Engaging with Pasifika families and communities:
Secondary school leaders' perceptions

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Abstract

Pasifika students have long been identified as underachieving in New Zealand education achievement statistics (Samu, 2016). Despite widespread awareness of this and continued focus from government policies and Ministry initiatives, insufficient progress has been made to improve these statistics and, as a result, more Pasifika people are in low paid, unskilled employment and issues of poverty have not improved. *O le tele o sulu e maua ai figota* is a Samoan proverb which illustrates that with the support and guidance of many, the task at hand is easier to achieve. This research was built on this belief and the need to focus on the strategies and processes that secondary school educational leaders employ when attempting to engage and work in effective partnership with Pasifika families, in order to support and guide the learning of Pasifika students and subsequently influence achievement outcomes. Furthermore, while there is a considerable amount of literature on the education of Pasifika students, there is a dearth of knowledge on how schools and educational leaders can engage with Pasifika families.

The two aims of this research were to identify and critically examine secondary school leadership practices in engaging with Pasifika families and to explore leaders' perceptions of the impact of engaging with Pasifika families and communities on Pasifika student outcomes. This study employed a qualitative approach that was positioned within the interpretive paradigm but with a Pasifika worldview. Talanoa focus groups were conducted with two senior and middle leaders from four different secondary schools located across Auckland that were predominantly Pasifika in their student population. Participants in this study were not required to be of Pasifika descent; however, seven of the eight participants that agreed to participate identified as Pasifika. Findings were analysed utilising a thematic analysis approach through coding and use of computer software. These results were then presented by theme according to the three research questions that formed the basis of the talanoa focus groups.

The data revealed that three key aspects were important for school leaders to understand and value when engaging with Pasifika families. The proposed '*e so'o le fau i le fau'* model presents these key factors as necessary to sustain effective partnership between schools, Pasifika students and their families. Recommendations from this study include the need for schools to utilise leaders and teachers of Pasifika heritage to lead the partnership with Pasifika families, and inform ways in which schools can foster an environment that acknowledges the diversity of Pasifika peoples. Schools must also incorporate strategies to engage with Pasifika families into their annual and strategic plans as well as formalise processes of evaluation to continuously seek ways to improve in order to nurture the involvement of Pasifika communities in the school.

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Attestation of authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Name: Ronise Laumemea

Signed:

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Ou te mafaia mea uma lava ona o ia ua faamalosi mai ia te a'u, Filipi 4:13

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

"O le tele o sulu e maua ai figota"

Talofa lava! As a Pasifika leader and teacher, I enjoy meeting all parents and families and working in collaboration with them in order to support the educational learning journey of my students. The Samoan proverb "*O le tele o sulu e maua ai figota*" translates to mean that with the light of many, seashells are easily found. This is a metaphor which illustrates that with the support and guidance of many, the task at hand is easier to achieve. I believe that all stakeholders involved in the life of a child, whether it be parents, families or teachers and schools, must be united in effective partnership to create the conditions with which students can work effectively to sustain a brighter future. This thesis research focuses on this partnership and considers the practices and perceptions of educational leaders in engaging with Pasifika families.

Introduction

A longstanding issue in New Zealand education is the overrepresentation of both Māori and Pasifika students at the tail end of achievement statistics and data. Despite the widespread awareness of this issue and the combined efforts of government policies and Ministry initiatives, insufficient progress has been made to improve these statistics and as result, more Māori and Pasifika people are in low paid, unskilled employment and issues of poverty have not improved.

There is a growing awareness of the need to focus on improving the achievement of Pasifika students, whom the Ministry of Education (MoE) have identified as one of their 'priority' student groups. In their statement of intent, the Ministry of Education (2014) list that one of their six priorities is to "engage children and students, and their families and whānāu to sustain participation and transitions in education" (p. 21). Coxon, Anae, Mara, Wendt-Samu and Finau (2002) stated that "one of the visions of Tomorrow's Schools was the greater involvement of parents with their schools and schools being more directly accountable to the communities they are meant to serve, the parents and families of their students" (p. 92). The notion of engagement, partnership and accountability between schools and families is discussed further in various Ministry policies and other literature (Biddulph, Biddulph & Biddulph, 2003; Chu, Glasgow, Rimoni, Hodis & Meyer, 2013; Gorinski & Fraser, 2006; Ministry of Education, 2012b). However, in practice, the processes and strategies that schools and school leaders employ in attempting to foster this relationship, are varied in both their application and their effectiveness.

The available educational literature and research continues to highlight the importance and value of engaging with families and communities in supporting educational outcomes for students (Chu et al., 2013; Gorinski & Fraser, 2006; Ministry of Education, 2012b; Siope, 2013; Taleni, Macfarlane, Macfarlane & Fletcher, 2017). However, there is no one approach that would suit all

schools. This is the case particularly when it comes to working in partnership with Pasifika students and their families. The lack of literature in regard to the conditions which nurture and foster effective partnership between educational leaders and Pasifika communities emphasises the significance of a research focus such as this.

This study firstly aimed to critically examine secondary school leaders' practices in regard to engaging with Pasifika families and communities. Secondly, this research aimed to explore secondary school leaders' perceptions of the impact of engaging with Pasifika families on Pasifika student achievement outcomes.

Rationale

The rationale behind this research has developed from two key factors. Firstly, as a middle leader in my own school I am interested in examining, from an educational leaders' perspective how schools initiate and establish partnerships with Pasifika families and communities. Secondly, because of my Samoan and Pasifika identity, I am passionate about improving student achievement outcomes for Pasifika and, in my experience, engaging with Pasifika families and communities is not necessarily straightforward. Further explanation of these key factors are explored below in a description of the personal and professional influences on this research.

Personal perspective

My parents migrated to New Zealand in 1984 and, like many Pasifika migrants, they came in search of better work and educational opportunities for their children. My father is an electricity linesman for Vector and my mother is a machine operator for New Zealand Post. Both of my parents have laboured tirelessly in their line of work since before I was born and have continued to work hard even to this very day. Growing up, the value and importance of education in securing a sustainable successful future for myself was drilled into me daily. The fact that they had migrated from their homeland for us was a constant reminder of the pressure to excel in my academic studies. My upbringing and the values instilled in me at a young age are all relevant to the basis of this research, because it is within the very essence of why I became a teacher, a middle leader and pursued this postgraduate study. The fact that education can shape a child's future for the better is at the very core of this research.

Professional perspective

Although I believe that my personal perspective is the most influential factor for choosing to focus on this particular area of research, there are other factors that must also be considered. Working in a multi-ethnic predominantly Pasifika school, I am often conscious that, despite the context in which I currently teach, I represent the minority in more ways than one. I am a Pasifika teacher and 26% of our teaching staff are of Pasifika descent. I am a Pasifika middle-leader and 22% of

the middle-leaders in our school are of Pasifika descent. I am female and 45% of our teaching staff are females. This is relevant because it relates to New Zealand's goals of equity and aspirations as a culturally diverse nation (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014). The existence of the minority as categorised by ethnicity or gender will always exist. This is also the case in education. The challenge however, is in the way in which schools, leaders and educators celebrate and recognise the diversity in the minority as the beginning in addressing issues of deficit theorising.

Having worked in my current school for almost ten years, I have experienced several changes and significant shifts in leadership personnel, organisational change and progressive development in digital technology that has impacted on classroom teaching practice. During this time many initiatives and programmes have surfaced including *Ka Hikitia* (Ministry of Education, 2009), *Te Kotahitanga* (Bishop & Berryman, 2009) and the *Pasifika Education Plan* (Ministry of Education, 2008b, 2012b) to name a few. I have no doubt that such initiatives and programmes will continue to be released in the future. However, in my opinion, the key contributing factor to the success of any initiative is its implementation and the consistency system-wide to ensure that aims are met in relation to their targets and goals.

Finally, the influence of my professional perspective on this study is my search for the effective strategies and processes that educational leaders employ when they attempt to engage with Pasifika families and communities and how this partnership impacts student outcomes.

Research aim and questions

In considering the research context and the rationale, with both the personal and professional perspectives, the following research aims and questions were developed to frame this investigation. The aims of the research were:

- To identify and critically examine secondary school leadership practices in engaging with Pasifika communities; and
- To explore leaders' perceptions of the impact of engaging with Pasifika communities on Pasifika student achievement outcomes.

The research questions were:

1. What leadership strategies and processes do secondary school educational leaders put into practice in order to engage with their Pasifika families and communities?
2. What enablers and barriers do leaders experience in engaging with Pasifika families and communities?
3. What are school leaders' perceptions of the impact of engaging with Pasifika communities on Pasifika students' achievement outcomes?

The following is a brief overview of the chapters that highlight each significant step of this research journey:

Chapter 2: Literature review – I conceptualise and frame the research focus in order to set the foreground (setting/context) for my topic. Three major themes are considered in this chapter. Firstly, I discuss educational leadership and how it is framed. Secondly, I define Pasifika students and explore the complexity of Pasifika cultural identity. Lastly, I examine home school partnership and outline conditions that both support and hinder this relationship.

Chapter 3: Methodology and methods – this chapter presents an overview of the methodological approach that was selected as most suitable to meet the aims of my research. In addition, it justifies and critiques the positioning of my qualitative research within the context of the interpretive paradigm and a Pasifika worldview. Data collection and data analysis techniques are then discussed as well as issues of validity and ethics. The chapter concludes with an examination of the limitations of the research design.

Chapter 4: Findings – this chapter presents the data and findings, and introduces the common themes that developed based on the three central focus questions.

Chapter 5: Discussion – this chapter critically examines and interprets the significant findings based on the emergent themes from Chapter Four and makes links with the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

Chapter 6: Conclusions – in closing, this chapter draws conclusions from the overall findings of the research and suggests recommendations for practice. The strengths and limitations of the study are identified before areas for further research are considered.

Chapter 2 – Literature review

Introduction

There is substantial evidence that supports the need for educational leaders to effectively engage with Pasifika families and communities in order to improve student outcomes. This literature review examines the existing body of knowledge to lay the foundation upon which my research was based. The three major themes explored in this review are: (1) educational leadership; (2) Pasifika education; and (3) home-school partnerships. This chapter concludes by drawing together the connections between the three key themes to form the research questions which framed this study.

Before delving into the literature review, it is necessary to highlight some of the key words that were utilised in attempting to gather all relevant research and educational literature on my research topic. Appendix A outlines these key words and terms as used in the following literature review.

Educational leadership

This section reviews the literature I have read in regards to educational leadership and attempts to conceptualise, in particular, how leaders engage with families and communities, as well as the relationship between educational leadership and its impact on student outcomes as this is central to my research focus. To do this, I firstly consider various definitions of educational leadership before examining Boards of Trustees' governance, senior leadership and middle leadership.

Definition

Educational leadership is concerned with how schools and educational settings are led. Cardno (2012) suggests that the main work of an educational leader is with teachers, and leaders must be focused on influencing teaching and learning in ways that positively affect educational achievement outcomes. In other parts of the world, educational leadership is sometimes referred to as education administration, education management, instructional leadership or academic leadership. Much of the literature on educational leadership is leader-centred in that it focuses on the leader as an individual, although some literature takes the position that leadership is a process. Either way, leadership is about influencing others. Perhaps the most accurate and authentic definition of educational leadership is provided by Bryk, Gomez, Grunow and LeMahieu (2015) who suggest that leadership should enable improvement by managing the various conditions of professional capability, engagement of the community and quality teaching so that improvement in achievement outcomes can be attained as well as sustained. In contrast, Yukl (2002) argued that "the definition of leadership is arbitrary and very subjective. Some definitions are more useful than others, but there is no 'correct definition'" (p. 5). What is common in attempts to define

educational leadership, however, is that the responsibility of leadership in education does not fall on the shoulders of one single role or person but, rather it is the collective task of a group of people. This is described in the following section which looks at the ways in which schools in New Zealand are governed.

Boards of Trustees

The New Zealand school education system changed significantly into more self-managing institutions when the *Tomorrow's Schools* (New Zealand Government, 1989) policy came into effect. This saw the governance of schools being placed under the control of the Boards of Trustees (BoTs). This is of particular significance in the context of my research because of the attempt to make schools more accountable to the communities which they serve. The governing Board of Trustees elected members. These members often consisted of the principal, a staff representative and parent representatives. The Education Act of 1989 stated that "except to the extent that any enactment or the general law of New Zealand provides otherwise, a school's board has complete discretion to control the management of the school as it sees fit" (New Zealand Government, 1989, p. 76)

Different theories exist in literature regarding the efficacy of school governance by BoTs in New Zealand (Robinson & Ward, 2005; Robinson, Ward & Timperley, 2003; Wylie, 2007). In a study investigating the conceptions of governance that informed the practices of school trustees, Robinson and Ward (2005) found that there was little evidence that educational or democratic values shaped governance activity and that the perceptions held by trustees about good governance were subject to concerns about the quality of relationships and the effectiveness and efficiency of task completion. Robinson et al. (2003) also considered the capacity of trustees to adequately fulfil their roles in the governing of schools. Their research suggested that capacity was "assumed rather than systematically developed, and the result is that, in the most disadvantaged communities at least, lay governors struggle to perform the governance role that was envisaged" (Robinson et al., 2003, p. 278). Wylie (2007) considered the high expectations of BoTs attempting to meet local needs while also meeting government accountability requirements. Wylie (2007) made five main suggestions one of which included connections between boards and parents. In this way, the importance of the engagement between the school and parents or families is emphasised, even at the BoT governance level.

Senior leadership

If the main responsibility of the Board of Trustees is to govern the school, then the overall management and sole responsibility of the day to day running of schools lies with those in senior leadership. Schools differ in their leadership structure and the format of their senior leadership teams (SLTs); however, most SLTs consist of people with roles such as Principal, Deputy

Principal, Associate Principal or Assistant Principal. In composite schools which include Primary (Year 1-6) and Intermediate (Year 7/8), often there is a Director in charge of each sector.

There is increasing consideration given to the varying ways in which leadership is structured and distributed in schools. However, leadership research about principals continues to remain prevalent because of the role's importance to school improvement (Gurr & Drysdale, 2013). The Ministry of Education's (MoE) document titled *Kiwi Leadership for Principals: Principals as Educational leaders* (KLP) (Ministry of Education, 2008a) presented "a model of leadership that reflects the qualities, knowledge and skills required to lead New Zealand schools from the present to the future" (p. 6). Figure 2.1 is the educational leadership model (ELM) presented with reference to educational leaders leading learning in order to "improve outcomes for all students, with a particular focus on Māori and Pasifika" (Ministry of Education, 2008a, p. 12).

Figure 2. 1 Educational leadership model (Ministry of Education, 2008a, p. 12; 2012a, p. 12)

The four qualities outlined in this figure underpin a leader's ability to improve the teaching and learning outcomes within their school. These qualities are manaakitanga (leading with moral purpose), pono (having self-belief), ako (being a learner) and āwhinatanga (guiding and supporting). Two aspects of Figure 2.1 are of particular interest within the context of this study. The first of these is the aim to improve outcomes for all students with a particular focus on Māori and Pasifika. The second aspect is the focus on making connections and building networks within and beyond schools. Furthermore, the KLP area of practice entitled 'partnership and networks' highlights that effective principals "demonstrate the interpersonal skills needed for building

strong relationships with key stakeholder groups such as trustees, parents, whānau and local organisations" in order to enhance student learning (Ministry of Education, 2008a, p. 20).

In their research on the patterns of distributed leadership by principals, Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom and Anderson (2010) found that although leadership existed right across schools, principals still remained the central source. They also found that "no single pattern of leadership distribution is consistently linked to student learning" (p. 54). In other literature the conceptualisation of leadership at any level includes issues of influence and authority. Bush (2011) discusses these both as dimensions of power in that the latter is often associated with formal positions whereas the former can be exerted by anyone in the school. In exploring leadership outside of the principal and SLT, we turn now to consider middle leadership.

Middle leadership

For this research, I have chosen to include the perspective of middle leaders alongside senior leaders because in my current role, I am a middle leader. In my experience, middle leaders are constantly engaging with parents and families on the one hand and on the other, with senior leaders and classroom teachers. This section will firstly define 'middle leadership' then explore existing literature in order to conceptualise middle leadership in secondary schools.

Definitions of middle leaders vary and are dependent on the context of the educational institution and organisation. This is supported by Gurr and Drysdale (2013) who write, in their studies of middle-level leaders in secondary schools in Victoria Australia, that "a definition of middle-level leaders is not simple" and "increasingly in education the term used is middle-level leaders, yet those who are defined as middle-level leaders can depend on the context and structure of the school or school system" (p. 57). Both the MoE publication *Leading from the middle: Educational leadership for Middle and Senior Leaders* (2012a) and Gurr and Drysdale (2013) define middle leaders as those teachers who work with and support classroom teachers and students, providing pedagogical and pastoral leadership while fulfilling various administrative functions. Middle leaders are those who have significant responsibility for particular areas within the school which they are situated. In secondary schools these teachers are likely to have specific titles and roles for their positions and area of responsibilities. These titles vary from Head of Faculty, Head of Learning Area and Head of Department, as well as Deans.

Middle leadership is linked directly to student learning and teacher quality through the middle leaders' immediate relationship with classroom teachers within their sphere of responsibility. Middle leaders are able to affect and influence the quality of teaching and learning in order to improve student outcomes. Cardno (2012) supports this notion in her discussion of direct and indirect forms of educational leadership, as do Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999) in

reference to direct instructional leadership which they describe as the focus of leaders on the behaviour of teachers "as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students" (p. 8). Furthermore, the Ministry of Education (2012a) highlights that middle leaders work in a range of networks which are both internal and external. This is relevant in the context of this research because the Ministry of Education (2012a) details that middle leaders would benefit from "working with parents, whanau, hapū, iwi and caregivers to established shared expectations for students" (p.16). In practice, this is equally important for middle leaders who are pastoral deans in connecting with families and pedagogical leaders by working in partnership with teachers to foster relationships with parents in order to support the academic achievement of students.

Both educational leadership research and literature support the need for effective professional leadership learning and development for teachers in the school setting. Creating effective professional leadership learning is one of the key tasks of both senior and middle leaders. Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd (2009) highlight the fourth of their eight leadership dimensions "promoting and participating in teacher learning and development" (p. 42), as having produced a significantly large effect size on student outcomes. In another meta-analysis, Louis et al. (2010) identified developing people as one of the core leadership practices deemed helpful by principals and teachers. Providing teachers with the professional development and materials required to successfully fulfil their jobs was listed as one of the 21 key areas of responsibility in research conducted by Waters, Marzano and McNulty (2004). Finally, Gurr and Drysdale (2013) further highlight the importance of improving teacher practice through professional leadership and development by suggesting that initiating professional learning communities is important in producing an environment that is both responsive and innovative in schools. Therefore, in the context of this research, the implication is that both senior and middle leaders support and provide teachers with professional development and learning opportunities to explore ways in which they can engage with families in order to support their students.

The role of a middle leader is unique in the organisation and structure of a school in that these roles, as the title suggests, are situated between senior leadership and classroom teachers. There are complex issues and tensions that are associated with the role. It is the middle leaders who feel the 'squeeze' and the tension in the hierarchical organisation of a school. Bennett, Woods, Wise and Newton (2007) identified two key tensions in their review of empirical research of middle leadership in secondary schools that further highlight the middle leader 'squeeze'. The first is the expectation that a middle leader has a whole-school focus as well as maintaining loyalty to their respective department. The second tension is "between a growing school culture of line management within a hierarchical framework and a professional rhetoric of collegiality" (Bennett et al., 2007, p. 455). This is further supported by Fitzgerald (2009) who argues that the use of the term middle leader indicates a hierarchical position as opposed to a pedagogical position.

Participants in research conducted by Fitzgerald (2009) report that in the tyranny of bureaucracy, there is little time left for leadership. The complex role of middle leaders in secondary schools continues to evolve and a challenge across many schools is the development of these leaders to ensure that they are well supported to fulfil the associated tasks afforded to them (Cardno & Bassett, 2015; Fitzgerald, 2009; Notman & Youngs, 2016). An additional task for middle leaders, is the building of relationships with parents, families and communities. How schools support middle leaders in achieving this partnership is of particular interest given the context of this research.

Effective educational leadership is crucial in all school settings in making a significant impact on improving academic achievement outcomes. This section has explored the governance of the BoT, senior leadership and middle leadership in relation to the focus of my research. I now turn to the core purpose and motivation behind this research.

Pasifika education

This section will explore Pasifika education as the central focus for this study. I will start by defining the term 'Pasifika' in the context of my research before reviewing literature and research on Pasifika education.

'Pasifika' is the collective broad term often used loosely to describe peoples who are descended from the Pacific Islands. These islands include Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands, Niue, Fiji, Tokelau, Tuvalu as well as smaller Pacific Islands within the Pacific region. For many years, Pacific peoples have migrated to New Zealand in search of better education and improved opportunities. Many migrant Pacific peoples are now in their third and fourth generation of New Zealand-born children and, although their ties with the Pacific Islands remain strong, for some it is no longer considered 'home' (Coxon et al., 2002). The 2013 census indicated that of New Zealand's total population, 7.4% identify with one or more Pacific ethnic groups (Statistics New Zealand). The Pacific peoples' ethnic group was the fourth largest ethnic group following the European, Māori and Asian ethnic groups. The Pacific peoples' ethnic group are a young population with the highest proportion of children aged 0-14 years at 35.7%. In 2013, 62.3% of people who identified with at least one Pacific ethnicity, were born in New Zealand. The implications of this are a cause for concern particularly where there are issues of identity and maintenance of culture. This matter will be examined in greater depth later in this chapter.

For this research, the use of the term 'Pasifika' is a reflection of the collective grouping of Pacific peoples. The following part of this review will outline the existing literature in relation to Pasifika education. There is a considerable amount of research and literature focused on the education of Pasifika students. Because of this, I have divided this section into two parts. The first part will

outline some of the MoE and government publications. The second part will discuss non-Ministry literature surrounding Pasifika students and education.

Ministry of Education publications

In attempting to address the huge disparity in the achievement of Pasifika students, the New Zealand Government and the MoE have commissioned and released several publications and policy documents. It is important to note here that Ministry publications and literature in relation to Pasifika students have been outlined at the outset for two reasons. Firstly, there is a significant amount of focus from the Ministry in regards to the education of Pasifika students and this is made clear in the following section. Secondly, we need to critically consider that these publications and literature are influenced by government and are unlikely to criticise or challenge existing policies.

Before discussing these documents in relation to my research, I will first provide a brief overview of MoE and government literature based on three themes which have been outlined in Table 2.1. I will then discuss these themes in more detail. These themes were identified based on central focus questions for this research as well as common themes found in the MoE and government literature. The first theme is that of Pasifika students and Pasifika education. The second theme considers the teaching of Pasifika students and teachers of Pasifika descent. The third and final theme is research on connecting with Pasifika students, parents, families and communities.

Table 2. 1 Ministry publications and literature in relation to Pasifika students

Theme	Authors
Pasifika students and Pasifika education	Chu et al. (2013), Coxon et al. (2002), Ferguson, Gorinski, Samu and Mara (2008), Education Review Office (2010), Education Review Office (2012), Education Review Office (2013), McNaughton (2011), Ministry of Education (2008b, 2012b), Siataga (2011)
The teaching of Pasifika students and teachers of Pasifika descent	Alton-Lee (2003), Brown et al. (2008), Education Review Office (2013), Mara (1998)
Connecting with Pasifika students, parents, families and communities	Biddulph et al. (2003), Mara (1998), Gorinski and Fraser (2006), Gorinski (2005), Ministry of Education (2012b)

Pasifika students and Pasifika education

The focus on educational leadership in New Zealand has led to a number of documents, policies and publications being prepared by the MoE. These include the previously mentioned *Best evidence synthesis* (Robinson et al. 2009), the *Kiwi leadership for principals* (Ministry of Education, 2008a) and the *Pasifika Education Plan* (PEP) (Ministry of Education, 2008b, 2012b). One of the underlying purposes of these publications to date is the collective focus on improving

student outcomes targeting Māori and Pasifika students specifically. All of the Ministry literature is presented on the premise that Pasifika students are underachieving in education and that this is an issue that must be addressed across sectors and by all stakeholders. However, despite the collective focus and the new initiatives, Pasifika achievement outcomes have not improved. An example of this can be found in the 2017 NCEA annual report where the participation-based attainment rates of University Entrance (UE) identified that 36.9% of Pasifika students gained UE. In comparison, over 70% of students who identified as New Zealand-European or Asian gained UE (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2018). The Education Review Office (2013) reported that while positive changes were evident in the practices of some schools, there appeared to be no significant system-wide changes in the way in which schools responded to the needs of Pasifika students. The Education Review Office (2013) identified four key contributing factors from the five schools it reported as catering successfully to the educational needs of Pasifika students. Two of these four key contributing factors are relevant to this research. The first factor was effective leadership where both school BoTs and leaders were well informed about what was effective in engaging and improving outcomes for their students. The second factor was sound partnerships as well as relationships with Pasifika families and the community which resulted in a clear vision and the capacity to collectively bring the vision to life (Education Review Office, 2013). At the core of the findings outlined in their analysis of Pasifika education research literature, Chu et al. (2013) highlighted the importance of relationships when working in partnership with Pasifika students and their families. Chu et al. (2013) indicated suggested areas of priority which included models for effective governance relationships with Pasifika communities, models for home-school relationships and systematic evaluation of effective relationships between schools and their communities. The significance placed on relationships with Pasifika students and families underpins much of the literature and research (Coxon et al., 2002; Ferguson et al., 2008).

The teaching of Pasifika students and teachers of Pasifika descent
This section discusses the Ministry publications focused on the teaching of Pasifika students and considers the research on teachers of Pasifika descent. The documents explored here include those that indirectly refer to Pasifika students and discusses Pasifika students as students of diverse cultural backgrounds.

In exploring the learning experiences of Pasifika students, Ferguson et al. (2008) highlight the importance of culturally responsive pedagogical practice and content by discussing various strategies employed by teachers to meet the individual needs of Pasifika learners. Chu et al. (2013) explain that "there is research evidence of a growing consensus among educationalists that culturally responsive pedagogies such as the use of languages and culturally appropriate learning and teaching are important" (p. 46) in supporting the learning and the achievement of Pasifika

students. The Education Review Office (2012) explored the quality of assessment practices and found that the achievement information about Pacific learners varied in its quality. Furthermore, the Education Review Office (2012) stated that "school leaders were, therefore, not breaking down the data sufficiently to look at what supported Pacific learners to achieve or fail" (p. 9). Alton-Lee (2003) highlights that quality teaching must be responsive to student learning processes and also affirm cultural identity in order to optimise learning opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds.

Considering the significant focus on effective teaching practice and improving educational outcomes for Pasifika students, there is very little literature and research on Pasifika teachers and their impact on Pasifika students. The unique role of Pasifika teachers is best described by Mara (1998) as 'gatekeepers'. The only MoE publication found to solely focus on Pasifika teachers is a small scale research initiative by Brown et al. (2008). This study examined the experiences of Pasifika teachers by exploring notions of Pasifika cultural identity and how such identity might be viewed as having an impact on future Pasifika students. Brown et al. (2008) outline five themes in their research findings which include Pasifika teachers and community ties, as well as how Pasifika teachers negotiate cultural identities within mainstream New Zealand schools. In highlighting the shortage of Pasifika teachers in New Zealand schools, Brown et al. (2008) explain that "given that there is likely to be increasing future demand by Pasifika parents for Pasifika-oriented education, comparable to kura kaupapa Māori, it seems essential to attract more Pasifika teachers into the profession and to ensure that the profession provides a hospitable working environment for them" (p. 23). Table 2.2 illustrates the significantly low percentage of Pasifika principals, management and teachers.

Table 2. 2 Teacher ethnicity statistics (Education Counts, 2017)

Ethnicity	Principal	Management	Teacher
European/Pakeha	77.2	80.1	70.6
Māori	15.4	9.9	9.7
Pasifika	1.7	2.6	3.0
Asian	0.5	1.6	4.0
Other	1.1	1.2	2.8
Unknown/no response	4.1	4.6	9.9

Clearly there is a need for more Pasifika teachers as well as research on the impact and influence that Pasifika teachers have on the learning and achievement outcomes of Pasifika students.

Connecting with Pasifika parents, families and communities

This section reviews the available MoE literature focused specifically on engagement and partnership with Pasifika parents, families and communities and the impact on student outcomes.

Creating and fostering the partnership and relationship between schools and families makes a significant impact on student outcomes (Chu et al., 2013; Coxon et al., 2002). In fact, it is so important that ERO have included the domain of "Educationally powerful connections and relationships" as one of its process indicators in evaluating and reviewing the performance of schools. The concept of educationally powerful connections was originally discussed in the work of Robinson et al. (2009). Almost all the Ministry literature focused on Pasifika student learning outcomes cites the importance of engagement with Pasifika parents, families and communities (Alton-Lee, 2003; Chu et al., 2013; Coxon et al., 2002; Education Review Office, 2013, 2015; Ferguson et al., 2008; McNaughton, 2011; Robinson et al., 2009). Working in partnership with the parents, families and communities of all students is seen as imperative to supporting the educational journey of any learner. Of particular importance is the prominence placed on engagement between Pasifika parents, families and teachers in the PEP, firstly in the 2009-2012 version (Ministry of Education, 2008b) and more recently in the PEP 2013-2017 version (Ministry of Education, 2012b). The PEP is the government's response to accelerating the progress of Pacific learners and identifies specific goals, targets and actions for Pasifika education in New Zealand. There are two targets that relate directly to my research focus. The first is illustrated in Figure 2.2, the Pasifika success compass which places Pasifika learners, parents, families and communities at the centre of Pasifika success.
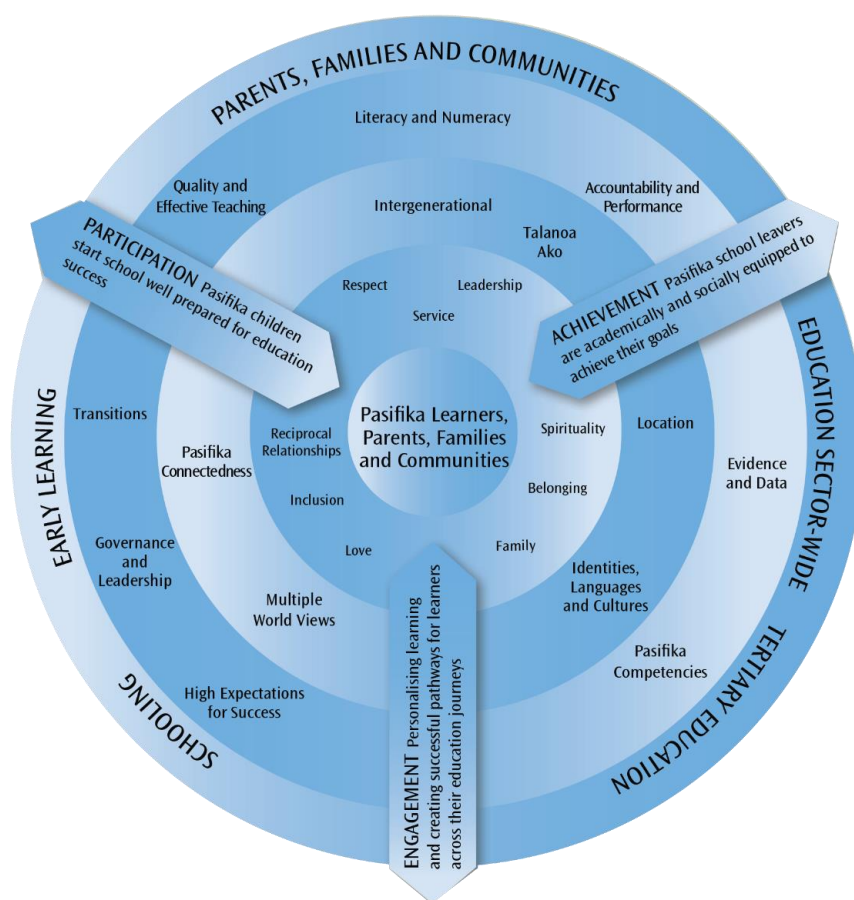

Figure 2. 2 Pasifika success (Ministry of Education, 2012b, p. 3)

This suggests that in order for Pasifika learners to succeed, partnership with Pasifika parents, families and communities is vital. The second target is the need for "more informed and demanding parents, families and communities supporting and championing their children's learning and achievements" (Ministry of Education, 2012b, p. 5).

Prior to the PEP, the MoE implemented a programme in 1997 that aimed to enhance home-school liaison with Pacific Island parents and communities. The *Pacific Islands School-Community-Parent Liaison* (PISCPL) project was one of the initiatives from within the Ko e ako 'a e Kakai Pasifika which was the 1996 Pacific Islands people's education plan (Mara, 1998). The PISCPL project was reviewed independently by Mara (1998) then used as a case study by Gorinski (2005). This initiative saw six clusters of schools in Auckland, Wellington and Tokoroa employ a Pacific Island (PI) liaison person. Although the aims of each cluster varied in their expectations of the liaison person depending on the context of the community, the main purpose of the PISCPL liaison person was to connect and liaise between three parties – the parents, students and teachers. One of the ongoing issues identified with the PISPCL was the funding and resourcing needed, with the main area of cost being the time required by the liaison people to establish and build relationships. Twenty years later, the review of the PISCPL by Mara (1998) is still relevant in regard to her suggestion that "the success of any intervention with PI communities must be based on an understanding and appreciation of these differences and a willingness to accept this diversity as a strength rather than a problem" (p. 46). Gorinski (2005) found in her research that the person in the role of liaison coordinator was pivotal to the success of the initiative and that a clear outcome of the PISCPL initiative was parent empowerment. This suggests that the person in the role is just as important as the role itself. Parents were able to learn more about how to support their children's learning and "it brought out things in parents that they never thought they could do (parent). Similarly, enhanced student achievement, both social and academic has been realised as a result of the project" (Gorinski, 2005, p. 23). Although it was an initiative implemented in the late 90s, both the successes and the challenges of the PISCPL project still appear to be relevant for Pasifika students in schools today and add to the importance of conducting research focused engaging effectively with Pasifika families at secondary school level.

In discussing the connection between home and school for Pasifika families specifically, some of the literature considers the role of the church. Biddulph et al. (2003) explore the multiple communities children belong to and suggest that the church community is of particular significance for Pasifika children. While active parental support has positive effects on student achievement, for many Pasifika parents the church plays a centrally supportive role (Biddulph et al., 2003; Brown et al., 2008). The literature also supports involving the local church and the church leaders in the school as one of the ways in which to build connections with Pasifika parents

(Chu et al., 2013; Education Review Office, 2012, 2013; Gorinski & Fraser, 2006). In some instances the literature has considered the influence of the church in the lives of Pasifika peoples in relation to the development of literacy (McNaughton, 2002), especially in the context of Pasifika language maintenance and the growth of bilingual and full immersion early childhood centres (Ferguson et al., 2008). The term 'church' does not appear in the PEP; however, the word that does surface and could possibly act as a sufficient substitute is 'spirituality'.

This section has explored the existing MoE literature and government publications focused on Pasifika students. While there is not a large amount of non-MoE literature regarding Pasifika students and education, this is a research area that is progressively growing in its body of knowledge.

Relevant literature and research

In this section, I will firstly examine relevant literature in addition to the three themes discussed in the previous section. The themes are: Pasifika students and Pasifika education; the teaching of Pasifika students and teachers of Pasifika descent; and research on connecting with Pasifika students, parents, families and communities. In the second part of this section, I will discuss issues of culture, identity and values as areas that are vital to understanding the ideals and principles that generally strengthen Pasifika learners.

Pasifika students and Pasifika education

As previously mentioned in this literature review, 'Pasifika' is a collectively broad term used to describe the multiple ethnicities within the scope of the peoples who originate from the Pacific Islands. Some of the literature consider this notion to be problematic. Smith (1998) argues that when the power to define and give meaning is in the hands of others, instead of those directly concerned, then that group has lost power and control over their own constructions. Samu (2007) also suggests that this multi-ethnic grouping of people is an issue of control. The use of such a homogenous term to collectively group several identities within the one suppresses and undermines the historical, social, political and cultural uniqueness of each of the Pasifika societies (Samu, 2007). Therefore, the very use of the term 'Pasifika' is in itself an issue of contention.

On the issue of the education of migrant Pasifika peoples, Fairbairn-Dunlop (2014) states that Pasifika peoples have been migrating to New Zealand for over a hundred years in search of education, but somehow the migrants' dreams remain unfulfilled. With huge numbers of Pasifika students leaving secondary school with minimal qualifications and high dropout rates at tertiary level, it is no surprise that Pasifika peoples are overrepresented in unskilled and lower-waged jobs. The improvement of educational achievement outcomes for Pasifika people has urgency,

Fairbairn-Dunlop (2014) suggests, "not only for the quality of life of Pacific families, but also given New Zealand's goals of equity and aspirations as a culturally diverse nation" (p. 875).

The teaching of Pasifika students and teachers of Pasifika descent

There is an increasing awareness of the need for teachers to be culturally responsive in their teaching practice in order to support and improve the educational outcomes of students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. This is also crucial in attempting to address the varying needs of minority learners. In analysing teaching practice, Samu (2016) argues that quality teaching must be effective for all who participate and in order for this to happen, diversity and difference need to be at the core of the meaning behind 'quality teaching'. Allen, Taleni and Robertson (2009), Hunter et al. (2016) and Porter-Samuels (2013) discuss, to varying degrees, this ideal of culturally responsive pedagogy and how it can impact positively on the learning experience of Pasifika students in general. In extending this ideal further and attempting to determine the relationship between culture and educational outcomes, Mila-Schaaf and Robinson (2010) build on Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital and argue that "'polycultural capital' may be a useful way of framing the potential advantage associated with ongoing exposure to culturally distinctive social spaces" (p. 14). In this sense, teachers must reflect on their teaching practice as being culturally responsive and creating an environment that is conducive of the unique 'polycultural' identity of Pasifika students. The concept of 'culturally safe spaces' is also considered as crucial in identity security and in reaffirming the value and validity of Pacific knowledges and ways in which this knowledge is constructed (Du Plessis & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2009). In addition, Fairbairn-Dunlop (2014) argues that because identity in the form of language and culture are central to Pasifika knowledge and ways in which knowledge is constructed, the educational experiences of Pasifika learners should in turn be viewed through a cultural lens that recognises Pasifika knowledge as valued and valid and Pasifika students as culturally located individuals (p. 875).

In a similar way in which MoE literature and research focuses specifically on the impact of Pasifika educators in the teaching profession, there is a significant lack of relevant literature in this area. Siteine (2010) examined the ways in which New Zealand teachers interpret and address the concept of identity in the classroom, while research by Hawk, Cowley, Hill and Sutherland (2002) explored what makes a 'good teacher' for Māori and Pasifika students. Hunter et al. (2016) outline how learning is enhanced and cultural identity is affirmed when educators consider the language and culture of Pasifika students and explicitly establish reciprocal relationships with students and their families. The research initiative discussed by Allen et al. (2009) explored the experience of five New Zealand European teachers from schools with significant Pasifika student populations as they visited Samoa. This study aimed to identify changes in the teachers' thinking after the visit and subsequently how the experience could impact their classroom practice. All of

this literature has a limited focus in that it examines and focuses on all teachers and their pedagogical practices. However, Rio and Stephenson (2010) consider the important role which teachers of Pasifika heritage have in making schools successful learning environments for Pasifika students. Through the sharing of their cultural knowledge and understandings, Pasifika teachers "created possibilities for cultural specificities to be appreciated and reinforced" (Rio & Stephenson, 2010, p. 8). Pasifika teachers have the potential to significantly change attitudes and pedagogy in order to bring about a shift in the teaching of Pasifika students.

Clearly there is a lack of literature concerned with teachers of Pasifika descent and even less is known about senior and middle leaders of Pasifika descent. This is relevant in the context of this research given the growing body of research on culturally responsive leadership practices and increased focus on the leadership strategies for Pasifika students. Mugisha (2013) and Siope (2013) support the need for instructional leadership and culturally responsive leadership to actively address ethnic based achievement gaps and replace the monocultural expectations that exist. Siope (2013) extends the idea of a culturally responsive pedagogy of relations as discussed by Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh and Teddy (2007), by suggesting from her findings that a culturally responsive pedagogy of relations cannot be learnt or taught. Although writing in the context of education in Hawaii, Hattori (2016) supports the findings of research conducted by Cardno and Auva'a (2010), in suggesting that the "great diversity of cultures in our society is not visible in the leadership of our schools; islanders are underrepresented in such positions" (p. 7). Leadership development programmes targeting potential Pasifika leaders in schools have been proposed in research as a means to address the disproportionate ratio between Pasifika students and leaders of Pasifika heritage (Airini, 2010; Cardno & Auva'a, 2010; Hattori, 2016). Taleni et al. (2017) explore educational leadership strategies that support Pasifika students in New Zealand schools and outline seven key concepts that support effective principal leadership for Pasifika learners. These are:

1. Building dynamic relationships with students and families;
2. Understanding Pasifika cultural world views;
3. Effective use of achievement data information;
4. Strengthening culturally responsive leadership practices;
5. Creating robust community engagement;
6. Setting high expectations for success and achievement; and
7. Engaging in motivational professional development.

While many of these key concepts are relevant in the context of my research, a central difference is that Taleni et al. (2017) emphasises principal leadership as opposed to the leadership of senior and middle leaders.

Connecting with Pasifika parents, families and communities

There is a significant amount of literature and research surrounding engagement with Pasifika parents, families and communities, particularly at the early childhood education (ECE) level. This is probably because of the age and dependence of children in ECE and the need to maintain close communication with parents and families. The Education Review Office (2013) suggest that in general, the connection with Pasifika parents and families is strong in the younger years of compulsory education and that the engagement and partnership with Pasifika parents and families during secondary and tertiary education is significantly inadequate in comparison. In their study examining the factors that influence successful completion of tertiary qualifications for Pasifika students, Benseman, Coxon, Anderson and Anae (2006) found that "the capacity of educational facilities to retain students is a function of the interface between student and institution, and the institution and the community" (p. 147). In a case study of a child's interest in drumming, Cooper and Hedges (2014) analysed the use of theoretical frameworks such as 'funds of knowledge' to allow families and ECE centres to engage in a reciprocal relationship in order to enhance collaboration and benefit the developing learner and cultural identities of children. In a recent Australian study that investigated "patterns of engagement, achievement and transition of Pacific Island (PI) learners at the secondary level" (p. 21), Paulsen (2016) explored effective strategies to engage with PI in attempts to improve their educational outcomes. In the context of engaging with Pasifika families, it is especially important that the communication and relationships between home and school are reciprocal and built on mutual respect and trust. The significance of relationships when dealing with Pasifika students, families and communities is best exemplified by the philosophical reference point and Samoan concept of 'teu le va' which is to "value, cherish, nurture and take care of the va, the relationships" (Anae, 2010, p. 2). This concept of the *va* is important in respecting the relationships and the spaces between all involved in the developing educational journey of Pasifika students. Taleni et al. (2017) suggest that "building rich, strong relationships is central to providing a warm, accepting and welcoming learning environment for Pasifika students" (p.20), and so this notion of fostering relationships is crucial in engaging effectively with Pasifika parents and communities. Pasifika peoples thrive on relationships and it is vital that schools create an environment that fosters engagement and creates a culture of partnership based on mutual respect and trust.

The role of the church in regard to the building and development of community for Pasifika families is also considered in the literature. Religion and church are referred to in the ethnic interface model outlined by Samu (2016) as one of the factors where schools and institutions have no influence. Cooper and Hedges (2014) explore the cultural authority of the church, while Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi and O'Regan (2009) consider the value of church for Pasifika peoples and the unity of Pasifika families which is attributed to their Christian faith. The literature also argues that for Pasifika families, church plays a central role (Fletcher et al., 2009). Taleni et al.

(2017) highlight fa'aleagaga, or spirituality, as one of the key traditional Pasifika leadership qualities embedded within cultural values.

While there appears to be insufficient literature on connecting with Pasifika families and communities at secondary school level specifically, there is an increasing focus on working in partnership and collaboration with students and families of diverse backgrounds. These issues are explored in the third section of this chapter.

Culture and identity

Some of the available literature concerned with Pasifika students examine the questions of culture and identity. This includes the tensions and complexities within these two concepts. Culture and identity are important contributing factors to any student and their learning journey, as research continues to illustrate that students who are firm in their identity and culture progress, achieve and succeed in their education (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014; Samu, 2007). Culture is a concept that can be interpreted in many different ways. Voi (2000) suggests that "Culture comprises the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, intellectual and emotional features that characterise a society or a social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also the modes of life, fundamental rights of a human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs" (p. 217). This is important because culture, when viewed through a Pasifika lens encompasses both the surface and the deeper levels.

For migrant Pasifika peoples, many of whom are now in the third and fourth New Zealand-born generations, the Pacific Islands are no longer considered as 'home' (Coxon et al., 2002). In 2013, 62.3% of people who identified with at least one Pacific ethnicity, were born in New Zealand. Therefore, preserving the culture and identity of Pasifika students in their New Zealand education is important and a major contributing factor to creating a culturally safe space in schools for students to learn and succeed. Fairbairn-Dunlop (2014) supports this when she states that "providers of professional learning and development for teachers are required to recognise and reinforce the central role that identity, language and culture play in learning, because this is an essential platform for lifting outcomes for all learners especially Māori and Pasifika learners" (p. 876). Seiuli (2016) considers the challenge of identity in relation to Samoans when he suggests that "identity as a function of cultural adaptability and social acceptance continues to present a myriad of challenges for some Samoan migrants, even after generations of citizenship in adopted homes like New Zealand" (p. 54). The issue of culture and identity maintenance is important and will continue to be a challenge for all educators in the changing face of the New Zealand population. Students have the right to an education that is culturally responsive and to also have their various identities authentically affirmed within their school settings (Cooper & Hedges, 2014). While achieving equity in education for all learners presents a complex challenge for

educational leaders and school settings, it is a challenge worth addressing for the sake of providing an environment that allows students to belong, particularly for Pasifika learners.

Pasifika students and the education of Pasifika learners continue to be at the forefront of much of the literature that attempts to address the considerable disparity in educational achievement in New Zealand. Furthermore, the importance of relationships is also highlighted as a contributing factor to influencing change and seeing a shift in leadership and teaching practice.

Home-school partnership

This section of the literature review examines the partnership between home and school. There is a significant amount of literature surrounding general home-school partnership strategies in schools. Three themes are highlighted in this section based on the literature examined: the emphasis on the relationship and the partnership between home and school; the engagement between home and school is learner focused; and potential barriers to successful Pasifika home-school partnership.

Emphasis on the relationship and partnership, between home and school

For educational institutions and schools to be successful in improving student achievement outcomes, it is imperative that the partnership between home and the school is fostered and encouraged. The terms 'relationship' and 'partnership' are used interchangeably in literature describing the connection between home and school, with significance placed on the need for effort from both parties in order for the relationship to be effective (Bull, Brooking & Campbell, 2008). Donaldson (2012) states that "the highly important interrelationships between home and school need to be maximised" (p. 52). In their research on student achievement beyond the classroom, Best and Dunlap (2012) highlight an important issue when they suggest that "because an abundance of research demonstrates the positive outcomes associated with family involvement in education, school board members and other policymakers should ensure that their policies promote meaningful rather than token family engagement" (p. 5). In exploring definitions of parent involvement in their research based in America, Raftery, Grolnick and Flamm (2012) argue that parent involvement is a purposefully broad concept and ultimately includes "multiple components to account for the myriad ways in which parents are involved and in which involvement can affect children" (p. 347). The literature continues to highlight the positive impact of the relationship between home and school (Alton-Lee, 2003; Best & Dunlap, 2012; Raftery et al., 2012; Robinson et al., 2009). However, Bull (2011) argues that although educational literature and Ministry publications continue to emphasise the strengthening of links between schools and communities, exactly how these interactions improve educational outcomes is often unclear. Bull (2011) persists by suggesting that "sometimes the main activity is the school simply giving information about qualifications, student achievement, curriculum developments, school

programmes etc. to families" (p.3). In their report to the MoE on successful home-school partnerships, Bull et al. (2008) outline the following key features based on research literature and their case studies:

1. Relationships in home-school partnerships are collaborative and mutually respectful;

2. Successful home-school partnerships are multi-dimensional and responsive to community needs;

3. Successful home-school partnerships are embedded in school development plans; they are well resourced and they are reviewed regularly;

4. Successful home-school partnerships are goal oriented and focused on learning;

5. Effective parental engagement happens largely at home;

6. There is timely two-way communication between school and parents in successful home-school partnerships; and

7. Building successful time home-school partnerships takes time and commitment.

Similar key factors were discovered in an external evaluation by ERO which was elaborated on by Mutch and Collins (2012). The key factors that were found to be critical to enhancing and strengthening the engagement between schools and parents included leadership, relationships, school culture, partnerships, community networks and communication (Mutch & Collins, 2012). In considering the perspective of parents in the light of home-school partnership, Fletcher, Greenwood and Parkhill (2010) explored the perceptions of 13 parents and their role in their children's endeavour to read. In their study, Fletcher et al. (2010) found that Pasifika parents really valued the opportunity to find out about their child's progress in reading and that ready access to the teacher, classroom and school was important to them.

Engagement between home and school is learner focussed

While the partnership between home and school is significant in supporting students in their learning journey, the literature also highlights the importance of ensuring that home-school partnership is centred on the learner (Alton-Lee, 2003; Biddulph et al., 2003; Bull et al., 2008). Tuck, Horgan, Franich and Wards (2007) highlight the importance of focusing the interaction among parents and teachers on the needs of the children and, while it should not distract quality teaching and learning as the "core business of a school" (p. 46), effective home-school partnership aligns the focus of education as a collaborative and community effort. It is therefore important to note the work of Robinson et al. (2009) here, who suggest that:

> Some kinds of engagement with families and communities can be counterproductive. Schools may invest considerable time, energy, and resources in activities that can have minimal or even negative impact on student outcomes and end up frustrating students, families and staff. (p. 204)

Alton-Lee (2007) presents a worthy solution in emphasising the importance of strategic and collaborative research to inform how schools can address educational challenges particularly in

the case of diverse learners. Therefore, it is imperative that leaders utilise evidence-based processes that place the learner at the centre of home-school partnership in order for engagement between schools and parents to positively influence student outcomes.

Potential barriers to successful Pasifika home-school partnership

The literature on home-school partnership also identifies barriers to successful home-school partnership. The PISCPL identified some barriers which included cultural issues and establishing relationships with Pasifika parents, time and timing issues, and funding (Mara, 1998). In addition to these, Gorinski (2005) highlighted language, cultural hierarchies, cultural misunderstandings, parent training and lack of clear communication. Gorinski and Fraser (2006) also listed the aforementioned barriers as well as ignorance, limited economic resources, lack of expertise amongst teachers and school administrators, lack of confidence, acculturation and cultural frameworks. These barriers are not restricted to the literature referenced here but are also relevant to potentially preventing successful home-school partnerships in the present day. However, while the existing literature outlines the many barriers to effective home-school partnership with Pasifika families, there is very little known about ways in which to address and limit the influence of these factors that hinder this relationship between home and school.

Summary

This literature review has outlined three central themes to my research; educational leadership, a focus on Pasifika education and a look at home-school partnership. The literature has indicated that educational leaders must focus on how to engage with Pasifika families and communities and that this is crucial to improving student outcomes. It is interesting to note here that, while much of the MoE literature and non-MoE literature emphasises the importance of engaging with Pasifika families, there appears to be very little research and literature into the strategies and processes that must be employed by secondary schools for this engagement to be effective.

The underlying focus in this literature review is the emphasis on improving educational outcomes for Pasifika students. Another connection that can be made across all three themes is the importance of the people who hold the roles afforded to them in attempting to improve achievement in education. This literature review laid the foundation for my central research focus question: How do educational leaders engage with Pasifika families and communities in order to improve student outcomes? The three sub-questions were:

1. What leadership strategies and processes do secondary school educational leaders put into practice in order to engage with their Pasifika families and communities?
2. What enablers and barriers do leaders experience in engaging with Pasifika families and communities?

3. What are school leaders' perceptions of the impact of engaging with Pasifika families and communities on student achievement outcomes?

The following chapter will outline the research methodology and methods that were employed to collect qualitative data in attempts to answer these questions.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

Introduction

This relatively small-scale study utilises a qualitative research approach. The first aim of this research was to identify and critically examine secondary school leadership practices in engaging with Pasifika families and communities. The second aim of this research was to explore leaders' perceptions of the impact of engaging with Pasifika communities on Pasifika student achievement outcomes.

This chapter begins with an overview of the methodological approach that was selected as most suitable to my research questions and aim. It justifies and critically reflects on the positioning of my research within an interpretive paradigm and the use of qualitative research design. What follows is a section that clarifies my selected research method and the rationale for using talanoa focus groups. The ways in which the data are analysed are then outlined, as well as a discussion of validity and ethics. This chapter concludes with an examination of the limitations of the research design.

Methodological approach

Methodology is the systematic and critical analysis of the methods that one adopts in their research. It is also the justification of why certain methods were selected. This research focussed specifically on the engagement with Pasifika families and communities and so there was a certain element of cultural responsiveness within my study. Because of this, I had to be culturally reflexive as a researcher. From a Pasifika worldview and, more specifically, a Samoan lens built on values deeply rooted in respect and relationships, it is therefore important that my own cultural identity is shared. Fairbairn-Dunlop, Nanai and Ahio (2014) suggest that researchers (and participants) bring their own beliefs and understandings to the research process "and these influence how the research is framed, carried out and responded to, and the findings disseminated (p. 3).

In Chapter One, my parents were mentioned briefly in the description of my personal perspective as an influence on the rationale behind this research focus. I was born to Tuimavave Pio and Itagia Mulipola. My father is from the village of Lepea and though he did not complete his schooling, he has worked in both Samoa and New Zealand, as an electrical linesman. While he speaks little English, he is well respected in his job as a hardworking dedicated man. My mother was born and grew up in Vailoa Palauli which is on the island of Savaii. She was educated and completed her schooling before working in the local postshop. My mother's parents encouraged education and subsequently there are many university graduates amongst my maternal extended family, including my Uncle who has a Master's degree in Arts. In contrast, my father's family were not as educated and I was the first from my father's family to graduate from university. Although he

did not complete his schooling and spoke little English, my father served on the Board of Trustees during my years in primary school. My parents were very actively involved in our school and their desire to see us succeed was evident. The journey and the upbringing of both my parents is relevant to my methodological positioning because growing up, the value of education was drilled into me and my siblings from a young age. Now faced with my own children, I have found myself repeating the many lectures I received when I was younger.

Not long after they married, my parents moved to New Zealand. Moving to a foreign land and away from what was previously home, my parents continued to cultivate the use of the Samoan language and culture both at home and in our local church community with which we were very much involved. We were taught concepts of faaaloalo (respect) and faamaualalo (humility) and, in all we do, that we carry the name of our family and our culture. This concept was highlighted by Samu (2007) who quoted a Samoan grandmother's words to her son: "Whatever you do, remember that you represent three things – your name, your family and your people" (p. 137). This is a brief insight into my journey thus far and in the context of this study, it is at the core of my ontology and part of the epistemology that underpins this research.

Overall research design

Ontology is the study of being and refers to our most basic beliefs about the nature of reality (Grant & Giddings, 2002; Scotland, 2012). It is also the basis "for developing an epistemology which defines the nature of the relationship between enquirer and known, what counts as knowledge, and on what basis we can make knowledge claims" (Grant & Giddings, 2002, p. 12). The qualitative research approach I have taken falls under the interpretive paradigm with a Pasifika worldview. While this may sound complex in theory, it is actually quite simple in practice. Wellington (2015) states that the interpretive researcher's aim "is to explore perspectives and shared meanings and to develop insights into situations" (p. 26). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) note that the central endeavour in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of the human experience and, in this way, I have investigated the experiences of educational leaders and focused on their actions as a way of developing theory to inform current practice. With an interpretive approach I searched for personal knowledge and accepted that, as the main instrument of the research, my subjectivity may have influenced the research as it was conducted (Wellington, 2015). However, "to retain the integrity of the phenomena being investigated, efforts are made to get inside the person and to understand from within" (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 19). I chose this particular approach because I wanted to observe and investigate leadership practice and processes. Therefore, the overarching qualitative paradigm I employed was interpretive.

However, I am conscious that given my Samoan background and cultural upbringing, my lens is different. Anae, Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu and Finau (2001) describe the differences of the Pasifika research context as lying "in the epistemological nuances of the collective responsibilities and ownership principles inherent and common in Pacific life practices and values" (p. 27). These values and life practices include familial and collective roles, differing responsibilities and influences of Pasifika patterns of individual and group behaviour, as well as Pasifika understandings of knowledge (Anae et al., 2001). This cultural lens is also highlighted by Fairbairn-Dunlop (2014) when she discusses the importance of Pasifika knowledge as valid and valued. The Pasifika worldview is described as one that is holistic in nature and incorporates three inter-dependent elements as illustrated in Figure 3.1. Tamasese Ta'isi Efi (2007) describes a Pasifika worldview in this way: "Imagine if you will, a worldview that understands the environment, humans, the animate and inanimate – all natural life – as having its sources in the same divine origin, imbued with the life force, interrelated and genealogically connected" (p. 13).
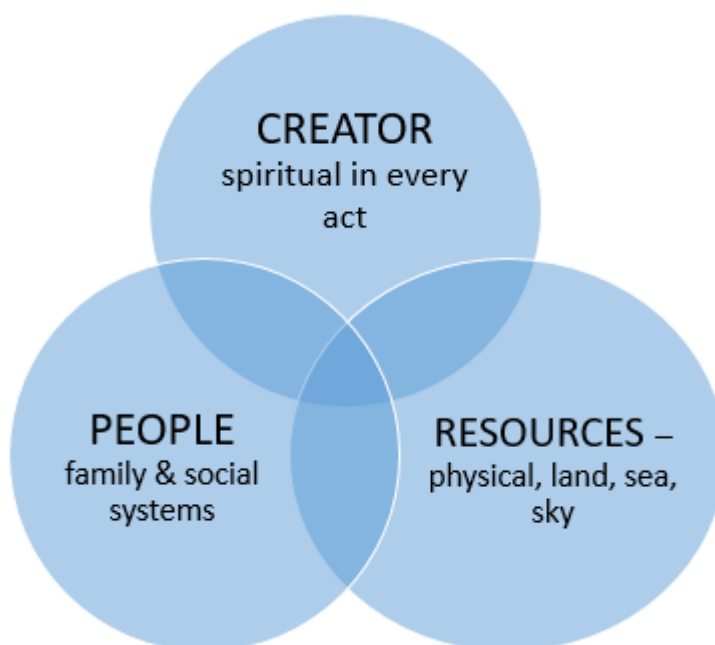
Figure 3. 1 Pasifika worldview (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2018, p. 6)

This model is important in the context of this research because it is a reflection of my own beliefs, and frames the way in which I view and observe the reality that surrounds me. The nature in which the three elements of creator, people and resources are interconnected is central to my understanding of the ways in which knowledge is constructed.

The qualitative research approach taken in this study was within the interpretive paradigm, but with a Pasifika worldview. Ontologically, this is my view on the nature of reality that frames my research which, in turn, limits the epistemology and the way in which knowledge is questioned and interrogated. Smith (1998) suggests that indigenous peoples have their own research needs and priorities. Their questions are important and research helps to answer them (Smith, 1998). In a similar way, this research is focused on Pasifika students and the schools' direct relationship

with their families. As a leader and teacher, I am aware of the need to improve Pasifika student outcomes and consider my Pasifika background as an important part of my ontology and epistemology. Before discussing the research sample in this study, it is necessary to firstly consider the concept of talanoa as a methodological approach and method in the context of this study.

Talanoa

In Samoan, the term 'talanoa' refers to conversation and the respected space between those participating in the discussion. In the early 2000s, Dr Timote Vaioleti, a Tongan academic, proposed talanoa as a "culturally appropriate means through which Pacific peoples can describe their own experiences in research" (Vaioleti, 2013, p. 3) . Talanoa can simply be referred to as a face-to-face conversation, an exchange of ideas or thinking both formal and informal (Vaioleti, 2006). However, the significance is on the valued and respected space created for the sharing of experiences to take place. Furthermore, Vaioleti (2006) suggests that "talanoa removes the distance between the researcher and the participant" (p. 25) and that this is ideal particularly because relationships are the foundation upon which Pasifika interactions are based. In addition, Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba (2014) suggest that the talanoa process and content are "intersubjectively constituted by past experiences, imagination, the environment, emotions that occur through remembering and each person's bodily and verbal responses to one another" (p. 328). In this sense, talanoa embodies the position of the researcher, how the participants respond and the possibility of research data in the interaction taking place in the space of talanoa.

Tunufa'i (2016) challenges talanoa as a methodology and asserts that it is in fact a mere cultural translation of a data collection tool such as focus groups. Tunufa'i (2016) continues by arguing that talanoa lacks the philosophical underpinning to be authenticated as a methodology. However, in the context of this research, I chose talanoa as both a methodological approach and method given my upbringing, my Pasifika worldview and the focus of this study on Pasifika families and communities. I wanted to gain insight into the strategies and processes used by educational leaders to engage Pasifika communities, how these strategies and processes are formed, and the impact that they are perceived to have on student outcomes. As a Samoan researcher, it was important that the necessary cultural protocols and processes were followed and that culture was understood and taken into consideration before the research focus group began. These talanoa focus groups were conducted in a manner allowing for openness and natural conversation, through the researcher partaking deeply in the research experience rather than standing back and analysing (Vaioleti, 2006). In discussing research principles that were fulfilled by a talanoa approach, Otunuku (2011) highlighted the importance of the relationships between the researcher and the researched, establishing equality of all stakeholders and adhering to appropriate confidentiality. Furthermore, cultural practices were recognised as paramount over the agenda of the research as

well as meaningful engagement that saw the participants respected as both individuals and as members of certain social groups (Otunuku, 2011). In relation to Pasifika researchers and Pasifika research models, Seiuli (2016) suggests that "in this realm of connection, researchers, participants and wider community are involved in a process of reciprocal knowledge sharing, which manifests shared hopes, dreams and aspirations in and throughout the process of engagement" (p. 58). In this sense, talanoa represented all that I wanted to achieve both as a research methodology and method. Moreover, with research focused on engaging with Pasifika families as well as my Pasifika worldview, it was necessary to employ a recognised Pasifika data collection method to authenticate the relationship between researcher and participant.

Research sample

For this research, I conducted talanoa focus groups in four different secondary schools. Because I was interested in looking at the strategies and processes employed by educational leaders across a variety of settings, four different schools were needed to provide me with a range of strategies and processes. The schools I focused on were secondary schools in Auckland with at least 75% of Pasifika students in their student population. Participants targeted to participate in my study were senior and middle leaders with at least two years' leadership experience and who were available and willing to participate. I wanted to focus on the perspective of both senior and middle leaders because of my position as a middle leader at my current school.

The recruitment process for participant schools and individuals began well. I contacted a wide range of secondary schools across Auckland by sending invitation emails to principals seeking permission to conduct my research at their school. The Participant Information Sheet (See Appendix B) and the Consent Form (see Appendix C) were also included in this email. Four principals responded and gave permission for my research. Three of these four principals delegated the coordinating of the focus group to a member of their SLT. The fourth principal forwarded my invitation email to all the staff at his school and invited senior or middle leaders to contact me directly. My research did not go any further at this school. Of the three principals that delegated the coordinating of my research to SLT members, two of these schools followed through and arranged appointment times for my talanoa focus group to take place. The third SLT member did not follow up on my research despite my continued emails, so I was left to find two other schools for my research. In the end, the two schools I had already recruited referred me to two other schools and, fortunately, this meant I had the four participant schools I needed.

It is also important to note here that although the research sample for my study did not require participants to be of Pasifika descent, seven out of the eight of the senior and middle leaders that agreed to participate were from a Pasifika background. In my communication with school

principals and the coordinating SLT member at each participant school, it was made clear that participants were not required to be of Pasifika heritage. The criteria for potential participants was also outlined in the Participant Information Sheet. However, the cultural and ethnic background of participants was an issue that was beyond my control.

Data collection methods

For this research I chose focus groups as the data collection method with a talanoa approach. This was because I wanted to openly discuss and investigate the practices and perceptions of educational leaders and how they engage with Pasifika families and communities. Given the collective focus of improving achievement outcomes for Pasifika students, I wanted to take a similar approach in conducting talanoa focus groups and researching the perspectives of at least two senior or middle leaders. I was also conscious that as an outsider to the secondary schools in which I would be researching, the senior or middle leaders would know each other and be able to interact and share thoughts, ideas and experiences that would not otherwise surface in an individual interview (Lichtman, 2010).

On the issue of the weaknesses when utilising focus groups as a research method, Gibbs (2012) considers issues of confidentiality, possible conflicts amongst participants and complex verbal and non-verbal responses resulting in a difficult task for analysis and interpretation. In attempts to alleviate some of these disadvantages for my research, I made sure to spend some time at the beginning of the focus group introducing myself, my background and my research before discussing confidentiality and informed consent. With a talanoa approach, I wanted to ensure a safe and respectful space for the research to be conducted by specifically acknowledging concepts of culture and *va*. Anae (2010) describes va as the space between and asserts that to 'teu le va' is to value and nurture the space and the nature of relationships. In the context of research data collection methods, this was necessary to maintain a culturally safe space for talanoa to take place.

Thematic analysis

Each talanoa focus group was recorded and transcribed verbatim. Cohen et al. (2018) suggests that qualitative data analysis focuses on "in-depth, context-specific, rich, subjective data and meanings by the participants in the situation" (p. 643) and that there is no straightforward formula for turning data into findings. In attempting to organise and coordinate the research data collected, computer software was used. From here, units of analysis were identified, key concepts and points were refined, and relationships between the data of each participant school was drawn before arranging the data into themes. In other words I assembled the data, reassembled and recombined the data in different ways before synthesising and integrating the data into a meaningful account and analysis (Cohen et al., 2018).

Coding

To begin my analysis, the transcripts were uploaded to the computer software known as Nvivo. The reviewing of the data was arranged according to the three central questions of the research. The indicative talanoa focus group questions have been included as Appendix D. To coordinate the data collected across the four focus groups based on the three focus questions, various themes and ideas that were found to be common across participant responses were coded accordingly. A code is simply a label linked to a piece of text that identifies a specific idea and assists the researcher in collating similar information with the same code (Cohen et al., 2018). The codes were taken directly from the responses of participants and summarised to form the themes within each of the three central questions of the research.

Validity

In conducting research of any kind, issues of validity and the reliability of the data collected is often in question. Cohen et al. (2018) suggest that, in qualitative research, issues of validity "might be addressed through the honesty, depth, authenticity, trustworthiness, dependability, credibility" (p. 246) and by minimising researcher bias where possible. However, Wellington (2015) argues that we can never be 100 percent sure of validity. In the context of research, we can minimise researcher bias. This bias can reside in the researcher's approach and characteristics, the participants' characteristics or the questions of the study. To ensure the integrity of this research and in attempts to minimise research bias, the focus group questions were trialled with two of my colleagues who are both middle leaders. As a result, additional information was added to the introduction at the beginning of the focus group. This was to ensure that specific definitions of terms used were shared by participants. Establishing a relationship and rapport with participants was fairly straightfoward and no issues of power were evident given that most participants were middle-leaders. Before each focus group, I introduced myself, the research focus and the rationale behind it. To ensure that participants spoke freely and that their responses were received respectfully, confidentiality was outlined immediately after my introduction and before consent forms were signed. Partipcants were informed about the audio recordings and that both the recordings and transcripts would be confidential to myself and my supervisor.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness relates to the way in which researchers document their decisions, the design of their research, their data gathering and data analysis techniques as well as how ethical approaches are demonstrated (Mutch, 2005). With qualitative research in particular, it is important that the researcher is consistent in carrying out their research (Creswell, 2013) as it is easy to influence the data collected by changing the way in which the research is conducted. This was even more challenging in the context of a talanoa approach because of the focus on open and natural

conversation (Vaioleti, 2006). To address this challenge, I printed out the three focus questions and displayed these on the table during the talanoa focus groups so that participants could openly partake in the talanoa but still remain focused on the questions asked. In attempts to address the issue of consistency so as to strengthen and improve the trustworthiness of the research design, I kept a journal throughout the research process. This enabled me to reflect on each talanoa focus group and allowed me to be reflexive in my position as a researcher. Mutch (2005) supports the maintaining of a research journal as a way to become both reflective and reflexive. This journal has continued to serve both a professional and personal purpose during this research but it has also given me the opportunity to interrogate and critically consider my position and the influence of my perceptions, on my research.

Credibility

Credibility is to do with the ways in which you have ensured that your findings resonate with those who are familiar with the setting or context of research (Mutch, 2005). Seiuli (2016) asserts that personal interaction and establishing relationships support notions of credibility and reliability. For this research, I chose to conduct focus groups in four different secondary schools because I wanted to explore the various strategies and processes employed by educational leaders at each school in attempting to work in partnership with Pasifika families and communities. Before each focus group I spent some time introducing myself, my research and my background in attempts to establish a relationship. I purposefully wanted to ensure that I researched in schools across Auckland to gather a variety of perspectives from a range of communities. While the findings from my research may not be applicable to all secondary schools, the data collected adequately reflects the responses of my participants, and aspects of the results may be transferrable to senior or middle leaders who are familiar with the setting and context of this study.

Ethical considerations

Ethics approval was sought from AUTEC as the core focus of my research was the perspectives of educational leaders. Informed consent and voluntary participation is important in all research. At the beginning of the talanoa focus group session, I reminded participants of this and assured confidentiality and privacy of information collected through the use of pseudonyms in the final dissertation document. Consent Forms were provided via email prior to the talanoa focus group and participants agreed by signing these forms before the focus group session began. I also informed participants of their right to withdraw at any time before, during, or after the focus group sessions. When the focus groups were in the space of talanoa I needed to ensure that each participant felt valued as a person and that the opinion they shared would be considered and received respectfully.

Informed consent

In this study, participants were provided with an Information Sheet that detailed the purpose and method of this research as well as Consent Forms. Transcripts were not provided for participants to review and verify their contribution to the focus group. This was firstly due to confidentiality issues but also because participants should not be able to edit the responses of the other participants in the focus group. However, at the end of the focus group participants were invited to contact me via email if they had any further contributions to the research focus or wanted to clarify anything they had discussed during the talanoa. While there was no follow-up from participants via email, the Information Sheet outlined that a summary of the full dissertation document would be made available to them upon completion.

Confidentiality

At all times, participants' privacy and confidentiality were respected but anonymity could not be assured. Pseudonyms were used for participants, and participating schools were identified in a generic way. Any information disclosed during the talanoa focus groups that was likely to identify the participants or the schools in the research was omitted in an attempt to ensure confidentiality. Participants were advised that their identity would remain confidential to myself and my supervisor. Consent forms, transcripts and audio recordings were stored digitally at AUT.

Limitations of study – methodology and design

No matter how carefully a researcher plans a study, there will always be limitations and restraints that are beyond our control. There are two main limitations that I wish to reflect on in considering the methodology and design of my research. The first is the decision to focus on secondary schools with predominantly large numbers of Pasifika students in their school population. This decision was based on my own experience in a large multiethnic predominantly Pasifika secondary school. To gain a wider scope of strategies and processes employed by educational leaders in secondary schools, research into schools with a smaller number of Pasifika students would have given a contrasting insight. These schools may also utilise strategies and processes to engage with Pasifika families and communities successfully and these could have been shared to schools with large numbers of Pasifika students.

The second limitation on this study was time. Given that schools are places that are constantly active and pressured for time, particularly considering the demands of students and teaching staff, the talanoa focus groups conducted were limited by time. Two of the four focus groups were held directly after school and the other two were held during the non-contact of the participants. Because of this restriction and my inability to limit this constraint and its influence on my research, participant responses felt somewhat rushed. Given the opportunity to carry out research

in the future, I would make sure that there was sufficient time for participants to commit fully to the research. This could be achieved by ensuring that there was enough time before and after the talanoa focus group interview as well as limiting the possibility of external restraints on participants time.

Summary

In summary, this chapter has outlined the methodological approach of the study. It has reflected on the position of my research under the interpretive paradigm with a Pasifika worldview. The rationale and use of talanoa focus groups as the method for data collection is clarified and the way in which the data was analysed, is outlined. Issues of validity and ethics were discussed before a concluding section examining the limitations of the research design. The chapter that follows presents the findings of the research.

Chapter 4 – Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the data gathering phase. I conducted four talanoa focus groups to identify and critically examine secondary school leadership practices in engaging with Pasifika families. To begin this chapter, information about the participants and the participant schools is briefly outlined. The findings are then presented according to the three focus questions that guided the talanoa. Participant quotes and commentary are included as evidence to support the findings. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the results from the research.

Participating schools and participants

Before the findings of this research are presented, it is necessary to point out two factors in regards to the data collected. Firstly, in the Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix B) potential participating schools were required to have at least 75% Pasifika students in the ethnic makeup of the student population. However, due to unforeseen circumstances beyond my control that were mentioned briefly in Chapter Three, an additional two schools were included in the study. Three of the four participant schools currently have lower than 75% Pasifika student population as outlined in Table 4.1; however, these schools have had around 75% Pasifika students in their student population in the past five years.

Table 4. 1 Participant schools' demographic information (Education Counts, 2018)

School	Roll	% of Pasifika students
School A	592	66%
School B	814	84%
School C	325	70%
School D	686	62%

The second factor that must be noted in regards to the data collection is that the Participant Information Sheet listed specific criteria of potential participants. I would like to highlight here that participants in this research were not required to be of Pasifika descent. However, in each school the participants that agreed to participate in the research and who demonstrated some experience in the area of engaging with Pasifika families and communities, were of Pasifika heritage. Therefore, as outlined in Table 4.2, seven out of the eight participants were of Pasifika descent. The potential implications of this are considered further in Chapter Five.

Table 4. 2: Participants' demographic information

School	Participant name	Ethnic background	Position in the school	Leadership experience
A	Sina	Pasifika	Head of learning area	10-14 years
A	Tasi	Pasifika	Head of learning area	15-19 years
B	Lesa	Pasifika	Head of learning area	10-14 years
B	Maria	Pasifika	Assistant principal	10-14 years
C	Sione	Pasifika	Dean	5-9 years
C	Ana	Pasifika	Head of learning area	2-4 years
D	John	NZ-European	Dean	30 + years
D	Tavita	Pasifika	Head of learning area / Dean	15-19 years

The section that follows will present the findings of the research based on the three focus questions. The focus questions central to the core aims of the research were:

a. To identify and critically examine secondary school leadership practices in engaging with Pasifika communities; and

b. To explore leaders' perceptions of the impact of engaging with Pasifika communities on Pasifika student achievement outcomes.

Question One: Strategies and processes

The first question of the talanoa focus group asked: What strategies and processes do secondary school educational leaders employ when attempting to engage with Pasifika families and communities? The responses from participants varied and often the discussion was centred around how strategies were either formal or informal. From the participant responses and discussion, formal strategies and processes have been defined as targeted, deliberate, planned and strategic processes that leaders employ when engaging Pasifika families. Informal processes have been defined as occasions and events that are more casual and familiar for Pasifika parents and families. These formal and informal strategies and processes are discussed further in the following section.

Formal strategies and processes

Across the four participant schools, there were some formal strategies and processes that were common; however, these varied in the finer details. Before discussing the finer details of these findings, Table 4.3 presents a summary of the formal strategies and processes that were evident in the data collected as well as the number of times each was mentioned in the talanoa focus groups.

Table 4. 3 Formal strategies and processes

Formal strategies and processes	Number of responses
• Talanoa / Community meetings specifically targeting Pasifika parents, families and communities conducted in the Pasifika language	4
• Home-school partnership, academic counselling, academic learning conference, parent-teacher-student conference	3
• Home visits conducted by leaders and teachers to targeted Pasifika students	2
• Breakup students into year level ethnic groups and delegate student groups to Pasifika teacher for monitoring	1
• Powerup Pasifika parents groups	1
• Sunday lunch gathering for Pasifika parents	1

Talanoa

The most common response that I have classified as a formal strategy and process is a meeting for Pasifika parents and families specifically. These meetings varied in their title and were referred to as talanoa meetings, community meetings and Pasifika fono (meeting). Across the four schools these meetings were driven by senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers of Pasifika descent and included the opportunity for parents to engage in their heritage languages. Sina spoke passionately about coordinating a meeting with Tongan parents and particularly identified that initially the meetings were to address pastoral issues; however, she discovered that parents were disconnected and unaware of student learning:

> *Originally we put that on because a lot of our Tongan kids were misbehaving so I thought well let's get the parents in… But as soon as we started off I found out that a lot of our parents are not in touch with what's going on at school academically in the classrooms… so we slowly branched out to teaching parents on NCEA… we went as far as strategies to read to their kids at home for low proficiency students, we went as far as putting on a book sale, we went home and checked their bookshelves (and) we went far and wide to parenting tips. Some of our parents were not able to parent as such, as Tongans in New Zealand (Sina)*

In a similar way, Tasi spoke about community meetings held once a term at School B for all Pasifika parents. The meeting would start with general information for all Pasifika parents and then families were able to split into specific ethnic groups:

> *So I'll take the Tongans and we have people for different groups so that if there is anything in the meeting that was not fully understood by the parents we clarify it because we are meeting in our own language… but not only that – we also talk about things that are currently happening at school that we feel the parents need to be informed about for example – the attendance data, the achievement data specific to Tongans and to other ethnic groups… we look at the general behaviour… we also encourage the parents to do things that may help them to support their kids more (Tasi)*

Similar to the experience of Sina, at School C and School D the meetings were also centred around educating parents about NCEA and doing so in the Pasifika languages:

> We called an NCEA evening for Tongan parents, just tryna… educate them more on NCEA Achieved, Merit, Excellence… we (would) have a meeting, a fono (meeting) and we would have the speakers of the Pasifika languages and (we) definitely had food (Sione)

> So traditionally we always try and have Pasifika fono's with parents… we used to coordinate Pasifika fono with our careers evenings and expos and stuff like that… but lots of times in the early days of NCEA it was kind of NCEA evenings… so those are the traditional ways in which we try and engage (Tavita)

One of the primary focuses that I found when participants were discussing the organising of these talanoa community meetings targeting Pasifika parents was the need to educate parents. This varied from teaching parents about NCEA to discussions on how parents can best support their child's learning at school. This was evident in the responses from participants:

> I would print out the asTTle results in reading and writing of the children of the Tongan group and we would have a meeting and the parents would sit down… and they see (the results) and ask "what's 2A Sina?" that means he's below the curriculum expected and then we trace that and that was another set of data that I saw happening. Kids begin to improve because of the communication I had with the parents (Sina)

> I mean they (the parents) have good intentions for their kids but they don't know "how do I support my kid? Oh just go to school and do your homework" but actually, they don't know how to arm themselves with the support that they can give their students (Maria)

Home-school partnership

In three of the four research schools, home-school partnership in the form of academic counselling, academic learning conferences, and parent-teacher-student conferences was prevalent. This was the formalised school process where parents and students would meet with their form teacher two to three times during the year to monitor and track student progress. Although it was identified from the outset as not targeting Pasifika students specifically, it was still recognised as an effective means of connecting with families and communities as found in the following responses:

> We do have annual conference, annual student parent conferences and that's when parents come in to (see) us and we have two days off school… they come and we give them our/the students reports for that part of the year… we talk to them about the student goals that they might continue to have… (Sina)

> They're called… letters are sent out to all the families to ask for them to come during the day and they can take it to their employers to let them know and then they come and sit down for about half an hour and conference with their tutor teachers about achievement, attendance, behaviour and planning for the future. So what goals they can set, what's their career pathway and whether they're being offered the right course (Tasi)

> Home-school partnership… was really good to have resources, and support and a program to engage with our Pasifika. It was really good and again I suppose it was purposeful obviously not sustainable because it ebbed and flowed in regards to engagement (Tavita)

Within discussions regarding home-school partnership and academic counselling in its various forms, the issue of parent attendance was questioned. Across the three schools that employed this form of engagement with parents and families, the attendance was fairly high due to the collective effort across the school to ensure that parents and families attended. For example:

It has improved… Overall - there's a lot of followup, there's a lot of pre-calling parents and letting students know how important it is. Yeah so the attendance is pretty good. It's gotten better (Tasi)

Home visits

At School A and B, teachers and middle leaders carried out home visits to targeted groups of students and their families. Most of the time these home visits were a follow-up to parents being absent from organised home-school partnership meetings or in relation to student behaviour. In the case of School A, home visits were carried out in a targeted effort to improve literacy and readings skills:

cause I remember one time I said to the parents "Do you do reading at home?" and they said No and I said "do you have a bookshelf in your room?" and they said No… (so) we decided on that day as a committee we'll have what we call a "ahi" you know we'll all do that as a group… it's a Tongan traditional thing so I remember Alison's father he went with me from house to house to check their (family's) bookshelf and we even went to his house. When we went to his house they had a nice bookshelf with books already there (Sina)

For pastoral issues in regards to student behaviour, Lesa shared that she would visit homes individually particularly if there were "challenging" Pasifika kids. In the past, School D would arrange for the form teachers to conduct home visits of all their students at Year 9 level as the first year of college:

In the early days we used to do home visits for Year 9 parents. So the teacher of the Year 9 whanau group would go and visit them in their own home and… so yeah, that was really… getting to know the family and the student in their own environment and so you could see… the environment that they were in (John)

In a very telling description of her experience of carrying out home visits, Sina revealed the following:

I visited parents who don't come school. I go and knock on their door and give them the letters and when I went there I see the way they live at home, the kind of lacking and I begin to appreciate the way that people are living out there. Sometimes we have so high a demand here but when I go and see them then you realize, that some (families are) probably sleeping on the floor… and all that sort of thing so yeah, that's basically one major thing that I (did to) engage with our Tongan families (Sina)

To a lesser extent, other formal strategies and processes by participants included breaking up students from each year level into their ethnic groups and delegated each year level ethnic group to a certain teacher to monitor. Tasi discussed this:

So what we have (done) in the past is kind of breakup the year levels and look at… Year 9, 10 all the way up to Year 13 and a certain Samoan teacher would identify the Samoan kids in that Year level and offer them support as in this is what you should be doing in Year 9 this is where you're at with your asTTle (so) all the way up to Year 13 they have someone to relate to (Tasi)

At School A they have initiated a Powerup Pasifika parents group. Tasi commented on this:

> *Yeah so what I've found is that when parents come and bring their kids to our powerup which is our homework centre we run, they're doing other things… but what I wanted to do is engage them in some learning that they could work (on) alongside their kids and understand what they're kids are learning about and helping with reading and writing and stuff… so it's all these kinds of things with parents who would otherwise be sitting at home sending their kids to homework centre (when they) could be coming in and working alongside them and understanding how to engage better with their kids and their education… (Tasi)*

At School D, they organised a Sunday lunch for Pasifika parents to attend. Tavita commented that this was "enticing Pasifika people through food" as traditionally, many Pasifika families reserve Sunday lunch for a family feast. This Sunday lunch was well attended and another example of the variety of strategies senior and middle leaders have employed in engaging with Pasifika families and communities.

Informal strategies and processes

Informal strategies and processes were discussed across the four participant schools and, in a similar way to the formal strategies and processes, these varied in the finer details. Before discussing these findings further, Table 4.4 presents a summary of the informal strategies and processes that were evident in the data collected as well as the number of times it was mentioned in the talanoa focus groups.

Table 4. 4 Informal strategies and processes

Informal strategies and processes	Number of responses
• Polyfest fiafia nights (dress rehearsal)	4
• Involving church ministers from the local community in the school	2
• Sport – rugby games	2

Polyfest

The most common informal strategy discussed across all four participant schools was Polyfest. The participants spoke about the high level of engagement and partnership with Pasifika parents, families and communities involved in Polyfest, an annual competition for Auckland secondary schools to showcase their Pasifika culture and language through dance. To varying degrees, participating schools discussed how they utilised Polyfest as an avenue to connecting with Pasifika parents and families:

> *I can see it in our Tongan Polyfest… you know what when we're like that with our Tongan parents at Polyfest, boy the kids are kids for about 7 weeks… they're little Tongan angels… you know? Because the parents are sitting there and we are sitting here and the kids are good. They can learn our dances in 7 weeks and they achieve you know? (Sina)*

I guess we try to capitalise on the Polyfest… the families are guaranteed to come in anyway to come and see their kids perform so we try and utilise that time to either put in some messages about what's happening at our school… just a little plug right at the beginning is usually something that we do because we find that we get a higher turnout of families that would come to attend to watch the performance as opposed to running a separate event where they just come in… cause I think before the Polyfest they had a parents meeting eh and I think it was only like 2 or 3 parents that turned up so there were more staff than there were families at this event. So obviously when Polyfest fiafia nights (dress rehearsal) were coming up the info that was gonna happen at that meeting, they ended up sort of saying it at the fiafia nights (Maria)

At School C and D, participants considered the value that parents place on culture as well as meeting parents in their ethnic groups as opposed to meeting Pasifika parents collectively:

I think in terms of programs definitely probably Polyfest… that's bringing them in… cause I think a lot of them just wanna get their children in touch with their culture cause they're brought up here, they're raised here. That's probably the main reason not much about educational but more about connecting them to their culture (Sione)

Using the Polyfest groups, the language groups to have those meetings in those settings and again really good in regards to language specific rather than a whole bunch of Pasifika people and again obviously its Polyfest - that is the carrot but you have just a little bit of information in regards to NZQA fees and NCEA outline and highlighting some of the good achievers in the school (Tavita)

Polyfest is clearly an important opportunity in the participant schools to engage with Pasifika parents and families in a less formal setting. This was a strong research finding in that it was one of the first strategies that participants discussed in relation to Question One.

Involving church ministers

In their efforts to engage with Pasifika families and communities more effectively, School A and School C discussed how they invited local church ministers to school events. This was an informal strategy and was considered as an opportunity to recognise the spirituality of Pasifika families and value the priority placed on religion and faith. Tavita and John spoke about inviting local church ministers to the school for breakfast:

Yeah we had the pastors in… so our previous Principal Mike, one of the first things he did was to try and build relationships with the Ministers. So he went to the local churches and we had a breakfast to talk on how we could partner up… it was a good way to look at different avenues of connecting (Tavita)

Being heavily involved with church herself, Sina discussed her attempts to involve local church ministers in her meetings and engagements with parents, families and the local community:

I went to the church ministers because I believe they have quite a role in the parents' life but they weren't so keen. So I came back from there… I try and engage as many of the categories of groups (as I can) (Sina)

These events and gatherings were informal in their approach and an example of yet another strategy and process employed by educational leaders in engaging with Pasifika families and comunities.

Sport

In discussions regarding the ways in which Pasifika parents engage and partner with schools, sport, and in particular, rugby was highlighted as an informal way of connecting with Pasifika parents and families. Ana suggested that "it's a lot of informal occasions like rugby games they'll come and that's when you sort of talk to them". Tavita also mentioned rugby and extended the idea of informal gatherings further by considering the environment in which Pasifika parents are most comfortable:

> *but I think even with rugby, using the things that our parents naturally gravitate towards and again having the discussions in home-school partnership like why don't our Pasifika parents come in? Cause they don't feel comfortable, they don't feel welcome, they want to see the teachers as the experts whereas traditionally in the primary school setting... the environment is more welcoming for the parents to come along (Tavita)*

Question Two: Enablers and barriers

The second question of the talanoa focus group asked: What enablers and barriers do leaders experience when engaging with Pasifika families and communities? Although the responses from the participants varied, there were some commonalities. This section will first explore the enablers as the things in which support leaders in their engagement with Pasifika families and communities before describing the barriers to engagement.

Enablers

Across the four participant schools, some enablers were common. Before discussing these in detail with commentary and supporting quotes, Table 4.5 presents a summary of the conditions which enable and support leaders in their experience engaging with Pasifika families and communities.

Table 4. 5 Enablers

Enablers	Number of responses
• Expert teacher knowledge of the Pasifika languages	3
• Pasifika senior or middle leaders and teachers	2
• Senior or middle leaders and teacher standing within the community	2
• Support from my school to try different strategies	1
• Initiatives were led by the languages department	1
• Resources and funds	1
• Communication home	1
• Connections and networks	1
• Key people and relationships	1

Expert teacher knowledge of Pasifika languages

A key finding in the conditions that enabled and support leaders in their experience engaging with Pasifika families and communities, was the expert teacher knowledge of Pasifika languages and culture. Both Sina and Sione spoke in regards to their ability to converse in the Tongan language fluently. Lesa suggested that many parents she had encountered found it easier to speak to her in Tongan. Sione shared that "relationships are built straight away" with parents of students because of his ability to speak the language.

Pasifika teachers and staff

Building on the enabler of teachers having expert knowledge of the Pasifika language and culture, Ana and Maria specifically referred to having teachers of Pasifika descent on staff as a significant condition that supported leaders in engaging with Pasifika families and communities:

> *Yeah and I guess we're lucky at this school too because we kind of have a rep from each Pasifika group so Sione does all the Tongan stuff, I do all the Samoan stuff, Tom does all the Niuean stuff so we're quite lucky. But I think of all the other schools that don't… (Ana)*

> *I think… in a school like this, for the families to see that the makeup of the staff at our school - a lot of us look like them… I think that's an enabler that also could… get rid of those barriers because they're going "oh ok so the principal is Pasifika, oh there's some DP's (Deputy principals) that are Pasifika" we've got quite a large number of Pasifika teachers. So I guess that's another enabler - we are the face of the school so if they see that the face matches theirs… we look like them, we have similar backgrounds, similar upbringing… I think that's an enabler… (Maria)*

Senior or middle leaders and teacher standing in the community

The third most common enabler found in the discussions with participants, was the standing of school leaders and teachers in the local community. This supported efforts to engage with Pasifika families because school leaders and teachers were recognised locally in their roles as educators and were respected individuals:

> *because I speak Tongan fluent, and I had some kind of standing in the Tongan community where people took whatever I came up with… So as a community person as a church minister and all that, people knew me and I could easily do that and that helped to them to convince them of what I was doing… that was one of the best things that enabled me because of my community stead when people came in here and listen to what I was trying to say, even though I scolded them still they listened… (Sina)*

> *I've been doing the Tongan group for 10 years and just in recent like my standing in the Tongan community within our community is quite good (Tavita)*

Other conditions that were discussed as enablers in terms of supporting engagement with Pasifika families included support from the school senior leadership team to try different strategies to connect with parents and families:

> *And then the enablers I think would be the support from the school. You know we were never told NO, they've never ever said "you can't have a meeting, that's not a good idea", it's always been "you give it a go, we'll support you" so that's an enabler I think (Lesa)*

At School B, the community meetings mentioned earlier in this chapter, were organised and coordinated by the languages department. This was highlighted as an enabler for this school:

> *I think for one thing… we have a languages department at our school and I know not all schools have up to those Senior levels in different languages especially Pacific languages. So I think that's one of the enablers that we have that allows us to have that direct connection to Pasifika communities and valuing the language (Maria)*

As with all initiatives and strategies in schools, having sufficient resources and funds to perform and fulfill various events was an important contributing factor. Lesa mentions this:

> *when we started off our Tongan meetings, the school used to provide food eh… and for us Pasifika, where there is food – there are people. So it was something that the school started off providing, some money for us to have some food… but that was one enabling aspect of what the school is doing (Lesa)*

Another key factor revealed that supported leaders in engaging with Pasifika parents and families was clear communication between home and school:

> *I think communication home… just continued and clear communication. We can't take for granted that our kids are gonna tell their parents - if we could text, but texting the parents is quite an expensive thing if you do it on mass all the time. So I think just making sure the word is out there, is an enabler (Tavita)*

One final enabler that Tavita touched on was the importance of key people when dealing with Pasifika families and that for students, parents and teachers, relationships are crucial:

> *it was always really good to have experts or people with the heart not necessarily people of the culture but people of the heart… so again (we are) really blessed to have John here because he's been here for ages… he understands and is willing to learn. So just having those key people and also teachers… if you have some key teachers who have great relationships with the kids (then) we don't necessarily need to have big events… each teacher is taking responsibility and having that cultural competence or cultural fluidity and fluency (Tavita)*

Barriers

Within the four participant schools, a number of barriers were uncovered. Before exploring these any further, Table 4.6 presents a summary of the conditions that research participants found to be barriers in their experience of engaging with Pasifika families and communities.

Table 4. 6 Barriers

Barriers	Number of responses
• Working parents who are unavailable	2
• Church activities which means parents cannot attend school events	2
• Parent perception: what can I learn	1
• Parent perception: understanding of the education system	1
• Parent perception: understanding the ability of their child	1

• Partnership is one-way	1
• Family events mean that students and parents are unavailable	1
• Teacher barriers	1
• Lack of teacher knowledge of the Pasifika language	1
• Community perception of the school	1
• Lumping Pasifika peoples' into one group	1

Working parents

Parents busy with work and their jobs was identified as a barrier by the participants. This was a barrier that was relevant to all parents and not specific to Pasifika parents:

> *I think it's a barrier it's because you know, most parents are working parents and every time you give a notice or whatever you call up in relation to a meeting, the parents can't come to the meeting… (Lesa)*

However, it was suggested in discussion with the participants, that Pasifika parents are shift workers or have more than one job:

> *I've definitely seen that, especially around the shift work. I mean if you look at the community we live in, some of our parents have more than one job and… we have one parent that's working and the other one is not working, you know looking after the kids and all that (Maria)*

In regards to the barrier of Pasifika parents being too busy with work, Tavita considered whether it was an 'actual' barrier or more a 'stereotypical' barrier:

> *Um barriers I don't know I think we always talk about how busy Pasifika parents are, working multiple jobs and you know… there are stereotypical barriers but I don't know if they're actually strong barriers or relevant barriers so timing is always an issue (Tavita)*

Church

An interesting finding was the identification of church, as a barrier for leaders in engaging with Pasifika families and communities. Although their comments were brief, the fact that they perceived church as a barrier is worth noting. In reflecting on parents who could not make it to meetings because of prior engagements with their commitment to church, Lesa suggests:

> *sometimes its church and I say you know this is only once a term, you can always go to church again next week and the following week. So I feel that that is a barrier… (Lesa)*

Sione and Ana discussed how many of their Pasifika students were absent from school because of church activities and involvement with various events and functions. They questioned the priorities of parents and families in allowing their children to miss school because of church commitments.

Parent perceptions

Although varying in the content of their responses, participants spoke at length about the perceptions of Pasifika parents, and how these perceptions hindered their ability to engage with the school. In discussing parents attitude when attending meetings:

> *I can think of barriers – I think it happens (to) a lot of our Pasifika, it's their conception or their understanding or the perception that they have of themselves… the number of parents who could come in and participate – and it was a very Tongan mentality, what's there for me to learn? You know. So that hindered them from reaching out… because I know that some of our people think "oh I don't need to come because I'm alright, I don't need to learn what you have… and at school, students are your responsibility, you teach our children" (Sina)*

When considering the conflict and misunderstanding between the leaders' and teachers' approach to education, in comparison to understaning of parents, Tasi reflected on preconceived ideas that parents came with:

> *I think the misunderstanding that when you ask parents to come in from a certain culture like Samoa, they come with their beliefs as to what they think school should look like and how people should be treating each other and so there was a bit of conflict at times with parents thinking 'this is a village, we're running it like a village' and us thinking well we're here to educate your children so we need your support in a different way… (Tasi)*

Parental perceptions and understanding of the education system and the ability of their child, was also identified as a barrier for participants. Sione spoke about the difficulty in working with parents who often took their child's side of the story. Maria covered many of the conditions considered as barriers for leaders in engaging with Pasifika families:

> *I guess the families have good intentions… but they still keep the worlds quite separate… they don't see the value of when we're asking for their time outside of the school hours… they would still value church, "no we have to go church…" and yet they still say "no but school is important" but their actions are telling us otherwise… I think that's one of the barriers and like I said, they come with good intentions but it's just that … I guess they don't know how to follow through. If education was so important then why are you not coming to support the school and meeting us halfway… (Maria)*

Maria continued to discuss parent perceptions and concluded by saying "we're trying to build a partnership but it's hard if you're doing all the work and the other party is not coming".

Other barriers that were outlined by the participants included family. Ana spoke about Pasifika families and the difficulty faced by leaders in attempting to understand student absence due to family bereavement.

> *Or even family. We've got a kid who had a funeral, Alan and he's been away for like 3 weeks and his grandma died in the holidays but it's not just him it's a lot of kids. Pasifika families… need to know, people grieve, everyone grieves but it's the time taken away from the education that's a concern… (Ana)*

John mentioned that another barrier for leaders in engaging with Pasifika families, is the barriers that teachers have in place:

I think the barriers… for teachers (are) probably their own barriers that they wanna put up… their expectations… the point is we've got to reflect on our students and the community that we live in (John)

Although previously discussed as an enabler, Tasi explained that the lack of teacher knowledge of the Pasifika language was a barrier for some Pasifika teachers who were born and raised in New Zealand:

Yes I can talk about barrier because I alluded to it before. So we're young Samoan staff and only one of us is fluent in Samoan, so the lack of language yeah… we felt disconnected from our Samoan parents who could speak the language and so it depended on the availability of our Samoan speaking teacher to come to each meeting… and when she was unavailable - we couldn't run the meeting. We felt like… we don't have a right to talk. So it's almost that faa'alo'alo, the respect you have for your culture and the elders, that you don't want to step on any toes because you're an English speaking 2nd generation Samoan (Tasi)

Tasi probed further and spoke about the local community's perception of the school and how that too could be a barrier to engaging with Pasifika parents and families:

I think for our particular school there's a stereotype about our community that the parents have about our school… that perception itself, the stereotype that parents have of our school is a massive barrier because they're not sending their kids here… they only see the negative media, the negative kids that they hear about and the data doesn't help because we're getting the lowest learners coming… it's like the community perception of us (Tasi)

One final barrier that Tavita reflected on and mentioned several times during the talanoa focus group, was the way in which Pasifika ethnic groups were collectively "lumped into one group". Earlier in the talanoa discussion at School D, Tavita noted that meeting in specific ethnic and language groups during Polyfest as opposed to meeting collectively as Pasifika, was of benefit when engaging with Pasifika families and also students. However, challenges arose when students identified with more than one Pasifika culture:

again discussions with Pasifika is maybe too broad… (to say) "ok this is the Samoan community, this is the Tongan" when there's half-caste or kids who have 3 different cultures… They're still lost in between which culture do I go to and where do I fit in and do I go to this Māori meeting that looks at priority learners or do I go to the Samoan meeting or I wana celebrate my Niuean-ness. So I think that maybe, I don't know if it's a barrier but it's a discussion point in regards to… making sure that we can accommodate for the great diversity within Pasifika (Tavita)

The enablers and the barriers outlined here were extensive and the implications of these conditions in examining secondary school leadership practices when engaging with Pasifika families and communities is crucial, particularly when considering the impact on student achievement outcomes.

Question Three: Leaders' perceptions

The concluding question of the talanoa focus group was: What are school leaders' perceptions of the impact of engaging with Pasifika families and communities on Pasifika student outcomes? The participant responses to this question, were largely positive and affirmed the assumption on

which this research focus was developed: that engaging with Pasifika families and communities makes a significant impact on improving student achievement outcomes. This section will first explore the participants' observations and experience of the influence of engaging with Pasifika parents and families on student achievement.

Positive impact

All participants discussed the positive impact that engaging with Pasifika parents and families had on learning:

> *But I can only speak from my experiences over the years of how I engage with parents who have devoted their time to come and are willing to learn. I see it in the achievement of their own children. As I said one of those is the Tongan girl who's finished her Masters' degree. The father, he was there from day one. He never missed a meeting... (Sina)*

> *You will have parents who will support their child... have the child equipped with the right equipment for learning. They will ensure as a parent, that the kid is showing up to school (and) doing all of that. So I think yes, families like that in those situations, the student can definitely succeed. Especially if the parents are learning alongside with them, growing with them as they age and understanding the dynamics of being a teenager and that motivation... (Maria)*

> *Oh definitely I mean look at parent interviews. You know, half the time it's the kids that are doing really well that you don't really need to have a conversation with the parents, they're the ones that are always here. But the kids that need their parents to be there aren't there. You can tell in class when a student doesn't hand in an assessment and you say oh I'm gonna text your mum and they say, text her she doesn't care. So they already sort of know. I think it has a big impact (Ana)*

Whether Pasifika parents were educated was also considered as a factor that influenced home-school partnership and the impact on student outcomes:

> *if one of the parents is educated or both parents are educated, usually the student can see the end goal. They can see "so if I can go to uni and do this this and this, then I can get a good job like my dad" (Maria)*

Improved student outcomes

Throughout the four participant schools, all participants spoke at varying lengths of the difference that engaging with Pasifika parents had on improving student outcomes:

> *of course the students' achievement outcomes are definitely increasing when there is a closer engagement with the parents and community... I think every single parent or parents for that matter – the best is what they want for their children. The majority I say. So you imagine if that comes together and click well with us – then the kids can do anything (Sina)*

> *So I think yeah, traditionally its really vital. The really proactive parents usually know what their kids are up to and help them along the journey (Tavita)*

Sione and Ana described their experiences of being able to connect and work in partnership with parents to ensure that students were on the correct pathway for their chosen career. Having parents 'on-board' went a long way:

> *I just had a whole lot of phone calls today about vocational pathways to about 6 families and they are on-board. So next week I'm taking them out to NZMA to just have a look at*

the courses there, and the parents they understand… I just say look your child has Level 1 and 2 and (is) not doing UE approved subjects so he's setup just to do nothing next year so we can start the ball rolling now (Sione)

And I think they lean more towards a form teacher like I had a kid tell me he wanted to be an accountant but his father wanted him to be a builder or something and so I texted Dad and said let's meet up to talk about your child… We got that out of the way, now he's doing the right subjects for what he wants to do, rather than the dad so for some of them, I think the form teachers play a very important role in connecting with the families (Ana)

Maria expressed how important it was, that parents 'journey' with their children as they progress through school:

those parents that grow with the child, change their mindset, adapt themselves to the changing society and times, as well as encouraging, as well as having an extension of what they're learning at school, furthering that learning and giving them that real-life experience - yeah I think that our kids can thrive definitely (Maria)

Tavita extended the idea of parents journeying with the school by highlighting the notion of schools 'empowering' parents:

the whole reason that we tried to have community engagement is to get that holy trinity of the family, the student, and the school to really help facilitate the potential out of the kids. So traditionally really really important… I think a lot of the time we just disseminate the information. But again, it's (about) empowering parents beyond that information - to really partner with the school and for us also to partner with parents, to really bring the best out of the students (Tavita)

The collective efforts of students, teachers and schools with parents and families – was presented as an effective combination in supporting the learning journey of Pasifika students:

Stuff like that – that's why, I have no doubt in my mind – when there is closer and respectful engagement with our parents and we speak the same language, we walk the same pathway the outcomes will be better (Sina)

if we can get it right with the parents and the teachers with the students and the right balance of support and effort you know - man it should be a winning combination with the kids (Tavita)

Improved student behaviour

As well as improved student outcomes, Sina articulated that student behaviour also improved because they were in regular contact with parents and families:

they trusted me as their caretaker so if their kids were misbehaving "Miss… Sina Sina" so you can see there that because I contacted the kids here, the kids were sort of improving their behaviour in such ways because there's somebody who's a Tongan who's taking care of their kids here… (Sina)

Tasi reflected on whether engaging with Pasifika parents and families was directly linked to improved achievement but noticeably, behaviour definitely improved:

we found that it was hard to say whether that turned into achievement but the behaviour side was the one that we noticed improved… so yeah it's hard to say whether one intervention has an outcome but we can informally see it with the kids (Tasi)

On engagement with parents during Polyfest, Sina noted that students were 'angels' because parents were so supportive and actively involved with the school during that time.

Negative impact

While the majority of responses from the participants were largely positive and affirming in the belief that engaging with Pasifika families improves student outcomes, Maria considered the adverse affects of parents expectations that resulted in their children not fulfilling their potential:

> *On the other hand, when I say no I'm talking about parents that have set the bar so high for their child not realizing that their child's strengths are not in the path that they envisioned. You know like "oh you're gonna be a lawyer" but the kid hates writing or whatever you know? Like there's no way that they would carry that on at university so that's what I mean by no. So if you have parents like that who just have high expectations - this is it, you can't change it or shift to the environment around them, then Pasifika kids will definitely struggle and either give up or just wipe their hands clean "like nah this isn't me" (Maria)*

Kids can still succeed

In response to this question, Tavita reasoned that some students do continue to succeed and achieve, despite their parents and families not engaging or partnering with the school:

> *It's probably just a rarity that you would have kids who buck the trend who are self-motivated and do everything on their own and it happens (Tavita)*

Tavita concluded that connecting with Pasifika families makes a huge difference but that there are some kids that can still succeed, it's just that working in partnership with Pasifika parents 'makes it so much easier'.

Summary

This chapter has presented and outlined the results from the data collected. The strategies and processes that secondary school senior and middle leaders put into practice in order to engage with Pasifika families were summarised as either formal or informal. The conditions that act as enablers and barriers for leaders when engaging with Pasifika families were identified. Finally, the perceptions of the impact of engaging with Pasifika families on student outcomes were examined. The following chapter will discuss these findings and will analyse the results in relation to the existing literature.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

Introduction

This chapter critically examines the findings from the research data in an attempt to move beyond the results and existing literature to address the central aims of this study. To begin, a recap of the research questions is outlined, followed by a summary of the key findings. The results are then examined according to the aims of this study and in relation to literature and existing research. This chapter concludes by integrating the significant themes to present a model that summarises the importance of this research as a contribution to the existing literature on engaging with Pasifika parents and families.

Recap

The central aims of this research were:

1. To identify and critically examine secondary school leadership practices in engaging with Pasifika communities; and

2. To explore leaders' perceptions of the impact of engaging with Pasifika communities on Pasifika student achievement outcomes.

These aims framed the three focus questions that formed the basis of the talanoa focus group discussions:

i.   What leadership strategies and processes do secondary school educational leaders put into practice in order to engage with their Pasifika families and communities?

ii.   What enablers and barriers do leaders experience in engaging with Pasifika families and communities?

iii. What are school leaders' perceptions of the impact of engaging with Pasifika families on student achievement outcomes?

Summary of findings

The key finding in relation to Question One is that there are both formal and informal strategies and processes when engaging with Pasifika families. Based on discussions in the talanoa focus groups, I have defined formal strategies as targeted, deliberate, planned and strategic efforts from educational leaders to work in partnership with Pasifika parents. Informal strategies were relaxed in their approach and were in a more familiar setting for these families. Formal strategies that were discussed included home-school partnership, although it was noted that this did not target Pasifika parents specifically and was instead a whole school approach to connecting with all parents. Organising and coordinating talanoa meetings specifically for Pasifika parents and families was a common practice. This was significant in that within the participant schools, it allowed parents the opportunity to converse in their native language. Other formal strategies included home visits and delegating Pasifika students to Pasifika staff to monitor and track

academic progress. Powerup Pasifika parents' group and Sunday lunch were two other formal strategies trialled within the research schools. In relation to informal strategies discussed by participants, engaging with Pasifika families during Polyfest was common to all four participant schools. Involving church ministers and connecting with parents at rugby games were other examples of informal strategies highlighted by participants.

In response to Question Two, the enablers that were identified by participants were the expert knowledge that teachers and leaders had of the Pasifika languages and culture. Having teaching staff that are of Pasifika descent and who have standing in the community was also acknowledged as supporting leaders when engaging with Pasifika families and communities. Of the barriers that were identified by the participants as an obstacle to engaging with Pasifika families, three barriers were prominent. The first was that of working parents and challenges around availability of parents to engage with the school. Secondly, church was considered as a barrier by the participants because of the priority given to church by parents and families. This meant that parents were sometimes unavailable for meetings and students were absent from school. The final barrier was parent perceptions in the form of understanding the education system, understanding the ability of their child and questioning whether there was anything they could do to support their child's education because this was the school's job.

On the question of what participants' perceptions were of the impact of engaging with Pasifika families and communities on student achievement outcomes, this study found that working in partnership with Pasifika families had a noticeably positive impact on student outcomes. Student behaviour improved and parents were empowered to support their children during their learning journey. In contrast, one of the participants also considered that students can succeed despite their parents and families not engaging with the school; however, it was easier for all concerned if students, parents and teachers were all working together in partnership to support the educational journey of students.

Secondary school leadership practices

This section will combine the findings from Question One and Two and discuss these in relation to the literature so as to address the first aim of this study which was to identify and critically examine secondary school leadership practices. To do this, three central themes will be explored based on the key findings, and will be discussed in light of the literature reviewed. The first is the drive by Pasifika senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers to connect with Pasifika families. The second theme is the place of Polyfest in relation to the value placed on culture and identity by Pasifika families. The final theme considers the position of church when leaders attempt to engage with Pasifika parents and families.

Drive by Pasifika staff

The results of this study indicated that secondary school leadership practices in engaging with Pasifika families and communities were largely driven by senior leaders, middle leaders and teaching staff of Pasifika descent. The formal process of talanoa community meetings held in all four schools was initiated and coordinated by Pasifika staff, sometimes outside of their role and responsibilities. Enablers which supported the research participants in their engagement with Pasifika families included knowledge of the Pasifika language and culture, and teachers' or school leaders' standing within the community. The participants in this study demonstrated an unwavering passion for the education of Pasifika students because of their own Pasifika heritage but, even more importantly they believed that by working in partnership with Pasifika families, Pasifika students had a greater chance at excelling in their academic studies. These leaders exemplified the four leadership qualities in the Educational Leadership Model (ELM) as illustrated in Chapter Two. These qualities were "manaakitanga – leading with moral purpose; pono – having self-belief; ako – being a learner; and awhinatanga – guiding and supporting" (Ministry of Education, 2012a, p. 19). Furthermore, the participants in this research, through their talanoa meetings, were addressing the Pasifika Education Plan's (PEP) focus on "more informed and demanding parents, families and communities supporting and championing their children's learning and achievement" (Ministry of Education, 2012b, p. 5). Whether they were aware of this or not did not surface in the discussions; however, the leaders' determination to engage with Pasifika families was clearly evident.

Participants in research conducted by Taleni et al. (2017) commented that principals led the way in which both staff and school engaged with families and communities for their connection in the learning and educational achievement of their children. The findings of this current study differ in that no principals were involved as participants and, in the participating research schools, engaging with families and communities was led by senior and middle leaders of Pasifika descent. Mara (1998) describes the unique role of Pasifika teachers as 'gatekeepers'. Participants in this research also considered that non-Pasifika fronting the engagement with Pasifika parents, must understand and be willing to learn. The support of the principal and senior leaders was also highlighted as essential for Pasifika leaders to engage with parents and families. This supports the findings of Bull et al. (2008) and Mutch and Collins (2012) who state that school leadership is a key contributing factor enabling schools to develop and implement a consistent vision and approach to home-school partnership.

Although a strong finding in this research was the importance of leaders' and teachers' expert knowledge of the Pasifika language and culture, a contradictory discovery was that for some New Zealand-born Pasifika teachers, this was in fact a challenge for them in engaging with Pasifika

families due to their lack of language and cultural knowledge. This is the reality for many Pasifika teachers as well as students. It adds to the complexities of Pasifika identity and highlights the importance of maintaining the Pasifika languages for these migrant groups. Siteine (2010) and Hunter et al. (2016) explore the importance of the Pasifika language in relation to students and their identity. Mila-Schaaf and Robinson (2010) also note the importance of maintaining the Pasifika language as a form of cultural capital for students. The same concept can be applied to Pasifika leaders and teachers who may see their lack of cultural capital as a barrier to engaging with Pasifika families. In the literature reviewed, this was a challenge presented in relation to Pasifika students and one that has yet to be explored in the context of Pasifika teachers. In the current study, some of the participants' perceived lack of cultural capital and knowledge of the Pasifika language also suggests that while Pasifika peoples are easily grouped in one collective umbrella of Pasifika, it does not acknowledge or attempt to understand and value the multiple diversities within. In other words, for some Pasifika leaders and teachers including participants in the current study, cultural capital and knowledge of the Pasifika language is problematic particularly when these seem to be accepted as key identifiers of Pasifika identity. Ferguson et al. (2008) make a valid point in relation to Pasifika learners by warning that "unquestioningly categorising Pasifika learners as a homogenous group with similar experiences" (p. 25) could present problems. This concept could also apply to Pasifika leaders and teachers and is a tension that is not considered in literature explored. However, what continues to be emphasised in educational research about Pasifika students and families is the connection between home, school and community.

At the core of these findings is the importance of relationships with students, families and the community. Hawk et al. (2002) highlight in their research findings just how important the relationships between teachers and Pasifika students are. Chapter Two outlined the seven key concepts that support effective principal leadership for Pasifika students as found by Taleni et al. (2017). The first of these key aspects is building dynamic relationships with students and families. Taleni et al. (2017) stated that principals "referred to knowing their students and families as critical to building effective relationships" (p. 20). The findings from the current study also recognised that building networks and positive relationships within the community, is crucial to having the necessary support to develop successful relationships.

The literature reviewed in Chapter Two revealed that there was very little known about the impact of both Pasifika educational leaders and teachers on the achievement of Pasifika students in schools. While there is an increasing body of literature and research on culturally responsive leadership practice and culturally responsive pedagogy, this study has found that Pasifika school leaders and teachers indirectly exhibit notions of culturally responsive practice and they are often the leader or teacher that champions engagement with Pasifika students and families in their

schools. Siope (2013) promotes a culturally responsive pedagogy of relations as an important platform for beginning to shift the mindset of society in order to address some of the inequalities that exist in education today. Chu et al. (2013) and Ferguson et al. (2008) outline the importance of culturally responsive practice in including the use of languages, culturally appropriate teaching practice and providing an inclusive learning environment. This same approach was applied by participants in the current study when engaging with Pasifika parents and families. Mugisha (2013) suggested that school leaders would not meet instructional goals for "socio-culturally disadvantaged students without successfully rallying for support and engaging various agents in the school community such as teachers, parents, cultural leaders and policy makers" (p. 14). In this sense, for leaders who are culturally responsive in their leadership practices, engaging with Pasifika families and communities is crucial to the successful development of this relationship. What is even more important is that in the same way teachers are encouraged to be culturally responsive in the classroom, secondary school leaders - both Pasifika and non-Pasifika - must consider and reflect on strategies and processes used to engage with Pasifika families and ensure that a culturally responsive environment is created where Pasifika identity is both "valid and valued" (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014, p. 875). Although leaders of Pasifika heritage are underrepresented in schools, this study demonstrates that both Pasifika leaders and teachers are a great resource for secondary schools in leading the engagement with Pasifika families and communities.

Culture and identity

Pasifika families have been migrating to New Zealand for more than a hundred years and for many, the Pacific Islands are no longer regarded as home (Coxon et al., 2002). Therefore, maintaining the culture and identity of Pasifika people is of the utmost importance. Culture and identity are important contributing factors for all students and their learning journey, as research continues to illustrate that students who are firm in their identity and culture progress to achieve and succeed in their education (Alton-Lee, 2007; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014; Samu, 2007). This is important in the context of this research because one of the informal processes that was a key factor for all four participant schools in this research was Polyfest. Polyfest is the Auckland secondary schools Polynesian festival competition, celebrating Pasifika culture, language and identity through dance. All research participants spoke of the high level of engagement from Pasifika parents and families during preparations for Polyfest. This finding suggests that Pasifika parents and families value schools as institutions where culture and identity are encouraged and nurtured, as well as centres of learning and academic achievement because of their greater sense of engagement. However, upon reflecting on this finding and trying to understand why this heightened level of engagement by Pasifika parents exists during Polyfest, two key factors emerge which were also prevalent in the research findings.

The first factor to consider is that Pasifika parents are more engaged during Polyfest because it is an opportunity for them to support their child in showcasing their culture and identity within the school setting. The current study highlights that this is even more crucial considering the migrant identity of Pasifika peoples'. This result supports relevant literature that emphasises the need for schools to celebrate and recognise Pasifika cultures and identities (Cooper & Hedges, 2014; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014; Mila-Schaaf & Robinson, 2010; Samu, 2016). However, research has not yet explored the celebration of Pasifika culture at schools as a pathway to engaging with Pasifika families. Outside of Polyfest, traditional methods of engagement and more formalised processes such as home-school partnership do not appear to present Pasifika parents with the same opportunity to acknowledge their heritage.

The second factor that must be considered is the influence of Pasifika parent perceptions on their ability to engage with schools. On the one hand, Pasifika parent perceptions were identified as barriers for school leaders in creating an effective partnership. On the other hand, the heightened engagement with Pasifika families during Polyfest suggests that Pasifika parents will engage when they feel that they have the capacity and the knowledge to contribute. This notion is also supported in evidence uncovered by Gorinski (2005) in the Pacific Island Schools Community Parent Liaison (PISCPL) case study where parent involvement as tutors in educational activities created a positive impact on Pasifika students. Additionally, Best and Dunlap (2012) promote meaningful rather than token engagement while Robinson et al. (2009) suggest that some kinds of engagement are counterproductive. These kinds of engagement can often be perceived as fostering engagement but in practice can detract from the core purpose of partnership which is the focus on supporting the academic achievement of students. The onus then is on the school and the leaders tasked with the responsibility to engage with Pasifika parents and families to create an environment that celebrates culture and identity while also educating and empowering parents to partner with the school and their child in order to improve their chances of succeeding. In outlining strategies that support home-school engagement with Pasifika parents, Gorinski and Fraser (2006) suggest that workshops would provide specific opportunities for parents to learn new knowledge and skills that would allow them to become more active in their child's education. Participants in this study also favoured this style of engaging with Pasifika parents and acknowledged that it was invaluable to all concerned - the school, the student and the parents - because in the end, everyone benefited. Where this research differs from that of Gorinski and Fraser (2006) is that workshops conducted by participants in this study were held in the Pasifika language which removed the barrier of "first language needs" (p. 24).

Church

One of the noteworthy findings from this study was the role of the church community in Pasifika families. In the current study, this was a contradictory result in that on the one hand, church

ministers from the local community were targeted as a strategy to engaging with Pasifika families. This result aligns with the findings of Chu et al. (2013), the Education Review Office (2012, 2013) and Gorinski and Fraser (2006). On the other hand, two of the research schools considered church as a barrier for them when attempting to engage with Pasifika families. Biddulph et al. (2003), Brown et al. (2008) and Fletcher et al. (2009) considered church as playing an important and central role in the Pasifika community. Several questions arise from this finding that are important to evaluating leadership practices in engaging with Pasifika families. Literature recognises that church and spirituality is a key factor in the lives of Pasifika peoples' (Samu, 2016) and that church is an area in need of further investigation as to the impact of educationally focussed church liaison activities in school settings (Chu et al., 2013). In an extension of Pasifika families' strong association with church, Taleni et al. (2017) highlights fa'aleagaga, or spirituality, as one of the key traditional Pasifika leadership qualities embedded within cultural values. The current study found that for some leaders, church was a barrier in engaging with Pasifika families. Clearly, Pasifika parents place prominence on church and spirituality, and the challenge is how educational leaders can come to respond and address the complexities of this connection with church in order to engage more fully with Pasifika families. Although writing in a tertiary context, Samu (2007) presents a worthy solution when she states that "we must build on and contextualise existing strengths" (p. 148). In other words, we need to reach out and make new connections with church communities or view existing partnerships with church communities as a strength so as to build on this relationship and better support Pasifika students and their families. By understanding and embracing the Pasifika worldview as described by Tamasese Ta'isi Efi (2007), and illustrated by Fairbairn-Dunlop (2018) in Chapter Three, secondary school leaders might be able to build on the strong connection that Pasifika parents and families have with church and their spirituality in order to engage effectively for the benefit of Pasifika students. This Pasifika worldview incorporates the spiritual alongside people and the land, and needs to be considered by school leaders as a necessary pathway for engaging with Pasifika parents and families. By being aware of the Pasifika worldview and carefully considering the spiritual connection of Pasifika peoples, school leaders can create an environment that recognizes the importance of church and spirituality as experienced by Pasifika communities.

Secondary school leaders' perceptions

This section will explore the leaders' perceptions of the impact of engaging with Pasifika families and communities on Pasifika student outcomes in light of the literature reviewed.

Literature and research strongly suggests that effective engagement with Pasifika parents and families can improve achievement outcomes of Pasifika students (Coxon et al., 2002; Education Review Office, 2010; Gorinski & Fraser, 2006; Paulsen, 2016). Findings in this study

overwhelmingly support this and indicate that working in partnership with Pasifika families has a large positive impact on student outcomes. Student behaviour improved and parents were empowered to support their children during their educational journey. The fifth concept outlined by Taleni et al. (2017) as one of the key supports that scaffold the foundation for effective principalship is that of creating robust community engagement. Taleni et al. (2017) assert that "the power of a positive connection between school and community is undeniable and needs to be initiated by school leaders" (p. 25). Participants in the current study highlighted that the partnership helped to facilitate the potential of Pasifika learners and that evidence can be found in past Pasifika students who have completed secondary school, and made their families and communities proud by continuing further to undertake tertiary study. This finding is reflected in the research of Mutch and Collins (2012) when they suggest that it is important for schools to foster relationships with parents and families of their students and for parents, families and communities to engage in school activities because "not only does it influence student performance and well-being, it enhances family and community cohesiveness and identity" (p. 175).

In contrast, one participant in this research also considered that students could succeed despite their parents and families not engaging with the school; however, it was easier for all concerned if students, parents and teachers were all working together in partnership to support the educational journey of students. Another participant reflected on cases where parent and family engagement hindered the potential of the student because of parent perceptions in regards to their child's ability or not understanding the way in which the education system functions. These comments support the findings of Hunter et al. (2016) who state that "there were some circumstances described in the studies which excluded some families from involvement in their children's education" (p. 204). Some of the circumstances revealed in the study conducted by Hunter et al. (2016) were related to language difficulties, economic circumstances and also a lack of knowledge of the New Zealand education system. The current study also considered family matters and issues as a barrier in engaging with Pasifika students in the form of students being absent from school because of a family bereavement. In findings discussed by Hunter et al. (2016), participants demonstrated a similar concern about Pasifika students being able to balance family and school needs and suggested that teachers needed to understand the commitment and responsibility Pasifika students have to their family. Teachers who "demonstrated respect for the world they inhabited, were better able to support them" (Hunter et al., 2016, p. 204). A point of difference in the current research can be found in the way in which participants spoke about their Pasifika students. One participant shared that she treated the students as if they were her own. In other words, participants genuinely took ownership and personalised relationships with their Pasifika students by engaging with them as if they were their own children. This assisted and

supported their ability to engage with both Pasifika students and parents to improve student outcomes.

Integrating of themes

Engaging with Pasifika families is not as straightforward and simple as the *Pasifika Education Plan* (Ministry of Education, 2012b) implies. There are a multitude of factors that must be considered by educational leaders when initiating and developing strategies and processes for connecting with these parents, families and communities. The secondary school leaders' practices and perceptions in engaging with Pasifika families and communities uncovered in this study have highlighted that, in order to partner effectively with Pasifika parents, educational leaders must understand and value three key aspects. These key aspects incorporate the themes discussed in this chapter and are illustrated in Figure 5.1. This model summarises the key findings from this research and literature reviewed in addressing the aims of the current study.
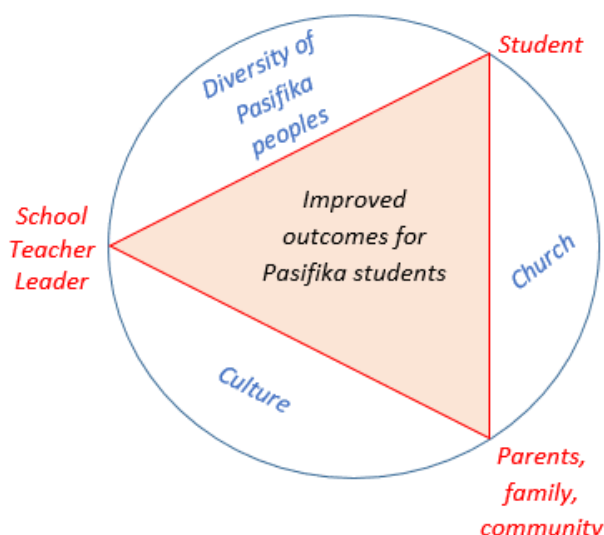

Figure 5. 1 E so'o le fau i le fau

This model is entitled "E so'o le fau i le fau". This is a Samoan proverb which highlights that unity is strength. Fau is the Samoan word for hibiscus fibres. It has many uses in everyday Samoan life and requires careful processing from its original plant state to its use as a common material. The analogy of "e so'o le fau i le fau" refers to the way in which fau is weaved and how it is strongest when it is bound together. The careful processing and the weaving are conditions which are necessary in order for the fau to be robust in their connection. In this model, the fau represents the 'holy trinity' of the student, parents and teacher as the central functioning partnership in the three-way triangle, and at the core of this partnership is the focus on improving outcomes for Pasifika students. The surrounding circle that supports the partnership illustrates the careful processing and the weaving which are necessary for the fau to be strong in their connection. These are the conditions which leaders must understand and value in order for the partnership to be

effective in its engagement. The findings in this research has suggested that there are three conditions and key aspects. These are discussed below.

The first key aspect in this model is the diversity of Pasifika people. Pasifika peoples are a complex multi-ethnic diverse group that collectively contain many different languages, cultures, ethnicities, identities and modes of being. To add to this already complex grouping is the fact that more Pasifika people are born in New Zealand then in the Pacific Islands. Therefore, Pasifika are no longer considered to be a migrant group (Siataga, 2011). The co-construction of identity for this dynamic group comes with tensions and challenges associated with the shift in belonging and a search for both validation and affirmation.

An area that has yet to be discovered in educational literature and research in relation to its potential to significantly impact this particular aspect, is the role of Pasifika leaders and teachers in schools. Pasifika leaders and teachers are able to understand the challenges and complexities faced by Pasifika students and have the capacity to fill this gap. Seven out of eight participants in this study were of Pasifika descent and engaged with Pasifika families and communities as part of their role responsibility, but moreso out of their loyalty and desire to see Pasifika students succeed. Non-Pasifika leaders and teachers can come to understand and value the complexity of Pasifika identity in order to relate more fully to their Pasifika students by exploring notions of culturally responsive pedagogy and culturally responsive leadership as outlined by Hawk et al. (2002), Hunter et al. (2016), Mugisha (2013), Siope (2013) and Taleni et al. (2017).

The second key aspect in this model is culture. In Chapter Two, 'culture' as defined by Voi (2000), was discussed and is worth highlighting here. Voi (2000) suggested that "culture comprises the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, intellectual and emotional features that characterise a society or a social group. It includes not only the arts and letters but also modes of life, fundamental rights of human beings, value systems, tradition and beliefs" (p. 217). When attempting to engage with Pasifika families and communities, secondary school leaders must carefully consider culture in two different forms. To start with, leaders and teachers must acknowledge and reflect regularly on the culture of Pasifika parents and families in relation to the set of unique traditions, beliefs and customs as well as the language and identity of such a diverse group. Participants in the current study commented about respecting the space between teachers and Pasifika parents, and this is an example of such a custom. Knowledge and understanding of Pasifika culture is also highlighted in the work of Allen et al. (2009), Hunter et al. (2016), and Taleni et al. (2017). The second form of culture that school leaders must be aware of is the culture of the school in relation to the environment created and the nature with which Pasifika parents and families are invited and encouraged to be a part of the school community. Establishing a culture within the school for Pasifika parents and families to feel welcome and accepted is crucial

to sustained and effective engagement. As outlined in the findings of this research through the enablers and both formal and informal processes, culture is a significant contributing factor.

The third key aspect in this model that secondary school leaders need to understand when reflecting and initiating strategies to engage with Pasifika families and communities is the prominence placed on church and spirituality. The participants in the current research considered involving church ministers as a strategy to engaging with Pasifika families but church as a barrier was also considered. However, by employing a Pasifika worldview as outlined by Fairbairn-Dunlop (2018) and Tamasese Ta'isi Efi (2007), school leaders can better understand the underlying prominence placed on church. Being aware of the value placed on spirituality is the beginning to viewing church as a useful tool to engaging effectively with Pasifika parents, families and communities.

The proposed model *e so'o le fau i le fau* depicted in Figure 5.1 provides a visual understanding of how the diversity of Pasifika peoples, culture and church are necessary to support student, school and home partnership in Pasifika education. The secondary school leaders' perceptions in this research largely supported the assumption that engaging with Pasifika families and communities improve student outcomes and this is at the centre of the model proposed.

Summary

Chapter Five has critically examined the secondary school leaders' practices and perceptions as identified in this research, in relation to the literature discussed in Chapter Two. The three themes that were explored to address the first aim of this research was the drive by Pasifika staff; culture and identity; and church. The participants' perceptions of the impact of engagement with Pasifika families on student outcomes were outlined. Finally, in incorporating the key findings of this research in relation to the literature reviewed and in focussing on the aims, a model was presented to illustrate the aspects that are crucial for secondary school leaders to understand and value when engaging with Pasifika families. The chapter that follows will bring this research to a close by clarifying the conclusions of this study, make recommendations for future practice and explore the strengths and limitations before concluding with suggested areas for further research.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

"O le tele o sulu e maua ai figota"

To conclude, Chapter Six will summarise the overall research by firstly presenting a brief overview of the research aims before examining the contribution to knowledge by discussing the implications of the findings from this study. Secondly, recommendations on how the key findings from this study can be applied in practice will be explored and a review of the strengths and limitations of the current research are considered. Finally, suggestions will be made for areas of further research.

Overview of the research

This research was framed by two aims. The first was to identify and critically examine secondary school leadership practices in engaging with Pasifika families and communities. The second aim was to explore leaders' perceptions of the impact of engaging with Pasifika families and communities on the achievement outcomes of Pasifika students. This study employed a qualitative approach that was placed within the interpretive paradigm but with a Pasifika worldview. Talanoa focus groups were held in four different secondary schools in Auckland that have at least 75% Pasifika students in their student population. In each talanoa focus group there were two senior or middle leaders. Although participants were not required to be of Pasifika descent, seven out of the eight participants that agreed to participate in this research identified as Pasifika. There were three central questions that formed the discussions in the talanoa focus groups. The following section will examine the conclusions that can be drawn from this research based on the two aims that shaped this study.

Conclusions

To identify and critically examine secondary school leadership practices in engaging with Pasifika families and communities.

There were two research questions in which responses were integrated to address this aim. These questions were:

1. What leadership strategies and processes do secondary school educational leaders put into practice in order to engage with their Pasifika families and communities?

2. What enablers and barriers do leaders experience in engaging with Pasifika families and communities?

This research identified that strategies and processes put into practice to engage with Pasifika families were either formal or informal in their approach. The findings highlighted that there was considerable effort and passion exerted by Pasifika leaders and teachers in coordinating strategies to work in partnership with Pasifika families in order to influence student outcomes. This study

has raised important questions about culture and identity in relation to the level of engagement from Pasifika parents. The results also conclude that church plays a significant role in the lives of Pasifika families and that the value placed on church is important for educational leaders to understand, so as to engage more fully with Pasifika communities.

The findings from this research suggest that engagement with Pasifika families in the participant schools is largely driven by staff of Pasifika descent. Although Taleni et al. (2017) suggest that the responsibility of engaging with Pasifika families belongs to school principals and leaders, and that in order for this partnership to be effective it must be developed and part of the central focus for the school (Bull et al., 2008; Mutch & Collins, 2012), this research concludes that Pasifika school leaders and teachers are driving the partnership with Pasifika parents in their schools. An additional conclusion is that this work is largely dependent on Pasifika staff and that this is a responsibility that needs to be extended to all staff or resourced more adequately in secondary schools.

In relation to culture and identity, the results of this research complement those of earlier studies in relation to the factors that contribute to setting the foundation for Pasifika students to excel (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014; Samu, 2007). The findings of this research provide insight into how cultural events like Polyfest are utilised by schools as opportunities to engage with Pasifika families which in turn suggests that Pasifika parents value the development of culture and identity for their children at school. The importance of schools as environments that nurture and foster both culture and identity of all students is emphasised further in this study. This research found that this was of particular significance in the context of New Zealand-born Pasifika students.

The current data highlight the importance of church for Pasifika families. This finding implies that there is a significant relationship between Pasifika families and church or their spirituality that must be carefully considered by school leaders when engaging with Pasifika parents and communities. This particular finding is covered briefly by Brown et al. (2008) and Taleni et al. (2017) and is an area that has yet to be fully utilised in the participant schools. Furthermore, this result gives emphasis to the spiritual connection and faith of Pasifika people and the need for school leaders to understand this connection if they are to effectively engage with Pasifika families.

To explore leaders' perceptions of the impact of engaging with Pasifika communities on Pasifika student achievement outcomes.

The principal theoretical implication of this study is that engaging with Pasifika families and communities has a largely positive impact on student outcomes. The current study found that student behaviour improved and parents were empowered to support their children during their

educational learning journey. The literature supports this finding and recognises that the achievement outcomes of Pasifika students can improve significantly with effective partnership between the school and Pasifika parents (Coxon et al., 2002; Education Review Office, 2010; Gorinski & Fraser, 2006; Paulsen, 2016). This study has also raised important questions about the nature of Pasifika families who do not engage with the school and suggest that the responsibility to pursue this partnership, lies with the school leaders. Therefore, this research aligns with the relevant literature to conclude that it is crucial that school's make every effort to partner with Pasifika parents in order for Pasifika students to realise their potential (Hunter et al., 2016).

Overall, this study strengthens the idea that in order for schools to engage effectively with Pasifika families and communities, three key aspects as proposed in the "*e so'o le fau i le fau*" model, must be understood and valued. These aspects are significant conditions that will support and enable the partnership between home and school to be successful and have been integrated from the central findings of this study within existing literature. The following section outlines recommendations and considers the strengths and limitations of this study before suggesting areas for further research.

Recommendations

Recommendation one

As New Zealand continues to become an increasingly diverse nation with people identifying with multiple ethnicities, schools must respond by being culturally responsive both in teaching practice and more specifically in engaging with families. Creating this environment is the responsibility of the school principal and both senior and middle leaders. In the case of Pasifika teachers, students and parents, I recommend that schools continue to utilise leaders and teachers of Pasifika descent to support and assist the school in forming an effective partnership with Pasifika students, parents, families and communities. Pasifika leaders and teachers can also support and assist the school through mentoring other teachers to develop culturally responsive practice for the teaching of Pasifika students, as well as supporting school-wide professional development in this area. Where schools have yet to formalise strategies and processes for engaging with Pasifika families and communities, Pasifika leaders and teachers can help to inform and suggest ways in which schools can create an environment that is inclusive of all Pasifika students, parents, families and communities.

Recommendation two

As with many initiatives, strategies and processes implemented in schools it is essential for the success of the strategy in meeting and achieving its aims, to regularly review, reflect and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses. This is also crucial for effective engagement with Pasifika families

and communities, particularly with the changes and shifts in the education of students in New Zealand. A recommendation from this research, therefore, is that secondary school leaders incorporate strategies to engage with Pasifika families in formulating their annual plan or strategic plan, and also formalise processes of evaluation to ensure that areas for improvement are addressed and areas of strength are extended. A valid suggestion presented by participants in this study is the value of parent voice in dictating how schools foster the relationship and partnership between home and school. If Pasifika parents, families and communities can contribute by advising schools on how the engagement between home and school can be purposeful, then the partnership would be more informed and successful.

Strengths and limitations of the study

Initially the participants in this study were not required to be of Pasifika descent. The fact that seven out of eight of the participants were Pasifika was a major strength of this study. However, this could also be considered a limitation in that the perspectives discussed in this research were mostly through a Pasifika lens which includes my own as the primary researcher. This could have skewed the analysis of the data collected. It could also be considered as self-theorising and an influence on the opinions, beliefs and perspectives shared by participants.

The participants of this study were all senior and middle leaders who were very experienced in their roles and the strategies they employed to engage with Pasifika families. This was a strength of the current research in that the leaders demonstrated an unwavering commitment and dedication to working in partnership with Pasifika families. Conversely, this could also be considered as a limitation in the context of this study. Given the focus on Pasifika home and school partnership, this research is limited in that it has not explored the perspective of parents and families in examining effective engagement. This is an area that has yet to be investigated, but this is necessary in providing a full evaluation and a broader, more accurate view of successful home-school partnership for Pasifika communities.

This research was relatively small in sample size with four participant schools and eight participants in total. The limited participant pool was necessary for this dissertation given the timeframe; however, it is only a small snapshot of the ways in which school leaders engage with Pasifika families and communities. The findings represent the perceptions of the participants of this study and may not be representative of all senior or middle leaders. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the results will be transferrable to other school settings and can act as a starting point for leaders in reflecting on how they engage with Pasifika families.

Further research

While this research has concluded that leaders' perceptions of the impact of engaging with Pasifika families and communities was that it significantly improves student outcomes, further research should be undertaken to explore the impact of Pasifika teachers on improving the outcomes of Pasifika students. Initially it was not the intention of this research to explore the practices and perceptions of Pasifika senior and middle leaders. However, in doing so I have discovered that this is an area that is missing from literature both as the researcher and the researched. Given the widespread awareness of Pasifika student underachievement in schools and the *Pasifika Education Plan's* focus on engagement and participation (Ministry of Education, 2012b), Pasifika leaders and teachers have the capacity to make a significant contribution to the growing body of knowledge on addressing the disparity of achievement for Pasifika students.

Final conclusion

Engaging with parents, families and communities is vital to the academic achievement of all students but in the case of Pasifika parents and families, this partnership is even more crucial given the complexities of Pasifika identity. This research has acknowledged the role of senior and middle leaders in schools and, even more specifically, the place of Pasifika leaders and teachers in secondary schools in attempts to engage with Pasifika families and communities. The *'e so'o le fau i le fau'* model has been presented as a suggested framework for leaders as they initiate and form a partnership with Pasifika parents. As well as highlighting the challenges faced by Pasifika peoples', this model also considers the role of culture, identity and church within Pasifika families as ways for school leaders to understand and value the relationship between home and school. This model adds to the dearth of knowledge on successful home-school partnership for Pasifika families at secondary school level specifically.

The aim of this study was to identify and critically examine secondary school leadership practices in engaging with Pasifika families and to explore leaders' perceptions of the impact of engaging with Pasifika communities on student achievement outcomes. The Samoan proverb "*o le tele o sulu e maua ai figota*" metaphorically depicts the importance of support and guidance through engagement and partnership. In conclusion, this research recognizes the importance of engaging with Pasifika families in order to improve Pasifika student outcomes and acknowledges that while it is a task that is not easily addressed with one straightforward strategy, with the combined 'light' of school leaders, teachers, parents, families and communities: Pasifika students can thrive.

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Glossary – Abbreviations

BES	Best evidence synthesis
BOT	Board of Trustees
ECE	Early childhood education
ELM	Educational leadership model
ERO	Education review office
KLP	Kiwi leadership for principals
MOE	Ministry of Education
NCEA	National Certificate of Education Achievement
NZCER	New Zealand Council for Educational research
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
PEP	Pasifika Education Plan
PI	Pacific Islands
PISCPL	Pacific Islands School Community Parent liaison
SLT	Senior leadership team
UE	University entrance

Appendices

Appendix A: Literature review – Keyword search terms

Theme	Keywords
Educational leadership	Educational Administration
	Education Management
	Instructional leadership
Pasifika students	Pacific students
	Pacific Island students
	Pasefika students
	Ethnic minority
	Diverse students
Home-school partnership	Academic counselling
	Academic

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

3 May 2018

Project Title

Engaging with Pasifika communities: Secondary school leaders' practices

An Invitation

Talofa lava! My name is Ronise Laumemea and as part of my dissertation research for the Masters in Educational Leadership, I would like to invite you to participate in a focus group. This focus group will discuss and share experiences of how schools' engage with Pasifika families and communities.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to explore leaders' perceptions of their current schools' practice in engaging with Pasifika families and communities in order to improve student outcomes.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

I obtained your email contact through your school Principal and you were invited to participate in this research because you meet the following criteria:

- A Middle or Senior leader in Auckland

- From a secondary school

- With 75% or more Pasifika students

- With at least 2 years' leadership experience

- Available and willing to participate

- How do I agree to participate in this research?

You will need to complete the consent form that is attached. Alternatively, a consent form will be provided immediately prior to the focus group. Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?

The research project will be in the form of a talanoa focus group. Three senior or middle leaders from your school and myself will sit down in a mutually agreed meeting place and discuss the strategies and processes that are in place at your school to engage effectively with Pasifika families and communities in order to support students and improve achievement outcomes. The talanoa focus group will initially begin with questions that I have set and participants are invited to share their experiences and knowledge. The talanoa focus group session will be audio recorded for the purpose of transcription and research analysis.

What are the discomforts and risks?

It is not anticipated that there be any discomfort and/or risk experienced by you as a participant.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

If you are uncomfortable during the focus group and/or would like to refrain from responding to questions or contributing to the discussion, participants are free to do so.

What are the benefits?

It is hoped that you will benefit from participating in this focus group through open reflection and discussion about how schools engage with Pasifika communities. By participating in this research, you will be given the opportunity to reflect and discuss strategies and processes in your current school's practice when engaging with Pasifika families and communities.

The potential benefits for myself will include developing knowledge and a greater understanding of practices that are effective in secondary schools when engaging with Pasifika families and communities. I hope to be able to put into practice some of the findings from this research to help guide future practice and meet targets and goals in schools for effectively engaging Pasifika families and communities to improve student outcomes. Finally, the benefit for me will be that I will complete my Master of Educational Leadership degree.

It is hoped that the research findings will be beneficial to the wider community by being transferable and applicable to other secondary schools. Schools may be able to use the findings from this research to improve their own leadership practices' in engaging with Pasifika families and communities. It is important that secondary school leaders reflect and consider how they engage with Pasifika families and communities and this research may support them in doing so.

How will my privacy be protected?

To ensure that privacy is protected, pseudonyms will be used for all participants in the final dissertation and participating schools will be referred to in a generic way. Anonymity cannot be guaranteed given the small pool of potential participants however, any information disclosed in the research that is likely to identify participants or participating schools will be omitted.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There is no cost to participate in this research; however, potential participants will be using their time and availability to contribute to this research study.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Potential participants are given one week to consider this invitation.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Yes – upon completion of this research, I can email participants with a summary of the findings from this research. Information will also be provided on how you can access the full dissertation.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Alison Smith alison.smith@aut.ac.nz   921 9999 ext. 7363

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz   921 9999 ext. 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Ronise Laumemea ronise.helen@gmail.com (021) xxx xxxx

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Alison Smith alison.smith@aut.ac.nz +64 9 921 9999 ext. 7363

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 3rd May 2018, AUTEC Reference number 18/137

Appendix C: Consent Form

Consent Form

Project title: **Engaging with Pasifika communities: Secondary school leaders' practices**

Project Supervisor: **Alison Smith**

Researcher: **Ronise Laumemea**

○ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 3 May 2018.

○ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

○ I understand that the identity of my fellow participants and our discussions in the focus group is confidential to the group and I agree to keep this information confidential.

○ I understand that notes will be taken during the focus group and that it will also be audio-taped and transcribed.

○ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.

○ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then, while it may not be possible to destroy all records of the focus group discussion of which I was part, I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.

○ I agree to take part in this research.

○ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes○   No○

Participant's signature: ……………………………………………………………………………………………….

Participant's name: …………………………………………………………………………………………………

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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………………………………………………………………………………………….

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 3ʳᵈ May 2018 AUTEC Reference number 18/137

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix D: Talanoa focus group questions

Indicative focus group questions

The research questions are:

1. What leadership strategies and processes do secondary school educational leaders put into practice in order to engage with their Pasifika families and communities?

   Probing questions:

   a. What are the current leadership strategies and processes that exist within your school to engage with your Pasifika families and communities?
   b. How does your school engage with your Pasifika families and communities?
   c. Is there anything more you can tell me about this matter?

2. What enablers and barriers do leaders experience in engaging with Pasifika communities?

   Probing questions:

   a. In your experience, what are some of the factors that enable or support your school leaders when engaging with your Pasifika families and communities?
   b. In your experience what are some of the barriers that exist for your school leaders when engaging with your Pasifika families and communities?
   c. Is there anything more you can tell me about this matter?

3. What are school leaders' perceptions of the impact of engaging with Pasifika communities on Pasifika students achievement outcomes?

   Probing questions:
   a. In your experience, how does engaging with Pasifika families and communities impact the achievement of the students?
   b. Is there anything more you can tell me about this matter?