

Pacific Nations Students in Primary Teacher Training

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Abstract:

This article is based on a study that investigated how Wellington College of Education staff can support Pacific nations students to complete primary teacher training successfully (Dickie, 2000). While the number of Pacific children in New Zealand primary schools is increasing significantly, and the community demands more Pacific nations teachers and more teaching in Pacific languages, the number of Pacific nations students entering primary teacher training is falling. This study explored the views of 21 Pacific nations students in the Bachelor of Education (Teaching) degree through a questionnaire and interviews. Participants valued peer support and group work, but difficulties due to cultural constraints hindered some from active participation in classes and from approaching lecturers for assistance. Some had difficulty with aspects of academic English. The study indicated the need for targeted support and a better understanding by staff of cultural differences.

The Pacific nations population in New Zealand is growing rapidly, and at present Pacific nations children form 7.8 percent of the school population between the ages of 5 and 12 years (Ministry of Education, 1999b). Sixty-seven percent of Pacific nations students in New Zealand are concentrated in the Auckland region and 16 percent in Wellington, which means that there are schools in these areas with very high proportions of these students. Of the total Pacific nations population in New Zealand, Samoans constitute the largest group, making up approximately half of this figure. Based on self-identification, in order of population size, the groups are Samoan, Cook Islands Māori, Tongan, Niuean, Tokelauan, and other Pacific nations groups. The current trend shows that the Pacific population in New Zealand is

growing 11 times faster than other population groups and is expected to double by 2031 (Statistics New Zealand, 1998, p. 138).

While some Pacific nations students are highly successful in the New Zealand education system, the majority do not succeed as well as their pakeha (New Zealanders of European ancestry) peers and the following evidence suggests that the education system is not adequately meeting their needs.

School success

Pacific nations people, along with Māori, are under-represented in secondary school examination success and tertiary achievement. For example, in 1997 five percent of Māori and five percent of Pacific nations students gained an A or B Bursary or National Certificate Level 3, compared with 21 percent for all students (Ministry of Education, 1999b). Only seven percent continue to university, compared with 21 percent of students from other ethnic groups (Ministry of Education, 1996).

Elley (1992) describes the Reading Literacy Study conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), which compared the results of reading achievement among 9 and 14 year-old students in thirty-two systems of education. The latest study began in 1988, and one finding in particular should be of great concern to New Zealand educators. Out of the thirty-two countries, New Zealand had the greatest gap in reading achievement, at both Year 5 and Year 10 levels, between the students who were learning in their home language at school and those who were not. Elley states that the group who were not learning in their own language at school were mostly Pacific Islanders.

Unemployment

One result of this educational underachievement is that Pacific nations people are over-represented (along with Māori) in the unemployment statistics. The 1998 Official Year Book (Statistics New Zealand, 1998) indicates that in 1997, the unemployment rate for pakeha was 4.7 percent, for Pacific nations 15.3 percent, and for Māori 16.9 percent. In comparison to other ethnic groups, Pacific youth have the highest unemployment rates, with approximately 33 percent of young people between the ages of 15 and 19 years being unemployed. When New Zealand was experiencing a shortage of labour during the 1960s and early 1970s, Pacific nations people had been actively recruited into

mainly low-skilled and low-waged jobs in the manufacturing industry. This left them in a vulnerable position when economic recession hit in the late 1980s, and many of these people lost their jobs (Krishnan, Schoeffel & Warren, 1994). The free market “revolution” begun by the Fourth Labour Government and continued by successive National and Coalition Governments has brought an extreme version of economic individualism, influenced strongly by Treasury and the Business Roundtable. The apparent benefits of the economic restructuring have not been equitably distributed. The greatest negative impact of unemployment and financial hardship has fallen on Māori, Pacific nations people, and working class families on low incomes or social security benefits (Shirley, 1994).

Current attempts to address equity issues

If New Zealand education is to provide equitable educational opportunities for children from other than the mainstream pakeha culture, then clearly there is a need to deliver the curriculum in ways which better suit those children. The New Zealand Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education, 1993), which prescribes learning programmes in primary and secondary schools, states that students whose mother tongue is a Pacific language will have the opportunity to develop and use their own language as an integral part of their schooling. Numerous reports also stress the need for more use of Pacific nations languages in New Zealand schools (Ministry of Education, 1995; Market Research Limited, 1995; Irwin, 1988; Ministry of Pacific Islands Affairs, 1993).

There is considerable support from the Pacific nations parents for their home languages to be used as languages of instruction in New Zealand schools. Some years ago, the Ministry of Education commissioned a survey (Market Research Limited, 1995) to discover how parents felt about their children learning in English or Pacific nations languages. The survey concluded that Pacific nations people had a strong desire for their children to learn and retain the positive values of their own culture while succeeding in an English-oriented school system. It would be to the children’s advantage if primary schools could utilise this strength in their first language. Of the parents surveyed, 43 percent supported learning in both their own language and in English at primary school level. Only 18 percent preferred English alone to be used, and one percent preferred mainly their own Pacific language. An important point for schools is that nearly three

quarters of the parents interviewed rated learning their own language and learning about their culture and values as very important.

Need for more Pacific nations teachers

Several reports stress the need for more Pacific nations teachers to be trained (Tongati’o, 1994; Ministry of Education, 1995; Ministry of Pacific Islands Affairs, 1993). The Ministry of Education’s strategic plan *Koe Ako ‘a e Kakai Pasifika, Pacific Islands Peoples’ Education in Aotearoa, New Zealand towards the Twenty-First Century* (Ministry of Education, 1996) was designed to raise the quality of education for Pacific nations people in New Zealand. It has among its goals an increase in the number of Pacific nations teachers and the incorporation of Pacific nations perspectives into the New Zealand curriculum. The plan states that Colleges of Education and other providers must be encouraged to increase the supply of Pacific nations teachers and teachers who can teach in bilingual programmes.

At present only a small number of teachers of Pacific nations background are working in New Zealand schools. The *Teacher Census: Preliminary Report* dated March, 1999 (Ministry of Education, 1999c), indicates that two percent of the primary teachers in New Zealand identify as having Pacific Islands background, with eight percent identifying as Māori. This is a considerable under-representation of each of these groups in relation to the current student population.

Equity issues in access to teacher education courses

It appears that at a time when there is a need for more Pacific nations and Māori teachers in New Zealand schools, the introduction of “pencil and paper” entry tests of competence in English and mathematics is having a detrimental effect on the number of Pacific nations and Māori students entering Wellington College of Education. From the beginning of 1998, minimum academic requirements for entry to teacher training at Wellington College of Education were raised when it began delivery of its Bachelor of Education (Teaching) degree. Although it was certainly not the intention of staff to deliberately exclude any group of students from success in completing courses, it appears as though entry criteria do in fact exclude Māori and Pacific nations applicants, and the course content, pedagogy and assessment may also discriminate against them. Table 1 indicates the reduction over four years in the participation rate of these students enrolled in primary teacher training courses at Wellington College of Education while Table 2 shows them

as a percentage of students who complete teacher training and graduate. The 1996, 1997 and 1998 statistics are from the 1998 *College Annual Report* (Wellington College of Education, 1999). The 1999 figures are calculated from Academic Registry records, Wellington College of Education.

Table 1 Participation rates for Pacific nations and Māori students in primary programmes

	1999 %	1998 %	1997 %	1996 %
Pacific nations	6.2	7.8	8.8	11.0
Māori	15.9	19.1	14.1	33.0

Table 2 Graduate profile: Pacific nations and Māori students as a percentage of primary graduates

	1999 %	1998 %	1997 %	1996 %
Pacific nations	3.9	7.9	5.3	8.0
Māori	9.8	18.2	10.1	34.0

A Research Project

Research questions

Pacific nations students at Wellington College of Education are a minority group in a setting which is dominated by majority group culture and pedagogy. This study sought to examine if and how the cultural values and practices of the majority group permeate the education system and disadvantage Pacific nations students. It investigated the difficulties they may face, the reasons for their success and the support they receive.

The main research question for the study was: *How can Wellington College of Education best support and assist Pacific nations students to complete primary teacher training successfully?* In order to answer this question, information was sought and categorised under the following six sub-questions.

- What are the strategies Pacific nations students have used to complete courses successfully?
- What are the difficulties within the College that Pacific nations students face in academic study?
- Are there factors outside the College which influence Pacific nations students' ability to succeed?
- In which aspects of study would Pacific nations students like to have assistance?
- What type of support would Pacific nations students prefer?
- To what extent have the indigenous knowledge and languages of the Pacific nations been incorporated into College courses, and to what extent will Pacific nations students use these in the classroom?

Methodology

Students who were enrolled in the Bachelor of Education (Teaching) programme at Wellington College of Education and who identified as being of Pacific nations background were invited to participate in the study. Twenty-one students agreed, coming from first, second and third year cohorts of the degree. The data were gathered through a questionnaire which was completed by all participants, and through a combination of individual and group interviews, each lasting approximately 50 minutes. The study adopted a critical theory perspective, as it sought to review and challenge some aspects of teaching and learning for Pacific nations students at the College, looking for solutions which might provide equitable opportunities for minority students who are not succeeding as well as mainstream students in the New Zealand education system.

The project could be described as having an element of action research as I was involving participants (to a limited extent) in finding solutions, to empower them in order to change the system. My intention was that the information generated by the study would provide the basis for a better understanding of the needs of the students, leading to a positive course of action by College staff. A case study approach offered the opportunity to involve a group of people to find solutions, in order to develop a better understanding of an educational programme. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered in this study, but the qualitative information was of particular significance in providing the "thick description" which allowed the

participants' voices to speak clearly for themselves, in order to meet the emancipatory intent of the project.

The 21 participants represented the island nations of Samoa, the Cook Islands, Tokelau, Fiji and Niue. Of these, 19 had attended school in New Zealand. Two thirds of them identified as Samoan, and more than half related strongly or very strongly to their ethnic background. Out of the total number, only two indicated that they were fluent in their Pacific language, with eighteen giving English as their first language. They brought a wide range of backgrounds to their College study, from those who might be considered to be ESOL learners to those who were similar to many pakeha students in their use of English, and in their learning needs.

The Major Findings

What strategies have Pacific nations students used to complete courses successfully?

(i) Seeking support from peers

This emerged as a key strategy for the Pacific nations students who participated in this study. A majority of students spontaneously mentioned an aspect of peer support as being a useful strategy to assist their own learning. They reported that they were encouraged during College courses to work co-operatively in order to share ideas on course requirements such as readings and assignments. The idea emerged from several students that when they had a difficulty in understanding some aspect of a course, they would first ask a peer for assistance, then if necessary, approach a lecturer for help. However, there were difficulties for some students, and in some cases, their peers could be more helpful than the lecturer.

(ii) Joining a study or support group

Being involved with some type of study or support group helped some participants to complete their courses successfully. It emerged that three different types of study and support groups operate at College to support Pacific nations and other students. These were described as formal classes to teach particular skills including English, informal support groups of peers, and a study group set up by an individual lecturer to help clarify course content or assignments. One participant explained the advantage of the study group: "I felt we all had the same struggles which I believe most were unable to articulate in a bigger and

predominantly pakeha setting but could in a smaller group of their own kind."

(iii) Approaching the lecturer for clarification or feedback

Many students found that a useful strategy to help them to complete courses successfully was to approach the lecturer on an individual basis, immediately before or after the lectures, or at another time. At these meetings, students asked for clarification of the concepts which were covered in courses, for further information about assignment requirements, or for feedback on the work they had presented to the lecturer. If the lecturer believed that students were capable of success, this gave them more confidence in their academic studies. One participant described how a lecturer spoke to him after he received his assignment grade. She quietly expressed the view to him that although she knew he was bright and had the ability to succeed, this did not always show in his work. He said: "I found that really inspiring. It made me think, what am I doing, I could be achieving so much. Why am I satisfied with just passing?"

(iv) Using time management strategies

The College courses make heavy demands on students' time. For example during the second semester of eleven weeks, a third year student will be timetabled to take five compulsory courses and one selected study course, with a total of over twenty tasks or assignments to be completed over the last nine weeks of the semester. Managing their time well was seen as essential to success, as students pointed out that College courses are usually assessed by the completion of essay-type assignments which were described as requiring a lot of time. Their successful strategies included marking their calendar with due dates of assignments, completing one assignment at a time in the order in which they were due, and completing assignments and homework before returning home to family duties.

What difficulties within the College do Pacific nations students face in academic study?

(i) Difficulty in speaking out in class

A key finding from the study was the manner in which cultural constraints hindered some students from questioning the lecturer or engaging in class discussion. Some students commented that Pacific

nations students are culturally different in the way they behave with people they perceive to be in authority, and it is harder for some who are very strong culturally to question authority in any way. They attributed this difficulty mainly to their respect for lecturers as their teachers, and to their respect for older students in their class. Some mentioned other aspects of respect such as having to be well mannered towards their peers and therefore not interrupting them while they were speaking. One student clearly explained her difficulty in speaking out at College:

When I was brought up in my own culture, in my own church you were basically taught to be quiet. So, when you come here after being taught to be quiet and listen to your parents, listen to the teacher when you're sitting at school and stuff like that, and then when you come here you are expected, you know, to bring out your ideas and your perceptions and everything. You've been taught this way your whole life and you come here and you don't know how to express anything because no-one has shown you. That's why you feel so inferior or you're so small is because you haven't been taught the ways to communicate your ideas. You speak when you're spoken to. When there are older people around you do not sit in a conversation with them.

However, she agreed that in her view her culture had changed and she did not place those expectations on her own children. Another student spoke about her own lack of engagement in tutorial discussion, which might be seen by others as a lack of interest or a lack of understanding. She explained that she had been taught not to speak until she was asked, "And I don't speak till the other person has finished speaking."

A pertinent message to College lecturers was given by one participant who wrote, "There are some students who don't participate in tutorials, so they are left unnoticed by the lecturers. But these students have been raised to talk only when they are spoken to."

(ii) Difficulty in approaching the lecturer

As well as finding it difficult to speak in either a group or whole class situation, a number of students found it difficult to approach their lecturers to ask for information or assistance. There was also some criticism in that while the lecturers expected students to consider children's backgrounds when they taught them, according to the students' perceptions, this was not happening for the Pacific nations students in their own learning in College courses. It was suggested that

lecturers need to understand that there are students who aren't going to come forward and say that they do not understand. There seemed to be a need for the lecturer to take the initiative and explain to the students without making them feel inadequate.

Some lecturers were not seen by students as approachable, which made it difficult to ask them questions or to request an extension for an assignment. There seemed to be a difficulty for students which was caused by a lack of sensitivity or awareness by pakeha lecturers who delivered College courses. There was a feeling amongst some participants that they did not like Pacific nations students to be singled out for special attention in class. They suggested that lecturers should offer assistance in tutorial time aimed at the entire class so one person or a few were not singled out.

(iii) Difficulty with English

Clearly, for some participants, their level of English was a barrier to success in academic study. Students discussed how difficulty with English could lead to Pacific nations students receiving low grades for courses, failing courses, or having to withdraw from their teacher training courses completely. Students identified the following as causing them some difficulty in completing their College courses:

- Understanding what is required to complete assignments
- Researching for assignments
- Writing assignments
- Understanding the terminology used by lecturers
- Understanding complex terms in text
- Studying
- Understanding course outlines
- Understanding the curriculum
- Difficulty or misinterpretation of concepts

Other Difficulties Identified by the Participants

Generalisations about Pacific nations people and Pacific culture

Students expressed frustration with generalisations being made by some lecturers about Pacific nations students at College and about Pacific cultural practices. These included generalisations about students being shy and not asking questions and generalisations about aspects of Pacific nations culture with which the students disagreed. A participant explained her feelings about this:

In one of the lectures last year the lecturer was talking about Polynesian women and they sit in the back and they don't ask questions and that's just their culture but I totally disagree with that. It might be for Samoan born women coming into that environment that would probably happen but I think with New Zealand born I am not like that, just to sit back and not ask questions I just thought that's a whole lot of crap.

Some students were critical of tutors who might ask Pacific nations students to justify an aspect of Pacific nations culture.

I think that some of the things that the tutors make us do, they're really against the way we've been brought up. If we say something about our culture, sometimes in the class we'll actually be put down for it. I feel that the tutors make it worse by saying can you explain why is it like that? Why did she have to do that? But they don't understand that it's a culture/ethnicity thing. I'd rather sometimes just state it and that's it. I don't want to explain further. Sometimes we can't explain.

Like where we were in Health and it was stated that the girls really have to sit away at the back of the kitchen to serve and we were asked to explain further why and how come it's like that and it's not right. We can't explain it why it's like that. We've been raised that way.

Another student added, "Yes but that's the thing about it. It's not right by their culture, their understandings, but it's normal for us, it's not questioned, that's the way it is." When I asked what would address this difficulty, the students replied that lecturers should have knowledge about them and accept that there is a cultural difference.

Factors outside College which influence Pacific nations students' ability to succeed

Positive factors

Positive factors outside College that influenced Pacific nations students' ability to succeed in College courses included the support from the students' own families. This was described as the family expectations of parents and siblings that the students would succeed in their academic study and the support through caring for students' children while they were at College or studying. A further factor for some was the motivation of being the first members of their extended families to get degrees.

Difficulties

Time commitments to family

A pattern emerged of large family commitments for a number of the students, and this seemed greater for those who had been brought up strongly in their Pacific culture. Participants' comments included:

There are various roles and tasks we undertake in regard to family and church commitments, i.e., sharing our resources, e.g. money when needed, the person to do errands of all sorts, leaders amongst our youth, etc. While not always stated, it is an unspoken obligation that such is the expectation from our Matua (older people). This is an area we cannot just timetable in.

The family commitment sometimes made it difficult to complete College work, and for some, the family did not appreciate the extent of College work commitments.

Time commitments to the community

Slightly less time seemed to be given to the community activities by the students than to their families. However, many students had a considerable time commitment to their community activities which included waka ama (outrigger canoe racing), coaching sports teams, and team training as a member of a national sports team. Almost half the participants mentioned church activities, which included church youth groups, mission work, and music worship. There was a suggestion that pakeha lecturers did not understand the extent of church commitments.

If a tutor had an understanding of who we are as people and then they could understand certain things about what goes on in our life, like handing things in late because of all the commitments we have especially through church and I don't think a lot of people understand just how important the church is to Pacific Island people and how much of a part it plays in our lives. It's not just turning up on Sunday and just praying for most churches and for my church it's like a four or five days a week thing.

Time commitment to a part-time job

Approximately half of the students had to earn money through working at part-time employment in order to be able to continue their College courses. These jobs were often late at night and impacted on the students' ability to complete College work. Because of the demands of a full College timetable, the part-time employment had to be in the

evenings, at weekends or during the College holidays. This exhausted some students and clearly impacted on their College work.

What type of support would Pacific Nations students prefer ?

The participants made the following suggestions as to what could be put in place to support their learning.

(i) Learning support workshops based on students' needs

These would help students seek clarification on what is expected in assignments and what to study for exams. Some students suggested they would feel more comfortable speaking in these workshops rather than tutorials.

(ii) Grouping the Pacific nations students together in classes

The clear preference of the majority was to be in a class with a group of Pacific nations students with two thirds of participants choosing this. There was no support for a class of Pacific nations students only.

(iii) Appointing a Pacific liaison person

Students were strongly supportive of having a staff member appointed who could guide them in a pastoral role. It was suggested that the first six months of the first year was a critical stage for students and that the orientation programme should emphasise support for the Pacific students. The participants suggested two roles that could be fulfilled by a liaison person at Wellington College of Education. The liaison person could assist students in setting up a peer support group and in setting up study groups. Study groups were seen as valuable for first year students in particular.

(iv) Developing a Samoan language class

There was some support among the participants for a Samoan language class. Not all the students came from a Samoan background, but 16 out of the 21 indicated they would like to teach their Pacific nations language in a bilingual class at some time in the future. Having knowledge of their Pacific language helped some students to build rapport with children when they were on their teaching experiences. One participant commented: "It is important, if you have a language which could support peers or children this can bring about a whole new dimension. Children will see you as one of them. Someone who they can receive support and guidance from."

To what extent have the indigenous knowledge and languages of Pacific nations been incorporated into College courses, and to what extent will Pacific nations students use these in the classroom?

The majority (fourteen students) replied that they had never been encouraged to use their language, with four indicating that they had sometimes been encouraged to do so. When participants were asked if they thought that using their Pacific language would be a useful support for their own learning, thirteen students replied yes and five replied no, suggesting that they did not have sufficient knowledge of their home language for it to be of benefit. The participants agreed that indigenous knowledge had been incorporated into some courses through the use of Pacific nations resources. These resources included:

- Music, language, dance
- Musical instruments
- A professional Samoan sasa dancer
- Polynesian patterns
- Costumes
- Pacific Islands folk tales
- Texts with a Pacific nations perspective including the Tupu Series and New Zealand School Journals
- Tutorial readings
- Pictures of Pacific nations art and stories
- Video tapes

A Dilemma: Higher Entry Criteria Exclude Those We Need

The focus of this research project was to investigate ways to support Pacific nations students to complete primary teacher training successfully. I believe that there are aspects of this that can be addressed by College staff, but there are also aspects that really need to be addressed in the compulsory education system. In other words, there may be deficits for some students because of what has occurred in their primary and secondary schooling.

While there is a clear demand for more people of Pacific nations background to teach in New Zealand schools, fewer are entering Colleges of Education for primary teacher training (Ministry of Education, 1999a). This presents something of a dilemma facing teacher training institutions such as Wellington College of Education. With the introduction of a degree programme to replace the former Diploma of Teaching course, the entry criteria for teacher training has been made

more difficult, thus excluding many applicants. On the one hand the College needs to maintain a high standard of teacher education in accordance with the guidelines of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the Teacher Registration Board, and the expectations of school communities, but on the other it is unfortunate that the standards for entering teacher training courses do not measure the cultural richness and knowledge that some of these applicants would bring into the classroom. An appropriate approach to assist these applicants to meet the entry standards would be to continue to offer bridging programmes and to extend these.

Recommendations

The following recommendations could assist Pacific nations students at Colleges of Education to complete their courses successfully.

General implications for lecturers

Lecturers should continue to encourage students to support each other and provide many opportunities in classes for peer and group work to occur. They could also encourage students to work together on aspects of their study, but make it clear which tasks and assignments will be assessed as individual work.

There is a need to provide opportunities for all to contribute, perhaps setting up a formal structure such as co-operative groups to achieve this. This would be less threatening to some students as their roles would be formalised, and it would prevent assertive students from always controlling the group.

Lecturers should invite students to speak in class. Some of the participants indicated that cultural constraints meant they would not speak unless they were invited to.

Lecturers could liaise with the staff providing learning support and offer their assistance of specialist course knowledge if it is required for a learning support workshop.

Lecturers should make it clear to students that they are happy to talk to them on an individual basis, when they are available to assist them, and how they can get in touch.

Individual students should not be singled out publicly for help or criticism in the class.

Lecturers should take care not to make generalisations about Pacific nations people.

Students should not be expected to give an explanation or a view as an expert on their culture. This may make them feel threatened, and they may not want to give, or may not have, an explanation.

Lecturers should consider how they present themselves as the teacher. The participants mentioned that some lecturers seemed “approachable” and some were not. They appreciated it when a lecturer seemed to care about them and take an interest. Lecturers could have a quiet word of encouragement to a reticent or struggling student. Actively engaging with the students during tutorials would help lecturers to gauge the extent of their understanding.

Many students face difficulties in aspects of academic English. Course outlines should be written clearly to describe the course requirements. Lecturers should be aware of the difficulty for some students in understanding the terminology and complex terms they use in lectures and handouts. Giving a synonym or an alternative explanation for the new term is helpful to students.

Specific implications for Wellington College of Education

A programme of staff development would help lecturers to be more aware of the cultural constraints which make it difficult for some Pacific nations students to actively engage in classes. The programme would raise awareness of ways of incorporating a Pacific perspective into other courses, through exploring appropriate pedagogies, including indigenous knowledge and resources, and including references to the large body of research on and by Pacific nations people. An obvious way to achieve this would be for the College to appoint more Pacific nations staff members.

Lecturers would also be made aware of the pakeha emphasis on individual effort and achievement and the value placed on working independently. If lecturers were more aware of the high level of commitment to family and church of many Pacific nations students, they could take it into account when advising students on the need for good time management, and when responding to a student requesting an extension for an assignment.

Other aspects that the College could address are organising classes so that several Pacific nations students are together in a group, and appointing a liaison person of Pacific nations background to act in a pastoral role for the students. It would be better if this person were not a lecturer, teaching and assessing them, but a neutral person who could advise and assist the students. This person could also create useful links with the local Pacific community.

A very positive initiative to help address the needs of Pacific nations children in primary schools has recently been undertaken by Wellington College of Education. A new compulsory course entitled Pacific Nations Education is being introduced for second year students. It focuses on successful strategies required by teachers to foster effective teaching and learning for Pacific nations students in the New Zealand education system. On this course, students study issues of pedagogy and assessment, current Pacific educational research and the educational aspirations of Pacific nations parents and communities. The course offers benefits for all College students in helping to create a better understanding of how to meet the needs of Pacific nations children in New Zealand schools. An advantage for the Pacific students in teacher training may be its emphasis on Pacific cultures, which makes links into their own cultural capital, thus creating a support for their own learning. Attending this course could be useful professional development for lecturers involved in pre-service and in-service teacher education.

Conclusion

This study argues that higher Pacific nations participation and success can be achieved if Pacific nations students are successful in graduating as teachers and act as good role models in schools which Pacific nations children attend, and if they teach in culturally appropriate ways. These teachers would be able to share their knowledge and suggestions about learning for Pacific nations children with other students and staff in both their pre-service training at our Colleges of Education, and when they are working in schools. When we consider who is succeeding and who is not in the education system, we need to reflect critically on the curriculum itself, on the ways in which the curriculum is transmitted and assessed, and on our own values as teachers and those of our institutions. We need to ask what relevance this learning has for these students, and whose values are being presented. While it may be

difficult for many Pacific nations or Māori students to adapt to learning in a mainstream cultural setting (such as Wellington College of Education), it can also be difficult for mainstream students to concede that they are in a privileged position to learn, in that the cultural capital of the institution is designed to help *them* to succeed. Until they recognise this, how can they recognise the difficulties which may be faced by minority students? How many dedicated and enthusiastic learners are excluded from equitable educational opportunities (although it may not be the intention of their teachers to do this)? The participants in this study have offered practical suggestions. The provision of student support, professional development for lecturers, and the recognition of cultural differences and the implications of this for learning, will assist them to complete their primary teacher training successfully.

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