



# Talanoa Ako

Pacific  
Talk about  
Education  
and Learning

## Acknowledgments

Mālō lava to Judy Oakden (Pragmatica Limited), Moe Sa'u (Director, Programme Delivery), Gabrielle-Sisifo Makisi (Manager, Strategy and Integration, Programme Delivery), and the authors: Tagaloatele Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop, Dr Cherie Chu-Fuluifaga, Dr Martyn Reynolds, Dr Ivy Abella, and Dr Fuapepe Rimoni (Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington).

We acknowledge and value the voice of the Pacific parents, families, learners, and community who talked about education and learning.

Fa'afetai tele lava  
Soifua



**Rose Jamieson**

Deputy Secretary: Parent Information and Community Intelligence (PICl),  
Ministry of Education  
August 2021

Published 2021 by the Ministry of Education  
PO Box 1666, Wellington 6140, New Zealand.  
[www.education.govt.nz](http://www.education.govt.nz)

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Publishing services: Lift Education E Tū  
Designers: Liz Tui Morris and Jodi Wicksteed

ISBN 978 1 77690 196 8 (Print)  
ISBN 978 1 77690 197 5 (Online)

Replacement copies may be ordered from  
Ministry of Education Customer Services,  
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## Foreword

*Mālō le soifua, mālō e lelei, kia orāna, talofa nī, fakaalofa lahi atu, ni sa bula vinaka, tālofa, mauri, noa'ia, kia ora, tēnā koutou katoa. Warm Pacific greetings to all.*

I have always been committed to transforming outcomes for Pacific communities in Aotearoa. Strong partnerships and reciprocal relationships between families, communities, and schools are critical in supporting Pacific learners to achieve success.

Aotearoa has a large, dynamic Pacific community – almost 66 percent of us were born here – a significant and increasing number. It's time for the education system to strengthen how it supports Pacific learners and their families to reach their aspirations by adopting an “as and by Pacific” approach.

Over 1,800 parents, families, learners, and community leaders shared their experiences of the PowerUP and Talanoa Ako programmes from 2016 to 2019. They shared stories and told us how these programmes have impacted their lives, aspirations, and wellbeing. They told us what works for Pacific in Aotearoa – now the challenge is for us to listen and act.

To all of those who have shared their stories and experiences, I wish to acknowledge and thank you. Talanoa Ako: Pacific Talk about Education and Learning has been built from your voices.

This resource supports Pacific practices, teaching, and learning. It will help schools reflect on their own practices and inspire teachers and leaders to walk alongside Pacific families and communities. Perhaps more importantly, schools and teachers will understand what “culturally safe spaces” look and feel like, and what is important culturally to Pacific learners and families.

Pacific families and communities play an important role in supporting our children and young people. It is my hope that this resource continues to drive change and innovation across the education system, and supports Pacific learners, families, and communities to be an integral part of any solution.

I speak of Pacific youth as the Generation 6Bs – Brown, Beautiful, Brainy, Bilingual, Bi-cultural, and Bold. I have every confidence that teachers and school leaders will step up to the mark for this generation.

**Hon. Aupito William Sio**

Associate Minister of Education (Pacific Peoples)





## About this resource

### TALANOA AKO: PACIFIC TALK ABOUT EDUCATION AND LEARNING

Talanoa Ako is a Ministry of Education programme delivered in Pacific communities by community groups, Pacific churches, trusts, health providers, Pacific teachers, Board of Trustee collectives, and schools.

The programme grows parents, families, and community educational knowledge so they can champion and support their children's learning journeys and form partnerships with their children's schools to achieve Pacific success.

Talanoa Ako: Pacific Talk about Education and Learning is the first resource of the Talanoa Ako Guided Resources series of six. This resource has been developed from the Pacific PowerUP to Talanoa Ako Evaluation findings and learnings. (2016–2019).

Author: Judy Oakden (Pragmatica)

This first resource contains three reports:

- » Talanoa Ako: Pacific parents, families, learners, and communities talk education together – Pacific Powerup to Talanoa Ako 2016–2019 (2021).  
Author: Tagaloatele Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop
- » Talanoa Ako: From Pacific PowerUP to Talanoa Ako, AS and BY Pacific case studies (2021).  
Author: Tagaloatele Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop
- » Talanoa Ako: Pacific education literature review of key findings of the Pacific PowerUP evaluations 2016–2018 (2021).  
Authors: Dr Cherie Chu-Fuluifaga, Dr Ivy Arbella, Dr Martyn Reynolds, and Dr Fuapepe Rimoni (Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington)

Several short vignettes (videos) will also be available:

- » Talanoa Ako Community Voice: Talking about Education and Learning vignettes – filmed with Pacific learners, parents, teachers, principals, and community leaders in 2021 talking about education and learning from their own lived experiences.

### THE REMAINING FIVE TALANOA AKO GUIDED RESOURCES

The remaining five Talanoa Ako Guided Resources will be released monthly. They will include a resource which supports the building of Board of Trustees Pacific capability, a Talanoa reporting cycle, a literacy booklet for families based on the PISA results, a resource to support school governance and school leaders to develop a Pacific strategy, and a resource of examples of best practice for Pacific learners and families occurring in schools presently.

## THE TALANOA AKO DIGITAL APP

<https://www.education.govt.nz/news/talanoa-ako-digital-app-now-available/>

The Talanoa Ako digital app is another resource that supports Pacific parents, families, and communities.

It takes families through NCEA information, literacy and numeracy, learning pathways, careers and vocational pathways, school reporting, parent interviews, goal setting, and time management.

The content is in plain English and ten Pacific languages ('Gana Tuvalu, Gagana Sāmoa, Gagana Tokelau, Gasav Ne Fāeag Rotuām, Lea Faka-Tonga, Na Vosa Vakaviti, Solomons Pijin, Taetae ni Kiribati, Te Reo Māori Kūki 'Aīrani, and Vagahau Niue.)

Each Pacific language is also available in audio and has visually impaired functionality.



# Talanoa Ako

Pacific Parents, Families,  
Learners and Communities  
Talk Education Together

**SYNTHESIS REPORT OF PACIFIC  
POWERUP EVALUATIONS 2016-19**

February 2021

## Report Information

Prepared for: Rose Jamieson

Deputy Secretary: Parent Information and Community Intelligence (PICI) Ministry of Education

Author: Tagaloatele Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop

## Acknowledgments

Fa'afetai lava to the PowerUP families who shared their stories in the *Guided Talanoa and Profiles 2016 to 2019*, and the PowerUP partners from the PowerStations who supported this process.

Fa'afetai to the research team from the Ministry of Education's Parent Information and Community Intelligence (PICI), who were closely involved in the PowerUP project: Moe Sa'u, and Gabrielle-Sisifo Makisi.

Fa'afetai also to Judy Oaken, Director of Pragmatica Limited Consultancy team, who evaluated the PowerUp programme (2016 to 2018). Together with the PICI, Judy prepared the monitoring and evaluation reports and case study materials used in this synthesis and with Kellie Spee (Director of Kellie Spee Consultancy Ltd) prepared the 2019 evaluation report.

Finally, a special fa'afetai to Adrienne Alton Lee for the final peer review. Mālō lava.

Published 2021 by the Ministry of Education  
PO Box 1666, Wellington 6140, New Zealand.  
[www.education.govt.nz](http://www.education.govt.nz)

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Publishing services: Lift Education E Tū

Designers: Liz Tui Morris and Jodi Wicksteed

ISBN 978 1 77690 198 2 (Online)



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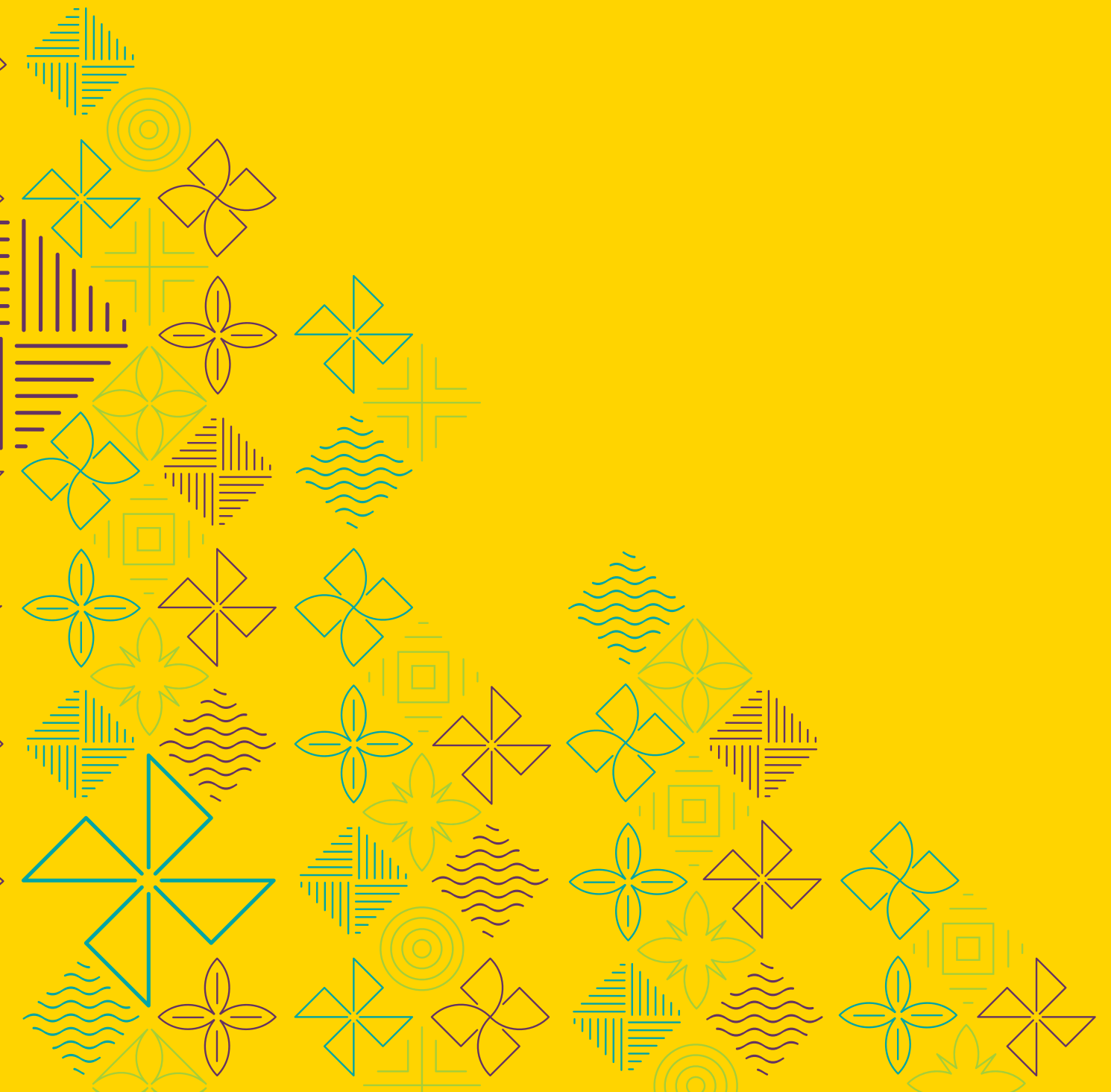
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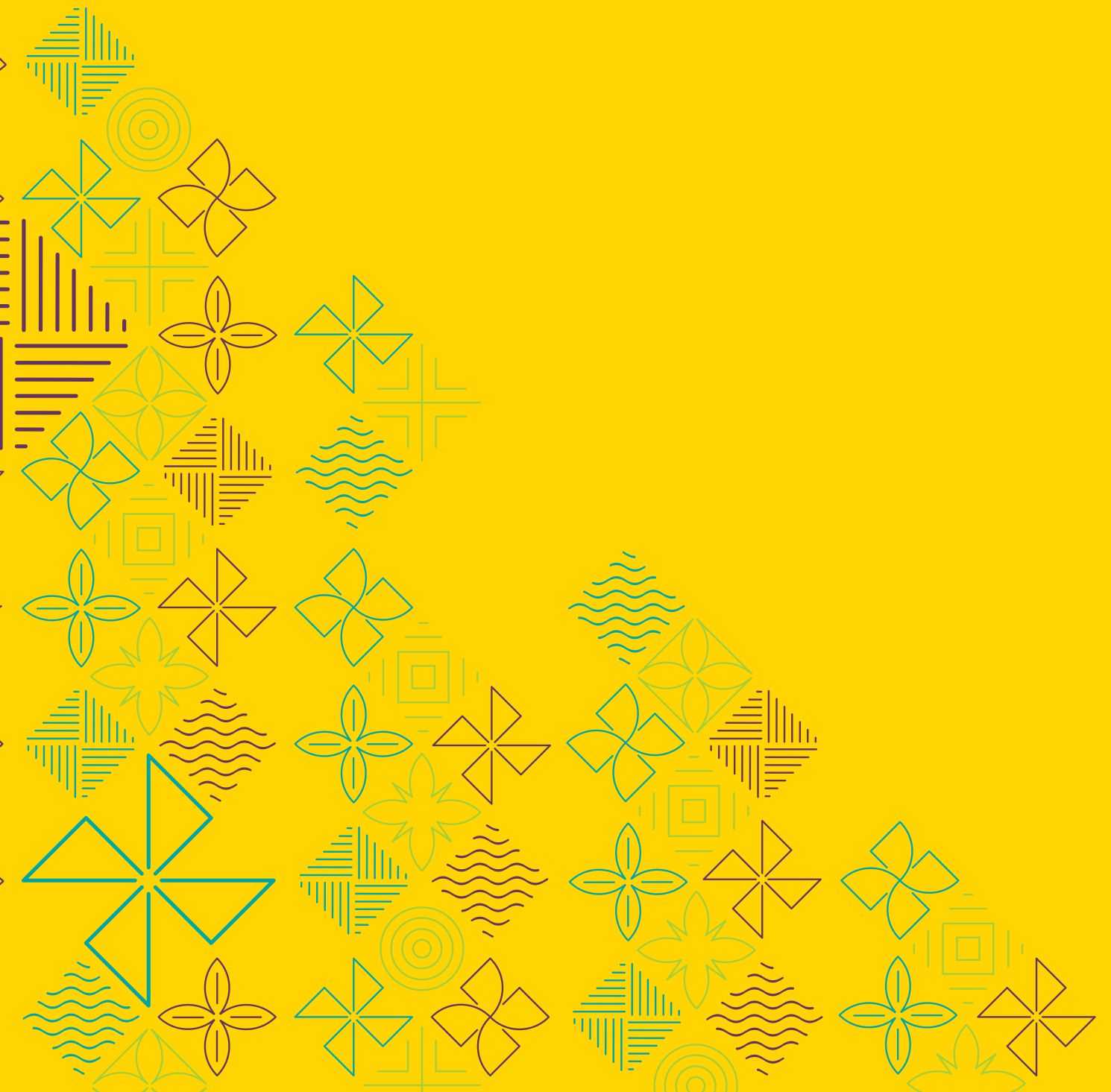




# Executive Summary



# Executive Summary



This report explores the conceptualisation and practice of culturally safe spaces for Pacific learners, as experienced and co-constructed by PowerUP Pacific parents and learners, community leaders, teachers, and the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) team, in the Pacific PowerUP *as and by Pacific* community-driven programme. Using PowerUP Talanoa with parents and learners (2016–18) as the starting point, the synthesis focus was on the questions:

1. What worked at PowerUP and why?
2. What were the strengths that Pacific parents, children, and communities brought to the PowerUP learning programme (funds of knowledge)?
3. How did the programme recognise, apply, and enhance these strengths to create culturally safe learning spaces for these parents and learners?
4. What other funds of knowledge did Pacific parents need to know to play their role in supporting their children to reach their fullest educational potential and in partnership with schools?

This has been achieved by applying a Pacific lens of *what is of value* and *how this is achieved* to the learnings outlined in the PowerUP evaluation reports and case studies (2016–19). These source materials capture the voices of PowerUP parents and learners as gathered in talanoa and surveys over a four-year period. These comprise the over 1,500 talanoa, which took place in the programmes' pan-Pacific approach (2016–18), and a further 1,450 in the testing of the programme in the FlexiPlus/'Au Lotu model (2019).

In the first year, talanoa were carried out with parents only. Learner voices were included midway through 2016 and continued through to the end of the programme. The inclusion of learner voices brought to light the many significant learning outcomes that are achieved when learners and parents are “on the same page” and was instrumental also in transferring lessons learnt at PowerUP into family homes and communities. The role PowerUP teachers played in helping co-construct the PowerUP culturally secure learning spaces has been gained by listening to the talanoa voices of parents and teachers. The PowerUP source materials are an invaluable longitudinal, rather than episodic, picture of Pacific parents and family engagement in shaping the PowerUP programme, namely, what worked for them and what they said needed to be done to ensure Pacific engagement in schooling.

This executive summary begins with an overview of the synthesis method and approach followed by a brief review of the PowerUP *as and by Pacific* approach and then synthesis findings. It concludes by proposing the dimensions<sup>1</sup> that supported the creation of the PowerUP *as and by Pacific* culturally safe learning spaces and recommendations.

<sup>1</sup> This use of the term “dimensions” mirrors that used in School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration (BES) (Robinson, Hohepa, and Lloyd, 2009).

## METHOD

Several points mark the synthesis approach. First, Pacific culture, language, and identity (funds of knowledge) have been treated as an asset. Second, the PowerUP teams (of Pacific parents and learners, families and communities, teachers, mentors, PowerUP staff, and the Ministry team) are considered to be communities of shared power and knowledge building. Each group played a major role in visioning and co-creating the PowerUP culturally safe learning spaces. They shared a collective ownership and pride and a stake in working together to establish a quality programme.

## TIME

The synthesis focus on four years of the PowerUP programme (2016–19) was a strong reminder of the importance of time in learning and the processes of shift and change that are involved in learning. The importance of time has been evidenced in the talanoa voices: the more parents and learners participated in the programme, the more discerning and confident their voices became. For example, in the earlier years, students (politely) talked about the differences between their school and their PowerUP experiences. In 2018, PowerUP learners “saw, named, and labelled” incidents of bias and racism they had witnessed or experienced. They had learnt not to accept that this was “just the way things are”.

The four-year time span covered in this synthesis enables a fuller understanding of the processes that generated learning shifts by PowerUP parents and learners. For example, PowerUP parents – whose main engagement with schools had been report nights, fundraising, and Poly club and who had felt that “all that the teachers want to talk about is my son’s rugby” – became more informed and strategic in engaging

with teachers and schools on educational matters and with their children. In this process, parents were steadily claiming their role in supporting their children to achieve their fullest education potential. In sum, the synthesis has shown that, as their agency in education increased, parents and children moved from being largely users to being active contributors to their education.

Learning stories (boxes) were used as a way of capturing some of the learning shifts parents and learners experienced in participating in this educational programme where Pacific funds of knowledge were valued, visible, and practised. These boxes are a composite picture. At times, lessons learnt at PowerUP were set against global and New Zealand pedagogy and curriculum research models. These were kept to a minimum to avoid making the PowerUP stories fit into mainstream models and to let the PowerUP talanoa voices speak for themselves.

Time proved an important factor in refining the *as and by Pacific* programme in response to parent, learner, and community voices. These include the shift in 2019 from the pan-Pacific model to the FlexiPlus/Au Lotu model, which offered ethnic-specific options. Other changes in that year included a reduction in the number of sessions (from 25 weeks to between 8 and 15 weeks) and community decision-making regarding the sessions (for example, the use of block courses to allow for seasonal and shift workers) and the inclusion of local content.

## CONSIDERATIONS

PowerUP was the first time most parents and learners had been involved in an education programme where they were in the majority or in a programme in which Pacific funds of knowledge were regarded as a strength and asset.



Parents' educational experiences were varied: some had enjoyed schooling and experienced success, while others had not. Many parents believed education was the responsibility of schools. PowerUP learners' educational experiences were similarly diverse: many had learnt to be silent in class and not to ask or answer questions for fear of being laughed at. Because the PowerUP stations were established for the programme, most PowerUP parents, families, and staff did not know each other, nor had they worked together earlier. As a result, PowerUP offered opportunities for fresh beginnings in learning, and parents and students said they enjoyed coming to PowerUP "just to learn".

The PowerUP focus on parents and family participating together was also a new experience for parents and families – and this synthesis has demonstrated that it was a powerful and mutually empowering experience for them. PowerUP's parent and learner approaches fitted the Pacific value of having families as the major educating and socialising agencies; positioned parents and school and home lives closer together, increasing the potential to reduce misunderstandings or educational barriers between school and home; and facilitated a transfer of PowerUP learnings into homes and communities. PowerUP's provision of learning materials, books, and other resources for families and learners facilitated the development of strong relationships between PowerUP and the homes (see Alton-Lee, 2003; Robinson et al, 2009).

PowerUP families represented a wide diversity of New Zealand's Pacific community. Families included New Zealand-born and recent migrants and reflected the effects of intermarriage; socio-economic, urban, and rural differences; and age.

## THE AS AND BY PACIFIC LEARNING APPROACH

PowerUP aims were to establish culturally safe learning spaces for Pacific parents and families, where "academic"<sup>2</sup> support was provided in *as and by Pacific* ways. At first glance, these goals suggest a preparation or "head start" motive to preparing Pacific students for schooling – that is, a one-way process. This was not the case. The synthesis has demonstrated the huge strides Pacific parents and families made in working towards achieving the PowerUP model of Pacific engagement, leadership, and ownership of education. Talanoa voices have provided strong evidence of positive learning gains and the potential for creating new knowledge, which took place when Pacific and academic funds of knowledge and world views were brought together in the *as and by Pacific* programme.

The PowerUP ways of working and thinking comprised:

- » a whole-system approach based on the *fa'afaletui* (hearing and responding to the voices of parents and learners – often the missing voices)
- » a community-driven rather than school-based model, with a focus on parent engagement (leadership, ownership, responsibility lies with Pacific people)
- » the introduction of reflective practice (we are in charge, we can plan for change).

From visioning to design and delivery, and to the programme use of Pacific research processes such as *Fa'afaletui* and *Talanoa*, the PowerUP *as and by Pacific* programme observed and strove to reinforce Pacific ways of being, knowing, and knowledge sharing. In doing so, the programme made a significant difference in the lives and wellbeing of Pacific parents, families, and communities.

<sup>2</sup> "Academic" is the term used in the evaluation reports to refer to school learning or knowledge and skills that support school educational success. By applying this meaning, there is a suggestion that Pacific knowledge is non-academic.

## FINDINGS

### Agency and Ownership in Education – We Are Part of the Solution

PowerUP parents affirmed their essential and rightful role in their children’s education, in partnership with schools. In fulfilling this responsibility, they formed trusted relationships and partnerships in learning with other parents, teachers, schools, and their own children. Each learning step signalled a movement to Pacific leadership and ownership in education as in the PowerUP model of engagement.

---

*The PowerUP has empowered me to take a lead in my children’s education. With the information, I am more prepared to guide and help my children throughout their education journey.*

*Parent, talanoa*

---

Similar shifts in learners educational agency, have been evidenced in comments such as, “We have faith in ourselves that we can achieve our academic goals and future studies to get our future careers” and “We believe we can be as high achievers as other ethnicities if we are committed to

our education process”. Other comments included the fact that, through PowerUP, they had learnt to work and succeed in mainstream education settings and developed greater confidence that they could be successful learners.

### Parents’ Agency Reinforced by the PowerUP Programme

In PowerUP’s culturally safe and trusted learning environment, parents and learners had voice. They learnt to “talk education” and to know that their views were being listened to. They gained self-esteem in seeing their knowledge valued and challenged in the programme pedagogy and curriculum, and felt able to take risks. PowerUP parents and learners played an integral role in the co-construction of the concept of culturally safe learning spaces for Pacific learners (as the “user” group in the fa’afaletui) together with PowerUP coordinators, teachers and staff, other PowerUP families, and the PICI team. Each member of the PowerUP team had a collective and a personal stake in ensuring a quality and robust programme. The parent and learner voices informed programme planning, organisation, and processes.



### Box 1: “Talking Education” Increases Educational Agency

Parents said they had learnt to “talk education” at PowerUP – which they had never experienced in other groups they belonged to (such as family, church, and sports groups). In their workshop discussions, parents realised that they were not unique in their concerns for their children’s education, nor alone. Parents began to share their concerns with others “outside their family”, which had not been a practice (regarded to be a family weakness or failing and hence shameful). As they shared and debated their views with other parents, PowerUP parents came to appreciate and draw on the knowledge and ideas around them in their search for solutions. In this process, parents developed relationships in learning with other parents, teachers, and PowerUP staff, invited speakers, PowerUP learners, and their own children. PowerUP parents affirmed their role in supporting their children’s educational achievement and practised together the skills to fulfil that role, including ways of engaging with schools and teachers in respectful and informed ways.

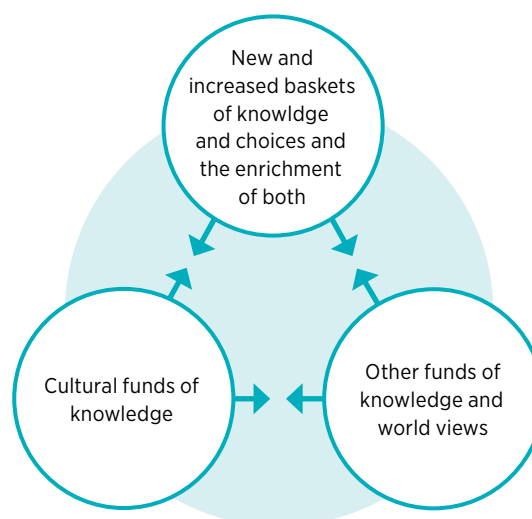
PowerUP parents were profoundly moved by the ways teachers and other staff communicated with their children. They also commented on the close and respectful relationships developed in these learning conversations and, the “out of the box” ideas generated as children’s views were debated and challenged. This caused parents to think about 1) the ways they talked to their children and 2) the value and valuing of children’s voice. Parents noted that education became the topic of conversation in their homes and, that they were more likely to consider their children’s voices in family decision making.

**Note:** In 2020 PowerUp was renamed *Talanoa Ako*. Programme changes introduced were informed by the 2016–19 evaluation synthesis outlined in this report.

### Academic Support Provided by the *as* and by Pacific PowerUP Programme

The powerful relationship between affective and cognitive learning has been highlighted many times in this synthesis (Alton-Lee, 2003; Robinson et al., 2009). The synthesis evidence also strongly supports socio-cultural theories of learning and development, that interpersonal and intellectual learning are interdependent from birth and throughout life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bruner, 1997; MacFarlane et al., 2007).

**Figure 1: Bringing Together Pacific and Other Funds of Knowledge and World Views**



By presenting other world views, PowerUP prompted a deeper understanding of the commonalities and differences between and amongst Pacific ethnic groups and with Kiwi and other world views (Tongati’o, 2010; Du Plessis & Fairbairn Dunlop, 2010). In this way, PowerUP provided spaces for examining Pacific and other funds of knowledge and negotiating potential “trade-offs”. The place of questioning in learning was undoubtedly a major challenge. However, in engaging in “friendly arguing” (Hunter R., 2008); Hunter J. et al., 2011; Hunter J. et al., 2020), parents and learners learnt that questioning is at the heart of knowledge building. They also gained resilience and empathy in sharing their views with others.

## Box 2: Knowledge and Skills to Engage in Learning Conversations

A concerning finding was that PowerUP parents and learners did not have an adequate knowledge or the information they needed to engage in education, particularly an understanding of the language and terms used in education discussions. While most school leaders probably believed they were sending out regular and comprehensive school information packages to families, this had not been the experience of these parents. And, as eloquently stressed by one, “everything’s in English ... how useful is that to parents or students whose second language is English?” This finding was a compelling reminder of the weakness of generic messaging in school information packages.

A pattern of three skills parents and learners needed to confidently engage in education, and education discussions, emerged in the talanoa. Parents needed: 1) to have accurate and up to date information about school-related processes and especially the language and terms used; 2) to learn the knowledge and skills to engage in education discussion, as in the power of identifying what they wanted to know and articulating a clear question; and 3) to have opportunities to practise and hone these skills “until these are in our bones”, thereby increasing their ability to engage in learning conversations with schools and teachers and in other places. A similar pattern of learning needs emerged in the students’ talanoa. In this case, there was a high urgency for students to develop their skills to engage in learning conversations (such as communication and questioning skills) and organisation skills (such as planning, focus, timing their work, and task completion). As with their parents, students learnt these and other skills in their interactions with other students, teachers, and staff at PowerUP (see also Chapter 4: What We Need to Know to Engage in Education).

## PACIFIC FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE

The enduring importance of Pacific values and beliefs in the hearts and minds of PowerUP parents and learners was a major synthesis finding. Pacific funds of knowledge were a core strength – a strength that has been silenced in education and schooling conversations. PowerUP parents and learners were proud to identify as Pacific peoples and to be known by their ethnic-specific heritage. Elders’ words to “never forget who you are” were also a deep reminder of the value and valuing of secure identity. For some, PowerUP engendered a consolidation of identity security as notably evidenced in the ‘Au Lotu model. For others, the programme generated a rethinking, relearning, and revaluing of culture, identity, and language. For example, FlexiPlus parents regarded PowerUP as an opportunity to mix with “other people like us” and to participate in Pacific language and cultural traditions. PowerUP was also highly valued in areas where Pacific families were a minority (rural areas) and “acted as a bridge between Pacific-born and New Zealand-born families”.

PowerUP situated, responded to, and added to the knowledge parents and learners brought to the programme (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2013). Pacific values, ways of knowing, and being (faith, family, and community) were embedded and reaffirmed in everything that happened at PowerUP – from the opening prayers, workshops, and presentations through to shared meals where families caught up with the news of the day, while revisiting and making meaning of new PowerUP learnings by setting these against recollections from their own school days. Families may have laughingly referred to PowerUP as their “date nights”. However, the important fact is that parents were there: engaging and talking about education in their own way, time, and language.

Seeing themselves in the PowerUP learning spaces made a difference. PowerUP was “our own education standing place”. Parents and learners had the chance to observe, listen, and engage with educational role models in learning conversations and to enjoy learning together. The safe and trusted PowerUP learning environments also formed a protective factor and supported parents and learners to take risks in learning.

In sum, the synthesis has demonstrated quite compellingly that the PowerUP programme nurtured positive relationships and the formation of educationally powerful connections; increased parents’ and learners’ resilience and self-belief in achieving as Pacific people; and supported families to move from being largely users of educational services to contributors to educational pedagogy and curriculum.

### **Theme of Culturally Safe Learning Spaces for Pacific Learners**

The theme of culturally safe learning spaces for Pacific learners is a major programme outcome. Cultural bias and racism are a negative overall. However, in seeing, naming (giving voice to), and seeking solutions to incidents of cultural bias and racism, PowerUP parents and learners learnt not to accept or normalise that this is simply “the way things are”. On this point especially, learners’ increased resilience in learning was couched in terms of the good of the Pacific community – the “group good” or the “we” – rather than an individual good of going together, looking out for, and keeping each other safe. The trusted relationships activated and reinforced in the programme were a protective shield against taking risks and bias. This aspect warrants further research.

### **Enriching Pacific Funds of Knowledge**

In the culturally safe PowerUP spaces, parents’ and learners’ agency in education deepened as they formed trusted relationships in learning with teachers and mentors, other parents and families, and adults’ speakers and resource people. Engaging in learning conversations increased parents’ and learners’ educational agency that “the power to change is in our hands”. This also added to and expanded Pacific funds of knowledge and practice from PowerUP to family homes and communities and built a body of Pacific leaders in education. Talking education was also a challenge to Pacific communicating norms, including the importance of questioning and acknowledging youth voice, and contribution in co-constructing ways of thinking and working.

The synthesis has demonstrated the ways the PowerUP programme built on Pacific funds of knowledge and, in doing so, created further learning options for Pacific learners. The first column of Table 1 on page 14 lists a proposed set of Pacific funds of knowledge. The set is grouped according to “attributes of emotional or social value, communication (voice), and collaboration” (Alton-Lee, 2017). Column 2 demonstrates how Pacific funds of knowledge were reinforced, challenged, and enriched in the PowerUP learning experience, as evidenced in this synthesis.

Table 1: PowerUP Enriched Pacific Funds of Knowledge

|                            | Emotional or value                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Communication voice                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Collaborative skills                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pacific funds of knowledge | <p><b>World view – faith, family, and community</b></p> <p><b>Identity as Pacific people</b> – holistic and all encompassing (individual, family, and community) and expressed in language and culture, ways of knowing and being, and ideas of success</p>                                                                                                                                                | <p>Confident and articulate voice, specific to role, age, context</p> <p>Concerns (and opinions) kept within the family</p> <p>Formulaic, for example, what is said and not said and who is involved in knowledge sharing</p> <p>Questioning is impolite/ acting above one’s station. Questioning is personal – a slight against the person rather than the idea being shared.</p> <p>To teu le vā (protect, cherish, maintain)</p>                                      | <p><b>Relationships / Social skills</b></p> <p>Reciprocity, respect as in it takes a village ...</p> <p><b>Leadership</b></p> <p>Consensus decision making by rank and status</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|                            | <b>PowerUP 2013–2019</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Added to or new knowledges | <p>Visible, valued, and practised Enhanced</p> <p>Self-esteem in seeing Pacific values, language, and culture observed in education and pedagogy</p> <p>Increased resilience in bringing Pacific cultural values and language into education spaces and creating opportunities for the creation of new knowledge</p> <p>A collective protection in seeing and dealing with unconscious bias and racism</p> | <p>Parent and your voice in talking education</p> <p>Talk education with those outside the family (PowerUP parents, teachers, staff).</p> <p>Agency – and esteem voices count – we can make a difference</p> <p>Questioning is at the heart of learning and knowledge building.</p> <p>The power of “friendly arguing”, learning resilience, and empathy in maintaining the vā in education: communication, inquiry, resilience, and empathy in defending one’s view</p> | <p><b>Relationships / Social skills</b></p> <p>Many trusted relationships in learning were formed with teachers, other learners, parents, and local and national communities.</p> <p><b>Leadership</b></p> <p>Families and community leadership affirmed Pacific responsibility and agency in education.</p> <p>Individual and collective learnings extended to interactions in other spaces e.g., family, schools. communities</p> |
|                            | <b>TALANOA AKO 2020</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |



### Bridging Relationships between Pacific Siloed Worlds

Siope (2011) has proposed that Pacific students' funds of knowledge are "siloed"; that Pacific students can live in six or seven different worlds - such as the worlds of home, school, church, sports, friends, and part-time employment - each of which is kept separate "as much as possible". As a result, Pacific funds of knowledge are not shared or applied between or across silos, which would be to the mutual benefit of each. Siope describes the siloed experiences of home and school with these words, "my parents knew little of what or how we did in school ... unfortunately my siblings and me

became our own gatekeepers of learning and in many ways sabotaged our futures by not allowing our parents to be a part of our siloed work" (Siope, 2011, page 12).

The synthesis has shown the ways PowerUP parents and learners began sharing their "family" concerns and hopes with others who were outside the family, in this way, cutting across and bridging personal, schooling, and home boundaries. Moving across these "siloed worlds" enabled a mutual enrichment of the knowledge embedded within each silo and also effected a widening of protective networks and, in turn, parents' and learners' ability to take risks in learning.



## DIMENSIONS CONTRIBUTING TO THE AS AND BY PACIFIC PROGRAMME

The following dimensions<sup>3</sup> contributed to the achievement of culturally safe learning places for PowerUP Pacific parents and families.

### Dimension 1: Recognising Pacific cultural values, beliefs, and ways of knowing and being (funds of knowledge) as an asset and strength in establishing firm learning pathways (‘auala) for Pacific learners

PowerUP was not a “one Pacific size fits all” programme. PowerUP situated, responded to, and added to the knowledge parents and learners brought to the programme. Pacific values and ways of knowing and being (faith, family, and community) were embedded and reaffirmed in PowerUP’s *as and by Pacific* ways of thinking and working. PowerUP parents and learners gained self-esteem and identity security in seeing their knowledge and ideas present, valued, and challenged in the programme’s pedagogy and curriculum. Knowing their voices counted also acted as a protective element in their learning – encouraging them to take risks. The feelings of safety and trust generated in the programme opened learners’ receptiveness to cognitive learning (Alton-Lee, 2003). Parents and families learnt “we have a role to play in our education, and we can do it”. Learning together at PowerUP reinforced the transfer of lessons learnt to home and other places. This and other descriptions cannot capture the joys, jokes, songs and dance, and alofa,<sup>4</sup> which characterised the experiences of PowerUP parents and families.

### Dimension 2: Community leadership, ownership, and responsibility

Programme leadership was in the hands of the Pacific community. PowerUP stations were coordinated by esteemed Pacific leaders, teachers, and mentors, and resource people were of Pacific ethnicity, as were the parents and learners. Academic and resource support was provided by the Ministry team. Each had a collective and an individual stake, as well as a pride in working together to ensure programme robustness, trustworthiness, and accountability. Bringing together the varied funds of knowledge to vision, fashion, and progress the programme involved a considerable amount of trust, individual and collective capability building, and a commitment to testing and adapting the programme to ensure robust learning systems. The dominant PowerUP message was “we have a voice in supporting our children’s education potential, and we are learning to use that voice”. Parents, families and communities learning together at PowerUP was described as an inspiring, empowering, and aspirational experience, and one that set the tone for further engagement in other family and community discussions. For many PowerUP families, the PowerUP programme of community engagement, interaction, and belonging became much more than an educational programme, as one parent said, “It’s bigger than my family: it’s like the community knitting together”.

<sup>3</sup> “Dimensions” is the term used in School Leadership and *Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why. Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration* (BES) (Robinson et al., 2009).

<sup>4</sup> The Samoan term for love, caring.



### Dimension 3: A high-trust relationship with the Parent Information and Community Intelligence (PICI) team

The PowerUP teams and Ministry relationships featured a high-trust partnership model. The Ministry's commitment to the programme signalled a serious intent (this programme is working and is here for the long haul) against a more common one-off education intervention many Pacific parents were more familiar with. The communication systems formed between PowerUP stations with the Ministry team from the 2016-19 evaluation were effective and swift in identifying what was working and what needed to be done. The strengths, weaknesses, and interesting ideas that emerged in the PowerUP team discussions set the frameworks for further programme thinking. The adaptation of the Pan-Pacific model (2016-18) to a FlexiPlus/'Au Lotu model are a major example of this.

The PowerUP communication and organisation systems had mutually beneficial outcomes. For example, PowerUP leaders and staff had somewhere to go when they needed academic and/or resource support. In addition, the knowledge they shared with the Ministry added value and validity to the Ministry knowledge base of parents' and learners' experiences of education in the PowerUP community-based programme.

### Dimension 4: Teachers who are highly skilled culturally and academically

Parents described the PowerUP teachers as highly skilled culturally and academically. They believed the teachers were "awesome role models"; had a good understanding of Pacific cultures, languages, and education journeys; and demonstrated the spirit of tautua (service) of "going the extra mile". Parents believed teachers cared for their students and for their education progress, as exemplified in a comment, "When my child goes into the classroom, the teacher knows my child's name and where they are at in their learning journeys". PowerUP teachers demonstrated considerable expertise in bringing Pacific funds of knowledge to bear on everyday teaching and learning within and across the core of schooling. They were skilled in promoting questioning and enquiry learning techniques and passionate in finding ways to support their learners to understand challenging concepts and processes. PowerUP teachers were described as "down to Earth" and "ruthless in sticking to task and encouraging learners to achieve".



### **Dimension 5: Putting communication and questioning at the heart of learning and knowledge building**

PowerUP supported Pacific learners to maintain strong Pacific values and progressions in challenging and reasoning. This is a critical point and fits Hunter's term of "friendly arguing".<sup>5</sup> The place of questioning in PowerUP learning spaces has been described as a game changer when considered in the light of so many research findings of unresolved conflict between values of politeness and the importance of questioning in learning.<sup>6</sup>

Learning to question and "talk education" at PowerUP increased parents' and learners' agency in education (see Box 1 on page 11). In the PowerUP multi-level and mixed learning programme, parents and learners gained resilience and empathy as their ideas were debated and critiqued in discussions. The use of questioning spurred changes in parents' and learners' relationships with teachers and other learners, as well as their understanding of the place of questioning in learning. By enabling parents' and learners' voices to be heard and responded to, PowerUP led to a repositioning of parents' and learners' attitudes to education from one of being "users of" to being contributors and leaders - a role that, for many, differed substantially from their own school experiences (Fairbairn-Dunlop & Makisi, 2003).

### **Dimension 6: Maintaining firm educational goals and teaching the skills to engage**

The programme upheld firm educational goals and, by drawing on Pacific and other funds of knowledge, increased the potential for creating new knowledge. At PowerUP, learning was not left to chance. Learning priorities were identified, role-modelled, and reinforced in the programme's multi-level learning strategy, which was a tremendous contrast to a one-size-fits-all learning approach. Parents' and students' learning strengths, weaknesses, and interesting possibilities were the focus of systematic and ongoing review through talanoa and being responded to in "real time". The relationships in learning developed at PowerUP are powerfully illustrated in one parent's comment that "PowerUP teachers listen and recognise learner efforts". The provision of professional learning development (PLD) programmes aimed at increasing teachers' knowledge and understanding of working with diverse learners are a strong synthesis recommendation.

<sup>5</sup> See Hunter and Anthony, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> A. Alton-Lee, personal communication, December 2020.

### Dimension 7: Building strong educational connections/relationships with families and communities, and supporting their engagement in wider learning communities and networks

Many trusted relationships in learning were formed by PowerUP families. The PowerUP strategy of parents and their children learning together was a powerful catalyst in the transfer of ideas and lessons learnt at PowerUP into family homes and communities. This transfer was reinforced by the provision of educational resources, such as writing materials and books, which, while an equity measure (ensuring a level playing field), also ensured lessons learnt at PowerUP were present and visible in homes.<sup>7</sup> The holistic nature of the programme – from early childhood (ECE) through to senior college students – was a strong reminder that learning is a lifelong journey that begins in the early years and requires careful planning and choices along the way.

PowerUP also expanded parents' and learners' experiences by connecting them into wider learning communities and networks. For example, presentations by experienced experts and other invited speakers demonstrated the importance of resilience in dealing with challenges (which parents and learners could identify with) and prompted thinking about new career choices that parents and learners had not known about or previously thought possible. Several PowerUP parents became leaders in education forums in their communities, while some joined together to form further learning communities and networks of their own. An increasing number of PowerUP parents stood successfully for election onto school boards and other school committees, and some enrolled in tertiary education.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The PowerUP community and family approach marks a significant paradigm shift in Pacific education: from a centralised and generic Ministry-delivered and regulated model, to a community-led and transformative model. PowerUP's *as and by Pacific* community-driven model presents a compelling challenge to top-down, one-size-fits-all education approaches. In treating Pacific funds of knowledge as an asset, the programme maintained identity security and supported parents' and learners' progress from being silenced users of education services to being leaders and shapers of their education journeying. The empowering experience of participating in the programme reinforced individual and collective agency and responsibility in education.

This synthesis has provided strong evidence that culturally safe spaces for Pacific learners are achieved when:

*Pacific ways of knowing and being (funds of knowledge) are valued, present and become normalised in school curriculum, pedagogy and organisational process and, when combined with 'academic/other knowledges' increased the potential for the creation of new knowledge and, schooling success.*

Chu et al., 2019.

Many examples of significant and transformative shifts in parents' and learners' agency in learning were gained in real time during the PowerUP programme. How can these powerful PowerUP learnings be translated to empower transformative change for Pacific parents and learners in other education settings?

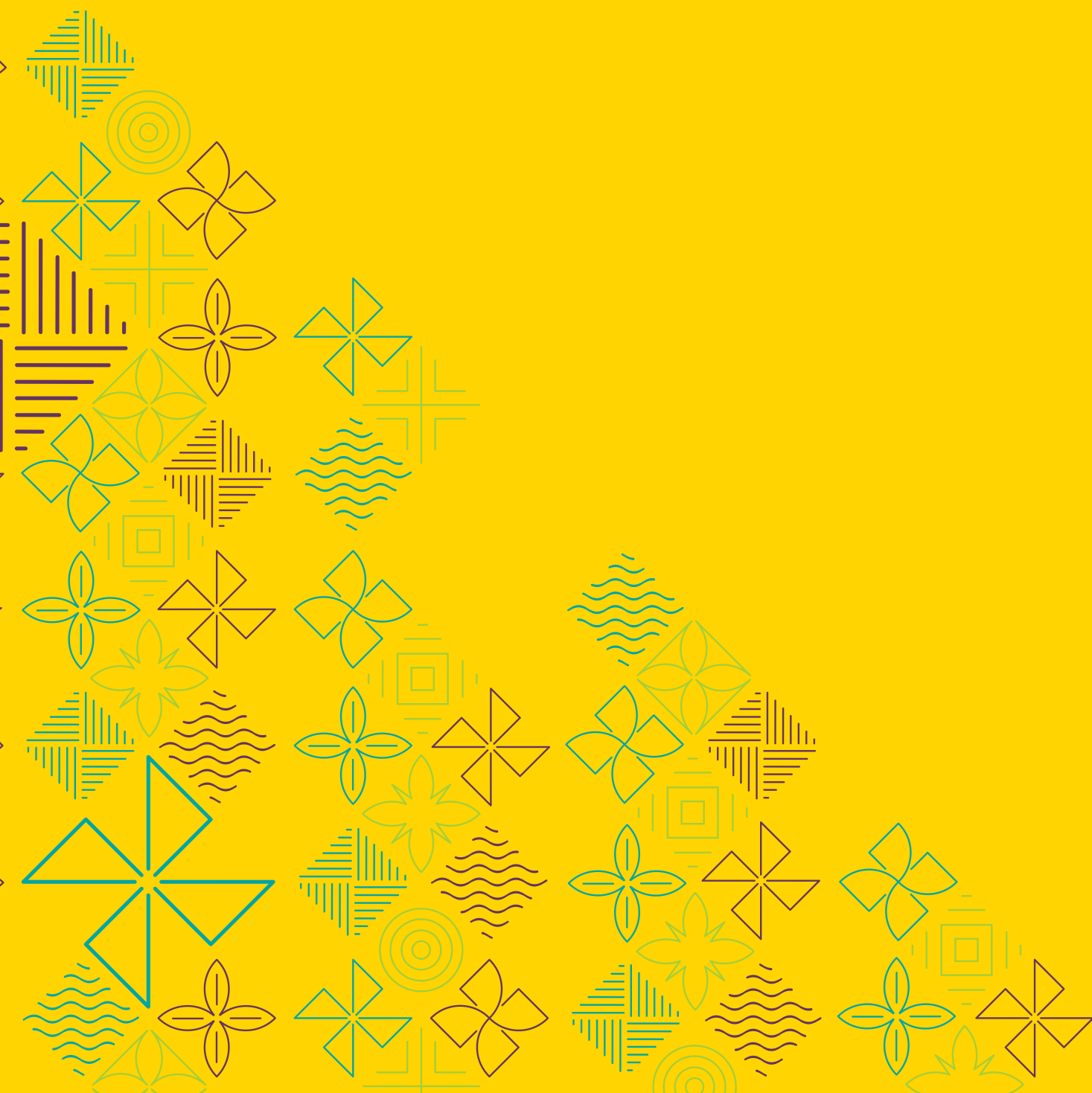
<sup>7</sup> See Robinson et al, 2010.





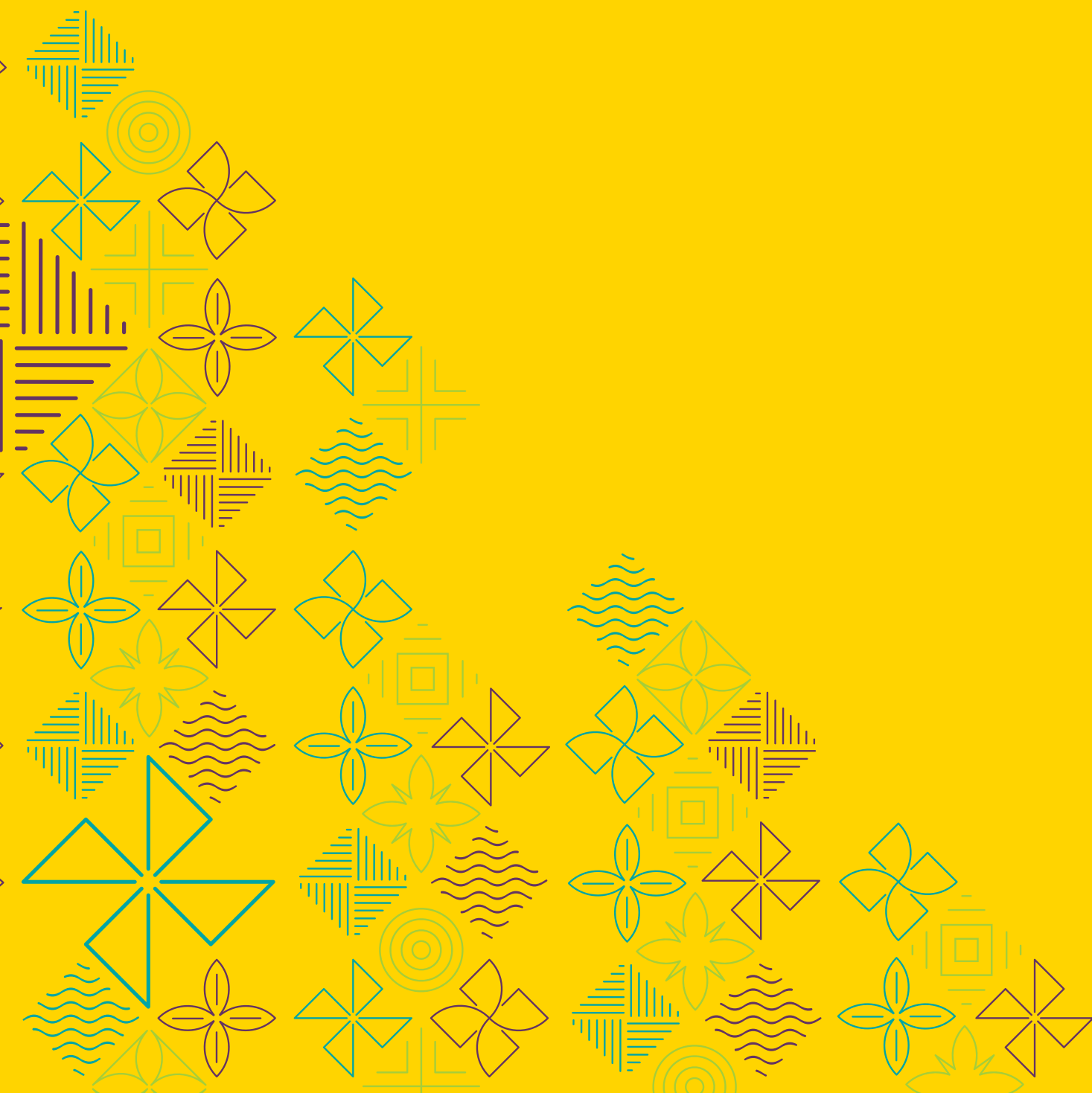
# Chapter 1

## Introduction to the Synthesis



# Chapter 1

## Introduction to the Synthesis



Documented evidence would make a significant addition to the PowerUP evidence base and support the full importance of PowerUP's *as and by Pacific* programme. The following recommendations are offered for consideration:

### 1. Evidence Base

The value of maintaining systematic baseline and change data for the programme could include the following:

- » There were differences in learning experiences by gender.
- » There were shifts in student experiences of identity security and learning at PowerUP and at school.

These could be tested in a small number of Talanoa Ako centres.<sup>8</sup>

### 2. Teacher Professional Development for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning

The PowerUP programme has demonstrated New Zealand's significant Pacific expertise in transformative change for culturally responsive teaching, in bringing Pacific funds of knowledge to bear on everyday teaching and learning within and across the core of schooling. However, Pacific teachers comprise only 3 percent of New Zealand's teaching workforce - with an estimated 8.4 percent of this 3 percent being in the ECE sector (Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2010).

There is an urgent need for a (compulsory) PLD cultural responsiveness. Phase 5 of Te Kotahitanga<sup>9</sup> outlines a complex professional development programme that has strengthened the power and voice of both Pacific learners and parents to directly influence teaching and learning in everyday teaching practice across the curriculum.

### 3. Generic School Messaging

All parents and learners require accurate and timely information about processes and the language and terms used. Generic school messaging has little value for culturally diverse parents and families. Proactive school messaging could include: preparing messages in video/social media forms, which Pacific families could view many times and holding specific information sessions for parents and learners where Pacific teachers explain and respond to questions in Pacific languages. The Talanoa Ako online learning programmes for parents, which were developed during COVID-19 on the Pacific Media Network (PMN) and the Talanoa Ako app are prime examples of culturally secure and inclusive messaging.

<sup>8</sup> PowerUp was renamed Talanoa Ako from 2020 with the programme changes informed by the 2016-19 evaluation synthesis outlined in this report.

<sup>9</sup> Te Kotahitanga is a research and professional development programme that supports teachers to create a culturally responsive context for learning that raises Māori students' achievement in education. For more information on this programme, see the Ministry of Education webpage Te Kotahitanga at: <https://tekotahitanga.tki.org.nz>



The PowerUP parents-and-learners-based programme is one of a wider basket of Ministry of Education (Ministry) programmes to support Pacific education. The programme explores the concept of culturally secure places for Pacific learners and identity security as the vehicle to support Pacific people to engage, enjoy, and achieve in education – confident and secure in their diverse identities, languages, and cultures.

The aim of the PowerUP programme was to establish culturally secure learning environments for Pacific learners by providing “academic” support for parents and learners in *as and by Pacific* ways. The programme recognised the centrality of Pacific values, knowledge, and behaviours (funds of knowledge) in the lives of Pacific peoples and as the foundation for education achievement and wellbeing. The PowerUP model of engagement states the goal that culturally safe spaces for Pacific learners will be achieved when Pacific knowledge, principles, and values are present and become normalised in school curriculum, pedagogy, and organisational processes.

*Indigenous peoples (Pacific) have control over the evaluation, and indigenous knowledge and science are the norm. The legitimacy and validity of indigenous principles and values are taken for granted. It does not exclude Western methods but includes them only as far as they are seen to be useful.*

Adapted from Wehipeihana, 2019 (page 381).

In the PowerUP community-driven model, empowerment and knowledge sharing were viewed as holistic processes, involving parents, families, and learners; the wider Pacific community; the PowerUP leaders, providers, and teachers; and the Ministry as in the Samoan concept of Fa’afaletui.

PowerUP’s *as and by Pacific* approach marks a paradigm shift in programme delivery for the Ministry from a centralised and generic model to a community-delivered and transformative programme aimed at ensuring culturally secure learning opportunities for Pacific learners. From visioning through design and delivery, and the use of Pacific research processes of Fa’afaletui and Talanoa, the PowerUP programme celebrated and reinforced Pacific ways of being, knowing, and knowledge sharing. In all ways, the *as and by Pacific* approach was a step towards maintaining the *vā* (relational space) in education by protecting and valuing the relationship between the learners’ home values, behaviours, goals, and expectations and those of the school.

## THIS SYNTHESIS

This synthesis explores the meaning and practice of culturally safe spaces for Pacific learners, as experienced by Pacific parents, learners, and communities in the PowerUP programme. Importantly, PowerUP was the first time that most of those involved had been the majority in an educational setting.

To explore relationship between culturally safe learning spaces and school achievement, a Pacific lens has been applied to the over 1,500 talanoa carried out with PowerUP parents in the pan-Pacific model (2016–18) and the estimated 1,450 talanoa gathered in the FlexiPlus/‘Au Lotu dual model programme (2019).<sup>10</sup> Reviewing the reflective talanoa voices in this way has raised a number of challenges. For example, as demonstrated in the Samoan process of fa’afaletui, the talanoa represent multi-level perspectives – the voices of parents and learners, providers, and PICI policymakers.

<sup>10</sup> The 2016–18 data is from 60 PowerUP stations (20 per year), and the 2019 data is from 38 stations (20 FlexiPlus and 18 ‘Au Lotu).



Notably, also, the PowerUP evaluation reports primarily focused on programme delivery against the programme key objective questions (KOQs). However, what might be regarded as a “moving feast of talanoa data” fitted Pacific norms of fono, consensus decision-making, and community engagement in the co-creation of knowledge (Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, 2001). Taken together, in this way, the talanoa voices reflect and validate Pacific beliefs around what is of value and how this is learnt and shared, including shifts over time. In sum, the PowerUP talanoa capture an iterative and cumulative community knowledge-building process. The talanoa featured the varied learning journeys of PowerUP Pacific parents and learners as they made meaning of their PowerUP learning experiences in their own way and time. It was powerful to read the deepening in talanoa voice in the successive evaluation reports. Clearly, the more parents and learners participated in the programme, the more discerning and authoritative their voices became. In a similar vein, the PowerUP ways of working also involved a process of listening, reflecting, refining, testing, and evaluating by the whole PowerUP team of parents and families, teachers, and PowerUP leaders and staff, as well as the Ministry team.

The five themes of culturally safe spaces proposed in the 2018 evaluation report (Oakden, 2018) have been taken as the core and starting point for this synthesis. These five themes, provided in box 3, emerged in the grouping of themes shared in talanoa in the first three years of the *as and by Pacific* model (2016–18) and were re-tested in the FlexiPlus/‘Au Lotu programme (2019).

### Box 3: Five Themes of Culturally Safe Places for Pacific Parents and Learners



**Pacific visible:** That Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities are acknowledged by and in equitable partnerships with schools in education. “Pacific visible” is also seen in the inclusion of community knowledge, Pacific ideas, and concepts through which Pacific education is understood



**Identity, language, and culture:** That Pacific learners’ developing identities are upheld by educational experiences that provide support for Pacific culture, and languages, and practices that value the contribution of Pacific parents, families, and communities through equitable and ethical partnerships



**Pacific wellbeing:** That the wellbeing of Pacific learners is understood in education in holistic Pacific terms and is supported by effective partnerships between Pacific parents, their children and families, and communities in education



**‘Auala (pathways into learning):** How Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities are facilitated to gain access to and be welcomed in education, such as curriculum pedagogy and through consultation



**Cultural bias and racism:** The attitudes, processes, and practices in education that limit the flourishing of Pacific learners, parents, families, communities, visibility, language, culture wellbeing, and access.

Together as well as individually these themes emerged as major motivational factors in parents' and learners' engagement in learning at PowerUP. Cultural bias and racism are negative factors. However, in the safety of the PowerUP learning environment, parents and learners gained the confidence to speak up, to see and to name incidents of cultural bias and racism they had witnessed or experienced themselves and not to accept these as the norm or "just the way things are". PowerUP was a culturally safe space where parents and learners could voice and share their experiences of cultural bias and racism, and identify ways of dealing with such incidents.

Taking these five elements as a given, the synthesis focus was on how these themes were present and practised at PowerUP and how learning from them inspired and empowered parents and family learning journeys. In line with the PowerUP model of engagement, this synthesis asks:

1. What were the strengths Pacific parents, children, and community brought to the PowerUP learning programme? (funds of knowledge)
2. How did the programme recognise, apply, and enhance these strengths to create culturally safe learning spaces for these parents and students?
3. What other knowledge did Pacific parents need to know to play their part in ensuring learners reached their fullest educational potential and in partnership with schools?

Information about education outcomes was not part of the PowerUP mission. However, the many successes of the programme are well-evidenced in the feelings of belonging and safety parents and learners experienced by "seeing ourselves" in an education programme; their increased understanding of school processes and informed engagement with teachers and schools on education matters; parents' affirmation of their role in supporting their children to achieve their fullest education potential; and the pride, esteem, and self-belief gained in achieving as Pacific learners.

## POSITIONING

A number of factors influenced the positioning of this synthesis.

### Treating Pacific Funds of Knowledge as an Asset

The theoretical framing of funds of knowledge is that all people and cultures have bodies of knowledge and skills that are historically accumulated and culturally developed and support individual and household function and wellbeing (Gonzalez et al, 2005). Pacific funds of knowledge are co-constructed and sustained in family daily events and ceremonies. Knowing and understanding Pacific student, family, and community funds of knowledge enables educators to use daily events and ceremonies to bring students' lived experiences into school in meaningful ways (Hunter et al., 2020). The *Pasifika Education Plan 2013–2017* (Ministry of Education, 2013) lists core Pacific values as belonging, family, inclusion, leadership, love, reciprocity, relationships, respect, service, and spirituality. These core values signal and underpin Pacific funds of knowledge.

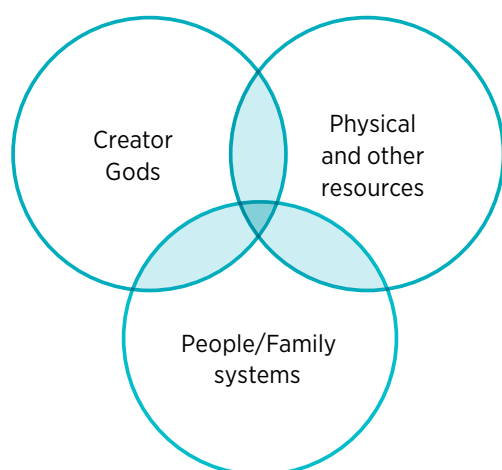
## A Pacific World View

Pacific peoples see their place in the world as connected to the creator gods, family, and family resources of land and environment (see figure 2). As described by Tui Ātua Tupua Tamasese Tupuola Tufuga Efi (2003):

*Imagine if you will a worldview that understands the environment, humans ... all natural life – as having its course in the same diving origin, imbued with the life force interrelated and genealogically connected ...*

(page 50)

Figure 2: A Pacific World View



Source: Fairbairn-Dunlop et al., 2014.

In Pacific kinship communities, wellbeing (basic needs, identity, and mana) is achieved by maintaining a harmony between these three elements of spiritual, social, and physical resource use. Family roles, behaviours, and decisions are determined by the desire to *teu le vā* (vā)<sup>11</sup> between these three elements. A consideration often missed in discussions is the Pacific belief that knowledge and talents are a *tofi* (a gift) bestowed by the creator gods.

The Ministry of Social Development report *Social Wellbeing Indicators for Pacific People* notes:

*Wellbeing occurs when all aspects of the individual and collective are in balance, in harmony and integrated and co-exist with environments, kinship support systems, language, fulfilment of roles and responsibilities and recognition of mana and tape ...*

(page 4)

## Culturally Safe Learning Environments

Culture refers to the sets of protocols, rules, and communicating patterns that develop to support the Pacific world view. Culture influences how people view, comprehend, and respond to physical and social phenomena. It extends beyond language and ethnicity. Factors such as age and generational issues, gender, sexual orientation, geographic location, religion, and socio-economic status may have as much – or more – cultural significance for an individual or community (Bennett et al., 2005). Macpherson and Macpherson (2010)<sup>12</sup> define culture as comprising material elements that people create and assign meaning to and non-material elements, such as language, beliefs, ideas, rules, customs, myths, and skills, each of which is encapsulated in the concept of culturally safe spaces for learning. Williams (1999) describes the holistic nature of culturally secure environments as those that are:

*Spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people; where there is no assault challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning together ...*

(page 213)

<sup>11</sup> See Airini et al., 2010.

<sup>12</sup> See also UNESCO terms intangible and tangible heritage.

### Pacific Peoples - a Diverse Community

New Zealand’s Pacific population is youthful and fast growing. The 2018 census indicates Pacific peoples comprise 8.1 percent of the total New Zealand population, and this number is expected to increase to 10.9 percent by 2026. The median age for the Pacific population is 23.4 years (compared with 41.4 years for non-Pacific), and one-third are in the schooling aged population group (between 0 and 14 years of age). The Pacific community is also increasingly diverse, by factors such as cultural group ethnicity, length of time in New Zealand, and increased intermarriage. Of the 381,642 people who self-identified as “Pacific peoples” in the 2018 census, 65 percent – or two people in every three – were New Zealand born. The endurance of fa’a-Pacific values and beliefs as evidenced in, for example, the priority of faith and family, the sustaining of Pacific languages, and the significant remittances to families in the homelands. Studies have also highlighted the intergenerational transfer of fa’a-Pacific communication and parenting norms in New Zealand, such as an unquestioning respect for the views of elders and those of higher status (such as teachers) and parent-child conversations marked by emphatic instructions (“do this”), with fewer opportunities for children to question or voice a view (Wilson, 2017; Fuka-Lino, 2015; Fa’alau, 2015). While Pacific values are respected, questioning and communication can be “at the heart of learning” through clever Pacific-led change processes, such as “friendly arguing” that support learning and respect while decreasing bullying (Hunter et al., 2020; Alton-Lee, personal communication, Dec 2020).

Knowing, understanding, and taking account of the diversity of Pacific parents and learners is fundamental to providing culturally safe learning spaces for Pacific learners. While fa’a-Pacific values and

behaviours are often presented as a binary or polar opposite to what are described as the more individualised values believed to prevail in Western communities, in reality, there can be a range of potential behaviours across and within this binary spectrum and as influenced by time and place or occasion (see table 2).

**Table 2: Fundamental Values: Pākehā Versus Pacific Peoples/Māori**

| Pākehā        | Pacific Peoples/Māori |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| » Individual  | » Communal            |
| » Secular     | » Spiritual           |
| » Consumer    | » Ecological          |
| » Conflictual | » Consensual          |

Source: Tamasese et al., 2010

In a similar vein, Berry’s acculturation model (2017) has proposed a range of intercultural strategies to mark individual and group preferences for engaging with their own and/or other cultural groups. Berry notes four types of acculturation strategies: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalisation. Berry’s range of potential actions is also influenced by a consideration for time, place, and purpose as seen in this example:

*When I asked a prominent Samoan leader the best way to introduce him to a group of Pacific students from New Zealand who were visiting Sāmoa for the first time, his response was ‘o le a tonu le pogai ole tou malaga mai? What is the purpose and, relationship (auala) in which you are coming here today?’ (for example, friend, colleague, teacher, family member, advocate for a group). His question focused on the nature of the visit, and the relationship being observed. Our response, in turn, determined his role, status and conduct on this occasion.*

Fairbairn-Dunlop

## THE APPROACH

This synthesis presents a strength-based picture of PowerUp parents' and learners' experiences of education in New Zealand and the challenges and shifts in their attitudes and approaches to learning that occurred through joining PowerUP. The synthesis also applies an equity approach: to provide Pacific learners with a full range of opportunities and benefits. The theoretical approach used is the sociocultural theory of learning and development: that interpersonal and intellectual learning are interdependent from birth and throughout life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bruner, 1997; Macfarlane et al., 2007). The approach of this synthesis takes the view that, to understand the meaning PowerUP parents and learners attribute to the concept and experience of culturally safe learning spaces, it is necessary to give equal attention to how the programme's ways of working and thinking inspired, empowered, and guided family learning journeys at PowerUP and through to their participation in school, home, and other communities.

Therefore, this synthesis begins by using the five themes of culturally safe learning spaces as a starting point, followed by the rationale, goals, and delivery of the programme, and concludes by returning to a fuller discussion of the five themes. Priority is given to parents' voices, as the initial aims of the PowerUP model were to "build the capacity of parents to support their

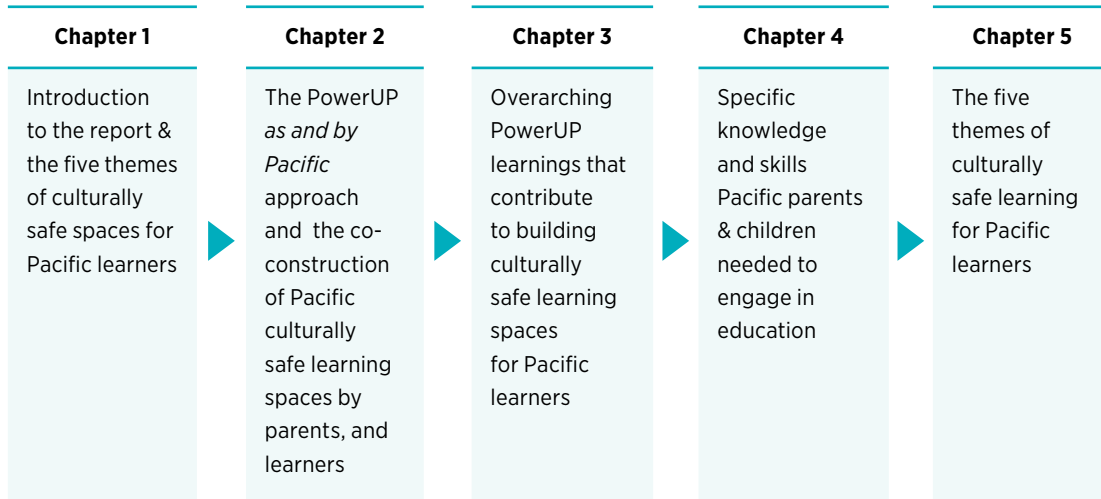
children to achieve their fullest educational potential". The inclusion of learners' voices in 2017 provided deeper insights of the programme and enabled a triangulation of adults' and children's experiences. Where the provider and Ministry voices have been included, these are signalled. The teacher voice is informed and reflected through the eyes of learners and parents, as expressed in talanoa. The data in the pan-Pacific programme cycle (2016–18) was not disaggregated by ethnicity, age, gender, or location. The data gathered in the FlexiPlus/'Au Lotu option (2019) is more detailed.

On this point, the synthesis is a composite and co-constructed picture of parents' and families' experiences of education in schools, and at PowerUP where, for the first time, they were the majority in a learning context. The patterns of learning highlighted are not time-bound by year (unless noted) nor by individual parent, learner, or family. This approach captures the truth that learning is not a passive or a linear process – people connect and make meaning of their experiences in their own way and time. For example, providers said that sometimes major shifts in parents' attitudes to learning occurred within a few weeks, for others it was a longer process. An overarching finding noted, is that, as parents learnt more about school processes, they also began to affirm their roles and responsibilities in supporting family learning journeys.

## THE STRUCTURE

This synthesis is presented in five chapters as outlined in table 3 below.

**Table 3: Synthesis Organisation and Process**



This chapter has presented the synthesis purpose, positioning, and approach and introduced the five PowerUp themes of culturally secure learning spaces that emerged in the parents and learners talanoa (2016-18) and were re-tested in the FlexiPlus/'Au Lotu programme. The focus of Chapter 2 is on the rationale and goals of the programme and how the *as and by Pacific* programme and Pacific values, beliefs, epistemology, and pedagogy were embedded in the programme's ways of working and thinking in the pan-Pacific cycle (2016-18) and the flexible option (2019). As in the fa'a-Pacific way, parents and learners brought their knowledge, values, and aspirations into the programme, while teachers and mentors incorporated and built on these strengths to establish new and extend existing 'auala (pathways) in learning. The use of reflective thinking (the "What?, So What?, What Now?" approach (Borton, 1970) is evidenced in the quality of talanoa voices.

Chapters 3 and 4 present the programme in action. Chapter 3 comprises three parts. Part 1 presents the bones of PowerUP's multi-task learning programme. Part 2 provides a

helicopter view – holistic and longitudinal – of the cumulative learnings by parents and learners across the four years, for example, the empowerment of parents' and learners' voices in this learning environment where Pacific ideals and behaviours were honoured; the reinforcement of the relationship between effective and cognitive factors in this learning; and the self-esteem in achieving as Pacific students. Part 3 discusses the importance of supporting the "best" teachers for Pacific learners. Chapter 4 focuses specifically on the knowledge and skills parents and learners needed in order to engage in school learning, and how PowerUP supported them to master and apply these learnings in connecting with teachers, schools, homes, and communities. What is highlighted quite compellingly is the fact that Pacific parents and children do not have adequate access to information about school processes or terms and language, largely because information packages are in English but also because of the cultural environment in which school messaging is carried out. Chapter 5 returns to a deeper discussion of the five themes of culturally safe learning and Chapter 6 provides some concluding comments.





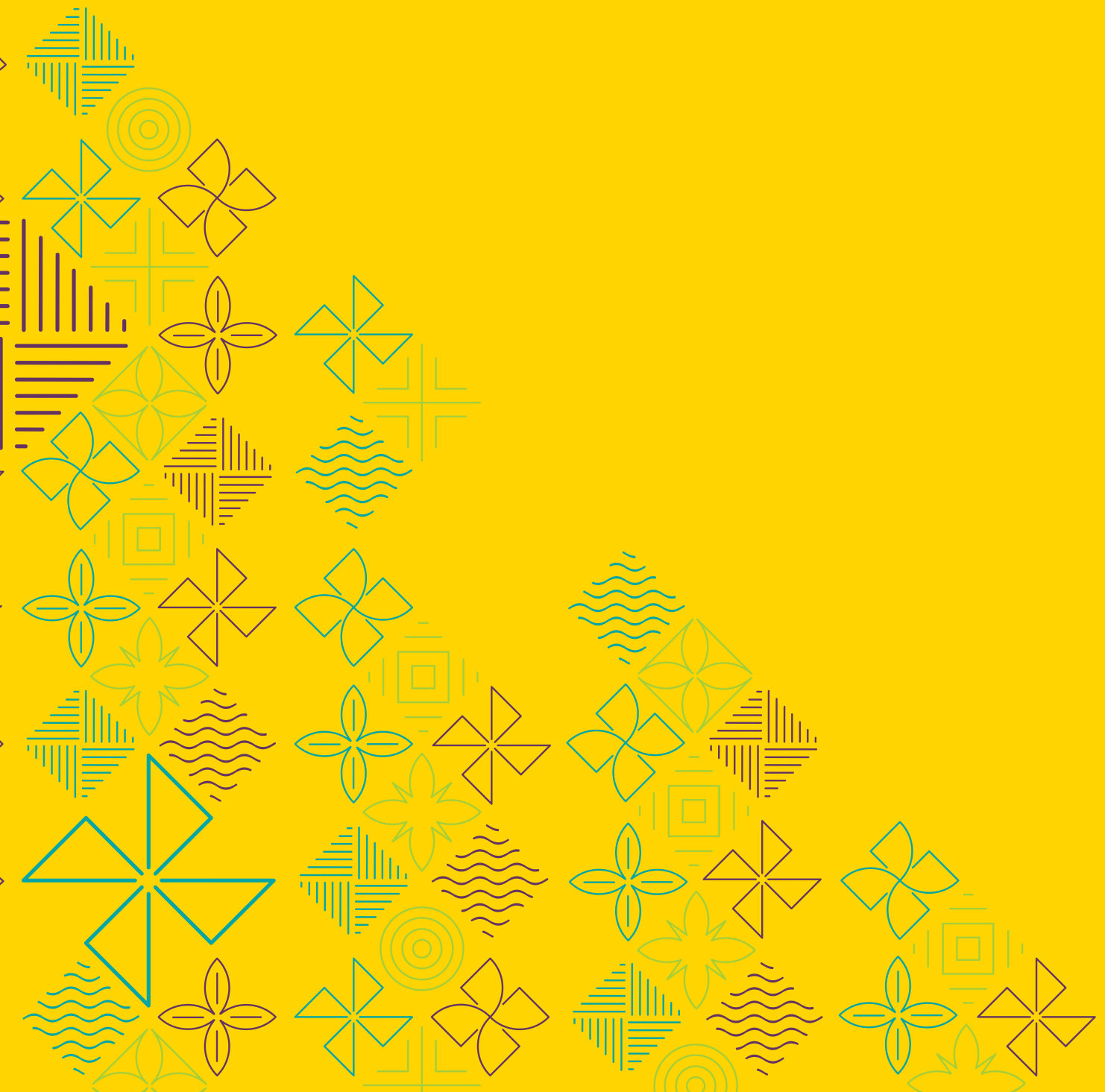
## DEFINITIONS

|                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Academic</b>                  | As in the PowerUP evaluation reports, in this synthesis, the term “academic” is used to refer to “school knowledge/other world views” and is used as a contrast to Pacific funds of knowledge.                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Culture</b>                   | Culture influences how people view, comprehend, and respond to physical and social phenomena. It extends beyond language and ethnicity. Factors such as age and generational issues, gender, sexual orientation, geographic location, religion, and socio-economic status may have as much – or more – cultural significance for an individual or community (Bennett et al., 2005). |
| <b>Funds of knowledge</b>        | The theoretical framing of funds of knowledge is that all people and cultures have bodies of knowledge and skills that are historically accumulated and culturally developed and support individual and household function and wellbeing (Gonzalez et al., 2005).                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Learners</b>                  | Students attending PowerUP comprised a mix of ECE, primary school, and secondary school learners. In this synthesis, the term “learners” is used to represent all student age groups.                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Parents</b>                   | In this synthesis, the term “parents” refers not only to parents but to other family members who attended PowerUP, for example, grandparents, siblings, and in some cases caregivers.                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>PowerUP/Ako</b>               | The programme reports cover a span of four years and two project phases.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Providers</b>                 | The providers are the community leaders responsible for organising and delivering the programme at each PowerUP site. In the 2016–18 pan-Pacific cycle, the providers were local community leaders. Church leaders were the providers in the ethnic-specific ‘Au Lotu model (2019). The ‘Au Lotu programmes were run in Wellington and Auckland only.                               |
| <b><i>Pacific terms used</i></b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>‘Auala</b>                    | Pathways, learning choices                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Fa’afaletui</b>               | The weaving together of multiple perspectives to form a complete picture                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Fia sili</b>                  | To act above one’s station                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Mā (fa’amā)</b>               | To cause or experience shame                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Talanoa</b>                   | The Pasifika cultural practice of conversations and talking issues through together (Vaioleti, 2006)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Teu le vā</b>                 | To protect the relationship – to keep relationships and people at the centre (see Airini et al., 2010)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Tū mālosi</b>                 | To stand tall, strong                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |



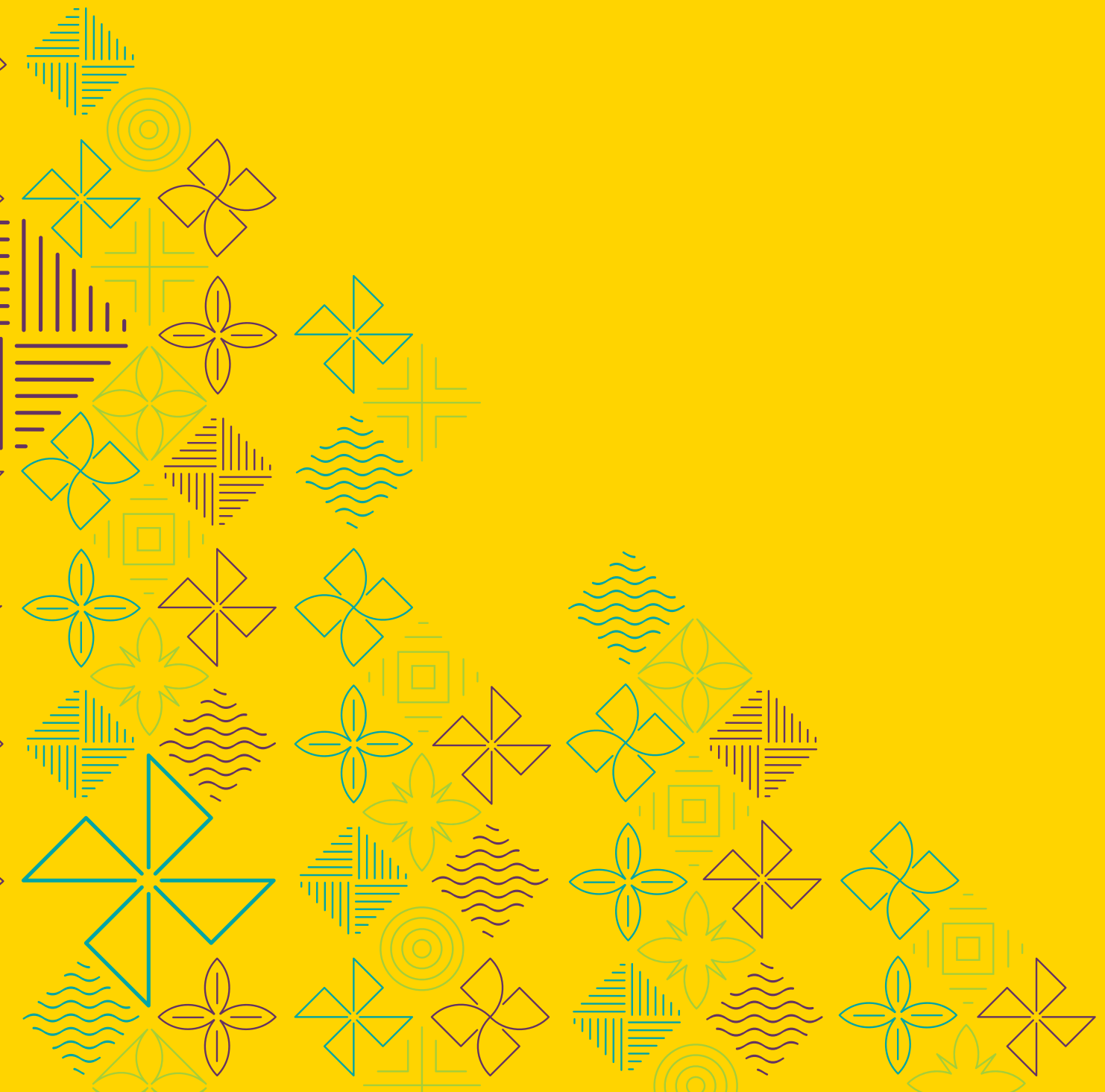
# Chapter 2

The PowerUP Programme  
(2016–19)



# Chapter 2

The PowerUP Programme  
(2016–19)





## KEY POINTS

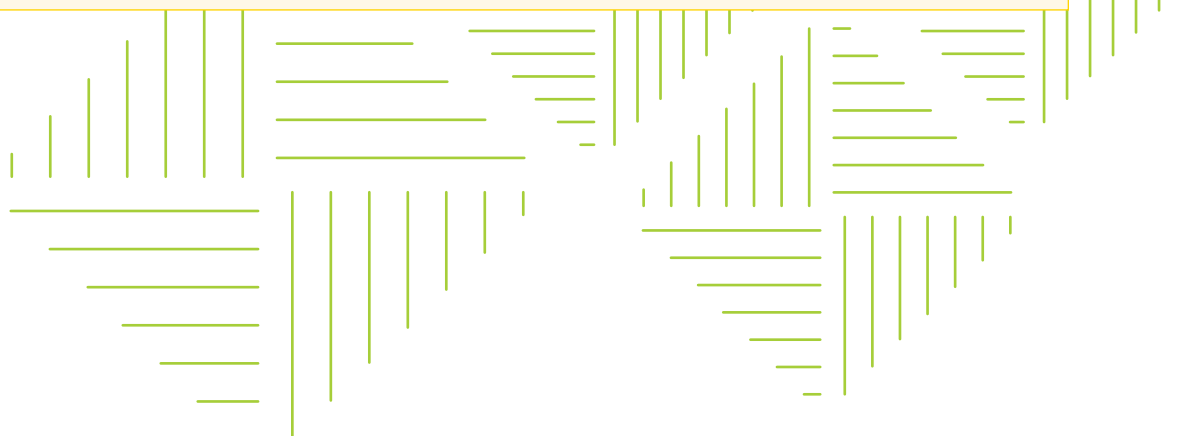
The PowerUP priority to providing academic support for Pacific families and learners in an *as and by Pacific* offered fresh starts in learning for parents and families. Pacific funds of knowledge (culture, language, and identity) were valued and treated as assets in the programme, and programme decision-making and delivery at each PowerUP station was shared by the PowerUP teams of community leaders, parents and families, teachers, mentors and other staff, and the Ministry team. As in the *fa'afaletui*, each group contributed to and were instrumental in working together to create culturally secure learning spaces for Pacific learners.

PowerUP gave priority to hearing and responding to the voices of parents and learners; the voices most often missing in education discussion. These voices were gathered by the use of guided *talanoa* and self-profiles and:

- 1) reflected parents and students learning strengths and priorities, supporting them to take responsibility for their education and choices made
- 2) contributed to a refining and adaption of the PowerUP ways of thinking and working. For example, the change from a pan-Pacific model (2015-18) to the FlexiPlus/'Au Lotu model in 2019 was in response to parents' expressed preferences for an ethnic-specific option. So too was the reduction in the number of sessions in that year (from 25 to 8-15) and the timing of these, which made it easier for parents to attend.

The strategy of parents and learners attending PowerUP together fitted the Pacific norm of holding families as the major educating and socialising agency and challenged the belief that education is the responsibility of schools. It also facilitated the transfer of lessons learnt at PowerUP into families, homes, and communities. Learners regarded their parents' participation at PowerUP as a clear signal that education mattered and as an expression of parental love. PowerUP parents began to better understand their children's learning journeys (which were so different from their own) and learnt ways to support their children to achieve their fullest education potential in partnership with schools. The programme reduced some of the cultural mismatches between learners' school experiences and the realities of their daily life experiences.

Each year, the total number of parents and families participating in the programme increased. However, the recruitment of families remained a challenge. The spread of the programme is seen in the 'Au Lotu data (2019), which indicated that 75 percent of parents attending were Pacific born.



The PowerUP programme is one of a range of Ministry of Education (Ministry) programmes to support Pacific educational achievement. The Ministry's PEP goals are to ensure every learner can achieve in education to realise their full potential and gain the skills to succeed in life and in the workforce. These goals align with New Zealand's national goals of equity and justice and aspirations as a culturally diverse nation.<sup>13</sup>

This chapter is divided in three parts: Part 1 outlines the framework of the PowerUP *as and by Pacific* programme, the PowerUP model of engagement, and the ways of working and thinking established to achieve the PowerUP goals, including the introduction of reflective thinking into the programme in 2018. In Part 2, the focus turns to the PowerUP programme in action, including delivery targets and mobilisation strategies in the 2016–18 years and as adapted in the FlexiPlus/'Au Lotu model (2019). The chapter concludes in Part 3 by exploring the question: What difference does it make to have parents and children learn together?

## PART 1: THE POWERUP AS AND BY PACIFIC PROGRAMME

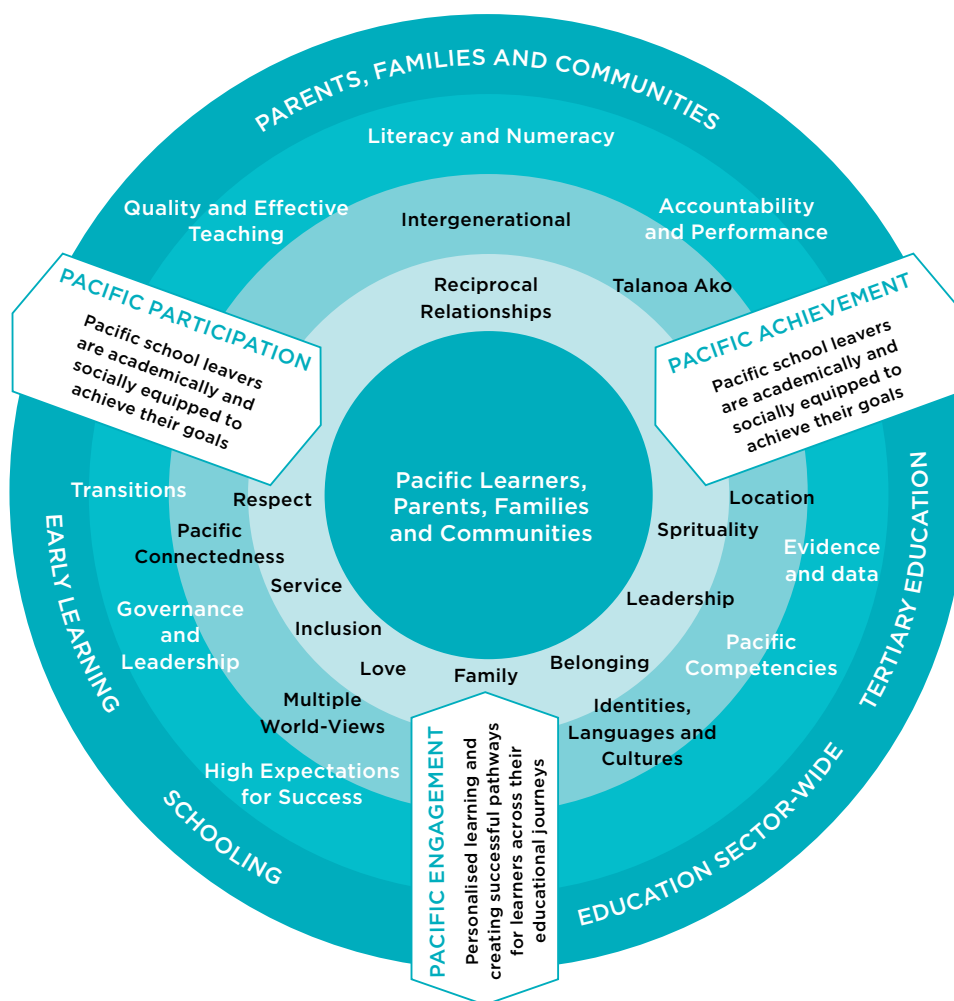
The philosophical basis of the PowerUP programme is that a whole-of-family approach is the most powerful way to raise Pacific educational achievement. PowerUP aims were to ensure Pacific parents and communities were informed, knowledgeable, and confident supporters of their children's learning journeys. These goals were to be achieved by providing academic support to parents and children from ECE through primary to secondary school learners in an *as and by Pacific* way.

The programme addresses *Pasifika Education Plan* goals (Ministry of Education, 2013), that "Pacific identities, languages, and cultures" are central to the concept of educational success for Pacific learners. PowerUP also recognises fa'a-Pacific cultural norms that parents, family, and community are the major socialising and educating agencies. They are the heart of identity, security, and wellbeing for Pacific peoples, as shown in the *Pasifika Education Plan (2013–2017)* spiral (Figure 3, page 37).

<sup>13</sup> See also other definitions of wellbeing.



Figure 3: Pacific Spiral PEP



PowerUP’s family-based approach also aligns with global research, which states the significant relationship between identity, security, and school achievement (Purkey, 1970), and evidence from New Zealand’s Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) that “quality teaching involves creating effective links between school and other cultural contexts in which students are socialised (Alton-Lee, 2003).

For many years, New Zealand’s Pacific community and Pacific educators have argued passionately for Pacific knowledge to be present and practised in education. At the 2018 series of national Pacific education forums hosted by the Hon. Jenny Salesa, (then) Associate Minister of Education, strong arguments were again made for integrating Pacific knowledge and

ways of knowing into school curriculum and pedagogy, together with stressing the urgency of investing in effective ways of building teacher capability for culturally responsive pedagogy to achieve this. Pacific calls for culturally safe learning spaces mirror the growing body of research findings that draw attention to the negative effects associated with the subordination (neglect) of tikanga Māori in New Zealand schooling. That devaluing of Māori knowledge and language in education has contributed to an erosion of identity security, which in turn has impacted negatively on Māori educational success. The PowerUP *as and by Pacific* programme captures the heart of Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s clarion call for community- and indigenous-driven learning models that reclaim and celebrate Māori knowledge and pedagogy (Smith, 2012).

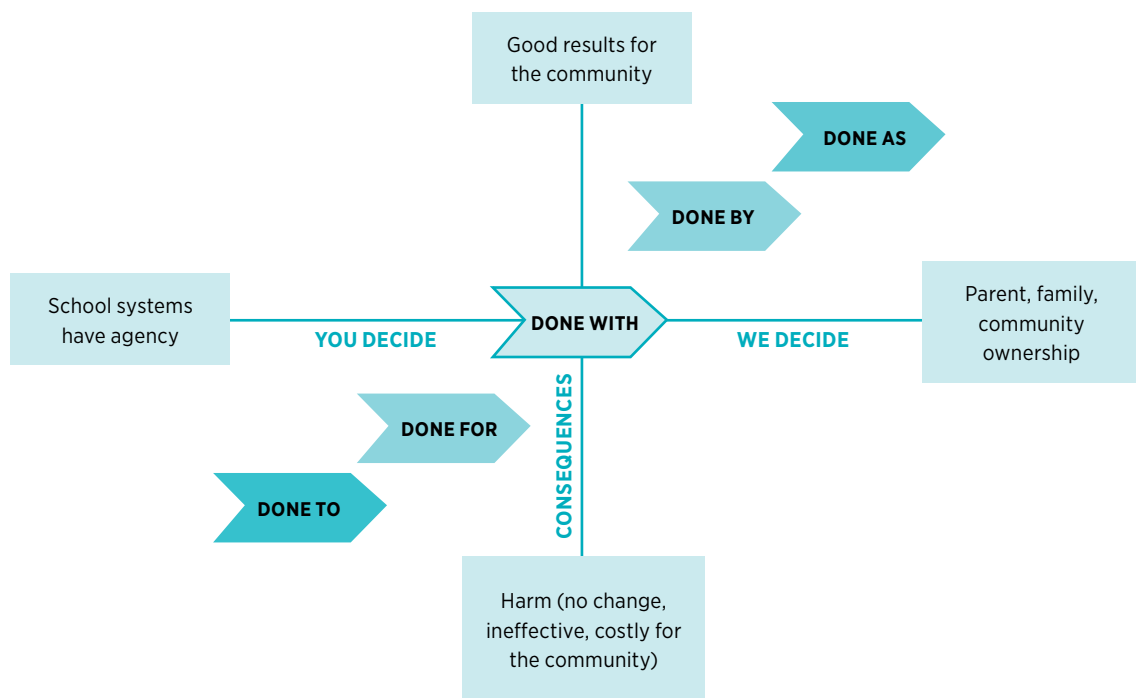
### The PowerUP Model of Engagement

The PowerUP *as and by Pacific* model of engagement takes the view that culturally safe learning spaces for Pacific students will be achieved (and harms reduced) when Pacific parents and communities affirm their ownership in education in partnership with schools (see figure 4). That is, where:

*Indigenous peoples [in this case Pacific peoples] have control over the evaluation, and Indigenous knowledge and science are the norm. The legitimacy and validity of Indigenous principles, values are taken for granted. It does not exclude Western methods but includes them only as far as they are seen to be useful ...*

Wehipeihana, 2019 (page 381)

Figure 4: The PowerUP Model of Engagement



Source: Adapted from Wehipeihana, 2019

The PowerUP programme marked a paradigm shift for the Ministry from a centralised and generic model to a community-delivered and transformative programme that, by supporting Pacific parents, families, and communities, allows them to gain ownership, agency, and responsibility in education. This would result in culturally secure learning opportunities for Pacific learners.





## Key Objectives

PowerUP aims were to build the educational capability, knowledge, and voice of parents, families, and communities, so equipping them to: 1) champion their children's educational journeys; 2) be more demanding of the education system; and 3) foster changes within their families and communities that enhance educational success and wellbeing. In the PowerUP family-based programme, academic support for parents and learners was provided from ECE through to secondary school learners at PowerUP's community mobilised stations, so covering the whole education spectrum, including career advice.

Key objectives (KEQs) were established to meet these aims in 2016, and these were applied across the four years of the programme reviewed in this synthesis. KEQ1 was the overarching objective, with KEQ2-KEQ4 being the objectives set in place to supportive the achievement of KEQ1. The KEQs were:

- » KEQ1: To build the capability, knowledge, and voice of Pacific parents, families, and communities to drive and accelerate Pacific educational success
- » KEQ2: To provide access to quality registered teachers at every level to ensure the right information is available at the right time
- » KEQ3: To ensure fit-for-purpose, culturally appropriate, inclusive, and effective approaches to best meet the local needs of Pacific parents, children, and families
- » KEQ4: To achieve real results in real time.

PowerUP programme evaluations (2016-18) and the 2019 dual option model reported back on these KEQs. The KEQs are "present centred", that is, providing "information at the right time" and "real results in real time". However, more is needed for transformative change to be effective. The PowerUP empowerment model or engagement represents a complex and long-term task, given the systemic and deeply embedded power imbalances in education policy and programme decision-making.

## The Powerup Ways Of Working And Thinking

From visioning to the design and delivery of the programme to the use of Pacific research processes of *Fa'afaletui* and *Talanoa*, the PowerUP *as and by Pacific* programme observed and strove to reinforce Pacific ways of being, knowing, and knowledge sharing. The programme incorporated the following ways of working and thinking:

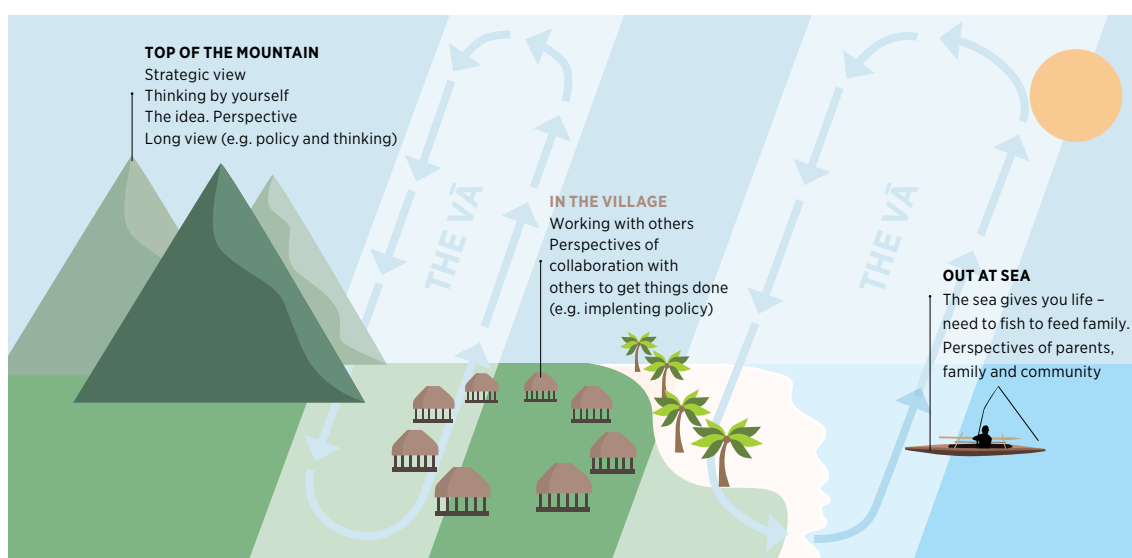
1. A whole-system approach based on the Fa'afaletui model
2. A community-driven rather than school-based model, with a focus on parental engagement
3. The introduction of reflective practice as a way of understanding and learning as a community - encouraging cycles of adaptive action to support positive and ongoing changes for parents and families that benefit the whole family and community and to inform the evolution of the PowerUP programme design.

Each of these three ways of working and thinking is discussed in more detail on page 41.

### ***Fa’afaletui* – a whole-system approach**

The *Fa’afaletui* process of gathering communities together to weave their experiences, expectations, and aspirations, is one many that Pacific communities are familiar with. The principles underpinning the *Fa’afaletui* are that sound decisions require consultation with a range of voices, namely the views of those sitting at the top of the mountain (policy level), those in the village (practitioners), and those “out at sea”, each of whom will or are impacted by the decisions made. In the *Fa’afaletui*, each perspective is a valued contribution and, consequently, each “voice” has a stake in ensuring decisions made achieve positive programme outputs (see figure 5).

**Figure 5: The Fa’afaletui Framework**



Source: Adapted from Tamasese, et al., 2005

Fa’afaletui is about the safety and comfort of the fale (house) to do the tu’i (the putting together of ideas). Fa’afaletui is to collaborate and share ideas and innovations in the comfort of a house.

In the PowerUP application of the Fa’afaletui model, knowledge and power was similarly viewed as a holistic and shared process. However, in PowerUP priority was given to the users’ voices, that is, the voices of families, learners, and the wider Pacific community, which are so often missing in education decision-making.

The Fa’afaletui model was also adapted and used by the Ministry team as a framework to link the different parts of PowerUP’s work: to facilitate, gather, interpret, and validate the knowledge shared in the programme; and to ensure all levels of thinking and activity were taken account of in programme planning and delivery. In carrying out this weaving of ideas, the Ministry team observed the Pacific value of *tausi le vā* aimed at protecting and maintaining the relationships between 1) policy and research into Pacific parents’ family and community experiences and ways of knowing and being; 2) programme implementation within families’ communities and schools; and 3) evaluating parts of the programme work plan in order to inform next steps.



### Community-driven

Community ownership was the driving principle in the PowerUP *as and by Pacific* programme. The programme was offered at PowerUP stations established throughout New Zealand for this purpose.<sup>14</sup> Leadership was in the hands of esteemed community leaders, and teachers and mentors were of Pacific ethnicity and drawn from the local community. Teachers were qualified and had a knowledge of Pacific languages and culture. In the PowerUP hub-like communicating and reporting systems, providers were the local PowerUP champions and liaison points for the Ministry's team. Providers implemented the programme and adapted it to community needs and context, recruited families, organised venues and sessions, kept attendance data and other records, and carried out the talanoa. In sum, ownership of the programme and decisions regarding programme content and delivery were shared by parents, families, and community, together with the Ministry's team.

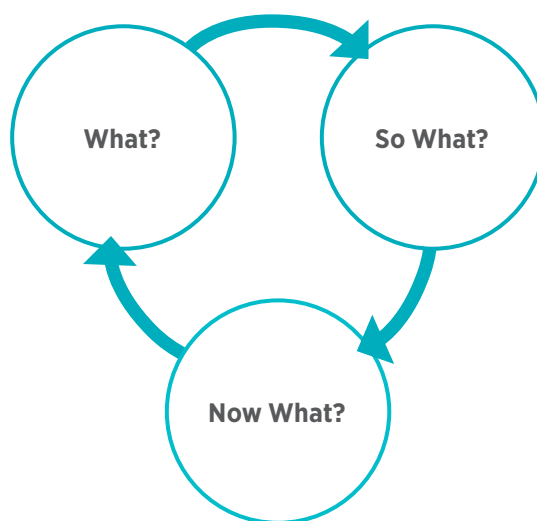
### Reflective practice

Several reflective practices were built into the PowerUP programme. The practice of talanoa – conversations, talking through issues – is a commonly used communicating and decision-making process in many Pacific communities (Vaiolleti, 2006). In the PowerUP programme, talanoa were used as a way of listening, hearing, and responding to parents' and learners' voices about their experiences of education generally and in the PowerUP programme. The programme's use of talanoa is discussed further in the Monitoring and Evaluation section below.

The Adaptive Action Cycle (AAC) of sensing, transforming, and acting was incorporated into the PowerUP programme in 2018 (see figure 6). AAC supports people to develop alternative ways of handling themselves,

other people, and their environment, thereby “increasing the personal options open to them” (Borton, 1970, page 86). The use of the AAC reflective processes of “What?, So What?, What Now?” gave PowerUP parents and learners the power to consider and take responsibility for making decisions about education, including the choice of learning pathways.

Figure 6: The Adaptive Action Cycle



Source: Borton, 1970

The depth and quality of the voices shared in PowerUP talanoa suggest parents and learners had internalised AAC as a way of thinking, making decisions, and acting. Furthermore, they knew that their views were listened to and could make a difference.

---

*[Taking part in the talanoa] means I am able to reflect and work towards goals for our family, in our journey with our kids.*

*Parent, talanoa*

---

Providers and the Ministry team also used AAC as a strategy to ensure programme relevance, robustness, and appropriateness to community context and needs.

<sup>14</sup> Note: 20 PowerUP stations in the 2016–18 cycle and 38 in the 2019 FlexiPlus option.








### Powerup Targets And Delivery

Programme targets were set in 2016 and applied through to 2018. These were to establish 20 PowerUP stations in communities spread around New Zealand for parents and ECE, primary, and secondary school learners. Each of the PowerUP stations would provide 26 two-hour sessions, which were scheduled consecutively. Programme attendance targets set in 2016 were similarly intensive and detailed: 800 Pasifika parents and families, along with their children aged 5 years and under; 1,000 primary school students; 1,000 year 9 and 10 students; and 1,500 Pasifika NCEA students.

Significant changes to programme delivery were introduced in the FlexiPlus/'Au Lotu model (2019) in response to community voice and with the aim of growing the programme. Parents had found the earlier programme targets of 26 consecutive sessions hard to meet. These changes are highlighted in red in table 4. In summary:

- » The FlexiPlus programme was a continuation of the pan-Pacific programme and parents' and children model. The 'Au Lotu programme involved ethnic-specific and parent-only stations.
- » The number of PowerUP sessions per year was reduced from 26 to 8-15, which could be scheduled according to community context (for example, as block sessions to suit local activities, such as seasonal work).
- » Providers had an allocation of three to four of these sessions, which could be used to discuss local concerns (provider choice).

Table 4: The PowerUP Pan-Pacific Model (2016–18) and the FlexiPlus/‘Au Lotu Dual Model (2019)

| 2016–18                                                                                                                                                                                            | 2019                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                              | 2020                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| PowerUP plus                                                                                                                                                                                       | FlexiPlus                                                                                                                                                                                                      | ‘Au Lotu                                                                                                                                                     | Talanoa Ako                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>APPROACH</b><br><i>As and by Pacific community driven model</i>                                                                                                                                 | Tested and refined                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                               |                                                                            |                                                                                                                           |
| <b>DELIVERY</b>                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Community-driven</li> <li>» Pan-Pacific</li> <li>» Parents and children</li> <li>» Nationwide x 20 stations</li> <li>» 26 consecutive sessions</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Community-driven</li> <li>» Pan-Pacific</li> <li>» Parents and children</li> <li>» Nationwide x 20 stations</li> <li>» 8–15 sessions (flexible scheduling)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Church-driven</li> <li>» Ethnic specific</li> <li>» Parents only</li> <li>» Wellington and Auckland only</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*10 weeks</li> <li>Pan-Pacific or ethnic specific</li> <li>7 sessions and 3 provider choices</li> <li>Parent focused, or parent and their children focused</li> </ul> |
| Five themes of culturally safe spaces for Pacific learners identified                                                                                                                              | Tested and refined                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                             |                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

### Monitoring and Evaluation

As noted, PowerUP priority was given to hearing the voices of parents and learners. Guided talanoa series and self-completion evaluation surveys were the main programme monitoring and evaluation tools. Talanoa were carried out with parents and learners at each of the PowerUP stations at set times during the year, and data were systematically gathered throughout the programme and immediately lodged with the Ministry team.



### **Guided talanoa series**

The guided talanoa series were developed by the Ministry team with the aim of documenting shifts in family educational expectations and behaviours, which occurred as a result of attending PowerUP. The guided talanoa focused on seven thematic areas:

- » Pacific demography: including place of birth, family size, languages spoken
- » Early learning and primary education experiences, decisions parents made for their children, how they supported their children, home-school relationships, the parents' educational knowledge, beliefs, and assumptions about education
- » Secondary school education: parental choice, expectations, involvement with their children's learning, and ambitions for their children
- » What parents learned at PowerUP about the education system and how they supported their children
- » What actions parents took from having this information or knowledge, and how this altered their beliefs and perceptions about education
- » The outcomes from their new knowledge: the actions they took around their children's education, and their attitudes towards education; their messages for schools and other parents and families; and what made the difference for them
- » For children: the value of PowerUP, how they felt, and why they felt this way.

**Table 5: Longitudinal Approach to the Selection of Talanoa Families (2016-18)**

| <b>Family sample from each PowerUP station</b> |                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>2016</b>                                    | » 2 x year 1 families<br>(Pacific parents or adult family members only)                                                |
| <b>2017</b>                                    | » 1 x year 1 family<br>» 1 x year 2 family<br>(Pacific parents or adult family members and their children)             |
| <b>2018</b>                                    | » 1 x year 2 family<br>» 1 x year 3 family<br>(Pacific parents or adult family members and their children)             |
| <b>2019</b>                                    | » Talanoa with 64 families, including parents and their children, and 32 with community providers and church providers |

Over 1,500 talanoa with parents and learners were carried out in the first three-year project cycle (2016-18), and 1,450 were carried out in the FlexiPlus/'Au Lotu model (2019). This is a combined total of more than 2,950. These source materials were used in the PowerUP annual evaluation reports. Together, these data form an invaluable longitudinal picture of what Pacific families learnt at PowerUP, how they used these learnings, and ways these learnings influenced their beliefs, values, and attitudes to education. These talanoa voices contributed to the co-construction of the five themes of culturally safe spaces for learners, which are a central platform in this synthesis.

### **Self-completion evaluation surveys**

Self-completion evaluation surveys were developed by the PICI team to explore what parents and learners had gained in the programme and what they regarded to be the programme's strengths and weaknesses. These surveys were conducted in English. Three versions were prepared: 1) an adult's version [6 questions]; 2) a secondary school student's version [11 questions]; and 3) a version for students in years 5–8 [14 questions]. The PICI distributed copies to providers at each PowerUP station, who then returned the completed surveys to the PICI for data processing and analysis.

The response rates for the self-completion surveys are outlined in table 6. The response rate for the adult survey, based on attendance data, was 21 percent; for students, the response rate was 25 percent, based on all students who attended PowerUP. Providers said that it was usually the more regular attendees who completed the surveys.

**Table 6: Responses to Self-completion Surveys, 2016, 2017, 2018**

| <b>Responses</b>              | <b>2016</b>   | <b>2017</b> | <b>2018</b> | <b>2019</b> |
|-------------------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Parents and other adults      | 126           | 329         | 209         | 634         |
| Secondary school age students | 344           | 753         | 579         | -           |
| Years 5–8 students            | Not collected | 272         | 286         | 857         |

### **Interpretation**

In line with the PowerUP whole-of-system approach, data analysis, synthesis, and reporting were a joint task between the Ministry team and the external evaluators (Pragmatica Ltd). The process was as follows: on receiving the data from PowerUP providers, the Ministry team entered all survey responses into an Excel spreadsheet. The Ministry team members read all the talanoa responses and assessed evidence of change around several aspects, which were then coded into coding sheets for further analysis. Pragmatica Ltd then analysed this data, using pivot tables, and prepared a summary of key data, using descriptive statistics. These key data were then discussed with the Ministry's team through a sense-making process, which involved five stages of identifying key generalisations, exceptions, contradictions, and "surprises", such as themes that were present or missing and puzzling (Poyang and Oakden, PowerUP Plus Report 2017, page 58).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> The sense-making method originates from the work of Phil Capper and Bob Williams (Capper & Williams, 2004).

**Box 4: The Sense-making Process**

**Stage One:** We took a broad view, looking at the data overall before getting into the detail. We asked, “In general, what is this data telling us?” Then we identified the key generalisations. For instance, we noted that, in general, parents were attending the PowerUP sessions, and some of them had attended many sessions.

**Stage Two:** We asked, “What exceptions can we see?” We also looked to see if there were any outliers – either excellent or poor ratings that should be considered. For example, we identified a sizeable group of children who attended sessions without a parent or family adult.

**Stage Three:** Then we looked for any contradictions – aspects that might provide insights. For example, we saw that students said they talked about PowerUP with their parents even if parents didn’t attend. Notably, children said that they would have come more often if their parents had attended.

**Stage Four:** We considered findings that were surprising – either because they were present or because they were missing. Also, we thought about what we might learn from these findings. For example, we noticed through the talanoa that many of the parents who attended PowerUP sessions experienced noticeable changes in understanding how to support their children in just a matter of weeks.

**Stage Five:** Finally, we considered what still puzzled us and explored these “puzzles” rather than explaining them away. For example, we wondered, given the benefits to students of families attending PowerUP, how we might mobilise more families to participate.

When these stages of sense-making were completed, judgements were made on the performance in each of the evaluation criteria. Checking indicated that there was sufficient evidence to suggest that the judgements being made were credible and reasonable. These learnings were applied in the programme, taking into account the specific contexts of each PowerUP station, which saw a cumulative refining of the programme.

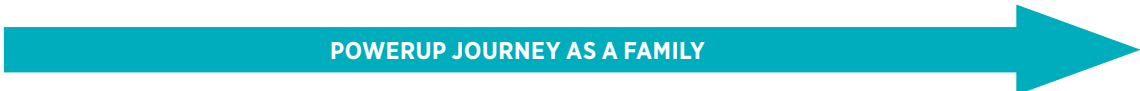
Table 7 outlines some of the shifts and refining of the PowerUP focus and ways of working by year over this period.



Table 7: PowerUP Report 2017

How PowerUP builds the knowledge, capability and voice of Pacific parents, students and families over time

| <b>MOBILISATION</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>EARLY ON IN THE PROGRAMME</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>MID PROGRAMME</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>BY THE END OF THE PROGRAMME</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>ADULT LED</b></p> <p>Invitation from someone they know and/or respect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» An adult they know (family or friend)</li> <li>» PowerUP champion</li> <li>» Community leader (in education, possibly from child's school)</li> <li>» Someone from church or through church notices</li> </ul> <p><b>CHILD LED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Hears about PowerUP at school</li> <li>» <u>Other family members attend</u></li> <li>» Friends attend</li> </ul> <p><b>MEDIA DRIVEN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Facebook</li> <li>» Pacific radio/community radio</li> <li>» School, community or church newsletter</li> </ul> | <p><b>ADULT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Settles/relaxes into a "safe" learning space (at PowerUP)</li> <li>» Starts to understand the <u>education system and how it works</u></li> <li>» Reports listening to children more</li> <li>» Has a better understanding of each child's aspirations</li> <li>» Helps children set goals and keep track of them</li> </ul> <p><b>CHILD</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Feels safe, has fun at PowerUP, <u>reduces anxiety and builds confidence to ask questions</u></li> <li>» <u>Builds trusted relationships with teachers and mentors at PowerUP to get the help they need</u></li> <li>» Talks more with parents at home</li> </ul> <p><b>FAMILY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Sets up routines around talking with each other, studying, going to school regularly</li> <li>» Prioritises education and learning in the family and makes space for this</li> <li>» Enjoys time out/change of scene at PowerUP and the family meal</li> </ul> | <p><b>ADULT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Starts to see their role in relation to education more clearly and learns skills to engage with schools in a child/parent/teacher learning conversation</li> <li>» Enjoys sharing ideas with other parents/feels supported/forms cohort</li> </ul> <p><b>CHILD</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Enjoys learning success</li> <li>» Enjoys being with others from the Pacific community also experiencing learning success</li> <li>» <u>Teachers at school notice child is motivated to learn and this improves their at school relationships</u></li> <li>» Understands learning is important for their future</li> <li>» Develops goals, possibly a career path, and a plan for achieving their goals</li> </ul> <p><b>FAMILY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Parents report things are more settled at home – less family stress, better communication, <u>broader communication</u></li> <li>» Enjoys family time at PowerUP</li> <li>» Engages with a broader Pacific community</li> </ul> | <p><b>ADULT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Confident to engage with school on their own terms</li> <li>» <u>Can critique what's happening, ask for explanations and extra help and can advocate for their children</u></li> <li>» Enjoys the support/ideas from the other parents at PowerUP</li> <li>» Enjoys PowerUP and commits to returning</li> </ul> <p><b>CHILD</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Understands what they are trying to achieve</li> <li>» Views education more positively, regularly attends school and experience positive outcomes</li> <li>» <u>More resilient in their learning</u></li> <li>» Says teachers notice they are more vocal in class, asking more questions, more engaged, <u>doing better quality work, getting improved grades</u></li> </ul> <p><b>FAMILY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Understands how to support and access education for the family</li> <li>» Understands how to support education, makes it a family priority</li> <li>» Addresses learning challenges – accesses help to resolve them</li> <li>» <u>Raised parental expectations of student success</u></li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Key</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Changes observed in participants attending for the first year</li> <li>» <u>Changes observed in participants attending for the second year</u></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |



## PART 2: WHO CAME TO POWERUP?

### The Programme Uptake and Attendance

In the early years of 2016 and 2017, attendance data gathered from the 20 PowerUP stations was reported in a variety of ways, as providers and families familiarised themselves with and learnt to manage the reporting systems and procedures. Data robustness was achieved by the third year (2018). PowerUP aims were to have parents and children attend the programme together. However, parents' attendance was impacted by factors such as employment (seasonal labour shift work), family, church, and health. As much as possible, PowerUP staff provided transport for families as needed. However, there is no data on this point. Table 8 sets out the 2018 attendance data against the 2019 data. In the table, critical change points are noted in red. Notably, the 2019 data represents 38 PowerUP stations compared with the 20 stations in each of the previous three years.

**Table 8: Total Attendance by Pacific Parents, Adult Family Members, and Children at PowerUP, 2018 (n: 20 PowerUP stations) and 2019 (n: 38 PowerUP stations)**

|                                             | Total visits to powerup stations | Reached overall | Average per week | Average per session |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------------|
| <b>PARENTS/ ADULTS</b>                      |                                  |                 |                  |                     |
| 2018 FlexiPlus adults                       | 8,542                            | 945             | 301              | 19                  |
| 2019 Au Lotu adults                         | 4,625                            | 569             | 463              | 29                  |
| 2019 FlexiPlus adults                       | 6,192                            | 878             | 431              | 21                  |
| Total adults 2019                           | 10,817                           | 1,447           | 894              | 50                  |
| Percent increase in adult attendance (2019) | 27%                              | 53%             | 197%             | 32%                 |
| <b>CHILDREN</b>                             |                                  |                 |                  |                     |
| FlexiPlus children 2018                     | 24,452                           | 3,458           | 1,041            | 52                  |
| FlexiPlus children 2019                     | 12,386                           | 1,669           | 825              | 40                  |
| Percent decrease in child attendance 2019   | 49%                              | 52%             | 21%              | 23%                 |
| <b>ADULT-CHILD RATIO</b>                    |                                  |                 |                  |                     |
| 2018                                        | 1 adult to every 3 children      |                 |                  |                     |
| 2019                                        | 1 adult to every 2 children      |                 |                  |                     |

**Note:** 2018 data features 20 PowerUP stations; 2019 data features 38 stations (20 FlexiPlus and 18 'Au Lotu stations).

The data for the four years covered in this synthesis indicates:

- » an increase in the total number of parents and learners attending PowerUP
- » an increase in parents' total attendance and by session (A consideration here is that the 'Au Lotu was a parent-only programme.)
- » an increase in the adult-to-child ratio from one for every three in 2018 to one to two in 2019, indicating that fewer children attended PowerUP without a parent
- » a decrease in child (learner) attendance, which was likely associated with the introduction of the 'Au Lotu parent-only model (2019).

### Recruitment and Mobilisation

By year, there were significant differences in total attendance by area, for example, between rural areas (high) and urban centres such as Auckland and Wellington (low). This raised questions about programme fatigue in urban areas and whether PowerUP was best suited to smaller and/or rural communities.

The effectiveness of the recruitment process was raised many times over the four years, despite the fact that the Ministry team took part in an extensive media training programme. There were comments such as, "I thought PowerUP is just for students" (parent survey) and "I didn't know about PowerUP ... I was worried about [my daughters'] achievement, and 'āiga suggested I go" (parent talanoa). By contrast, 'Au Lotu providers said they had found it comparatively easy to recruit parents and adult family members into the programme. This matches to comments by the Ministry team that 'Au Lotu providers enjoyed strong buy-in and guidance from the church ministers; that they received vital support from the ministers' wives; that the programme's priorities of language and cultural knowledge were already embedded in church programmes; and that the churches had robust and effective administrative community networks.

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*Churches are able to bring in the cultural aspect into the programme. What we teach within the programme aligns with the Minister's prayer or sermon at the end of the sessions, so it brings a spiritual and cultural balance to the programme.*

*'Au Lotu provider*



*I think that it is key because the church is a community; all the people come here. It allows the church to have an input into what they want and the success they want for their kids instead of being dictated by mainstream schools and by the Ministry [of Education].*

*'Au Lotu provider*



*We mobilised our parents using a church announcement following our Sunday service. We also shoulder-tapped some of our parents who we thought would benefit from the programme but had not yet registered. We also approached the local Pacific churches in our area, asking them to tell their parents about the programme and inviting them to join us. We also invited parents and teachers from our pre-school and those with children and grandchildren at primary and secondary levels.*

*'Au Lotu provider*

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Some FlexiPlus providers said they had experienced difficulties recruiting sufficient families into the programme, especially in smaller communities.

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*It has been a challenge to get 30 families to attend from our ... community. We did identify [fewer] than 20 families from the start, and from that, not all have been able to attend consistently. Some have taken real advantage of the workshops. But there have been close to 30 adults and 30 learners participating.*

*FlexiPlus provider*

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FlexiPlus providers had tried a wide range of strategies to publicise the programme, including radio interviews, posts on community Facebook groups, and distributing posters.

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*We approached community liaisons ... to talk through most suitable times to gain higher parent attendance. We explored times [when] parents finish work, especially considering when fathers finish work so they could also attend. We also considered the family not being home too late, especially with younger children.*

*FlexiPlus provider*

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They had also carried out presentations at local community meetings. Some had approached schools to see if they might advertise the programme through school networks and newsletters.

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*We asked if we could be put into contact with any families that [might] be interested in registering for PowerUP. We knew that, due to confidentiality, they would not be able to pass on the details of the students and families, so we tried to make a connection through the school and have them pass on the information. This wasn't very effective ... [Principals] were aware the programme was happening and were happy that it was going ahead, however, it wasn't an effective strategy to get families registered.*

*FlexiPlus provider*

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Some schools were encouraging. However, others were not, which is concerning. This lack of principals'/schools' support for the programme may signal a disconnect in the leadership space and warrants further attention.

A major change in the re-branding of PowerUP to the Talanoa Ako in 2020 was the inclusion of school communities, Board of Trustees, and teacher collectives in the programme. These are primarily Pacific

people who have strong links to their communities. New strategies currently being tested set the groundwork for the potential involvement of local schools and principals as partners in the PowerUP programme.

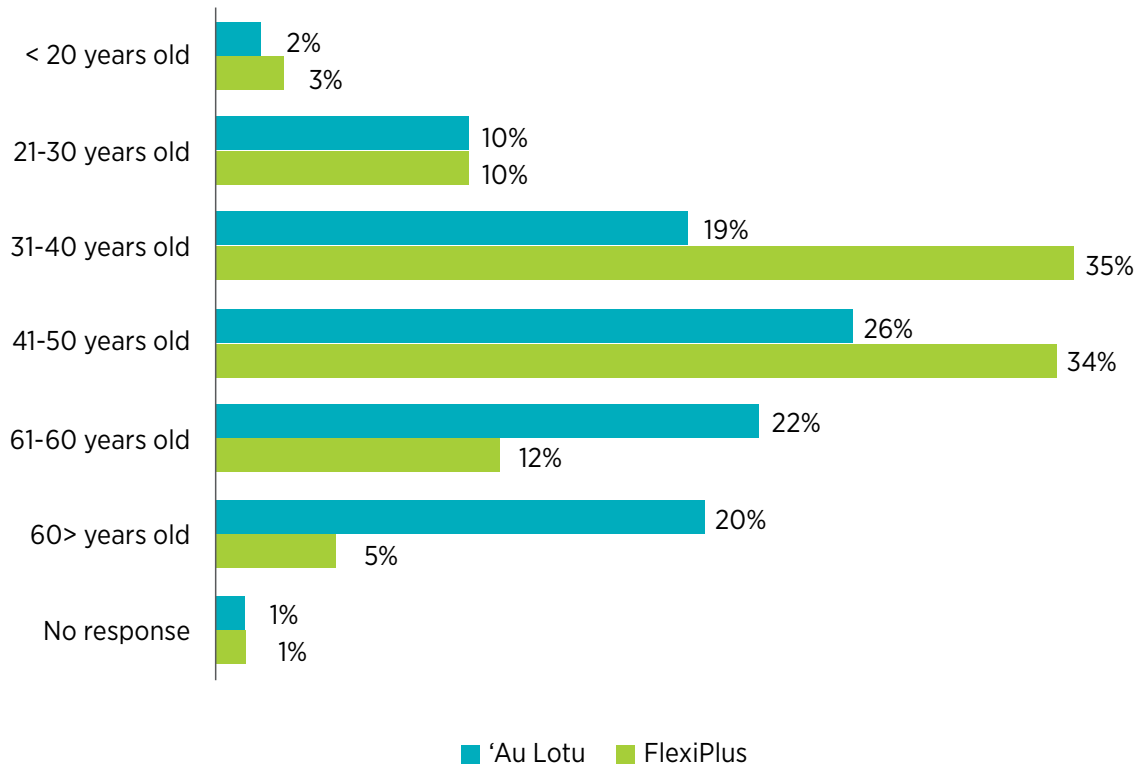
### The PowerUP Families

Data from the 2017 PowerUP profiles indicates PowerUP families were typically large: family numbers ranged from an average of four or five children, up to 10. This factor indicates the potential for shared learnings by siblings at PowerUP and in their homes and opportunities for senior PowerUP students to mentor younger students. Shared learning between Pacific siblings and mixed-age peer groups is a common norm in Pacific families (Ritchie and Ritchie, 1979; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2013).

Mothers were the main parent attending PowerUP. Over two-thirds (71 percent) of the 44 talanoa profiles in 2018 were completed with a mother, 14 percent with a father, 9 percent with both a mother and a father, and 5 percent with a mother and sister. Undoubtedly, this spread of attendance by family members relates to which family member was available at that time. The 2019 source materials suggest more fathers were attending. It also suggests that fathers' attitudes and behaviours had changed as they came to understand how to help encourage and support their children's education.

Family data gathered in the FlexiPlus/'Au Lotu (2019) highlight the wide reach the programme was achieving, especially to Pacific-born parents. 'Au Lotu parents/adults were more likely to be Pacific-born (75 percent) compared with FlexiPlus parents/adults (58 percent), and nearly three-quarters of the children attending FlexiPlus were New Zealand-born (73 percent). By age, a broader range of adult family members attended the 'Au Lotu sessions: those attending FlexiPlus were a younger profile (see figure 7).

Figure 7: The Age Profile of Adults Attending ‘Au Lotu and FlexiPlus



Source: Unpublished PowerUP report, Oakden, 2019

FlexiPlus had a broad representation of primary and intermediate school-age groups and those attending secondary school. By age, the most prevalent learner group at FlexiPlus was the 15- to 16-year-old group (22 percent).

In response to other programme options introduced in the FlexiPlus/‘Au Lotu programme in 2019, some parents and providers said they would have liked to hold more sessions throughout the year to support learners. Most parents favoured starting PowerUP at the start of the year or having the programme spread throughout the year.

*Start early in the year, as soon as school starts. With the fine weather, daylight savings, no winter sport commitments, parents and children would then, hopefully, be more encouraged [and] available to attend. And the day would not feel as long. Heading into winter, I have noticed how attendance numbers have dropped. Lessen the number of so-called barriers, be it cold weather, dark nights, which makes it feel like a longer day, if at all possible. Also starting earlier would give our children an extra boost of confidence heading into a new school year.*

*FlexiPlus parent, survey*

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*Spread out the workshops within each term. Maybe four to six sessions per term, for example, term one: report/NCEA understanding; term two: preparing for interviews with teachers; term three: exam planning/careers/institutional pathway; term four: reflection and cover anything else.*

*'Au Lotu parent, survey*

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Some providers had difficulty ensuring the venue's Wi-Fi signal was strong enough to support the sessions presented. The coldness of some venues during the winter sessions was also raised.

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*We wanted to show our parents how to use the school portal app that shows how their children are doing in school, but we can't connect to the Wi-Fi here at church. Not everyone has access to computers. Some parents don't have up-to-date mobile phones as well to download the app onto their phones.*

*'Au Lotu provider, talanoa*



*During the winter, several providers, particularly those in churches, commented on the difficulty of heating [the] venues. At times, this impacted on programme delivery. Also, some providers thought some winter sessions ran too late for younger children. Maybe [we] need to reassess and make a change, for example, on winter evenings maybe [PowerUP is] too late for the younger children to stay out late.*

*FlexiPlus provider, talanoa*

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### PART 3: WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE TO HAVE PARENTS AND CHILDREN LEARN TOGETHER?

Talanoa indicated a positive relationship between parents attending and children's motivation to learn and their discipline around completing tasks. In addition, parents and children learning together reinforced and sustained the transfer of learnings from PowerUP to family homes and the wider Pacific community. Parents said they enjoyed attending PowerUP. They also believed their children appreciated their presence.

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*[My children] definitely enjoy me coming with them to PowerUP. They show me their books with their work they did at PowerUP. I often go and sit in the classes just to listen to their mentors help them. It allows me to participate in their studies and know how to help them at home ... Their learning and outlook on learning has changed.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*My kids enjoy that I play a huge part in their learning. It also helps me to understand where they are in their education. The best thing about doing things together [PowerUP and then at home] is showing my kids that their learning is important to me; they know that I care about how well they do or not. And they see me being active in their education.*

*Parent, PowerUP 2017*



*[Support at PowerUP] has helped my children have higher expectations of themselves, knowing that they are not in it alone. As a family, we now have conversations about education, and I'm hearing from my kids how they want to keep trying to do their best with their education, in learning and gaining more.*

*Parent PowerUP 2017*

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*He is more focused in [his] schoolwork and is going back during study break to catch up. This has been a major shift in his attitude towards education ... He gets great support from the PowerUP team and teachers, which helps him in his academic work ... I think, for my son, he is at that age where he would prefer not to have me around all the time – which I understand. But for programmes such as PowerUP, I know he doesn't mind me being here. I just have to make sure I give him his space to learn freely ... I just make sure that, after the session, we make time to debrief in the car.*

*Parent, talanoa*

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PowerUP's parent and learner sessions also meant that education discussions were not abstract or theoretical but offered parents the chance to relate the discussions and concepts discussed directly back to their children and in real time. Simply put, PowerUP parents and families learnt the habit and skill of talking about education together.

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*... an easy way for a family to learn together and support children in learning/education excellence and for children to receive amazing support by way of teachers, mentors, and support staff.*

*Parent, survey*

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In doing so, PowerUP's family-centred programme effectively acknowledged and maintained the "vā" between parents and children, that is, we are together and on the same page. In doing so, PowerUP contributed to a strengthening of home relationships and home-school relationships.

Parents' participation at PowerUP had also increased their understanding of the role and responsibility they had to support their children's educational endeavours – a movement along the ownership trajectory outlined in the PowerUP model of engagement. Some parents also viewed learning gains as positive “steps forward” for the whole Pacific community, including the empowerment possible when Pacific people worked together and “didn't put each other down”.

When parents attended, PowerUP learning conversations carried over almost seamlessly into their home environments.

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*At home we talk about what new knowledge Mum and Dad have learnt at PowerUP and what happened at PowerUP on the night. My parents [now] respond a lot if we talk about something that happened at school. This is because they have learnt a lot from PowerUp, and when we talk, they understand what we're trying to explain. Dad questions a lot about our school results, both academic and extracurricular activities, and our future careers.*

*Student, talanoa*

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Learning transfers into homes occurred even when parents couldn't attend the programme. An average of 57 percent of students said that they had started talking to their families about their studies. However, there were only slight differences between students whose parents had attended the programme with them in the last eight weeks (62 percent said they talked “a lot” at home, and 61 percent said they talked “a bit” at home) compared with those who said they talked about education with their parents at home even though their parents had not attended the programme. In other examples, a mother said her husband couldn't attend PowerUP due to his work hours. However, his first question when he got home after work was “What happened at PowerUP today?” And she and their

children would tell him. A young working mother whose children were minded by their grandmother after school said she carefully outlined to her children the homework they must do and packed the materials they would need. Then, she would explain to the grandmother what the children should be doing, just to make sure this time was used wisely.

Learners said having their parents come to PowerUP indicated the parents cared about them and understood how different their children's learning journeys were from their own. Having parents at PowerUP was also a strong reminder that learners were not alone in their educational journeying. A learner's beautiful tribute to a mother captured a total appreciation of the learning together PowerUP experience.

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*Mum keep coming. You are learning heaps from PowerUP, and you have really tried your best to help us with homework, even though you didn't study here in New Zealand. We love that you are learning with us, and we thank you for caring about our future.*

*Student, talanoa*

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### **Provider Voice**

As early as 2017, PowerUP providers said PowerUP worked best when students attended with adult family members; that there was also a “quickness” in shifts in parents' understanding of school processes when parents attended and a swift transfer of learnings into homes. Providers also said most learners enjoyed seeing their parents at PowerUP, and one learner had told a provider that he “loved taking his work to show his parents, and this spurred him to work harder”.



### The 'Au Lotu Parent-only Sessions (2019)

The introduction of the 'Au Lotu parent-only sessions was greeted with a mix of views. Some providers believed parent-only sessions were useful because adults could learn without being distracted, and sharing would be more open and honest when children were not present. Some providers and parents said they would have liked senior students to be present at some sessions because the information shared would have been “really beneficial for them”.

*If it is specialised information for parents only it is OK – but [I] would really like my secondary school kids to attend some of the sessions with me, like NCEA information and so forth.*

*'Au Lotu parent, talanoa*



*It's great to have intermediate and high school students attending the workshops [with parents] as they will be able to pick up the discussions.*

*'Au Lotu provider, talanoa*

Some parents viewed the 'Au Lotu sessions as like “bringing education back to the family”. However, they still regarded parents as the first point of contact in their child's learning.

*Parents-only should be the first point of call. [I] understand that it takes a village to raise a child, however, a grandparent's point of view on learning may not be as driven as a parent's.*

*'Au Lotu parent, talanoa*

#### Provider Voice – The Talanoa Ako

The availability of options is a clear mandate and call by parents for flexibility, because not all communities are the same.

Different models mean communities can select what is best for them and then deliver this in their Pacific language, or a pan-Pacific bi-lingual model.

Talanoa Ako is truly flexible with providers operating as partners.

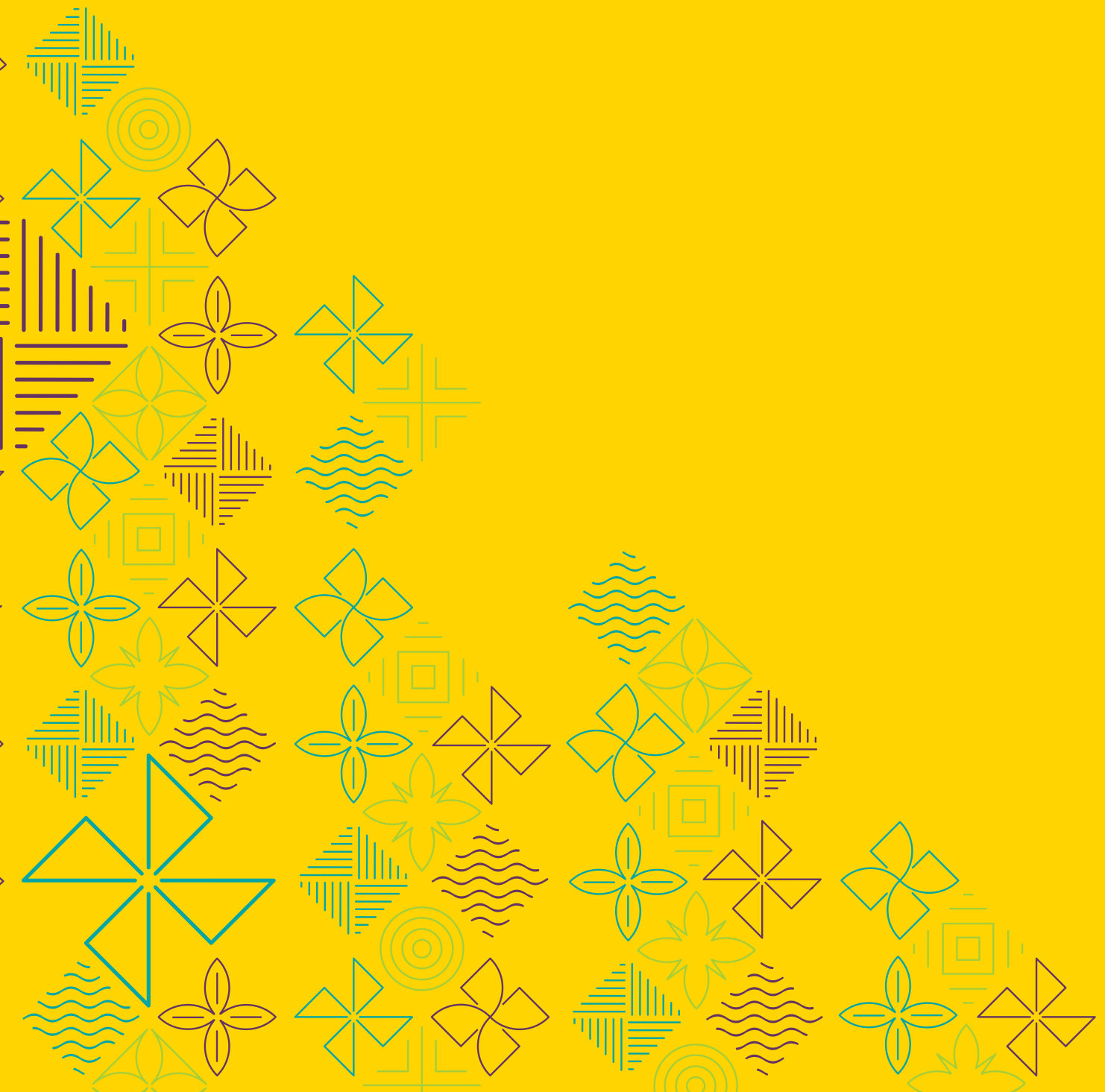
[It may be that] partners, that is, providers, start a parent-focused programme and then, as they build their capability, they look to deliver a family-focused programme. The latter involves greater staff and resourcing.





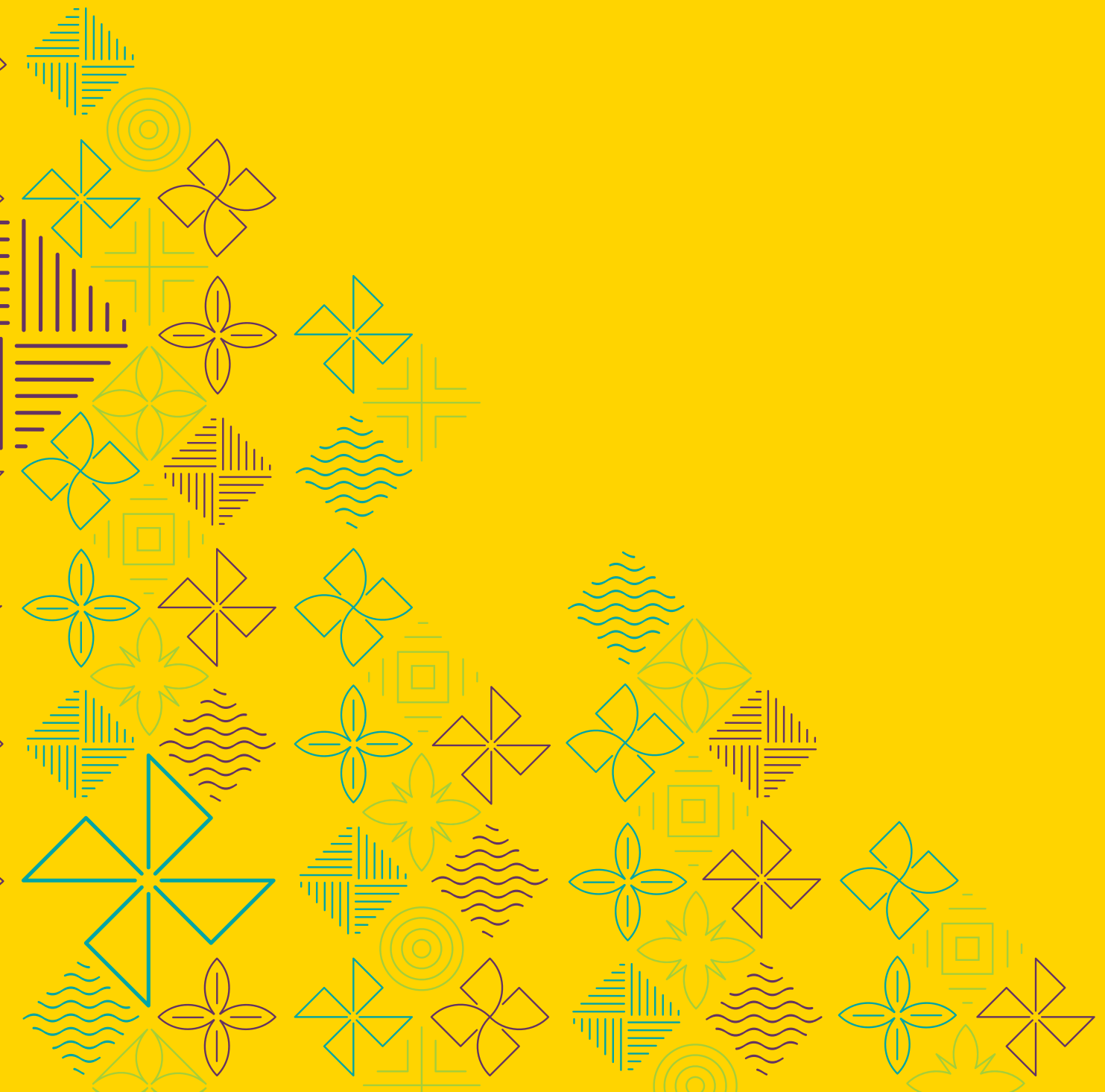
# Chapter 3

## PowerUP in Action



# Chapter 3

PowerUP in Action





## KEY POINTS

In the culturally safe PowerUP spaces, parents', and learners' agency in education deepened as they formed trusted relationships in learning with teachers and mentors, other parents and families, and adult speakers and resource people. Engaging in learning conversations: increased parents and learner's educational agency; reinforced the idea that "the power to change is in our hands"; added to and expanded Pacific funds of knowledge and practice from PowerUP to family homes and communities; and built a cadre of Pacific leaders in education.

Talking education was also a challenge to Pacific communicating norms, including the importance of questioning and acknowledging the contribution of the youth voice in co-constructing ways of thinking and working.



There are three parts to this chapter. Part 1 focuses on the PowerUP's *as and by Pacific* ways of working. Part 2 presents a helicopter view of major points that marked parents' and learners' PowerUP experiences over the four years reviewed in this synthesis (that is, the pan-Pacific programme years of 2016–18 and the FlexiPlus/'Au Lotu model tested in 2019). Part 3 discusses the question, "Who are the best teachers for Pacific students?"

## PART 1: THE AS AND BY PACIFIC WAYS OF THINKING AND WORKING

Parents and learners used words such as "safe", "caring", "non-judgmental", "positive fun", and "cool" to describe the PowerUP environment, teachers, and other staff. Commonly repeated comments included "it's like learning as a family" and "it takes a village" as parents and learners shared their expectations and helped shape this community-led programme. They said they could see themselves in the PowerUP ways of working and felt safe, engaged, and energised in the buzzing PowerUP environment.

*[PowerUP] provides a safe, fun, and warm learning environment for learners of all ages as well as the community. Secondary students are able to receive one-on-one learning time with specialised teachers and/or in smaller groups, or they find space to work on their assignments quietly. The atmosphere is always buzzing, with a mixture of highly engaged students and those who are there to "stress-release" (aka socialise). The light supper provided by PowerUP after every session is a bonus also.*

*Parent, survey*

*Community learning is totally a different environment and offers different experiences that our children can develop from. Their engagements, leadership skills, confidence, positive social relationship, trust, and feelings of belonging are all built up in the PowerUP gathering.*

*Parent, talanoa*

*It takes a village to raise a child; they need all the support they can get to excel in their studies. I learnt so many things in this community and really appreciated the help that I had.*

*Parent, talanoa*

*... [you're] not only coming to it because you're Pasifika, but [also because] it helps out with study preparation, sharing knowledge with other students, and much more.*

*Student, survey*

The main standing points (tū mālosi) that marked the PowerUP approach included: the prioritisation of communication and questioning skills in every activity, Pacific visibility, the use of mixed-ability grouping, and a multi-task learning environment.

### Communication and Questioning

The priority to questioning/inquiry learning was strongly embedded in every part of the PowerUP programme and activities. Teachers and staff constantly encouraged learners and parents to communicate when they were unsure, needed further information, or wanted to add a point. The programme demonstrated that questioning wasn't being rude, impolite, or *fia sili* (that is, acting above one's station) but was at the heart of learning and knowledge building. A pivotal learning for parents and learners was that you don't always have to be right, and there may not be one right answer. However, you must be able to explain and give reasons for your responses. As their ideas were critiqued and added to in the many learning conversations at PowerUP, parents and learners developed resilience and empathy in learning.

Hunter and Anthony's concepts of "friendly arguing" and "productive talk" (2011) relates well to how parents and learners learnt to "talk education" at PowerUP.

**Box 5: Resilience and Empathy in Learning**

Resilience and empathy are fundamental behaviours in learning and in dealing with adversity in the classroom and other contexts.

The definition of resilience used in the PowerUP evaluations was “the quality of being able to recover quickly or easily from, or resist being affected by, a misfortune, shock, illness, and robustness and adaptability”. In learning to consider issues from different perspectives, PowerUP parents and families developed resilience in learning. They became more positive, optimistic, and curious, and their self-control increased along with their “discipline to task completion”.

Empathy was defined as “The ability to understand and appreciate another person’s feelings, experience”. To build this capacity, the evaluators considered it necessary for parents and children to believe others can see them, understand them, and can feel what they are feeling.

Warranting further review: A significant number of comments and observations suggested that PowerUP learners experienced and learnt resilience as a group, that is, a community sharing and building knowledge and skills together rather than as individuals. Talanoa comments referenced a concern for the good of the “others”, that is, resilience as a community (“the bros”, Pacific peoples) rather than an individual good. As noted by one parent, “I see that the programme is helping my children, but it is also helping my community. This gives me confidence that I know something positive is happening within my kids and my community.” (Parent, talanoa)

**Pacific Visible**

Trusted relationships and role modelling were the glue and catalyst in the PowerUP programme. Each activity was a “learning other ways to learn” experience and one that aligned with Pacific family and community values. Parents and learners spoke about being seen, noticed, included, and cared for at PowerUP. In the safe and culturally secure PowerUP spaces, parents and learners gained confidence to share their ideas and to question and search for possible solutions.

**Mixed Grouping**

PowerUP activities were not ability grouped. Increasingly, research has been identifying the negative effects of ability grouping and streaming in education, as described by Gamoran in Alton-Lee (2017).

*Ability grouping rarely benefits overall achievement, but it can contribute to inequality of achievement as students in high groups gain and low-group students fall further behind. The more rigid the tracking system, the more likely these patterns are to emerge ...*

Gamoran, 1982

Closer to home, New Zealand educational expert John Hattie (2012) writes:

*As typically implemented, the greatest effects of ability grouping are to disrupt the learning community, socially ostracise some learners, and compromise social skills ... Effects on minority groups are much more serious, with more minority students likely to be in lower ability classes, destined to low performance based on low expectations, and often with the least effective teachers ...*

(page 328)

## Multi-task Learning Environment

PowerUP provided a multi-task learning environment. The growing research on the strengths of a multi-task programme (as opposed to a one-size-fits-all approach) indicates that it enables parents and learners to make meaning in their own way and time; encourages diverse students to perform well because it engages different student strengths at different times (Bossert, 1979); enables “the valuing of each members knowledge and skills” (Nuttal, 1999); and has the potential to disrupt hierarchical patterns of interaction (Bossert, 1979).

PowerUP provided academic support for parents and learners through workshops and discussions on topics specific to their expressed needs, for example, ECE education, exam processes, and career pathways. Activities for primary and secondary school learners included one-on-ones and group work, and for ECE children there were stories and literacy and numeracy activities, including art and music. In this family-based programme, parents could observe teachers and mentors interacting with their children, and children could watch their parents engaging in programme activities as well.

The different activities are described in more detail below.

### **One-on-ones: you can't be invisible!**

Parents were profoundly moved by the way PowerUP teachers, mentors, and other adults interacted with learners in the one-on-one and group sessions. They said teachers encouraged students to “question, question, question”, listened to and accepted their ideas, and then probed for further explanations – always in a respectful, positive, and non-judgemental manner. PowerUP parents also experienced the pride and self-belief gained by learners as they shared and debated their ideas in these exchanges.

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*Great interaction with teachers one to one [and] parents' sharing time. Fantastic to have a space weekly to discuss and receive clarity [around] issues that are not accessible at school.*

*Parent, survey*

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A major challenge (and benefit) of the one-on-ones for learners was that they couldn't be invisible (as some said they were in schools). They were expected to engage in learning conversations with PowerUP teachers and other adults and learners. In PowerUP's multi-task learning environment, learners learnt to engage in learning. They learnt study skills and to bring discipline to task, the joys of completing assignments (and to a good standard), and self-belief that “I can achieve in my own pace and time”.

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*PowerUP is an opportunity for me and my siblings to come and use the tutors here for help and to understand schoolwork that teachers [at school] have failed to explain.*

*Year 12 student, survey*

*... I learn a lot of new things that I would say [I] haven't heard of before. Therefore, when I go back to school, I understand everything because of the help I get at PowerUP.*

*Student, survey*

*I always leave PowerUP with all my questions answered and feeling confident about the subject.*

*Student, survey*

*Time to catch up with all assignments, to complete assignments, and then, when I go back to school, I understand ... I'm on track.*

*Student, survey*

---





Learners said the PowerUP teachers were approachable and proceeded with the learning at a comfortable pace.

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*I also find the teachers and mentors very helpful and friendly. Teachers are more approachable here.*

*Student, talanoa*



*Teachers at PowerUP help and explain things in a way I enjoy, so it makes it easier to do my revision and less boring.*

*Student, talanoa*



*My teacher [at PowerUP] assists me where she can see I need help, for example, helping me read words that I don't understand. It's easier learning [at PowerUP than at school] – they help us and teach us at our own pace. At school, they are more strict on us. I enjoy learning [at PowerUP] together with my peers at our own pace. And it's good that we feel comfortable asking our teacher any questions ... I improved my reading at PowerUP. I got four out of five in my reading assignment that my mentors and teacher helped me with at PowerUP.*

*Student, talanoa*



*Like ... they slow it down. Because I'm not a very fast learner, so they break it down for me ... they wait until I get it. At school, because the teachers have lots of kids, they have to kind of forget about slow learners like me and just move on, and then I don't get it.*

*Student, survey*

### **Workshops and group work: “talking education”**

Many relationships in learning were formed at PowerUP, for example, parents with the children, teachers and mentors, and other parents. Parents described the relaxed and open sharing of ideas in the parents' workshops as a revelation and that their workshops were vastly different from other groups they belonged to (mainly family and church groups) because the PowerUP workshops focused directly on education.

“Talking education” with other parents, teachers, and programme staff at PowerUP was a new experience for most parents and one they came to appreciate. The use of Pacific languages made these knowledge-sharing conversations so much easier, enjoyable, and finely nuanced.

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*A big part of PowerUP for me as a parent is having a better understanding of the education system, especially because English is not my first language. This has helped me understand more about the level my child is at and [upcoming] NCEA. This helps me to be more of a help to my child.*

*Parent, talanoa*

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Participating in PowerUP's parents' workshops helped break down barriers some parents felt in discussing their children's education with others. Parents who had initially been shy (mā) about discussing their concerns quickly realised that other parents held similar fears – and sometimes answers! In their workshops especially, parents gained an appreciation that they were not alone in their endeavours: there was an abundance of knowledge and support that they could draw on.

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*The parents' workshop gives us a lot of information to [help us] understand the curriculum. I am now confident to support my children in their studies.*

*Parent, survey*

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*Getting to talk with other parents, having a laugh with other parents, listening to examples of how other parents deal with issues.*

*Parent, survey*



*I share with them how the PowerUP helps my children in their learning and education, not only the kids, but for me, the mother, too.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*For me, it has been [about] surrounding myself with likeminded mothers who come and share their journey. We all come together and debrief about the highs and lows of the week and ways to help support our families. I feel empowered when I see that the programme is helping my children – and also my community. This gives me confidence that I know something positive is happening within my kids and my community.*

*Parent, talanoa*

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At PowerUP parents also witnessed their children become more open and relaxed around sharing their ideas with others – in doing so, learners were reducing their fear of being made fun of.

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*PowerUP is a great environment to be in – it brings positive vibes. It has brought new friendships (for my children) that are different from [those they have at] school – they enjoy the relationships with other children they don't normally associate with. Our children are more confident [about working] alongside their peers. They share their ideas and concentrate with their peers so that they not only learn from the teachers but also from one another.*

*Parent, talanoa*

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*I enjoy working with other students from different schools. We are able to share our experiences with the families and what it means to be a student now. I meet new people every week and love sharing about our learning and our challenges as well.*

*Student, talanoa*

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### **Inspirational speakers: Pacific role models**

Storytelling is a major knowledge sharing activity and recreation in Pacific communities. Listening to presentations by prominent Pacific speakers was a highly motivating experience for PowerUP parents and learners and added to their funds of knowledge. Parents and learners could see themselves in these tales of resilience – such as discussions about the steps forward, setbacks along the way, and a rethinking of the best way to proceed and then a going forward again. Speakers also shared options for career pathways that parents and children had never considered nor thought possible. They were also generous in sharing their time and contact details, thus opening further pathways and networks for PowerUP parents and learners. That people connect and make meaning in their own way is evidenced in the different reactions to one of the PowerUP presentations.

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*With my baby at ECE level, we encourage play and learning. There was a workshop at PowerUP where a lady came in and explained how the ECE students helped design an app in the Sāmoan language. I was so amazed. This helped me with supporting imagination. My daughter loves to draw. Before PowerUP, [I saw] her drawing as just added rubbish. But now, I actually talk with her and ask her to explain her drawing – why she drew the pictures. It has helped me identifying colours, objects, and even some words.*

*Parent, talanoa*

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*At PowerUP we had a speaker come in and talk about coding. It was so cool because this is what we do at school too. It was interesting how she displayed this so we could understand it better. It was so cool to know that the guest speaker works at the preschool and her preschoolers helped develop an app to help little kids read and write and learn in the Samoan language. I am into the whole animation thing, and I am an artist too and want to make my own cartoon show one day.*

*Student, talanoa*

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### **Shared meals - laughter, bonding, and reinforcing community**

The PowerUP custom of sharing a meal together at the end or start of the session fitted Pacific values of hospitality and hosting. This was also a practical way of enabling parents/adults to attend when they might otherwise have needed to stay home to prepare the evening meal. PowerUP parents and families enjoyed the shared meals. And, as in the Pacific way, new ideas and lessons learnt were challenged and clarified and set against remembrances of their own education journeys in discussions during the meals. Providers said sharing meals together was the right way to start or close PowerUP sessions. A parent referred to PowerUP as their “family date night”.

#### **Provider Voice**

Food is a powerful way of bringing our people together; they gather around the table and share food, stories, and laughter in an informal environment. Providing meals encouraged participation at PowerUP and was both culturally appropriate and sensible. Parents and children said they enjoyed eating with other families. Many stated, “We don’t have to worry about food on Wednesday night” – they knew that they were supported in education and also in nutrition.

PowerUP provided resources such as pens and reading books for all students, and materials such as toys, play dough, puzzles, and blocks for ECE learners. All learners were provided with workbooks, lesson worksheets, and workshop information; tutors recorded comments in these workbooks, and learners and parents were encouraged to add their own feedback. The provision of these resources ensured a level playing field for PowerUP learners and facilitated a sustained transfer of lessons learnt at PowerUP into homes. Transport was also provided for families as needed, and PowerUP staff made a point of linking families into other services, such as food banks and health networks. Many PowerUP families did not have access to internet, and so the availability of Wi-Fi at PowerUP stations was written into provider’s contractual arrangements. These and other actions reinforced relationships in learning between PowerUP staff and PowerUP families and communities.

Parents described PowerUP as an empowering, inspirational, and transformative experience and one that embedded and reinforced Pacific values of family, faith, and community.

Some PowerUP parents joined together to form their own education focus groups; others were recruited to leadership roles in other community national education networks and agencies. Some parents stood successfully for school leadership roles, such as the Board of Trustees, and others enrolled in tertiary study.

## PART 2: GETTING TO THE ESSENCE OF THE PACIFIC EDUCATION JOURNEY

Part 2 presents an overarching picture of the strengths that marked PowerUP parents' and learners' learning journeys, with a focus on what worked at PowerUP and why. While presented separately, these points are mutually reinforcing and evidence "the interface between the social world and the cognitive processes of students as a critical influence on student achievement" (Alton Lee, 2003, page 25).<sup>16</sup>

### We Can See Ourselves in Education

As has been noted, PowerUP was the first time most parents and families had been the majority in an educational programme. PowerUP was a place where they could stand together as Pacific people: be themselves and not have to worry about fitting into a learning environment that might feel foreign or uncomfortable to them. PowerUP gave parents and learners many and varied opportunities to engage in education and talk education.

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*I found that I was more comfortable with my own people. And PowerUP is somewhere where we can express ourselves through homework and also through coming together every Monday.*

*Secondary school student, survey*

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The feelings of safety and trusted relationships that encompassed the spaces acted as a protective shield against risk-taking at PowerUP and as a strategy to deal with cultural bias and racism (see Chapter 5: The Five Themes of Pacific Culturally Safe Learning Spaces). In the PowerUP learning spaces, parents and families drew on their collective strengths as Pacific peoples: the "we go together", rather than the "I".

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*The environment is safe, reliable, and encouraging. Being inspired and motivated by guest speakers, staff/teachers who go the extra mile, relationships built with everyone, support in schoolwork and family wellbeing.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*[PowerUP] is run in a laidback and friendly atmosphere, with a multicultural environment. Teachers, leaders, and mentors provide great leadership skills and are awesome role models to our children; that is why we take them to PowerUP every week.*

*Parent, talanoa*

---

Parents felt PowerUP was run "like a family" and that Pacific values of faith and family and identity security were strongly embedded in the programme's ways of working and thinking.

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*I feel that PowerUP meets these needs in the way we cater not only for the child but also for the whole family, not only for the academic need but also covering the physical, social, faith. At PowerUP, there is more opportunity for engagement – [the learners] become students who not only learn academically but are also prepared socially and in faith-based values.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*... setting rules and regulations, setting the culture for them ... PowerUP gives the kids a sense of identity ...*

*Parent, talanoa*

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<sup>16</sup> See also the socio-cultural theories of learning: that interpersonal and intellectual learnings are interdependent and continue to remain so through life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bruner, 1997; Vygotsky, 1978).



For many, the programme inspired a revaluing, relearning (in some cases), and an enrichment of Pacific funds of knowledge. For example, while both the FlexiPlus and 'Au Lotu parents stated identity, language, and culture were programme strengths, they gave different reasons for this belief (see Figure 8).

For 'Au Lotu parents, the programme had been instrumental in strengthening relationships between older and younger parents in “ethnic-specific and faith-based ways”. The 'Au Lotu parents gave high rates for the programme’s spiritual/faith and church involvement high (82 percent), the use of Pacific language (65 percent), and the fact that sessions were run by Pacific staff (65 percent). The use of mother tongue was another powerful enabler for those who were not fluent English speakers to engage in discussions.

---

*[The] church is a big part of my child's life and her upbringing. I find a combination of her church values and cultural values are something she can use in her education ... It is most definitely run in a Pacific way. It is held in [a] church where God is the centre.*

*'Au Lotu parent, talanoa*

*The facilitators spoke in our mother language. There will be a few English words that we may get stuck on, and [this] will be brought to the attention of the facilitators who will break down [the word] until there is a full understanding.*

*'Au Lotu parent, talanoa*

FlexiPlus parents valued the ways PowerUP offered Pacific families the opportunity to mix with “other people like us” and to participate in Pacific language and cultural traditions. PowerUP was highly valued in rural areas, where Pacific families are often a minority. FlexiPlus parents also believed the programme acted as a bridge between older and younger generations and between Pacific-born and New Zealand-born families. They rated learning together as a family alongside their children and with other Pacific families highly.

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*Our Pacific ways of family support and encouragement are relevant in promoting learning for the children. It also promotes transparency, inclusiveness, and shared responsibility to ensure no one lacks support in their learning.*

*FlexiPlus parent, Talanoa*

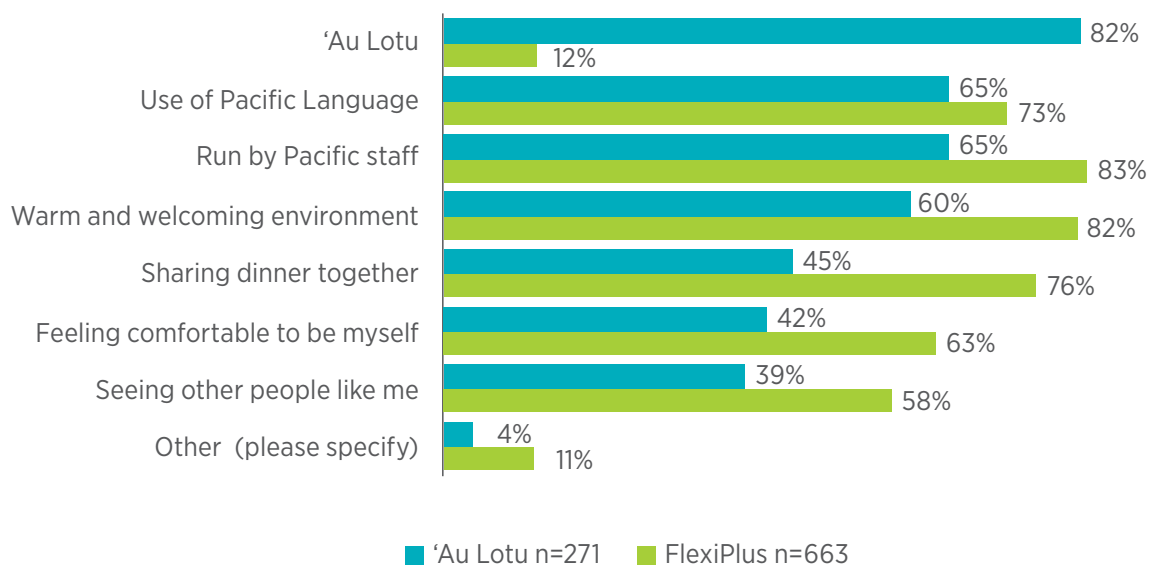
*Knowing that we go along with our children to learn ourselves. And [we are] giving them the opportunity to feel confident about themselves in their PowerUP learning environment and to be more aware and confident of their Pasifika fānau [Pacific family]. It's important for our children to have the sense of being connected, not only to their Māori heritage but to their Pacific Islands side too.*

*FlexiPlus parent, talanoa*

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Figure 8 presents 'Au Lotu and FlexiPlus views of the main things that made PowerPlus feel Pacific.

Figure 8: The Main Things that Made PowerPlus Feel Pacific



Source: Unpublished PowerUP report, 2019

Other perspectives of the value and valuing of the PowerUP *as and by Pacific* programme are evidenced in PowerUP evaluation reports.



### Box 6: The Inclusion of Pacific Funds of Knowledge Spurs Agency

Three of the six items listed as important in the 2016 PowerUP report featured Pacific funds of knowledge. These were: PowerUP's use of Pacific languages, its use of Pasifika champions and trusted family members to mobilise parents and families, and the practice of sharing a meal together.

In 2017, students described PowerUP as a place 1) that was run in a Pacific way 2) where students were visible and 3) that provided access to high-quality teachers.

Learners also said that the programme had built their faith and self-belief that they could achieve academically and on a par with non-Pacific students:

*We have faith in ourselves that we can achieve our academic goals and future studies to get our future careers or jobs. We believe we can be as high achievers as other ethnicities if we commit to our educational purposes. (Student, talanoa)*

In the 2018 summative evaluation reports (Oakden), learners stated emphatically that irrespective of whether the school or classroom climate was favourable towards them, at PowerUP, they had learnt to work and succeed in mainstream education settings and developed greater confidence that they could be successful in learning. Notably, the five themes of culturally safe Pacific learning spaces, which were outlined in the 2018 report, featured a robust discussion of cultural bias and racism.

### Voice in Education and Knowing Your Voice Counts

Many reports highlight the strength of Pacific "voice", as demonstrated, for example, in ceremonial events, in the practice of consensus decision-making and in the confidence of the youth voices shared in White Sunday celebrations. Reports also support that, in Pacific families, silence is seen to be a good behaviour and arguing is bad behaviour. As a consequence, Pacific people have fewer opportunities to master the art of questioning and inquiry, which are at the heart of learning and knowledge building. (Faalau, 2011; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014). The PowerUP programme brought Pacific parents' and learners' voices and funds of knowledge into education. In turn, this had an empowering spiralling impact on their agency in education.

Learning to talk education in the PowerUP programme:

1. encouraged parents to share their concerns with people who were not members of their family and kinship groups and to listen and consider the views raised by other parents and PowerUP staff and to contribute their own views – as in the saying "it takes a village", parents learnt to explore and draw on the knowledge around them in productive talk
2. spurred parents' understanding and affirmation of their role in supporting their children to achieve their fullest education potential, in partnership with schools
3. supported parents to be more deliberate, informed, and confident in their engagement with schools and teachers.

Source data from 2016 shows 81 percent of PowerUP parents said they had gained knowledge of their role in supporting each of their children in education, and 77 percent said they could take a leadership role in setting conditions for and reprioritising learning to make it a family focus. In 2018, most PowerUP parents reported that they knew what they could expect from schools and how to navigate education and school processes. They were happy to engage with schools for positive but also challenging conversations.

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*[PowerUP has given us confidence in] communicating as much as possible with the school - by emailing the teachers or ringing up the office for more information. If we can do our part at home and help out where we can, then we are confident that our girls will be more confident at school and that they know we are working together with them to achieve their goals.*

*Parent, talanoa*

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PowerUP was a powerful reminder that education is a lifelong journey and one that requires careful planning and choices along the way, for example, to realistically assess “Where am I now? What do I hope to achieve? and What am I prepared to do to achieve those goals?”.

---

*Education is a high priority in our family. PowerUP has helped to affirm what we believe to be a strong value. Helped unpack report reading, the importance of knowing right subject choices and the responsibilities/partnerships we (us and the school) play with our children. For success to happen for our children, we have to know the education system well and not be afraid to ask questions.*

*Parent, case study*

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*Since the session with Careers New Zealand, I noticed that they are talking more of the future careers ... For example, the older girl, when she was in year 12, she was dreaming of becoming a lawyer ... In year 13, she [said she] wants to do work in the tourism industry, but now, since the PowerUP session ... she said “Mum, I am going to be a teacher” ... As a parent, we just support them.*

*Parent profile*



*PowerUP helps parents understand how important it is for our kids to succeed in school and what us parents need to do to support our kids. Attending PowerUP helps me understand how important NCEA credits are and how they can be used.*

*Parent, talanoa*

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### **The valuing of children’s voices**

The main PowerUP learnings for students were that they were expected to engage in learning conversations – they could not be silent. In the safe and trusted PowerUP spaces, students (who initially had found teachers’ use of questioning to be disquieting) learnt resilience and empathy as their ideas were debated and challenged. They gained confidence in asking questions and knew their questions would be listened to and respected.

---

*The teachers at PowerUP, the way they do it, it’s kind of like asking me the same question but in a different way [than the teachers at school] until I understand.*

*Student, talanoa*



*Three key things I have learnt in the last few weeks at PowerUP are ... to talk with my teacher... to learn together with the other kids here ... working with the other kids is fun because we help each other out ... to ask for help when I need it and not be shy. Sometimes, I don’t like talking to anyone or if anyone looks at my work. But now it’s a little easier to ask for help.*

*Student, talanoa*

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## Teachers Who Are Highly Skilled Culturally and Academically

Parents believed PowerUP teachers were highly skilled, both culturally and academically. They said the PowerUP teachers understood Pacific languages and cultural ways, identified with students' learning journeys, were awesome role models of achievement, and demonstrated a spirit of tautua (service) in going the extra mile to support students' educational success. Stories shared demonstrated quite compellingly the powerful effect of the seemingly little words and acts by PowerUP teachers on students' attitudes to learning and their learning behaviours.

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*When my child walks in ... they know his name, they know the course he is taking and where he's at.*

*Parent, talanoa*

*Overall, if you have a teacher [who] cares for the child's learning, it shows in the change of attitude, not even in their school marks but in their attitude; in their effort to try.*

*Parent, talanoa*

Parents also believed PowerUP teachers were experienced, educationally astute, and had great leadership skills. They were down-to-earth and firm and ruthless in finding ways to support learners to understand challenging concepts and processes. PowerUP teachers challenged learners to question, explain, and justify their responses and, equally importantly, they recognised children's learning efforts.

---

*The teachers are so experienced and know their material so well that it is no wonder the kids love coming here. [Learning at PowerUP] is different in a way [from school]. PowerUP is more one-on-one, and the effort [the children put in] is recognised in every session.*

*Parent, talanoa*

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*My boys have a good relationship with the teachers and students at PowerUP – being comfortable to ask questions and having someone explain things to them from a ground level. Now, they begin to love being at school because they understand.*

*Parent, talanoa*

*My children enjoy the teachers in the PowerStation because they always ask to help us. Learning in the PowerStation is like learning together as a family.*

*Parent, talanoa*

*One thing that I have seen in my [year 1 son's] learning is his reading with the assistance of the PowerUP teacher. We have recognised more interest in reading [from him], especially when the attention is focused on his reading at our PowerUP session and then there is a follow-up at home. [My son] feels supported to read, and the extra support with someone he knows and trusts has been good for him.*

*Parent, talanoa*

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An indication of the ways teachers set the tenor and tone of the buzzing PowerUP learning environments are captured in this parent's words.

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*... the genuine interest from other educators that they don't just have contact with and just being in such a positive space with passionate people who are Pacific and mostly Cook Islands is amazing. I am just glad we have such a programme. I am thankful to [the organisation] who just provide all of the other stuff around it, the mentors, transport, food, and other resources, and my parents' group, which is led by [name] who is so down to Earth but really firm about encouraging our children to succeed. She is ruthless. It really shows how the school, family, and community can work so well together.*

*Parent, talanoa*



In sum, the approaches used by PowerUP teachers supported learners' wellbeing, built their social and emotional competencies and resilience, and in doing so, increased their capabilities for productive participation in heterogenous groups (see Alton-Lee, 2017, page 12).

### Transfer of Relationships in Learning to Homes, Schools, and Communities

*Culturally sustaining pedagogy is the development of respectful, reciprocal relationships between educators, students and their families, and communities.*

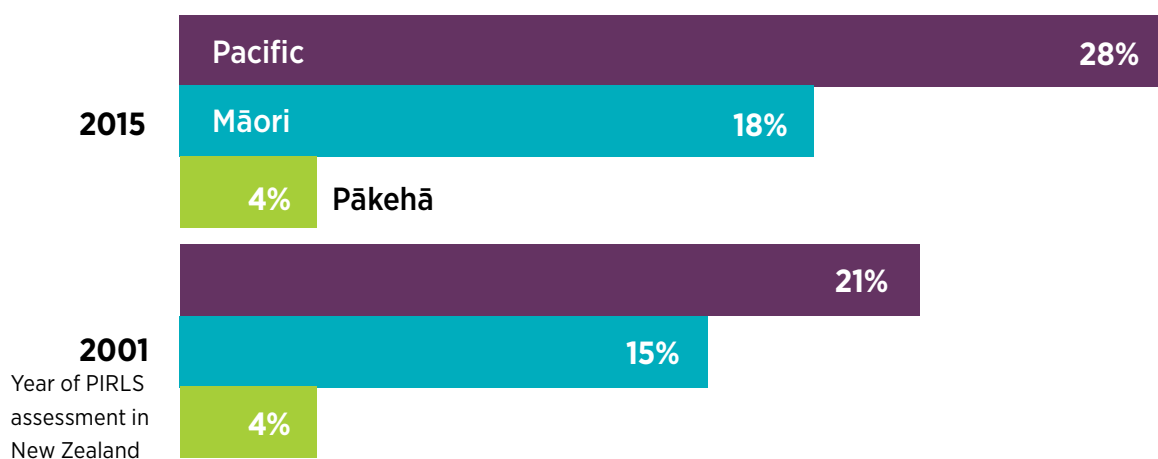
Hunter et al., 2020

The PowerUP strategy of parents and students learning together brought home and family lives together and was a crucial factor in smoothing the transfer of lessons learnt at PowerUP into homes, families, and communities. The PowerUP priority of getting books and other educational materials into PowerUP homes in meaningful ways was another pivotal strategy, given the robust relationship between the number of books in homes and educational success (see Figure 9).

PowerUP family sizes ranged in number from 5 to 12 children and represented ECE through to senior secondary school learners. This powerfully reinforced the potential for knowledge sharing within families.

#### Figure 9: The Relationship between Books in Homes and Education Progress

Over time, the proportion of Māori and Pacific children with 10 or fewer books in the home has grown disproportionately compared to Pākehā children



Ministry of Education. (2020). *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study. New Zealand analysis for 2001 and 2015. Year 5 students with 10 or fewer books at home by ethnicity*



The strong and warm relationships generated in the PowerUP learning spaces increased personal and family agency and set in motion a spiralling train of learning gains, which in turn, impacted family feelings of unity (“we are on the education road together”) and wellbeing.

---

*... there has been encouragement from my son’s school – very punctual, school reports have been very encouraging. PowerUP has really had a big influence on my son’s learning in the last two years. For me, attending PowerUP gives me the motivation to continue encouraging my son like they do at PowerUP. So, it’s not just being done at PowerUP but also in our home. I’m also very proud of the progress that my son [is making] ... Some changes that have impacted my son are: he’s more independent, simple things, like, I no longer have to wake him up each morning for school, he just gets up and gets ready on his own. Changes at school are little improvements in his school report. He’s a creative thinker, which has been a highlight through his school report. He’s very respectful of his teachers and other students. He’s doing well and improving in his studies.*

*Parent, talanoa*

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Families gained considerable pride when their children experienced success in education.

---

*I know our child looks forward to PowerUP every week. We also get to see his performance there first hand at PowerUP every week ... during the sharing time at the end of each session. It helps to make it normal for our children to share, and we parents have to share, too. We enjoy our time at PowerUP.*

*Parent, talanoa*

As learners and families experienced more success in learning, they became less stressed and enjoyed learning more. Family life became more peaceful as arguments about educational concerns decreased. Parents also noticed positive changes in their children’s behaviours at school and at church. Education became a topic of conversation in family homes.

---

*We have recently started more family time on Mondays ... prayer time, we discuss school stuff, what their daily life [is] like. My wife and I see this as a way of strengthening our family with education. We are able to help each other out and support each other with the things that we have taken away from PowerUP.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*More happy because my children are more reliable and confident in doing their chores at home, schoolwork, and whatever they [are] involve[d] in our church youth society. There’s no longer complaints and laziness in doing their schoolwork, no more calling from school to inform me [Dad] about any troubles for my boys!*

*Parent, talanoa*

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Family routines were reorganised to enable learners time and resources for study. And, in some instances, parents gave precedence to children’s study (before exams for instance) ahead of family and church commitments.

---

*We get to communicate more and understand each other and how to work and help each other. I do not expect them to attend any church or youth programme during the weekdays or even an extended family occasion at [the] weekend, especially when they have to prepare and complete assignments or schoolwork. My children are more confident about talking to me about their schoolwork and letting me know if they need not to attend a church fakalavelave.*

*Parent, talanoa*

Parents also said they tried new family experiences together, such as visits to the library, art galleries, and museums. Table 9 summarises changes in parents' and family adults' attitudes to learning as a result of attending PowerUP.

**Table 9: Reported Changes in Pacific Parents' and Family Adults' Attitudes to Learning**

| Before PowerUP                                                                                                                            | After PowerUP                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Parents came to PowerUP with their knowledge of their families and communities.                                                           | <p>Parents contribute and negotiate their Pacific “baskets of knowledge” with academic and other funds of knowledge.</p> <p>Parents and learners affirm the value and relevance of Pacific knowledge in education.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Parents were reluctant to talk about their children's education with other people.                                                        | Parents learn to share their hopes and concerns with other likeminded parents, providers, and teachers. In doing so, parents learnt they are not alone in their concerns and identify potential solutions, drawing on the knowledge around them. Parents learn that education is a lifelong journey that begins in the early years. They also learn the importance of planning and choices, which will open rather than reduce options. |
| Parents were unclear about educational processes and their role in education in partnership with schools.                                 | Parents affirm their rightful role in their children's education in partnership with schools. They develop capabilities to fulfil this role and develop relationships with other people and resources to support family learning journeys. Opportunities open for the parents to take on leadership roles, education, or employment.                                                                                                    |
| Many parents considered that it was the school's role to educate their children and they trusted the educators to do this professionally. | Education become a topic of conversation in family homes and communities for the very first time.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

Source: Adapted from Oakden, 2017.

## PART 3: WHO ARE THE BEST TEACHERS FOR PACIFIC LEARNERS?

The PowerUp programme supported using the best available teachers. PowerUP parents strongly believed that having Pacific teachers in schools was crucial for Pacific parents and for Pacific learners. In schools where there were few or no Pacific teachers, learners and parents missed out on opportunities to engage with educational role models who understood their cultural perspectives and funds of knowledge. They were also denied the protective elements that Pacific teachers afforded Pacific learners.

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*I think another step would be to hire more Pasifika teachers; classrooms equipped with more Pasifika resources.*

*Parent, talanoa*

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A student expressed a different view: that you didn't need to be Pacific to be a good teacher for Pacific students; cultural respect and sensitivity were the main qualities teachers needed, and the non-Pacific PowerUP teachers and parents they had worked with had supported them in culturally secure ways. Importantly, this learner then described working with non-Pacific teachers as a strength that reinforced their Pacific values of respect and taking care of each other. In other words, it was the Pacific learners who had been culturally responsive.

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*In this programme, we have our parents and teachers of non-Pasifika descent working with us. We work together and learn from each other by sharing our views and looking at best ways to understand them in schools. This makes us feel very proud to be more culturally sensitive and respecting others and elders in our schools. We feel the importance of sharing and taking care of one another and, above all, respecting our teachers no matter where they come from.*

*Student, talanoa*

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A learner supported the need for more Pacific teachers but also emphasised the importance of upskilling non-Pacific teachers' expertise to engage with Pacific learners.

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*We think our schools should employ more Pasifika teachers who could understand Pasifika students better. We also think non-Pasifika teachers should attend some Pasifika cultural exchange programmes to learn and understand our Pasifika culture and way of life, our patterns of behaviour, and how best to deal with them in a Pasifika approach.*

*Student, talanoa*

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This learner voice is a critically astute view, given estimates that Pacific teachers form just 3 percent of New Zealand's teaching population, and just over 8 percent of Pacific teachers work in ECE settings (Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2010).



**Provider Voice: Teachers Who are Culturally and Academically Skilled**

Providers believed that teachers participating in the PowerUP programme had grown knowledge and skills in culturally responsive teaching.

Even those skilled in working with Pacific families said they had learnt by seeing families working together – how parents wanted their children to succeed at school, the role parents could play in supporting their children in education, how Pacific communities work, and how their Pacific students react in their community settings.

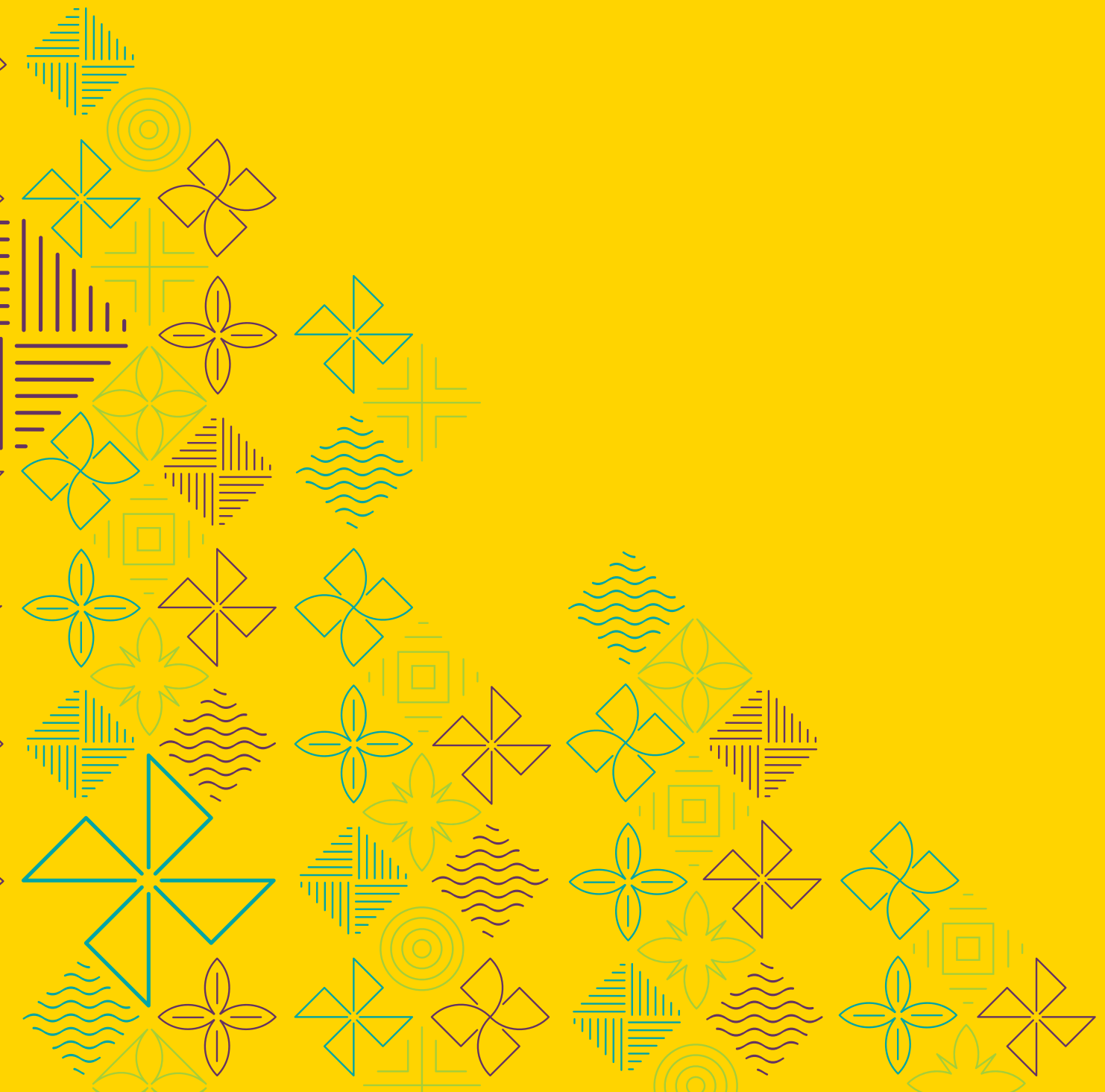
PowerUP had provided the opportunity for non-Pacific staff to work with Pacific students in a different environment. They had seen Pacific customs and practices that they had not necessarily witnessed at their own school (such as the use of Pacific language and prayers). PowerUP increased their ability to teach/communicate in a culturally safe environment, for both themselves and their students.

Teacher trainees (invited to PowerUP) were able to observe inclusive teaching and learning strategies that can be used in the classroom to create a more effective learning environment for Pacific students.



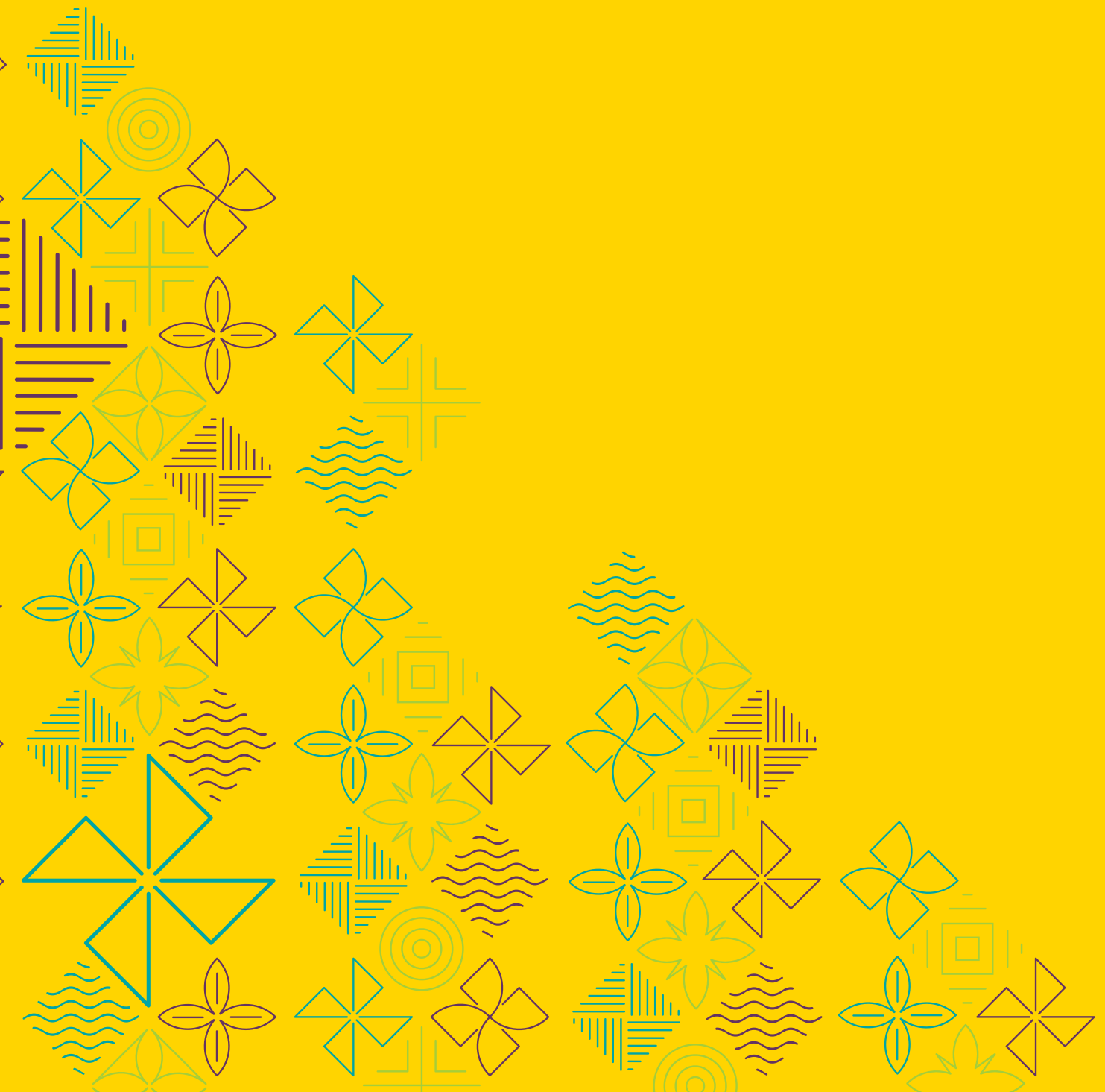
# Chapter 4

What We Need to Know to Engage in Education



# Chapter 4

What We Need to Know to  
Engage in Education





## KEY POINTS

In PowerUP's community-driven spaces, parents identified and learnt the skills they needed in order to take the lead and support their children's education journeys. A pattern of three learning steps for parents and learners has been outlined. Each step is critical to support Pacific (and other) parents' confidence and engagement in school learning. First is to have accurate knowledge and information about school processes, especially the language and terms used. Second is to have opportunities to master the skills they need in order to connect and engage in education in informed and strategic ways, including the power of articulating a clear question. Third is to increase their confidence and apply these skills in their connections with schools, teachers, and the wider learning communities.

PowerUP parents and children quickly learnt the power of a good question and developed significant resilience and empathy as they participated in the mutual "give and take" of critical debate with teachers, mentors, parents, and other adults and peers at PowerUP. Watching the ways teachers and other adults at PowerUP talked to their children and the warm relationships developed in these conversations caused parents to think deeply about their own parenting practices, including how they communicate with their children, their relationships with their children, and their children's voices.

Centring Pacific funds of knowledge in the PowerUP programme reinforced the relationship between identity, security, learning success, and individual and family wellbeing. Parents described PowerUP as the place where they and their children had been given the chance to learn and achieve in their own time and way.

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***Community learning is a totally different environment and different experience that our children can develop from. Their engagement, leadership skills, confidence, positive social relationships, trust, and feelings of belonging are all built up in PowerUP gatherings.***

*Parent, talanoa*

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Systems have their own sets of knowledge skills and attitudes that facilitate engagement and success and have the potential to transform the systems. To succeed in any system, you need to know how that system works, your place (role) in the system, and how to engage with the system in informed and strategic ways.

The focus of this chapter is on what learners and parents needed to know to engage strategically and confidently in learning conversations. The term "skills" is used in this chapter to encompass shifts in both knowledge and attitudes. Talanoa materials demonstrated very compellingly that parents and learners did not have an adequate or clear understanding of education and school processes or the skills set to facilitate robust educational discussions. As a result, conversations with schools and teachers were more likely to be at a surface level rather than deeply meaningful.

This synthesis identified three learnings that parents and learners need to know in order to engage strategically in learning discussions. These learnings, which many might consider to be a "taken for granted or basic" knowledge, represented a serious challenge to Pacific parents' and learners' full engagement in learning.

They are:

- » To know and understand school processes and the language and terms used
- » To identify and learn the “rules of engagement” in educational conversations
- » To learn to apply these skills in other contexts, such as school, home, community, the workforce, and heterogenous spaces.

Together and separately, the learnings signal an extension of parents' and learners' funds of knowledge and agency into a “new” context. Parents and learners were also challenging a view that asking questions is “not Pacific” and that schools are responsible for education. In the safe and trusted PowerUP environments, parents and learners developed the communication skills of questioning, resilience, empathy, and collaboration, which are central to engaging in learning conversations (Alton-Lee, 2017). Competence in these skills also served as a protective factor against cultural bias and racism. Making sure Pacific parents and learners master these skills is a key synthesis recommendation.

The focus of Part 1 of this chapter is on the skills parents need to know. Students' priorities are discussed in Part 2. Both parts follow a similar process and embody the reflective approach of “What? So What? What Now?”, including ownership, responsibility, and agency.

## PART 1: PARENTS

### To Know and Understand School Systems, Language, and Terms Used

A major synthesis finding was that PowerUP parents and learners did not have confidence that they were receiving accurate or up-to-date information about school processes and the language and terms used. While schools likely believed they were sending out adequate and clear information to all parents and families,

this had not been the experience of the PowerUP parents. It was not determined whether this was due to families not receiving these information packages or difficulties understanding what they did receive. However, parents were vocal about the fact that they hadn't been able to gain this necessary information at their school's parents' evenings. A common practice had been for schools to schedule a meeting, distribute information sheets, and talk to these (usually supported by a PowerPoint of flow charts and diagrams), followed by a short question time and an invitation to those with further questions to “please contact the school”. Not only was everything in English, it also appears that PowerUP parents had been challenged by the generic nature of the meeting messaging. Parents strongly questioned how accessible this essential education information had been for Pacific parents and learners and others whose first language is not English.

PowerUP parents had many varied opportunities to access the education information they needed, in either their preferred Pacific language or in English; in workshops, discussion groups, and in conversations over their shared dinners. Parents also found it easier to attend PowerUP because: there were many sessions; the sessions were scheduled to better suit work commitments; and at some PowerUP stations, staff provided transport as needed. Some parents also said they adjusted their night-shift hours so they could attend.

The shifts in understanding captured in Table 10 indicate that PowerUP was successful in meeting parents' educational priorities. Confidence in National Standards and NCEA (including grades) almost doubled, and understanding of ECE learning almost tripled. However, the significant number who placed themselves in the “somewhat confident” category across all levels is concerning. An uncertainty about the meaning of the term “literacy” was echoed throughout the programme cycle.



Table 10: Shifts in Understanding of Educational Processes (2016–17)

|                                                                                | 2016 – before attending PowerUP | 2017 – after attending PowerUP |                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|
|                                                                                | Confident                       | Very confident                 | Somewhat confident |
| Better understanding of ECE benefits                                           | 33%                             | 82%                            | –                  |
| Understanding how to engage with National Standards:                           |                                 |                                |                    |
| » Literacy                                                                     | 34%                             | 68%                            | 31%                |
| » Mathematics                                                                  | 33%                             | 68%                            | 23%                |
| Better understanding of NCEA                                                   | 40%                             | 70%                            | 16%                |
| Better understanding of grades used in NCEA                                    | 33%                             | 71%                            | 15%                |
| Improved understanding of vocational pathways (Youth Guarantee <sup>17</sup> ) | 30%                             | 54%                            | 25%                |

Parents said that, before attending PowerUP, they had been afraid to talk to their children about educational matters.

*We were afraid to talk about school stuff before because we did not know enough to talk to the kids about it ... The strengths from attending PowerUP were that now I am able to talk to my kids about anything that is bothering them about school ... [PowerUP is a] great opportunity to engage with your kids about NCEA or other school actions and things you don't fully understand.*

*Parent, talanoa*

Getting to understand school processes better proved to be an essential step in parents engaging in an informed way in schooling, especially for parents whose second language was English. As they gained more information about school processes and terms, parents' confidence to support their children's schooling increased, and they also became more specific in using "school language" in articulating their concerns.

*A big part of PowerUp for me, as a parent, is having a better understanding of the education system, especially because English is not my first language. This has helped me understand more about the level my child is at and NCEA. This helps me be more of a help to my child.*

*Parent, talanoa*

<sup>17</sup> A Ministry of Education initiative aimed to support learners in developing their own pathways towards future work and careers and help educators meet their students' needs. For more information, see the Ministry of Education webpage, Youth Guarantee at: <http://youthguarantee.education.govt.nz>

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*When my son and niece talk about it, [they say that they have] already passed NCEA, which means they both already have more than 80 credits. I feel excited and thankful that my family chose the right thing, to join the PowerUP.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*[I learnt] strategies and ideas on how to improve and support my child at home with any struggles they have in a subject. I do fun things with [child's name] for maths, like, when I do cooking, we measure things and count things.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*Understanding NCEA achievement standards ... There is more to life than just settling for what makes them comfortable. I want them to challenge themselves and be more than what they just settle for.*

*Parent, talanoa*

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Comments indicated quite compellingly that in understanding school processes PowerUP parents were also learning that they had a role in their children's education.

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*Learning about NCEA and reporting helps us build confidence, can help to understand my role as a parent and the role for our kids. We are still shy about going into school to ask questions.*

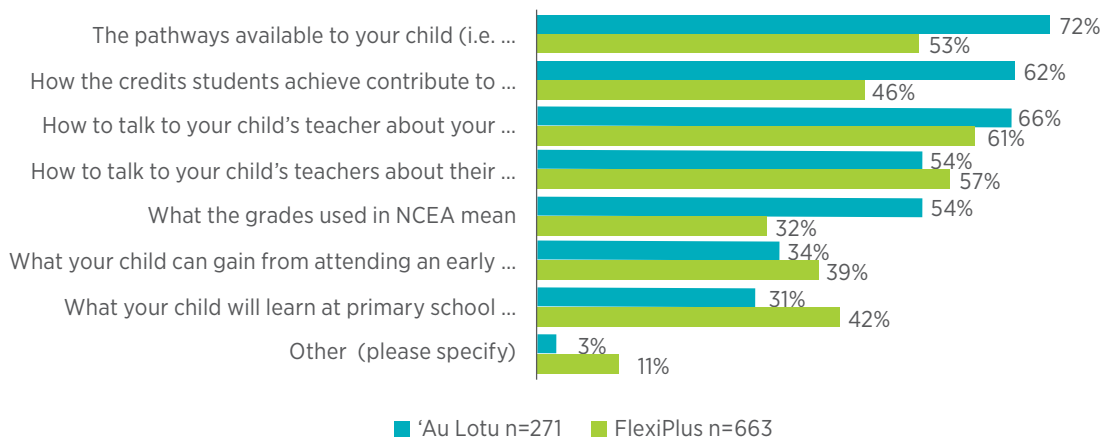
*Parent, talanoa*

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The responses by FlexiPlus/'Au Lotu (2019) parents to the question of the main things they had learnt at PowerUP aligned strongly with the priorities set by parents in earlier years (2016–18), namely, access to information about learning pathways, systems, and processes. FlexiPlus parents also held concerns about their communications with teachers:

- » The 'Au Lotu parents most appreciated learning: about educational pathways (72 percent), how the credits that students achieved contributed to NCEA qualifications (66 percent), how to talk about and work with teachers to support their child's progress (42 percent), while 57 percent of adults prioritised improving access to educational information, systems, and processes as their main learning need.
- » FlexiPlus parents most appreciated learning how to: talk to teachers about their child's development, work with teachers to help their children (61 percent), and speak to their child's teacher about the child's learning (57 percent).

Figure 10: Four Main Things Adults Learnt at ‘Au Lotu and FlexiPlus (2019)



Source: Oakden, 2019

An important indication of PowerUP parents increased confidence in school processes was seen in their openness to talking about their children's progress with others, which had not been a practice in the past.

*My daughter, who is doing NCEA Level 1 this year, is feeling more confident and is working harder at gaining her credits to not just pass but also to aim to get higher than what she sets out to get.*

Parent, talanoa

*My child did well in 2017. She enjoys writing especially, but I know she can always do better. I encourage her to study and focus this year as she is now in year 8. I know the extra work she puts in all helps towards her academic results. This [PowerUP] space allows her to ask questions and get more help outside school. She has gained more confidence and feels empowered to always aim high.*

Parent, talanoa



## To Identify and Learn the “Rules of Engagement” in Educational Conversations

To support their children’s education journeys, PowerUP parents needed to know the skills to engage in education discussions in meaningful ways (for example, communication, emotional and social skills, and collaboration). The place of questioning in learning and knowledge building sparked deeply challenging conversations for PowerUP parents generally, and about their own parenting practices and children’s voices.

### The Power of Asking a Good Question

A highly confronting learning for PowerUP parents was that asking questions wasn’t being rude or speaking above one’s status (fia potu) but is an essential strategy in exploring and testing ideas. It is highly likely that PowerUP parents and learners alike had little practice in the skill of questioning (Faalau, 2011; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014).

As noted previously, questioning is a challenging practice in Pacific communities, where communication and decision-making practices are based on seniority (status, age, gender, role). This determines who talks (and who is listened to), what is talked about, and how decisions are made. Often also there is a pressure to get answers right, fuelled by a fear of bringing shame on the family by being wrong.

Parents watched the PowerUP teachers and other staff encourage students to question when they were unsure, wanted to know more, or had other ideas to add. Parents also witnessed the excitement and fun generated as teachers gently, but also unerringly, probed students’ explanations. Parents also saw the resilience and empathy students displayed as their ideas were debated and they dissected learning conversations, and the parents were amazed, proud, and surprised at the profusion and complexity of the ideas children came up with in these learning conversations.

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*PowerUP sessions empower our children to think outside the box, not just think within their comfort zone.*

*Parent, talanoa*

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Parents began considering and fine-tuning their own questioning and communicating skills to make sure that the questions they asked and the words they used didn’t “come out the wrong way” or cause offense. Parents found that questioning involves an elaborate set of skills, which include having a clear understanding of the issue or what they wanted to know; gathering information (evidence) to support a view or argument; bringing this information together to formulate a question that captured the points they were seeking to make (and also anticipating responses they might need to counter opposing arguments); and being able to identify the best person or appropriate forum to lodge their enquiry.

Talanoa demonstrated that PowerUP parents made more enquiries, attended parent teacher interviews, were more confident about the questions they should ask, and were respectfully challenging and engaging with teachers and schools about their children’s progress and ways they support their children.

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*Being at PowerUP, I have learnt what questions to ask. Like, before, my whole body would give off an attitude that said (without me saying) “What are you doing to my child? She is finding it hard to read that certain book.” Now I am calm and ask the teacher, “Is there an easier book that she can read as it seems hard for her?” The teacher takes time to answer me in a way that I understand better by saying that she believes she can read it and just to keep encouraging her.*

*FlexiPlus parent, talanoa*

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*I am a little bit more knowledgeable about what is expected from me as a parent. I can speak to my child's teacher about my child's learning and have some understanding of the learning conversations. There is also a strong relationship built between me, my child, and their teacher.*

*'Au Lotu parent, talanoa*

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A growing number of parents said they engaged more frequently with their children's school and understood their involvement was critical to a positive, successful, educational experience. In addition, more PowerUP fathers were now engaging and participating more with their children's school by attending parent-teacher interviews with their wives and supporting changes to home routines. There was evidence also that parents were initiating discussions with teachers rather than waiting to be contacted by the school.

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*[I am] gaining the confidence to ask more from those who teach my child. I was always apprehensive about asking my child's teacher for more work for her, as I understand they already have a lot on their plates. However, I have a renewed confidence, through PowerUP, that it is my duty and responsibility to be proactive when it comes to my child's education.*

*'Au Lotu parent, talanoa*

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Importantly, parents' engagement with schools was no longer a one-way process: they were contributing partners in maintaining their relationship with the schools and their children.

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*I have been able to apply what I have learnt in [the] parent-teacher interview. Many a time, I have sat and agreed to everything the teacher has said about my kids learning. [Still] I feel I have been empowered to speak up and not just take my child's learning at face value and from one person's opinion.*

*'Au Lotu parent, talanoa*

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*PowerUP has enabled me to better support my children's learning through strategies that are aligned with what their teachers are using in the classroom. Always important is to keep the three-way lines of communication open – which are for myself, my children, and their schools.*

*'Au Lotu parent, talanoa*

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The 2019 review examined two further aspects of parents' increased agency. These were: interacting with teachers and becoming more involved with schools – for example, in parent groups, friends of the schools, Boards of Trustees, and at parent-teacher meetings. Parents' talanoa showed mixed experiences on these points.

PowerUP parents also gained confidence and involvement in community and national educational forums and in initiating and leading discussions. Some stood for and were elected to Boards of Trustees and other locally elected bodies.

### Encouraging Children's Voices

PowerUP parents also began encouraging their children to question their teachers, which again had not been a Pacific practice.

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*My children are slowly starting to build confidence, especially through attending PowerUP. I encourage my children to come and ask questions because the [PowerUP] teachers are able to support them more than I could regarding English and maths. Sometimes my [year 7 child] doesn't bring homework to PowerUP, but now I see that he is slowly beginning to bring work and also ask questions.*

*Parent, talanoa*

---

Watching the ways PowerUP teachers and other adults talked to the children and the warm relationships that developed in these conversations caused parents to think of the ways they communicated with their children and the power of their children's voices (see Box 7).



**Box 7: Children's Voices**

Parents were overwhelmingly moved by the positive ways PowerUP teachers and other adults talked to students. The warm relationships generated in these learning exchanges made parents think about the ways they communicated with their children and the creative energy and authority of children's voices:

*I believe that, before PowerUP, I was, like, narrow minded – closed to my way of thinking being the only way. It has really opened my eyes: my kids can do it; they are allowed to make mistakes; and they learn from it. It's their learning journey. I need to stop comparing it with my time at school. It was more about me being scared and trying to protect them more. It wasn't easy, but I have really tried my best. And I'm glad I did, otherwise they might not be here at PowerUP. (Parent, talanoa)*

*[I'm] actually stopping and listening, letting the students and kids know they are worthy. Kids don't always get it right. Listen to your gut, listen to your kids' views. It's not always [just about] what adults are saying. Giving them a chance to tell their story. Giving the attention; thinking of what else you can do [to support them]. (Parent, talanoa)*

*Since I came to PowerUP, I've changed the way I communicate with my children. I discuss with my children their individual goals and how to achieve their goals. (Parent, talanoa)*

These and other similar comments mark critical shifts in PowerUP parents' attitudes to parenting and parenting practices.

**Applying and Sustaining the Skills to Engage in Education, from PowerUP to Home, Schools, and Communities**

Before joining PowerUP, the parents' main connections to schools had been report nights, when children had broken a school rule, and when supporting fundraising and cultural nights. One parent said that when she met with her son's teachers, all they wanted to talk about was his rugby, and she hadn't gone to school to hear that!

Parents said that by attending PowerUP 1) they were better informed about school processes, and 2) became more strategic in raising their concerns with teachers.

---

*Understanding NCEA was very instrumental to me. One of my children is doing Level 2 NCEA and had only 75 entries [credits] for all subjects chosen, but with the assistance of the PowerUP programme, we were able to understand and therefore went to school and asked her teachers if they could allow her to do more courses in order to have more entries. And now she could pass well if she passes them all.*

*Parent, talanoa*

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One parent expressed the view that it was parents' right to ask questions about their children's progress.

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*I have a right to know what the school can offer and ask for help if I cannot understand something from the school. I want more confidence to [be able to] ask teachers about their strengths and weaknesses.*

*Parent, talanoa*



The positive shifts in PowerUP parents' confidence to approach ECE and school teachers with their concerns is outlined in Table 11. Before attending PowerUP, two out of five parents were very confident they knew how to support a child with their learning. After attending, this increased to nine out of ten parents. Fewer than half of this group were very confident to talk with teachers in early learning services and primary schools before attending PowerUP. After attending, this increased to three in every four parents. One-third were very confident they knew about educational pathways before attending PowerUP, and this increased to nearly three-quarters after attending PowerUP.

**Table 11: Parents' and Family Adults' Shifts in Confidence after Attending PowerUP**

| Attribute                                                                                                                                        | % Very confident |       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-------|
|                                                                                                                                                  | Before           | After |
| Knew how to support your child with their learning                                                                                               | 39%              | 88%   |
| Could talk to the staff at your child's primary school about your child's progress and how the staff and you could support your child's learning | 42%              | 84%   |
| Could talk to the staff at an early learning service or school about a child's learning                                                          | 41%              | 80%   |
| Understood the educational pathways available to children, that is, further studies, vocational pathways, employment                             | 33%              | 73%   |

## Parent-initiated Engagement – Don't Wait for the School

Parents said that the more they learnt about school processes, the more aware they became of the challenges their children faced, including incidents of cultural bias, racism, and inequity. Parents said this knowledge had spurred their more active engagement with their children's teachers.

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*I am a little bit more knowledgeable about what is expected from me as a parent. I can speak to my child's teacher about my child's learning and have some understanding of the learning conversations. There is also a strong relationship built between me, my child, and their teacher.*

*'Au Lotu parent, talanoa*



*PowerUP has opened our eyes in terms of how our children have been misrepresented at school. PowerUp empowered us parents not to be afraid to challenge the school and make sure that our children received the maximum learning and support.*

*FlexiPlus parent, talanoa*

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In addition, 'Au Lotu parents began initiating discussions with schools themselves, rather than waiting to be contacted by schools – one parent described this as a duty and responsibility.

Parents also began contacting teachers when their children made comments, such as “my teacher talks too fast”, “I don't understand what is happening”, or “things are moving too quickly in class”, which they might not have done previously.

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*I have learnt from PowerUP that it could be better not only from the teacher's end but also from mine. It is not enough to be passive and sit back. [Instead, I need to] to engage and be proactive.*

*'Au Lotu parent, talanoa*

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Parents gained a satisfaction and pride as they saw that their interventions had made a difference.

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*I am now very confident to ask questions at school – how [my children] are learning and what is being taught. Now I know how they are learning at PowerUP, and I see that they are making good progress and their confidence ... at school is building.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*I am now more demanding at school [asking for] work to be brought home now – I want to make sure my children to understand their subjects and if they need extra help to make sure they take their work to PowerUP.*

*Parent, talanoa*

## Reciprocal Learning Exchanges

Importantly, parents felt that teachers were responding to their questions in “a reciprocal manner”.

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*[my daughters' teacher] communicates better with me. How? For example, “Your daughter's doing better in this, but with your help, she can better in another area.” The teacher uses positive language, and I notice my daughter is doing better now she is reading more.*

*Parent, talanoa*

Parents have a role in supporting their children to reach their educational potential. Positive experiences, such as the one described above, had helped confirm for parents their responsibility to work with schools to support their children’s learning. One used the term “triangle of success” to explain the child, parent, school relationships in learning.

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*It is absolutely essential for schools and parents to work together to support children’s learning. Working together, there is a triangle of success. The teachers, student, and parents working together is the only way I believe that our Pacific kids will achieve. That being said, it takes a whole village to raise a child, so it has to include the communities you are in.*

Parent, talanoa



*Mum and Dad are able to talk to the teachers and principals that are part of PowerUP, and they are happier to approach our teachers at school now. They would have never done that before.*

FlexiPlus student, talanoa

A number of PowerUP parents became more involved in school management posts, such as, Boards of Trustees. They said that the learnings they had gained at PowerUP had increased their understanding of the critical influence of such roles and gave them the confidence to become actively involved.

PowerUP learners confirmed that their parents had become more motivated to engage with principals, teachers, and other school staff, which had not been an earlier practice. One student said that his parent’s engagement with teachers and schools had become so much the norm that he (the student) no longer had to be the “go-between” (mediator) between home and school, which had been his role in the past.

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*... they [parents] don’t have to ask so many questions; they know now.*

Student, survey



## PART 2: STUDENTS – “AT POWERUP, I’VE GOT A CHANCE”

Student’s learning priorities aligned closely with those of the PowerUP parents.

### To Understand School Processes, Language, and Terms Used

A significant number of secondary school students said that, before joining PowerUP, they had been unsure about school processes. The programme had helped reduce their uncertainties. Students reported increased understanding of NCEA units, achievement standards, credits, grades, and which credits were needed to achieve an NCEA-level qualification (Table 12). However, and again a concern, up to one-third placed themselves in the “not sure” category.

**Table 12: Students’ Understanding of School Examination Processes Before and After Attending PowerUP**

|                                                                                                | Before | After | Not sure |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-------|----------|
| Adequate understanding of unit standards and achievement standards                             | 32     | 49    | xxx      |
| Clearer understanding about how credits contribute to NCEA                                     | 35     | 62    | 28       |
| Confident understanding of the grades used in NCEA                                             | 35     | 59    | 26       |
| Better understanding of which NCEA credits they need to achieve their NCEA-level qualification | 38     | 59    | 31       |

Figure 11 lists the activities learners chose to do at PowerUP alongside those they had found to be useful. Four out of five students said they did homework and study at PowerUP (79 percent), and 65 percent of this group believed that that had been their most useful learning at PowerUP.

*It helps you to complete your homework if you cannot manage your time. They also help you be up to task and also top of the class.*

*Student, survey*

*Time to catch up with all assignments, to complete assignments, and then when I go back to school, I understand ... I’m on track.*

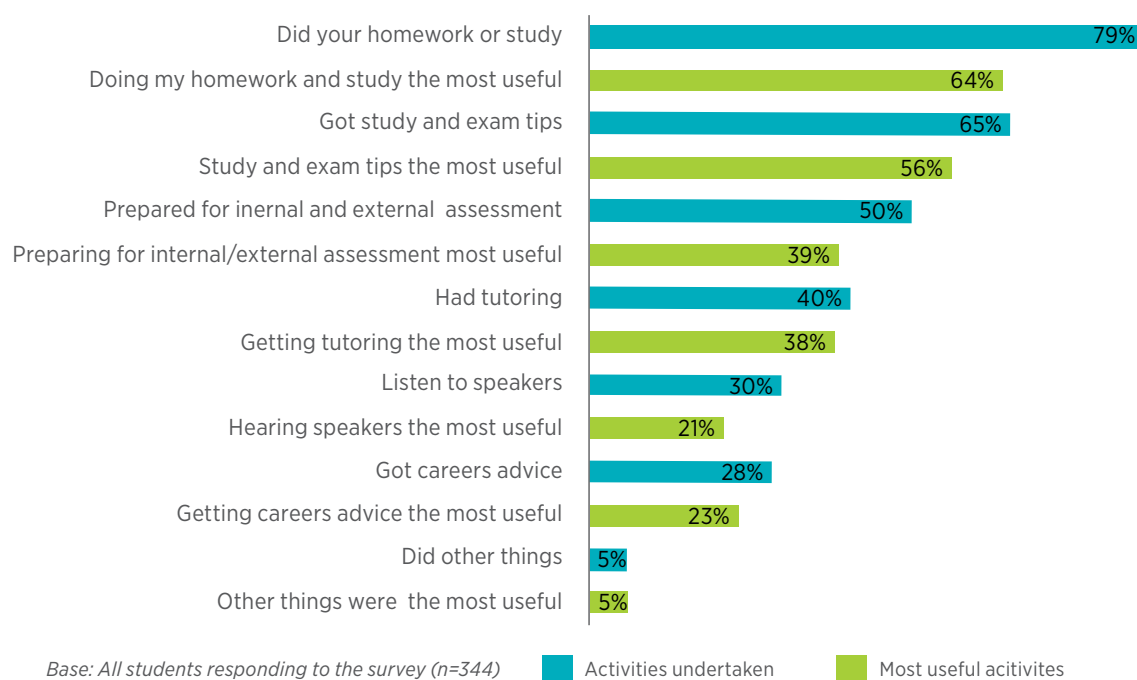
*Student, survey*



*It’s a good way to finish assessments and makes it understandable for students as to why it is very important to pass NCEA.*

*Student, survey*



**Figure 11: Activities Undertaken by Students at PowerUP and Those they Found Most Useful**

Source: PowerUP report (Oakden, 2019)

### To Identify and Learn the “Rules of Engagement” in Education Conversations

It would appear that before taking part in PowerUP, the students did not have adequate study skills and learning approaches, and the PowerUP teachers and mentors played an important role in fostering these necessary skills. Also, PowerUP highlighted the importance of learners having sufficient and guided time so they can get a full understanding of school curriculum content and processes.

#### The Skills to Engage

Discipline to task, task completion, planning and using time wisely, and being better able to deal with pressure featured highly in students’ comments about what they had learnt at PowerUP. The relationship between these skills is notable.

*PowerUP has helped me understand how important it is to work hard and prepare myself for Level 1 once I get to year 11. Also, the teachers are available to work with me one-on-one.*

Student, survey



*It is really beneficial to helping you cope with stress and managing your time.*

Student, survey

A significant number said they had found listening to speakers who had overcome similar educational challenges had been particularly valuable – this reinforces the place of “story telling” in supporting Pacific peoples to make sense of their own lived experiences. Hearing of such experiences caused students to think more deeply about learning and the effectiveness of their own approaches to learning.

## Questioning

As with their parents, students found PowerUP teachers' use of questioning techniques a bit startling in the first instance. However, in learning to question, they became linked to a whole new vista of ideas. Students highlighted the new ideas and ways of thinking they had experienced as they worked with PowerUP teachers.

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*... I learn a lot of new things that I would say [I] haven't heard of before. Therefore, when I go back to school, I understand everything because of the help I get at PowerUP.*

*Student, talanoa*



*The teachers at PowerUP; the way they do it; it's kind of like asking me the same question but in a different way [than the teachers at school ask questions] until I understand.*

*Student, talanoa*



*I wish I had joined from the start because the tutors and teachers helped me with all my questions I had when I came to PowerUP. I always leave PowerUP with all my questions answered and feeling confident about the subject.*

*Student, survey*

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Students learnt to question their PowerUP peers and teachers thereby extending their boundaries of learning.

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*[Asking questions] is very helpful, it builds up your confidence and supports you with your learning for your future, and it is fun and cool.*

*Year 8 student, survey*

## Provider voice

There were several noticeable changes in student's behaviour. For example, their study skills improved; they became more focused on achieving their goals; and they seemed to enjoy learning more as they experienced more success and were more likely to persevere to get a good result. In addition, students became more confident about asking questions at PowerUP and then at school as well as they gained greater knowledge and understanding of subjects. In some cases (especially older teens), students became more self-motivated and were striving to achieve the results they wanted.

Learners also drew attention to the nature and quality of their relationships with PowerUP teachers. They valued teachers who took the time to make sure the learners understood challenging concepts and the associated work tasks required.

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*... an opportunity for me and my siblings to come and use tutors here for help and to understand schoolwork that teachers [at school] have failed to explain.*

*Student, survey*



*My teacher [at PowerUP] assists me where she can see I need help, for example, helping me read words that I don't understand. It's easier learning [at PowerUP than at school] – they help us and teach us at our own pace. At school, they are more strict on us. I enjoy the learning [at PowerUP] together with my peers at our own pace. And it's good that we feel comfortable asking our teacher any questions ... I improved my reading at PowerUP. I got four out of five in my reading assignment that my mentors and teacher helped me with at PowerUP.*

*Student, talanoa*




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*Like, they slow it down because I'm not a very fast learner; so they break it down for me so I get it and know it ... they wait until I get it. At school, because the teachers have lots of kids, they have to kind of forget about slow learners like me and just move on, and then I don't get it.*

*Student, talanoa*

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Sound learning relationships developed as PowerUP spurred learners' positive engagement in learning at school and across curriculum areas – for example, maths.

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*I learnt a lot about maths at PowerUP. One of the academic mentors was able to help me in this area. I used to hate maths, but when she helped me, I learnt to enjoy it more because I can understand it. This made attending PowerUP fun. Maths is something that I always find hard when I am at school, but I am learning all the time. I had a writing test, and I got a 5B. I only need one more [mark] to get 5A, which is the highest mark in writing.*

*Student, talanoa*

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*This happened because I had that extra support. I was shocked to see how I improved. It made me feel happy that I am on the right track.*

*Student, talanoa*



*I learnt a maths problem at PowerUP [and] was asked the same maths problem at school and no one in my class knew it but me! So, I was very happy with myself.*

*Student, talanoa*

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### Applying these Skills in Other Situations and Having the Faith to Achieve

Students' positive relationships with PowerUP teachers and other adults gave them confidence to approach their teachers at school as well.

A small number of students in years 9, 10, and 11 said their confidence to talk to their teachers about education almost doubled. Similar gains were made across secondary school age groups during the first year of PowerUP, and these increased through 2017. However, a significant number placed themselves in the "not at all" confident category (see Table 13).

**Table 13: Level of Confidence Asking Teachers for Help (2017)**

|                | Very confident | Somewhat confident | Not at all confident |
|----------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Before year 13 | 46%            | 39%                | 13%                  |
| After year 13  | 74% (+28)      | 23%                | -                    |
| Before year 12 | 32%            | 47%                | 29%                  |
| After year 12  | 73% (+41)      | 23%                |                      |
| Before year 11 | 23%            | 49%                | 23%                  |
| After year 11  | 58% (+35)      | 36%                |                      |
| Before year 10 | 24%            | 41%                | 29%                  |
| After year 10  | 49% (+25)      | 39%                | 8%                   |
| Before year 9  | 19%            | 39%                | 28%                  |
| After year 9   | 49% (+30)      | 32%                | 7%                   |

Views shared in 2019 indicated that PowerUP learners were responding differently in class; they were more confident about engaging and raising questions with teachers.

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*I have the confidence to challenge what subjects I want to take and what I need to take because they relate what I want to do in the future. Also [I have] the confidence to ask questions in class and outside class too.*

*FlexiPlus student, talanoa*

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*We were learning about [the] perspective of yourself, and I took that, and I'm going to use it with school and rugby too. It's helping me learn new things I can apply in school. It's teaching me new techniques for learning and speaking too. It's increasing my confidence to, like, put my hand up when I'm in class, when usually I'm afraid because people will judge [me].*

*FlexiPlus student, talanoa*

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Table 14: Changes in Pacific Parents and Family Adults after Attending PowerUP (2017)

| Before PowerUP                                                                                                                                                                                                         | After PowerUP                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Just under one-third (30%) of parents were very confident about talking to staff about their children's learning (data from the adult survey).                                                                         | 57% of parents were very confident about talking to staff about their children's learning (data from the adult survey).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Feedback from parent-teacher interviews was limited.                                                                                                                                                                   | Parents had effective conversations with teachers about their children's learning.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Parents' engagement with the school focused mainly on their children's behaviour.                                                                                                                                      | Parents were affirmed that they had an important and rightful role in their children's education.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Many parents considered that it was the school's role to educate children, and they trusted the educators to do this professionally.<br><br>There was no well-defined role for parents in partnership with the school. | Parents learned details about the education system, language, and terms used.<br><br>They developed trusted relationships with PowerUP providers, teachers and coordinators, and like-minded parents.<br><br>They gained access to people and resources through PowerUP to support their families in learning.<br><br>They provided more effective support for their children's learning. |
| Parents engaged with their children's learning by reminding them to do their homework.                                                                                                                                 | Parents listened to their children more.<br><br>They set up routines to help their children succeed in their schoolwork.<br><br>They enjoyed seeing their children succeed and had raised their expectations of what their children could achieve.                                                                                                                                        |
| The possible pathway for each child through education to employment was not particularly clear.                                                                                                                        | Parents had a clearer understanding of educational pathways and, the importance of planning and choices made. They became more visible in schools, and opportunities arose for them in leadership roles, further education, and employment.                                                                                                                                               |

Source: Adapted from the 2017 PowerUP evaluation report (Oakden, 2017)

Table 15: Changes in Students' Reports of their Learning Experiences

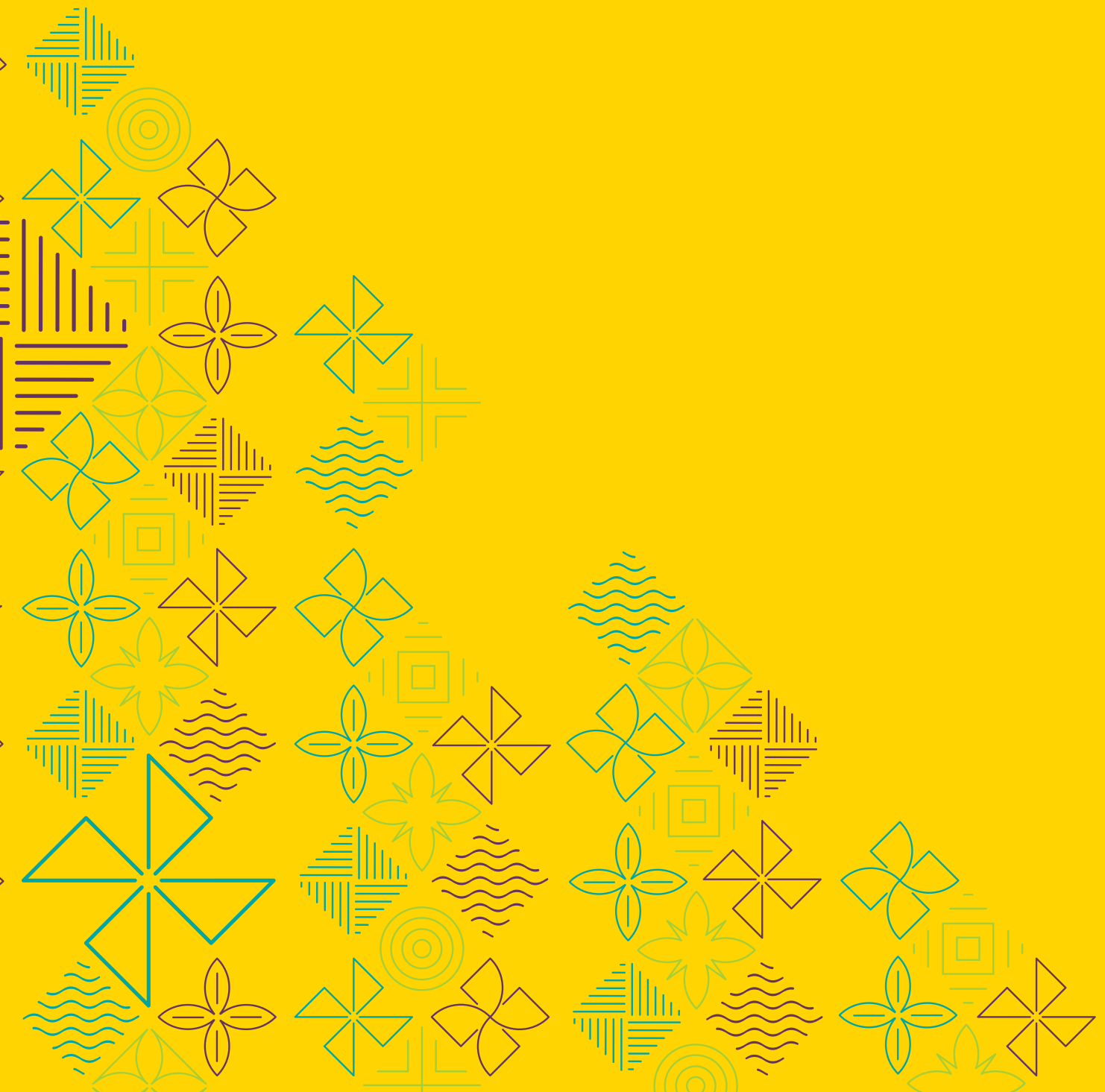
| Before PowerUP                                                                                                                             | After PowerUP                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Just over one-quarter (28%) of students completing the student surveys were very confident about talking to teachers about their learning. | Nearly two-thirds (62%) of students completing the student surveys were very confident about talking to teachers about their learning.                                                                                                             |
| Some students reported being anxious and feeling lost in class.                                                                            | Students said PowerUP is a safe place to learn.                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Many students felt the pace of class was too fast and reported feeling left behind.                                                        | Students feel more confident and believe they can learn. Some said it took them more time to learn, but they are determined and resilient.                                                                                                         |
| Many students only partially understood the education system.                                                                              | Students reported their school teachers commented on a change in their engagement with learning and now worked with them more.                                                                                                                     |
| Some students were not particularly engaged in school or had disengaged with school.                                                       | Students who were not attending school started attending again. They understood what they need to do to be successful in learning. They developed a love of learning when they believed success was possible and consistently experienced success. |
| The students' peer group may not see it as cool to be smart and succeed at school.                                                         | Students were part of a peer group where it was cool to be successful in education.<br><br>They felt their parents (if they attended PowerUP) better understood what their education was about and supported it more.                              |
| There were no clear links between education and after-school pathways in many cases.                                                       | Students understood why succeeding at education was worth pursuing. They started seeing exciting possibilities for themselves, were motivated to work towards those possibilities, and were resilient when there were setbacks.                    |

Source: Adapted from the 2017 PowerUP evaluation report (Oakden, 2017)



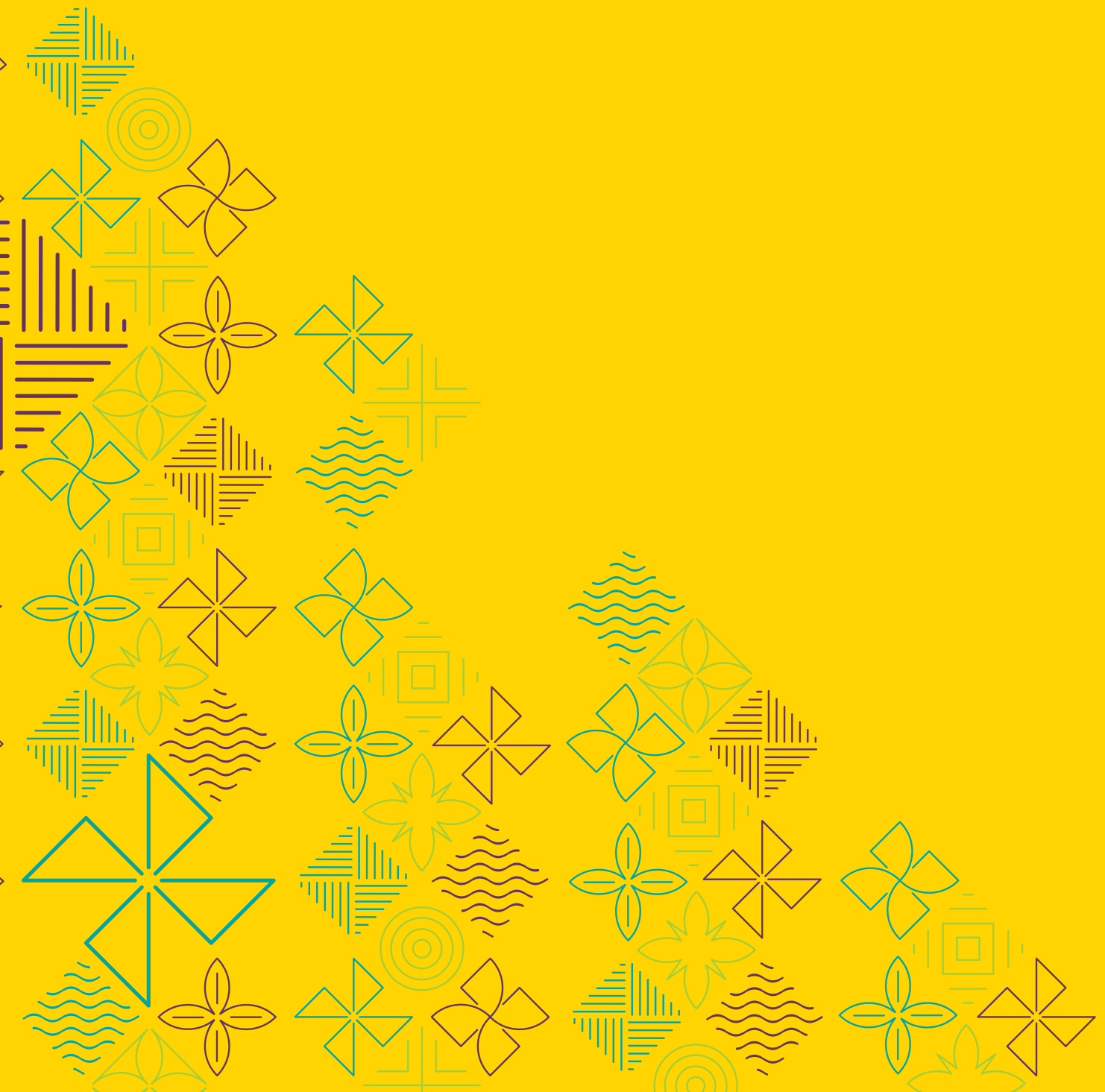
# Chapter 5

## The Five Themes of Pacific Culturally Safe Learning Spaces



# Chapter 5

## The Five Themes of Pacific Culturally Safe Learning Spaces







## KEY POINTS

The PowerUP's Pacific ways of working and thinking supports the creation of culturally safe learning environments. The visibility of Pacific culture language, beliefs, and expectations in every facet of the programme proved to be an inspirational, aspirational, and transformative experience for Pacific parents, families, and learners. It also reinforced and reminded programme participants of the place of Pacific knowledge and pedagogy in their own lives and was validated in their increased understanding of school processes and improved schooling achievement. At the same time, in the safe and trusted programme spaces, parents and learners had the chance to interrogate the meaning of fa'a-Pacific ideals and practices in the light of changing times.

For parents and learners, the PowerUP education experience reinforced the relationship between identity security ("knowing who I am"), learning, and success in schooling. Parents' and students' self-belief as learners was increased. So too was their resilience in interacting with others and their joy in learning and achieving. Parents and learners viewed the sustaining of Pacific language and cultural ways of thinking and doing they experienced at PowerUP to be a demonstration of tautua (service) to the quality of life and wellbeing today and to future generations of Pacific.

### **Educational Successes and Guidance in Life Journeys**

Parents and children were proud that their 'auala into learning and success in learning, had been achieved through the inclusion of fa'a-Pacific values, beliefs, knowledge, and pedagogical practices in the PowerUP programme. Parents and children said education was now a topic of family conversations. The programme formed a foundation for their increased resilience in formal school systems and a protection against acts of cultural bias and racism. Relationships between family members had been enhanced: members communicated better with and supported each other and engaged together as a family in other activities. For some families, there had been a rethinking of time spent on cultural and church obligations.

In the PowerUP *as and by Pacific* space, parents and children learnt to mediate between the values, beliefs, and norms underpinning school and home learning, which is an essential skill to learn in today's rapidly changing world. In learning to break across siloed worlds, PowerUP families gave truth to and progressed the PowerUP model where:

*[Pacific] people lead and are in control and [Pacific] values, principles, approaches and methods prevail. It does not exclude other ... methods but only as far as they are seen to be useful.*

Wehipeihana, 2013

This chapter returns to focus more deeply on the five themes of culturally secure learning by building on the snapshot of programme learnings raised in the previous chapters. Again, it is a composite picture of how these themes were conceptualised and experienced in the 2016–18 period, and the further perspectives that emerged in 2019 in the two-model flexible programme. Whilst interrelated and mutually reinforcing, the five themes are treated separately to highlight their individual and combined strengths as PowerUP became more than an educational programme for parents and learners.

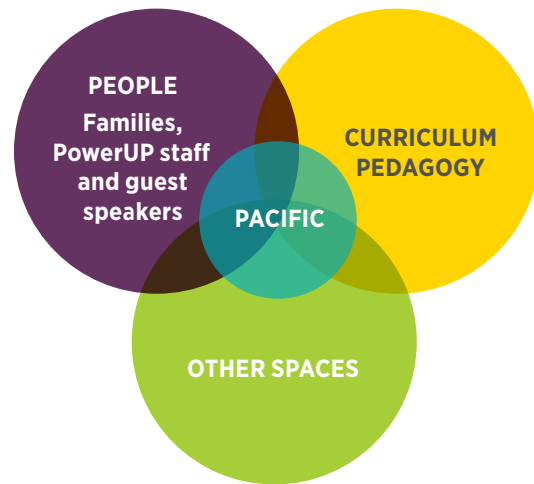


## THEME 1: PACIFIC VISIBLE “WE CAN SEE OURSELVES IN THIS PROGRAMME”

That Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities are acknowledged by and in equitable partnerships with schools in education. “Pacific visible” is also seen in the inclusion of community knowledge, Pacific ideas, and concepts through which Pacific education is understood.

As in the PowerUP model of engagement (Chapter 2), the programme crafted an *as and by Pacific* perspective to help parents, families, and Pacific communities achieve a deeper engagement and ownership of their schooling and education matters. PowerUP signified a tremendous contrast for many parents, whose previous engagement in schooling had largely been to support cultural performances, school fundraising drives, and report evenings, and as one parent stated, “All [the teachers] wanted to talk about was my son’s sporting prowess”. Pacific ways of knowing and being were visible in every aspect of the PowerUP programme (Figure 12) and encouraged the parent and learner voice and agency in education. Through PowerUP, parents and learners moved from being apprehensive and “fearful” to being comfortable and confident to talk about education and, in particular, about their children’s education.

Figure 12: PowerUP is “Pacific Visible”



As noted, Pacific peoples were highly visible in leadership roles at PowerUP (as coordinators, qualified teachers and mentors, and invited speakers) and understood Pacific cultural ways and language. In the ethnic-specific ‘Au Lotu programme (2019), everything took place in the language of that community.

### Teachers

Parents and learners described the PowerUP teachers as approachable, positive, and easy to talk to: they felt comfortable asking questions and knew that their questions would be respected and encouraged. Pacific knowledge became more visible in PowerUP curriculum and pedagogy as parents and learners added their experience into this *as and by Pacific* learning programme.

While parents and learners valued Pacific knowledge and ways of working, they also learnt to draw on “other” knowledge and support networks. As in the saying “it takes a village to raise a child”, they learnt that schools do not hold sole responsibility for children’s learning and that there are many pathways to learning.

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*PowerUP is more value-based and strengths-driven compared with their schools. They are more nurtured, and educators are more aware of their culture and how as individuals they learn.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*I found that I was more comfortable with my own people. And PowerUP is somewhere where we can express ourselves through homework and also through coming together every Monday.*

*Secondary student, survey*

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### **Provider Voice**

Providers said they had worked hard to ensure PowerUP provided a quality learning experience for Pacific parents and children, especially in selecting skilled teachers who had strong empathy and understanding of Pacific children.

A learner made it clear that you did not need to be Pacific to be a good teacher for Pacific students and that cultural respect and sensitivity was a major factor, and non-Pacific teachers and others could also support Pacific students in culturally secure ways.

As a result of joining PowerUP, parents' engagement with schools was no longer a one-way process – they were contributing partners in maintaining their relationship with the schools and their children.

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*I have been able to apply what I have learnt to [the] parent-teacher interview. Many a time, I have sat and agreed to everything the teacher has said about my kid's learning. [Now] I feel I have been empowered to speak up and not just take my child's learning at face value from one person's opinion.*

*'Au Lotu parent, talanoa*

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In the 2019 review, two further aspects of Pacific visibility (voice and agency) were explored. These related to parents' visibility in interactions with teachers and with schools, as for example, parent groups, friends of the school, boards of trustees, and parent-teacher meetings. Parents' talanoa showed mixed experiences on these aspects.

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*PowerUP has enabled me to better support my children's learning through strategies that align with what their teachers are using in the classroom. Always important is to keep the three-way lines of communication open – which are for myself, my children, and their schools.*

*'Au Lotu parent, talanoa*

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PowerUP parents also gained increasing visibility and voice in community and national educational forums and in initiating and leading discussions. For example, some stood for and were elected to their school Board of Trustees and other locally elected bodies.



## THEME 2: IDENTITY, LANGUAGE, AND CULTURE

That Pacific learners' developing identities are upheld by educational experiences that support Pacific culture and languages and practices that value the contribution of Pacific parents, families, and communities through equitable and ethical partnerships.

Parents strongly believed PowerUP followed well-understood Pacific values and beliefs and world views (Chapter 1). As in the words of Tui Ātua Tupua Tamasese Efi (2003), at PowerUP, there was a relationship between spirituality, family, and resource use, together with the core values that underpin this relationship; namely sacred bonds, love and compassion, reciprocity, respect and deference, humility, and family.

*When I come to PowerUP, it's like going to my family. We pray together, talk in our language, and we know each other from here and the church.*

Parent, talanoa



*The other big thing for me is how the space is made to feel "Pacific", which my children love because it's like being at home.*

Parent, talanoa



*PowerUP is a positive, health environment for our Pacific families. Everything is Pacific and to find out how amazing it is ... just get in, and you will be thankful for making one right choice ... we feel very comfortable coming to PowerUP because it is a gathering of familiar people.*

Student, talanoa

Parents and learners talked about experiencing a Pacific ethic of care: that families engaged with integrity and genuine support for one another. As outlined by Oakden (2019), identity security was achieved at PowerUP:

- » Pacific parents and adult family members can be themselves and feel at ease and comfortable. They do not have to fit into a learning environment that feels foreign or uncomfortable to them.
- » PowerUP encourages a strong sense of belonging and fellowship develops. There is a strengthening of culture. Pacific parents and adult family members have a place to stand firm as Pacific people. The talanoa signal that this has particular importance for PowerUP families in pan-Pacific settings, where people participating are a minority in their communities numbers-wise.
- » PowerUP is more than an educational programme for parents and adult family members. It is about community engagement, interaction, and belonging – "It's bigger than my family; it's like the community knitting together".

### Identity Security

PowerUP reinforced parents' and learners' feelings of identity security, and there is strong evidence in the source materials of a relationship between identity security ("knowing who I am") and learning success.

*It's important for my children to know where they come from and who they are to do well in school. Because you would be lost if you didn't know your identity. If they are proud of their identity, they will do well in education.*

Parent, talanoa

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*[PowerUP gives] my children confidence in identifying themselves correctly in their schools, allowing them to appreciate and take pride in who they really are.*

*Parent, talanoa*

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A mother shared her pride when teachers identified her children by their ethnic group (Tuvaluan) rather than by the more commonly used “Pacific” label. She regarded this as an important step in her children’s identity security.

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*For the first time, my children have told me that they are happy to be identified as Tuvaluan students at school. Previously, they were identified as “PIS” [Pacific Island students] along with other dominant PI groups. This is a positive trend as it gives my children confidence in identifying themselves correctly in their schools, allowing them to appreciate and take pride in whom they really are.*

*Parent, talanoa*

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One learner attributed her learning achievements to her father’s reminders to “Never forget who you are and where you come from”. Most learners took great pride in being known as Pacific. They also talked about the importance of identity security to the wellness of all Pacific peoples.

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*Being a Pasifika of [xx] descent is very important to us. It is our identity; our culture, and it is important because it is what we are and what we stand for. We are proud to be Pasifika. We are very confident, and never will we be ashamed of it. Our language, our culture is our life. Our Pasifika is always in our hearts, and we will always be Pasifika, and that is who we are, and we will hold it high and proud.*

*Student, talanoa*

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*A person without a culture does not have an identity and hence deserves no place in society ... our identity, language, and culture make a great difference to who we are. They remind us every day of who we truly are. They remind us of the hard life our ancestors have lived and ... encourage us to strive for excellence and to make a difference to our lives and the lives of our future generations ... Without identity, language, and culture, we would be like a vessel in the ocean without a compass to get ashore safely. Our identity, language, and culture are the adrenaline that pumps hope and direction to our learning.*

*Student, talanoa*

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Providers’ comments that “children talked of identity, language, and culture in more depth than their parents” warrant further research. For example, is this because the youthful years are the years of identity security? Are these issues being discussed at school? Or are these students experiencing a deeper cultural divide in New Zealand and in schools today?

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*Our Pacific way of family support and encouragement is relevant in promoting learning for the children. It also promotes transparency, inclusiveness, and shared responsibility to ensure no one lacks support in their learning.*

*FlexiPlus parent, talanoa*

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### Pan-Pacific and Ethnic-specific

The availability of the two models in 2019 provided some answers to questions about the ethics of offering pan-Pacific or Pacific ethnic-specific programmes.

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*I feel that PowerUP meets the needs of our Pacific community in the way that we cater for not only the child but the whole family, not only for the academic need but ... the physical, social, and faith [needs and] setting rules and regulations, setting the culture for them. If they learn that at PowerUP, they can take it back home ... PowerUP is very Pasifika, especially when we incorporate the language weeks. PowerUP gives the kids a sense of identity, as it is a struggle [sometimes for them to maintain that in the wider society]. During Samoan language week, all the Samoans were excited; they were proud to be in that culture; we were praying in that culture, talking about what they love in that culture. We have also covered all the cultures [represented] here at PowerUP ... PowerUP is very inclusive.*

*Parent, talanoa*

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'Au Lotu parents said they preferred that model because they had a limited knowledge of English and they had been encouraged by church ministers to be involved in that model and believed that the church could and should play a greater lead role in supporting Pacific education. In addition, they liked the fact that the 'Au Lotu operated in a faith-based way and followed cultural protocols. Some who chose the 'Au Lotu programme indicated this was because they preferred learning with other adults.

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*Being able to communicate in our ... mother tongue and be with people [who] we are with in the church family makes a big difference. Our mother tongue being utilised and having shared knowledge of our cultural and religious upbringing [also] helped. We are like a village connected.*

*'Au Lotu parent, talanoa*

Younger members said the 'Au Lotu model had given them the opportunity to work more closely with elders. One said that the programme had supported her to have a voice in church matters and speak in a church environment, which was usually reserved for elders.

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*It's helped me to open up [and] get to share my ideas to show I have a voice; in [the] church, it's always the elders. It's helped my confidence when I have a few things to say ...*

*'Au Lotu parent, talanoa*

---

Some parents in areas where 'Au Lotu was available chose to join FlexiPlus. They wanted to participate in a pan-Pacific learning community that was parent and child focused. FlexiPlus was also valued by New Zealand-born parents and learners who indicated they had fewer Pacific community connections.

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*The most important thing that happened to me was when [person] delivered " 'o 'oe o le fofō" to us students. He spoke about [the] migration of our ancestors, [the] push and pull factors. I was born in Sāmoa, and I came here when I was one or two. When I go back home for family holidays, I see my cousins struggle with basic reading. [This] makes me really appreciate my parents for the sacrifice they made so we can have a better future; makes me want to do better in school and not muck around.*

*FlexiPlus student, talanoa*

As in the earlier programme years, the FlexiPlus parents believed their attendance at PowerUP was a major influence on their children's participation and learning.

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*It is really important [for parents to attend] ... Also, having some time out ... with my kids and then meeting and talking with other people together is nice.*

*FlexiPlus parent, talanoa*



*You can drop your kids off to wherever, but if you're not there to support them it doesn't really mean anything.*

*FlexiPlus parent, talanoa*

In a few instances, non-Pacific parents and learners attended FlexiPlus. A few Pacific parents made the point that they would prefer the programme be only for Pacific because Pacific parents were less comfortable speaking when non-Pacific parents attended.

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*Limit PowerUP Pacific to only people of Pacific descent. Incorporating non-Pacific in a space intended just for Pacific somewhat takes away from Pacific people. I've noticed that.*

*FlexiPlus parent, talanoa*





## THEME 3: 'AUALA IN (ACCESS)

How Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities are facilitated to gain access to and feel welcome in education, such as curriculum pedagogy and through consultation.

Major PowerUP strategies to facilitate robust pathways access ('auala) to education for Pacific learners included:

- » Valuing and reaffirming Pacific funds of knowledge
- » Developing intentional strategies that support parents' and children's 'auala into learning
- » Instilling the concept of lifelong learning
- » Encouraging self-belief and resilience in learning.

These four strategies are described in more detail below.

### Valuing and Reaffirming Pacific Funds of Knowledge

PowerUp valued and celebrated Pacific identities, languages, and cultures as assets, strengths, and the vehicle for learning. It provided opportunities for parents and learners to weave their knowledge and life experiences together in their learning journey. In this way, fa'a-Pacific ways of being and knowing were constantly reaffirmed. For example, elders and parents shared and passed on their knowledge, older students assumed leadership roles and supported younger learners, and the whole PowerUP community of parents, providers, and mentors took care of and responsibility for each other's safety and learning progress. The feelings of belonging and identity generated in the programme were highly motivational for parents' and learners' confidence, sense of purpose, and self-esteem in learning.

### Developing Intentional Strategies that Support Parents and Children 'Auala into Learning

PowerUP supported parents' and learners' voices in education and worked to ensure they had accurate information about school systems and opportunities to learn and master the skills needed to engage with teachers and schools. PowerUP also supported the transfer of knowledge and lessons learnt into parents' and families' relationships with schools, with communities, and in other learning contexts.

### Instilling the Concept of Lifelong Learning

PowerUP's holistic programme was a reminder to parents and learners that learning is a cumulative process that has its beginnings in the early years and requires setting goals, planning and making choices, and taking responsibility for achieving the set goals.

### Encouraging Self-belief and Resilience in Learning

Parents and families learnt that learning takes place at any time and any place: it is not teacher directed or confined to the classroom. In weaving their cultural and school knowledge together, parents and families learnt that there are many 'auala (pathways) to learning: to lead and take the initiative in learning and to "hang in" and negotiate further learning pathways. Participating with other Pacific learners at PowerUP built learner resilience, faith, and self-belief that they could achieve academically and on a par with non-Pacific students.

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*We have faith in ourselves that we can achieve our academic goals and future studies to get our future carers or jobs. We believe we can be as high achievers as other ethnicities if we commit to our educational purposes.*

*Student, talanoa, 2017*

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Other students stated emphatically that irrespective of whether the school or classroom climate was favourable towards them, at PowerUP they had learnt to work and succeed in mainstream education settings and developed greater confidence that they could be successful in learning (2018).

## THEME 4: PACIFIC WELLBEING

That the wellbeing of Pacific learners is understood in education in holistic Pacific terms and supported by effective partnerships between Pacific parents, their children and families, and communities in education. This builds on the holistic picture discussed in Chapter 3: PowerUP in Action.

### Wellbeing

PowerUP parents and learners demonstrated a palpable pride in being Pacific and in achieving educational success “in our own way”.

*I see education differently after attending PowerUP Plus. It's not just pen to paper. With PowerUP, it helps students feel more relaxed about school, especially P.I. students. The programme helps the whole family.*

*Student, talanoa*

Wellbeing was generated in the reciprocal learning relationships developed at PowerUP, and the resilience and empathy generated in supporting each other's learning served as protective factors against bias.

*The environment is an excellent place for my kids to enjoy and be part of this community push for the Pasifika people. We are constantly encouraging one another and not pushing each other down because it will not solve anything. We encourage each other to be confident and not afraid to ask for anything if we need help, especially in a classroom.*

*Parent, talanoa*

Parents learnt skills to support their children's education achievement (see also Chapter 4: What We Need to Know to Engage in Education). However, and as has been noted previously, PowerUP became much more than that. In learning together at PowerUP, parents gained a better understanding of their children and the pressures they might face at school. Parents began to set aside time to listen and learn more about their children's interest and strengths.

*I am more attentive to them, and I don't try to force them to do their schoolwork straight after school. Instead, I give them time to relax, and then we work together using different strategies.*

*'Au Lotu parent, talanoa*



*I learnt the importance of being there and spending quality time with the children. This way, I am supporting them with their confidence in themselves as learners. They are achieving better at school.*

*FlexiPlus parent, talanoa*

At PowerUP, parents also learnt more about themselves, their strengths and weaknesses, and how their behaviours influenced the educational and personal growth of their children.

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*Well, when I first started, it's not that I was an angry person, but sometimes that's how it looked to others. Now I just bring it down: I listen; I am more patient and really just want what's best for my children. Which is the same for others: we just do it in a different way. Now I stop and listen before I say anything, which makes them more able to talk more to me about school. We have really good conversations [now] ... I do talk more positively with my son, as before I would be hard on him to always get excellence.*

*FlexiPlus parent, talanoa*

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In fact, PowerUP proved to be an inspirational, empowering, and transformative experience for parents as well as learners.

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*[Attending PowerUP], it's a huge change for everyone; not only for my kids but for me [as their mother] too. It helps and encourages me to go back to school so that's what I did. I did Level 4 in ECE. I feel good and need to continue next year.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*I am currently studying, and I truly understand the structure of studying. So, it is good to be heard and listened to through the talanoa sessions.*

*Parent, talanoa*

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As more fathers began attending PowerUP (2019), indications are that there were improvements in parents' relationships with each other as well, as they began to share responsibility for their children's education.

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*Yes, I talk with my husband a lot more about our responsibilities in making sure we are both encouraging our children with their education. I am also advising my husband to let the kids go to more school activities, for example, camps and sports ... [and] to be more open and spend more time with the kids. We try to do things together outdoors to get away from the devices, for example, we go to the park or spend time at the shopping mall.*

*'Au Lotu parent, talanoa*



*Taking part in this very important programme for me, personally ... it has directed us on the right path and [provided] a better understanding of the education system that our kids are in. It has shown my husband and I ways to identify and address any barriers. [It has shown us] how to improve and support our fānau in pursuing their academic achievements - not only that but also to be aware of the health and wellbeing of our kids and our Pasifika 'āiga.*

*'Au Lotu parent, talanoa*

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Parents also developed strong friendships with other PowerUP parents, and these friendships extended to them working together in other educational spaces.

### From PowerUP to Homes

Parents reported that, since joining PowerUP, they had become closer as a family.

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*PowerUP has helped us talk more as a family. This has allowed everyone in the family to be able to express their thoughts and feelings. We communicate about the positive and any worries or concerns that the children may face at school, but mainly we focus on the positive things. An example of this is when I ask the children how their days has been; I will encourage them to give more than a one-word answer. I will help them give an in-depth answer by helping them explain their day and ... reflect on the activities they did at school.*

*FlexiPlus parent, talanoa*

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Education becomes a topic of family conversation for the very first time.

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*Wow! It has made a major transformation around the dinner table or at breakfast.*

Parent, talanoa



*Schoolwork has become very important to my children now. There is a sense of competitiveness amongst themselves, which I see is crucial to their learning. We talanoa more at home, and I don't have to give instructions and remind [them of] their priorities.*

Parent, talanoa



*Our conversation is not just [about] getting credits but [about] getting ready and being prepared. We all have dinner, we sit down together, and my kids are telling me what they want; they share; they have better understanding now.*

Parent, talanoa

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Whereas parents said they used to only instruct their children to “do your homework” and then left them to it, now their support had become more positive and directly focused.

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*We have been talking about education more now, especially with my daughter getting ready to sit her exams for Level 3. This has allowed us to be more open and speak life into our kids, encouraging them to try their best and [encouraging them] that they are capable of doing whatever it is that they put their minds and hearts to. I want the best for my kids, and it is a joy to see them grow and enjoy the things that they are learning along the way.*

Parent, talanoa

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Changes in the nature and tone of family conversations were also noted.

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*I know it has changed how we talk to each other. Right now, our family talk about succeeding, further education, personal and professional development, and other things that we didn't normally discuss before. Coming from Sāmoa, where our jobs ... were considered really good paying jobs, back there, we took things for granted. Living in New Zealand and finding ourselves struggling financially has made us see life from a different perspective and appreciate opportunities. It has made us realise that, sometimes, our comfort zone may not always be our [optimal] comfort zone and that we need to be evolving in our way, so we are able to adapt to the changing world we live in.*

FlexiPlus parent, talanoa



*Our communications with our children are way better now than before. Mainly [it's] because we are now asking the right questions to them. So, they are able to converse and share with us their concerns, their peaks and lows in school, and any other matters that concerns them and their education.*

FlexiPlus parent, talanoa

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## New Family Routines

New home routines aimed at supporting children's learning were introduced, such as reading with younger children; spending less time on devices; starting a goal-setting book for family members; and moving children to a more visible place to do their homework, where they could engage with parents if they needed support.

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*He now does his work in the lounge where we can see him. We picked up this advice from the PowerUP sessions we attended this year. He now has a timetable he needs to follow, and we make sure he does his homework in the living room. His marks have now improved from achieved to merit, and it's only been a month now of PowerUp.*

*FlexiPlus parent, talanoa*

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Parents began using terms such as "shared journeys" and "working as a team" when talking about their children's learning. Learners used words such as "absolute family strength" and "strong healthy families now and for the future".

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*My children share with us parents their successes and failures. We are now able to approach the school for assistance. We are working together as a team to achieve in education. The children are regarding homework at home as a normal part of their evening schedule.*

*Parent, talanoa*

*There is an absolute positive strength in our family. As children, we see that, with good education, we will have a good, strong, healthy family in the future. It takes everyone to build a good, firm family.*

*Student, talanoa*

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## Prioritising Family Time

Again, the words used indicated that, while in the past, parents had usually made all family decisions, decision-making was becoming more shared.

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*We in our family had been too busy for each other, but now we find time to bring the family together - PowerUP has helped with that. We are doing more things together, and we support each other more. The best thing is getting to know each other better.*

*Parent, talanoa*

*As a family, we made a decision that we would involve ourselves in church activities on Sundays, and the rest of the week, we focus on work and schoolwork of my children.*

*Parent, talanoa*

*[We are] not pressuring them into church activities if it interferes with their schoolwork. We are proud of our culture and our children, but at least we can have open communication to discuss things like this.*

*'Au Lotu parent, talanoa*

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There was also evidence of strengthened family unity. PowerUP parents and children reported that their homes had become more positive, encouraging, and motivating environments and that relationships were more open and honest between family members. Children were more open to sharing their strengths, weaknesses, and any challenges they had at school and, in turn, parents were more confident to approach the school and teachers when help was needed. Senior learners said their parents now tracked their academic progress and asked for ways they might provide extra help or support. Learners reported that they had come to understand the sacrifices their parents had made generally but also specifically in attending school meetings.

*Mum and Dad are much more responsive to my learning needs now. I have heaps of confidence [that I can] have open conversations about school with them because of the support they give me. Even in my struggles, they still support and encourage me. [Their support and encouragement] help me be a better learner and respect my teachers.*

*FlexiPlus student, talanoa*



## THEME 5: CULTURAL BIAS AND RACISM

The attitudes, processes, and practices in education that limit the flourishing of Pacific learners', parents', families', and communities' visibility, language, culture wellbeing, and access.

Cultural bias is experienced in many ways. It is present in school when people – be they school leaders, teachers, administrative staff, or teacher aides – hold attitudes and behave in ways that best “cater for European thinking” but may not be particularly relevant or meaningful for Pacific or non-Pacific parents and students. Cultural bias effectively undervalues and disenfranchises learners. It includes assumptions made about the Pacific learners and the families they come from, the way they learn, and why they do or do not engage in the classroom (see also Smith, 2012). For instance, as has been noted previously, only one-quarter of secondary school students felt very confident to ask teachers for help before attending PowerUP. This confidence increased to more than half after attending PowerUP (Oakden, 2019). This finding indicates that Pacific children want to engage constructively with teachers about their learning, but they need the right environment for this to occur.

It is 20 years since prominent education researchers Anae, Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu, and Finau (2001) drew attention to the unconscious cultural biases in New Zealand’s educational structures and the challenges to educators these biases presented.

*Educators must recognise the nature and extent of intra-group diversities; they must take a more pro-active role in becoming aware and informed of these and acknowledge the cultural bias inherent within the structures of New Zealand’s education system. Having done so, such educators would creatively consider their own practices in terms of how to bridge the quite complex cultural and social gaps, or mismatches that exist.*

Anae et al., 2001 (page 91)

In 2018, national attention was drawn to unconscious bias and institutional, racism in New Zealand education settings in the New Zealand Speech-language Therapists’ Association (NZSTA) and Children’s Commission report.

*When tamariki and rangatahi feel undervalued or underrated because of their culture, this has a negative impact on their experiences in education and [on] their identity.*

NZSTA and Children’s Commissioner, 2018  
(page 13)

The focus of this discussion is on PowerUP parents’ and learners’ views and experiences of cultural bias and racism, including whether and how such incidents have influenced their engagement in learning. An overarching rider to be kept in mind is that PowerUP was the first time the majority of parents and children had participated in an education programme where 1) they were the majority group or 2) they were part of a programme that recognised, understood, and prioritised *as and by Pacific* ways of knowing and being.

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*For me [the] most important thing that happened was probably [the] celebration of Samoan Language Week. It made me really respect my culture and identity and my family and where I come from. I really want to do best by it, big time. I think that really helped me change the way I looked at my schooling and how I can do better.*

*FlexiPlus student, talanoa*

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### Seeing, Naming, and Dealing with Cultural Bias and Racism

In the trusted and culturally affirming spaces of the PowerUP programme, parents and students gained confidence in seeing, naming, and drawing on their growing confidence as informed and resilient learners to deal with incidents of cultural bias and racism. They also learnt that learning could be fun and “cool”.

#### **Naming**

Students didn’t use the terms cultural bias or racism in earlier talanoa. However, the many finely nuanced comments made about the differences between PowerUP and their school environment suggested that such behaviours had become normalised for Pacific students.

The PowerUP programme offered learners protection from being intimidated, for example, by teachers going too fast so that the students did not fully understand the instructions, and of being made fun of or becoming invisible in the classroom. Students also used terms such, “no one is left behind” and “comfortableness” in asking for help and said that PowerUP overcame their language challenges.

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*PowerUP is a programme where students can just come together and share their troubles/ understandings with each other. It’s a place where there is no judgement.*

*Secondary student, survey*

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*Pacific students are still finding it difficult to learn in the classroom as there is the language barrier ... [There is a] lack of education in the classroom, compared with on the sports field where we tend to excel ...*

*Student, talanoa*



*You feel comfortable to be able to ask any questions and can guarantee that you will not be made fun of, and also, [there is] the positive atmosphere from when you arrive to when you leave.*

*Student, talanoa*



*They are open to answering any questions about any of the subjects that we are struggling with in school, and with their positive, laidback, and helpful attitude, [it] not only makes learning fun but also makes us want to learn.*

*Student, talanoa*

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Occasionally, students talked specifically about discrimination and racism.

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*Although we feel valued as Pasifika students at school as a whole ... we still, at times, feel discriminated against. We feel that, at times, teachers don’t care to understand our problems as raised from cultural perspectives, [and this is] leading to clash[es and] verbal disagreements, [and] Pasifika students [being] pointed at for being rude. We fairly think that, as a school, students should be allowed to express [themselves] freely, and teachers [should] be more culturally sensitive in addressing issues that we face.*

*Student, talanoa*

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Parents were more vocal in stating the relationship between cultural bias and racism, and equity and access issues. They stated that many of the education systems, processes, and language used were not conducive to Pacific children's academic success.

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*They don't get how things are different for us families that struggle to speak English. [And they] practise cultural models from our country so often, we cannot ask questions because it would be seen as disrespectful.*

*'Au Lotu parent, talanoa*



*I think promoting equality within the school will go a long way. Encouraging leadership skills and empowering Pacific parents and students [to understand] their worth and value and to know that they have the same opportunities as other students.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*Previously for [child], he has had a lot of help from teachers with his schoolwork and rugby. This year, they have only focused on his sports. They used to talk about his grades – his maths – but all I hear about now from teachers is rugby. This has affected [child's] enthusiasm in school where he is not really fazed about his grades because he is quite far behind. He has been through a lot – grief, pressure from everyone, hurt.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*Schools are supposed to be safe, hence we send our children with trust that they will be safe at all means. Yet, I am not 100 percent comfortable with the safety of my children at schools, given the increasing number of fights in schools these days.*

*Parent, talanoa*

At PowerUP, parents and students became more sensitive to distinguishing quality teaching. This, in turn, made them more conscious of cultural bias and racism and more confident to call it out and deal with it.

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*PowerUP has opened our eyes in terms of how our children [have] been misrepresented at school. PowerUP empowered us parents not to be afraid to challenge the school and make sure that our children received the maximum learning and support.*

*FlexiPlus parent, talanoa*

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### **Acting**

In the PowerUP culturally safe learning spaces, parents and students developed a number of skills, strengths, and strategies that served as potential protective factors. The overarching protective factor was their increased belief and confidence in themselves as capable and resilient learners. The reaffirmation and reclaiming of Pacific identity security (being Pacific) in the *as and by Pacific* programme was a major protective strength, as was learners' increased (academic) knowledge and understanding of how to engage in school systems and processes.

The talanoa indicated that many of the PowerUP children began responding differently in class, even where the school environment was not conducive to Pacific children's learning. They became more confident in questioning and talking to teachers.

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*I have the confidence to challenge what subjects I want to take and what I need to take because they relate what I want to do in the future. Also [I have] the confidence to ask questions in class and outside class, too.*

*FlexiPlus student, talanoa*

As a matter of policy, each PowerUP session sought to strengthen Pacific identity, language, and culture.

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*We were learning about [the] perspective of yourself, and I took that, and I'm going to use it with school and rugby too. It's helping me learn new things I can apply in school. It's teaching me new techniques for learning and speaking too. It's increasing my confidence to, like, put my hand up when I'm in class, when usually I'm afraid because people will judge [me].*

*FlexiPlus student, talanoa*

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### Parents' Views on the Changes Needed

Parents and learners emphasised that change is needed because Pacific cultures are not well recognised in schools. Parents stressed their views of what educational measures must be put in place in order to turn the tide and raise Pacific education success. In the 2018 summative evaluation, parents outlined the following five points that were necessary to address cultural bias and racism in classrooms and schools and to grow resilient and confident Pacific learners.

1: Some schools have little knowledge or understanding of what Pacific communities value, and many don't know how to approach Pacific peoples.

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*I think schools could learn how reciprocal relationships with parents and families help support learning for ESOL students. I think they could learn how to explore Pasifika perspectives on inclusion, beliefs, family expectations, learning and support, and kids with learning disabilities. They could learn how to make personal connections to develop understanding and trust.*

*Parent, talanoa*

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*Question: Do you think Pacific children and young people are well catered for within our education system? Parent answer: Not a hundred percent, but I think it's slowly getting there. The support and help from the communities, like PowerUP, make a huge difference, and it's making changes in our young kids' lives. The thought of learning [while at the same time there is] caring, loving, and fun, is a great way to encourage kids to embrace education and allows them to do [so]. It is a very positive aspect in their lives.*

*Parent, talanoa*

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2: School curriculums are Eurocentric: Parents talked of how PowerUP used Pacific examples in teaching and learning.

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*I think, at the moment, the curriculum [and] teachers [cater] for European thinking. They don't know what they're doing.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*And [it would be better if schools are] just being encouraging, being more positive and caring when communicating with parents. "When you can walk in my world as comfortably as I walk in yours, only then can we be Treaty partners" – Whaea Mata from Parihaka.*

*Parent, talanoa*

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3: Some systems and processes schools use to communicate with them are not easily accessible to the Pacific parents and students; at times, school communications led to more confusion for parents.

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*I also think they could relay information better to secondary students and parents [about] NCEA. I went to Pasifika NCEA night with my eldest daughter at her school, and the terminology they used left me [confused]. A Sāmoan mother next to me left more confused than when she entered.*

*Parent, talanoa*

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4: Engaging with teachers is a variable experience for parents and students: Some parents formed excellent working relationships with teachers, but others did not.

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*With [Child], his attitude was really bad at the beginning of the year; halfway through, things started to change. I never thought that happened because of school, but when I went to the parent interview, which they have changed to talanoa, [I realised what a difference a teacher made]. At the talanoa, the child introduces their parents to the teacher, and [Child] tells me what they are working on. One thing that stood out for me is when [Child] was talking, the teacher was prompting him in a positive way. I spoke to the teacher, and she mentioned that [Child] has a place to go to when he is upset. She doesn't ignore him, and it's not about rewarding him but giving him a safe place to express himself in. It comes down to the teacher, who is there for the kids, who is not there for the money, not just to do the job and leave. [Child] said himself that he loves [Teacher]: "She knows what I need and want to do." [Teacher] is a reliever, and he's not looking forward to his main teacher coming back. [Child] said, "She always growls me, yells at me."*

*Parent, talanoa*

*Overall, if you have a teacher [who] cares for the child's learning, it shows in the change of attitude, not even in their school marks but in their attitude; in their effort to try.*

*Parent, talanoa*

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Overall, both parents and teachers expressed their strong desire for mainstream education systems to have teachers like the PowerUP teachers.

5: Having Pacific teachers in schools is crucial for Pacific parents and children: if there are no or too few Pacific teachers in schools, Pacific children miss out on Pacific role models and people who understand their cultural perspectives at school.

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*I think another step would be [to hire] more Pasifika teachers [and have] classrooms equipped with more Pasifika resources.*

*Parent, talanoa*

*We think our school should employ more Pasifika teachers who could understand Pasifika students better. We also think non-Pasifika teachers should attend some Pasifika cultural exchange programmes to learn and understand our Pasifika culture and way of life, our patterns of behaviour, and how best to deal with them [using] a Pasifika approach.*

*Student, talanoa*

### Evaluator's Voice

PowerUP helps parents and children to address cultural bias and racism when they experience it in other settings. Through PowerUP, parents and children develop skills, strengths, and strategies that act as protective factors. The changes in participants' skills, strengths, and strategies are evident in their talanoa, for example: Pacific parents and children experience a more positive and inclusive learning experience. Parents and children also gain a stronger sense of their potential and ability. Pacific parents realise they can contribute in positive and equal ways to their children's education. Also, the sense of cultural belonging and identity that is encouraged at PowerUP builds the children's confidence and sense of purpose around learning.

Table 16: Differences between PowerUP and Schools, from Parents Who Attended PowerUP

| What was present at PowerUP                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | What was missing at school                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A Pacific environment based on Pacific identity, culture, and language, incorporating parents' spirituality. PowerUP knows the families well. Discussion is in a mix of English and different Pacific languages.                                                                                            | School is an environment where, for Pacific parents and students, a Pālagi culture dominates. Pacific identity, culture, and language may be present in Pacific cultural groups but, at times, Pacific aspects of identity, language, and culture come across as tokenism.                                                  |
| Parents find it transforming when they receive explanations of NCEA and other school systems in ways they can understand. Use of multiple languages is important.                                                                                                                                           | At times, sessions at schools are confusing, and communication is not clear. For instance, the way schools explain NCEA is unclear to many Pacific parents.                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Pacific parents and children realise they must ask questions to learn. At PowerUP, they can practise asking questions in a culturally safe space. Parents and children quickly become more confident about asking questions at school.                                                                      | Parents and children feel uncomfortable asking questions – before attending PowerUP, fewer than half the children felt confident asking a teacher for help at school.                                                                                                                                                       |
| Parents focus on how to have learning conversations with children and teachers. After attending PowerUP, parents better understand the education system, and the nature of conversations at school changes to be more focused on learning.                                                                  | Initially, parent communication with schools may focus on student behaviour rather than learning. Pacific parents often say the only contact with schools is when their children do something wrong.                                                                                                                        |
| Children believe the PowerUP teachers deeply care about them.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | At times, teachers care and form great relationships, but some teachers do not seem able to engage effectively with Pacific children.                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| The environment at PowerUP allows children to learn at their own pace, so they understand and become confident to ask questions. Children come to believe they can achieve educational success and want to be at PowerUP. They feel they are in a supportive peer group with others who also want to learn. | The classroom environment may not support Pacific learners. For example, at times, students felt confused and left behind and did not really understand the purpose of the lessons. Many Pacific children did not feel confident to ask questions in class. They felt ashamed or worried about other students mocking them. |
| The PowerUP learning environment supports taking risks in learning and achieving success. Both the parents and children take on leadership roles. Success builds success and leads to Pacific parents and children being more visible and vocal; willing to ask questions and to partner.                   | At first, Pacific parents aimed to be polite, and children tried not to stand out.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

Source: Adapted from PowerUP evaluation reports (Oakden, 2017, 2018, 2019)

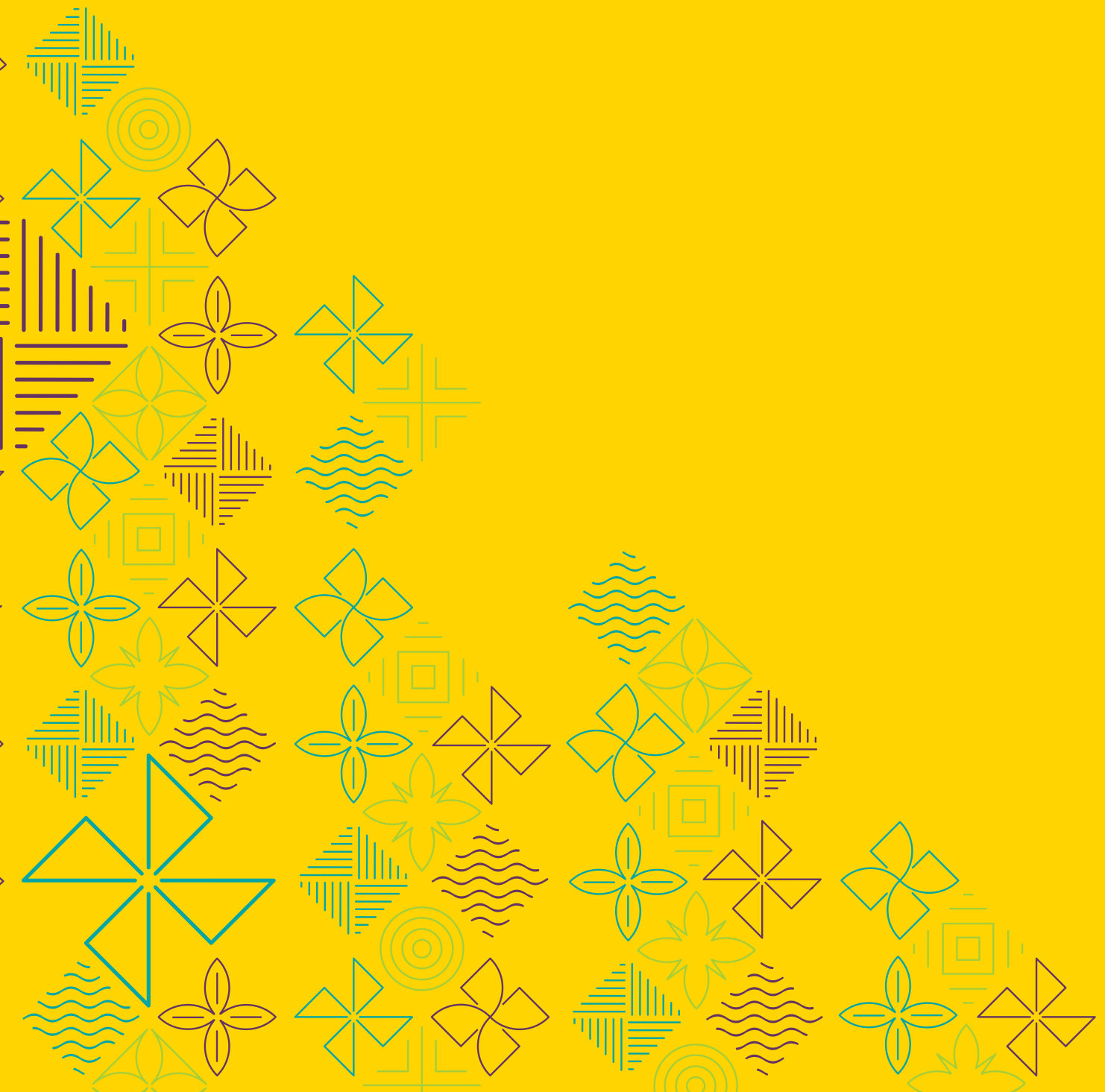






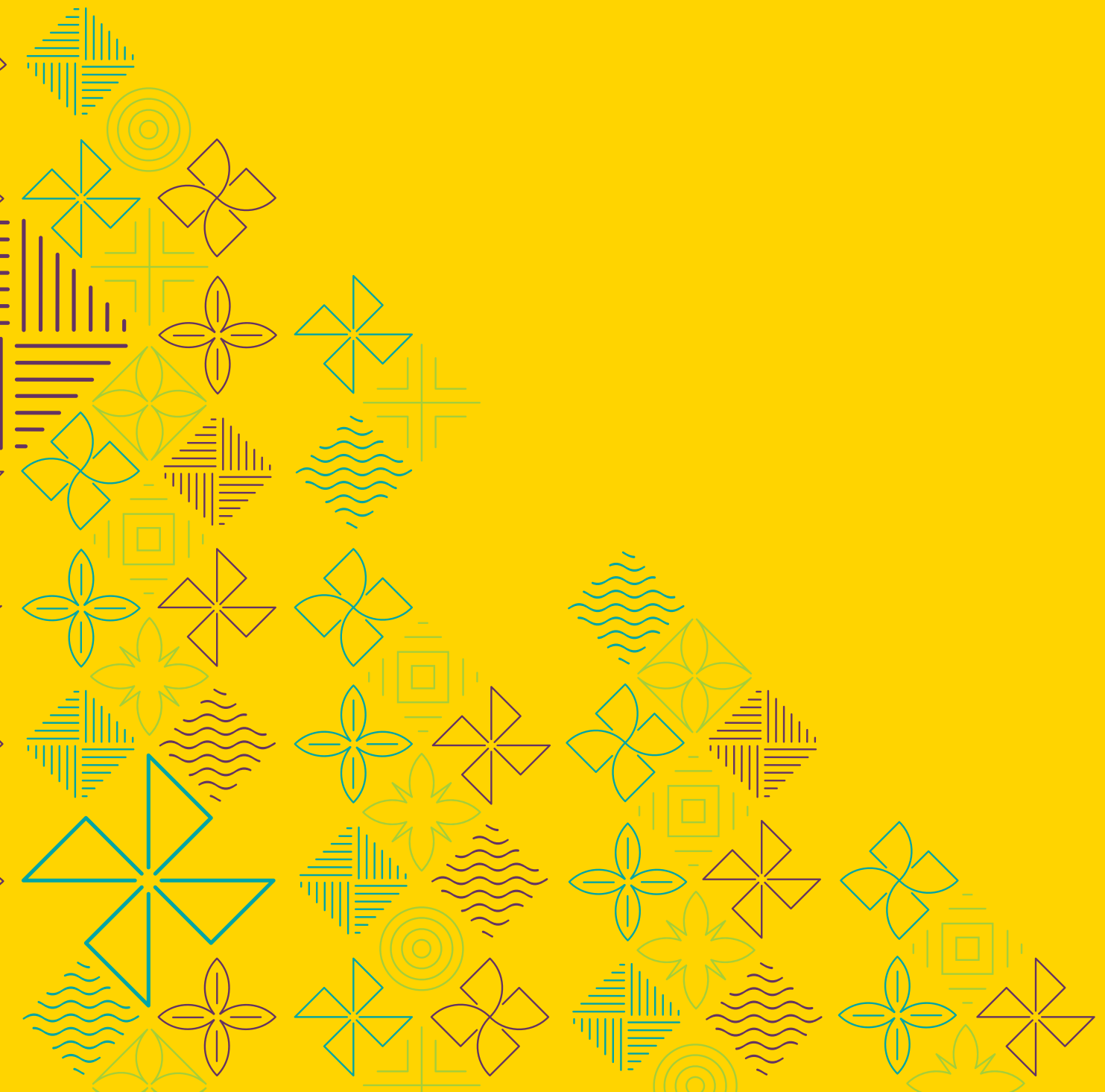
# Chapter 6

## Concluding Comments



# Chapter 6

## Concluding Comments



The PowerUP community-led programme is a major contribution to the theorising and practice of culturally safe learning spaces for Pacific parents, families, and communities. Pacific identity, culture, and language (funds of knowledge) were embedded in the PowerUP ways of working and combined with academic (school and other funds of knowledge) to create new knowledge, some of which has been highlighted in this synthesis.

The valuing and validity of the themes of culturally safe spaces for Pacific learners, which are a major programme finding, lie in the fact that these were co-constructed in a process of listening and responding to the voices of Pacific parents, learners, coordinators, and teachers as shared in talanoa. These voices informed PowerUP ways of working and adaptations made in the four-year period covered in this synthesis (2016–19).

The major and powerful synthesis finding is that PowerUP parents affirmed they had a role and responsibility in supporting their children's education journeys, and they learnt ways to explore and master the knowledge and skills they needed to do so. Parents' and learners' increased agency in education was powerfully reinforced by the fact that Pacific identities, language, and culture (funds of knowledge) were valued and present in PowerUP pedagogy and curriculum. When combined with academic (other funds of knowledge and world views), these created the potential for further developing existing understanding as well as new understandings.

Of equal importance, PowerUP parents and learners played an integral role in the co-construction and practice of the concept of culturally safe learning spaces for Pacific learners together with the

PowerUP coordinators, teachers and staff, other PowerUP families, and the Ministry of Education. Each of these groups had a collective and an individual stake in ensuring a quality and robust programme. Parents' and learners' voices (the users of the programme) were gathered in talanoa over the four years covered in this synthesis and used to inform programme planning and organisation and processes.

- » KEQ2: Providing access to quality registered teachers at every level to ensure the right information is available at the right time
- » KEQ3: Ensuring fit-for-purpose, culturally appropriate, inclusive, and effective approaches to best meet the local needs of Pacific parents, children, and families
- » KEQ4: Achieving real results in real time.

The PowerUP *as and by Pacific* model of culturally safe learning spaces signals a significant paradigm shift in Pacific education, from a centralised and generic Ministry-delivered and regulated model to a community-driven and transformative model that, it was proposed, would afford equitable learning opportunities for Pacific peoples, in their own way.

This synthesis has demonstrated how the PowerUP programme addressed these parent-focused goals but became so much more because it gave voice (educational voice) to Pacific parents and children about what education for Pacific people could and should be. The model of Pacific culturally safe learning places that emerged from the over 1,500 talanoa voices (2016–18) and was then tested in the dual provision model (2019) is a foundational and evidence-based marker for further discussion by Pacific peoples and educators, researchers, and decision-makers.

The model highlights Pacific aspirations and expectations of what education for Pacific people could and should be, together with the knowledge and knowledge-building strengths Pacific people bring to learning processes. At the same time, the synthesis has highlighted, quite glaringly, the fragility in Pacific peoples' 'auala into education: that parents and students had a hazy knowledge of the school systems, some of the terms and language used, and the skills needed to engage in education respectfully, strategically, and in an informed way. Much, but not all, of this related to the fact that English was not their first language. The PowerUP programme addressed this need; parents and children identified for themselves and learnt the knowledge, information, and understandings they needed to improve the schooling and education journeys.

The many talanoa stories shared in this report indicate compellingly that PowerUP parents and children learnt that they did not need to be alone in their educational journey. They learnt to "talk education" with others (which had not been a norm), to understand that learning takes place in many places (not only in the classroom), and to draw on the ideas and knowledge that was all around them (as in, "it takes a village"). Equally importantly, as their knowledge about educational processes increased, through PowerUP, so did parents' claiming of their roles, responsibilities, and rights to support their children to reach their fullest educational potential. For many, there was also a transfer of the knowledge and skills they learnt at PowerUP into their relationships with teachers and schools, their other family members, and their connection to their wider communities.

Relationships and role modelling were the glue in the PowerUP programme and the Pacific pathway to learning. Relationships opened up receptiveness to learning for many parents and their children, especially for those who had not experienced success in school. Many relationships in learning and learning as a community were formed at PowerUP, for example, parents' relationships with other parents, with teachers and mentors and invited speakers, and with their own children.

This synthesis has highlighted challenges Pacific parents and children often face in coming to terms with the important role of questioning and communication in learning, and of children's voices. There is evidence that the messages gained by watching teachers and mentors and other adults interacting at PowerUP made parents think about their own relationships with their children and helped them understand the importance of giving priority and more attention to spending family time together and to listening to their children.

Another major point raised was whether you had to be Pacific to be a good teacher for Pacific students. In response? It was the quality of the relationships that counts.

In the *as and by Pacific* programme, where they could see themselves and the values they hold dear, parents and children experienced success and gained resilience in learning as Pacific students. This confidence and self-belief as learners became protective factors against cultural bias and racism. As beautifully coined by one student:

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*We have faith in ourselves that we can achieve our academic goals and future studies to get our future careers or jobs. We believe we can be as high achievers as other ethnicities if we commit to our educational purposes.*

*Student, talanoa*

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The talanoa shared over the four years emphatically reinforced the fact that the programme was a transformative experience for Pacific peoples in showing what learning and schooling can be. It also highlighted the centrality of identity security and self-esteem in learning and as a protective factor against cultural bias and racism. The voices shared in talanoa validate these culturally secure learning spaces as ensuring equitable pathways for Pacific learners.

## GOING FORWARD

The PowerUP data, evaluation reports, and case study materials are the most important evidence-based and longitudinal portfolio of Pacific parents' experiences of education in New Zealand. It shows how, in this culturally safe programme, the parents learnt the value of and strengths of their fa'a-Pacific cultural values and behaviours as the bridge to becoming resilient, informed, and confident learners in school systems. These materials are a story of growing self-belief in learning achieved within the *as and by Pacific* learning programme, where "I can see me" and "I can be me" stand at the forefront of learning.

The model of culturally safe places that emerged and was piloted over this period has set an evidenced-based platform for further review and exploration of teacher education, programme and policy making, and school organisation. This model of culturally safe learning spaces contributes to the Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) (Alton Lee, 2003) and sits alongside tikanga Māori education models (see Smith, 2012; Bishop and Glynn, 1999; and Macfarlane et al., 2007).

The PowerUP model of culturally safe learning spaces signals a paradigm shift in Pacific education, from a centralised and generic Ministry-delivered and regulated model to a community-driven and transformative model that offers equitable learning opportunities for Pacific peoples. The data raises the need to interrogate the assumptions and meanings underpinning terms and language used in educational discussion if we are to stop "talking past each other in education" (Metge and Kinlock, 1978). In listening and hearing Pacific parents' and children's culturally inflected voices in this way, the PowerUP programme has also opened up wider learning and leadership horizons for Pacific parents and learners, as was visioned in the PowerUP model of engagement. In the 2019 literature review for the PowerUP programme, Chu et al. answers the question "What does partnerships in learning mean, and how is this experienced by Pacific peoples?"

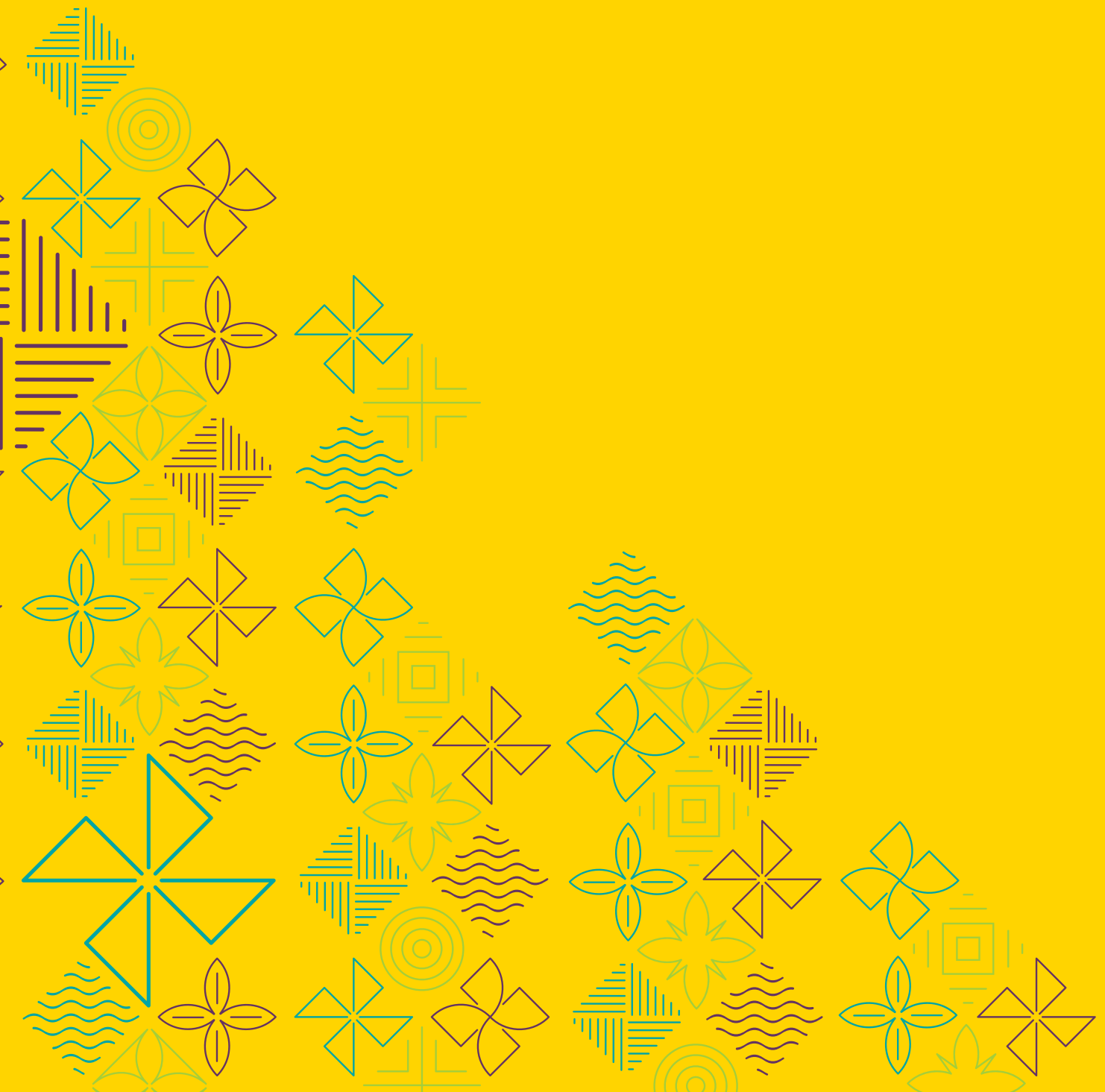
*Pacific education is framed as a partnership. Yet Pacific ideas, beliefs, values, and practices, including language and concepts, are at times recognised, valued, and supported by progressions but at other times are ignored. ... Optimal environments and practices likely to benefit Pacific parents and their children are not in place at all schools. These factors include the exclusion of parents and families and communities from various aspects of Pacific children's education, the devaluation of Pacific aspects of Pacific culture and practises, such as language, beliefs, and experiences and a lack of understanding and support for the negotiations Pacific students perform in order to be successful in all the cultural spaces they inhabited.*

Chu et al., 2019

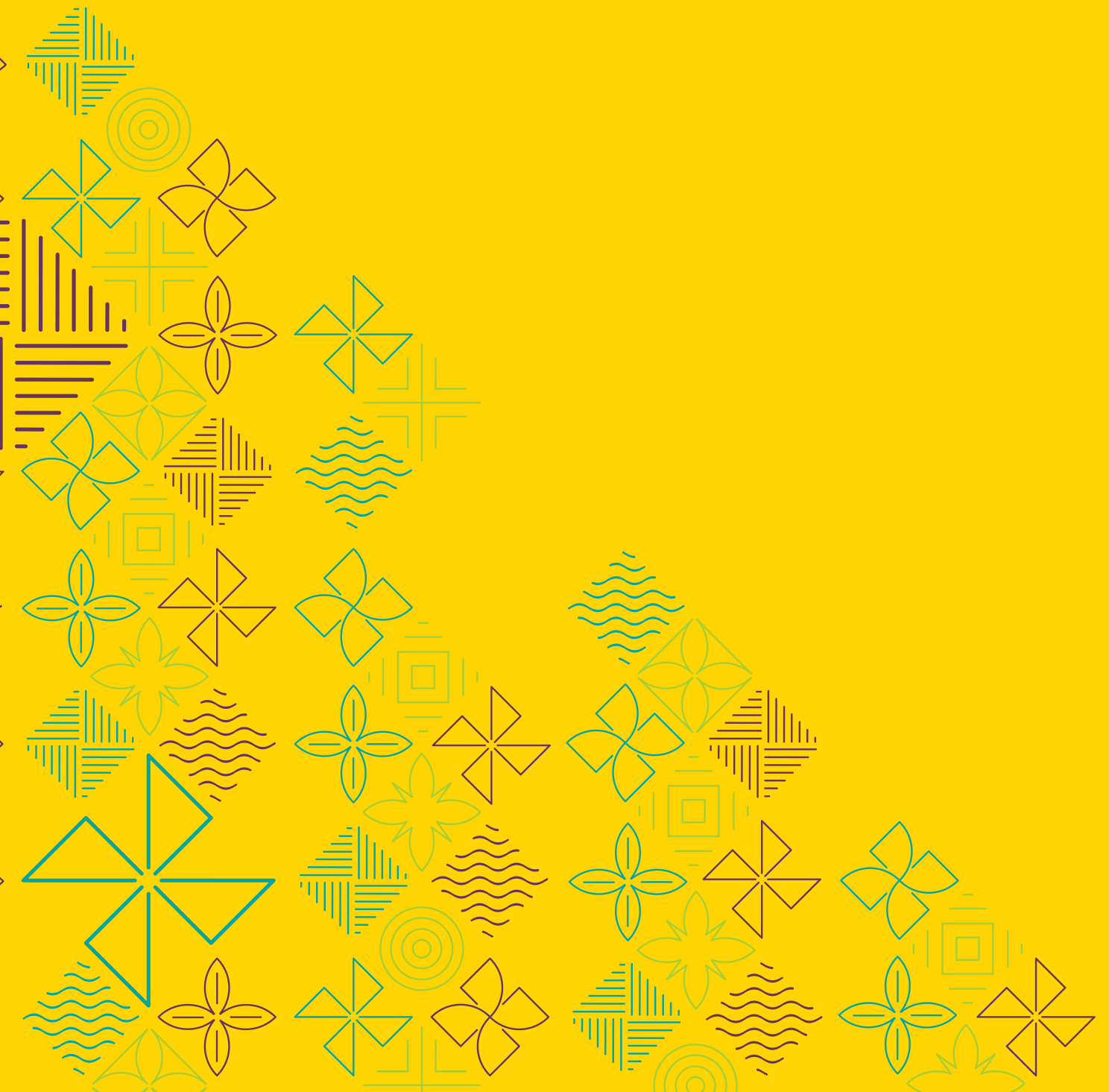




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# Talanoa Ako

From Pacific PowerUP to  
Talanoa Ako Case Studies

POWERUP EVALUATIONS 2016-2019  
KEY LEARNINGS

*Case Studies As and By Pacific*

# Report Information

Prepared for: Rose Jamieson

Deputy Secretary: Parent Information and Community Intelligence (PICl) Ministry of Education

Author: Tagaloatele Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop

Published 2021 by the Ministry of Education  
PO Box 1666, Wellington 6140, New Zealand.  
[www.education.govt.nz](http://www.education.govt.nz)


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Publishing services: Lift Education E Tū

Designers: Liz Tui Morris and Jodi Wicksteed

ISBN 978 1 77690 199 9 (Online)

The background of the page is a vibrant green, overlaid with a complex pattern of geometric shapes. These shapes include four-pointed stars, circles with concentric lines, squares with internal patterns, and various floral or leaf-like motifs. The colors used for these patterns are teal, yellow, and purple, creating a rich, textured effect.

# Case Studies



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# Case Studies:

## Introduction

## TALANOA AKO – TALKING ABOUT LEARNING AND EDUCATION CASE STUDIES

These case studies give voice to Pacific parents’ and families’ PowerUP experiences, as shared in talanoa held at Power Stations located throughout New Zealand during the years 2016 to 2019. The case studies draw on over 1,500 talanoa carried out by providers with families during the 2016–18 cycle, and the 2019 dual model programme of ‘Au Lotu and FlexiPlus and case study reports prepared by Oakden (2017); Oakden and Kennedy, (2018, 2019); and Oakden (2020). Pseudonyms are used in cases 1–4.

These talanoa materials capture an invaluable longitudinal database of Pacific parents’, families’, and communities’ experiences in the PowerUP *as and by Pacific* programme and how this impacted their lives, aspirations, and wellbeing. In line with the Samoan practice of fa’afaletui, the multilevel voices shared in these talanoa reinforce the truth that, to ensure a robust understanding of the quality, relevance, and appropriateness of a programme, it is imperative to listen to the voices of those at the policy level, those implementing the programme, and those on the ground who are most affected by the programme.

### Purpose

The purpose of these case studies is to contribute to the evidence-based discussion of Pacific education by the Pacific community and education researchers, policy makers and programmers, teachers, and schools. These case studies also provide substance and direction to the calls made by the Pacific community to the (then) Associate Minister of Education Hon. Jenny Salesa for the stronger inclusion of Pacific ways of being and knowing in programme planning and policy making (Fono 2018).

The challenge is how to action the views shared in these case studies in schools, classrooms, and homes, as well as in general educational decision-making for Pacific peoples. More particularly, we need to acknowledge the concept of “culturally safe spaces” and the five themes of culturally safe spaces in Pacific lives and learning journeys:



***Pacific visible***



***Identity, language, and culture***



***‘Auala in (access)***



***Pacific wellbeing***



***Cultural bias and racism.***

## POWERUP AS AND BY PACIFIC PROGRAMME

The PowerUP *as and by Pacific* programme recognised the centrality of Pacific values, knowledge, and behaviours in the lives of Pacific peoples and as the foundation for success in school learning. PowerUP's *as and by Pacific* approach presents a significant paradigm shift from a centralised, generic, and largely Ministry of Education-delivered parenting programme to a community-driven, tailored, and transformative one that is focused directly on ensuring culturally secure learning spaces for Pacific peoples – as defined by participating families as “... where I can be me”.

The PowerUP community-driven programme placed parents at the centre, alongside their children, in learning, as in the Pasifika Success Compass (see Ministry of Education, 2013). The programme's philosophical base is that parents' participation is the most powerful way to raise Pacific educational achievement. This approach fits fa'a-Pacific ideals that families and communities are the major educating and socialising agencies for children and the heart of identity security and also, the findings from New Zealand's Best Evidence Synthesis (Alton-Lee, 2003) that “quality teaching involves creating effective links between school and other cultural contexts in which students are socialised”. In short, the PowerUP programme was a step towards “teu le vā” in education – to acknowledge, honour, protect, and maintain the relationship – between Pacific families and school.

## CASE STUDY APPROACH – RELATIONSHIPS IN LEARNING

These case studies provide a strength-based picture of Pacific parents and family learnings in the PowerUP programme. They are a longitudinal rather than a “single instance” picture of views shared across the 20 PowerUP stations during this period, as is the Pacific way of storytelling. Each case study emphasises Pacific peoples' strong intentions to succeed in education as Pacific peoples – secure in their identity, language, and culture.

The five studies presented here feature families from most Pacific Islands; those living in large, urban cities, such as Wellington and Auckland, as well as smaller rural areas, such as the town of Ōamaru (case study 5). A significant number of parents and older family members sharing their stories are Pacific born; most of the children are New Zealand born. With the exception of case study 2 (Pele's family), the case studies are a compositive picture.

The case studies focus on what worked well for PowerUP learners and families and, largely as a result of their PowerUP experience, what is missing for Pacific students in mainstream schooling, including incidents of bias and racism.

Parents' priority for joining PowerUP was to know and understand school systems, processes, and the terms used. Once parents gained access to this knowledge and information, their capacity and confidence to engage in educational discussions with their children, schools and teachers, and the wider community increased exponentially. In PowerUP's culturally secure and non-judgmental spaces, Pacific parents and children learnt to “talk education” in their own way, language, and time. Relationships were the undoubted

glue in the PowerUP programme; for example, parents formed new learning communities with each other, with teachers, other adults, inspirational speakers and agencies, and with their children. As parents and children realised more fully the knowledge that was all around them (that is, not only with teachers and schools) and that they were not alone in their learning journeys, the many learning conversations that took place generated and supported other 'auala (pathways) into further learning.

Many light-bulb learning moments for parents and children are encapsulated in these case studies. These include Pacific parents' growing understanding and reaffirmation of their role in supporting their children's schooling, in partnership with schools, and the place of Pacific knowledge in school learning. As they "talked education" with others at PowerUP, parents and children were also bringing their own baskets of knowledge, experiences, skills, and hopes into these conversations. As they negotiated the intersects of their home and Pālagi knowledge, expectations, and aspirations, Pacific parents and children were also setting new visions and pathways – not only for their own families but for the betterment of *all* Pacific communities and peoples. Providers were amazed at the speed of shifts in parents' and children's attitudes and approaches to learning once they had a better understanding of school processes and the rules of (respectful) engagement. On this point, the case studies demonstrate quite compellingly parents' and children's increased understanding of the power of questioning at the heart of knowledge building (asking questions was not being rude or thinking above one's station) and also of children's voice.



## THE CASE STUDIES

The first three case studies focus directly on parents' and families' learning journeys in the PowerUP programme. Parents said PowerUP was totally different to other groups they belonged to because the focus was on education. Furthermore, the open sharing of educational concerns and potential solutions at PowerUP was a major revelation to these parents. Case studies 4 and 5 are written more with a view to highlighting some of the challenges PowerUP parents and children faced in their learning journeys and the actions they took to address these. Each of the five case studies reinforce and serve as critical reminders of the value and valuing of culturally safe learning spaces for Pacific learners.

### CASE STUDY 1:

#### Parents and children learning together makes a difference

This case study highlights the shared learnings and deepening family relationships that occurred as parents and children participated together at PowerUP. These included the benefits of “being on the same page” and the alignment of theory and practices as parents observed their children learning in “real time and place” and vice versa. The ways these shared learnings impacted on family relationships and organisation is noted also in case study 3, with parents being “profoundly moved by the ways PowerUP teachers and other adults interacted with students”.

### CASE STUDY 2:

#### A family story: Pele and her children Viva and Simi

This case study shows how Pele encouraged her daughter to “hang in” when her interest in school was fluctuating. By attending PowerUP, Pele knew the importance of her responding positively in her daughter’s down times. Also, it gave her ideas of where to go to access support (including online learning resources) to keep her daughter engaged through her years 12 and 13 schooling. Attending PowerUP also spurred Pele’s interest and skills in furthering her own education. Pele became an administrator at her PowerUP station and has since taken up lead roles in other education agencies.



**CASE STUDY 3:****Pacific parents talking education – from PowerUP to homes, schools, and wider communities**

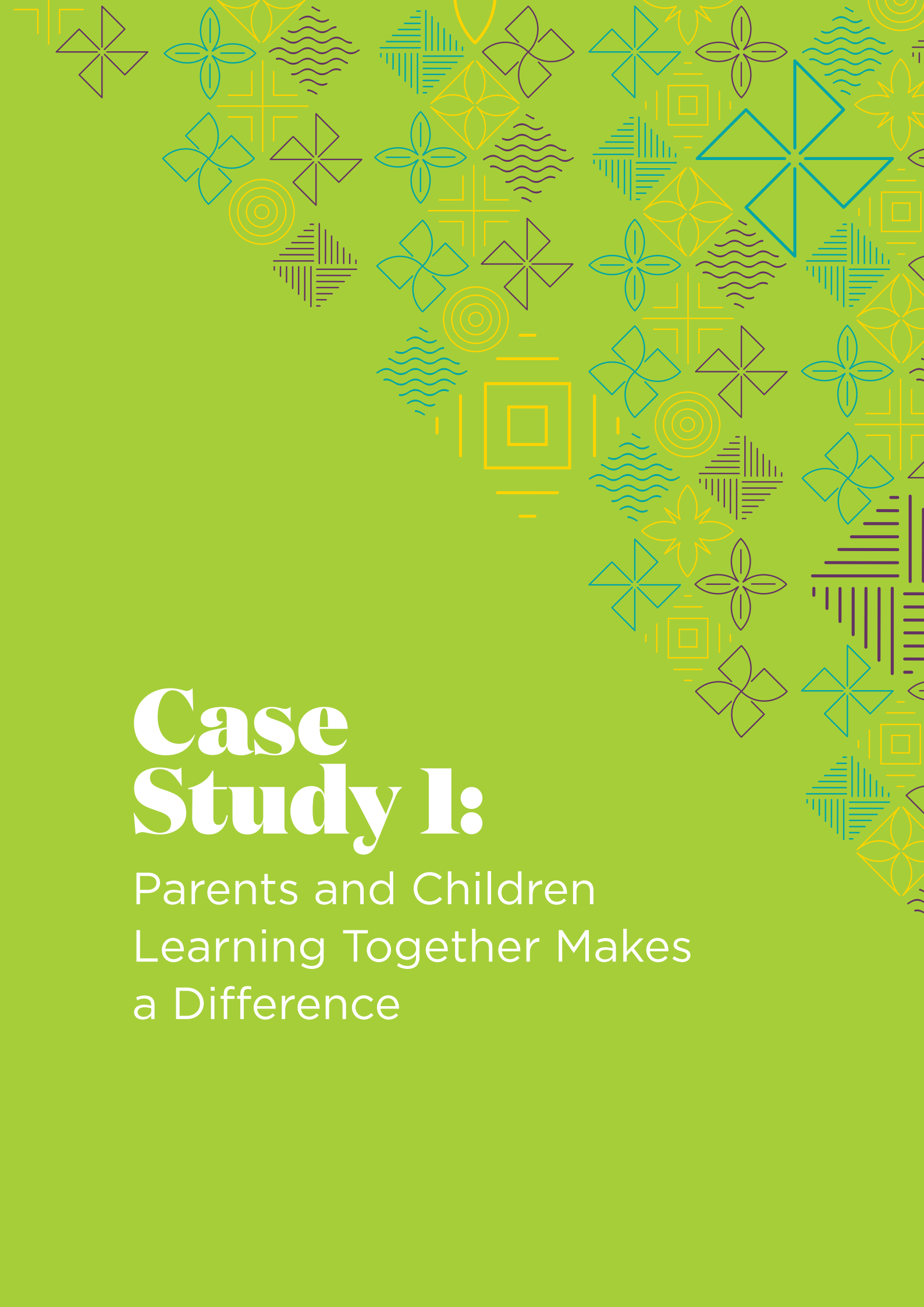
The focus of this case study is on how PowerUP parents developed the habit and practices of “talking education”. A pattern of three steps emerged in this process. First, to know and understand school systems, processes, and the terms used. Second, to master the skills of articulating a good question and gain confidence in engaging in educational discussions. Third, to fine-tune these skills in other spaces, for example, their homes and in their engagement with teachers and schools and the wider community. As confirmed in the talanoa, in this process, parents reaffirmed and claimed their role in supporting their children to reach their fullest educational potential and in partnership with schools (as in the PowerUP model of engagement).

**CASE STUDY 4:****Learning to see, name, and address cultural bias and racism**

This case study has been written with a view to opening discussions about cultural bias and racism in education settings. The aim is to encourage those engaged in education to examine their assumptions, attitudes, and approaches to teaching Pacific and other non-Pālagi students. In the early PowerUP sessions, children didn’t really talk about bias or racism, although they did talk about “being treated differently”. As parents and children experienced what education could be, in the safety of the PowerUP programme, they came to see, understand, and name the differences between their PowerUP and their school experiences.

**CASE STUDY 5:****Community empowerment *as and by Pacific*: The Tālanga ‘a Waitaki PowerUP, Ōamaru.**

Case study 5 is the story of a Pacific community rallying together to establish the organisational structures that would enable them to establish a PowerUP centre and support their children’s educational success. It also highlights the good will and connections generated as they tirelessly worked to gain the support of the Ōamaru community to achieve their goal. This case study presents a model of the organisational, operational, and compliance requirements necessary in establishing PowerUP (or other similar community institutions) – the networks and leadership skills Pacific families learnt as the Ōamaru community backed them in this venture together with the cultural enrichment that was spurred in the Ōamaru community through these mutual engagements.



# Case Study I:

Parents and Children  
Learning Together Makes  
a Difference

## INTRODUCTION

PowerUP's community-driven and family-based programme – running from early childhood education (ECE) through to secondary schooling – was believed to be the most powerful way to improve Pacific children's educational achievement. This case study highlights the mutually reinforcing relationships and learnings fostered when parents and children attend PowerUP together, for example, relationships between parents and children, teachers and schools, and with other families and learning communities. In doing so, the PowerUP *as and by Pacific* programme reinforced the vā (relationship) between Pacific home and school knowledge and practices and in doing so supported new 'auala (paths) into learning successes for Pacific parents and learners.

The significant body of evidence shared in talanoa indicate: a positive relationship between parents attending PowerUP and children's motivation to learn; the transfer of PowerUP learnings into homes and communities, and parents' increased confidence around engaging with teachers and schools on educational matters.

Parents' voices are presented first in this case, followed by children's. The case study concludes with a summary of how changes to programme delivery in 2019 (as in the FlexiPlus and 'Au Lotu models) increased the number of parents attending PowerUP and reduced the parent to child ratios.



## PARENTS

Parents described attending PowerUP with their children as an empowering, inspirational, and aspirational learning time and said that the *as and by Pacific* programme was vastly different from any other schooling environment they had experienced. They immediately felt a sense of belonging at PowerUP because they were learning as a family, and Pacific beliefs, values, and behaviours were embedded in everything that was said and done – from the opening prayers to the workshops and sessions through to the shared dinners. Parents (and children) believed they were seen, listened to, and had a voice at PowerUP.

Parents described the PowerUP teachers as role models of Pacific educational success who also exemplified Pacific values such as *tautua* (service) and *alofa* (care).



*When I come to PowerUP, it's like going to my family. We pray together, talk in our language, and we know each other from here and there and the church.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*(PowerUP) gives my children confidence in identifying themselves correctly in their schools, allowing them to appreciate and take pride in who they really are.*

*Parent, talanoa*

Most parents enjoyed sharing in their children's learning journeys at Power Take care and believed their children liked having them there.



*[They] definitely enjoy me coming with them to PowerUP. They show me their books with their work they did at PowerUP. I often go and sit in the classes just to listen to their mentors help them. It allows me to participate in their studies and know how to help them at home ... My children love going to PowerUP ... Their learning and outlook on learning has changed.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*My kids enjoy that I play a huge part in their learning. It also helps me understand where they are at in their education. The best thing about doing things together is showing ... that their learning is important to me; they know that I care about how well they do or not. And they see me being active in their education.*

*Parent, talanoa*

*It allows me to participate in their studies and know how to help them at home ...*



One parent was unsure whether his son appreciated him being at PowerUP and so was careful to give his son “room to move”.



*He is more focused in [his] schoolwork and is going back during study break to catch up. This has been a major shift in his attitude towards education ... He gets great support from the PowerUP team and teachers, which helps him in his academic work. I think, for my son, he would prefer not to have me around all the time – which I understand. But for programmes such as PowerUP, I know he doesn't mind me being here. I just have to give him his space to learn freely. I just make sure that, after the session, we make time to debrief in the car.*

*Parent, talanoa*

### Learning about Learning Together

Parents described PowerUP as the complete family package and one that had made a great difference in their understanding of school processes and education.



*The environment is an excellent place for my kids to enjoy and be part of this community push for the Pasifika people. We are constantly encouraging one another and not putting each other down, because it will not solve anything. We encourage each other to be confident and not afraid to ask for anything if [the kids] need help, especially in a classroom.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*I see education [as being] different after attending PowerUP Plus. It's not just pen to paper. With PowerUP, it helps students feel more relaxed about school, especially P.I. students. The programme helps the whole family.*

*Parent, talanoa*

Importantly also, the reinforcing of theory and practice at PowerUP differed significantly from the school-based courses many parents had attended. Parents were able to observe teachers and other adults interacting with their children “in real time and place”. They also saw how their children’s interest, confidence, and resilience in learning were spurred in these conversations.

Parents were profoundly moved by the ways PowerUP teachers and other adults talked to children. The PowerUP teachers were positive and non-judgemental, and they encouraged students to question, question, question, and seek answers when they didn’t understand something or when they had information to add. Parents also witnessed children gaining empathy and resilience as their ideas were debated and critiqued in these conversations, and they saw the abundance of “outside the box” ideas that their children generated.



As they watched teachers and other adults interacting with children at PowerUP, parents started thinking more deeply about their own relationships with their children and the value and validity of their children's voices.



*I believe [that], before PowerUP, I was, like, narrow-minded – closed to [the idea of] my way of thinking being the only way. It has really opened my eyes: my kids can do it; they are allowed to make mistakes, and they learn from it. It's their learning journey. I need to stop comparing it with my time at school. It was more about me being scared and trying to protect them more. It wasn't easy, but I have really tried my best. And I'm glad I did, otherwise they might not be here at PowerUP.*

*Parent, talanoa*

Mingling together at PowerUP, parents were able to see for themselves the pride and self-esteem their children gained in succeeding and how this spurred their children's determination for further educational successes.



*[PowerUP] has helped my children have higher expectations of themselves, knowing that they are not in it alone. As a family, we now have conversations about education, and I'm hearing from my kids how they want to keep trying to do their best with their education, in learning and gaining more.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*My daughter who is doing NCEA Level 1 this year is feeling more confident and is working harder at gaining her credits to not just pass but aim to get higher than what she set out to get.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*My child did well in 2017. She enjoys writing especially, but I know she can always do better. I encourage her to study and focus this year as she is now in year 8. I know the extra work she puts in all helps towards her academic results. This [PowerUP] space allows her to ask questions and get more help outside school. She has gained more confidence and feels empowered to always aim high.*

*Parent, talanoa*

In sum, parents attributed the marked changes in children's study habits, discipline to task, and confidence as learners to the influence of PowerUP.



*(My kids) Their confidence to interact with other kids of all ages ... the genuine interest by other educators ... and just being in such a positive space with passionate people who are Pacific and mostly Cook Islands is an amazing place.*

*Parent, talanoa*

Before joining PowerUP many parents held the expectation that schooling was the responsibility of teachers and schools. The PowerUP programme was a compelling reminder that 1) parents played a major role in their children's learning journeys and 2) parents could master the knowledge and skills to fulfil this responsibility.



*Understanding NCEA was very instrumental to me. One of my children is doing Level 2 NCEA [and] had only 75 entries [credits] for all subjects chosen, but with the assistance of the PowerUP programme, we were able to understand and therefore went to school and asked her teachers if they could allow her to do more courses in order to have more entries. And now she could pass well if she passes them all.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*It's not about getting credits but getting ready and being prepared. We all have dinner, we sit down together, and my kids are telling what they want, they share, they have better understanding now.*

*Parent, talanoa*

Over time, PowerUP parents came to affirm their role in supporting their children to achieve their fullest education potential, in partnership with schools.



*PowerUP has empowered me to take a lead in my children's education. With the information [from PowerUP], I am more prepared to guide and help my children through their educational journeys.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*Schoolwork has become very important to my children now. There is a sense of competitiveness amongst them, which I see is crucial to their learning. We talanoa more at home, and I don't have to give instructions and remind [them] of their priorities.*

*Parent, talanoa*

*During parent interviews, I discussed with the whānau teachers: What subjects [are suitable] for my child to take in order to reach their goals? What level are they at at the moment? Have they progressed more than before? What other help can the school offer?*





## CHILDREN

Children liked having their parents at PowerUP, and some saw this as a sign that their parents cared for them and their educational progress. The children said PowerUP was like “learning as a family”.



*Having our parents help us with our schoolwork and also having them in PowerUP is really good because we see their love and support for us to do better and the importance of our learning.*

*Student, talanoa*

Some just really enjoyed seeing their parents there – one said he loved taking his work over to show his parents when he completed it – and this spurred him to work harder.

They believed that, when parents attended, they gained a deeper understanding of children’s educational journeys today, which were so different from their own journeys.



*They understand my learning journey ... what school is like compared with when they went to school.*

*Student, survey*



*It’s given them more understanding of what I’ll be going through, and they’ll be able to help me.*

*Student, survey*

Conversely, children said their understanding of their parents' lives and expectations had also increased as a result of their parents becoming more involved. They said that, as their parents learnt more about school processes at PowerUP, their family discussions became much more than “go and do your homework” or “good boy” conversations.



*At home, we talk about what new knowledges Mum and Dad have learnt at PowerUP and what happened at PowerUP on the night. My parents [now] respond a lot if we talk about something that has happened at school. This is because they have learnt a lot from PowerUP, and when we talk, they understand what we are trying to explain. Dad questions a lot about our school results, both academic and extracurricular activities, and our future careers.*

*Student, talanoa*



*Their understanding of NCEA makes it much easier to explain what standards I've done. I have much more support now.*

*Student, survey*



*My mum started telling me the importance of the right NCEA subject choices.*

*Student, survey*

One child described the mutual gains for parents and children and had these encouraging words for his mum.



*Mum – keep coming. You are learning heaps from PowerUP, and you have really tried your best to help us with homework even though you didn't study here in New Zealand. We love that you are learning with us, and we thank you for caring about our future.*

*Student, talanoa*

### When Parents Can't Attend

Some parents couldn't attend PowerUP due to work and other commitments. Even so, it was evident that learning transfer into homes and families still occurred. For example, 57 percent of students said they had started talking to their family about their studies. However, there were only slight differences between students whose parents had attended with them in the last nine weeks compared with those whose parents had not attended. A young mother said her husband's first question when he arrived home from his shift work on PowerUP evenings was always “What happened at PowerUP today?”, and she and the children would tell him. In another example, a working mother – who relied on her mother to mind her children after school – said that, in order to make sure this time was used wisely, she told her children the homework they must do after school, placed the materials they would need in their school bags, and then outlined the homework tasks to her mother.

## GOING FORWARD (2019) TALANOA AKO

### Changes to the Programme

In response to the parent and community views shared in talanoa from 2016 to 2018, and with the aim of increasing parent attendance, a number of changes were introduced in the 2019 PowerUP programme. First, two new delivery models were introduced, and the number of sessions was reduced from 25 weeks to between 8 and 15 weeks.

The two delivery models available in the Talanoa Ako model (2019) were:

- » the PowerUP FlexiPlus pan-Pacific model, in which parents and children both attend sessions for between 8 and 15 weeks over the year
- » the PowerUP 'Au Lotu ethnic-specific model, which is for parents and adult members of the extended family only. This runs for 10 weeks.

Further programme adaptations included: a reduction in the target number of families at each PowerUP station (from 75 to 30 families) and more flexibility for providers to schedule sessions in blocks – thereby accommodating other family and community activities/commitments that might arise (such as seasonal work).

The value of these changes is highlighted in the 2019 attendance data (Table 1), which shows 1) significant increases in parents' and adults' attendance on the previous year (2018) and 2) a drop in the adult to child attendance ratio from 1:3 (in 2018) to 1:2 (in 2019). In sum, in 2019, fewer children attended PowerUP without a parent or family adult.

**Table 1: Total Attendance by Pacific Parents, Adult Family Members and Children at PowerUP, 2018 and 2019**

| Parent/Adults                               | Total visits to PowerUP stations | Reached overall | Average per week | Average per session |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------------|
| FlexiPlus adults 2018                       | 8,542                            | 945             | 301              | 19                  |
| 'Au Lotu adults 2019                        | 4,625                            | 569             | 463              | 29                  |
| FlexiPlus adults 2019                       | 6,192                            | 878             | 431              | 21                  |
| Total adults 2019                           | 10,817                           | 1,447           | 894              | 25                  |
| Percent increase in adult attendance (2019) | 27%                              | 53%             | 197%             | 32%                 |
| <b>ADULT:CHILD RATIO</b>                    |                                  |                 |                  |                     |
| 2018                                        | 1 adult for every 3 children     |                 |                  |                     |
| 2019                                        | 1 adult for every 2 children     |                 |                  |                     |

Note: 2018 data features 20 PowerUP stations. The 2019 data features 39 PowerUP stations (21 FlexiPlus and 18 'Au Lotu stations).

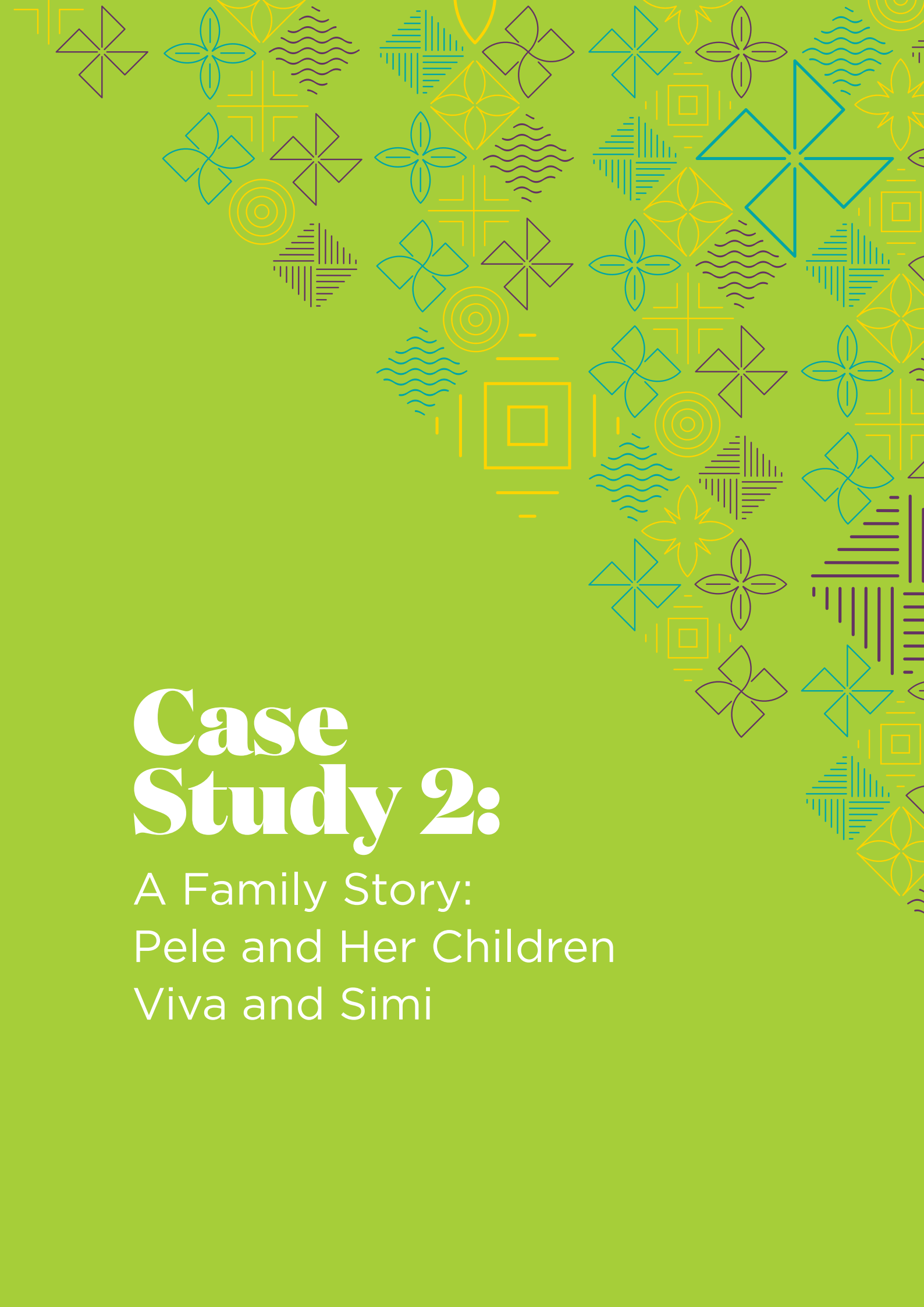




AAA  
BUSINESS OF ASSOCIATION  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
SOLUTIONS

# ʻO le Tūʻuga





# Case Study 2:

A Family Story:  
Pele and Her Children  
Viva and Simi

This case study captures the learning journeys of Pele's family, from when they joined PowerUP in 2016 through to 2018 when Pele began providing administrative support at the family's local PowerUP station. It is the story of a New Zealand-born Samoan family – Pele, a solo parent; Viva, Pele's 18-year-old daughter; and Simi, her 9-year-old son – and how, as a result of attending PowerUP, they became more resilient, questioning, and goal-directed learners and who began talking through their concerns with each other. Pele's story is presented first followed by excerpts from Viva's and then Simi's talanoa. Together, these present a whole-of-family perspective of educational ups and downs experienced over a three-year period.

## PELE'S STORY

Pele enrolled her family in PowerUP in 2016 because Viva often didn't want to go to school and didn't seem to have any idea of what she wanted to do when she left school. Pele was scared Viva would drop out of school without a qualification. When Pele's uncle told her about PowerUP, Pele decided to see if it could make a difference. Pele's first impressions of PowerUP and the PowerUP station were that it was a buzzing place, with everyone talking about education, and a lot of laughter. Most of the teachers, other adults, and children were Pacific and made them feel welcome, warm, and "at home". Pele didn't know many people there, but Viva and Simi seemed to fit in straight away and made new friends quickly. Pele said that, after attending PowerUP for several weeks, Viva had begun to go to school every day because she "now understood [the work] and knew where she could get help from".



*PowerUP plus is very empowering and embracing. [It's] definitely a place [where] kids feel a sense of belonging. I think the friendliness of the staff; staff going the extra mile for our kids, speaks volumes.*

(2017)

Pele had always believed she was doing a "pretty good" job of supporting her children's schooling. She attended parents' meetings and report nights, was a regular at fund-raising activities, and made sure her children had time to do their homework. However, watching PowerUP teachers working with students, listening to presentations, and participating in the parents' workshops helped Pele realise that she had a lot to learn. Many discussions had been in English, Samoan, or other Pacific languages, and Pacific examples that parents were familiar with were used to clarify concepts and terms. Pele had always been a little whakamā (embarrassed) to share her worries and concerns with others. However, she became bolder when she realised that the other PowerUP parents were in the same boat as her – just wanting their children to reach their fullest educational potential.

Furthermore, many of the questions the other parents raised were the ones she would have asked herself, and she could relate to the practical solutions offered. In the PowerUP discussions, Pele came to understand her role and her responsibility to approach teachers if she had concerns about her children's education. And in the parents' group Pele had learnt to frame the hard questions she needed to ask teachers, such as "What are their learning strengths, needs, and progress, and what can I do to support their learning?"



*PowerUP has given me confidence as a parent to take responsibility for my children's education and not to leave it to my children and the school. It's a partnership ... Well, it should be a partnership.*

(2017)



*[I've now had] conversations [with my daughter's teachers] around preparing for exams this year and about what my daughter needs to do to achieve her goals for this year. ... Being able to ask the hard questions, no matter how hard they are or just asking questions full stop, no matter how stupid they sound, [enables me to play] an active part in my kids' education.*

(2017)

Pele felt buoyed by the positive feedback she had received from her daughter's school.



*[At the half-year report night] her teacher was amazed, absolutely amazed by Viva's improvement ... by her growth in self-confidence and her schoolwork.*

(2017)



*My son is more engaged, and he has more confidence in himself about his schoolwork and learning. Receiving the help and support at PowerUP has helped him. And being able to do work with his peers and receive the one-on-one support has made a huge difference.*



Pele could also see that Simi's educational progress was also going well as a result of working with the PowerUP teachers and other students.



*My son loves reading in particular, so he enjoys his reading time at PowerUP but also enjoys the fun activities. And my daughter loves PowerUP because she sees her friends and she gets to study with them and she receives the one-on-one help she needs in subjects she needs to catch up on. I always check in with my kids every week after PowerUP to see how it [has been] for them, and they both love it and enjoy it. For me personally, a real strength of attending PowerUP is seeing my kids show up week after week, which is great to see, and they encourage more of their friends to attend. This to me speaks volumes about the support they are getting at PowerUP Plus.*

(2017)

In addition, Pele also started talking about school matters with her children at home.



*I have an understanding [now] of what my daughter is talking about when she talks about her subjects and what she needs to achieve to gain certain credits in NCEA – for example, what is “merit” and “excellence” – and achieve her goals.*

(2017)



*[PowerUP offers] strategies and ideas on how to improve and support my children at home with any struggles they have in a subject. I do fun things with Simi for maths, like, when I do cooking, we measure things and count things. And I know Simi is above on his reading because he reads everything; he enjoys it, but I want to know more ways to help him, and I can get that at PowerUP.*

(2017)

After a good year at PowerUP and at school, in 2018, Pele noticed that Viva was again losing interest in her studies. However, because of what she had learnt at PowerUP, Pele said she was better equipped to talk things through with Viva and not “jump the gun” as she had in past times. She was able to encourage Viva to complete her NCEA and her Level 3 exams. Pele also believed that their attending PowerUP together as a family had reinforced for Viva that Pele cared about her and her educational progress.



*[Viva] enjoys it a lot that I am there – it gives us the opportunity to have conversations about learning and education on a weekly basis, and she sees that I care about her education and her progress.*

(2018)



*[Viva] is struggling to find the motivation to stay in school this year, so our family discussions are helping her gain perspective of her future and what she needs to do to finish off this year and finish off well.*

(2018)



In 2018, Pele started talking to Viva about career choices, using some of the advice she had proactively sought from her children's schools and teachers. Pele also followed up on a link about choices and careers she had learnt about at PowerUP, and she and Viva began talking regularly about the future and how to plan for that future. With her mother's help and support, Viva decided on the career she would like to pursue. Then, encouraged by her mother and the PowerUP teachers, Viva shared her goal with her teachers at school, who then provided targeted support to help Viva achieve her goal (for example, helping Viva select the right units and courses for her goal).



*I think [PowerUP] is great for Pacific students and families as it supports and encourages learning. Just like it takes a village to raise a child, I think it takes a village to support our kids to do well and aim high ... [PowerUP] is very different [from school]. It's culturally sensitive; we begin with a prayer to bless the evening, we finish with a prayer to end and bless the food.*

(2018)

As a result of seeing how her own and other children flourished at PowerUP and her own PowerUP experience, Pele began encouraging other parents and families to join. Pele shared with them the benefits of learning together as a family and as part of the wider Pacific community. She particularly wanted to reassure parents by telling them about PowerUP's emphasis on 'āiga - families helping and supporting one another in the Pacific way.

## VIVA'S STORY

In 2016, Viva confided during her talanoa with a PowerUP staff member that she was feeling disengaged from school and didn't have any career or life goals in mind. She wasn't attending school regularly, mainly because she "couldn't understand anything". However, by mid-2017, Viva said PowerUP had restored her confidence in her abilities and "now I understand [the work] and know where I can get help from". Viva attributed this to the PowerUP teachers and the ways they made it easier for her to understand things.



*... they slow it down. Because I'm not a very fast learner, so they break [subject matter] down for me so that I get it and know it - they wait until I get it ... At school, because the teachers have lots of kids [to think about], they have to kind of forget about slow learners like me and just move on, and then I don't get it.*

(2017)



*The teachers at PowerUP, the way they do it; it's kind of like asking me the same questions but in a different way [than the teachers at school], until I understand. [PowerUP], it's a good place to learn.*

(2017)

In 2017, Viva acknowledged that the care shown by PowerUP teachers was a major factor in her achieving her NCEA levels. Another factor was the satisfaction she experienced in learning with her PowerUP friends.



*I wouldn't have passed NCEA Level 1 if I hadn't come to PowerUP last year.*

(2017)



*The help the PowerUP teachers [gave me] – explaining stuff to me that I didn't quite get in class; the one-on-one teaching they give me is better for me, I think. [Also] working together with my friends in catching up on work.*

(2017)

In summary, through joining PowerUP, Viva's whole attitude to learning changed.



*(PowerUP) makes me feel well equipped – knowing what I'm walking into and knowing what to ask helps me in the long run. PowerUP prepares me well and sets me up to achieve what I want when I finish this year.*

(2017)



*I understand a lot more now, and now I like going to school. I am very motivated because I know what I want to do, and I'm getting good support to go to university and reach my [future career] goal.*

(2017)

Viva completed her school year (2018) and began planning her next steps, well supported by her PowerUP learnings, her teachers, and career advisers.



*Since attending PowerUP, I now set goals for myself. I never used to do that. [But] I just need to get the motivation back this year to keep going with those goals ... I need to go back to what I was doing [last year]. I'm trying my best to keep going and aim to achieve the goals I have set for myself. My mum is very supportive and encourages me every day to do well and keep going.*

(2018)

*... they slow it down. Because I'm not a very fast learner, so they break subject matter down for me so that I get it and know it – they wait until I get it ... slow learner doesn't mean I'm dumb I just like to be sure.*





## SIMI'S STORY

Simi was in year 2 at primary school when the family joined PowerUP in 2016. He enjoyed going to school and being with his friends and was making steady progress. PowerUP helped consolidate a positive attitude to learning for Simi.



*[PowerUP teachers] try and make [learning] fun. They encourage us to try our best at school, and they tell us we can do it.*

(2018)

Supported also by his mother's guidance at home, Simi developed a strong work ethic. For example, he began completing his schoolwork promptly so he could enjoy time on his mother's laptop.



*I never used to do my work first. I always used to jump on my mum's laptop first, but now I do my work first so I can get a treat, and that treat is [to go] on the laptop. I still like to read. I love to read. I always make sure I do my work now, so I can go on my mum's laptop to play games.*

(2018)

## SOME CONCLUDING COMMENTS

### Pele



*There's a real sense of belonging [at PowerUP] for the kids ... Everyone is made to feel welcome: the parent helpers, the teacher helpers – they are amazing; they wear their heart on their sleeve. The teachers are all amazing like that, and the way they make everyone feel welcome, everyone wants to learn ... The community thing for me is why it works so well. The kids see that their parents and teachers care about their learning. These adults will stay back until after 7pm to feed us and to help with [the students'] credits. It's the Pacific way! ... Unity between the kids [at PowerUP sessions] is amazing. Some kids who never connect at school are doing that at PowerUP. The little ones coming from other schools, and seeing the older boys looking out for them and helping and caring for the younger students has been what I've enjoyed seeing.*

(2017)

### Viva



*[PowerUP makes me feel good about my Pacific identity] because it has all the aspects of my culture practices, which are taught at home – food, prayer, and family support.*

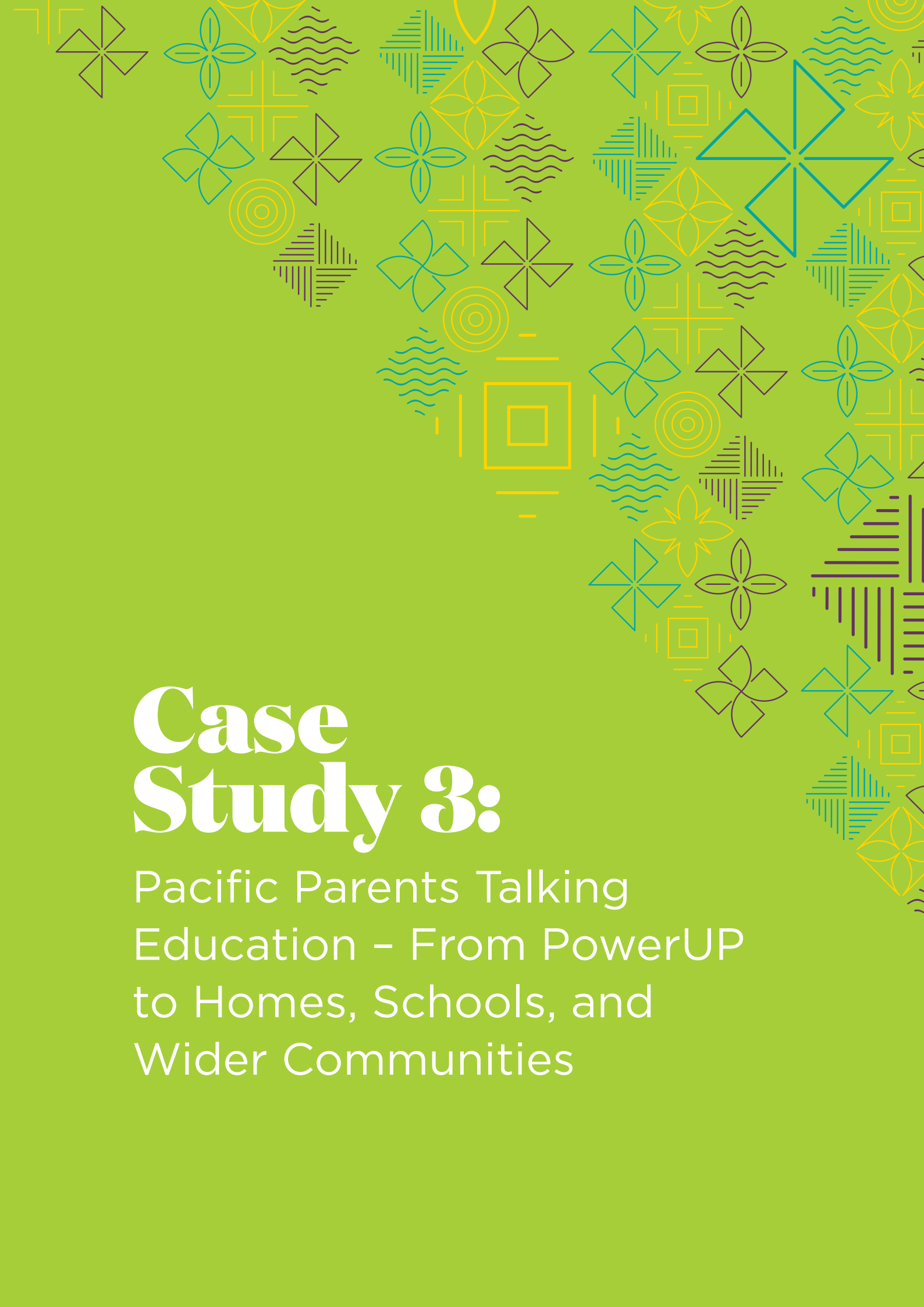
(2018)

### Simi



*I love how close I get to my friends [at PowerUP], and we help each other out.*

(2018)



# Case Study 3:

Pacific Parents Talking  
Education – From PowerUP  
to Homes, Schools, and  
Wider Communities



## INTRODUCTION

Parents said their major reason for joining PowerUP was to gain accurate information about school processes, systems, and the terms used so they could support their children to achieve their fullest education potential. While that may have been a priority, PowerUP became much more than this. As one student said, “[You’re] not only coming to it because you’re Pasifika, but [also because] it helps out with study preparing, sharing knowledge with other students, and much more”. Being in this *as and by Pacific* programme, where Pacific people were the majority group for the very first time, empowered Pacific parents’ voices and agency in talking education. By acknowledging and reclaiming Pacific knowledge and ways of knowledge sharing, the PowerUP programme also reinforced, gave meaning to, and served to validate the five elements of culturally safe places for Pacific learners (see Oakden, 2018) of Pacific visible; identity, language, and culture; Pacific wellbeing; ‘auala (pathways into learning); and cultural bias and racism. Simply put, PowerUP Pacific parents and children experienced tremendous pride and fulfilment in achieving as Pacific learners.

PowerUP’s holistic programme was a reminder that education is a lifelong and cumulative process that requires planning and making choices and that Pacific families are not alone in their learning journeys. As in the saying “it takes a village to raise a child”, there is knowledge and support all around that Pacific peoples can draw on – including from each other:



*The environment is an excellent place for my kids to enjoy and be part of this community push for the Pasifika peoples. We are constantly encouraging one another and not pushing each other down, because it will not solve anything. We encourage each other to be confident and not afraid to ask for anything if we need help, especially in the classroom.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*Community learning is totally a different environment and [offers] different experiences that our children can develop from. Their engagement, leadership skills, confident, positive social relationships, trust, and feeling of belonging are all built up in the PowerUP gatherings.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*It takes a village to raise a child; they need all they support they can get to excel in their studies. I learnt so many things in this community and really appreciated the help that I had.*

*Parent, talanoa*

This case study highlights the spiralling and cumulative developments that marked parents' learning journeys as they learnt to "talk education" at PowerUP. The case study is organised according to the pattern of three interrelated learnings, which marked parents' and children's capacity to "talk education". These are: 1) to know and understand school processes and terms used, for example, NCEA; 2) to master the skills of "respectful" engagement in learning, including, relationships, questioning (as the heart of learning), and communicating; and 3) the application and sustaining and enhancing of these learnings in other spaces, that is, engagement with families, teachers, schools, and wider communities of learning.

## TALKING EDUCATION

### 1. Knowing the School System

Many parents said that, before coming to PowerUP, they didn't feel confident enough to approach teachers at their children's schools with their educational concerns. Some believed education was the school's responsibility, and they trusted teachers to fulfil this role; others were hesitant to question someone of higher status (such as teachers) because this could be regarded as speaking above one's status (*fia sili*). However, the major reasons parents joined PowerUP was to gain accurate information about school processes, systems, and terms used so they could support their children's learning – understanding NCEA procedures was a priority. Parents said that, while schools may have believed they were sending out adequate and clear information to all parents and families, this had not been their experience. Parents challenged the value of the commonly-used and generic school information packages, stressing that parents and students whose first language isn't English faced a double task of 1) understanding the English and 2) making sense of the information being delivered.



*(Language barriers) A big part of PowerUP for me as a parent is having a better understanding of the education system, especially because English is not my first language. This has helped me understand more about the level my child is at and [upcoming] NCEA. [It] helps me to be more of a help to my child.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*(Sense making) ... because parents don't understand the system. It's a tricky system to navigate your way through ... understanding systems, timing of subjects, codes, exams, timetabling.*

*Parent, talanoa*

By way of contrast, parents said they had many and various opportunities to learn about school processes at PowerUP, including the parent's workshops, one-on-ones, and presentations. Furthermore, the use of Pacific languages had ensured them voice in these finely nuanced discussions.



*We were afraid to talk about school stuff before because we did not know enough to talk to the kids about it ... The strengths from attending PowerUP were that now I am able to talk to my kids about anything that is bothering them about school ... [PowerUP is a] great opportunity to engage with your kids about NCEA or other school actions and things you don't fully understand.*

*Parent, talanoa*

## 2. Knowledge and Skills to Engage

Parents formed many learning communities at PowerUP – with other parents, teachers, other adults, invited speakers, and their children. They said the workshops were different from any other groups they belonged to (such as church and family) because of the open and free sharing of ideas and because discussions were totally focused on education. Participating in workshops broke down any reluctance parents may have felt around asking questions or discussing their children's progress with others. Those who had been shy (whakamā) in sharing their concerns quickly realised they were not alone. Just as importantly, potential solutions and possibilities for action were generated as parents shared their experiences together.



*Knowing other families going through the same things makes me more confident.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*The parents' workshop gives us a lot of information to understand [the] curriculum. I am now confident to support my children in their studies.*

*Parent, survey*



*Getting to talk with other parents, having a laugh with other parents, listening to examples of how other parents deal with issues.*

*Parent, survey*



*I share with them how PowerUP helps my children in their learning and education; not only the kids, but for me, the mother, too.*

*Parent, talanoa*

Participation in this *as and by Pacific* programme also alerted and reinforced parents' understanding of the challenges Pacific children faced in schooling, including subtle and not so subtle incidents of cultural bias and racism (see also Case Study 4: Learning to See, Name, and Address Cultural Bias and Racism).



*PowerUP has opened our eyes in terms of how our children have been misrepresent[ed] at school. PowerUP empowered us parents not to be afraid to challenge the school and make sure that our children receive the maximum learning and support.*

*FlexiPlus parent, talanoa*

Parents' workshops were marked by a spirit of camaraderie, laughter, and purpose – of working together to advance Pacific education, not only for their own families but for all Pacific people. One parent laughingly referred to PowerUP as their family “date night”.



*For me, it has been surrounding myself with likeminded mothers who come and share their journey. We all come together and debrief about the highs and lows of the week and ways to help support our families. I feel empowered when I see that the programme is helping my children but also my community. This gives me confidence that I know something positive is happening within my kids and my community.*

*Parent, talanoa*

Drawing on their experiences, many parents began sharing their PowerUP learnings in other educational forums. Some took up leadership roles in Pacific community and national education networks, and others joined together to form their own education-focused groups. And they could see that, like them, their children were also forming relationships in learning and sharing ideas with other students at PowerUP.



*PowerUP is a great environment to be in – it brings positive vibes. It has brought new friendships [for my children] – they enjoy relationships with other children from different schools they don't normally associate with. Our children are more confident to work alongside their peers. They share their ideas and concentrate with their peers so that they not only learn from the teachers but also from one another.*

*Parent, talanoa*





### 3. Questioning

A major attitudinal change for parents and children came with the understanding that questioning is at the heart of learning and knowledge building. Parents were deeply moved by the way PowerUP teachers and other adults involved in the programme talked to children. Teachers encouraged students to “question, question, question”; listened to and accepted their ideas; and then probed for further explanations – and always in a respectful, positive, and non-judgemental manner. As is well-documented, questioning is a challenging behaviour in many Pacific communities, where communication behaviours are based on consideration of seniority (status, age, role, gender), which in turn determines 1) what is knowledge and how this knowledge is shared (Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, 2001; Anae et al., 2001) and 2) who talks (and who is listened to). In many Pacific communities, there is also a stress placed on providing the “right” answers, fuelled by the fear of being wrong and so bringing shame to the family. Research indicates Pacific peoples have less practice in asking questions generally and/or in education settings (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014).

PowerUP parents witnessed for themselves the ideas and excitement generated as teachers probed students’ responses: the resilience, pride, and self-esteem children gained as their ideas were debated and dissected in these interchanges. Some parents expressed their feelings of absolute pride – and, for some, surprise – at the sophistication and complexity of the ideas that children came up with.



*PowerUP sessions empower our children to think outside the box, not just think within their comfort zone.*

*Parent, talanoa*

Like their parents, students had found PowerUP teachers’ use of questioning a bit startling in the first instance. However, as their vā (relationship) with teachers grew, the students quickly came to understand and accept the spirit behind these exchanges and to engage respectfully. These interactions also made students think deeply about learning, their own approach to learning and useful study skills.

*I am gaining the confidence to ask more of those who teach my child. I was always apprehensive about asking my child’s teacher for more work for her, as I understand they already have a lot on their plates. However, I have a renewed confidence through PowerUP that it is my duty and responsibility to be proactive when it comes to my child’s education.*

*‘Au Lotu parent, talanoa*





*The teachers at PowerUP ... the way they do it ... it's kind of like asking me the same question but in a different way until I understand.*

*Student, talanoa*



*... I learn a lot of new things that I would say I haven't heard of before. Therefore, when I go back to school, I understand everything because of the help I get at PowerUP.*

*Student, talanoa*



*My teacher [at PowerUP] assists me where she can see I need help, for example, helping me read words that I don't understand ... they help us and teach us at our own pace. At school, they are more strict on us. I enjoy the learning [at PowerUP] together with my peers at our own pace. And it's good that we feel comfortable asking [our teacher] any questions ... I improved my reading at PowerUP. I got four out of five in my reading assignment, which my mentors and teacher helped me with at PowerUP.*

*Student, talanoa*



*... the tutors and teachers helped me with all the questions I had when I came to PowerUP. I always leave PowerUP with all my questions answered and feeling confident about the subject.*

*Student, survey*



*[Asking questions] is very helpful; it builds up your confidence and supports you with your learning for your future, and it is fun and cool.*

*Year 8 student, survey*

Importantly, these parents began encouraging their children to question, which was a significant shift in Pacific parenting attitudes and behaviours.



*My children are slowly starting to build confidence, especially through attending PowerUP. I encourage my children to come and ask questions because the teachers are able to support them more than I could regarding English and maths. Sometimes my [year 7] doesn't bring homework to PowerUP, but now I see that he is slowly beginning to bring work and also ask questions.*

*Parent, talanoa*

Parents also refined their own manner of asking questions in an informed and respectful way, articulating their concerns as clear questions; identifying the best time/person/forum in which to raise their concerns; making sure they obtained the right information to clarify their concerns; and being ready with suggestions that might address the concern.

## RELATIONSHIPS AND CHILDREN'S VOICES

As they watched and listened to the warm ways in which PowerUP teachers and mentors interacted with their children, parents became more conscious and aware of how they talked to their children and of their children's own voices.

*... before PowerUP I was, like, narrow-minded – closed to my way of thinking being the only way. It has really opened my eyes: my kids can do it; they are allowed to make mistakes, and they learn from [them]. It's their learning journey. I need to stop comparing it with my time at school. It was more about me being scared and trying to protect them more. It wasn't easy, but I have really tried my best. And I'm glad I did, otherwise they might not be here at PowerUP.*

*Parent, talanoa*

*[I'm] actually stopping and listening, letting the students and kids know they are worthy. Kids don't always get it right. Listen to your gut, listen to your kids' views; it's not always [just about] what adults are saying. [Give] them a chance to tell their story ...*

*Parent, talanoa*

*Since I came to PowerUP, I've changed the way I communicate with my children. I discuss with my children their individual goals and how to achieve their goals.*

*Parent, talanoa*

*[At PowerUP], we get to see his performance there first-hand ... during the sharing time at the end of each session. It helps to make it normal for our children to share, and we parents have to share, too.*

*Parent, talanoa*



## APPLICATION – SUSTAINING POWERUP LEARNINGS AT SCHOOL, IN FAMILIES, AND FOR THE FUTURE LEARNING JOURNEY

### Connecting to Teachers and Schools

Through attending PowerUP, parents gained a better picture of what of they could expect from schools and how they could navigate education and school processes. They also gained confidence around engaging with schools in positive and challenging conversations. Parents used words such as “confident”, “more demanding”, and “I have a right to know” to describe their engagement with schools.



*I am now very confident about asking questions at school – how they are learning and what is being taught. Now I know how they are learning at PowerUP, and I see that they are making good progress and their confidence ... at school is building.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*I am now more demanding at school; [asking for] work to be brought home now – I want to make sure my children understand their subjects and, if they need extra help, to make sure they take their work to PowerUP.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*I have a right to know what the school can offer. I ask for help if I cannot understand something from the school. I want to be more confident to ask teachers about [my child's] strengths and weaknesses.*

*Parent, talanoa*

In addition, parents no longer waited to be invited but began initiating discussions with teachers and schools on matters concerning them – as a “duty and responsibility” to their children.



*Understanding NCEA was very instrumental to me. One of my children is doing Level 2 NCEA and had only 75 entries [credits] for all the subjects [she had] chosen, but with the assistance of the PowerUP programme, we were able to understand and therefore went to school and asked her teachers if they could allow her to do more courses in order to have more entries [credits]. And now she could pass well if she passes them all.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*I am a little bit more knowledgeable about what is expected from me as a parent. I can speak to my child's teacher about my child's learning and have some understanding of the learning conversations. There is also a strong relationship built between me, my child, and their teacher.*

*'Au Lotu parent, talanoa*

Many parents had found that teachers had responded to their concerns in what they described as a reciprocal manner.



*[my daughters' teacher] communicates better with me. How? For example, "Your daughter's doing better in this, but with your help, she can better in another area". The teacher uses positive language, and I notice my daughter is doing better now she is reading more.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*I have learnt from PowerUP that it could be better not only from the teacher's end but also from mine. It is not enough to be passive and sit back. [Instead, I need to] engage and be proactive.*

*'Au Lotu parent, talanoa*





## AFFIRMING THE PARENT AND FAMILY ROLES IN THE “TRIANGLE OF SUCCESS”

Parents also began reclaiming their role and responsibility in supporting their children to reach their fullest education potential in partnership with schools. One parent described this as the “triangle of success”.



*It is absolutely essential for schools and parents to work together to support children’s learning. Working together, there is a triangle of success. The teachers, the student, and [their] parents working together is the only way, I believe, that our Pacific kids [will achieve]. That said, it takes a whole village to raise a child, so it has to include the communities you are in.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*... PowerUP has empowered me to take a lead in my children’s education. With the information [from PowerUP], I am more prepared to guide and help my children throughout their educational journey.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*During parent interviews, I discussed with the whānau teachers ... what subject my child [should] take in order to reach their goals. What level are they at in the moment? Have they progressed more than before? What other help can the school offer? PowerUP programmes help me to restructure how I support my children’s education and how to ask for help from school [to support] my children’s learning and progress.*

*Parent, talanoa*

Parent’s comments about their more informed engagement in school matters as a result of attending PowerUP were confirmed by students.



*Mum and Dad are able to talk to the teachers and principals that are part of PowerUP, and they are happier to approach our teachers at school now. They would have never done that before.*

*FlexiPlus student, talanoa*

One student said he no longer acted as the “go-between” (mediator) between home and school because “[his parents] don’t have to ask so many questions; they know now”.

## CONNECTING IN FAMILIES

Almost naturally, parents began applying PowerUP's positive and enabling communication approaches to their own lives and thinking.



*I see education differently after attending PowerUP. It's not just pen to paper. With PowerUP, it helps students feel more relaxed about school, especially P.I. students. The programme helps the whole family.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*We were afraid to talk about school stuff before because we did not know enough to talk to the kids about it ... now I am able to talk to my kids about anything that is bothering them about school.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*We have been talking about education more now, especially with my daughter getting ready to sit her exams for Level 3. This has allowed us to be more open and speak life into our kids, encouraging them to try their best and [reassuring them] that they are capable of doing whatever it is that they put their minds and hearts to. I want the best for my kids, and it is a joy to see them grow and enjoy the things that they are learning alone.*

*Parent, talanoa*

In many PowerUP families, education became the topic of conversation for the very first time and an entry point into other conversations.



*Wow. It has made a major transformation around the dinner table or [at] breakfast.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*Our conversation is not just [about] getting credits but getting ready and being prepared. We all have dinner, we sit down together, and my kids are telling me what they want; they share; they have a better understanding now.*

*Parent, talanoa*

Parents used terms such as “shared journeys” and “working as a team in education” to describe the relationships in learning that were developing in their families, while students talked about “absolute strength” in their families and “strong, healthy family in the future”.



*My children share with us parents their successes and failures. We are working as a team to achieve in education. The children are regarding homework at home as a normal part of their evening schedule.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*There is an absolute strength in our family. As children we see that, with good education, we will have a good, strong, healthy family in the future. It takes everyone to build a good, firm family.*

*Student, talanoa*



*If we can do our part at home and help out where we can, then we are confident that our girls will be more confident at school and that they know we are working together with them to achieve their goals.*

*Parent, talanoa*

Families also prioritised their family commitments to make room for family time - one parent noted that this had been a family decision.



*We, in our family, had been too busy for each other, but now, we find time [to bring] the family together. PowerUP has helped with that. We are doing more things together, and we support each other more. The best thing is getting to know each other better.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*As a family, we made a decision that we would involve ourselves in church activities on Sundays, and the rest of the week, we focus on work and schoolwork of my children.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*We get to communicate more and understand each other and how to work and help each other. I do not expect them to attend any church or youth programme during the weekdays or even an extended family occasion [in the] weekend, especially when they have to prepare and complete assignments or schoolwork. My children are more confident to talk to me about their schoolwork and let me know if they need to not attend a church fa'alavelave.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*[We are] more happy because my children are more reliable and confident in doing their chores at home, schoolwork, and whatever they [are] involved in [through] our church youth society. There are no more complaints and laziness in doing their schoolwork, no more calling from school to inform me about any troubles for my boys!*

*Parent, talanoa*

## CONCLUDING WORDS – ACHIEVING AS PACIFIC

In all ways, achieving educational success as Pacific people at PowerUP and in their schooling and families was an inspirational and transformative experience for parents and families.



*It's a huge change for everyone. Not only for my kids, but for me too. It helps and encouraged me to go back to schools. So that's what I did. I did Level 4 in ECE. I feel good and need to continue next year.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*I am currently studying, and I fully understand the structure of studying. So, it is good to be heard and listened to through the talanoa sessions.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*Becoming a doctor is a set goal for when high school is over. And PowerUP has provided motivation and confidence that goals can be achieved if you set your mind to them.*

*Student, talanoa*

PowerUP parents and students displayed a palpable pride that their 'auala into learning and learning success had been achieved through valuing Pacific knowledge and sharing practices in this *as and by Pacific* programme. PowerUP was an empowering learning experience for parents and reinforced that there is more than one pathway to learning.



*The other big thing for me is how the space is made to feel "Pacific", which my children love because it's like being at home.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*When I come to PowerUP, it's like going to my family. We pray together, talk in our language, and know each other from here and the church.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*[PowerUP gives] children confidence to identify themselves correctly in their schools, allowing them to appreciate and take pride in who they really are.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*My confidence in learning my schoolwork has gotten better, and I know some of it is because of who I am. My papa always tells me, "Never forget who you are" and where he came from.*

*Student, talanoa*

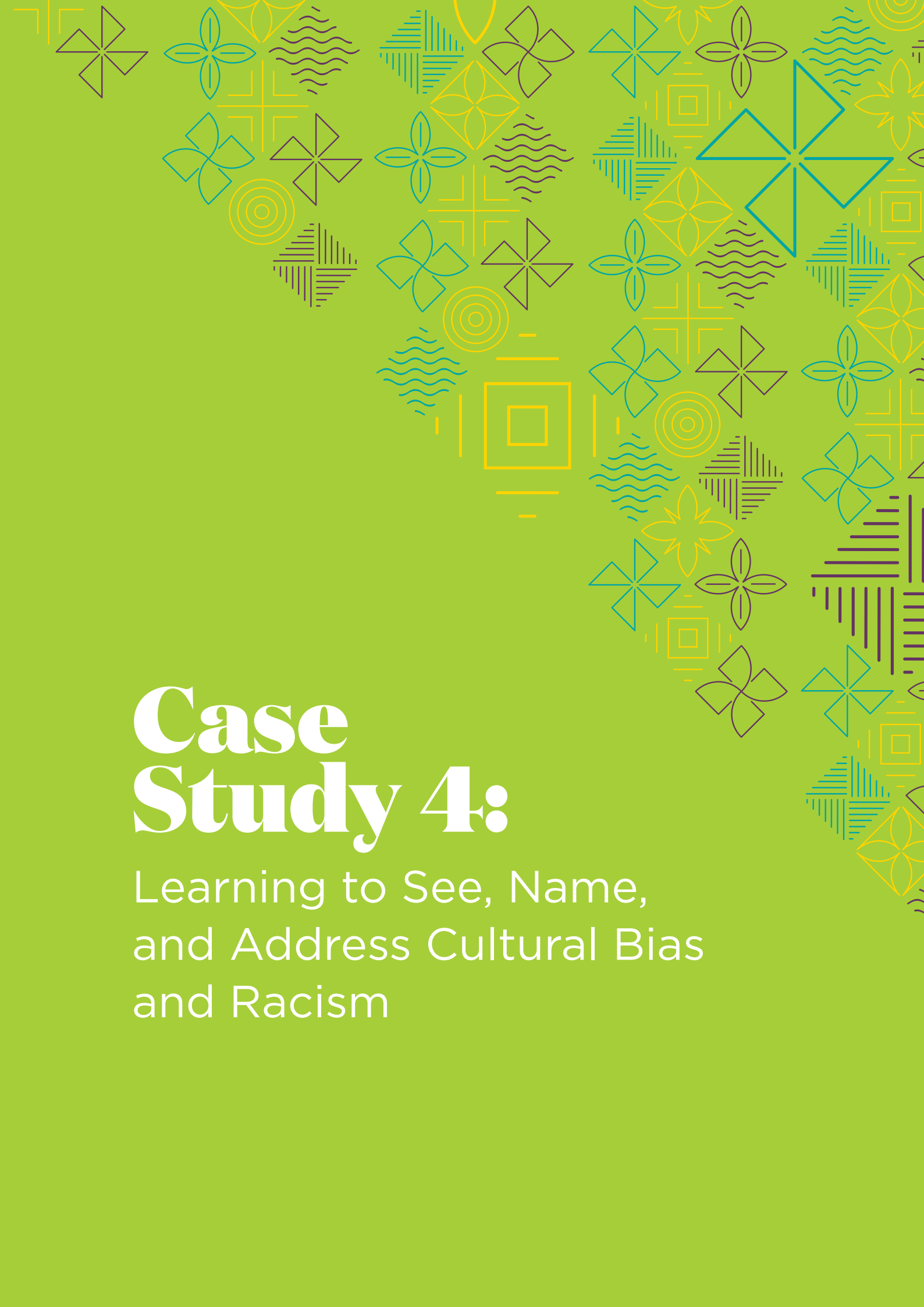


*When you can walk in my world as comfortably as I walk in yours, only then can we be Treaty partners.*

*Whaea Mata from Parihaka; cited by a parent in the PowerUP talanoa*







# Case Study 4:

Learning to See, Name,  
and Address Cultural Bias  
and Racism

## INTRODUCTION

It is 20 years since prominent education researchers Anae, Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu, and Finau (2001) proposed that Pacific education achievement was impacted by the cultural bias within the structures of New Zealand education system.

*Educators must recognise the nature and extent of intra-group diversities; they must take a more pro-active role in becoming aware and informed of these and acknowledge the cultural bias inherent within the structures of New Zealand's education system. Having done so, such educators would creatively consider their own practices in terms of how to bridge the quite complex cultural and social gaps, or mismatches that exist.*

Anae et al., 2001, (page 91)

In noting the increase in unconscious bias and racism in New Zealand classrooms, the 2018 *He Manu Kai Mātauranga: He Tirohanga Māori: Education Matters to Me: Experiences of Tamariki and Rangatahi Māori* report, produced by the New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) and the Children's Commissioner, drew attention to the relationship between students feeling undervalued or underrated because of their culture and the negative impact on their educational experience.

*When tamariki and rangatahi feel undervalued or underrated because of their culture, this has a negative impact on their experiences in education and [on] their identity.*

NZSTA and Children's Commissioner, 2018, (page 13)



Pacific parents and students stated very firmly that Pacific ways of knowing and being were embedded in everything that took place at PowerUP. Furthermore, their sense of belonging and identity security that had developed in the PowerUP learning spaces had increased their faith, resilience, and confidence that they could succeed in mainstream education settings.

It is important to note that students didn't use the terms "unconscious bias" or "racism" in early discussions. Instead, they talked about PowerUP as being "different" from their school experiences. Over time and in the safety of the PowerUP environment, students and parents began raising and applying these other terms. Providers noted that students were more articulate on these points than their parents.

This case study begins by presenting some definitions of cultural bias and institutional racism. Next, the case study outlines parents' views of what elements are necessary to ensure culturally safe spaces for Pacific learners. Finally, the case study presents some activities that could serve as discussion starters for teachers and schools and for community discussion. This case study challenges boards of trustees' members, principals, teachers, and other educators and policy makers to reflect on whether the ways they work support and ensure equitable 'auala (access) to education for Pacific parents and families.

## DEFINITIONS

### Cultural Bias

Educators may hold attitudes about learners and behave in specific ways that "cater for European thinking" but that may not be relevant or appropriate for Pacific parents and students. Cultural bias has been described as the "hard stuff" that may occur for Pacific families and that effectively undervalues the knowledge the families have and bring to school, thereby disenfranchising them from the fullest possible participation in their children's schooling. Cultural bias includes assumptions made about the Pacific learners and their families and communities, the way they learn, and why they do or do not engage in the classroom (Chu et al., 2019; Oakden, 2019a).

For example, only one-quarter of secondary school students attending PowerUP felt very confident about asking teachers for help before attending PowerUP. This confidence increased to more than half after attending PowerUP (Oakden, 2019a). This finding indicates children want to engage constructively with teachers about their learning, but they need the right environment for this to occur.

## Institutional Racism

Institutional racism has been defined as “... discrimination that act[s] overtly to obstruct Pasifika communities and their students from achieving academic success in schools ... the conflicting perceptions held by schools and teachers of Pasifika students lead to educational responses ill-designed to improve Pasifika achievement”. (Nakhid, 2003, page 207).

Came (2012) defines institutional racism as “a pattern of differential access to material resources and power determined by race, which advantages one sector of the population while disadvantaging another. Such racism is not only about conspicuous acts of violence but can be carried in the hold of mono-cultural perspectives ... More disturbing is its normalisation to high imperceptibility within one’s personal and professional life”.

## PARENTS

Parents in the PowerUP programme gave their views of what is necessary if schools are to counter and address cultural bias and racism (not prioritised) and provide culturally secure and inclusive classrooms.



*I think schools could learn how reciprocal relationships with parents and families help support learning for ESOL students. I think they could learn how to explore Pasifika perspectives on inclusion, beliefs, family expectations, learning and support, and kids with learning disabilities. They could learn how make personal connections to develop understanding and trust.*

*Parent, talanoa*

Question: Do you think Pacific children and young people are well catered for within our education system?



*Not a hundred percent, but I think it's slowly getting there. The support and help from the communities, like PowerUP, make a huge difference, and it's making changes in our young kids' lives. The thought of learning [while at the same time there is] caring, loving, and fun, is a great way to encourage kids to embrace education and allows them to do [so]. It is a very positive aspect in their lives.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*And [it would be better if schools are] just being encouraging, being more positive and caring.*

*Parent, talanoa*

## Curriculum

Parents talked about how PowerUP used Pacific examples in teaching and learning, but also the way PowerUP teachers encouraged them to share their own (Pacific) knowledge in school learning processes.



*I think, at the moment, the curriculum [and] teachers ... cater for European thinking. They don't know what they're doing.*

*Parent, talanoa*

## Teachers

Some parents formed excellent working relationships with teachers, but others did not.



*With [Child], his attitude was really bad at the beginning of the year; halfway through, things started to change. I never thought that happened because of school, but when I went to the parent interview, which they have changed to talanoa, [I realised what a difference a teacher made]. At the talanoa, the child introduces their parents to the teacher, and [Child] tells me what they are working on. One thing that stood out for me is when [Child] was talking, the teacher was prompting him in a positive way. I spoke to the teacher, and she mentioned that [Child] has a place to go to when he is upset. She doesn't ignore him, and it's not about rewarding him but giving him a safe place to express himself in. It comes down to the teacher, who is there for the kids, who is not there for the money, not just to do the job and leave. [Child] said himself that he loves [Teacher]: "She knows what I need and want to do." [Teacher] is a reliever, and he's not looking forward to his main teacher coming back. [Child] said, "She always growls me, yells at me."*

*Parent, talanoa*



*Overall if you have a teacher [who] cares for the child's learning, it shows in the change of attitude, not even in their school marks but in their attitude; in their effort to try.*

*Parent, talanoa*

## Pacific Teachers



*If there are no or too few Pacific teachers in schools, Pacific children miss out on Pacific role models and people who understand their cultural perspectives at school.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*I think another step would be [to hire] more Pasifika teachers [and have] classrooms equipped with more Pasifika resources.*

*Parent, talanoa*



A student said:

*We think our school should employ more Pasifika teachers who could understand Pasifika students better. We also think non-Pasifika teachers should attend some Pasifika cultural exchange programmes to learn and understand our Pasifika culture and way of life, our patterns of behaviour, and how best to deal with them in a Pasifika approach.*

*Student, talanoa*

### Communication - Especially the Use of Pacific Languages

*I also think they could relay information better to secondary students and parents [about] NCEA. I went to Pasifika NCEA night with my eldest daughter at her school, and the terminology they used left me [confused]. A Sāmoan mother next to me left more confused than when she entered.*

*Parent, talanoa*



## ACTIVITIES

### Activity 1: How Would You Classify these Students' Comments?



*It's a great place for learning, and you don't get intimidated by others.*

*Year 8 student, talanoa*



*... a learning environment where you feel comfortable to be able to ask any questions and can guarantee that you will not be made fun of and ... the positive atmosphere from when you arrive to when you leave.*

*Student, talanoa*



*PowerUP helps Pasifika students in particular to understand NCEA more confidently. PowerUP clarifies the NCEA system in an understanding way so no one is left behind.*

*Student, talanoa*

### Activity 2: What Do these Talanoa Comments Tell Us about Pacific Parents' and Children's Expectations of Teachers?



*The teachers are really easy to talk to. They are open to answer any questions about any of the subjects that we are struggling with in school and with their positive, laidback, and helpful attitude, [it] not only makes learning fun but also makes us want to learn.*

*Student, talanoa*





*[I] love how [the PowerUP staff] know her personally. As soon as she walks in, teachers know her subjects or what assessment she had on. This really made my child feel at ease; the support is there for her in school and when she is out of school. Building relationships and having that trust where the child knows they are valued – and their families are valued – is a big thing.*

*Parent, talanoa*



*One thing that stood out for me, is when [Child] was talking, the teacher was prompting him in a positive way. I spoke to the teacher, and she mentioned that [Child] has a place to go to when he is upset. She doesn't ignore him, and it's not about rewarding him but giving him a safe place to express himself in. It comes down to the teacher, who is there for the kids ...*

*Parent, talanoa*



*This year, [the teachers] have only focused on his sports. [Other teachers] used to talk about his grades, his maths. But all I hear about now from teachers is rugby. This has affected his enthusiasm in school, where he is not really fazed about his grades because he is quite far behind.*

*Parent, talanoa*

### Activity 3: Choose One Student Voice and Discuss



*Although we feel valued as Pasifika students at school as a whole, we still at times feel discriminated against. We feel that, at times, teachers don't care to understand our problems as raised from cultural perspectives, [and this is] leading to clash[es and] verbal disagreement[s and] Pasifika students [are] pointed at for being rude. We think that, as a school, students should be allowed to express freely, and teachers [should] be more culturally sensitive in addressing issues that we face.*

*Student, talanoa*



*Yes, I do think that non-Pacific kids achieve more, but ... I am encouraged to keep going to succeed and prove that culture is not the problem and that, whoever you are, you can do anything when you put your mind to it.*

*Student, talanoa*



*There are some Pacific students who are determined to achieve and block out the negativity. I think it's an emotional thing where some people can handle it, and others can't.*

*Student, talanoa*

#### Activity 4: Discuss the Following Composite Table

The table below draws on differences between PowerUP and schools, as expressed in talanoa (adapted from Table 3, Pacific PowerUP Plus Evaluation 2018, Oakden, 2019a, page 25).

| What was present at PowerUP                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | What the parents and students say is missing at school after attending PowerUP                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>The PowerUP <i>as and by Pacific</i> environment reinforces Pacific identity, culture and language, and ways of being. Discussions are in a mix of English and Pacific languages.</p>                                                           | <p>School is an environment where a Pālagi culture dominates. Pacific identity, culture, and language may be present in the school's cultural groups, but at times, Pacific aspects of identity, language, and culture come across as token.</p>                                                                                                                      |
| <p>Parents and students receive explanations of NCEA and other school systems in ways they understand, including the use of Pacific languages.</p>                                                                                                 | <p>At times, sessions at schools are confusing, and communication is not clear. For instance, many Pacific parents comment that the way schools explain NCEA is unclear to them.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <p>In PowerUP's culturally safe spaces, parents and children learn the role and power of questioning in learning. They gain resilience and empathy in asking and responding to questions and become more confident to ask questions at school.</p> | <p>Parents and children feel uncomfortable asking questions. Before attending PowerUP, fewer than half the children felt confident to ask a teacher for help at school.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <p>Parents focus on how to have positive learning conversations with children and teachers.</p>                                                                                                                                                    | <p>Initially, parent communication with schools may focus on student behaviour rather than learning. Many Pacific parents say their only contact with schools is when their children do something wrong. After attending PowerUP, parents understand the education system better, and their conversations with schools and teachers are more focused on learning.</p> |
| <p>Children believe PowerUP teachers deeply care about them and their educational achievement.</p>                                                                                                                                                 | <p>Many teachers care and form great relationships with Pacific children. Some do not seem able to engage effectively with Pacific children.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |



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The PowerUP environment enables children to learn at their own pace and become confident learners. Children believe they can achieve educational success and want to be at PowerUP. They know they are in a supportive peer group with others who also want to learn.

The classroom environment may not support Pacific learners. For example, at times, students feel confused and left behind and may not fully understand the main points being made in lessons. Many say they do not feel confident to ask questions in class: they worry about feeling ashamed or being mocked by other students.

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The PowerUP learning environment supports taking risks in learning and achieving success. Both the parents and the children take on leadership roles. Success builds success and leads to Pacific parents and children being more visible and vocal.

At first, Pacific parents' aims are to be respectful in their dealings with teachers and schools, and children try not to "stand out". As they become more knowledgeable about school processes and successful in their learning strategies at PowerUP, parents and children become more willing to ask questions, be visible, and partner with the school.

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## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The very act of exploring questions of cultural bias in the talanoa was an empowering experience in itself. It required parents and children to identify bias, label or put a name to it, and then share how they might have dealt with such incidents differently if they had been faced with them.

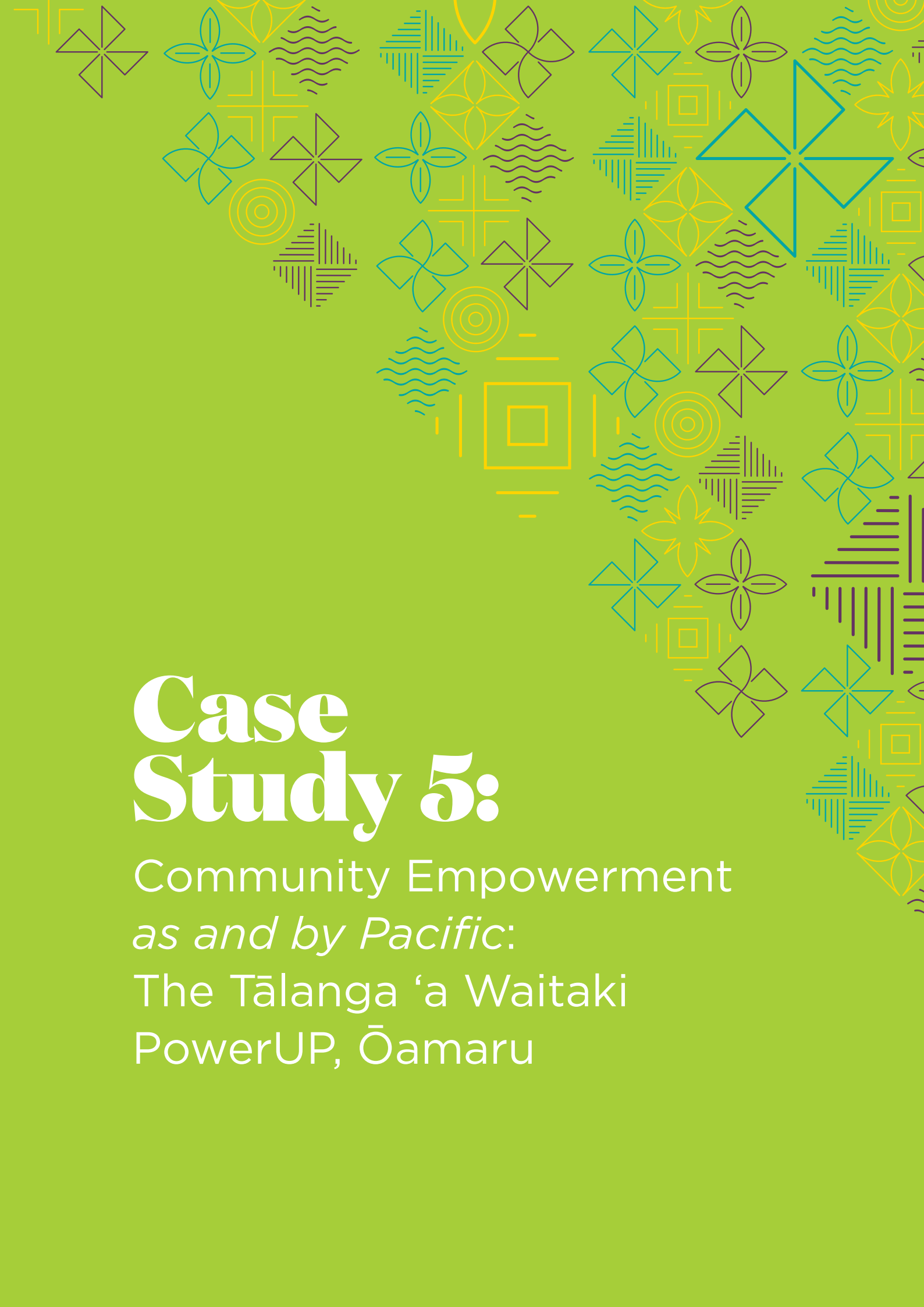
The meaning of providers' comments that "children talked of identity language and culture in more depth than their parents" warrants more investigation. For example, for students:

- » Is there more bias in schools today?
- » Have students become more deeply aware of being treated differently by teachers/schools and the lack of place for "Pacific" in the school systems?
- » Have they grown tired of "trying to fit in" and identify the need to "negotiate their place"?
- » Has being involved in the PowerUP *as and by Pacific* space reinforced feelings of being Pacific?
- » Has it opened the students' eyes to the fact that there is more than one way to achieve school learning and encouraged the "can do" attitude that is necessary for success?

For parents:

- » Do views shared in the talanoa mark an emerging shift in Pacific perceptions about Pacific identity in New Zealand? For example, rather than trying to integrate and be Pālagi, some parents wanted their children to be secure in their Pacific identity. Providers commented that they had seen Pacific parents "lose their identity being in New Zealand". They believed PowerUP valued Pacific identities and made parents and students "more proud of who they are together as Pacific". Some providers also remarked there was a growing demand in some Pacific families for children to learn Pacific languages and culture.





# Case Study 5:

Community Empowerment  
*as and by Pacific:*  
The Tālanga 'a Waitaki  
PowerUP, Ōamaru

## INTRODUCTION

In the 2016–18 PowerUP programme cycle, the Ministry of Education established 20 PowerUP stations throughout New Zealand communities. PowerUP's whole-of-family and community-driven approach was regarded to be the most powerful way to ensure parents and families access the knowledge and skills to support their children's educational journeys, be more demanding of the education system, and foster changes within their families and communities that support educational success and wellbeing. PowerUP's family-based strategy aligned well with fa'a-Pacific beliefs that family is the major socialising and educating agency and at the heart of identity security.

The Ministry contracted esteemed Pacific community leaders to deliver this *as and by Pacific* programme. Providers have responsibility for tasks such as engaging qualified teachers, locating suitable venues, recruiting parents and families, and scheduling and organising the PowerUP sessions. Providers also have responsibility for record keeping (such as attendance data and financial returns) and for carrying out talanoa and surveys with parents and families to ensure programme quality, effectiveness, and relevance. The providers lodge their record keeping materials with the Ministry for monitoring and evaluation purposes and further consideration of programme adaptations. In all ways, providers are the linchpin and community face of the Ministry's PowerUP programme: a duty of care that is not taken lightly. As a result of the growing interest in the PowerUP parenting and family programme, the Ministry decided to increase the number of PowerUP stations contracted in 2019.

This case study captures a picture of the tremendous empowerment of Ōamaru's small Pacific<sup>1</sup> community as they rallied together to establish the organisational processes necessary to secure a PowerUP contract and further their vision of building ako (baskets of knowledge) to enhance Pasifika successes now and for the future. The case study also highlights the relationships and networks that the Pacific families developed with the wider Ōamaru, Waitaki, and Otago communities and with the Ministry of Education's Pacific team, as each devoted their energy and skills to realising the Ōamaru community's vision. This case study models a learning and capacity building process for other Pacific communities. It draws largely on "Tālanga 'a Waitaki Milestone Report 5" (Ministry of Education, 2018; Oakden, 2019a; *Education Gazette*, 2019).

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1 Estimates place the Ōamaru population at 13,000, 1,200 of whom are Pacific (or one in four). The majority of the Pacific population of Ōamaru are of Tongan ethnicity. Many Pacific peoples moved to Ōamaru for employment in the local meat works and for the cheaper housing and living costs. There are 12 Pacific churches in Ōamaru.

## GETTING STARTED – THE TĀLANGA ‘A WAITAKI POWERUP

In early 2019, the Ōamaru Pacific Island Network called a parents’ workshop to discuss their children’s education. The group wanted support so they could be stronger champions for their children at school. A steering team of 10 Pacific parents was formed at this workshop, comprising “a mixture of Tongan, Tuvaluan, Tokelau, and Samoan heritage” (*Education Gazette*, 2019). Each was passionate about education and had strong community networks and experience.

The steering team then requested the Ministry of Education provide “specific educational support for our Pasifika community and ... deliver a Pasifika community-focused educational programme delivered by local Pasifika” (PowerUP provider, personal communication, 2018). In response, the Ministry suggested that the PowerUP programme would fit the Ōamaru vision. The team paid a visit to the PowerUP station in Christchurch. This visit to observe the PowerUP ways of working and to help answer questions “clinched the deal”. From that time on, and through many meetings with the local Pacific community and the Ministry of Education team, the steering team succeeded in launching their own PowerUP programme in July 2018 – a remarkable testament to the commitment of this small Pacific community.

## SETTING THE POWERUP FOUNDATIONS

The Pacific community had hoped to start PowerUP as quickly as possible but didn’t have the organisational structures in place that would enable them to gain a contract with the Ministry.<sup>2</sup> They sought the support of an organisation that could hold the contract on their behalf and a local non-governmental organisation Literacy North Ōtago agreed to act as the umbrella fundholder for this purpose. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was entered into with Literacy North Ōtago.

*For our Steering Team to have a contract with the Ministry, we had to find an organisation that was willing to be the umbrella fund holder. We have been grateful that Literacy North Ōtago were able to provide us with that opportunity. As part of this experience, we have found it important to have a Memorandum of Understanding specifically identifying our key role and responsibilities for the umbrella organisation and role of our Steering Team. A big part of that has also been the importance of clear communication, conflict resolution, regular reviews and setting boundaries.*

Oakden, 2020 (page 21)

<sup>2</sup> The extensive nature of this task is highlighted in Jo Cribb’s report of findings from the Charities Service research that “complying with government regulations, managing risk and recruiting staff and volunteers were key governance challenges for volunteer agencies.” Furthermore, 15 percent of the community’s steering team members did not know much or anything at all about their governance roles and responsibilities, and 18 percent felt they did not have oversight of the financial performance of their organisation (Cribb, 2020).



Establishing the governance and operational systems to meet due diligence and contracting requirements was not an easy task as is seen in the huge commitment of time parents gave to this process.

*Our team had taken much time to develop our governance and operational structure at the commencement of the project. Contractual requirements with the Ministry meant that we needed to develop all our structures, policies and processes from scratch in order to meet due diligence ...*

*By the end [of] our first term, our Steering Team had amassed approximately 3000 volunteer hours that included attendance at planning meetings, travelling to Christchurch to visit the nearest PowerUP station, more planning meetings, planning our hub sessions, recruitment and mobilisation plan, redeveloping our session times and structure and policies where necessary.*

Oakden, 2020 (page 22)

With the guidance and support of Literacy North Ōtago members, by the end of 2018, foundations for delivering the programme and the organisational baselines for achieving further educational goals had been set.

*This process helped us to build a strong foundation for us to move forward and be intentional with our plans and goals for the future in terms of education for Pasifika in the Waitaki region.*

Oakden, 2020 (page 22)

When it seemed that Literacy North Ōtago might close, the steering team set about finding another umbrella organisation to become the programme fundholder. They could see additional benefits from using a Pacific organisation. In 2019, an arrangement was made with the Ōamaru Pacific Island Community Group Incorporated to take up the fundholder role.

*Being under the umbrella of a non-Pacific organisation was, at times, challenging in that different perspectives, values, and cultural practices were shared ... Whilst not always agreed upon, shared responsibilities and best intentions proved to be the foundation of ensuring that the service delivery was not compromised.*

*We have opted to go under the umbrella of a Pacific organisation, Ōamaru Pacific Island Community Group Incorporated. The learnings we have taken from our journey thus far have placed us in good stead for the future and ensuring the service delivery remains the same as it has been under the guidance and umbrella of Literacy North Ōtago.*

Oakden, 2020 (page 22)

## HUGE ENROLMENTS BRING DELIVERY CHALLENGES

In the early days, Tālanga 'a Waitaki PowerUP had been worried they might not recruit enough families to meet their contract target. However, nearly three times the target number of Pacific families enrolled. Such was the programme's success that in the national 2019 PowerUP data of average numbers of parents and children attending PowerUP around the country, the Ōamaru PowerUP station was ranked second, with 22 parents and 87 children attending per session. This community response was totally rewarding and confirmed the value and rightness of this *as and by Pacific* programme to the Ōamaru context. At the same time, the steering team now faced the challenge of raising additional funding to ensure the quality of the programme wasn't compromised.

*The contract target was to recruit and register a minimum of 20 families. Initially, this was our goal, as we were not sure how many families, we would be able to engage. When 27 families registered in week one and increased to 45 and eventually 57 families, our focus changed to adequate resourcing. We needed staffing in the hubs and equipment and catering. We had to review our budget, and it was important to us that the allocation of fees for teachers and mentors was not compromised ...*

*We developed a fundraising plan to supplement the contract payments from the Ministry of Education. We worked through the issues, reviewed our budget, and we are extremely grateful to our community caterers and teachers who were patient with us as we disbursed payments and fees. We are thankful to philanthropic funders who have donated generously.*

Oakden, 2020 (page 23)

The support gained illustrated the depth of community goodwill and support for the Pacific community's endeavours and to the programme. Looking back, the steering team acknowledge that getting PowerUP established and in such a short time frame had been a huge undertaking. They had worked tirelessly to activate and reinforce the local, regional, and national supports to ensure their community didn't miss out on the PowerUP journey and had been humbled by the positive responses they received.

*A community that works together is a community empowered. The Tālanga 'a Waitaki PowerUP Steering Team have been humbled to deliver an educational support programme that acknowledges our Pasifika values. Our community [has] begun to reap the benefits this model offers, and we look forward to ... opportunities in the future. Build Ako to Enhance Pasifika Success 2018. MISSION SUCCESSFUL.*

Oakden, 2020 (page 23)

## MISSION SUCCESSFUL!

The steering teams' views were that the programme had:

- » built community cohesion – bringing the Pacific community together:

*Perhaps our key learning as a provider is that it takes a village to raise a child, and working together has been the key. When we first met with the Ministry in May to discuss support options for the Waitaki area, the PowerUP model was described and offered to our community to implement a PowerUP station locally. In hindsight, we feel the journey we have taken since May has been immensely empowering to say the least. We have formed strong connections within our steering team, developed trust and deeper engagement with our Pacific and wider community, and shown the country what a huge difference a small group of passionate individuals with the right guidance can make for the betterment of our community. The community responded by supporting and welcoming the programme and the benefits it offers to Pasifika families.*

Oakden, 2020 (page 24)

- » strengthened Pacific parents and family engagement in education and their relationships with school principals, rectors, and members of senior leadership teams in the region, and with individual teachers from local primary, intermediate, and secondary schools:

*Building relationships and developing the connections they have with the teachers that attend PowerUP has been inspiring. Watching the children's eyes light up when they see their favourite teacher from school attend, giving their favourite teacher a hug or academic mentor a hug for coming, and witnessing the interactions they have in the hubs is a strong incentive for the team.*

Oakden, 2020 (page 24)

Pacific parents gained confidence in engaging with teachers and schools on matters of concern. Parents also became more involved in taking on leadership and governance roles. For example, six Pacific parents were elected to school Boards of Trustees (BOTs) in the region. Many teachers also came to visit PowerUP to learn how to engage with the community “as Pacific”.

*One of the measures of Ōamaru PowerUP's success is that, following the 2018 programme, parents proved more willing to voice complaints. Another measure may be the increasing number of Pacific parents who have been elected to school boards.*

Oakden, 2020 (page 25)

In these and other ways, and with PowerUP support, these Ōamaru parents and families are working to fulfil the migration dream as captured in the New Zealand Immigration Report, 2019 (page 41).

*This is why they are in New Zealand. Like those who came to Ōamaru before them, they want better lives for their families. They are committed to seeing their children do well. So is Ōamaru.*

## PROVIDED AND STRENGTHENED 'AUALA IN ŌAMARU AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY

PowerUP established pathways and supported the Pacific community-built relationships with the wider Ōamaru community - to meet, collaborate, and share resources and ideas with social service agencies, tertiary providers, and local schools, ensuring the Pacific community achieves greater visibility in the Ōamaru community and vice versa.

*During ... PowerUP in the Waitaki, we received an invitation alongside the Pacific Island network to present to regional funder, Ōtago Community Trust in October 2018. This was a great platform to share with the board about the Pacific Island community in the Waitaki region, what our needs are, including educational needs, and the impact PowerUP has had in the community.*

Oakden, 2020 (page 24)

Two parents shared their experiences of the Ōamaru PowerUP Plus station in an Education Gazette article entitled “‘Powerful’ Pacific programme gathers momentum” (2019).

Mother of two and New Zealand-born Samoan Hana Halalele was part of the team which set up the Talanga 'a Waitaki PowerUP Plus PowerStation for their local community.

Hana says it all started with local group Ōamaru Pacific Island Network organising a workshop for Pacific parents to discuss their children’s education. The group, who called themselves Talanga 'a Waitaki, felt that they needed better support so they could be stronger champions for their children at school. From there the group worked with the Ministry of Education and held consultations with their community to launch their own PowerUP in July 2018. Volunteer parents in their steering group Talanga 'a Waitaki played an important role in establishing, and now running, the PowerUP, and bringing different Pacific values and languages to the team.

To start a PowerUP they put together a working group of volunteers who were passionate about education. She said: “Liaise with your local community groups, council, agencies, schools ... just really utilise all the tools that are already available in the community.”



*“There are just over 10 steering team members. It’s a mixture of Tongan, Tuvaluan, Tokelauan and Samoan heritage and everyone has their own various networks within the wider community. Each person has different schools and different pastoral roles within our PowerUP,” says Hana.*

*“Our model [PowerUP] works well for us because it is community-focused and community-driven.*

*“It’s about going back to our Pacific values of alofa, love, respect, and service in everything that we do and everything that we stand for.”<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>3</sup> Hana Halatele was elected to the Waitaki Council in 2019, largely but not only in recognition of her work as being “a voice for the town’s growing Pasifika community”.

Aisea Fifita, is a lead teacher in the PowerUP station and is also Assistant Rector of Teaching and Learning at Waitaki Boys High School. He is Tongan-born and the father of two. He said:

*The majority of parents are from the Islands, and in the Islands, the schools are expected to run everything with no questions from the parents. But in New Zealand, it is very different ... I love seeing the parents having the confidence to approach schools. Previously, they did not question the school, even if they were unsure if their child's needs were being met. But now, they have more understanding about NCEA and all the other things happening at school with their children.*

*The PowerUP whole-of-family approach, covering Pacific values of faith, respect, and well-being, has worked well ... building parents' capability to support their children's schooling. We're a very small community, and we're very lucky as almost everyone knows everyone, and that's key to families in terms of how to support their children at school.*

*[Children are] very positive in terms of learning in a different environment to school, getting all the community together, and seeing their parents enjoying their time there and having more understanding of their school processes.*

*I get to talk to teachers from kindergarten and primary school as a community and get to meet the children who are coming through the education system. Knowing them that early, and that one day they will be at high school with me, is very positive. I will have ideas about how to help them and will be able share ideas and strategies with other teachers; it is very powerful.*

*Education Gazette (20 March 2019)*





The background of the page is a vibrant green, adorned with a variety of intricate geometric patterns. These patterns, rendered in teal, yellow, and purple, include stylized flowers, crosses, squares, and abstract shapes. The patterns are scattered across the top and right sides of the page, creating a rich, textured effect. The word "References" is prominently displayed in the lower-left quadrant in a bold, white, serif font.

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# Talanoa Ako

Talking about Education  
and Learning

PACIFIC EDUCATION LITERATURE  
REVIEW ON KEY FINDINGS OF THE  
PACIFIC POWERUP LONGITUDINAL  
EVALUATION 2016-2018 HEARING  
THE VOICE OF PACIFIC PARENTS

# Report Information

Prepared for Rose Jamieson

Deputy Secretary: Parent Information and Community Intelligence (PICI), Ministry of Education

Authors: Dr Cherie Chu-Fuluifaga, Dr Martyn Reynolds, Dr Ivy Abella, and Dr Fuapepe Rimoni  
(Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington)

## Acknowledgments

Our research team would like to acknowledge colleagues who have made important contributions to this work and who have enhanced the scope and quality of our review of the literature in the thematic areas from the findings of the Pacific PowerUP Longitudinal Evaluation 2016–2018. This work was commissioned by the Ministry of Education Pacific PowerUP team in Parent Information and Community Intelligence (PICI). Key Ministry of Education personnel helped and supported the project throughout, including Rose Jamieson, Moe Sa'u, Gabrielle-Sisifo Makisi, and the Pacific PowerUP team.

Victoria University of Wellington's specialist librarian Grace Faletutulu, Pasifika Navigator, provided crucial expertise and cultural support to ensure authoritative coverage and sourcing of publications according to the timelines for the completion of the review work.

We acknowledge and respect the researchers (and their participants) who have contributed to eroding the dearth of literature and findings on Pacific education. Much of the work has come from the motivation to infuse educational literature with new ways of understanding of the lives of Pacific learners, their families, and communities.

Fa'afetai tele lava, māuruuru roa, and thank you.

Cherie Chu-Fuluifaga

Ivy Abella

Martyn Reynolds

Fuapepe Rimoni

2021

Published 2021 by the Ministry of Education  
PO Box 1666, Wellington 6140, New Zealand.  
[www.education.govt.nz](http://www.education.govt.nz)

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Publishing services: Lift Education E Tū

Designers: Liz Tui Morris and Jodi Wicksteed

ISBN 978 1 77690 200 2 (Online)



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# Executive Summary



# Executive Summary



This literature review explores key thematic findings from the Pacific PowerUP Longitudinal Evaluation 2016–2018 (Oakden, 2017, 2019; Oakden and Kennedy, 2018; Oakden and Kennedy, 2019). Pacific parents, families, communities, and learners over the three-year talanoa identified five main areas they felt needed further consideration to support Pacific educational achievement. These themes are discussed below.



### **Pacific visible**

how Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities are acknowledged by, and are in equitable partnership with, education. Pacific visible is also apparent in the presence of community-sourced Pacific concepts through which Pacific education is understood.



### **Identities, languages, and cultures**

how Pacific learners' developing identities are upheld by educational experiences that provide support for Pacific culture(s), language(s), and practices that value the contributions of Pacific parents, families, and communities through equitable and honourable partnerships.



### **Pacific wellbeing**

how the wellbeing of Pacific learners is understood in education in holistic Pacific terms and supported by effective partnerships between Pacific parents, families, and communities, and education.



### **'Auala in – Access**

how Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities are helped to gain access to, and be welcome in, education such as through the curriculum, use of pedagogy, and consultation.



### **Cultural bias and racism**

the attitudes, processes, and practices in education that limit the flourishing of Pacific learners', parents', families', and communities' visibility, identity, language, culture, wellbeing, and access.

These five themes form the challenge of the Pacific people's "voice" from the various talanoa as a next step to supporting Pacific achievement from a parent, family, community strength-based discourse. This literature review examines the research around these themes and draws on other literature in the field of Pacific education. Its sources are generally taken from the period 2009 to 2019.

The review begins by acknowledging the voices of Pacific learners, their parents, and communities more widely and by providing a summary of the Pacific PowerUP Longitudinal Evaluation 2016–2018 (Oakden, 2017, 2019; Oakden and Kennedy, 2018, 2019). It offers two prefaces to the main themes relating to parents, families, and communities on the one hand, and educational professionals on the other. Together, these prefaces frame a discussion that understands Pacific education as a partnership. The review reveals that Pacific people have many ideas, beliefs, values, and practices, including language, relevant to education that are sometimes recognised, valued, and supported by professionals but at other times are ignored.



The literature also reveals links between education that is achieving the goals of Pacific people and Pacific learners and creating positive experiences in areas such as wellbeing, identity, and access to high-quality education. Educational achievement is one goal of Pacific people, but this should be understood in conjunction with others. These include being visible through continuation in education; being visible through success as a Pacific person, which involves recognition and validation in education and the community; and the effective maintenance of a balance between two (or more) cultural worlds. The literature also points to how Pacific concepts, such as success and wellbeing, should be appreciated as holistic and interconnected and not tidily mapped against English-language rendered European-origin counterparts.

The review depicts factors that contribute to situations where optimal environments and practices likely to benefit Pacific parents and their children are not in place. These factors include the exclusion of parents, families, and communities from various aspects of Pacific children's education; the de-valuation of aspects of Pacific culture and practice, such as language, beliefs, and experiences; and a lack of understanding and support for the negotiations Pacific students perform to be successful in the cultural spaces they inhabit.

Recommendations include further research attention to the potential and actual contributions of parents, families, and communities to Pacific education; ways of facilitating the contributions of Pacific people to education; the learning of teachers to be responsive to Pacific learners and their families; the role of language in Pacific identity and how education can support this; and ways of eradicating cultural bias and racism. Research that focuses on Pacific parents, families and communities, and their children and that does not aggregate populations without contextual justification is to be encouraged, as is research grounded in Pacific ideas, epistemologies, methodologies, and motivations. The literature review contains much of promise. The challenges are to implement more fully what is already known and to extend knowledge so Pacific education can fulfil its role in the migrant dream, responding to the voices of parents, learners, families, and communities and distilled from the talanoa gifted to the Pacific PowerUP evaluations.

# Positioning the Literature Review



# Positioning the Literature Review



The Pasifika success compass (*Pasifika Education Plan 2013–2017*, Ministry of Education, 2013b) visibly places parents, families, and communities at the centre of Pacific success with their children. PowerUP was developed as a platform to help this become a reality.

Pacific PowerUP is an education programme that sits within Pacific communities. It is operated by Pacific people for Pacific people, to build the knowledge of Pacific parents, families, and communities about education and schools to support Pacific children's learning journeys. The PowerStations, or sites for Pacific PowerUP, provide academic support for learners from early learning to Year 13. They also provide culturally safe spaces that the Pacific PowerUP evaluations reveal to be resources that let parents and families champion their children and be more demanding of the education system. The PowerStations also foster significant changes within families so education as it exists in Aotearoa New Zealand becomes a priority that can be actioned.

Parents are asked by schools to form partnerships with them. Pacific PowerUP helped parents express their inability to partner effectively with schools without knowledge and understanding of education and learning.

Evaluations of Pacific PowerUP were conducted over 2016 to 2018 (Oakden, 2017, 2019; Oakden and Kennedy, 2018, 2019). Case studies from the evaluations show the positive effect of Pacific parents, families, and communities who support the education of their children. The structure of PowerUP was designed to provide a climate in which the risk taking that is the engine of learning becomes a positive challenge in a supportive environment, meaning good progress can be made. By contrast, at times, schools do not provide such environments; progress is restricted where student participation is muted.

The partnership of parents, learners, community members, and teachers fostered by PowerUP provides learning opportunities for all: learners progress their learning; parents learn about the education system and the kinds of learning valued in it so they can better support their children; and teachers learn about the full potential of Pacific learners when given an appropriate learning environment.

As a result, relationships are reconfigured in positive ways so that respect and expectation inform how those involved interact: parents and children, teachers and learners, schools and Pacific communities. Thus, building the capacity of those involved in Pacific education, especially through developing the capability, voice, and knowledge of parents, families, and communities, emerges as a significant contribution of PowerUP.

A consequence is the acceleration of visible Pacific educational success and the way this success is understood. This review particularly looks at the Pacific voice and the Pacific concepts that underpin that voice to draw attention to the potential of Pacific people to articulate, define, and participate in education that focuses on the young members of their communities.

As a way of positioning this literature review, we examined the key thematic findings from the Pacific PowerUP Longitudinal Evaluation 2016–2018 (Oakden, 2017, 2019; Oakden and Kennedy, 2018, 2019). These themes have been developed from the voices of Pacific parents and children from over 1,200 in-depth talanoa. The talanoa were the main part of the 2016 to 2018 evaluations and took place primarily in the culturally safe space of a PowerStation or the family home or church. The talanoa were spaces where Pacific people expressed their perceptions and experiences of education. They shared how, through PowerUP, as their educational knowledge grew, they were able to support their children's learning journeys, form authentic, equitable, and reciprocal

relationships with schools and teachers, and change the way they, as Pacific people, operated in their families and homes to make education and powerful education conversations a priority.

The premise for the PowerUP evaluation was to delve into the experiences and perceptions of parents, learners, families, and communities who were involved with the PowerUP programme. The evaluation was a collaborative, coordinated talanoa-infused approach to gathering quality research-based knowledge with the intention of improving Pacific presence, engagement, and achievement in education.

The five themes that emerged from the PowerUP evaluation are an important starting point for establishing research and Pacific education priorities. The themes are as follows.



**Pacific visible** – how Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities are acknowledged by, and are in equitable partnership with, education. Pacific visible is also apparent in the presence of community-sourced Pacific concepts through which Pacific education is understood.



**Identities, languages, and cultures** – how Pacific learners' developing identities are upheld by educational experiences that provide support for Pacific culture(s), language(s), and practices that value the contributions of Pacific parents, families, and communities through equitable and honourable partnerships.



**Pacific wellbeing** – how the wellbeing of Pacific learners is understood in education in holistic Pacific terms and supported by effective partnerships between Pacific parents, families and communities, and education.



**'Auala in - Access** – how Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities are helped to gain access to, and be welcome in, education such as through the curriculum, use of pedagogy, and consultation.



**Cultural bias and racism** – the attitudes, processes, and practices in education that limit the flourishing of Pacific learners', parents', families', and communities' visibility, identity, language, culture, wellbeing, and access.

Following in the footsteps of early policy (Ministry of Education, 1996), the first iteration of the Pasifika Education Plan (2001–2005) was launched in 2001 (Ministry of Education, 2001), and 17 years later a navigation document titled *Tapasā* (Ministry of Education, 2018) was published. This builds on the fifth iteration of the Pasifika Education Plan and advises educational professionals on how to think about and enact Pacific visibility as success in Pacific education. As is clear from *Tapasā*, Pacific education can be understood as a partnership between Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities on the one hand, and educators working in a largely European tradition on the other. In the relational space between these partners lies the most profitable area for progress in Pacific education. This literature review acknowledges the importance of this partnership and those relationships through the presentation of two sections of commentary, one reflecting each partner. These sections guide the reader to the texts that highlight the potential contribution of each side of the partnership spread across the five main themes drawn from PowerUP evaluation findings and embedded in this review.



We also acknowledge the *Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020–2030* (2020) and two previous Pacific education literature reviews that have set out the terrain of educational research: *Literature review on Pacific education issues: Final report* (Coxon et al., 2002); and *An analysis of recent Pasifika education research literature to inform and improve outcomes for Pasifika learners* (Chu et al., 2013).

## REVIEW PROCESS

To conduct this review, we searched for materials that had relevance to the context of Aotearoa New Zealand and were generally published since 2009 (that is, from 2009 to 2019). To identify materials for the literature database, we worked closely with the librarian from Victoria University of Wellington who has specialist expertise on Pacific subjects. As a research team, we each took one or more of the themes and committed to searching the databases as well.

## INCLUSION OF PUBLICATIONS IN THE REVIEW

The purpose of the review is to summarise evidence across a ten-year timeframe regarding approaches associated with five themes relevant to Pacific learners: Pacific visible; identities, languages, and cultures; Pacific wellbeing; 'Auala in – Access; and cultural bias and racism. This implies a standard or criterion for inclusion in the review as “evidence”. Our criterion for evidence is generally the internationally recognised standard of quality assurance with independent editorial peer review.

Thus, materials we reviewed included: journal articles; published conference proceedings; book chapters; books; post-graduate theses (master’s and doctorate levels); and externally reviewed published government reports that met the stated criteria. Both online and in-print publications were included, provided they met the criteria for

quality assurance and independent editorial peer review. Generally excluded were in-print or electronically available materials lacking independent editorial review and quality assurance such as self-published monographs or papers; in-house working papers; PowerPoint presentations from conferences without published proceedings; unpublished government or agency reports; and lectures from workshops or coursework at tertiary institutions. Inclusion of occasional sources that do not meet the criteria is justified through uniqueness of contribution.

## PUBLICATION TIMEFRAME FOR REVIEW MATERIALS

We decided to review material from 2009 to 2019 because this ten-year period has provided a substantial collection of new research works in educational publications in the public domain. These include journal articles, book chapters, master’s and doctoral theses, government and agency reports, and so on. Where publications from outside this period are referenced, they are included as support for literature from within the timeframe.

## SEARCH PROCESS AND TERMS

The process of finding research sources involved using electronic searches of relevant comprehensive databases, including ERIC, EBSCO, PsychINFO, Scopus, Proquest, Index NZ, and Google Scholar.

Key words employed in searching for relevant materials and resources included: Pacific, Pasifika, Pacific Island/er, Pacific people, Pacific education, Pasifiki, Tangata Pasifika, as well as terms for each sub-group Pacific culture (Samoan, Tongan, Niue, Fijian, and so on). Cultural group terms were used in conjunction with the following phrases: tertiary education, higher education, universities, polytechnics, wānanga, private training establishments; ā’oga ‘āmata, language nests, early childhood education

(ECE) or centres, families, 'āiga, whānau/fānau; secondary schooling; Pasifika school liaison; multicultural; alternative, diversity, English as a second language teaching; governance, leadership, mentoring, literacy, numeracy; cultural competency; culturally responsive pedagogy; language development; language maintenance, preservation of languages; teaching and learning; teacher knowledge, skills, teacher-learning pedagogy; transitions; mentoring; adult transitions; community engagement, home-school partnership; development, empowerment, and social justice.

We cannot guarantee all relevant publications were sourced and included in this review. Instead, it represents our best endeavours to include all published materials that could be located within the public domain and within the timeframe given for the work. Confidential materials not available in the public domain are, therefore, not covered by this review.

We did not include Pacific education research materials that were not directly relevant to the review's focus of Pacific visible; identities, languages, and cultures; Pacific wellbeing; 'Auala in - Access; and cultural bias and racism. Also, in a few instances, a publication was excluded if it was a non-substantive opinion piece that did not reference any evidence or documentation for stated opinions.

Full citations are included for each publication in the reference list at the end of this review.

## TITLES AND FRAMING OF THE THEMES

The five themes came from groupings developed from the talanoa voice drawn from the PowerUp evaluation. Pacific visible reflects the importance of Pacific communities seeing themselves in notions of success. Identities, languages and cultures is a theme that focuses on the importance of these aspects to Pacific parents and

their children. For example, role models and mentoring are most beneficial when it is Pacific for Pacific. 'Auala (Samoan for pathway, road) - Access describes the ways Pacific people can access schools, curriculum, knowledge, and other aspects of education. Cultural bias and racism acknowledges the talanoa that described many examples of negative forces experienced by Pacific people in schools and in their interactions through Pacific children's educational journeys. For learners, this was generally a matter of talanoa about their everyday school environments and relationships with teachers. Pacific wellbeing reflects the desire by parents, families, and communities for the visibility of a more holistic view of the levers that support achievement together with an acknowledgement of increasing issues including mental health and suicide within Pacific communities.

## PACIFIC AND MĀORI IN RESEARCH

Some of the research in this review reflects the experiences of both Pacific and Māori participants. In the past, the aggregation of Pacific and Māori in research may have been acceptable. However, as the literature has developed, the acceptability of this practice has been questioned. Recent literature has dealt with one population or the other, but a concerning trend is to aggregate communities that see themselves as distinct. Instead, because of the dynamic and diverse nature of Pacific ethnic communities and factors relating to post-migration generational difference, ethnic and generationally specific research is increasingly valuable. Although research must consider context, the ongoing viability of Pacific and Māori aggregation in research is limited. Pacific communities are also increasingly calling for, and participating in, ethnic-specific Pacific research (Airini et al., 2010).

## THE TERM PACIFIC

The umbrella term “Pacific” has been used by the New Zealand Government, agencies, educational institutions, and academics to describe the ethnic make-up of people migrating from the Pacific Islands to Aotearoa New Zealand (Cook, Didham, and Khawaja, 2001). Bedford and Didham (2001) state that the term “Pacific” has been commonly and widely used at all levels of society, including educators, policy makers, community workers, the media, and institutions. The use of the term has often led to broad generalisations about a group of people who are extremely diverse.

A foundational research document titled the Pasifika Education Research Guidelines (Anae et al., 2001), which was developed for the Ministry of Education in Aotearoa New Zealand, has provided one definition of Pacific people. At the time of development, it made reference to the six Pacific nations of Sāmoa, Tonga, Niue, the Cook Islands,

Tokelau, and Fiji. In this context, “Pacific people” is exclusive of Māori. In the broadest sense, it covers peoples from the Island Nations in the South Pacific and, in its narrowest sense, Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand. The research guidelines and other pieces of research work go on to clarify the issue of Pacific people as being a heterogeneous group with different inter- and intra-ethnic variations in culture. Variations include New Zealand-born and raised, island-born and raised Pacific people, and being recognised as diverse groups.

For the purposes of this review, we have used “Pacific”, rather than “Pacific Island” or “Pasifika”. We have used “Pacific” to mean people who can “trace descent to and/or are citizens of any of the territories commonly understood to be part of the Pacific (i.e., Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia)” (Davidson-Toumu’a, Teaiwa, Asmar, and Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2008, page 11). The use of the term Pacific in this way is in line with current Ministry of Education policy.





# Rationale for the Literature Review





# Rationale for the Literature Review



## RATIONALE FOR THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Communities, researchers, and education professionals who are concerned about enhancing Pacific education are faced with a good deal of literature. This review seeks to connect Pacific people and academic research by using the talanoa themes from Pacific parents, families, communities, and children as a focus.

Researchers in particular may find the reiteration visible in this review helpful in strengthening their ongoing focus, while communities and professionals will be able to base future actions on the patterns of findings and ideas that emerge.

A particular function of a review such as this is to provide a starting point for new thinking and actions, acknowledging the way literature moves forward as a body. In this way, greater depth and effectiveness are likely in future research. For example, current literature reflects the way Pacific parents are positioning themselves in relational closeness to educational institutions, a trend that itself creates a need for up-to-date information.

For educational institutions, the literature review lets people focus on what has been shown to be effective in Pacific education so that well meaning but potentially unhelpful pathways are avoided, and resources are positively concentrated into what works for Pacific learners.

A springboard for this review was the most recent relevant directional document, *Pasifika education research priorities: Using research to realise our vision for Pasifika learners* (Ministry of Education, 2012), which was published towards the

end of the currency of the fourth iteration of the Pasifika Education Plan (Ministry of Education, 2009). Priorities identified within the 2012 document were literacy and numeracy, family and community engagement, governance and leadership, transitions and effective teaching, and learning. While none of these priorities has ceased to be relevant, the involvement of families and communities in authentic partnerships in education has emerged as a central organising feature capable of supporting positive change in Pacific education. Thus, this focus underpins the current review. Although educators and other professionals contribute to education, research that will make the most difference is that which encourages all involved to follow effective pathways to partnership.

This review also offers alternative perspectives capable of undercutting the deficit thinking that can block the effectiveness of well-meaning individuals, groups, and initiatives. We hope the review will inspire those who want to rethink and remodel Pacific education through Pacific approaches. We hope it supports policy-makers to find deeper insights that move away from simplistic actions intended to make fast gains. An approach to data that includes more than one education sector can reveal deeper patterns of entrenched and often invisible practice, and point to innovative strengths-based actions and progress that can form the basis of future policy. Finally, it is important to focus Pacific education on a reciprocal relationship through which parents, families, and communities are equal partners with policy-makers, an endeavour from which everyone can benefit.

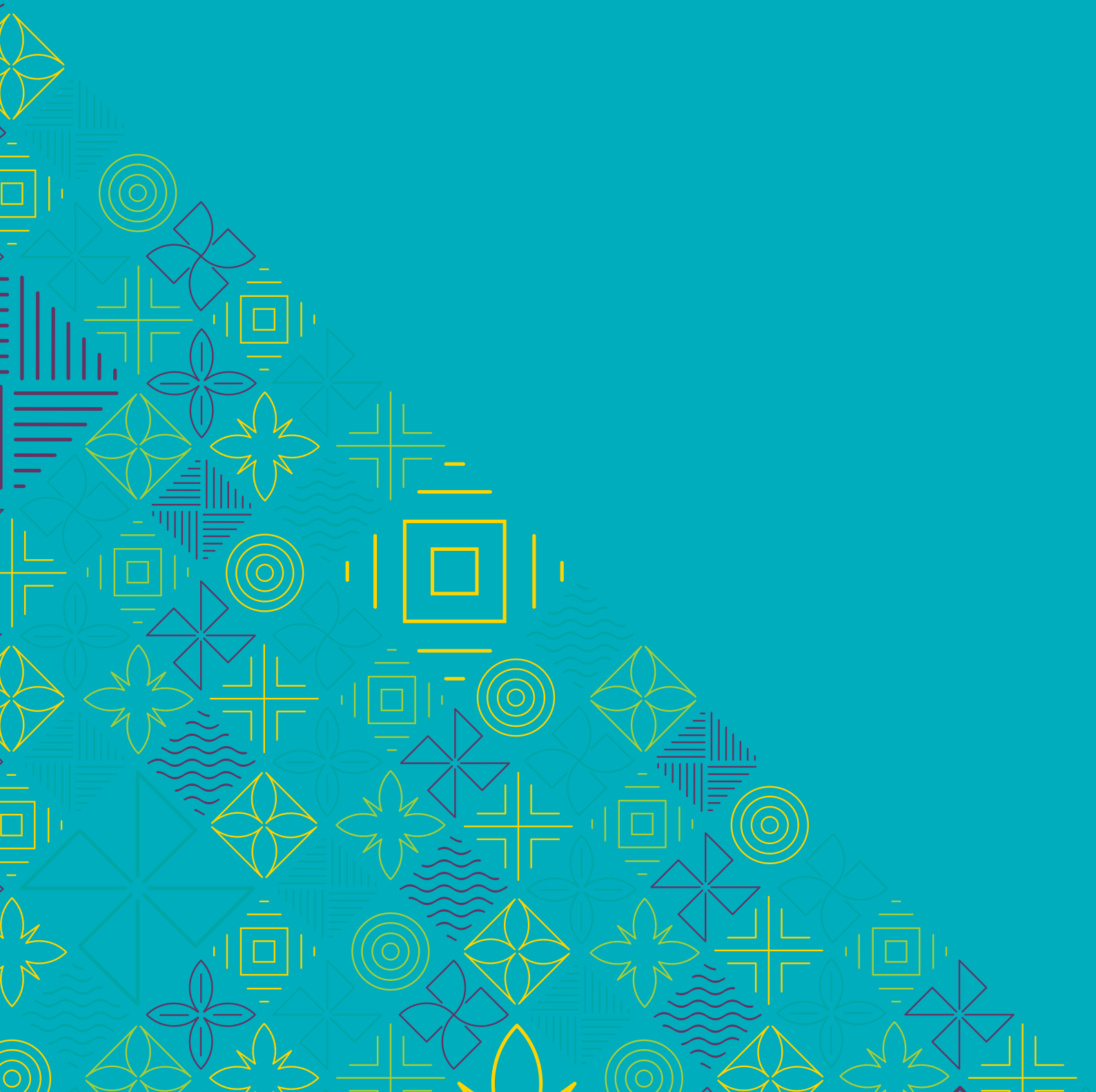


# Cross-theme Prefaces





# Cross-theme Prefaces





## PARENTS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES

At the core of Pacific education are learners, their parents, families, and communities as active agents in education. The literature gives an account of their involvement in multiple ways. Pacific communities have their own ideas about education, although questions remain about how visible these Pacific ideas are in educational (and research) contexts. Concepts such as success (Reynolds, 2017; Toumu'a, 2014), wellbeing (Manuela and Sibley, 2013; Verbiest et al., 2019) and giftedness (Faaea-Semeatu, 2011; Frengley-Vaipuna, Kupu-MacIntyre, and Riley, 2011) have been expressed through Pacific thinking. Pacific values provide a source of knowledge for education, for instance, in the areas of relationships (Airini et al., 2010; Māhina, 2008; Mila-Schaaf and Robinson, 2010) and how to understand education as a social resource (Fa'avae, 2017) framed by culture (Akeripa, 2017; Fa'avae, 2017; Lipine, 2010) including reference to faith (Lipine, 2010; Siopé, 2011). Pacific communities also have views about the purpose of education and how it should be conducted (Leauepepe and Sauni, 2014).

In addition, Pacific parents seek involvement in all levels of their children's education (Chu, Abella, and Paurini, 2013; Flavell, 2014; Fletcher, Parkhill, Taleni, Fa'afoi, and O'Regan, 2009; Lipine, 2010; Paulsen, 2018; Reynolds, 2017; Towner, Taumoepeau, Lal, and Pranish, 2017). Peer relationships are a salient supportive feature of Pacific visible and success in Pacific education (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014; Reynolds, 2018b; Rimoni, 2016). Indeed, social structures in education that operate like Pacific families are also helpful to Pacific students (Chu, Abella, et al., 2013; Hunter et al., 2016; Wilson et al., 2011). Throughout this literature review, relationships between parents, families, communities, and schools are ubiquitous. They are a testament to the central place of education within the migrant dream (Mila-Schaaf and Robinson, 2010).



## EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS AS PARTNERS

As partners with students, parents, families and communities, educational professionals are significant in Pacific education. When professionals understand Pacific education as a partnership (Laumemea, 2018; Mitchell, 2014), progress is likely. An important factor in Pacific education is teacher behaviour that is positive and aspirational for Pacific students (Lipine, 2010; Nicholas and Fletcher, 2017; Siope, 2011; Toumu'a and Laban, 2014).

Teachers who contextually interrogate concepts to make visible and embrace Pacific ways of thinking can develop new ways of working. In addition, educationalists who develop or participate in appropriate Pacific support programmes are of value to Pacific students (Beatson, Seiuli, Patterson, Griffiths, and Wilson, 2018; Chu, Abella, et al., 2013; Noonan, Bullen, and Farruggia, 2012; Richardson et al., 2018; Wilson et al., 2011). The roles of parents and communities are also honoured when schools and other institutions respectfully facilitate their increased access to learners' education (Chu, 2009; McDonald and Lipine, 2012; Mitchell, 2014) and when professionals have an appreciation of the negotiations between two worlds undertaken by their Pacific students (Lipine, 2010; Marat et al., 2011; Paulsen, 2018; Reynolds, 2017; Si'ilata, 2014). Effective tone and direction-setting educational leadership (Cardno, Handjani, and Howse, 2018; Patterson, 2012; Spee, Toumu'a, Oakden, Sauni, and Tuagalu, 2014) has an important supporting role for educational professionals in their partnership with Pacific parents, families, and communities.

## CROSS THEMES AND POWERUP

The PowerUP evaluations (Oakden, 2017, 2019; Oakden and Kennedy, 2018, 2019) draw attention to the partnerships involved in Pacific education. Pacific parents, families, and communities bring their knowledge of Pacific culture including world views, language, and concepts. Teachers bring a knowledge of education that should be shared with the Pacific parents, families, and communities that support Pacific learners. Pacific students bring their developing identity, natural curiosity, and potential to learn. In an appropriate environment of well-configured respectful relationships, this partnership has the potential to provide Pacific learners with what they need to be the best they can, contributing to families, communities, schools, and the wider society of Aotearoa New Zealand.

# Theme One:

Pacific Visible



# Theme One:

Pacific Visible





Pacific visible involves:

- » the acknowledgement and valuing of Pacific presence in education
- » the centrality of Pacific concepts through which to understand Pacific education
- » embracing Pacific concepts of success that:
  - › are holistic and therefore wide
  - › do not necessarily sit comfortably with Euro-centric ideas of success
- » understanding that Pacific success is intergenerational
- » adopting relational lenses that lead to the enhancement and visibility of Pacific success
- » effective home-school and teacher-learner relationships
- » aspects of institutional life that visibly align with Pacific practices.

However, when education does not acknowledge and value the Pacific presence in education, barriers to progress exist.





Pacific visible is a term that came from the many Pacific PowerUP evaluation talanoa. It therefore acknowledges and values the Pacific presence in education. In addition, literature that relates the Pacific voice to a wider audience of educators, researchers, and policy-makers is an act of acknowledgment that values what Pacific people have to say.

Being visible is a matter of something being seen, not just existing. For Pacific students, it means being valued for who they are. In cultural terms, it encompasses education and educators placing value on Pacific view points. Pacific people have ideas and beliefs that are relevant to education but that may not have been fully recognised or acknowledged in education or the wider society of Aotearoa New Zealand. Listening to people's voices is a way of bringing to the surface what the majority culture and discourse may act to submerge. Hearing what people have to say is an opportunity to learn what matters to them. This involves welcoming Pacific people as active participants in the education of the children of today. Pacific parents, communities, and students wish to be fully visible and valued in the education system.

For this review, as a way of articulating and focusing ideas of Pacific visible, attention to Pacific notions of success was central. Success is a subjective matter because it involves the achievement of goals. What one group may see as success, another may value lightly. In education, where success

and measurable achievement are often conflated, particularly where institutions set goals based on reportable achievement statistics, this has universalising tendencies. However, the literature of Pacific success proposes many forms of interlinked success that include, but are not restricted to, achievement. Making these visible has the effect of valuing the presence of Pacific people as participants in education. Pacific visibility in education involves understanding and valuing what is unique about Pacific people.

In the literature of Pacific education, Pacific ideas of success include achievement but are also framed as social and intergenerational, and not confined to the individual. Factors that contribute to Pacific forms of success include giving attention to home-school relationships through the recognition of the significance of culture and language, and student-teacher relationships. The importance of relationships to Pacific people can be deliberately supported by teachers learning about Pacific children, their homes, and culture, and by having high expectations of Pacific students. These factors are connected through a holistic approach to success that embeds individual students in their families and communities, and individual teachers in their institutions and systems. The literature indicates these areas are pertinent regardless of sector. Attention to relationality, the state of being related, also emerges as a consistent theme in the literature of Pacific success.

## VISIBILITY OF PACIFIC SUCCESS AS A WIDE CONCEPT

The voices of Pacific learners, families, and communities are present in much of the research that deals with the visibility of Pacific notions of success. Nakhid (2003), for instance, made an early contribution to the discussion about how Pacific learners are seen and understood in education. The voices of Pacific learners in Nakhid's work clearly stated a desire for success as Pacific, for being visible. Nakhid used the metaphor of a school photograph to indicate both the desire of Pacific learners to be represented as themselves and their general absence from such images. Many writers in the field (e.g., Mayeda, Keil, Dutton, and Ofamo'oni, 2014; Naepi, Stein, Ahenakew, and de Oliveira Andreotti, 2017; Nakhid, 2003; Reynolds, 2017; Santamaría, Webber, Santamaría, and Dam, 2015) suggest the potential of critical race theory to articulate the processes that govern visibility and invisibility in cases such as that of Pacific people in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The work of Anae (2010) builds on the idea of what it might mean to be Pacific in education, suggesting that a transformational agenda for the field be built on Pacific ideas. Anae discusses *teu le vā*, a Samoan reference for caring for relational spaces, in this case, the space of education cared for in part by acknowledging Pacific communities through increased visibility while embracing their complexity. This strand of literature, which enhances Pacific visibility as a result of foregrounding the Pacific concepts that constitute visibility, is growing (Airini et al., 2010; Anae, 2016, 2019; Coxon and Samu, 2010; Kennedy, 2019; Mara, 2011, 2013; McFall-McCaffery, 2010; Reynolds, 2016, 2018b, 2019; Toso, 2011). A parallel body of literature that alludes to the Tongan concept of *tauhi vā* also exists (Fa'avae, 2017; Fonua, 2018; Māhina, 2008) through which caring for socio-spatial relations takes place (Ka'ili, 2005).

A report from Treasury (2018) provides a further opportunity to appreciate and make visible the breadth of Pacific concepts of success. In the report, a wide Pacific view includes the visibility of cultural dimensions of wealth and prosperity, along with standard measures of financial success, and various broad measures such as happiness, safety, knowledge, being healthy, and faith. Significantly for this context, education is discussed in the report as a form of success that redefines "more traditional Eurocentric [sic] narratives about economic prosperity" (page 4) that have the potential to silence or make invisible Pacific accounts.

A further aspect of the breadth of Pacific success is intergenerational success. This means the visibility of success achieved not only as an individual but as part of an educational journey over more than one generation. The Graduate Longitudinal Study New Zealand (see Tustin et al., 2012) and Theodore et al. (2018) conducted a statistical analysis of Māori and Pacific student outcomes through a lens of success as the private and social benefits of university graduation. Private benefits concern financial matters and are associated with employment; social benefits involve various forms of social capital such as helping family and volunteering. The study's intent was to inform policy by recognising ethnicity as a factor in the post-graduation distribution of both kinds of benefits.

Generally, inequities exist in national employment rates for Pacific and Māori groups. However, the overarching finding of Theodore et al. (2018) is that a New Zealand university education is associated with a broad range of benefits such that, at two years post-graduation, employment rates for Pacific and Māori graduates are comparable to other ethnicities. Pacific graduates appeared to contribute significantly to social benefits, a finding speculatively explained by the researchers as the result of cultural obligations, concepts of reciprocity and attention to collective benefit.

The significance of both kinds of post-graduation benefit is heightened by generally lower entry rates of Pacific and Māori students to universities. This means that, although benefits may accrue through study, there are restrictions on their distribution by entry.

Theodore et al. (2018) also reveal that Pacific and Māori graduates take on more state-sponsored debt than other groups to attend tertiary study and experience less comfortable financial circumstances during study. Aspects of this persist over time, extending at least two years post-graduation. One possible explanation given is the responsibility Pacific and Māori students may have for social and community support. The researchers refer to other literature that shows not all government policies support the thrust of equity funding, indicating a lack of alignment in initiatives and intents. Thus, while a significant

finding of the study is that ethnic inequities in the labour market can be reduced intergenerationally, by boosting Pacific and Māori students' success in completing higher education, a complex intergenerational reading is required to appreciate the factors that shape access, success, and consequent outcomes.

Toumu'a (2014) advocates for the recognition of a wide basket of interconnected forms of Pacific educational success in the adult sector. By combining data from a literature review, a Pacific consultation group, and a wider online survey, Toumu'a sought to find and describe collective ideas about literacy, success, and the links between these. The relationship between Pacific cultures, languages and identities, the aspirations Pacific people have of literacy and a literate person, and the contribution Pacific forms of literacy make to success as Pacific all feature in the study.



The research by Toumu'a (2014) reveals conceptualisations of literacy and success in the Pacific community to be broad and holistic when compared with internationally prevalent definitions. While reading and writing feature, these skills are insufficient to develop the kind of culturally-rich, relationally-focused, multi-modal, holistic literacy that Pacific respondents desire. In addition, a narrow range of reading and writing skills does not support a transformative, holistic, culturally-understood, family-focused understanding of success. These findings add to perspectives on economic forms of success by embracing a socio-cultural perspective. Toumu'a refers to the need to unpack constructions of success at the interface of cultures in Pacific education so the material and non-material dimensions of what it means to find success as Pacific become more widely understood. This is a call for Pacific visibility in the construction of success in education.

In the secondary sector, Reynolds (2017) also found various interconnected forms of success in Pacific education. The student voice paints a picture of success as a processual matter featuring multiple forms. These both stand alone and relate to each other in causal or directional ways. This study takes a relational lens to education and is supported by the Pacific cultural references to *vā*, a spatial metaphor of relationships, and the Tongan cultural reference of *poto*, a relational understanding of wisdom. Forms of Pacific success in the study include: being accepted for who one is as a student and cultural Pacific person; comfort, an environmental form of success informed by the quality of relationships in a space; participation in education, including by risk taking – a kind of success made more likely by a comfortable environment; relational resilience, which can be resourced by peer, family, and school relationships, particularly when these align; and academic achievement.

The model of Pacific success in Reynolds (2017) unpacks the processes that can lead to achievement and completion by focusing on the day-to-day reality of education as it is experienced by Pacific students. This perspective offers considerable agency to teachers and institutions to modify their thinking and behaviour. Teachers can, for example, monitor participation as a form of visible Pacific success on a lesson-by-lesson basis, paying attention to the way various teaching approaches promote Pacific students' participation and learning. Similarly, teachers and institutions can reimagine the relational language they use to deliberately signal the acceptance of Pacific students and high expectations of their potential, ensuring Pacific students are visible in pedagogical endeavours.

A relational understanding of education also asks questions of how schools understand and enact a focus on the individual Pacific student, peer group, family units, and the community. Reynolds (2017) suggests that, by considering success through cultural references such as the Samoan concept of *teu le vā*, schools and educators may enhance their abilities to see, understand, and support a wide basket of Pacific success. This takes a nuanced approach to recognising which relationships are significant and which kinds of care are possible to give to them.

Alkema (2014) extends ideas of Pacific success beyond the compulsory education sector in an informative way. The discussion looks at what Pacific adults understand by success. Again, this is a wide basket of related and integrated items. Alkema shows how people, places, and practices and pedagogies come together to support Pacific people in gaining the successes they seek. Educators who support Pacific people through holistic, collaborative, and relational means and most likely to be effective.





RUSSELL



## HOME-SCHOOL AND TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

Fletcher et al. (2009) make visible the factors that have a positive impact on Pacific students' literacy, language, and learning in the primary and intermediate sector. Using parent and teacher voices as data, this work builds on a previous study (Fletcher, Parkhill, and Fa'afoi, 2005) of Pacific students in Years 6 to 9 that revealed parental love and support, identity, high expectations from parents and teachers, and well-founded home-school relationships all contribute to Pacific educational success.

Recognition of students' first language by the school emerges in Fletcher et al. (2009) as a factor in Pacific students' success, as does the valuing and validation by teachers and schools of other aspects of students' culture. This involves the degree to which Pacific culture is visible and integrated into school programmes. In addition, both Pacific parents and teachers of Pacific children described home-school relationships as crucial in ensuring Pacific students' success in school. In these ways, the importance to education of recognising what it means to be Pacific is enhanced.

Despite these findings, the account of success offered by Fletcher et al. (2009) is conditional. Teachers report maintaining home-school relationships is not always easy; some Pacific parents keep their distance from the school; some parents value being able to approach the school in their first language, possibly through an intermediary such as a member of their church. The essence of these findings is echoed in the voices of Pacific parents in Tuafuti (2010).

With specific reference to literacy, Fletcher et al. (2009) reveal that teachers recognise the decoding of words as a strength of Pacific students that is unmatched by their capability in comprehension. Speculative explanations given by teachers for this include Pacific parents' time-heavy work and cultural commitments that restrict high-quality discourse between adults and children.

Teachers in Fletcher et al. (2009) perceive Pacific students as being risk-averse in the classroom. The researchers account for a lack of risk-taking in reading through Pacific students' unfamiliarity with content, compounded by a dislike of public exposure. Fletcher et al. (2005) report that some school environments may not provide a space where Pacific social behavioural expectations are easily accommodated. For instance, noisy classrooms may demand competition for teacher attention so quiet respectful students miss out. Despite these factors, the researchers report a consensus amongst teachers and parents that success, characterised by literacy learning, "is likely to be enhanced when Pacific values, languages, and cultural knowledge are made an implicit part of teaching and learning practices throughout the school" (Fletcher et al., 2009, page 32). Where the value placed on things Pacific is visible to Pacific learners, they are likely to flourish.

Nicholas and Fletcher (2017) found that visibly high teacher expectations of Pacific students are a significant factor in Pacific success in secondary education. Mathematics as a curriculum area in the secondary sector is of general concern. The decline in mathematics attainment in Years 7 to 8 in Pacific students is particularly problematic. To investigate this, Nicholas and Fletcher gathered data from one-on-one interviews with educators and parents associated with students deemed to have been relatively successful in avoiding this pattern of decline.

Key findings of Nicholas and Fletcher (2017) include the importance of cultural congruence between home and school, and the visible valuing of all cultures within mathematics classrooms. In addition, they report the significance of quality teaching and high expectations for all, particularly where the greatest gains are understood by teachers to be likely for low-achieving Pacific and other minority students. To make the best of Pacific students' potential in mathematics, the researchers suggest time, resources, and language support are offered when needed. These findings reveal a mix of cultural concerns, resourcing issues, including of the main resource of time, and attitudinal matters. Teacher attitudes to Pacific learners are also significant, especially when they are less successful than other students at the start of a programme. This combination is reflected elsewhere in the literature.

Lipine (2010) examined achievements of Samoan secondary students in Aotearoa New Zealand in six low decile secondary schools. The findings focus on the significance of the "āiga" or extended family to education. A model of success emerges that includes students' passion to achieve and their capacity to deal with inconsistencies in a variety of unaligned cultural understandings. This holistic approach to success is also informed by influences such as church, peer support, school influences, and recreational and sporting influences. A holistic approach to success makes visible Pacific community strengths. In addition, Pacific students' experiences of success can be affected by their teachers' approach to learning, their understanding of Samoan students, the effects of learning approaches, and policy. What it means to be Samoan, and how that is recognised and appreciated by teachers, is therefore significant.

Lipine (2010) suggests that understanding the relevance of family values in the schooling of Samoan secondary students is an educational opportunity for those

involved in education. Dealing with the often contradictory relationship between fa'asāmoa (the Samoan way) and fa'apālagi (the European way) is a unique aspect of Samoan students' education in Aotearoa New Zealand. Exploring values in this context is significant not only intergenerationally but also interculturally: teachers' cultural knowledge should be framed responsively to take account of heterogeneity among Samoan students. Lipine indicates that the interplay between culture, family, religion, and other social areas of life and the education of Samoan students deserves to be visible in education.

Fasavalu (2015) provides a counter narrative to stereotypical ideas of Pacific non-achievement in secondary education by presenting the voices of students who achieve well. An important finding is that a positive experience of education involves interaction with teachers who have a sense of their own and their Pacific students' agency. However, effective teachers who support students' cultural and academic identities are an exception, not the rule. Fasavalu points to the need for teacher education to pay attention to the importance of preparing teachers for Pacific academic success. An aspect of this is the visibility of Pacific learners in education, not just as students but as cultural people with family and community resources and potential.

A qualitative study conducted by Tait, Horsley, and Tait (2016) of five Pacific students sought to investigate the way students understand the value of tasks set at the New Zealand Scholarship (NZS) level. The NZS is a competitive examination generally sat in addition to other examinations by students studying at National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 3. The examination has a modest uptake when compared with other evaluation systems at the secondary level. Although this study has no Pacific theorisation or conceptualisation in its framework, findings suggest the value of examining what students attribute

success to but also what they see as success. The study suggests that ideas of success and failure are limited to the grade achieved in an examination, which provides an insufficient account of the complex motivations and actions of Pacific students. The study raises the question of how to make more visible those aspects of being Pacific that feed motivation in education so potential strengths are garnered and leveraged.

Tait et al. (2016) suggest alternative ideas about factors affecting Pacific success, which include the risk of public failure, the relative attributional importance of skill and hard work, and relational factors between students, teachers, and parents. For example, the interest value of NZS for Pacific students is enhanced by “strong teacher-student relationships” (page 53) in which students perceived that teachers value students’ efforts. In this context, successful relationships involve trust. Affective relational descriptors of this nature can be found elsewhere in the literature (e.g., Richardson et al., 2018). As a way of introducing Pacific epistemology into Pacific-focused research, attention to the literature of *teu le vā* is one way to bring Pacific visibility to relational matters in education.

Chu, Abella, et al. (2013) researched examples of success in Pacific education from the tertiary sector. Methodologies used included *talanoa* and appreciative inquiry (AI). Three broad themes and sets of sub-themes emerge from their work. One significant theme is the importance of family support in education. This combines a student’s personal commitment to success with institutional practices and family like structures. These embody a learning village focused on relational care and support. A second theme focuses on teaching and learning relationships that involve mutual respect, recognition of cultural identity and aspiration, provision of Pacific spaces, peer support, and high expectation. Finally, institutional commitment is important. This includes the visibility of significant Pacific role models, leadership that is effective in supporting Pacific students and Pacific oriented initiatives, and active institutional engagement with Pacific communities. These themes re-articulate the relationships between individuals, families, communities, teachers, institutions, and success found elsewhere, offering a layered and holistic understanding of how to build concepts of Pacific success that confound a narrow focus on student, teacher, or institution.

Also in the tertiary sector, Marat et al. (2011) undertook a mixed methods study involving Pacific student and parent voices to assess students' self-efficacy in learning strategies likely to lead to success in study. Marat et al. used a multi-dimensional concept of self-efficacy that involves a personal, proxy, and collective agency. Findings include high levels of efficacy reported by Pacific tertiary students. Significantly, the agency and perceptions of success they reported are often collective in nature, featuring self- and family responsibilities as arenas for success.

Marat et al. (2011) propose important forward-looking strategies. These include explicit statements by institutions of the kinds of learning strategies most useful for students. For example, visible support for goal setting, self-regulation and review rendered in culturally appropriate ways; a collective staff approach to responsibility for student achievement; the ongoing development of ways to support close home-institution links; and the propagation of culturally responsive assessment strategies that value different ways of being. Taken together, these strategies point to the value of explicit descriptions of what is expected of success in teaching and learning. For Pacific students who are seeking to live successfully in two worlds, as described by Lipine (2010) and others (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014; Mila-Schaaf and Robinson, 2010), the shifting of important information from tacit to explicit domains can reduce disparities related to differences in background of educational access and achievement. The strategies suggested by Marat et al. offer a relational approach to Pacific students' success by understanding self-efficacy as socio-centric. This in turn suggests the adoption of a relational lens in matters of pedagogy, assessment, and the definition of success in Pacific education – a move likely to make visible the relationships that form Pacific students' resources as they seek success in education.

## INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES TO SUPPORT SUCCESS

Institutional attempts to promote success through deliberate relational means are described in the literature. Wilson et al. (2011), for example, describe the Āwhina support programme developed by one tertiary institution as a strategy within science, technology, engineering, and mathematics subjects to support Māori and Pacific students, many of whom are first-in-family or first-in-science at university. In programmes of this nature, Pacific visible is not limited to attendance but can also be seen in the underpinning relational values that structure the engagements that take place through the programme.

The Āwhina support programme is an on-off campus approach that includes mentoring in which students can act as mentee and/or mentor; outreach; tutoring sessions; high expectations of achievement; the cultivation of aspiration for further study; and collective senses of success and reciprocity. The Āwhina programme's intention is to provide an interface for te ao Māori, the Pacific world, and Western science within which Māori and Pacific students will flourish. Initial results suggested enrolments, completion, and student perceptions validate the approach. However, Wilson et al. (2011) signal a need to find confirmatory data to make more robust claims for the programme.

In a follow-up study, Richardson et al. (2018) report that a measurable positive outcome, an "Āwhina effect", may exist as a result of the Āwhina programme. The researchers sought to establish this through an examination of relative completion rates, but tempered any definitive claim with statistical and contextual caveats. Despite this, Richardson et al. recommend the extension of similar programmes across the tertiary sector, suggesting that culturally appropriate values-based programmes are likely to produce higher achievement rates

than other ad hoc equity programmes. This claim emphasises the need to highlight the values that underpin programme structures and activities as ways of thinking about resources and success. However, as the researchers note, more work is required in this area.

The potential of institutionally-organised values-driven group support to encourage various forms of Pacific success is also reported by Beatson et al. (2018). This small-scale study focuses on the experience of being a Pacific student in midwifery education. Findings include the challenges students face fitting into a course and institution; reticence to ask for help from potentially inappropriate support structures; the significance of determination; and the motivational effect on Pacific students of a desire to work with Pacific women. Pacific students also describe the experience of their course by referring to a support group, ākongā, as significant as a space in which to develop relationships. Other findings include a preference for face-to-face learning; the value of connections and belonging; collectivism as a way of approaching study and life in general; and, negatively, the costs of study and difficulties with modes of assessment.

Although the research by Beatson et al. (2018) is limited by sample size, it presents important themes of Pacific success. The importance of belonging, which involves the positive acceptance of a person's identity, is reported elsewhere (Fletcher et al., 2009; Patterson, 2012; Reynolds, 2018b), as is the importance of appropriate values to underpin support programmes (Richardson et al., 2018). What Alkema (2014) refers to as a learning village approach, one where relationships are crucial, is valued by students in Beatson et al. Finally, success for the three students in the study is family and community success not individual success, a strand of thinking that offers the possibility to institutions of re-linguaging and reconceptualising their approach to making Pacific success visible (Reynolds, 2017, 2018b). Research of this nature provides opportunities to make clear the cultural aspects of educational experience and motivation, emphasising the communitarian nature of successful educational experiences and of motivation for many Pacific people.



## ALIGNMENT TO ENCOURAGE SUCCESS

Patterson (2012) investigated Pacific and Māori students' ideas about success in the tertiary sector. The investigation focuses on two strands: what success is, and practices by which it may be pursued. In the first strand, Patterson made visible pastoral categories of Pacific success that include feeling loved, being confident in being Pacific, being part of a community, having friends with similar academic goals, contributing through participating in the life of the institution, and making one's family proud. Academic success includes developing skills to support confidence in academic progress, positive interactions with academic staff, understanding the work, and feeling happy and safe in the institution's environment. Recurrent themes in the literature from this strand include the importance of the tone of the environment in which Pacific students study (Wilson et al., 2011), belonging (Fletcher et al., 2009; Patterson, 2012; Reynolds, 2018b), success as participation (Reynolds, 2017) and the importance of both the peer group and family (Rimoni, 2016).

The specific focus of Patterson (2012) is non-lecture contexts within the first year of a bachelor's degree course. Sixteen practices promise support to Pacific success. These include: engaging learners one to one; peer groups as an encouraging space for cultural growth and belonging; the facility of individual students to prepare for new levels of thinking; and the provision by support services of a learning space congruent with culturally valued practices. In addition, echoing Beatson et al. (2018), the availability of culturally appropriate support staff as members of the institution can be important. Appropriateness here might include Pacific for Pacific support. Thus, the potential to support success exists across academic staff, families, peers, the self, and support services. This combination highlights the idea that Pacific success is not the responsibility of one group or individual but is best seen in a

holistic way. As a consequence, alignment between the aims, intentions, and values of those people and spaces that aim to support Pacific students is at a premium. Consequently, actions to build alignment based on Pacific ideas and practices are valuable.

A holistic understanding of success also values alignment between institutions. Sanner and Deis (2009) provide an example from the United States of America of inter-school collaboration supporting the success of minority groups. Key ingredients include joint measures, such as: improving advertisement of support services; improving understanding of student demographics; the development of strategies leading to student success; deliberate attention to success; and giving students a second chance. Evaluative measures applied to these initiatives include increases in the numbers of minority students willing to access support services, the effect of diagnostic skill testing and measures to eradicate gaps, and student learning. Sanner and Deis give credit to institutional collaboration for supporting continuous institutional attention to past progress and future needs informed by input from students, staff, and administrators.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, collaborative relationships between faculties in tertiary institutions and between schools in the compulsory education sector, possibly supported by Kāhui Ako/Communities of Learning structures (Ministry of Education, 2019), may potentially leverage aligned strategies that place agency for Pacific students' success in groups of institutions. This has particular potential when collaborative institutional relationships reflect the potential learning pathways of students and are founded on Pacific visible.

Towner et al. (2017) detail ideas about Pacific success in a private training institute (PTE), a highly relevant educational context for this review because large numbers of Pacific tertiary students study in PTEs

(Ministry of Education, 2011). In accounting for success as higher than average completion rates for Pacific students, the researchers sought the student voice that focused on initiatives within the institution. Initiatives included: targeted workshops; successful senior students as study buddies; staff-supported evening study sessions; occasional whānau social celebration evenings; extra tutorials; and one-to-one student-staff sessions. Since most respondents were Tongan, this is, in effect, a single ethnicity study. Towner et al. report that students attribute educational success to support in study skills, the building of high-trust relationships, a supportive environment, and study buddies. Trust, as a key theme in this study, is centred on students' relationships with

open and approachable staff. In addition, a deep connection with the PTE through involvement in culturally familiar and acceptable events can support pride in belonging.

These findings suggest the significance of relational activity by staff, and the importance of time, opportunities, and structure are enablers for this. The study resonates with Richardson et al. (2018) in suggesting that not all equity-oriented initiatives are equally effective. The findings of Towner et al. (2017) place emphasis on understanding success in Pacific education through a focus on the individual and collective, echoing the student voice at the secondary level in Reynolds (2018b) and elsewhere.



## PEER RELATIONSHIPS AND SUCCESS

Reynolds (2018b) discusses the visibility of Pacific peer groups as being important to various forms of Pacific success. In general, Pacific peer group interaction is not a focus in Pacific education research. Increased appreciation of the visibility of Pacific relational strengths expressed in peer situations is, therefore, an area with great potential. Acceptance by peers is a form of success because it validates a student for who they are as a Pacific person, and what they might achieve (Nakhid, 2003). Students in this study describe their peer body as brothers, a collective term also found elsewhere (Rimoni, 2016; N. P. Samu, 2015) as a site for acceptance of success and relational resilience.

Reynolds (2018b) reports that competing forms of success, Pacific and otherwise, in education can construct moments of choice. For instance, success in conforming to media-supported (Loto et al., 2006) negative stereotypes of Pacific people can be in conflict with Pacific success as academic prowess. In such cases, because the identity of the brotherhood and its ability to support success is affected by external representations and related negative expectations, responsibility is placed on schools to be deliberate in the way they care for their relationships with the Pacific group(s) as well as with individual Pacific students. This raises the question of the extent to which schools *teu le vā*, or care, for their relationships with the Pacific collective, and in what areas: academic, sporting, and/or cultural? In other words, the pervasiveness of factors that produce minoritisation demands that schools counter negative messages and cultivate success as acceptance of Pacific students for who they are; inaction constitutes relational disregard for the group.

Kele (2018), in a Solomon Islands study, reiterates the value to educational success of peer interaction and effective student-teacher relationships for students from Pacific Island cultures. Findings include the value of peer support to progress in mathematics; the significance of teachers listening to students about what is helpful to their learning; and the need for teachers to reflect, review, and responsively re-examine their classroom approaches. Relational matters, including peer support, appear key to mathematical progress in the Solomon Islands context, a society that, like many Pacific communities in Aotearoa New Zealand, has a communal focus. In this study, teacher behaviour that expresses care and connection, when legitimised by a role description focused on responding to students, offers students an opportunity to find their place in mathematics.

Similarly, in research set in Hawaii, but applicable to distance education in other Pacific nations, Rao and Giuli (2010) highlight the significance to Pacific students of synchronous meetings that bring people together even if through virtual means; the appointment of staff whose relationships with students will last the whole course; and considerations of students' home lives when considering course structure and expectations. Such thinking echoes New Zealand literature (Averill, 2009; Fonua, 2018) and highlights the potential of educational strategies that deliberately align with the values of those intended as the beneficiaries of the process. In the context of Pacific education, this implies the visibility of Pacific values.





## RELATIONAL SPACES

Fa'avae (2017) discusses the education of Tongan males in the context of community. He shows how the extended family and elders are central to comprehending Tongan students' motivations and achievement. Fa'avae encourages researchers and practitioners to use Pacific concepts to understand the dynamics of Pacific social life so that education can be reframed as learning about the self in relationships with others. Challenges to education identified by Fa'avae include aligning cultural models of school leadership with those in communities, encouraging the identification of collective goals, and using strategies and structures that are recognisable to students because they reflect community practice. An important aspect of this study is a focus on relational matters through tauhi vā, caring for sacred relational spaces. This is a navigation that extends beyond student-teacher relationships and into all relationships in education, including those involving parents, families, communities, and schools.

Reynolds (2018a) examined educational environments at the classroom level, seeking, through the application of the Pacific concept of vā, to account for the relationships that contribute to Pacific success. Teacher-student relationships in Pacific education have been understood as a function of an individual teacher's disposition (cf. Hawk, Cowley, Hill, and Sutherland, 2002). A contrasting vā-based approach makes visible a cultural and spatial understanding of how such relationships can be understood.

Findings suggest that thinking about aspects of relationships in spatial terms, such as proximity, education as a gift given in the educational space, and classrooms as wide and potentially threatening spaces, can help teachers construct alternative ways of behaving that are valued by Pacific students. Such thinking offers a Pacific-theorised account of the risk averseness (Fletcher et al., 2009; Tait et al., 2016) of Pacific students

in public spaces, and of the relational value of one-to-one encounters (Averill, 2009; Patterson, 2012; Towner et al., 2017) between Pacific learners and their teachers or mentors. The benefits of understanding Pacific education through Pacific conceptualisations, including methodology, have been recognised elsewhere (Wikaire et al., 2017).

Classroom space and pedagogy were examined by Abella (2016, 2018). She studied a successful Pacific teacher's approach in a low decile school as a case study. Mapping artefacts for learning, such as information technology (IT) hardware and software, Abella found that the teacher constructed her pedagogical approaches in response to student need and circumstances. For instance, the teacher integrated mathematics into other subjects or everyday life as experienced by students, and acknowledged the time of day in expectations and teaching approach. Effective strategies included high teacher expectations of students, a reworking of space to create communal elements but also to encourage independent learning, and visual representations relevant to Pacific (and other) learners. Constraints on the teacher's effectiveness observed by Abella included limited availability of IT hardware, particularly for homework, low levels of literacy, large class sizes, and a lack of Pacific elements in the curriculum provided by the school and education system generally. The teacher in the study identified professional learning and development as an area of need, particularly relating to technology and pedagogies made possible by technology. Abella points to the interface between a teacher, their understandings, tools, and actions in educational spaces as an important area for study, particularly when integrated with other environmental factors in the day-to-day enactment of education. An approach that looks at what happens in the relational space of a classroom offers an opportunity to understand more of the factors involved in creating success in Pacific education.



In her doctoral dissertation, Averill (2009) examined teacher–student relationships in classrooms of schools characterised by low socio-economic circumstances. In the research, positive classroom spaces feature care. Averill identified that dispositional aspects, such as liking, respect, mutual tolerance, and being able to express one’s identity are those that support caring relationships. This is true if mutual connections as people and learners, knowledge about relevant cultures, and the enhancement of identity are present. Averill reports that care-based pedagogical practices include one-to-one teacher–student interactions, opportunities for sharing one’s identity, expectations of progress in mathematics, and humour. These findings sit well with other studies that value close relational contact (Tait et al., 2016), high expectations (Fletcher et al., 2005; Nicholas and Fletcher, 2017), and the giving of the self (Reynolds, 2018a).

Hill, Hunter, and Hunter (2019) discuss utility, peer collaboration or group work, effort and practice, and family support as Pacific students’ four top-ranked mathematics educational values. Utility focuses on the perceived value of mathematics to wider life, either in day-to-day activities or as support for a career. This highlights the importance of teachers providing authentic learning opportunities for students from all cultural groups. The researchers link peer collaboration to ideas of reciprocity and collectivism as Pacific cultural values. The value given by students to effort suggests they see success and understanding in mathematics as a result of hard work. This finding has implications where low expectations, based on the perceived laziness of Pacific students, exist. The finding that Pacific students value the active involvement of their family in mathematics learning counteracts ideas that Pacific parents either do not care (Nakhid, 2006) or lack the skills to care effectively (Turner, Rubie-Davies, and Webber, 2013). An implication of this study for Pacific education

is that effective classroom relationships are those that make space for Pacific learners’ lives, parents, families, and communities.

In the specific cultural space of a music conservatory, Rakena, Airini, and Brown (2016) examined the dynamic of student–teacher relationships practised through the dyad of novice–expert. They report Māori and Pacific students to be fluent in discussing power relationships in micro and macro contexts in their music education. This includes how teaching norms affects students’ ability to study and the wider consequences of pedagogy. For instance, actions and dialogues that devalue a student’s culture can lead to feelings of marginalisation. In addition, students report that their ideas of appropriateness, presentation, and communication can challenge the institution, potentially with negative consequences. The researchers conclude that coping with the rules of engagement within an institution creates additional learning for Māori and Pacific students over that required of students socialised into hegemonic cultural norms.

Although institutional culture can act as a barrier, especially when it is invisible to those with the most power to effect change, Māori and Pacific students in Rakena et al. (2016) claim relational resources provide a context for motivation and success. Social factors that support success include: peer influence, cultural networking, family, and attention to spirituality. These operate in complex ways. For instance, family relationships obligate time and attention but in return provide emotional and psychological support; and faith, as a motivation reveals the significance to students’ education of their relationship with God. These factors support students so they benefit from the effective aspects of institutional practice, such as the demonstration by teachers of their expertise, an important aspect of a conservatory model of education. Making Pacific strengths visible and valued in educational contexts such as this is likely to support learners’ progress.

## APPRECIATIVE MENTORING FOR SUCCESS

The structure of mentoring programmes that effectively support Pacific students is discussed in the Pacific wellbeing section of this review. Here, the literature of mentoring in Pacific education is considered in relational terms. Pacific families and communities are structured around mentoring situations. The literature looks at the extent to which this strength is recognised and leveraged in formal mentoring situations.

Chu (2009) describes the potential of mentoring in tertiary education by reflecting on personal experience. Using an AI framework that contrasts with problem-solving approaches that try to unpick problems from a known position, Chu describes how the “dream” of optimal outcomes for Pacific students can be supported through relational means. An AI mentoring approach combines the desire of Pacific students for one-to-one contact with a space in which Pacific cultural norms and dreams become strengths. The development of identity, valuing of culture, and enactment of success on a student’s terms are all possible in AI, mediated by the expertise of a mentor. Chu describes examples of AI framed in a traditional mentor-mentee format and in a leadership

cluster where the potential for those involved to pursue leadership is socially articulated and explored. A group-based approach to leadership development adds the component of peer support to the mix, a positive aspect of Pacific success in the literature (Chu, Abella, et al., 2013; Lipine, 2010; Patterson, 2012; Reynolds, 2018b; Rimoni, 2016).

Developing her discussion of mentoring further, Chu (2018) portrays Pacific mentoring as a holistic experience. In this, mentoring is leadership development that involves the wider family in a relationship of trust; mentees do not stand alone. In addition, mentoring relationships that begin in education do not remain exclusively educational. Chu points out that, for effective mentorship to embrace Pacific values in academic institutions, employment practices need to ensure Pacific academic mentors are available for Pacific students to work with. This concern can be extended to other sectors of education. There is a dearth of Pacific teachers in the compulsory education sector. The provision of time and space for existing Pacific faculty members to offer mentorship has potential to address this situation. Time and space, as well as other resources, are significant in any attempt to encourage Pacific students to become teachers and academics, because the commitments of mentors are great.

## BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

Several barriers to the success of Pacific students in education are embedded elsewhere in this review. In this section, literature is presented that draws attention to issues that make Pacific success hard to gain and that mute the potential of Pacific visibility in education.

Wikaire et al. (2017) conducted a largely quantitative study designed to establish predictors for Māori and Pacific students' success relative to non-Māori and Pacific in several health-related Bachelor's level courses. They found the impact of school decile and participation in bridging programmes were significant for outcomes when other variables were controlled. In addition, the first year of study proved highly predictive of further outcomes. Wikaire et al. suggest that bridging programmes help address, but not eradicate, issues stemming from gaps in academic knowledge and in experience inherent in the transition between secondary and tertiary education for Māori and Pacific students.

Wikaire et al. (2017) link the fact that results in the initial year of study were both predicted by pre-tertiary factors and predictive of later results in a student's programme, and to a literature base that describes the first year of health study to be a daunting and potentially unsafe experience. Such courses are characterised by cultural isolation, racial discrimination, and large class sizes in largely white institutions. In the researchers' view, survival of the first year may suggest a student has sufficient resources to continue to later success, but this does not remove responsibility for institutions to ensure the study experience is not characterised by negative racialised experiences. These would include Pacific cultural invisibility. The researchers draw attention to the need to consider the environments created by institutions, particularly in terms of the way they privilege some ethnic groups over others, when accounting for rates of

minority students' success in study. While pre-tertiary and early academic variables are relevant to ongoing success, Wikaire et al. found these were insufficient to account for the total difference observable in outcomes for Māori and Pacific students when compared with non-Māori and Pacific peers. A recommendation is that institutions widen their support to include not only bridging and the first year of study but to continue it for subsequent years of health courses.

Retention of students in the tertiary sector is the focus multi-sourced research by Benseman, Coxon, Anderson, and Anae (2006). They found five areas that, when poorly managed, provide difficulties for Pacific students that can adversely affect retention. These are: motivation and attitude, particularly in communities where the cultural capital gained by previous tertiary education experience is thin; family pressure and obligations; peer relationships that can be a help or a hindrance; financial issues; and a lack of support within the tertiary institution. The Pacific student voice reveals several positive steps likely to help in retention. Among them are an information service for secondary students facilitated by Pacific tertiary students as role models, motivators and information bringers. In addition, having a Pacific presence in the tertiary institution, appropriate pedagogy, support, timely information, and an effective interface between Pacific communities and tertiary institutions emerge as important areas with potential to improve Pacific student retention and future visible success.

Perrot (2015) provides a discussion of Pacific students' perceptions of how they obtain success in tertiary education. The main finding is a tension between complex barriers placed in front of Pacific students by practices within education and the personal strategies and approaches some students use to overcome these as Pacific people and succeed. Perrot uses the concept of resilience to account for aspects of individual Pacific students' success.

Many of the strategies Perrot describes, however, have relational aspects. Pertinent findings include the value to Pacific success of institutions adopting a long time-scale when appraising a student's potential. Given institutionally framed forms of exclusion, it is not unreasonable to expect the academic success of some Pacific students will take longer than for others who are well positioned in and by education at enrolment. The creation of explicit steps to success though goal setting is also valued by Perrot. The potential of this strategy is related to

the cultural journey some Pacific students have to make to succeed in an education system in which Pacific cultures are less visible and valued than others. Perrot's work intersects with other accounts of cultural issues in Pacific experiences of education (e.g., Houghton, 2015; Lipine, 2010; Marat et al., 2011). This work points to the value of listening to the journeys of individuals to make visible, appreciate, and develop clear understandings of the complexity of forces at work in Pacific education.



# Theme Two:

Identities, Languages,  
and Cultures





# Theme Two:

Identities, Languages,  
and Cultures





Identities, languages, and cultures involves:

- » understanding the construction of Pacific identities
- » the relationship between language and identity
- » leadership as a factor in supporting Pacific identity formation
- » the significance of home-school relationships to language, culture, and identity
- » teacher-student relationships and identity construction
- » processes of Pacific identity construction
- » specific cultural sites of significance for Pacific students.

Culture and identity are significant, interlinked aspects of life in the literature of Pacific education. Language is an important element of culture that contributes to identity. This section starts with literature that discusses the nature of culture and identity in the context of diasporic Pacific people. Literature is also presented that foregrounds the contribution of leadership in education to creating positive spaces for Pacific language, culture, and identity. Schools are inevitably places that contribute to identity construction. This is because education as a process provides experiences that support, shape, or undermine learners' sense of who they are. The literature considers this process through cultural responsiveness, examination of home-school relationships, in-school negotiations between world views, and descriptions of specific identity-centred processes. In addition, literature is examined that describes specific sites that support Pacific culture and identity within education. Taken as a whole, the literature of Pacific education on culture and identity alludes to experiences of tension between cultural norms and ideas about identity that have different origins, Pacific and non-Pacific. Wellbeing, success in education, and access to high-quality education are well served when these tensions are positively resolved so that diversity is a strength and not made a problem.



## UNDERSTANDING IDENTITY

When looking at culture and identity in Pacific education, it is helpful to consider Mila-Schaaf and Hudson (2009a) who suggest culture can be understood as a “system of logic with its own underpinning assumptions and internal coherence” and as “an entire eco-system of interrelated ideas, beliefs, values, knowledge, and behaviours” (page 115). This definition directs attention away from specific cultural items and towards the overarching relationships between them. Significant relationships discussed in the literature include those between school and home, and between a Pacific person and their language. This association is affected by the relationship between the representatives of the school and the Pacific language in question.

Mila-Schaaf (2009) provides a Pacific-origin way of understanding identity capable of rendering the significance of relational matters. Mila-Schaaf describes identity in relation to *vā*, a Pacific-origin multi-dimensional spatial metaphor of relationality, or the state of being related. Through *vā*, identity is determined through genealogical, inherited, and created relationships “within a relational force-field of interdependence” (page 135). Identity is a matter of positioning. In many Pacific cultures, identity is constructed relationally so that good ethics express identity by privileging interpersonal relationships above individual rights. The consequences of Mila-Schaaf’s understanding of *vā* when shifted from her focus of health ethics to education, remain the same: of importance is the state of relationships between knowledge systems. The knowledge system embedded in a public service, such as education, is embodied in institutionalised practice and the understandings of those working in the system. This exists in relation to other knowledge systems carried by groups in receipt of the service who were not involved in its inception and development, such as Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities. Thus, the issue is the

configuration of the relationship between knowledges held and valued by Pacific parents, families, and communities and knowledge held and valued by education as a whole and, specifically, the educators of Pacific learners. A well-configured relationship between these knowledge systems requires an authentic partnership between people. The inclusion of Pacific parents, families, and communities in Pacific children’s education is not only a necessary prerequisite, it is a necessary step that leads to the reciprocal relationships between the knowledge systems.

It is important to note that relationships between groups or knowledge systems are not static; critical thought is required to understand the contextual value of elements of knowledge systems and to avoid simplifications, such as essentialism and reification. Culture evolves over time. Simplifications are unhelpful because they do not reflect the complexities of identity under the umbrella (T. Samu, 2006) of Pacific education, nor do they reflect the fact that one’s identity can be multiple and contextual. Considering relational categories such as identity through a *vā* lens emphasises context as space and time. Although not all groups in Pacific education may identify with the concept of *vā*, the literature of the *vā* in Pacific education is growing (Airini et al., 2010; Anae, 2010; Frengley-Vaipuna et al., 2011; Māhina, 2008; Reynolds, 2016) and the concept is helpful in re-reading the ways identity construction is mediated in and through education.

Language, relationships, and family emerge as significant components of identity in Pacific education in a study by Hunter et al. (2016) that synthesises five year-long studies of data gathered from various participants in Pacific mathematics education. Hunter et al. report that the attitude of education professionals to Pacific languages can vary. The significance of Pacific languages is affirmed by professionals who value students using their Pacific language(s) in addition to English. However, other educators attribute

difficulties in speaking English to the use of a Pacific language at home, failing to recognise the long-term value of bilingualism and the aspects of identity associated with language. Such attribution indicates an instrumental understanding of the school, divorcing education from identity. Hunter et al. also report that, where their language proficiency does not meet the demands of the school and insufficient support is provided, parents find meetings with the school difficult. The researchers show how both parents and learners can feel devalued if their language of choice is not incorporated appropriately into institutional practices. Such feelings indicate how the politics of language inclusion at local and national levels can affect identity at individual and group levels. Understanding that fluency in Pacific languages is an asset rather than possible deficit in relation to fluency in English is, therefore, both a personal and political matter.

Hunter et al. (2016) also indicate that inclusive and collaborative learning spaces that support identity in Pacific education are possible where teachers build on the idea of family through a Pacific lens. Clear and strong links between family and school act to support Pacific students and teachers in their endeavours. Productive links involve relationships of respect that can be signalled by schools in many ways. Simple things, like correct spelling and pronunciation of names, can be significant. Learning activities embedded in the lived experiences of Pacific students also indicate respect, not least because of the knowledge displayed by teachers of their students under such circumstances. Where students are encouraged to bring identity-rich items or knowledge to school, the researchers point out that staff and other students can learn in a reciprocal process. This reiterates the need for equitable partnerships as being crucial to well-configured relationships in Pacific education.

While some teachers in the research by Hunter et al. (2016) display deficit attitudes to the richness of Pacific students' lives, professional learning and development helps others to gain knowledge to start bridging processes between cultural understandings. The researchers indicate that, despite policy, issues relevant to identity and culture remain as an aspect of the cross-cultural misinterpretation that happens in education. Thus, a way forward may be to disturb default interpretations of familiar educational events to make space for the expression of Pacific identity, language, and culture.

As previously indicated, discussions of culture and identity need not be limited to individuals. Education as a service can have an identity that sits alongside the identities of students and others involved. Leaupepe and Sauni (2014) discuss Pacific ECE programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand, recounting a history of development from garages and church halls, through struggles for equity and recognition to the establishment of chartered, licensed Pacific ECE services. They describe the present situation in which Pacific ideas compete with non-Pacific ideas in ECE, such as the way children and education are viewed. This is a matter of values and identity: education is valued in Pacific thinking not as a profit-making venture but an act of service. The centrality of churches in Pacific ECE contexts indicates the importance for Pacific people of faith and church participation. Church-supported Pacific community approaches contrast with privatisation in ECE more generally. In Leaupepe and Sauni's account, Pacific ECE demonstrates a diverse community's understanding of the significance of education as a way of developing identity. Because language, values, and accepted behaviours benefit from a formal place of reproduction in diasporic societies, ECE can provide a sheltered space, close to families, where the identity construction of new members of Pacific communities through immersion in Pacific languages and cultures can be valued.



## LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

Si'ilata et al. (2017) suggest that the way forward in Pacific education involves nurturing a situation where the success of Pacific learners does not hinge on them changing to adopt the majority culture, literacy, and identity. Instead, a transformation is required in education whereby Pacific learners are supported to make meaningful connections between their funds of knowledge – from home and school – so they experience success in both spaces. The authors argue that, to help Pacific students in this, several dimensions can provide guidance to teachers and schools: knowledge and high expectations of learners; knowledge of bilingualism in a Pacific context; appropriate strategies of instruction that include Pacific languages as resources; partnerships with families and communities; and the forging in school of Pacific connections involving languages, worlds, literacy, and texts.

Si'ilata et al. (2017) use the metaphor of a va'atele, a double-hulled ocean going canoe, to suggest the balance and alignment required in an endeavour to benefit from living in two worlds. They suggest relationships that are inquiry-focused, aimed at success, and collaborative can lead to: Pacific success in which language

and literacy are curriculum-relevant tools; teaching that connects with and builds on languages, identity, and culture to meet curriculum demands; support for teachers through school leadership; and professional learning and development so teachers can improve practice to facilitate Pacific learners' success.

A contribution of Si'ilata et al. (2017) is to focus on the significance of language as an important cornerstone and conveyor of culture in Pacific education. International literature (Valenzuela, 2005) shows how schools can subtract from students when their language and other cultural aspects are invisible or devalued. The va'atele framework highlights how various literacies can complement each other when they are made an explicit aim. Valuing what students bring to school can produce a situation where education adds to students' funds of knowledge without also depleting them. Linguistic diversity is a resource in classrooms when it is incorporated into day-to-day business and not regarded as irrelevant or a problem. Si'ilata et al. say that creating this positive situation is the responsibility of all teachers – all can improve their practice to create opportunities for Pacific (and other) students to build on their language, identity, and culture in meaningful ways.

## LEADERSHIP TO SUPPORT CULTURE AND IDENTITY

Cardno et al. (2018) examine leadership that seeks to develop inclusive secondary education in a diverse low decile context. Qualitative data from leaders reveal that concepts of inclusiveness are often limited to Māori and Pacific groups, despite a wider diversity in a school, and effective leadership practices are absent, despite the espoused commitment of leaders. While leaders may see ethnic diversity as a strength of a school, Cardno et al. recognise the challenge for school leaders of effectively managing multi-ethnic differences in their schools. A factor acknowledged by the study is the inconsistency in the meaning of diversity and inclusion across the literature and in practice. In Cardno et al., inclusion is discussed as relevant to populations that are under threat of exclusion.

Practices designed by schools to promote inclusion, as identified in Cardno et al. (2018), include attempts at race-matching staff and students. In effect, this means finding Pacific teachers to teach Pacific students. In addition, the researchers report priority programmes for Pacific and Māori high-achieving, gifted, talented, and low-achieving students, and more general ethnic-specific mentoring programmes. They note that a consequence of ethnically targeted programmes can be the exclusion of ethnic minorities outside the target group. Where these groups are as poorly served by education as groups that are targeted, issues of equity need to be considered. Similarly, day-to-day practices intended to be inclusive, such as special awards ceremonies, sports activities, and cultural activities, are often targeted at Pacific and Māori students rather than all groups that would benefit from greater visibility. Other inclusion practices reported as effective by schools include opportunities for parents to participate as the audience of various events, and regular academic conferencing between teacher, student, and parents. However, the

researchers note that inclusive practices are not always overtly discussed as matters of inclusion (or visibility). This perhaps relates to an overall lack of comprehension about what ethnic inclusion might mean in school.

Thus, Cardno et al. (2018) reveal the way that well-meaning schools can construct practices that have potential for inclusion of Pacific students and communities in education but that are undercut in their effectiveness by insufficient theorising or discussion about the issues involved. School initiatives in Pacific education benefit from the authentic involvement of Pacific communities through fono, community-based mobilisation, and discussion. Where this approach is not adopted, investment of time and effort can be blunted, particularly under pressure from the complex operational needs of a multi-ethnic school. Hardworking staff can follow paths that lead to initiatives at the wrong time or in the wrong place, and to approaches that do not sit comfortably with the Pacific communities they are intended to serve.

A further study examining the relationship between leadership and Pacific student success, and relevant to a discussion of culture and identity, was conducted by Taleni, Macfarlane, Macfarlane, and Fletcher (2017). This reports the results of talanoa involving four principals from the primary and secondary sectors who were selected for their commitment to centrally-funded Pacific equity initiatives. The research reveals these principals value the weaving of several conceptualisations, initiatives, and attitudes into everyday school life. These include dynamic relationships with students and their families; understandings of cultural world views from the Pacific region; achievement data being used effectively; ongoing development of culturally responsive leadership; the creation of effective community engagement; high expectations in the areas of achievement and success; and engagement in motivational professional development.

An important element of many of these items is the leader adopting the identity of a learner. For instance, the use of data involves learning about learners and the development of Pacific world views requires leaders to continue to expand their knowledge of community. Thus, to provide a grounding for the culture and identity of Pacific learners to be valued, leaders need to develop their own enabling culture and identity.

Taleni et al. (2017) also show the potential for schools of having Pacific people with community links, appropriate cultural starting points for engagement, and passion

for their communities. A product of schools engaging with community can be the development of safe spaces in which Pacific visible provides a context for welcoming the involvement of Pacific parents, families, and communities. Community relationship brokers are, in effect, a resource for leaders and others who wish to learn to be more contextually responsive in their work. Consequent attention is drawn to the need in education, training, staff development, and promotion for the care and nurturing of Pacific staff who have this potential, and for structures for their potential to be shared.



## HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

In the literature, discussions of identity in Pacific education extend beyond schools to embrace relationships with families. Paulsen (2018) studied experiences and perspectives of students of the Pacific diaspora and their parents in Melbourne, Australia. This research is relevant because it highlights notions of relationality understood within a diverse diasporic Pacific population.

Paulsen (2018) reports that, although parents may be engaged with their children's education in the home space, this is not necessarily transferred to the school space. Sometimes, this is because the school seems to parents to be an alien place in which a perceived lack of expertise provokes anxiety. While students and parents in the research express commitment to education and have relevant long-term strategies, such as career goals, parents' confidence at managing school processes can be limited. In some cases, parental confidence decreases as students progress through schooling. In others, where a parent's educational background is strong, levels of confidence are relatively high. An implication of these findings is that, if schools value Pacific parents' input into education, they need to be mindful how parents may feel in relation to the school, a significant finding in the PowerUP longitudinal evaluation.

Student perceptions were also investigated by Paulsen (2018). The author reports that conflicts between home and school expectations increase as students progress through the education system. An important area of conflict is over time use. These conflicts become indirectly visible to teachers; as schools demand more time of senior students, teachers see less commitment from Pacific students. Paulsen suggests some parents do not realise the out-of-class time commitment expected by schools. Where this is true,

improved communication is a potential way forward. Paulsen notes that, where strong relationships are in place, students take part in school, particularly in leadership and volunteer roles with which they are familiar from home. Peer influence is also a strong feature in this study.

Paulsen's (2018) findings draw attention to the home-school connection as a way forward in the educational success of Pacific students. However, relying on parents to have the cultural capital to make close connections can result in inconsistency. Some parents express support for students in terms of learning and close engagement with staff, others concentrate on support in more physical ways, such as uniforms. These differences are related to parental confidence and resources more than motivation or priority. Parents may be willing to change their behaviour to maximise educational success, but Paulsen points out the irony in schools expecting student compliance and conformity as a prerequisite for educational success. By implication, conformity does not sit well with student agency in identity construction, and neither does the exclusion of parents from aspects and sites of education. However, unwittingly, this situation is constructed and there are cases about uniform change to include cultural attire.

In addition, the different readings by parents and school staff of the same situation, as reported in Paulsen (2018), show how values and expectations affect the experience a person has, particularly across cultural boundaries. Paulsen concludes that schools need to find alternative ways of supporting parents to understand what is involved in educational success. This should be coupled with schools changing their perceptions of what success might mean, in order to accommodate diverse students' interests and strengths. Understanding notions of success requires schools to undertake authentic engagement with communities in equitable, reciprocal partnerships.

Both conclusions argue for the value of alignment in identity construction. This is because the management of conflict places an unnecessary burden on students as they seek success by navigating multiple identities across two (or more) worlds.

Flavell's (2014) thesis reached similar conclusions to Paulsen (2018) but in a New Zealand context. The author found that, although Pacific parents show an understanding of the education system through their choice of school, they may not relate to the individualised communication provided by schools. In addition, students often silo school and home life, and avoid learning conversations with parents (Nakhid, 2003) of the kind facilitated by Pacific PowerUp. Consequently, despite a desire for progress, parental frustration and disconnection is evident. One explanation is that students fear they may fail to meet parental expectations and so adopt a low-profile, passive-classroom approach and measures, to keep the worlds apart. In these circumstances, Flavell recommends schools develop more inclusive strategies that encourage dialogue between the parties in Pacific education and parents, students, and teachers. In this way, a shared understanding of students' learning needs and targets can be reached, partnerships developed, and relational conflict, which can negatively affect student identity development, minimised.

## TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

Porter-Samuels (2013) literature review unpacks ideas and implications of cultural responsiveness in the field of Pacific education, which is useful for articulating the journey towards cultural responsiveness as a series of logical steps. The definition used for culturally responsive schooling involves going beyond the surface acknowledgement of the culture of another to a place where a deeper understanding

affects teaching strategies. For this to happen, an understanding of the diversity of Pacific is required, accompanied by a clear sense of the identity of individual learners including their relationships with their parents, families, and communities. This can be developed by teachers knowing who they are teaching through engagement with representative Pacific community members.

In developing cultural responsiveness, learning cannot be limited to appreciating others. Porter-Samuels (2013) stresses that teachers need to recognise power as it operates in education and in their practice. For instance, value judgements that underpin curriculum and pedagogy need to be recognised as aspects of power, in order to be adjusted or replaced. The implication of Porter-Samuels' review is that, by combining knowledge of students, the self, and practice, teachers position themselves to reject deficit explanations for what they see in classrooms, shifting to relationally constructed, motivating and, therefore, effective practice. Such practice makes space for students' identities because power over what is learned and how it is encountered is shared. Consequently, learning can be relevant and authentic.

Reynolds (2019) extends the discussion of cultural responsiveness to cultural humility in an article that features a review of the literature of culturally relevant education and culturally responsive pedagogy. Addressing Pacific education through the concept of *vā*, Reynolds shows how teachers' understandings of themselves, in relation to Pacific students, can be enhanced through conceptual learning. For this kind of learning, it is helpful for teachers to have a disposition of humility in which the student and parent voice is valued as a basis for constructing actions that express relational care. By implication, these circumstances create space for students to learn in ways in which they are acknowledged and visible as cultural people and in which their identity construction process, culture, and language(s) are valued.



## SYSTEM LEVEL RELATIONSHIPS AND IDENTITY

McAra-Couper et al. (2018) discuss mutual prejudice among professionals and service users. Although this is health research, the nature of the relationships involved resonate in education because a key idea is that professional logic may not be significant to service users who bring their own logic. While prejudice is generally seen as a negative force and an area to be avoided, McAra-Couper et al. argue that prejudices merely exist, and need to be recognised and moved past. Thus, in the choice of hospital for giving birth, familiarity, closeness to home, and the advice of family and friends are prejudices held by Pacific women; the idea that a primary rather than tertiary facility is better for uncomplicated births is a prejudice held by midwives. The lesson is that fruitful discussion and greater mutual understanding can be facilitated by communicating and respecting the points of view of others, and that applies to education as much as to health.

When those responsible for a system, be it health or education, assume members of the communities they serve are ignorant, or they read the behaviours of community members as evidence of a lack of engagement, this can make invisible the values that form the core of identity. This situation may be exacerbated when matters of education, for instance, are out of the scope of community members' direct experience. As highlighted in Flavell (2014); and Paulsen (2018), communication to promote alignment in terms of goals and ways of achieving them is crucial.

As discussed, language is an important cultural element of identity. The way literacy is understood can affect identity construction. Robertson (2013) reiterates the concerns of many writers on Pacific education in a literature review of the area, with a special focus on literacy. This sketches the numbers of people from Pacific groups

who speak a Pacific language and describes aspects of best practice in second-language acquisition. In addition, Robertson reviews literature in the areas of strengthening home-school connections; world-shifting as an experience and strategy amongst young people; ways of recognising strengths so they can be deliberately included in formal education; and critical literacy. This is valuable as a way of positioning texts and student experience so critical awareness of the power relations that perpetuate power and legitimacy in society becomes a normal part of literacy. Taken as a whole, Robertson points to the nexus of language, culture, and identity, articulating this in an account that also considers strategies that education can take to recognise realities for Pacific students. This work resonates with that in other sectors, such as Toumu'a (2014) in adult education.

The way academic subjects are understood is another area in which system-level relationships can affect student identity. Fonua (2018) shows how changes in a teacher's practice can operate to better integrate knowledge from the Pacific into science programmes at the tertiary level to increase student motivation. The author discusses issues arising from the way Tongan values can collide with those embedded in teaching programmes, using the example that the topic of human reproduction is a tapu or sacred subject, and inappropriate for Tongans in mixed-sex classes.

As a result of learning from her students, Fonua (2018) describes ways of responding to this situation. These include options for tutorial classes organised by sex and changes to the images used in teaching. In addition, she discusses introducing Tongan knowledge, for instance, Tongan ways of healing of wounds, to stand beside Western accounts, and how these satisfy the demands for academic references for material currently outside the academy. Fonua also describes adjusting assessment practices to accommodate changes in content that allow students to teach their

teacher about gaps in their knowledge. This undermines any assumption that knowledge gaps exist for students only. Fonua reports that students' identities as positive science learners are supported when institutional practice embraces their indigeneity in a space that accepts Tongan language, culture, and values. Fonua's discussion focuses on power relations in the classroom. It aligns with literature discussed above (Porter-

Samuels, 2013; Reynolds, 2019) that values teachers as learners about their own cultural position and the origins of the material they bring to class. The exposure of teachers' assumptions and their increased awareness of power can facilitate a space of respectful sharing, where the conditions of learning are sympathetic to what a teacher knows and continues to learn about students' values in science as in other contexts.



## PROCESSES OF IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

Rimoni (2016) analyses the voice of 12 Samoan secondary students from three schools in Aotearoa New Zealand, describing key aspects of experience that contribute to their success at school. These include schools acknowledging the boys for who they are and for the multiple identities they have. The author illustrates the potential of positive relational interactions with peers and staff to support a developing sense of belonging. The boys in Rimoni's study believe that socialisation at school enables future decision-making. It should be noted, however, that this can be affected by factors external to schools, such as the forces of politics, the economy, and New Zealand society in general, which provide stories of Pacific disadvantage. Rimoni suggests that listening to student accounts of identity formation can offer a foil to "official" accounts of what it means to be Pacific in Aotearoa New Zealand, especially in terms of diversity and criticality. By being aware of Pacific students' accounts of themselves, schools can provide more meaningful and motivationally appropriate educational opportunities. By valuing identity construction, schools can support a sense of belonging and appropriate decision-making in the light of individual and community aspirations.

Informed by comparing recent Pacific student experiences of education with her own, Siopé (2011) organises her findings into five areas: aspirations; siloed experiences characterised by divisions between school and home; the educational significance of adults who are responsive, reasonable, and available; negative relational experiences in school; and the influence of church. These contribute security or insecurity to student identity construction processes in one way or another. At the core of Siopé's discussion is the idea that teachers who are secure

in their cultural identity are those who generally provide the kind of educational experiences that honour Pacific students in theirs. By having the interest, confidence, and flexibility to connect with students, such teachers serve the educational aspirations of families by supporting students' identities.

In a study of the way identity is explicitly treated in Year 7 and Year 8 of schooling, Siteine (2010) describes a typology of four positions adopted by teachers: cultural provider; cultural mediator; cultural transmitter; and cultural popularist. Siteine says these positions provide a logic for teacher practice in attempts to affirm the identity of students, but they can result in the allocation of identity rather than its affirmation. For Pacific students, elements of anachronism and simplicity can be included in identity allocation that can complicate processes of identity formation. Siteine (2013) further problematises the concept of identity within the social studies curriculum. The author suggests a lack of conceptual clarity compels teachers to use their own personal and social knowledge in this endeavour in ways that create conceptual ambiguity and lead to the privilege of a particular view of identity. This is unlikely to reflect Pacific ideas of the concept.

Fasavalu (2015) also supports the idea that external factors can contribute to student identity, in this case, through a tension between being allocated to the "tail" of underachievement and stories of sacrifice, service, and pride in family that come from lived experience. An implication of these three studies is that teacher self-knowledge and a reflexive and well-grounded curriculum may provide a better context for discussions of identity in classrooms than a situation where power over what counts as knowledge relevant to identity is concentrated in teachers' hands and in which unspoken assumptions prevail.



## SPECIFIC EDUCATIONAL SITES OF IDENTITY FORMATION

Within Pacific education, the classroom is not the only site in which identity can be developed. Fairbairn-Dunlop (2014) examines the concept of identity through the male Pacific voice in a Poly Club (a cultural performance group), and the spaces associated with it: community, practice, performance, and so on. Students in the study indicate an inclusive Pacific identity within the group that is based on acceptance. For instance, multi-ethnicity is not an issue for members. The club is a forum for the development of leadership, connections new and old, brotherhood, connections to culture(s), and, for some, a connection to education. As a safe space, Poly Club seems to provide a respite for some members from less well-configured relationships in school. Fairbairn-Dunlop also makes a tentative connection between Poly Club membership, improved school attendance rates, and positive achievement

data. Together, these findings suggest the potential of Poly Clubs as a model for other aspects of schools, particularly in terms of relationships and deliberate attention to identity as relationally constructed.

Fairbairn-Dunlop's (2014) claim that Poly Club is a significant space for identity construction, especially for peer connections realised as a "brotherhood" in boys' schools, is supported by Reynolds (2017). As other research (Paulsen, 2018; Rimoni, 2016) has shown that peer influence is a significant aspect of success in education for Pacific students. However, Nakhid (2003) suggests schools may be places where Pacific students find it difficult to "see" themselves as they would like to be seen: positive and visibly participating in education. Put together, these research strands make pertinent the question of how schools might more closely integrate the ethos and practices of Poly Clubs into their day-to-day programmes, an important outcome of successful leadership (Talení et al., 2017).



In the area of arts, Mackley-Crump (2011) provides an ethnographic account of how a musical enterprise (a Polyfest) can support Pacific student identity and perhaps also academic achievement. Backgrounding the data by referring to educational leaders' criticisms of time spent on Polyfest, research on the centrality of relationships in Pacific education, and Nakhid's (2003) calls for identity construction to be valued in education, Mackley-Crump shows how students performing material to which they connect is an opportunity to strengthen community through relationships. Anecdotes given include a student who changed behaviour to be included in the performance, and of the high attendance by the wider Pacific community. The complexity of the Pacific community is demonstrated by Mackley-Crump's concluding comments: moving the show to the capital city was an opportunity for an out-of-capital community to showcase its achievements to their more upwardly mobile cousins who may previously have had a detrimental view of them. This is a strategy that results in "introducing an intra-diasporic dimension" (page 271) to identity.

Williams (2018) provides an account of the significance to Pacific students and families of a large annual cultural festival for schools set in Auckland, the ASB Polyfest.

The author describes how communities of practice develop in schools with a focus on performance. Cultural performance groups become a transnational focus of belonging that reflect village structures, crafted by tutors in cooperation with students. School identity and elements of popular culture are woven into presentations that reflect the cultural parameters of the festival but are unique and relevant performance outcomes. Williams also observes sites of contestation between organising committees and cultural groups as gender, cultural, religious, and ethnic ideals meet the intents and actions of performers. The negotiations that take place reflect developing transnational urban Pacific identities and the dynamics associated with them.

The value of music to Pacific students both within and outside education is made clear in Faaea-Semeatu (2015). This work highlights that schools do well to recognise that existing practice may not provide recognition of Pacific students' artistic abilities. However, Pacific students can be honoured when schools execute appropriate changes, as a result of learning from students, families, and communities about the capital students bring, and accept alternative ways of operating that maximise Pacific students' strengths.



# Theme Three:

Pacific Wellbeing



# Theme Three:

Pacific Wellbeing





Pacific wellbeing involves:

- » understanding Pacific wellbeing through Pacific concepts
- » holistic thinking
- » the involvement of parents
- » the involvement of community
- » Pacific concepts of resilience
- » culturally informed measurement tools
- » mentoring and peer support
- » minimising shame and supporting mental health.

Pacific visibility can be improved by paying attention to models of wellbeing founded on aspects of Pacific language, culture, and identity. For example, Ola Lei (Panapa, 2014) uses the octopus as a metaphor to encapsulate the holistic relationships that communities from Tuvalu understand between various elements of wellbeing, such as spiritual, relational, and physical. The Fonofale model (Ministry of Health, 1995) developed by Fuimaono Karl Pulotu-Endemann has been widely used (Ponton, 2018) to understand wellbeing in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand. This model emphasises the holistic nature of wellbeing through the traditional Samoan fale or house. The space, land, and family foundations that support the fale work together with four pou, or posts, that provide structure and spiritual, mental, physical, and other forms of wellbeing (Ponton, 2018). In this way, the connectedness of people is emphasised through the Pacific understanding of wellbeing embedded in the model.

A broad range of research addresses the wellbeing of youth and families in Pacific contexts, much of it located in education. A lot of the definitional discussion of wellbeing focuses on holistic conceptualisation, such as that described above, drawing strength from Pacific concepts and practices. Despite this, some wellbeing research addresses the area through more general concepts, particularly resilience, although this can also be rendered in several ways. The literature includes moves to develop precise Pacific measures of wellbeing through cultural references; ideas about consultation aimed at developing context-specific tools; and discussion about the negative potential of decontextualised practices.

Wellbeing is also discussed in association with caring in the classroom and cultural practices. Research into mentoring, as a way of supporting the wellbeing of young Pacific people, advocates for structures and practices that are congruent with Pacific family experience. Benefits can come to participants where familiarity encourages engagement. The research literature also draws attention to the involvement of families in educational contexts as a support to Pacific students' wellbeing and to the importance of the relationship between identity and wellbeing. At the community level, research suggests that identity is a complex, fluid area in intergenerational diasporic Pacific contexts. Threats to identity reported in the literature that can affect wellbeing include issues around acceptance and the related concept of shame. A positive role exists in this area for well-configured relationships between parents, families and communities, and schools. Taken together, the research literature presented here argues for the value of contextualised concepts, practice, and measures of wellbeing that consider Pacific histories, ideas, and behaviours.

## HOLISM AND WELLBEING

Much recent research literature in the field of Pacific education depicts Pacific wellbeing as a holistic concept. This means processes and experiences that contribute to wellbeing are interconnected in intimate ways and are best explained by reference to the whole person located in their community. Pacific education research often reports on wellbeing as being constructed, realised, and experienced in and through relationships, often by reference to the concept of *vā*. This, however, is not a universal understanding of wellbeing.

A cultural element is part of a relational rendering of wellbeing; groups have their own understanding of what it is to be well and the conditions under which this is likely. Thus, when wellbeing is discussed, agreement about what is meant cannot be assumed. This is particularly true in contested cultural spaces. Heaton (2018) illustrates this in the bicultural context of education in Aotearoa New Zealand, warning of the dangers of simplifying one group's complex cultural concepts as they are brought into spaces dominated by other cultural understandings. In Heaton's view, the placement of the Māori "hauora" as an equivalent to the English "wellbeing" in curriculum documentation can blunt holistic Māori understandings. She suggests that understanding hauora in relation to other concepts, such as *whakapapa* and *wairua*, can make a contribution to a holistic appreciation of what hauora might mean. In this way, wellbeing in education can be understood as part of a field of related and intersecting concepts, avoiding narrowness, and conceptual isolation. Pacific holistic concepts of wellbeing also sit uncomfortably with narrow approaches.

The simplification of concepts of wellbeing in education is not only an issue for Māori. Research suggests that similar restrictions on Pacific-origin wellbeing concepts can occur. For example, Panapa (2014) shows how an introduced curriculum can work

against holistic ideas of wellbeing encoded in the Tuvaluan concept of *Ola Lei*. Panapa describes the way wellbeing focuses on physical health in education in Tuvalu. This denies the complexity of *Ola Lei* that is rendered in the research through a metaphor of a multi-legged creature at home in deep and shallow water; an octopus. *Ola Lei* is multi-dimensional, including spiritual, social, and physical worlds, and the relationships between human and other aspects of creation. Echoing the connectedness of *Ola Lei*, research in the field of Pacific education in Aotearoa New Zealand frequently draws attention to the interconnectedness of the wellbeing of learners, their families, communities, and the wider world, physical, and beyond.

Mila-Schaaf and Hudson (2009b) explicitly discuss the potential of negotiating relationships between multiple knowledge systems through a spatial metaphor that resonates with the concept of *vā*. The metaphor of a negotiating space is helpful when considering wellbeing, because the concept can be rendered differently according to culture. Essential precursors to effective interventions include developing an understanding of what wellbeing entails and how it is located in relation to other cultural concepts, such as family and the spirit. The same, of course, is true of other concepts such as education, where a pertinent question is to whom does education belong – the individual or the family and community? The aim of the negotiation space is to affirm that Pacific people have the agency and ability to select the best of the worlds in which they synchronously live. In this way, they have the opportunity to benefit from a multicultural or polycultural life (Mila-Schaaf, 2011; Mila-Schaaf and Robinson, 2010). It is important to point out, however, that effective negotiation is built on mutual respect and trust. Decontextualised assumptions of cultural superiority and inferiority are not helpful in this or any other context.







## PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The aim of Flavell's (2019) doctoral study was to explore how secondary schools could develop relationships with Pacific families and communities to support students' successful learning outcomes. The context was a New Zealand rural town in the North Island. The study recognised the drive from the Ministry of Education to strengthen family and community engagement in the education of Pacific young people (for example, the *Pasifika Education Plan*). It also noted that many effective strategies have been adopted by schools that encourage the engagement of Pacific families. One aim, therefore, was to capture good practice.

The study explored relationships using a variety of frameworks. An AI framework helped explore how home-school relationships worked well and could be enhanced to benefit secondary Pacific learners. A Communities of Practice lens helped explore power dynamics in relationships, and the theoretical

frameworks, Teu le vā and Talanoa Research Methodology, helped explore Pacific perspectives of relationships.

Key findings show the willingness and expertise of members of the Pacific community to support schools' endeavours to cater for Pacific learners, helping address any barriers to family engagement. Despite the strong commitment from teachers and school leaders to work more closely and creatively with Pacific families, the study concludes that knowledge and ideas do not always flow freely between home and school. An inherent risk is that schools hold onto decision-making processes, although the capacity exists within the Pacific community to offer effective solutions. Teachers and families may maintain relationships whereby families' cultural identities, experiences, and knowledge are distanced from decisions related to learning. To alleviate this risk, school structures need to open up to allow for a free exchange of information, prioritising relationships that accord with Pacific values.



The frameworks employed for this study could also be applied to school settings, to help review and develop home-school practices for Pacific families. These frameworks, which in some ways reflect a Pacific image of Bishop's (2012) kaupapa Māori thinking about home-school partnerships, have the potential to bring structural change that enhances reciprocal dialogue and shared decision-making between schools and Pacific families.

International literature indicates the importance of parental involvement in education as a positive factor in student wellbeing. Dedonno and Fagan (2013) conducted a quantitative study in the United States of America of contributors to students' academic self-concept. Among the findings were the value of praise and communication between parents and students. This extended well beyond the early years, suggesting value may exist for all students in deliberately involving parents in education. This also points to the importance of removing potential barriers to parental involvement that exist for some populations. Family structure was also deemed important to academic self-concept in this research, with two parent-family contexts positively associated with student academic self-esteem. By implication, this suggests that, in cultures where a non-nuclear family structure is a norm, attention by educators to the wider family may further support academic self-esteem, especially where a solo parent is embedded in an extended family structure. Dedonno and Fagan (2013) were surprised by racial differences in academic self-concept, speculating stereotype threat as a potential explanation. Such theorisation, if applied to Pacific students in Aotearoa New Zealand, points to racism as a possible partial explanation for any low academic self-esteem that exists within the group.

Pengpid and Peltzer (2018) analyse data drawn from responses to the Global School-based Student Health Survey of six Pacific Island nations. The data show a positive association between parental involvement in the lives of adolescents and several markers of health and wellbeing. Markers included lower rates of substance abuse, violence, injury rates, and truancy, and better dietary behaviour, physical activity, and mental health. If findings of this nature transfer to Aotearoa New Zealand as aspects of the relationship between family involvement and student wellbeing, schools may wish to support student wellbeing by facilitating student-parent relationships related to schooling. Helpful strategies might include taking deliberate steps to make school a welcoming space for Pacific parents because the research indicates some Pacific students seek to silo their lives (Nakhid, 2003), keeping parents and school apart.

Sullivan et al. (2017) studied the relationship between support given by Nauruan families towards family members pursuing teacher education and the student engagement and wellbeing development strategies of the Nauru Department of Education. They found a variety of family responses to the needs of students. These ranged from unquestioned support based on trust to intended support frustrated by temporal and material demands in the wider family context. Interventions from the Nauru Department of Education were seen by Sullivan et al. as having helpful pastoral characteristics and making a priority of negotiated family responsibilities. This research shows the kinds of practical difficulties Pacific students may face when balancing school and family responsibilities, particularly those associated with time. It also aligns with New Zealand research in suggesting pastoral care as a way to support academic achievement and course completion for Pacific students whose situations involve multiple responsibilities and identities (Wilson et al., 2011).

## IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY-LEVEL RELATIONSHIPS

Wellbeing can be supported through deliberate attention in the education system. Mila-Schaaf and Robinson (2010) conducted mixed-methods research using data from New Zealand's first national secondary school student health and wellbeing survey. The research looked for cultural variables that are significantly associated with better educational outcomes for Pacific high-school students. Of importance are cultural pride; maintenance of Pacific-origin values; proficiency in a Pacific language; and acceptance by Pacific people. Together with trying hard in education, doing well at school, and planning for the future, were significant. In addition, qualitative data provided by Mila-Schaaf and Robinson show that Pacific positive deviance in achieving rapid economic and social mobility is supported by being accepted, having confidence, speaking a Pacific language, and other Pacific cultural values.

Mila-Schaaf and Robinson (2010) conclude that the migrant dream of remaining Pacific, while acquiring the benefits of a new location on an intergenerational timescale, contradicts stereotypical depictions of diasporic people caught between cultures. Instead, under certain circumstances, involvement in more than one culture can be a positive advantage as plural capital. What Mila-Schaaf and Robinson call polycultural capital involves fluency in moving across cultural spaces to advantage. This is a hybrid synergistic strategy in which non-financial forms of culture, such as skills and knowledge, operate as sources of status; a matter of balance, of finding a *noa* or an equilibrium between various cultural discourses.

The significance to wellbeing from Mila-Schaaf and Robinson (2010) is that Pacific students are supported when two sets of cultural stock are valued so that neither one is seen as necessarily superior. This balance can be actioned by schools that support

Pacific students to retain and/or develop heritage skills and knowledge. Resources for the acquisition and extension of language and other forms of culture are important as is the provision of space in which students can express their learning. Pacific cultural capital includes supportive family structures that can be acknowledged and leveraged by schools for the benefit of their Pacific students; language as part of curriculum and school practices; and the admission of student experiences as the basis of critical thinking in lessons. These and other strategies signal acceptance to students for who they are, which is essential to wellbeing.

In a further study, Mila-Schaaf (2011) discusses culture and identity and their impact on health, wellbeing, and educational outcomes by reference to relationships within Pacific communities. Data developed through face-to-face contacts with second-generation Pacific migrants show that an important dynamic for this group is with island-born Pacific people. This dynamic is characterised by hierarchies, power relations, and the politics of exclusion and inclusion. Mila-Schaaf reports that Pacific capital in the form of age, level of cultural knowledge, family, and so on counts in Pacific spaces, and that speaking one's Pacific language is of major significance.

Mila-Schaaf (2011) shows that, for second-generation Pacific people, acceptance in Pacific spaces is not a given. Island-born migrants may regard the identities of second-generation migrants as fixed, viewing New Zealand-born Pacific people negatively. Thus, a second-generation Pacific person might identify with other Pacific people but not be identified by them as Pacific. Wellbeing can be challenged by these contradictions. Mila-Schaaf describes strategies such as strategic essentialism, genealogical claims, and the offering of Pālagi capital as those used by second-generation Pacific people to bolster their position in identity transactions. However, the author theorises that, particularly in a diaspora, culture and identity are defended

by some through the exclusion of others using an appeal based on traditional notions of culture to define what counts. Thus, the ability to negotiate successfully in the space between ideas of what it means to be Pacific is significant to identity and wellbeing.

The complex view of Pacific identity provided by Mila-Schaaf (2011) indicates the significance to wellbeing of a holistic approach that can take account not only of issues associated with migration to a place where one is in a minority but also of intergenerational relationships within a group. Wellbeing and identity are closely linked, so acceptance is an important factor in both. Consequently, models of wellbeing and support programmes for Pacific youth need to include space to recognise, articulate, and negotiate such complexities. The significance of *vā* to deepened appreciations of Pacific identity, as it relates to wellbeing, cannot be overstated.

Ethnic identity and the related processes of acculturation and cultural orientation are important concepts in a study by

Manuela and Anae (2017). This is relevant for Pacific education because, not only is ethnic identity a significant element of an individual's self-concept, it is also linked to wellbeing. Manuela and Anae point to how ethnic identity, as a protective factor for Pacific people, can buffer against negative influences on wellbeing. One negative influence is the effect of colonialism, which conditions the spaces in which ethnic identity exists.

Manuela and Anae (2017) recommend that ethnic identity be included in future research, particularly in quantitative work. This is particularly important given the prevalence of issues such as mental health among Pacific young people. The importance of religion and acknowledging the differing needs and expectations of New Zealand- and island-born cohorts (Mila-Schaaf, 2011) are important features that Manuela and Anae's work highlight as significant possible elements in cultural enhancement programmes.





## READINGS OF RESILIENCE AS AN ASPECT OF PACIFIC WELLBEING

Resilience is a concept that can be associated with wellbeing. Perrot (2015) discusses resilience as involving a process in which adversity is mediated by protection to produce a positive outcome. It includes the ability to cope positively with difficulty, a reflection of a position of strength associated with wellbeing. However, the seat and significance of resilience is not uncontested in Pacific education.

How educators think about wellbeing is a matter of theorisation, the explanation for what is observed. Associating resilience with grit, Crawford-Garrett (2018) suggests that concepts related to wellbeing can be located by teachers of Pacific students in an individualistic account of education that ignores structural features of education and society. Such accounts are amenable to deficit theorisation of student achievement because they erase power-related aspects of context that contribute to, or diminish, resilience. Crawford-Garrett's research suggests that an absence of theorisation in this area during teacher training can reinforce a simplified understanding of student behaviour in adverse circumstances. Adversity can include the forces of discrimination, lack of respect, Pacific invisibility, and cultural misunderstandings. Results that can come from these forces can include the silencing of Pacific learners and increased relational distance between

educators and learners, parents, families, and communities. Crawford-Garrett suggests that attention to resistance as an alternative theorisation for what teachers may see as negative behaviour in classrooms, particularly in low-decile schools, provides a basis for critical discussion during teacher training. While this suggestion may have merits, in that it includes the aspect of systemic power as an element in understanding classroom interactions, it is not informed by ideas of wellbeing of Pacific origin.

Research tools that operationalise concepts of resilience have been used to develop snapshots across populations. Caygill (2016) uses two datasets from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study to examine the development of resilience in learners in Aotearoa New Zealand, specifically academically resilient students from low socio-economic backgrounds who achieve well. Because many Pacific students fall within this demographic, the study is relevant to Pacific education. Caygill used Kiswarday's (2012) framework for resilience. This involves inner personal strengths, interpersonal and social strengths, and supports and resources external to the child. Caygill concluded that all those involved – parents, whānau, teachers, and the student themselves – need to work on these areas for optimal academic achievement. This position underlines the agency teachers have to positively influence students whose families may not be able to fully realise their role in education.



The reading of resilience provided by Caygill (2016) rests on a social and holistic understanding of wellbeing. This draws attention to the importance of family and community in the progress of the individual. Caygill notes that the literature of resilience pays particular attention to moments of transition where students move between schools and/or educational sectors. Those who are already struggling at school may struggle more because new relationships and a renewed sense of belonging are required.

The Ministry of Health (2018) report *He Ara Oranga: Report of the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction* provides support for holistic concepts of wellbeing in Pacific contexts. In education, factors such as a sense of belonging, a consequent feeling of safety, often vested in an understanding of the system, are potential markers of Pacific wellbeing in education in the sense described in the report. As a result of enhanced wellbeing, Pacific students are likely to contribute empathy in educational settings and experience resilience in the face of educational challenges. This view of wellbeing is contextual, involves connections both in and out of education and, therefore, is relational.

Fa'alili-Fidow et al. (2016) provide an analysis of learner data that suggests, over time, Pacific students' feelings about school can change, with safety and confidence about school completion increasing, despite no change in the proportion of Pacific students' who feel there is an adult who cares for them in school. When compared with New Zealand European students, these researchers report Pacific students appear more connected to their school, feel part of their school, and feel cared for by an adult in school. Possible explanations for this include students' perceptions about connection being informed by understanding the world through *vā*, and the significance of school-focused peer-group bonding for Pacific students. Overall, this dataset indicates progress for Pacific education in areas key for wellbeing at a national level.

## CULTURALLY INFORMED MEASURES OF PACIFIC WELLBEING

Research exists that seeks to develop culturally informed ideas of wellbeing of particular relevance to Pacific education. Manuela and Sibley (2013) report ongoing development of the Pacific Identity and Wellbeing Scale (PIWBS). This was a five-point self-reported measure aimed at appropriately assessing wellbeing from a Pacific perspective, and now revised to six points (Manuela and Sibley, 2015a). The six points are: Perceived Familial Wellbeing; Perceived Societal Wellbeing; Group Membership Evaluation; Pacific Connectedness and Belonging; and Religious Centrality and Embeddedness and Cultural Efficacy (Manuela and Sibley, 2015b, page 61).

The intention behind the scale is to provide a holistic measurement of the overall psychological experience of people from the Pacific. Manuela and Sibley (2013) used constructs developed from literature, qualitative data, and other sources as the basis of the scale. Socio-centric markers of wellbeing are significant in the model, which takes account not only of the perceived wellbeing of the individual but also of family and community. The PIWBS also pays attention to the influence of religion and the importance of a sense of belonging.

Constructing a Pacific wellbeing measurement tool challenges universal measures of wellbeing by asserting it is possible and appropriate to conceptualise and measure it in contextualised culturally informed ways. In the PIWBS, a holistic, multi-dimensional Pacific-origin account of wellbeing is accentuated, which provides an avenue for developments in evaluating wellbeing-focused practice in Pacific education. Such thinking sits well with ideas of Pacific education that place relational concerns at the core. It also resonates with claims about the importance of family engagement in education as a way of supporting Pacific students' success.

Looking at Pacific migrant wellbeing through health and identity lenses in Australia, Rodriguez (2012) examines how reciprocal networks inform Pacific ideas of belonging and wellbeing. The author argues that policies and interventions that do not consider cultural factors construct problems because of the poor choice-making of individuals. Consequently, the effect of policy is likely to be limited. Instead, understanding the relationships between socio-economic position, cultural expectation, and notions of wellbeing offers a more contextualised approach to improving Pacific people's wellbeing. It is important to conceptualise, investigate, and intervene in wellbeing in ways that make sense to those involved. This means those responsible for policy development and evaluation need to be open to rethinking how such issues are approached. Losi (2017) supports this line of thought. The author concludes that health information currently provided to Pacific mothers is not well used by them, partially because of cultural and religious beliefs. Policy changes recommended by Losi include sensitivity in managing conflicting messages from Western and traditional health approaches, designing community health initiatives close to target populations, and using digital technology for information sharing.

"mHealth", or mobile health, is the delivery of health programmes through mobile phone and app technologies to achieve medical goals. Working in this field, Verbiest et al. (2019) provide an example of the potential of co-design in constructing wellbeing models and subsequent interventions. The researchers report the development of a holistic model of wellbeing informed by collectivist worldviews and constructed through discussion with Pacific people. The model embraces relationships with kin but extends to physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual environments. The research outcomes show how behavioural change in a group can be supported through contextually responsive understandings of

the issues involved when these issues are supported by appropriate communication methods. This suggests that a cultural lens, developed through community consultation, can produce relevant and positive wellbeing strategies beyond the scope of those imagined by professionals.

Averill (2012) links teaching practices to wellbeing in a study driven by multiple in-class observations. Averill augments Durie's (1998) *whare tapawhā* model, which was based on a four-sided house, employing cultural references from Tonga to structure holistic conceptualisations of wellbeing. These support the value of care in the classroom. Averill links caring practices to interrelated physical, spiritual, cognitive, social, and emotional aspects of culturally founded models of wellbeing that support academic rationale. Fonofale is an example of a Pacific culturally founded model. Potential outcomes of classroom care as pedagogy, as detailed by Averill, include the development of wellbeing, inclusivity in mathematics teaching, and positive attitudes from Pacific students to mathematics.

Wellbeing can also be understood as practice that can be built on cultural norms. Using data from the national youth health and wellbeing survey of 2012, van Lier et al. (2017) found that two-thirds of students had a vegetable garden at home and one-quarter of the student population were involved in home gardening. Gardening is associated with health through healthy dietary habits, such as fruit consumption, and also with physical activity and improved mental health and wellbeing. Young adolescent Pacific males living in rural contexts are the group most likely to be home gardening, providing significant information for those who seek to develop wellbeing strategies built on Pacific strengths.





## CULTURALLY FRAMED WELLBEING: MENTORING AND PEER SUPPORT

One well-represented area of practice in the recent literature on Pacific education is mentoring. Mentoring in education is a relational practice where interpersonal support is available to learners as mentees from mentors. Mentors are generally staff but can be senior students. Three studies are reported here. When mentorship programmes embrace Pacific cultural understandings, including understandings of relationality, or when they are run by Pacific mentors, Pacific visibility is enhanced.

In her Master's thesis, Faletutulu (2017) stated that young Pacific people can be moulded into leaders through specific ways, including the availability of programmes that address their values and beliefs as a Pacific young person in New Zealand. Faletutulu recommended that leadership programmes have the potential to create a community of strong Pacific young people who will encourage one another to become mentors in the future for other Pacific young people. Effective programmes that provide a positive environment can cultivate young Pacific peoples' identities and leadership. The author further elaborated that leadership programmes for Pacific young people needed to provide spaces for a discussion of Pacific and Western styles of leadership. Such discussions would consider where Pacific young people might be starting from in their leadership journeys. As a result, stronger Pacific leaders can be raised up because development can start in a context that Pacific young people recognise.

Farruggia, Bullen, Solomon, Collins, and Dunphy (2011) examine youth mentoring in Aotearoa New Zealand. They report that, internationally, mentoring programmes are significant as interventions for youth who are at risk. Such programmes can lead to improved school attendance and achievement; support more positive attitudes towards school; support greater

wellbeing and connectedness; and reduce susceptibility to involvement with drugs. In Aotearoa New Zealand, Farruggia et al. suggest that cultural alignment in the context of Pacific youth mentoring could include the involvement of extended family; acknowledgment of language and customs; acknowledgment of cultural identity; and conceptualising wellbeing in collective rather than individual ways.

Mentoring is embedded in family like structures through tuakana-teina (older-younger) relational models in Aotearoa New Zealand. These mirror the kinds of mentoring that happen in Pacific families and communities. However, despite the fact that many mentoring programmes target Māori and Pacific youth, Farruggia et al. (2011) found little evidence of cultural alignment between practice and the cultures of these groups. In addition, they report that little local evaluative literature adopts a consciously cultural lens. A consequence is that what might be culturally salient to mentees may be missed in programme evaluation. This questions the validity of imported mentoring programmes without deliberate cultural perspectives as well as those developed in Aotearoa New Zealand that have aims, activities, and evaluation that do not take account of culture. Without nuanced thinking, the goals of mentoring programmes, along with their enactment, may be alien to those intended to benefit.

In her mentoring work in education, Chu (2009) recommends points that are critical for Pacific young people. These are as follows:

1. Pacific mentoring and leadership are interconnected and cannot be separated. One cannot exist without the other. Mentoring is about being interested in developing younger students as leaders and as people who can be influential within their relationships. Educational institutions should recognise, place priority, and support the understanding of alternative ways of mentoring for leadership.

2. Relationships that are built on solid foundations of shared values are important in leadership development. Some of these values are respect, compassion, humility, honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, and reciprocity. These values should be integrated into mentoring programmes for Pacific students in education. Values build relationships. Engage students so their needs and values are reflected in mentoring processes.
  3. Leadership development starts today not tomorrow. A leadership initiative can start as something small and can still have a considerable impact on Pacific communities.
  4. A specific setting or context helps to facilitate leadership development. The people, their needs, the resources, and the culture of the context determine the shape of leadership initiatives. Universities should have structures, people, and resources that support and enhance these initiatives.
  5. Leadership development is for the long term. Short-term initiatives will have impacts but it is the long-term development that will have far-reaching positive effects for Pacific communities.
  6. Resources are needed for effective mentorship and leadership development. Institutions and government agencies should be constantly reminded of their obligations and responsibility to Pacific people. The people resources are important and necessary in leadership development.
  7. The development of shared visions by leaders is critical for leadership in Pacific communities. These are shared visions based on the hopes and aspirations of Pacific people.
  8. Mentoring of younger Pacific students in education is necessary for the growing and nurturing of their identities.
  9. It is important to document and record the stories of mentorship-leadership development and individual growth. Communicate and document the stories, draw out the key principles and themes, and use them for learning of leadership knowledge. To strengthen Pacific education, it is important the stories focus on enabling factors.
  10. The right leadership development has far-reaching effects. Appreciative mentorship, as well as being life-changing for individuals, also has the potential for considerable positive effects, changes and impacts on organisations, institutions, and communities (pages 263–265).
- Other recent relevant research describes mentoring practice that includes cultural concepts appropriate to the populations involved. For example, Noonan et al. (2012) examine the effectiveness of STARS, a locally developed programme intended to support students in transition from primary to secondary sectors. The STARS programme acknowledges Māori mentoring practices of tuakana-teina through its peer-based structure. In the programme, groups of Year 9 mentees are matched with Year 12 and Year 13 students who they interact with in wilderness camps, community projects, and weekly meetings. Qualitative data discussed by Noonan et al. indicate the programme to be most effective in low decile schools and those with high numbers of Pacific students. The researchers speculate that the group aspect of mentoring may align with collective cultures from the Pacific. An environment that reflects mentorship-rich family relationships may also benefit Pacific students.
- Ross (2010) discusses building culturally relevant support in a distance learning environment for the engagement, retention, and success of new Pacific (and Māori) students. The author found that proactive institutional provision of regular contact with tutors and knowledgeable peers is helpful



to new students, especially when timed to coincide with significant points in a student's course. Timely intervention can lead to the resolution of issues, especially when a student feels part of a learning community. The programme of support was built on a kaupapa Māori theory to embrace kōrero, whānau, and tuakana-teina relationships. Pacific students in the programme particularly value opportunities to build meaningful relationships, responsiveness, and the recognition of the importance of family and culture. Support workers in the programme acknowledge that inclusive, rather than specific, pedagogies provide an appropriate approach to Pacific diversity.

## SHAME AND PACIFIC WELLBEING

Shame is integrated into how wellbeing is articulated. As discussed, issues of discrimination, invisibility, and misrepresentation are also significant. Nevertheless, shame is worth considering in relation to wellbeing, given its salience in the literature.

Because identity can be undermined by judgement, the concept of shame is relevant to wellbeing. Johnson (2012) gives a discussion of the relevance of shame in a US educational context. Drawing from the literature, Johnson associates shame with being exposed to external or internal judgements, loss of control, and/or incompetence. Shame is related to issues of wellbeing and associated with a threat to the self. Johnson provides results that tentatively link shame and a degraded sense of community, and suggests that, where this applies, the development of community by deliberate institutional action is a way forward. This quantitative research may have application in Pacific educational contexts through the salience of concepts of shame in the Pacific (Anae, 2010; Brown et al., 2007; Latu and Young, 2004).

Pacific concepts of shame may be nuanced by the nature of the social or relationally dependent self (Mila-Schaaf, 2006). If exposure to judgement is an important element in the construction of shame, deliberate consideration of the qualities, configuration, and scope of teaching and learning environments may be helpful in managing shame (Reynolds, 2018a). In addition, if community security is a way to reduce shame, deliberate support of Pacific communities in schools may be a significant strategy (Reynolds, 2018b). Because a feeling of incompetence is also related to shame, the recognition in schools of Pacific funds of knowledge, such as language and values, may also make a positive contribution. Students who fail to "see" themselves in school (Nakhid, 2003) because Pacific visibility is low are unlikely to feel part of the school community. Their absence may create a sense they are judged as unworthy, contributing to shame within the educational space.

The importance of relationships as a way of combating threats to wellbeing is supported by work on Pacific wellbeing that focuses on mental health and suicide prevention (Tiatia-Seath, 2014). In this work, stories of suicide prevention and mental health service delivery pay attention to the significance of family involvement, dissonance between Western and Pacific beliefs around mental health, and the level of engagement of Pacific youth. Tiatia-Seath argues that community cultural considerations in Pacific contexts are crucial for effective suicide strategies and more general mental health service engagement. This makes a priority of the visibility of Pacific ideas of wellbeing, identity, language, and culture more generally. It also prioritises attention on family and community relationships on the part of the health system and, by implication, the education system as it seeks to support Pacific learners' wellbeing.

# Theme Four:

'Auala in - Access



# Theme Four:

'Auala in - Access



'Auala in - Access involves:

- » parent and community access to education
- » the relationship between institutional culture and access
- » the effect of system level considerations
- » access and well-aligned educational relationships.

Pacific students, like all students, should have access to high-quality education that leads them to experience success. Because Pacific students are related to parents, families and communities, issues of access extend beyond opportunities to attend a school. A discussion of access, or the pathway into in Pacific education, should include the conditions that students, parents, families, and communities experience in the education system.

When paying attention to access, this literature review approaches the subject in several related ways. These include attention to opportunity as a result of the way the system is structured and experienced; the qualities required of in-school relationships to provide optimal access to learning; institutional structures, attitudes, and behaviours that welcome families and communities as part of students' educational journeys; and leadership and training as ways to ensure increased access by Pacific students, families, and communities to success within the education system.



## PARENT AND COMMUNITY ACCESS TO EDUCATION

A significant factor in Pacific students' access to high-quality education is the extent to which schools successfully engage with families. Laumemea (2018) studied school practices intended to support Pacific family engagement. The author reports that when schools partner with Pacific families, student outcomes, student behaviour, and parents' abilities to offer effective support improve. Informal and formal practices were evident in schools within the study. The main factors required of effective schools in Laumemea's account are: an appreciation of the diversity of Pacific people; awareness of the cultures of Pacific people and the culture of the school as it seeks to be welcoming; and mindfulness of the prominence of spirituality and the church to Pacific people. Strategies that embody these factors are likely to be successful in encouraging engagement.

The Education Review Office (ERO) is responsible for reviewing the performance of schools across Aotearoa New Zealand. Mutch and Collins (2012) combine data collected by the ERO to present an analysis of factors that enable parental and community access to education. An important finding is that "it was not just what the school did but the spirit in which it was done that led to successful engagement" (page 177). This points to the significance of the qualities of relationships between institutions, parents, and community rather than to specific actions as predictors of successful engagement. This research suggests the importance of a belief in partnerships and shared responsibility for education; developed or developing common understandings and expectations; and commitment to collaborative work. Relationships characterised by mutual trust underpin these factors; effective communication supports trust. Leadership is a significant factor in developing a school culture that values openness and partnership. This is associated with well-

configured and effective consultative relationships. Examples given by the researchers of trust-based engagements include celebrations of success and restorative practices. Hunter et al. (2016) also draw attention to the significance of reciprocal and respectful relationships between schools, students, and their families. When these are in place, students' cultural identity is affirmed, learning is enhanced, and the kinds of cross-cultural misrepresentations and tensions that may result in inequitable practice are minimised.

Although the ERO data discussed by Mutch and Collins (2012) were not exclusively derived from the Pacific voice, they are relevant because, as the researchers point out, they resonate with more precise Pacific datasets, such as the Pacific Island School Community Parent Liaison Project (Gorinski, 2005). In addition, a diverse population invites schools that seek to be effective with all their students to structure consultation and partnership with multiple and diverse communities. In many schools, Pacific students and their communities constitute a diverse group within a more general diversity.

Averill, Metson, and Bailey (2016) review literature that is pertinent to a nuanced understanding of the involvement of parents in the education of Pacific (and Māori) students. Echoing the findings of others (Hunter et al., 2016; Laumemea, 2018; Mutch and Collins, 2012), Averill et al. note that the quality of relationships between school and home is a significant factor in the kind of access parents have to school processes. In this account, quality involves dignity and respect. Examples of how productive relationships can be enacted include actions to develop trust such as those that build on home practices.

From the literature reviewed, Averill et al. (2016) explain that the development of optimal relationships is a cultural matter for schools. Leaders and teachers need to understand parents as partners and the



development of shared goals as accepted practice, rather than as an add-on to other, competing understandings. The researchers point out, however, that several barriers exist. These barriers stem from factors that cannot be controlled by a school; variable understandings of policy within education sectors; insufficient access to effective professional development; time budgets that are already under pressure; language and cultural differences between home and school; and varied ideas about partnership among a heterogeneous parent group. For mathematics education in particular, which was the focus of the research by Averill et al., difficulties in understanding the subject can be an increasing issue for parents as students get older. Averill et al. identify a need for further New Zealand-based investigations into the maximisation of parental involvement in schools and the effect of this on wellbeing, affect, and achievement. This would include research examining effective paths that give access to parents, families, and communities so authentic, equitable relationships can form the basis of Pacific education.

Flavell (2014) examines the perceptions of family in their role in supporting learning. Like Siope (2011), Flavell describes Pacific students avoiding conversations about learning with their parents to reinforce distance between home and school. This frustrates parental desires to be involved and encourages a sense of disconnection. The fear of failure to meet parental

expectation is identified by Flavell as a possible motivation for students behaving in this way. Flavell (2017) points to a significant aspect of all effective relationships that seek to provide access to success in education for Pacific students: listening to and learning from Pacific parents and families. The author describes individualised communication models used by the school as being hard for parents to deal with (Flavell, 2014). This can include environments that are not welcoming and language use that does not invite participation. The kinds of *talanoa* favoured by Laumemea (2018) offer an alternative.

Akeripa (2017) found that the *fa'asāmoa* can influence decisions on learning and access to education by male Samoan students. The research also found, however, that masculinity in itself does not challenge positive participation in education. Akeripa shows that Samoan males value education and link it to future success for themselves and their families. It is also evident that the *fa'asāmoa* influences the value these males see in education as well as it contributing to their identity and self-esteem. Deterrents from education reported by Samoan students include family pressures and a lack of motivation rather than concepts of masculinity. These findings are interesting and point to an area for further investigation in a context where Pacific males are outperformed in education by Pacific females.

## INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE AND ACCESS

The findings of Mutch and Collins (2012) on the significance of school culture in producing an environment where minority students have access to success are reiterated in a Pacific context by Irving (2013) in a report of a single site report not subject to peer review. Among the findings of Irving's primary sector research are that access to success is encouraged when teachers and leaders show commitment to their Pacific students using a shared, collective approach based on the propositions that if "they fail we all fail" or that these are "all of our students" (page 3). A collective approach of this kind is a matter of school culture, deliberately developed over time in the face of potentially competing underpinnings of culture such as competition as the means to success. One aspect of this culture is the deliberate involvement of parents, families, and communities.

Irving (2013) also suggests that visible demonstrations of values-level concepts, including love and respect, position schools to encourage optimal achievement. Ongoing and visible commitment to care, understanding, identity, language, and culture by teachers is likely to support relationships that encourage student success. Irving's insistence on the significance of commitment and values suggests these are relational matters: they are effective not only because they are held by one party in the relationship but because they are perceived by the other. In other words, Pacific people have access to education when the environment created by the visible actions of those who run schools is welcoming and open. This idea is supported elsewhere at the classroom level (Reynolds, 2018a; Siope, 2011) and for parents (Fletcher et al., 2009).

Actions taken by schools to tailor education for Pacific students are examined by Bonne and Spiller (2017). A mixed picture emerges of progress in the way education in the primary and intermediate sectors is responding to Pacific communities. In 2016, two-thirds of teachers indicated they were deliberately gaining knowledge of individual students' cultural origins. Just over a third claimed recent access to practical professional learning and development focused on engaging Pacific students, up by 10 percent over 2013. However, despite the fact that more than half of principals surveyed claimed to be using National Standards data to identify Pacific students' learning needs, the proportion of schools that had integrated engagement strategies into their strategic plans was far smaller, at over a third. One strategy reported was to form a close relationship with Pacific language nests to encourage a smooth transition. However, not all schools that used this strategy facilitated continued learning of the relevant Pacific language in their schools. Around a fifth of principals indicated a need for further external expertise to ensure implementation of effective support strategies for Pacific students.

As a whole, the data given in Bonne and Spiller (2017) suggest that, while progress may be made in the classroom, at least in superficial ways, it is less secure at the institutional level. Given the emphasis of the literature on leadership and planning for the success of Pacific students in education (Averill et al., 2016; Laumemea, 2018; Mutch and Collins, 2012), the need for centrally sponsored changes, such as in time allocation, and opportunities to develop relationships are priorities. These are part of a greater system- and school-level rethink about Pacific students' access to high-quality education.

An example of leadership reshaping education to provide access to continuing and success-focused education for Pacific students is offered by Spee et al. (2014). The authors describe how the management team of a college with a high proportion of Pacific students created a culture of achievement and learning from evidence-based responsiveness, combined with effective pastoral care, the involvement of family, and belief in students' potential. The essence of the approach is partnership in a

commitment to improving Pacific outcomes in which respectful and responsive processes engage families. Raising student aspirations, enjoyment, and feelings of belonging are among the successes reported. Without effective leadership, access to high-quality education for Pacific people will remain overly dependent on individual teachers, parents, students, and school initiatives. Scaling up improvements in Pacific peoples' access to the best education requires significant institutional and systemic change.



## SYSTEM-LEVEL CONSIDERATIONS

The literature on Pacific education points to several systemic factors that affect Pacific access to high-quality education. These include school size, costs (such as uniform and curriculum materials), and the way concepts that act as gatekeepers are understood.

Pacific students are not evenly distributed through the education system. For example, in 2011, 90 percent of schools had 25 percent or less Pacific students on their roll, while 5 percent of schools had 50–100 percent of Pacific students on theirs (Education Review Office, 2012). As a result of this clustering, some features of schools, such as decile designation and school size, are salient when considering access in Pacific education. Gordon (2015) conducted a relevant review of education organised by the decile system, a positively discriminating funding mechanism designed to distribute additional resources to areas of relative socio-economic need (Ministry of Education, 2016). Gordon found that the size of decile 1 to 4 schools in which Pacific students are over-represented (Bonne and Spiller, 2017) is a matter of significance. These schools are now smaller on average than they were 25 years ago, a trend that shows no sign of slowing down.

Because unviable class sizes can occur when a small cohort is offered a wide choice of subjects, small secondary schools are limited in the number of subjects they can offer, particularly in students' NCEA years. A consequence is that many Pacific students who attend decile 1 to 4 schools are relatively restricted in their access to a range of subjects. Access restrictions of this nature are not generated at school level. Instead, they are related to systemic factors. For instance, the small size of decile 1 to 4 schools may be a consequence not only of the number of students who live locally but also of their migration to other schools, including those with a higher decile rating.

Such movement may be an unintended and paradoxical consequence of decile ratings understood by communities as a proxy for the quality of education provided. Student migration has been described as a racialised decile drift (Singh, 2018), a “white flight” that consequentially reduces access to a wide education for those who do not migrate to higher decile schools. Thus, when access to a high-quality education for Pacific students is considered, consideration of intended and unintended contributory factors is necessary.

Faitala (2013) found that a combination of the popularity of less literacy-rich subjects, compounded by misunderstandings of the NCEA assessment system, teacher influence, and the prioritisation by students of immediate enjoyment can result in restrictions in the subjects studied at secondary level by Pacific students. As a consequence, access to tertiary education becomes limited. Faitala recommends that schools promote literacy at all levels of education, including reading and writing courses at the secondary level. Together with clearer pathways through assessment matrices, and clarification of the routes to higher education, a stress on literacy has the potential to support Pacific students to progress long term in education.

In the ECE sector, Mitchell (2014) reveals that costs faced by parents, often combined with enrolment policies, are a barrier to ECE access for Pacific people. Costs include requests for donations and optional charges levied, in addition to costs covered by statutory subsidies. When parents feel unwelcome as a result of enrolment practices, this can add to a second significant factor that affects access, which is a sense a centre cannot be trusted with the child. Mitchell suggests that deficit theorisation can be present in ECE centre staff and made visible in their various practices. A recommendation Mitchell makes is the wider adoption of induction processes that make transparent what happens at centres, support of family–staff interpersonal relationships, and embodying

an understanding of education as for and with, rather than separate from, families. A reduction of costs is another strategy that has potential to increase ECE access for Pacific people.

Access to high-quality education for Pacific students can also be affected by the way concepts that act as gatekeepers are understood. As an example, Frengley-Vaipuna et al. (2011) discuss the way increased access for Pacific students to Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) can be encouraged by re-understanding the area. Access to GATE and the opportunities for success it affords are governed by the recognition of students as having gifts and talents.

Frengley-Vaipuna et al. adopt a cultural model of GATE in which being *poto*, in the Tongan sense, “able to match behaviour to context – knowing what to do, being able to do it, knowing when to do it and doing it well” (page 43), is essential for recognising GATE students. An explicitly cultural model of GATE offers access to Pacific students who demonstrate their potential in ways valued by communities. Faaea-Semeatu (2011) extends the argument by showing how cultural GATE markers, such as adaptability, memory, church affiliation, commitment to excellence, relational skills, resilience, birthright, linguistic fluency, and leadership can be developed in consultation with communities, parents, and students. When this is achieved, concepts that act as gatekeepers reflect Pacific values and do not operate as exclusionary impositions.

## ACCESS AND EDUCATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Access to a high-quality education for Pacific students can be enhanced when relationships between students, their families, communities, and teachers are supportive and inclusive. McDonald and Lipine (2012) conducted a study with 38 Samoan secondary students. The authors

found that, while educational systems need to be responsive to minority students, such as Pacific students, and policies and strategies in Aotearoa New Zealand have increasingly been adopted to promote the development of Pacific learners, more understanding is needed. Key findings include the importance of understanding that access to success in education for Pacific students involves relational matters. This includes developing a clearer idea of how partnerships and relationships between Pacific parents, families and communities, and educational institutions can be authentically developed.

Relationships identified by McDonald and Lipine (2012) as crucial to Pacific students' access to success in education include those centred on the students' home and community. For example, motivations to succeed at school for Samoan (and other Pacific) students include returning the support and investment of their family and community as a way of caring for the *vā* between themselves and the community. This may not be fully recognised and supported by schools. Also important to success in school is students' skills in dealing with two cultural worlds, those of community and school. A significant aspect of this reported by McDonald and Lipine is the ability to negotiate inconsistencies between the demands these worlds make.

The relevance of community as motivation in Pacific education raises questions of how conscious schools are regarding their part in constructing high-stakes choices for students. McDonald and Lipine (2012) recommend that ideas from key stakeholders about effective support for Samoan students should be considered in planning future achievement. By taking account of family and community in planning, the potential is increased to align the multiple worlds experienced by students. In addition, any arrangements intended to bridge these worlds need to be understood as cultural and involve parents, peers, and educationalists working together. However,





the student voice collected by McDonald and Lipine highlights the uncomfortable way schools sometimes promote concerns about academic achievement as a choice to be made above the cultural, social, and personal dimensions of educational environments. Where this occurs, the relegation of cultural obligations can be experienced by students as a misalignment between worlds.

Alignment is relevant to educational access for Pacific students because where schools listen to and understand what matters to families and communities, students are likely to be supported by inclusive relationships. However, where relationships between schools and communities are poorly configured, Pacific student success may depend on the skills of unsupported individual students to negotiate between conflicting demands or choices. An unbridged distance between home and school can operate to make access to all aspects of education problematic for Pacific students because it ignores the collective basis of Pacific cultures.

The significance of relationships in access to education is highlighted in a study by Siope (2011). This study describes the way Pacific students sometimes silo their worlds so family access to the student's education is restricted. Siope suggests that students' experiences of secondary education encourage them to act in this way, a finding echoed by Nakhid (2003). Siope describes how some teachers display characteristics of reasonableness, availability, and responsiveness to Pacific students with the effect that strong relational bonds support students' engagement and educational progress. Siope also finds the church is an important force, with potential to reinforce language, culture, and identity within a community setting. Negotiating the demands of church and school is a challenge faced by many Pacific students. Siope points to the potential of teachers who are aware of their students' lives to support this balance so access to both is protected. Other

literature (Fletcher, Parkhill, and Harris, 2011) supports the significance to Pacific students of positive student-teacher relationships in which links to parents, families, and community through Pacific culture and language(s) are acknowledged as valuable.

The link between relationships and Pacific students' access to success in education has also been described in the tertiary sector. Toumu'a and Laban (2014) investigated a research initiative designed to support continued access to university study for Pacific students enrolled at Victoria University of Wellington. Factors affecting access include the level of personal maturity and independence students possess, along with circumstantial factors, such as finance and family stability. Pacific students are supported when clarity exists around their presence at university, goals for study, and reasons for performing well. These are often associated with family. However, a sense of under-preparedness to study at the tertiary level in terms of "academic literacy, study skills and habits, and knowledge about what university life was like and what would be expected of them in order to succeed" (page 51) may be a barrier to continued access to tertiary education. Because under-preparedness is related to previous experiences in the education system, access to success at primary and secondary levels of education affect continued access to successful tertiary level study. This draws attention to systemic aspects of access.

Toumu'a and Laban (2014) also highlight the significance to Pacific students of relationships with staff. Where staff are supportive and take a holistic approach to their students, they are likely to continue to participate and achieve in tertiary education. Where this is not the case, students vote with their feet. For instance, one response in Toumu'a and Laban's study describes a passive form of rejection of learning: "we made a unanimous decision in our little informal group [of Pacific students] that we were actually more productive teaching

ourselves (laughs)” (page 52). The provision of spaces where relationships between Pacific students can develop, the structuring of mentoring by sympathetic others (particularly Pacific students and staff), and culturally safe teaching and learning spaces can contribute to students’ continued access to educational success. Another positive factor is institutional sensitivity to issues such as financial hardship. Balancing paid employment and study, access to space to study, and the effect of prior educational success within the family are also significant to educational success.

While limited in scope as a single institution study, the data in Toumu’a and Laban (2014) suggest that, although prior educational experiences may provide a limitation to future educational access, institutions can moderate this effect. In addition, specific initiatives that involve academic activities, but that also include the development of relationships through other means, can be useful to Pacific students. However, the day-to-day attitudes and behaviour of staff are also significant. The response of institutions to external factors that are essentially out of their control can also affect the way access is continued or curtailed. For instance, addressing financial matters “with adequate privacy and sensitivity to the realities of Pacific financial concerns” (page 53) can play an important role in enabling students to stay in study. Looked at together, these insights point to the importance of the way institutions and staff understand their roles as carers, educators, and creators of environments that support students to continue to access education. When access is assured, the opportunity exists for the community and family resources available to students, such as peer support and role models, to play a positive part in success.

The presence of Pacific staff has potential to support Pacific students’ access to success in education. This can be through their identification with Pacific staff (Toumu’a and Laban, 2014), but it can also

be through Pacific staff members’ abilities to identify and communicate with Pacific communities, as revealed by Laumemea (2018). The recruitment of Pacific teachers is generally achieved through initial teacher education (ITE) providers. Jenkin and Clark (2013) suggest extending access to ITE selection panels to communities such as Pacific communities. The potential benefits include expertise capable of recognising dispositions, knowledge, and skills valued by Pacific people in the process, so those admitted to ITE programmes are more likely to meet the needs of Pacific students.

Allen, Taleni, and Robertson (2009) describe an initiative that took school teachers from Aotearoa New Zealand to stay in villages in Sāmoa. The journey was part of a wider strategy founded on a dual idea. To teach diverse students effectively, teachers need to know themselves and their own culture while working to know their students’ culture(s) more fully. Culture is hard to appreciate in the abstract and the initiative hoped to help teachers enhance their cultural self-efficacy through experiential learning. Teachers reported that, following the visit, they had a greater sense of how much learning about their students was needed, about cultural insights, such as the importance of food and the significance of family, and ideas for specific teaching strategies. In practice, many of these capitalised on knowledge gained during the visit to Sāmoa, and on information and understandings that facilitated enhanced engagement of Pacific students. An important aspect of this initiative identified by the researchers was that, by living with people who have different world views, teachers can start to take new perspectives into their own “skin” as their existing thinking is exposed and challenged. A question to ask is of the resources available for similarly challenging Pacific community experiences in Aotearoa New Zealand and of the avenues that might make these available to teachers for the benefit of their Pacific students.

# Theme Five:

## Cultural Bias and Racism



# Theme Five:

Cultural Bias and Racism







Cultural bias and racism involves:

- » understanding concepts of equity in Pacific education contexts
- » paying attention to structural features of contexts in Pacific education
- » acknowledging the effects of direct racism
- » the ways Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities are understood and related to in education.

## CULTURAL BIAS, EQUITY, AND RACISM

Ethnic diversity, including Pacific and many other diversities, is a fact of life in education in Aotearoa New Zealand. Ethnicity as an aspect of diversity relates to identity and involves how a person sees themselves in relation to others of a similar background and culture. Diversity is not always celebrated. When diversity is negatively responded to with power, whether by individuals or through institutional practice, bias and racism result. Racism is the result of when “cultural difference is combined with physical difference and the concepts of superiority/inferiority” (Spoonley, 1988, page 6). In education, Pacific visible is suppressed if Pacific cultures, languages, and identities are regarded either explicitly or implicitly as inferior to others.

One way of understanding bias is as unconscious judgement applied in the context of diversity. These terms come together in the negative experience of those to whom judgement and prejudice are applied. Individual professionals may find it hard to operate without bias in an educational system that privileges, in part for historical reasons, certain groups. In Aotearoa New Zealand, knowledges of European origin infuse areas such as the curriculum, organisations, and values in education. Pacific knowledges are far less visible. Important questions to consider, however, include how people respond when they become conscious of bias, and under what circumstances can greater sensitivity to bias and racism be promoted when thinking about personal activities and environmental factors in education. One important issue in both considerations is how diversity is understood.

Among the models of diversity prevalent in education in Aotearoa New Zealand is that of Alton-Lee (2003). She proposes a frame (page v) that:

*... rejects the notion of a ‘normal’ group and ‘other’ or minority groups of children and constitutes diversity and difference as central to the classroom endeavour and central to the focus of quality teaching in Aotearoa, New Zealand. It is fundamental to the approach taken to diversity in New Zealand education that it honours the Treaty of Waitangi.*

This model is founded on relational equity. However, the education system does not start from a “clean slate”; quality teaching has been conceptualised over time in relation to the experiences of success of past students and on their language, culture, and identity needs. For Pacific learners to experience quality teaching, the cultural biases in education need to be deconstructed and adjusted. Increasing Pacific visibility without self-examination and change on the part of education and educators is unlikely to lead to the optimal achievement of Pacific success.

Leach (2011) presents an informative discussion of concepts of diversity together with critiques that have been applied to them. Thinking about diversity points to a tension between the politics of assimilation and pluralism and can lead to conflicting concepts of diversity. To investigate conflicting understandings of diversity, Leach collected survey data from educational professionals in the tertiary sector on how they supported Māori, Pacific, and international students in their first year of study. This discussion is important because it informs the ways Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities are understood and related to in education.

From the data, Leach (2011) produced a five-stage continuum of tertiary teachers’ attitudes to diversity: universal, universal-group, group, group-individual, and individual. These can be summarised as follows. A universal position treats all students the same and holds racism to exist in any variation of treatment. Race becomes silenced in this position. A group-based position takes ethnicity into account and recognises bonds between students within a group. From this position, additional support, such as a targeted tutorial, can be justified on the basis of group need in the face of the exclusionary effects of existing practice. An individual position erases ethnicity but seeks to deal with students on an individual basis; each is treated differently according to their need. Proponents of this

position recognise the difficulties inherent in such differentiation. An individual-group position recognises groups as existing but diverse, a situation where group-based action becomes unviable. A group-universal position recognises differences but sees justice in all students being treated the same.

In Pacific education where the concept of Pacific is an umbrella, the Treaty of Waitangi partnership is significant, and where most teachers are not Pacific, explicit discussion around concepts of diversity within schools and in partnership with Pacific communities is important. Without careful thought and accountability, the kinds of well-meaning but blunted initiatives described by Cardno et al. (2018) are likely. It is on the back of perceptive discussion of diversity that the capability to deliver equity for Pacific learners can be built.

The need for explicit discussion of equity is reinforced by Nakhid (2011). The author questions who is represented in institutional decision-making at the highest level in matters of equity. Nakhid interviewed six equity leaders in a tertiary institution and revealed various understandings of equity. Responses to questions about the role of equity committees included: student advocacy, fairness, the challenging of unjust practices, and an economic approach whereby expenditure on equity should be returned to the institution. Nakhid’s findings suggest that, while people may have a core understanding of equity, this may not be shared by all. Instead, cultural bias may be prevalent.

Nakhid (2011) points to passion, commitment, and empathy as important personal characteristics of those involved in institutional equity matters. However, what also emerges as significant is the kind of historical knowledge helpful to unpick equity issues, and three factors important in fostering engagement with equity issues among the majority population. These factors are: 1) awareness of the need for equity as a feature of a future successful

society; 2) the presence in influential positions of Māori and Pacific staff (supported by Pākehā allies); 3) recognition of cultural factors that support achievement.

Nakhid (2011) places these findings in the context of institutional norms, pointing out that endemic structures, made invisible by their institutionalisation, present barriers, despite the way individuals may feel about equity. The author suggests that a good first step towards equity is to trust leaders of minoritised groups, such as Māori and Pacific communities, to lead equity committees, coupled with willingness at the highest institutional level to take advice, however challenging it might seem.

Institutional factors related to bias and equity also feature in research by Taylor et al. (2017). This study examines student engagement levels as they relate to ethnicity in the context of first-year law students. Engagement is defined in part as the time and effort invested in studies. Although the research does not reveal significant ethnic differences in engagement levels, significant differences are apparent in students' motivations for studying law. Māori, Pacific, and Indian students indicate that family obligations have the most impact on their studies, information that the researchers suggest could be better used by law schools in undertaking transition and recruitment for these groups. Current practice might be changed to embrace Pacific parents, families, and community in equitable and reciprocal partnerships. Equity is not just about achievement but includes experience, access, and relationships. Governance advice on relationships with Pacific communities is available (Ministry of Education, 2013a).

George (2010) studied Pacific male students' experiences in secondary education, revealing an awareness of hegemony, cultural capital, and deficit theorising. Collectively, these elements support a nuanced understanding of boys' journeys through high school. George also shows how parents' understandings of the workings of

the education system are improving and that parents are helping their sons as a result. However, while schools may be making changes, students and parents see the process as insufficient. George points out that the changes taking place often depend on initiatives by individual teachers, a limited and sporadic resource.

Seeking the ideal case, Helu-Thaman (2009) explores the challenges of pursuing classroom cultural democracy in Pacific Island nations. Cultural democracy involves the representation of those involved in education in its content, structures, and practice. Steps towards an ideal situation suggested by Helu-Thaman include recognising the potential contribution of Pacific knowledge systems, pedagogical approaches and values in the classroom, and institutional life. Helu-Thaman's approach has application in Aotearoa New Zealand because it provides a platform to address assimilationist tendencies in educational curricula and teaching materials, values the recruitment of staff who reflect more closely the demographic profile of students, and pays attention to environmental as well as personal issues in education. An explicit discussion of cultural democracy in education has the potential to improve clarity about the relationships of inferiority and superiority that produce racism and bias in education. This is valuable where the outcomes of Pacific education are affected by negative attitudes and expectations (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2018; Rubie-Davies, Hattie, and Hamilton, 2006).





## STRUCTURAL FEATURES

The literature shows that the selection of one mode of assessment over another can produce bias. Young-Loveridge (2006) tracked Pacific students' mathematical achievements during the Numeracy Development Project (NDP) over a three-year period. A significant aspect of the NDP is making explicit the expectations teachers should have of mathematical progress. This is a feature that Young-Loveridge suggests may have alleviated previously documented low teacher expectations of Pacific students, a form of bias that has the potential to contribute to low Pacific achievement. However, the presence of several other factors prevents definitive statements from being made regarding links between the NDP. Young-Loveridge suggests that the NDP reporting methodology, a one-to-one interview between teacher and student, may have contributed to positive results for Pacific students that are somewhat at odds with other national surveys. This implicitly points to bias through assessment. Assessment data are capable of feeding racially-oriented low expectations in a circular way, especially when decontextualised. This places responsibility on policy makers when commissioning diagnostic frameworks to consider the relationship between how data are gathered, what data is measured, how they are presented, and the effects they can have on perceptions. As discussed by (Pettersson, 2014), the narrativisation of achievement data is not a neutral activity. The same can be said about the curriculum, to which achievement data are related, and the modes of teaching used for its delivery.

Representation is another structural aspect of education that can lead to bias. Siteine and Samu (2011) examined how Pacific peoples were portrayed in the New Zealand School Journal from 2002 to 2009. Building on earlier, more general work (Siteine and Samu, 2009) that suggested an image of Pacific people limited to superficiality

and stereotypical elements is prevalent in the social studies resources provided for schools, Siteine and Samu (2011) reveal a stereotypical depiction of Pacific people in the School Journal. This compounds under-representation when compared with Europeans. The researchers discuss these findings as problematic because stereotypical images support a deficit view of Pacific people in terms of their identity and social location in society in Aotearoa New Zealand. The task of schools seeking to challenge such ideological positions is made more difficult by bias in portrayal, presumably because of a lack of criticality in the dynamics of resource production.

Johansson (2012) also observes representation as an area for bias. The author examined the content of eight plays suggested for study at the secondary level on Te Kete Ipurangi, an officially sanctioned website. Johansson's analysis reveals texts that have culturally charged elements, such as stereotypical characters and themes, likely to support the construction of negative images of and in Pacific people. In a context where alternatives are available, Johansson's work asks why representation in drama is not subject to diversification and cultural responsiveness. Stereotypical images reinforce Pacific invisibility. Pacific visible is contributed to by authentic aspects of the curriculum, such as Pacific characters, contexts, issues, values, and ideas.

## DIRECT EXPERIENCES OF RACISM

A survey of students conducted under the auspices of the Children's Commissioner (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2018) reveals everyday racism to be the experience of vulnerable students. Although many students surveyed had experienced positive and appropriate relationships with teachers, common insights regarding marginalisation and discrimination in education emerge from Pacific young people. Racism is one of the top ten things many vulnerable students



would change in education. Pacific students' responses given in the research make it clear that racism is experienced at the hands of teachers, in terms of low expectations, dismissive behaviour, and negative language, and also from other students. The effects on wellbeing, aspiration, and identity are clear in the students' responses, as are students' understandings of the way well-founded relationships that have been given time to develop are supportive in otherwise hostile contexts. The researchers suggest that a systemic approach to students' negative experiences, including racism, be developed. In addition, the researchers recommend that students be part of consultative processes at Ministry-level when national education and learning priorities are under review.

A survey of Pacific young people conducted through the Ministry for Pacific Peoples (2018) has similar findings. Low expectations and stereotypical responses from staff in education, reinforced by representations in the media, are among the experiences of Pacific young people in education. Many respondents report that their teachers do not understand the way they learn and behave, nor have sufficient knowledge about their families, to offer support in education. The report links wellbeing issues, such as low self-esteem, to discrimination and racial stereotyping, and highlights the potential role of teachers in Pacific students' success and flourishing.

Mayeda et al. (2014) reveal that racism is an issue at the tertiary level. In addition to experiencing university as a "white" place because of a Eurocentric curriculum, their research describes the way on-campus racism reinforces a sense of alienation for Māori and Pacific students. This can take the form, for instance, of assumptions by other students of Māori and Pacific privilege regarding entry to tertiary education, which implies a lack of effort and ability. A sense that majority group students require others to forsake their identity to fit in can be felt by Pacific students. The adoption of a

low profile can be the result of repeated discrimination. The researchers suggest that, although some students succeed in converting discrimination to motivation, this responsibility should not rest with students. Consequently, Mayeda et al. recommend that management teams should address the perpetrators of discrimination and work with Māori and Pacific students to warn them of the issues and encourage them in ways of channelling the negative emotions they are likely to encounter as a result of everyday racism and colonialism in education.

The literature suggests that bias and racism exist in education at all levels. Indeed, the literature highlights that experiences of discrimination are common for Pacific staff. This is clear from Pacific principals' responses to a wellbeing survey (New Zealand Educational Institute, 2017). In addition, some Pacific teachers feel a bias can exist in institutional expectations of them to inhabit role descriptions that may not be culturally comfortable (Brown et al., 2007). Despite the presence in the research of racism and associated forms of exclusion in education, the literature on Pacific education in this review provides a concentration on positive change, including through an inclusive focus on Pacific values, concepts, and metaphors. This may explain why the balance of the literature covered presents Pacific ways forward for Pacific education that, while not denying the negative aspects of the lived realities of Pacific students, families, and communities, seeks to support the maximisation of Pacific potential.

# Conclusion



This literature review discusses research in Pacific education and the education of Pacific learners in partnership with their parents, families, and communities. Five interlinked themes have been used as organising features: Pacific visible; identity, language, and culture; wellbeing; 'Auala in - access; and cultural bias and racism. Many overlaps exist between these themes, and research that takes a holistic approach to Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities in relation to education promises much.

An aim of the review has been to support parents to champion their children and be more demanding of the education system. Within the review's findings are pathways of promise to Pacific parents and communities in this endeavour. While research has exposed the continuing presence of deficit paradigms and racism in education, many researchers have deliberately sought structures, pedagogies, relational activity, and policies capable of reforming education to meet the needs of Pacific students. Among these, mentoring, understanding the vā of education, appropriate methods of consultation, and, generally, strength-based approaches offer direction. Pacific families and communities bring strength and understanding but require visibility and ways in education to maximise their potential. The weight of past practice continues as an aspect of Pacific education, requiring deconstruction so a space can be created for more Pacific approaches to flourish. The research shows that this is not insurmountable.

Areas that deserve further attention include:

- » the potential for and actual contributions of parents, families, and communities to Pacific education
- » ways of facilitating the contributions of Pacific people to education
- » the kinds of learning available to education through engagement with Pacific people and Pacific wisdom, together with ways of facilitating this
- » the preparation of prospective teachers to be responsive to Pacific students and their families
- » the professional development and learning of practising teachers to be responsive to Pacific students and their families
- » the relationships between wellbeing, identity, and achievement: the role of language in Pacific identity and ways education can support this
- » access to high-quality education for Pacific students and eradicating the bias and racism that prevent this
- » research that focuses on Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities that does not aggregate populations without contextual justification
- » research that is grounded in Pacific ideas, methodologies, and motivations.

Airini et al. (2010) highlight that clarity and respect in research relationships is essential for producing knowledge that is useful and valid. This review honours all those who have made a positive contribution through research to the lives of Pacific students and their families and communities past, present, and future. We can only hope that our labour supports those who seek to serve in Pacific education in the years to come.

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