students thought I was in the room to assess their teacher. They responded to this belief by being very quiet and attentive so she would be viewed positively.

This teacher knew about Pasifika feelings and did not allow the students to feel a “failure”. She worked very hard encouraging them to complete more:

I know you can do this work (Teacher C).

A boy like you can do heaps more (Teacher C).

She, as did some of the other teachers, also used many teaching strategies to help her Pasifika students with their learning. These included: one-on-one instruction for those they knew had problems; making sure the instructions were clear; giving instructions a number of times [verbally and written] to ensure all the students were aware of what was expected; breaking the work into small “bite sized” pieces so that the students would not be overwhelmed with too much to do at once; and making sure the work was do-able. Yet Pasifika student learning was still minimal.

So what was the teacher getting wrong?

At this school there was an emphasis on Guy Claxton’s idea of “learning power”. But in fact what was happening here is the opposite of his metaphor. These teachers believed their role was to help the students understand the assigned tasks and they worked very hard, using all the teaching strategies they knew, to help their students achieve. However the teaching strategies they were using were in fact saying to their Pasifika students that they [the teachers] didn’t think the students were capable of the work. How this interaction developed is explained next.

Lowering expectations

As stated previously, Pasifika students trust their teacher to set the right amount of learning for their academic achievement. However in some lessons the teacher would reduce the amount of work required from the students. In one lesson one teacher changed her expectation from one page to two sentences. When this teacher lowered her expectations the students relaxed. There was more off-task talking by those who had exceeded the expectation and the noise level changed the focus of the students who were still struggling to complete the two sentences. The concentrated effort of the class regressed to one of a casual effort. The teacher had signalled an expectation which many had exceeded so students felt they had permission to stop.

Other ways in which the teachers in the study signalled low expectations included: asking for homework but never acknowledging that it had been done; giving out pieces of

paper and watching students use it to draw graffiti, or allowing students to screw up their notes at the end of the lesson and throw them in the bin. They also lowered expectations when they mislead students into thinking that they were working at the correct academic level to their peers (refer p. 31).

Respect as a Learner

Pasifika students ask for an environment where they can learn. They expect the teacher to be the authority in the classroom and to ensure that they are not interrupted by their peers. However often it was the teachers who interrupted the learning environment. For example teachers in this type of classroom constantly encouraged on task behaviour:

[name] thank you for your participation (Teacher B).

[name] just to be sure you were paying attention what are we doing? (Teacher C).

However this meant the teacher was continually interrupting the students. They needed to be on guard and listening in case the teacher was giving them instructions. When the teacher constantly talked in class, the students said they had no space to think:

Sometimes when the teacher is talking when we are working, it is annoying (Student A).

Pasifika students want to do the work but they need time to process their thinking. They prove this by working hard in exams. Not just because exams are important to them but because it is a quiet space when they can work. Students said they try in the exams because:

[In the exams] there is no noise (Student D).

The teacher is not talking to you (Student E).

[In the exams there is] just silence. When it is quiet you can concentrate (Student C).

Pasifika students also ask to be respected as learners by allowing them to do the work for themselves. They accept challenge and will ask when they need support (refer p 36).

Scaffolding at the right level

It appears that the *tacit* views of the teachers in this study agree with the views of Rothstein-Fisch et al. (2010). Rothstein-Fisch et al. (2010) describes non western cultural communities as collectivist. In a collectivist pathway the ethno-theory is interdependence, group and family success and models of learning which include working in groups, observation and criticism. Therefore members of this cultural pathway learn best in groups,

orally and “hands on” or interactive with some challenge. However as Rothstein-Fisch et al. (2010) also say there are individual differences within and between groups especially in complex modern societies. No one person is either completely individualistic or collectivistic. Yet some teachers still seem to hold the complete collectivist view for their Pasifika students.

Teachers who adopted this view assumed this meant their Pasifika students did not like to be challenged e.g., singled out to answer questions or with work that they could not do. They thought that reluctance to participate in their lessons was a result of making the Pasifika student feel uncomfortable because the teacher had stretched them too far. Teachers in this situation changed their lesson to make the work “manageable”.

Teachers believed they were “scaffolding” their students by breaking the work down into bits and having little discussion work so Pasifika students were not “put on the spot”. However, without challenge, the Pasifika students were not motivated or engaged in their learning. These views are the opposite to those of Guy Claxton’s “learning power” which the teachers at this school follow. Guy Claxton (2002) says that to thrive in the twenty-first century students will need to have learnt how to be tenacious and resourceful, imaginative and logical, self-disciplined and self-aware, collaborative and inquisitive (p.3). To be this confident twenty-first century person students need to be *cognitively engaged* with their learning.

So what then does good Pasifika learning look like when students are *cognitively engaged* in their learning? The next vignette will explore this question.

5.8 The Product: Yes we have some Pasifika learning

When all the pieces are present, the substrate attaches to the enzyme and the reaction takes place. This reaction is a continual process, but can be interrupted if the conditions change.

5.9 Vignette Four

What the classroom looked like

The students entered the classroom noisily and excitedly. It took some time for them all to settle down at their tables. The teacher told them what they would be doing in the lesson. Students fiddled about while they listened. The lesson began and was interactive. The teacher had an example of food chains on a data screen and the students were answering and asking questions about it in this example. Each student who answered or asked a question got

the teacher's full attention. There was a lot of talking between the students about the subject and between the students and the teacher. Students were asked to do various tasks that drew on their own experiences. Some called out their experiences. Others wrote their ideas in their book. There was a lot of excitement in the room. These interactions continued for 30 minutes.

The teacher then handed out a worksheet with questions about a food web. The students did not know the organisms on the food web. The mood of the class changed. Some students made paper darts while others began to play music on their phones. The noise level increased. Little work was now being done.

Analysis of this vignette

When all the pieces are present the reaction begins: the “activation energy” is sufficient so the learning starts; the enzyme is complete so the teacher has the teaching strategies that support Pasifika learning; and there is no inhibitor because the teacher has high expectations and the teaching strategies work well for the students. The reaction continues: the energy remains high; all the parts remain active; and learning is produced.

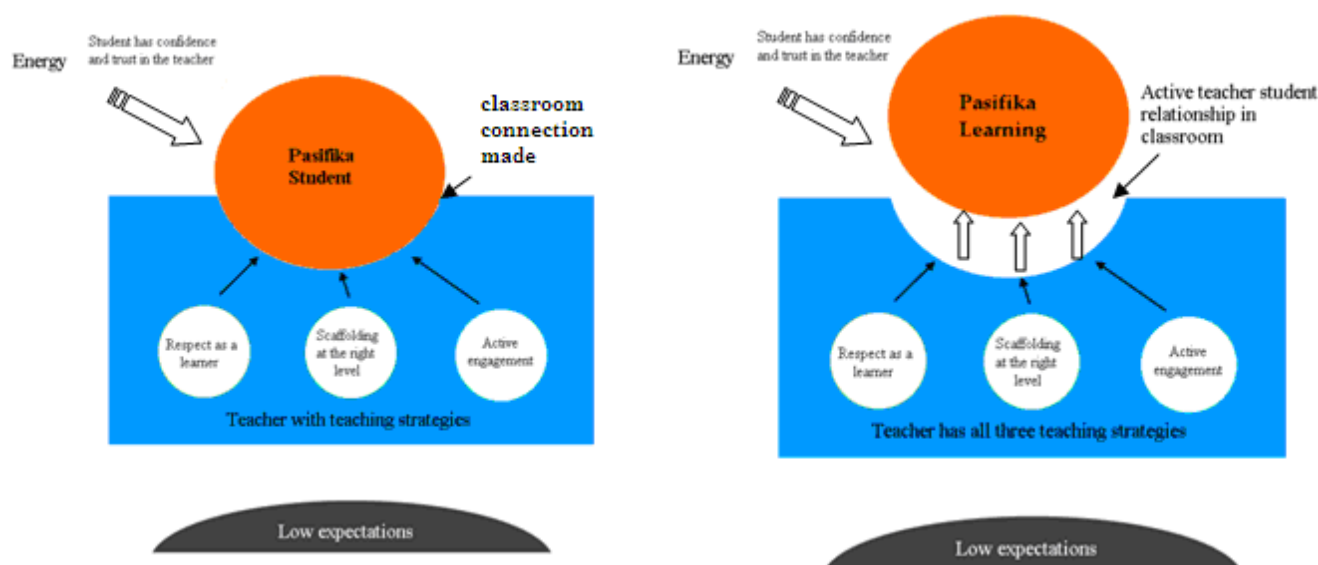


Figure 7: Enzyme is reacting. Learning is good

What was happening?

These students were interested in the material being taught and in the way it was presented to them. They talked about the videos and discussions were about “interesting things” (1st student interview). Despite the large volume of noise in the classroom the

students were actively engaged. Pasifika students were being given respect as learners. The classroom was a place where students wanted to learn. They felt confident giving their opinions and their contributions were valued and acknowledged by the teacher. They were scaffolded at the right level. The work was at a level that interested and engaged them i.e., Level 5 of the New Zealand Curriculum.

However when the teacher changed the lesson to a worksheet, learning slowed and in some cases stopped. When the teacher was asked why the worksheet was part of the lesson he explained it was department policy that all the students should know the information it contained [despite it being unrelated to their world] for common year-level examinations.

So why were the teachers changing what was going right?

The teachers all said that Pasifika students learnt best in groups, orally and “hands on” or interactive with some challenge. Yet despite knowing how Pasifika students learn these teachers still resorted to traditional teaching strategies such as word finds, tasks that were repetitive, worksheets, and chalk and talk when they were tired or unprepared. Even when the teachers knew their teaching strategies were not working for their Pasifika students they did not change their practice. They showed they were aware of Pasifika ways of learning but they agreed that the noise levels this type of learning involved would be more than they would accept in their classroom. In fact most teachers wanted a quiet classroom and this one classroom where the noise level was high was considered by the school management as an example of poor learning conditions. However this was the classroom in which all the Pasifika students said they were learning. One student said:

You want to talk about his work. That’s the only reason why we talk (Student C).
The teachers also knew about Pasifika values but did not respond to them. Knowing there was this inequality did not change any of the teachers’ actions. Pasifika students and their teachers both noted that non Pasifika students would always be helped first by the teachers. The teachers said that this was because the Pasifika students were less assertive than the non Pasifika students. One Pasifika teacher said:

The non Pasifika students just get on with it (Teacher C).
She also felt there was some cultural difference that was difficult to explain:

They’re [non Pasifika students] really assertive. With the other [Pasifika students] there is something stopping them from asking for help. Everyone else seems to wrap

it up in cotton wool before they let it out whereas [name of a non Pasifika student] just lets it out (Teacher C).

It seemed unusual that even *Pasifika* teachers knew that Pasifika students were less assertive, yet they did not recognize this behaviour as a learning barrier. These teachers knew that for Pasifika young people to be assertive is considered an aggressive and disrespectful behaviour. They said:

We [Pasifika culture] don't question adults. We don't sit above them. Children will always be sitting in the back (Teacher A).

It is a mark of respect to not question the person in authority. We are the person in authority (Teacher C).

Even though Pasifika teachers knew Pasifika students are not assertive they expected them to behave differently to their cultural norms. Why then, even when teachers read Pasifika behaviours correctly, do they not change their teaching practice? For these teachers not knowing *how* to change is probably the problem. Instead they abdicate their responsibility for these students, again blaming Pasifika values for poor behaviour and poor learning. This is also evident when Pasifika students show their teachers how they learn and teachers participate but the learning interactions become too difficult to sustain. This dilemma is discussed next.

Pasifika students show their teachers how they learn

When the students were asked “what learning looked like” they said it was something *they do* e.g., actively listening, sweating, talking with friends about the subject, in your head and asking questions. They were sure it was not sitting quietly absorbing information or copying notes. Even though Pasifika students did participate in this method, to them it was not how they learnt. This type of participation is not an indication of Pasifika ways of learning despite what previous research has suggested (Jones, 1991).

Teachers do recognise Pasifika “ways of learning” which they experience in small bursts in every lesson. For example, when Pasifika students are animated in discussions, respond to interactive teaching such as videos and games, and to being challenged, they are showing their teachers how they learn. In these activities they are not only participating but they are cognitively engaged with the material. Pasifika students do try to help their teachers get it right. For example one teacher said that some Pasifika students would give her tips when the class was off task, such as separating one student from others. The students said that

their teacher at Intermediate school did this and the student did very well. These students would also tell her when she let her annoyance get in the way of the lesson:

Miss you get too snappy and then forget what to do [and when the lesson had lost its impact they informed her it was] snooze material (Teacher C).

So why do teachers continue to ignore Pasifika ways of learning? I believe this happens because it is often easier to resort to traditional teaching methods (which are what most teachers have been taught) when teachers are tired, stressed or unprepared. Traditional teaching methods are also seen as acceptable forms of learning by non Pasifika students. Pasifika students do not respond to these teaching methods and if teachers can blame the Pasifika student for not participating and link it to Pasifika values, the problem does not lie with the teachers. Traditional teaching methods such as worksheets and word-finds can then still be viewed as acceptable teaching methods for them to use. I believe that Pasifika learning will only improve when teachers take full responsibility for their Pasifika students' learning and develop and use a wider range of teaching practices.

Chapter Six: What could change to enhance the learning opportunities for Pasifika students

6.1 Conclusion and Recommendations

What this research set out to do

This study set out to help teachers understand some of the “ways” of their Pasifika students so that they might build better relationships with them and better understand what was needed to support their learning. It aimed to allow teachers to hear how their words and actions were interpreted by their Pasifika students, and how these interpretations might have affected students’ learning. My aim was to help teachers to make changes to their teaching pedagogy. The teachers’ words and actions highlighted their assumptions and beliefs about Pasifika culture and learning, and it was these assumptions and beliefs, not the interpretation of them by Pasifika students, that were responsible for influencing relationships and learning for the students.

One starting point for the study was that if Pasifika students shared their understandings with their teachers they would see themselves more clearly as *being* learners. This was also disproved. This study found that Pasifika students already knew how they learnt and they were already telling this to their teachers. It was the teachers who were not hearing.

A summary of the analysis of classroom interactions

Overall findings were shaped as four vignettes and interpreted using the metaphor of an enzyme reaction. In summary, the analysis resulted in the shaping of the following claims.

In vignette one classroom there was no energy. The students knew the teacher did not like them. In terms of the enzyme metaphor they did not meet at the active site. Their relationship was poor. The teacher had low expectations of the students and his teaching strategies were poor and ineffective.

In the classroom of vignette two energy was present. The teacher liked the Pasifika students and there was an appropriate relationship between them in the classroom. However the teachers’ practice was poor and did not include the teaching strategies needed to support learning. In terms of the metaphor there was little substance to the enzyme, so the substrate

did not connect properly to the active site and the reaction did not proceed. The teacher also had low expectations of these students. Learning was poor.

In the classroom vignette three there was a good relationship between the teacher and the students. The students had confidence and trust in the teacher. However the teacher's low expectations of the students affected the teaching strategies used. The enzyme was intact but an inhibitor had attached to the enzyme, and this affected the ability of the enzyme to allow the substrate to connect to it. Learning was poor.

In the classroom in vignette four the relationship between the teacher and the students was good. The students had confidence and trust in the teacher. The teacher had good teaching strategies and confidence in the Pasifika students' ability. The substrate had attached to the enzyme and the reaction took place. Pasifika learning was happening, at least for a time.

How the findings differ from the views of previous research

This study supported the view of much previous Pasifika research (Samu, 2006; Siteine, 2010; Allen et al. 2008; Nakhid, 2006; Jones, 1991) that teachers need to build relationships with their Pasifika students for learning to occur. However I would qualify this by saying that the sort of relationship that the Pasifika students and their teachers believe is needed, must change. The teachers believed that learning about their Pasifika students' lives and culture would help build relationships and better learning would occur. By contrast Pasifika students said teachers just needed to like them and believe in their ability to succeed. In fact Pasifika students showed they had already experienced what they needed in some classes. They described relationships that worked simply as "They (the teachers) are kind, don't raise their voice, know how we feel and made you feel you could do it" (many responses).

Teachers were getting their interpretations of Pasifika culture wrong. They believed they needed to know about cultural home life to understand their Pasifika students. However Pasifika students said, although they appreciated their teacher's interest in them, they were not willing to share their personal details. This is not surprising when in many aspects of their lives Pasifika students are afforded adult responsibilities and already have many adult relationships. As Delpit (2006, p.29) has already noted in the words of one Black parent said "My kids know how to be black—you all teach them how to be successful in the white man's world". Pasifika students and their families are saying the same.

Teachers also interpreted Pasifika culture incorrectly when they assumed they were entitled (at school) to the same respect and authority as the Pasifika parent, without making specific efforts to gain that respect. Yet when Pasifika students struggled to understand in this culture of power (Delpit, 2006) teachers blamed Pasifika values and abdicated their responsibility for their Pasifika students' learning. Because Pasifika parents did not challenge the teachers, teachers believed they were not accountable for Pasifika underachievement. They justified lowering their expectations of these students e.g., "I do think there is very little confidence in their academic ability from them" (Teacher D). This perpetuates a downward spiral of poor pedagogy and poor behaviour. The teachers in this study were allowing their cultural assumptions to influence their professional pedagogy in ways that acted to impede students' learning.

For much existing research (Sanga, 2009; Fua, 2009; Thaman, 1993; Gegeo & Gegeo, 2000) good Pasifika pedagogy is described in terms of understanding a Pasifika way of learning. However in my study assumptions about a Pasifika way of learning had resulted in poor teaching for Pasifika students. Pasifika students were subjected to repetition, detailed control, no challenge, boredom and they experienced interactions with their teacher as showing little confidence of them as a learner. However they did engage when lessons were scaffolded at the right level, when the material was interesting and at the appropriate level, and when they were given the right amount of challenge. These are all aspects of good teaching practice. So "Pasifika ways of learning" could simply involve the use of good pedagogy.

Also reflecting on the belief that Pasifika students needed to bring their ways to the classroom, to help their teacher see what they could not understand, this study found that Pasifika students were already showing their teachers their "Pasifika ways of learning". The Pasifika students, as also shown by the Achievement in Multicultural High Schools (AIMHI) project (Hill & Hawk, 2000) and the Te Kotahitanga (Bishop et al. 2003) research, were very knowledgeable about their learning needs and how well these were being met, or not. However they used actions rather than words to display their meaning. They showed their "ways of learning" when they engaged with certain teaching styles and not others. They showed their Pasifika values when they remained loyal to teachers, returning to class everyday even when they were finding the experience difficult. Pasifika students know only

what they experience in front of them e.g., the pedagogies of their teachers. They have no other comparison. Therefore they can only relate their feeling by saying the work is “boring”.

The teachers are the professionals. The use of a good teaching pedagogy, as well as building trust and high expectations in their students, is central to their job. When they could see that what they were doing was not working, why did they carry on as usual? Teachers were not “listening” to their Pasifika students. They perceived the problem of Pasifika underachievement through the lens of their own learning experiences. They used teaching pedagogy that had been used with to them and they believed this works. This traditional teaching pedagogy was confirmed to them as “correct” by the achievement of their non Pasifika students, by their colleagues who participate in the same pedagogy, and by the school who rewarded this way of learning.

Where to next for teachers?

Current Pasifika research seems to focus on looking at traditional Pasifika ways of learning to find an answer for low achievement among Pasifika students. Non-Pasifika research seems to see the solution as teachers learning about their Pasifika students’ lives. Yet neither of these approaches seems to make a difference for Pasifika student achievement. This study has shown that what does make a difference is the employment of good pedagogy by teachers who like and believe in their Pasifika students’ abilities to succeed in this palagi education system.

What this means is:

- Teachers need to accept that they are responsible for the learning of the Pasifika students in their classrooms. They cannot abdicate this responsibility. They must teach these students to succeed in this education system right here and now.
- Teachers need to accept that Pasifika culture is different and special but it is not necessary for them to know all about it. Pasifika students and their parents respect the teacher for their subject expertise, not their knowledge of the Pasifika culture.
- Teachers need to be good teachers. They need to know how to demonstrate respect for their students as learners, to challenge their students, and engage and scaffold their learning at the right level.
- Teachers need to actually like their Pasifika students and believe they have the ability to succeed in the current palagi education system.

- Teachers need to be honest about the current level of achievement of each Pasifika student. They then need to develop teaching strategies that support students to improve quickly.
- Teachers need to learn to listen to their Pasifika students by correctly reading their actions so they know when they must adjust their practice.

What Pasifika students recommend to their teachers

This study has already said that the “Pasifika ways of learning” are not much different from good pedagogy. Pasifika students agree. They list three main ways that teachers need to act for good Pasifika pedagogy. The first is that the teacher needs to be the respected authority in the classroom. Pasifika students say they need their teacher to be in charge so that everyone can learn. When the teacher is the respected authority in the classroom, these Pasifika students say life is more equitable and consequences are consistent and fair.

Second Pasifika students ask that the teacher treat every student as an individual, with different personalities and needs, so that injustices such as being blamed and not being believed are eliminated. Pasifika students say that teachers who show them respect as a person, speak quietly to them, listen attentively to them when they have something they want to say, and respond with respect to their ideas and questions.

Third Pasifika students say they want a learning environment where: they have space to think; they are allowed to do the work for themselves; and the work is challenging. They ask that they are not singled out for help. They will ask for help when they need it and they want to be allowed to ask their friends first. They want their lessons to be active, for example by using games, discussions and videos. Lastly they ask that in their learning they be shown the whole picture and not just be taught the work in bits.

What this means for researchers and policy makers

Good teaching pedagogy as a means of improving achievement is not new or particularly radical as Alton-Lee (2003) states in the Best Evidence Synthesis report. However what is new in my study is the finding that teachers’ beliefs about “Pasifika ways of learning” are impeding progress, not contributing to it. This implies that continues to look for “Pasifika ways of learning” may not be helpful.

What is needed first is a focus on what is important for Pasifika students to learn. If improvement in Pasifika learning begins with teachers making sure that the basics [I take this

to mean reading and writing skills] are learnt well then research and policy needs to explore how this can be done efficiently and with dignity for Pasifika students. As well as starting with the basics, there could also be research which looks at what learning skills and/or what subject knowledge is important for Pasifika students to know to become the “actively, engaged, lifelong learners” the New Zealand Curriculum asks its citizens to become. The students need to be challenged and to see how their learning connects to their lives.

Of equal importance is research and policy which explores successful Pasifika teaching practices in New Zealand schools. If there are presently examples of teaching practices that encompass all the criteria for “Pasifika ways of learning”, and that both the teachers and the students agree are successful, we need to be highlighting and learning from them.

Finally policy makers need to provide professional development for teachers that allows them to recognise how some of their own tacit and expressed beliefs could be acting to impede Pasifika students’ learning. It is only when they are able to see the barriers to Pasifika learning that they will then see what good Pasifika pedagogy looks like.

The final statement

Being Pasifika is an honour. It allows those who are Pasifika to know and live with the special values and traditions that the culture holds. Being a Pasifika student in New Zealand is even more special and unique because it allows Pasifika students to have the best of both worlds. They not only have the advantage of living in the special Pasifika way but they also have the advantage of gaining a Western education which allows them to compete in the international world. Many Pasifika students are already living in both these worlds. However they are struggling to live in both worlds that this study and others like it need to be heard. It is time for Pasifika research to look at the *detail* of actual Pasifika learning in real classrooms so that every classroom in New Zealand can be taught to be a teacher who knows how to provide the learning environment needed for all Pasifika students to succeed.

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Appendix One: First Student Focus Group Interview Questions

[Informed from class observations]

1. What is similar about how you are treated at school and at home?
2. What is different about how you are treated at school and at home?
3. What things do your teachers do that affect your learning? Are there any things that you can remember from the previous times?
4. What does it mean to fail at school? If your teacher says you can't do the work do you think they are right?
5. What does your teacher need to do to help understand you better? What could you do to help your teacher understand you better?
6. Are Pasifika teachers more helpful to your learning than non Pasifika teachers?
7. What does being a good learner look like? What do your teachers think learning is?
8. What does poor behaviour look like? Why do students engage in poor behaviour?

Appendix Two: First Teacher Focus Group Interview

Questions

[Questions are informed from: class observations; informal interviews and; from the first student focus group interview. Students comments that shaped the questions are in brackets.]

1. Which students in this class would you say will pass NCEA Level 1? How important is failure to Pasifika students? [Everyone in the class is capable of passing their exams].
2. Do Pasifika students learn differently to non Pasifika students? In what way? [We need to talk to learn. Writing doesn't mean learning.]
3. Are teaching strategies different for Pasifika students than for non Pasifika students? [Teachers come to us when we haven't asked them to-they think we are dumb. They give out lots of instructions-they think we don't know anything.]
4. Do Pasifika students need different strategies to "control" behaviour than non Pasifika students? [When teachers shout it means they don't like us.]
5. Does Pasifika home life impact on Pasifika student achievement? How? [We can be naughty because they choose to.]
6. How influenced are Pasifika students by their peers? [Teachers are always picking on (names of certain boys).]
7. How important is it to be a Pasifika teacher for these students? [Being a young teacher is more important than being Pasifika. Pasifika teachers think you should not shame your culture.]
8. What could you do to help understand your Pasifika students better? What could your Pasifika students do to help you to understand them better?

Appendix Three: Second Student Focus Group Interview

[Questions 1 to 6 are the teacher responses reported back to the students.]

1. You are ashamed to show your good marks in front of your peers [fiapopo].
2. At school you have freedom that is why you misbehave.
3. You are too shy in class to ask questions. Not asking questions is also a sign of respect.
4. To avoid failure you just don't do the work. You are afraid to make mistakes because at home and at Sunday school you always have to get everything correct.
5. You like to have your lessons in small bits. Once you know this then you can move on.

These questions were not reported back as teacher understandings.

6. When the teacher speaks to you in your own language does it help you?
7. What does trying hard in class look like to you? What do you think it looks like for the teacher?
8. Do your teachers have high expectations of you? [Teachers say they have high expectations so they expect a lot of work from you.]
9. Do your teachers believe you can pass your exams? Do they help you to pass? Do you trust your teachers to give you all the work you need to pass your exams?

Appendix Four: Feedback from students to Teachers Second Focus Group Interview

1. How did you feel the last time we talked?

Feedback from the students about what you got right.

2. They agreed that they don't like getting certificates in assembly "too many eyes" but it is OK to get them in class. They said it was "cool to be smart" and "sad to be low".
3. They are afraid to fail. That is why they try in exams. They like it in the exams because it is quiet and they can think.
4. They do accept that they can't change their exam mark which is why they don't look back.

What the students say you got wrong.

5. They have more freedom at home than at school. At home they can walk away from a lecture. They can play their music at home.
6. They are not too shy to ask questions. It is how to learn.
7. They don't like the work in little bits. They want more challenge. They don't like repetitive questions where they already know the answer.
8. Learning is "actively listening, sweating, talking with friends about the subject, in your head and asking questions". Students want more discussions and talking. Noise is OK.

What the students also want to tell you.

9. They don't like it when you shout at them.
10. They don't like it when you come to them when they have not asked for your help.
11. They don't like being unjustly accused and that you punish the whole class.

Participant Information Sheet for the Study

“Teachers words and actions that affect the learning of their Pasifika students”

Researcher: Lorraine Teuila Spiller: School of Te Kura Māori Victoria University of Wellington.

Dear participant (students name),

I am a Masters student in Education at Victoria University of Wellington. As part of this degree I am researching a thesis about the effect of the interpretations of words and actions by teachers on the learning of their Pasifika students. This research will help build understanding about the Pasifika student's learning identity and help teachers better support and implement strategies to improve Pasifika achievement. It is also hoped that through these understandings Pasifika students may see themselves differently and that this might help them suggest changes in the development of their own learning identity.

The research will involve my observation of five Year 9 Pasifika student participants and their teachers during their core and option classes twice a week for six weeks. During the observation period the five students will be observed in their core classes and during option classes a different student or students will be observed each time until all option classes have been observed. I will be looking for behaviours, words and attitudes from incidents in the class that have stopped the student participants learning such as comments about not understanding/closing their book/body language etc. I will also be taking notes of the events that led up to this incident and the events that follow. The aim is to discover what shared meanings Pasifika students and their teachers give to certain words and actions and which meanings are different.

This letter is to invite you to be a participant in this study. Participation is voluntary. If you do participate you may withdraw from the study without question or penalty at any time before the data is analysed.

What is being asked of you?

You will be asked to attend two focus group interviews of one hour each with your peers. These interviews will be held at lunchtimes and food will be provided. The teacher focus group interviews will be held after school. At these interviews you will discuss how you and then how the other group has interpreted the words and actions selected from the observation phase. You will discuss and reflect on your and their interpretations and decide how you might understand each other better. As a group you will decide what meanings you will relate back to the student group.

I as the researcher will act as mediator between both groups. To ensure individuals are not identified I will relay the information as the group consensus. Each group will have input into how the information is reported. To ensure no discomfort or harm to any of the participants I as the researcher will be particularly vigilant and constantly conferring with my supervisor about any possible problems that might arise during this phase of the study. Student participants will be asked not to use teachers' names in their discussions and similarly teachers will be asked not to use students' names. Participants will also be required to sign a confidentiality clause on the consent form. At the end of the study all participants will receive a summary of the results.

Ethics and confidentiality

During the interviews I will be using a tape recorder. The tape will not be transcribed but selected quotes may be used. These quotes and the written report from the research will be on an anonymous basis except that the teachers and students in the research will be aware of each other. All material collected will be kept confidential. No other person besides me and my supervisor, Dr Kabini Sanga, will see the notes which will be kept in a locked file and all electronic material will be kept in a pass-word protected file that is accessible only by the researcher. The thesis will be submitted for marking to the School of Te Kura Māori Victoria University of Wellington and deposited in the University Library. It is intended that one or more articles will be submitted for publication in scholarly journals. All recordings and notes will be destroyed five years after the end of the study.

This research has been approved by the Victoria University Faculty of Education Ethics Committee. If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the study, please contact me at lorraine.spiller@nzcer.org.nz or my supervisor, Dr Kabini Sanga, at the School of Te Kura Māori VUW, phone 4639500 or email kabini.sanga@vuw.ac.nz or the Chair of the Ethics Committee at Victoria University Dr. Allison Kirkman at allison.kirkman@vuw.ac.nz.

Lorraine Spiller

Parent/caregiver Information Sheet for the Study **“Teachers’ words and actions that affect the learning of their Pasifika students”**

Researcher: Lorraine Teuila Spiller: School of Te Kura Māori Victoria University of Wellington.

Dear parent/caregiver (name),

I am a Masters student in Education at Victoria University of Wellington. As part of this degree I am researching a thesis about the effect of the interpretations of words and actions by teachers on the learning of their Pasifika students. This research will help build understanding about the Pasifika student's learning identity and help teachers better support and implement strategies to improve Pasifika achievement. It is also hoped that through these understandings Pasifika students may see themselves differently and that this might help them suggest changes in the development of their own learning identity.

The research will involve my observation of five Year 9 Pasifika student participants and their teachers during their core and option classes twice a week for six weeks. During the observation period the five students will be observed in their core classes and during option classes a different student or students will be observed each time until all option classes have been observed. I will be looking for behaviours, words and attitudes from incidents in the class that have stopped the student participants learning such as comments about not understanding/closing their book/body language etc. I will also be taking notes of the events that led up to this incident and the events that follow. The aim is to discover what shared meanings Pasifika students and their teachers give to certain words and actions and which meanings are different.

This letter is to invite your child to be a participant in this study. Participation is voluntary. If your child agrees to participate he/she may withdraw without question or without penalty of any sort at any time before the data is analysed.

What is being asked of your child?

He/she will be asked to attend two focus group interviews of one hour each with the other student participants. These focus group interviews will be held at lunchtimes and food will be provided. The teacher focus group interviews will be held after school. At these interviews the student participants will discuss how they and then how the teacher group has interpreted the words and actions selected from the observation phase. They will discuss and reflect on the teachers and their interpretations and decide how they might understand each other better. As a group they will decide what meanings they will relate back to the teacher group.

I as the researcher will act as mediator between both groups. To ensure individuals are not identified I will relay the information as the group consensus. Each group will have input into how the information is reported. To ensure no discomfort or harm to any of the participants I as the researcher will be particularly vigilant and constantly conferring with my supervisor about any possible problems that might arise during this phase of the study. Student participants will be asked not to use teachers names

in their discussions and similarly teachers will be asked not to use students names. Participants will also be required to sign a confidentiality clause on the consent form. At the end of the study all participants will receive a summary of the results.

Ethics and confidentiality

During the interviews I will be using a tape recorder. The tape will not be transcribed but selected quotes may be used. These quotes and the written report from the research will be on an anonymous basis except that the teachers and students in the research will be aware of each other. All material collected will be kept confidential. No other person besides me and my supervisor, Dr Kabini Sanga, will see the notes which will be kept in a locked file and all electronic material will be kept in a pass-word protected file that is accessible only by the researcher. The thesis will be submitted for marking to the School of Te Kura Māori Victoria University of Wellington and deposited in the University Library. It is intended that one or more articles will be submitted for publication in scholarly journals. All recordings and notes will be destroyed five years after the end of the study.

This research has been approved by the Victoria University Faculty of Education Ethics Committee. If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the study, please contact me at lorraine.spiller@nzcer.org.nz or my supervisor, Dr Kabini Sanga, at the School of Te Kura Māori VUW, phone 4639500 or email kabini.sanga@vuw.ac.nz or the Chair of the Ethics Committee at Victoria University Dr. Allison Kirkman at allison.kirkman@vuw.ac.nz.

Lorraine Spiller

Information Sheet for the Study
“Teachers’ words and actions that affect the learning of their Pasifika students”

Researcher: Lorraine Teuila Spiller: School of Te Kura Māori Victoria University of Wellington.

Dear Principal/Board of Trustees,

I am a Masters student in Education at Victoria University of Wellington. As part of this degree I am researching a thesis about the effect of the interpretations of words and actions by teachers on the learning of their Pasifika students. This research will help build understanding about the Pasifika student's learning identity and help teachers better support and implement strategies to improve Pasifika achievement. It is also hoped that through these understandings Pasifika students may see themselves differently and that this might help them suggest changes in the development of their own learning identity.

The research will involve my observation of five Year 9 Pasifika student participants and their teachers during their core and option classes twice a week for six weeks. During the observation period the five students will be observed in their core classes and during option classes a different student or students will be observed each time until all option classes have been observed. I will be looking for behaviours, words and attitudes from incidents in the class that have stopped the student participants learning such as comments about not understanding/closing their book/body language etc. I will also be noting the events that led up to this incident and the events that follow. The aim is to discover what shared meanings Pasifika students and their teachers give to certain words and actions and which meanings are different.

Participants (teachers, students and their parents/caregivers) selected by the Principal will be invited to a meeting to hear about the study and be given an introduction letter. Those that agree to participate will sign a consent form (students will also be required to gain consent from their parent/caregiver) and may withdraw from the study without question or penalty at any time before the data is analysed. Participants will also be asked to sign a confidentiality clause.

The participants will be asked to attend two focus group interviews of one hour each with their peers (students and teachers separately) to be held at the lunchtimes for the students and after school for the teachers. Food will be provided. At these interviews they will discuss how they and then how the other group has interpreted the words and actions selected from the observation phase. They will discuss and reflect on the interpretations and decide how they might understand each other better. I as the researcher will act as mediator between the groups. To ensure individuals are not identified I will relay the information as the group consensus. Each group will have input into how the information is reported. To ensure no discomfort or harm to any of the participants I as the researcher will be particularly vigilant and constantly confer with my supervisor re any possible problems that might arise during this phase of the study. Student participants will be asked not to use teachers names in their discussions and similarly teachers will be asked not to use students names. Participants will also be

required to sign a confidentiality clause on the consent form. All participants will receive a summary of the results of this research when it is completed.

Ethics and confidentiality

During the interviews I will be using a tape recorder. The tape will not be transcribed but selected quotes may be used. These quotes and the written report from the research will be on an anonymous basis except that the teachers and students in the research will be aware of each other. All material collected will be kept confidential. No other person besides me and my supervisor, Dr Kabini Sanga, will see the notes which will be kept in a locked file and all electronic material will be kept in a pass-word protected file that is accessible only by the researcher. The thesis will be submitted for marking to the School of Te Kura Māori Victoria University of Wellington and deposited in the University Library. It is intended that one or more articles will be submitted for publication in scholarly journals. Published results will not identify the school or the participants involved in the research. All recordings and notes will be destroyed five years after the end of the study.

This research has been approved by the Victoria University Faculty of Education Ethics Committee. If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the study, please contact me at lorraine.spiller@nzcer.org.nz or my supervisor, Dr Kabini Sanga, at the School of Te Kura Māori VUW, phone 4639500 or email kabini.sanga@vuw.ac.nz or the Chair of the Ethics Committee at Victoria University Dr. Allison Kirkman at allison.kirkman@vuw.ac.nz.

Lorraine Spiller

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH

“Teachers’ words and actions that affect the learning of their Pasifika students”

Please tick the boxes to indicate that you agree with the statements and sign the confidentiality clause and agreement to participate at the bottom of the page.

- ☐ I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research study.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself (or any information I have provided) from this study (before data collection and analysis is complete) without having to give reasons or without penalty of any sort.
- ☐ I understand that any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor.
- ☐ The published results will not use my name and no opinions will be attributed to me in any way that will identify me.
- ☐ I understand that the tape recordings of interviews and classroom activities will be destroyed 5 years after completion of the project.
- ☐ I understand that I will receive a summary of the results of this research when it is completed.

I agree to take part in this research and to keep all the information from discussions

confidential.....

Or I agree that, who is under my guardianship, may take part in this research and will keep all information from discussions in this research confidential.

Signed:

Name of participant

(Please print clearly)

Date

Information Sheet for the Study "Teachers words and actions that affect the learning of their Pasifika students"

Researcher: Lorraine Teuila Spiller: School of Te Kura Māori Victoria University of Wellington.

Dear Principal/Board of Trustees,

I am a Masters student in Education at Victoria University of Wellington. As part of this degree I am researching a thesis about the effect of the interpretations of words and actions by teachers on the learning of their Pasifika students. This research will help build understanding about the Pasifika student's learning identity and help teachers better support and implement strategies to improve Pasifika achievement. It is also hoped that through these understandings Pasifika students may see themselves differently and that this might help them suggest changes in the development of their own learning identity.

The research will involve my observation of five Year 9 Pasifika student participants and their teachers during their core and option classes twice a week for six weeks. During the observation period the five students will be observed in their core classes and during option classes a different student or students will be observed each time until all option classes have been observed. I will be looking for behaviours, words and attitudes from incidents in the class that have stopped the student participants learning such as comments about not understanding/closing their book/body language etc. I will also be noting the events that led up to this incident and the events that follow. The aim is to discover what shared meanings Pasifika students and their teachers give to certain words and actions and which meanings are different.

Participants (teachers, students and their parents/caregivers) selected by the Principal will be invited to a meeting to hear about the study and be given an introduction letter. Those that agree to participate will sign a consent form (students will also be required to gain consent from their parent/caregiver) and may withdraw from the study without question or penalty at any time before the data is analysed. Participants will also be asked to sign a confidentiality clause.

The participants will be asked to attend two focus group interviews of one hour each with their peers (students and teachers separately) to be held at the lunchtimes for the students and after school for the teachers. Food will be provided. At these interviews they will discuss how they and then how the other group has interpreted the words and actions selected from the observation phase. They will discuss and reflect on the interpretations and decide how they might understand each other better. I as the researcher will act as mediator between the groups. To ensure individuals are not identified I will relay the information as the group consensus. Each group will have input into how the information is reported. To ensure no discomfort or harm to any of the participants I as the researcher will be particularly vigilant and constantly confer with my supervisor re any possible problems that might arise during this phase of the study. Student participants will be asked not to use teachers names in their discussions and similarly teachers will be asked not to use students names. Participants will also be

required to sign a confidentiality clause on the consent form. All participants will receive a summary of the results of this research when it is completed.

Ethics and confidentiality

During the interviews I will be using a tape recorder. The tape will not be transcribed but selected quotes may be used. These quotes and the written report from the research will be on an anonymous basis except that the teachers and students in the research will be aware of each other. All material collected will be kept confidential. No other person besides me and my supervisor, Dr Kabini Sanga, will see the notes which will be kept in a locked file and all electronic material will be kept in a pass-word protected file that is accessible only by the researcher. The thesis will be submitted for marking to the School of Te Kura Māori Victoria University of Wellington and deposited in the University Library. It is intended that one or more articles will be submitted for publication in scholarly journals. Published results will not identify the school or the participants involved in the research. All recordings and notes will be destroyed five years after the end of the study.

This research has been approved by the Victoria University Faculty of Education Ethics Committee. If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the study, please contact me at lorraine.spiller@nzcer.org.nz or my supervisor, Dr Kabini Sanga, at the School of Te Kura Māori VUW, phone 4639500 or email kabini.sanga@vuw.ac.nz or the Chair of the Ethics Committee at Victoria University Dr. Allison Kirkman at allison.kirkman@vuw.ac.nz.

Lorraine Spiller