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Ho'oulu Ka Lālā No Ke Kumu: Engagement and learning of Hawaiian students begins with effective teachers

Lois Yamauchi, Rebecca 'Ilima Ka'anehe, Kristin Kawena Begay

Abstract

This paper describes how the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE) Standards for Effective Pedagogy, research-based strategies for culturally and linguistically diverse students, have been used in classrooms for Native Hawaiian students. Historically, Hawaiian students have not been well served by formal education. The CREDE Standards can provide a culturally relevant foundation for teachers to design educational activity that increases Hawaiian learners' engagement and learning. The Standards cover: (a) joint productive activity; (b) language and literacy development; (c) contextualization; (d) complex thinking; (e) instructional conversation; (f) modeling; and (j) student-directed activity. The CREDE Standards are aligned with indigenous Hawaiian values and cultural practices. Compared to more typical instruction, the CREDE model offers a culturally relevant context for Hawaiian students, focusing on the sociocultural aspects of learning and emphasising peer-assisted, cooperative learning.

Ho'oulu Ka Lālā No Ke Kumu: Engagement and learning of hawaiian students begins with effective teachers

Ho'oulu ka lālā no ke kumu, the branches grow because of the base of the tree, is a Hawaiian proverb which refers to the relationship between students and teachers (Pukui, 1983). In the Hawaiian language, words have multiple meanings. The word *kumu* means "tree," "source," and also "teacher," while *lālā* means "branch," but also "student." This paper describes the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE) Standards, research-based strategies for culturally diverse students, as they have been applied in classrooms for Hawaiian children. Our examples come from a Hawaiian language immersion programme, more typical English-language schools, and a private preschool. We describe how the CREDE Standards can be a strong base from which student learning and engagement emerges and outline how they align with Hawaiian values and practices.

The history of Hawaiian education is fraught with injustices, stemming from the 1893 illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom (Trask, 2000). Prior to this, the Hawaiian language was used throughout the nation for all governmental activities, including education (Kawakami & Dudoit, 2000). Newspapers and books were printed in Hawaiian, and literacy rates in Hawai'i were among the highest in the world (Kamakau, 1868).

After the overthrow of the monarchy, the Hawaiian language was banned in schools (Kawakami & Dudoit, 2000). Educators used corporal punishment when children spoke Hawaiian. This created a hostile school environment for Hawaiians and led to a decline in Hawaiian language use (Benham & Heck, 1998). The educational success of Hawaiians also declined, and contemporary Hawaiian students typically score lower on achievement measures and have higher dropout rates than students from other backgrounds (Kana'iaupuni & Ishibashi, 2003; Office of Hawaiian Affairs, 2011; University of Hawai'i Institutional Research Office, 2013). Hawaiians continue to be over-represented in special education and under-represented in post-secondary education. However, statistics are improving due, in part, to the development of Hawaiian culture-based educational programmes (Kamehameha Schools, 2009; Kana'iaupuni et al., 2010; Pacific Policy Research Center, 2010).

Hawaiian culture-based education

Kana'iaupuni and Kawai'ae'a (2008) described culture-based initiatives as "teaching and learning that are grounded in a cultural worldview, from whose lens are taught the skills, knowledge, content, and values that students need in our modern, global society" (p. 71). They identified five key components of culture-based education: (a) recognizing and using heritage language; (b) engaging family and community; (c) creating meaningful learning by grounding activities in culturally relevant content and assessment; (d) structuring learning interactions in culturally appropriate ways, and (e) gathering assessment information in culturally relevant ways.

Takayama (2008) compared achievement scores of Hawaiian students and other peers who were enrolled in Western-based, public schools, Western-based charter schools, and Hawaiian language and culture-based charter schools. Grade 5 Hawaiian students in conventional public schools outscored those in Hawaiian culture-based schools. However, in Grade 10, there were no differences in reading, and Hawaiian students in culture-based schools scored higher in mathematics. A greater percentage of students in Hawaiian culture-based schools moved out of the lowest proficiency rating, compared to students in conventional schools, suggesting positive effects of Hawaiian culture-based education in engaging students who were at greatest risk of educational failure.

Hawaiian language immersion

Ka Papahana Kaiapuni, the Hawaiian Language Immersion program, began in 1987 to revitalize the Hawaiian language and prevent its extinction (Wilson, 1998). Before 1987, there were about 2,000 native speakers of Hawaiian. Of these native speakers, the majority were over the age of 50, and only about 30 were under 18 (Heckathorn, 1987).

Kaiapuni is a K-12 programme that uses the Hawaiian language as the medium of instruction. In 2018, there were 23 Kaiapuni sites located on five of the eight major Hawaiian Islands (Hawai'i Department of Education, n.d.). Kaiapuni's 1999 graduating class was the first in over a century to complete their K-12 education in Hawaiian. That year, there were approximately 1,700 youths involved in the programme, indicating a dramatic increase in the number of young Hawaiian speakers (Yamauchi & Wilhelm, 2001).

Professional development to improve Hawaiian education

Teachers develop ideas about education through their past experiences and tend to teach in ways that they themselves were taught (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Change may be promoted by providing assistance to teachers through professional development (PD). For example, the Kahua Induction Program provided PD for teachers on developing relationships with Hawaiian community members and other aspects of the culture (Kahumoku & Kekahio, 2010). Kahua teachers reported increased knowledge, positivity, and skills related to culture-based education. Retention among these teachers was also high (91.4%), in a district with previously poor teacher retention.

The current paper describes the instruction of teachers who participated in another PD programme designed to improve Hawaiian learners' achievement. The PD promoted teachers' use of the CREDE Standards, which are based on Vygotsky's (1978) theory and over 40 years of research on what works for students from culturally diverse backgrounds (Tharp et al., 2000). The CREDE Standards include:

- *Joint productive activity*: Teachers and students working together to create shared understandings and tangible products.
- *Language and literacy development*: Promoting language goals throughout the school day.
- *Contextualisation*: Connecting new information to what learners already know from their previous home, community and school experiences.
- *Complex thinking*: Developing learners' high-level thinking and problem-solving skills.
- *Instructional conversation*: Using small-group discussions to develop conceptual understandings.
- *Modelling*: Providing examples for what students are required to do and providing feedback when they practise.
- *Student-directed activity*: Creating opportunities for learners to be involved in classroom decision-making, including how and what they learn.

The first five Standards are universal principles of best practices for all students (Tharp et al., 2000). Although most research has focused on the first five, Tharp (2006) identified the last two strategies as specific to indigenous communities. These two are also included in the model for early childhood education (Yamauchi et al., 2012).

CREDE PD includes workshops and instructional coaching (Yamauchi et al., 2012). Coaches observe teachers' instruction 4–6 times in a year and meet with educators to discuss their lessons. To evaluate CREDE implementation, we video-record instruction and rate it using a rubric designed to measure CREDE use (Luning et al., 2011). At PD workshops, teachers watch video clips of each other's instruction and discuss strategies.

Examples of CREDE in Hawaiian classrooms

In the following sections, we describe each of the CREDE Standards and provide an example from a classroom serving Hawaiian students.

Joint productive activity

This Standard emphasises teachers and students collaborating to create both tangible and intangible products (Tharp et al., 2000). A tangible product might be a concept map about a story that the teacher and students develop together. There are many intangible products—much like understanding the procedures of a science experiment.

Collaboration refers to activity in which there is joint authorship, ownership or responsibility for the product and requires interaction between participants (Luning et al., 2011). Although students learn much from each other, they also benefit from interactions with their teachers, who likely have more developed knowledge and language.

Understanding measurement through joint productive activity

In this second grade classroom at Wai'anae Elementary School, teacher Brook Chapman de Sousa (all teachers' names are real; all students' are pseudonyms) created multiple, simultaneous activity centres around the topic of measurement. Wai'anae is a rural community on the island of O'ahu, where the majority of residents are Hawaiian.

To begin the lesson, Brook provided instructions for five centres, through which the children rotated. She reviewed the classroom values and reminded the children to ask peers for help if they needed assistance.

The teacher's centre, where Brook sat with small groups of students, focused on weight. There was a scale, with two containers hanging on each end, to compare the weight of various items (e.g., pencils and erasers). The children guessed which items would be heavier before weighing them. Brook talked about the "tipping point," and the children added items to each side to determine the number of items needed to reach that point. The group discussed their estimations of weight and their guesses of the tipping point and recorded the information.

The other four centres were peer-directed activities that were familiar to the students. "Task cards" instructed them to record their estimations of particular kinds of measurements, make the actual measurements with tools available, and compare estimations with actual measurements. For example, at the length centre, there were several empty boxes of various sizes that had held familiar snacks. The children estimated and then measured the length of each item on the table. They used their fingers, hands, and forearms to estimate the length of the boxes and recorded their predictions before they measured the items.

These activities illustrated joint productive activity at an exemplary level. At the teacher centre, Brook and a small group of students worked toward a joint product—estimating and finding out how many items needed to be added to the balance scale for it to reach the tipping point. All students in the group participated and Brook used multiple forms of assistance, including questioning students on their actions, rephrasing what they had said, and modelling how the scale worked. There was a high level of collaboration between peers at all centres, as children worked together to solve measurement problems, creating both tangible products (e.g., written measurements) and intangible understandings of the concepts and procedures.

Language and literacy development

Language and literacy development emphasises that all educators are teachers of language skills, even within subject-specific classes (Tharp et al., 2000). For example, students in mathematics classrooms need to learn the vocabulary and ways of speaking and writing to communicate about mathematics. This Standard promotes teachers developing activities that engage learners in such expression.

At the highest level of language and literacy development, educators assist learners to be able to participate in discussions about what they are learning with a goal of using language to build conceptual understandings (Luning et al., 2011). To do this, educators provide different kinds of assistance to promote participation and expansion of ideas, including modelling language use, rephrasing learners' expressions, and questioning.

Language and literacy in a Hawaiian language immersion classroom

Although most kindergarteners enter the Kaiapuni programme with English or Hawai'i Creole English as their first language (Yamauchi & Wilhelm, 2001), teachers emphasise using Hawaiian in the classroom. In the next example, teacher Kapolei Kī'ili primarily spoke Hawaiian, although the children often responded in other languages.

Kapolei structured her lesson as four simultaneous activity centres, all focused on language learning. The children rotated through the 20-minute centres so that everyone experienced each activity. At her teacher-directed centre, Kapolei sat with five children and explained that they would be reading a picture book in Hawaiian to determine the beginning, middle, and end of the story. Kapolei showed them the cover.

Kapolei: He aha ke 'ano o kēia ka'a? (*What type of car is this?*)

'Ale'a: Race car.

Kapolei: Pololei e 'Ale'a, he mau ka'a heihei. (*That's correct 'Ale'a, these are race cars.*)
Pehea kākou e 'ike ai he mau ka'a heihei kēia? (*How can we tell that these are race cars?*)

'Ale'a: The race.

Kapolei: Ke 'ike kākou i ke alanui, 'ike kākou iā lākou e holo ana, 'ike kākou i nā kānaka like 'ole e nānā 'ana iā lākou, 'eā? Ua hele mua paha kekahi o 'oukou e 'ike i ia 'ano ka'a heihei ma Maui? (*We can see the road. We see them racing. We see the people watching them, yeah? Have any of you gone to see a car race like this on Maui before?*)

Wailana: And they can win a prize.

Kapolei: Pololei 'oe, hiki nō ke lanakila. (*You are correct. They can win.*)

Moana: I know who wins the prize, the blue one. The blue one wins the race.

Kapolei: Pololei 'oe, Pololei. (*You're right, correct.*)

At peer-directed centres, the children were engaged in various language learning activities and had been instructed to help each other. At one centre, children traced Hawaiian letters that Kapolei had written on cards that were covered in coloured sand. The children moved their fingers over the sand and said the sounds they represented. At another centre, children sat in pairs at computer stations reading the Hawaiian alphabet

on the screen. One child in each pair pointed to the letter as the two of them said it in unison. At the third centre, children listened to audio books and followed along with their printed versions.

Kapolei's lesson is an example of language and literacy development because she designed each centre with a clear goal of generating language expression. Kapolei used multiple forms of assistance to develop the children's skills needed for a discussion in Hawaiian. She praised children for their responses, questioned them about the story, modelled Hawaiian language expression and used Hawaiian to rephrase what children had said in English.

Contextualisation

Contextualisation refers to teachers making connections between the abstract ideas being taught and what students already know from previous home and community experiences (Tharp et al., 2000). Learning is promoted when new information is connected to what is already known. Teachers can make incidental and integrated connections that assist with new learning. Incidental connections are unplanned and spontaneous. While talking to students about a topic, teachers may realise how it is related to something students already know or learners might make their own incidental connections. For example, a science teacher made an incidental connection between air pressure and how students might feel when they are on an airplane that is landing. A student responded that it was similar to driving up to Haleakalā, an extinct volcano. The teacher responded that the student was correct that air pressure was different at the top of Haleakalā and so their ears might have "popped" as they drove up the hill.

Although incidental connections are important, contextualisation is even better when teachers integrate students' prior experiences with school concepts. Integrated activities require application of prior experiences to the new understandings. For example, a teacher could ask children to draw examples of different geometric shapes found in their homes.

Contextualising imperialism within the context of Hawai'i

Wai'anae High School social studies teacher Mike Kurose taught students in Grades 11–12 about imperialism. He integrated the lesson activities by relating the topic to students' experiences as Hawaiians, living in a place that was once the sovereign nation of their ancestors, but was colonised by Americans. Most students were Hawaiian, and they were in a programme that integrated learning about Hawaiian culture with English, social studies, and science education.

Mike began the lesson with a class discussion, asking the students why the US had colonised smaller countries. Students suggested reasons such as trade, national security, and gaining resources. Mike agreed with the students and talked about the debates surrounding imperialism. The class then worked in small groups, discussing texts that focused on these ideas, and Mike circulated to each group.

One group read two poems, "White Man's Burden" by Rudyard Kipling and "Brown Man's Burden," a poem written in response. The students read the poems and then discussed their interpretations of the texts. Another group of students read a letter that

the last Hawaiian monarch, Queen Lili‘uokalani, wrote to the US government in 1893 asking them to not annex the islands. The final group read a paper entitled “In Defense of Imperialism,” and Mike helped the students to interpret the author’s points. The groups rotated so that all students participated in each activity.

This lesson exemplifies contextualisation in that Mike designed activities that integrated the concept of imperialism within the socio-political context of Hawai‘i. The students were familiar with issues of colonization in Hawai‘i. Mike assigned the Queen’s letter because of these former understandings and student interest. The small group discussions of the other readings required students to further extend their understandings to other contexts.

Complex thinking

This Standard extends beyond rote memorisation to engage learners in higher-level thinking (Tharp et al., 2000). Students are asked to generate new information or use information provided. For example, they might analyse, categorise, or evaluate information, synthesise what is known, or apply understandings to a new context (Luning et al., 2011). Teachers who apply complex thinking engage in the “assess-assist-assess” cycle by observing what students know, assisting in appropriate ways to promote deeper understandings, and assessing new learning.

Complex thinking in middle-school mathematics

This example is from a seventh grade mathematics lesson at Kamaile Academy, a rural, public charter school. Teacher Kenny Ferenchak designed three rotating activities that were related to probability. At his centre, Kenny sat with four students and explained that they would be continuing their work on experimental and theoretical probability. Kenny held up a whiteboard and drew a square divided into four squares and asked, “What is this?”

Noah: Box, a box.

Justin: A ratio box!

Kenny: Good. What kind of special ratio are we talking about today?

Noah: Probability!

Kenny asked them what they thought the rows in the box represented. Justin replied that the bottom was the number of total chances and the top was how many times you would expect to get something. The teacher took out a die and read the question from the board, “How many 2s am I going to get in 12 rolls?” Cassandra suggested that if they rolled the die once, the chance of getting any number was $1/6$ and Kenny filled in the boxes on the left side of the figure.

Kenny: Now, we are talking about rolling it how many times?

Justin: 12.

Kenny: Where should we put the 12?

Justin: In the bottom box.

Kenny: Why do you say that?

Justin: Because it is the whole.

Kenny wrote “12” in the bottom right-hand box. Cassandra pointed to the empty box at the top and said, “It’s a variable.” The teacher wrote “x” in the top right hand box and the sentence “ $12=6x$ ” under the figure. Noah explained how he would solve for x. Kenny asked him where his numbers came from, and Noah pointed to the numbers on the board and explained. When Justin added that it was theoretical probability, Kenny asked him why he thought so. Justin explained that theoretical probability was a guess, and it might be different if they actually rolled the die.

Together, the students rolled the die 12 times and it landed on 2 twice. Kenny asked them what the experimental probability was and someone answered, “2 over 12.” Noah was excited, “Our theoretical stuff was right! It’s like our hypothesis.” Janet pointed out that they could also say “1 over 6,” explaining how she got the answer. Kenny asked the students if they thought that theoretical and experimental probability would always be the same. The students said no, and Kenny asked them why they thought so. Justin said that it was because things can go wrong. Noah added that things could change.

This lesson exemplified a high level use of complex thinking in that the goal was to understand the difference between theoretical and experimental probability. Kenny’s questioning required students to apply their understandings to reach a higher level of conceptual understanding. Kenny used the assess-assist-assess cycle to listen to, and observe, what students knew, assist them by clarifying and questioning, and then reassess. Kenny’s focus was on building students’ conceptual understanding by asking students to justify their thinking as they solved the equations.

Instructional conversation

Instructional conversation involves using dialogue with a small group of learners to develop conceptual understanding related to a specific learning goal (Tharp et al., 2000). Through these conversations, teachers can assess students’ learning and adjust their teaching accordingly. This individualises teaching and promotes students expressing themselves in culturally congruent ways. Ideally, all students participate in the instructional conversation, and learners speak more than the teacher, who questions their views, judgments, and rationales. Instructional conversation takes place in a small group arrangement, which some teachers find difficult (Yamauchi et al., 2004). This may require a restructuring of the classroom setting to include multiple and simultaneous activity centres, of which one is an instructional conversation with the teacher (Tharp et al., 2000).

Instructional conversations in Hawaiian language immersion

This example took place at Ke Kula ‘o ‘Ehunuikaimalino, a Hawaiian immersion school on Hawai‘i Island in Kawena Begay’s Grade 1 classroom. As part of a unit focused on “self,” Kawena led a lesson on feelings. In a small group of five students, Kawena displayed pictures portraying different emotions and encouraged students to identify and discuss their experiences with the emotion depicted. One of the pictures depicted anger, and Kawena asked the children what their bodies felt like when they were angry. The group discussed coping skills for dealing with anger, and practised these skills through role-play.

Through small group conversation, Kawena assessed how each student understood the task and provided tailored assistance. Throughout the conversation, she clarified vocabulary, encouraged personal connections, and questioned students in ways that elicited deeper understandings. At one point, a student misidentified the picture of surprise (pū' iwa) as “huhū,” which is anger. When questioned about why he felt that picture showed anger, the child responded “no ka mea I yell like that when I'm huhū” (*because I yell like that when I'm angry*), referring to the wide mouth of the child in the picture. This prompted another student to reply “akā 'a' ole huhū 'o ia. Huhū like me...” (*but he's not angry, angry is like...*) and physically made an angry face with narrowed eyes and a tightly closed mouth. Kawena pointed out the differences between the face the second child made and the face depicted in the picture, particularly with regard to the mouth (tightly closed versus wide open) and eyes (narrowed versus wide open). The students spontaneously practised making the two faces, commenting on how their faces felt. They continued to discuss the body signals that occurred with anger, and Kawena prompted the students to notice how their hands, chest, and legs felt when they pretended to be angry.

In this example, Kawena used instructional conversation to clarify and extend students' understanding of an academic topic. Each child contributed to the discussion, responding to the teacher and peers. Although the teacher planned a direction for the conversation, student contributions also directed the discussion. Kawena questioned students on understandings, promoting clarification, while building vocabulary. Children spoke in both Hawaiian and English, and Kawena rephrased their English contributions in Hawaiian. Using pictures to initiate the conversation provided a concrete focus for an abstract topic, which stimulated talk among these young children. Using physical objects and working on a tangible joint activity are strategies that promote conversation among all ages, but particularly youngsters and those who speak a second language (Chapman de Sousa, 2017).

Modelling

Teachers and learners can serve as models for behaviours, thinking processes, or procedures (Yamauchi et al., 2012). This Standard emphasises learners practising what was modelled and assisting them as the practice. At the exemplary level, the modelled examples are used for inspiration and show learners the step-by-step process to accomplish the task. The teacher also assists learners in practising or creating their own products and facilitates peer assistance.

Modelling a leaf-printing activity in a preschool classroom

In a preschool classroom at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Children's Center, a group of 3–4 year-old children engaged in leaf printing. The teacher, Alyson Navarro, started by assessing what the children knew about leaf printing and asking what materials they would need. All of the children replied “leaves!” Alyson took the children outside, showing them examples of leaves that would be good for printing. For instance, she used one leaf to show that leaves should not be bigger than the pie pans that would hold the paint.

After gathering their leaves and returning to the classroom, Alyson explained the next steps. She noted that, in order to see the leaves' details, they could not just dip the leaves in paint and press them to paper because it would be "too goopy." She modelled for the children how to line the pie pan with paper towels to soak up enough paint so the leaf would get a nice coat without being drenched. After demonstrating the process with one student, Alyson gave each child a pie pan with a different paint colour.

Alyson selected one child to demonstrate how to dab the leaf in paint and press it onto a piece of paper as she orally gave step-by-step instructions: "Then we want to press the leaf onto the paper towel with the paint on it, because printing is pressing. Then you want to press the leaf onto your own paper. Let's not forget to press the tip, and then pull up slowly!" At this point, the children were ready to print leaves on their own. As new children joined the activity, Alyson asked the children to model the process for the newcomers.

Alyson's leaf printing activity exemplified this Standard because she and the children modelled how to dip the leaf in paint, and thinking processes, such as how to decide whether the leaf was too big for the pan. The children practised what was modelled—choosing leaves, dipping them in paint, and putting the leaves on paper. Modelling was used to show a step-by-step process and a final product. The teacher assisted children as they practised, and learners also helped each other when they had difficulty and when new peers arrived.

Student-directed activity

Tharp (2006) argued that indigenous cultures inherently have student-directed activity embedded in effective instruction. Encouraging students' decision-making is integral to this Standard. For example, allowing students to choose from a variety of activities or asking them to write about something of their interest incorporates this Standard. At higher levels of enactment, students become involved in designing and developing tasks (Yamauchi et al., 2012). This provides students with choices about how to demonstrate their learning, which is aligned with the social structure of many indigenous communities (Tharp, 2006).

Student directed activity in a Hawaiian immersion context

Within Kawena Begay's combination Grade 4/5 Hawaiian immersion classroom, students worked toward making a personal connection to literature. At the beginning of the lesson, Kawena led a class discussion reviewing *Molly's Pilgrim* (Cohen, 1983), a book about a young Russian-Jewish immigrant, to help her American classmates understand the immigration experience. After reviewing the plot and theme of the story, Kawena led a discussion on how the class could present and relate it to other students. The children brainstormed ideas, including reading and interpreting the book, creating posters, and acting out the story. One student suggested writing a play that changed the setting to a local context. The class decided to write and enact a play about a student from the US continent coming to attend a Hawaiian immersion school.

Kawena guided students to determine what was needed. The class formed committees, assigning roles toward accomplishing the final production. Although the

teacher assisted students in remembering some essential elements (such as needing a script), the ideas generated and implementation of tasks were student-directed. The students separated into work groups of their choice. Kawena circulated and monitored the activities, asking questions and offering encouragement. All students engaged in the final production and wrote evaluations of the play and of their own learning processes.

This lesson exemplified student-directed activity in that Kawena engaged children in an activity generated by their ideas. She assisted by questioning students about what was needed, providing feedback, and suggesting the use of a script. The lesson also exemplified integration of several other CREDE Standards, including: joint productive activity, language and literacy development, contextualisation, complex thinking, and instructional conversation.

Alignment of the CREDE standards, Hawaiian values, and cultural practices

In this paper, we described the CREDE Standards and presented examples from classrooms serving Hawaiian learners. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Estrada, 2005; Doherty et al., 2003; Saunders & Goldenberg, 2007), we illustrated that use of the Standards promoted academic engagement and learning for Hawaiian children and youths. We suggest that these Standards are consistent with Hawaiian values and practices.

The collectivistic values of the Hawaiian culture often conflict with the individualistic orientation of formal Western education (Yamauchi & Tharp, 1995). Traditional Hawaiian teachings emphasise the social context and experience-based learning (Chun, 2006; Pukui et al., 1972). Hawaiian culture embraces holistic learning and values social relationships.

Compared to more didactic instruction, CREDE offers a more culturally congruent environment for Hawaiians, focusing on the sociocultural aspects of learning and emphasising peer-assisted, cooperative learning. Ethnographic research on Hawaiian families indicated that, at home, Hawaiian children often interacted with other children rather than adults (Tharp et al., 2007). Working together with siblings and peers, children often completed household activities as a group, with older siblings being responsible for younger ones.

Traditionally, Hawaiian was an oral language so learners relied on observational and memorization (Chun, 2006; Pukui et al., 1972). Hawaiian proverbs state: “I ka nānā no a ‘ike, by observing, one learns. I ka ho’olohe no a ho’omaopopo, by listening, one commits to memory. I ka hana no a ‘ike, by practice one masters the skill.” (Pukui et al., 1972, p. 48). These proverbs illustrate the learning processes of observing, listening, reflecting, doing, and questioning (Pukui et al., 1972). Questioning is the last step because this can be distracting. If students question constantly, they may not observe intently; thus, questioning has an appropriate time and place. However, in formal Western education, students are often expected to consistently participate verbally, asking questions in large-group settings. When learners do not engage in these ways, they may be viewed as lacking knowledge, comprehension, or interest. CREDE’s focus on small group, peer-directed interactions allows Hawaiian students to converse freely and comfortably with peers, while the teacher acts as a facilitator.

In the Hawaiian culture, self-directed learning is supported through the value of *kuleana* (responsibility). In a Western context, the concept of responsibility typically refers to an individual's duties and obligations. However, *kuleana* is defined not only as responsibility, but also *privilege*. *Kuleana* is seated in an individual's responsibilities within the context of the larger group (Beniamina, 2010). In classrooms, the *kuleana* of a child might be determined by values shared with the teacher and peers. Students are expected to know that their behaviours directly affect the learning of others and to act accordingly.

Beniamina (2010) suggested that self-directed learning and *kuleana* were intertwined in the master–apprentice model called *tēnā*, a four-step process used in learning settings on the island of Ni'ihau. First, the child was given simple tasks that were modelled by more knowledgeable individuals. Using household chores as an example, tasks were divided among family members according to ability. Through more advanced learners, children learned their responsibilities and the steps for task completion. In the second step, other people partially assisted learners to prepare to complete more complex, independent tasks. The learner was responsible for making decisions about how to handle these tasks. At the third step, the learners had the knowledge and experience to take full responsibility over the tasks without assistance. The fourth and final step involved responsibility to mentor others, as the learner became the teacher.

The ultimate goal is to complete the circle and pass on knowledge and skills to fulfill one's *kuleana*. Unlike formal education, the steps of *tēnā* are not age-specific, and apply to various contexts throughout life. Learners progress through the stages when they are ready. The value of *kuleana* is at the heart of this learning process. All receive tasks that contribute to the completion of the larger job, and share the responsibility of fulfilling their *kuleana* to give back to family or community.

The CREDE Standards provide a framework for teachers of Hawaiian students to promote conceptual understandings in culturally congruent ways. The emphasis on small group collaboration, observational learning, and student-directed actions are consistent with Hawaiian cultural traditions. Although the emphasis on talking while learning can be viewed as differing from traditional Hawaiian culture, students learn these expectations and skills in a culturally relevant way, thus promoting flexibility as they move between community and academic settings.

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Teacher mentoring in Samoa: Fa'afaileleina o faiaoga

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Abstract

The significance of the mentoring concept as a support mechanism for novice teachers is crucial; however, the mentoring concept has not been given much attention (Metros & Yang, 2006). This paper investigated teachers' perceptions and experiences about the mentoring concept in Samoa. A mixed-methods approach gathered data from 278 teachers from urban primary schools; 226 teachers were surveyed, 20 were interviewed and two focus groups of 16 each were also carried out. Findings indicated that teachers have a broad definition of mentoring. It also indicated that teachers were supported by principals; however, work overload seemed to have an impact on performance. The Ministry of Education Sports and Culture (MESC), schools, principals, senior teachers and educational institutions have a huge role to play to assist new teachers become proactive in spearheading desired systemic changes.

Introduction

The significance of the mentoring concept as a support mechanism is vital for teacher development. Metros and Yang (2006) observed that few institutions dedicated the time and resources required to offer formal mentoring programs. Given the problem regarding teacher retention and high teacher attrition in many countries, the concern is notable (Elafify, 2016; Ng, 2012; Sankar et al., 2011), which is also the case in Samoa. With the attrition rate at its peak in the latter 2000s, the Ministry of Education Sports and Culture (MESC) focused attention on novice teachers leaving the profession to curb teacher attrition and advance quality teaching and learning.

Background and context

In 2011, a MESC consultant developed a pilot project for the professional development of mentors. The Minimum Service Standards for Primary and Secondary Schools (MSSPSS) in Samoa was launched in 2016 which included: 1) Teacher quality; and 2) Student achievement. In addition, the National Teacher Development Framework (NTDF) 2018–2023 and the National Professional Development Policy (NPDP) 2018–2023 targeted high quality teaching for students to reach their potential which rested on quality teaching (MSSPSS, 2016, p. 10). The MESC 2011 initiative was to improve teacher performance via mentoring; however, minimal attention to mentoring was evident in the workplace.

MESC, in 2019, requested two teacher educators to develop an induction and

mentoring program for teachers. MESC's request seemed to indicate the importance of teacher mentoring; however, there is scant literature on mentoring in the Samoan context. Based on their experiences, however, the authors of the paper contend that the Samoan way of life and organization is family oriented and based on mentorship at all levels. This is perceived in the elders' relationship with the younger generation, the matai (chiefs) and taule'ale'a (untitled men), and the matai and the alii (chief of a higher rank). While this relationship is an integral part of life in Samoa, the holistic concept of mentoring was woven into teachers' responses and praxis. The study undertaken was to find out whether mentoring occurred in the first years of novice teachers' professional development.

Literature review

According to Rhodes et al. (2005), mentoring enhances desirable behaviour such as in academic situations or job performance while decreasing undesirable behaviour in addressing teacher retention and attrition (Elafify, 2016; Ng, 2012; Sankar et al., 2011). Moskowitz and Stephens (1997) noted that attrition rates for new teachers are higher "in their first three years of teaching and five times higher than those of more experienced teachers" (p. 6). In Samoa, "from 2015–2017, 217 teachers left the teaching profession and 146 out of 217 (67%) resigned while the other 71 (33%) were terminated" (Lauano MESC, personal communication, 2019).

Many factors contributed to teacher attrition, such as workload, classroom discipline and motivating students (Dropkin & Taylor, 1963). An AEU (2008) survey conducted on teachers with between one to three years of teaching indicated the top four concerns included workload (68%), behaviour management (66.1%), pay (62.9%), and class size (62.6%). Moreover, new teachers pointed to insufficient support provided by schools and administrators such as too many responsibilities and lack of recognition for work in their early years (Hudson & Hudson, 2016; Kearney, 2014), resulting in new teachers being subjected to stress and burnout. Elafify (2016) noted that retaining novice teachers was a challenge as they need continuous support from school administrators and government officials. In Samoa, Tufue (2019) found that one of the factors inhibiting teachers from transferring learned ideas into the workplace was consistent support from principals and work colleagues.

In teacher performance, Bigelow (2002) and Haney (1997) viewed mentoring as processes to help beginning teachers develop teaching behaviours and strategies. Mentoring is a nurturing relationship between a less experienced and a more experienced individual. This would be similar to how children in a Samoan family are nurtured by significant others in ways to behave, in protocols of the culture, how to become good ambassadors for the family, and their roles during cultural occasions. Mentoring supports new teachers in teaching difficult classes, extra workload and involvement in extracurricular activities (Danielson, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Additionally, Glassford and Salinitri (2017) reiterated the importance of mentoring for teacher retention, which was supported by Boyer and Lee (2001) regarding new special education teachers who indicated mentoring support was their reason for remaining.

A framework for mentoring would focus on a one-to-one support for new teachers guided by experienced teachers into the culture of the teaching profession (Ng, 2012). Similarly, the Samoan concept of mentoring is built on strengthening mutual familial responsibilities. The mentor–mentee relationship centres on trust, openness and support (McGee, 2001). Mentors facilitated the mentees' potential to become independent, accountable and responsible (Lee & Feng, 2007) and the co-constructive relationship of professional learning is reciprocal (Sankar et al., 2011).

Research questions

The purpose of this study was to explore participants' views about the concept of mentoring. The objectives were threefold: 1) To explore teachers' experiences of mentoring during their initial years of teaching; 2) To investigate the type of support teachers received in their first years of teaching; and 3) Whether mentoring, or lack of it, affected their performance.

The main question of the study was: What are teachers' mentoring experiences in teaching?

The sub-questions were: 1) How is the concept of 'mentoring' defined /perceived by teachers?; 2) How do teachers feel about being mentored?; 3) How does being mentored or lack of it affect teachers' performance? 4) How often does mentoring happen and in what manner?; 4) What factors facilitate and or inhibit the mentoring process?

Theoretical framework

A mixed methodology used to collect and analyse data comprising the quantitative and qualitative approaches (Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007). The pragmatism paradigm was employed due to its links and emphasis on mixed methods research (Hall, 2013; Pearce, 2012). Dewey, in Morgan (2014) stated that pragmatism theory is embedded in life itself, which is contextual, emotional and social. According to Feilzer (2010), "Mixed methods research offers to plug this gap by using quantitative methods to measure some aspects of the phenomenon in question and qualitative methods for others" (p. 8). Further, "pragmatism shifts the study of social research to questions such as: how do researchers make choices about why they do research (Morgan, 2014, p. 1051).

Feilzer (2010) believed pragmatism is aligned to an experiential world which is representative of reality based on functionality and its usefulness for people (Rorty, 1999). Alternatively, Denscombe (2008) explored the use of communities of practice pragmatist approach on differences and methodological alternatives. It provided for a third alternative when other approaches would not adequately deliver a viable option for the phenomenon researched.

Communities of practice were related to the social learning theories that emphasised group participation. The concept, as others argued, was a distinct demarcation between practitioners or teachers as opposed to researchers or academics. Denscombe (2008) advocated for communities of practice as underlying pragmatism in mixed research "there is no clear distinction between practitioners and researchers. The practice is

research; the research is the practice” (p. 6). As such, in his view, the two are inextricably linked.

Research design

The study utilised the quantitative and qualitative data with pragmatism adopted to conduct this survey in two phases; the collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by qualitative data through in-depth interviews and focus group sessions. As culture was an important component of the research, the qualitative indigenous methodology of *talanoa* guided interactions and communication between the researchers and participants. *Talanoa* (Otunuku, 2011) is appropriate for researching Pasifika indigenous knowledge and epistemologies because it is “... culturally sensitive and recognizes the participants’ social relationship as an appropriate context for collecting data” (p. 51). Faavae et al. (2016) claimed *talanoa* is deeply woven into the everyday lives of Pasifika people and Vaoleti (2006) contended it involved exchanging and weaving emotional stories of lived experiences. Twenty teachers who graduated from 2016-2018 were purposively selected for individual *talanoa* sessions. A form was given to all participants to sign upon consent.

The survey questionnaire had 30 questions: demographics, certification and professional development, mentoring, support system and teacher attrition. Pragmatism in mixed methods is seen as a two-way prong where the quantitative data would contribute to a “breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration” (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 123). A total of 226 in-service teachers enrolled in the 2020 FOE programmes were given the survey questionnaire. These were then analysed by a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) which provided descriptive analysis.

Qualitative analysis supplemented the survey. Responses were classified and according to questions and emerging themes which were examined for their particularities, similarities or uniqueness. This two-phase design enabled the researchers to adapt the interview questions and focus group discussions using the survey findings. Feilzer (2010) claimed “uncertainty as part of any human data should be balanced against the need for flexibility to provide the opportunity to address the unpredicted” (p. 14). Two focus group sessions of in-service teachers participated in discussions to further substantiate information solicited during the survey and interviews.

Findings

The findings are presented on a question-by-question basis using the qualitative component to extrapolate the quantitative aspect from the data that specifically targeted the research questions.

Question 1: What is your concept of mentoring?

Participants’ perception of mentoring indicated 80% defined mentoring as including: continuous nurturing by mentor; observation and critiquing of lessons; working with a mentor; and professional development. Mentoring was seen as professional development. One participant said “mentoring [comprise] strategies and ways to

improve teaching and service”. Respondents also perceived mentoring as coaching or guidance by the principal, an experienced senior staff or colleague “someone who guides, supports, helps and encourages particularly on what you would like to learn or know”. Another added, “It involves experienced teachers that we seek assistance from as they have the expertise, understanding and knowhow regarding education.” Inherent is the notion of being *nurtured*, as opposed to being *directed* which is extremely crucial in the mentoring process.

Question 2: What do you consider as the most important aspect of mentoring? Why?

The interview data highlighted the notion of trust in mentoring and as one participant said, “Trust between people is the key as what I hear, observe, the way people act and conduct themselves will influence my own teaching practice and performance.” Trust was also stressed by another, “The mentor and mentee relationship of trust opens pathways for better communication and understanding the mentee’s needs.”

Respondents also believed maintaining confidentiality was crucial in a relationship “Trust is important when you share your weakness with someone, for example, asking for specific teaching pedagogies. I believe that request would be confidential.” Another teacher remarked, “trusting a mentor to give good advice when you are in doubt. It helps one to become a better and confident teacher.”

Question 3: What support were you given as a novice teacher?

Participants acknowledged the types of support that new teachers received in their first years of teaching. Advice was the highest (98%), school resources (48%) a teacher to work with (44%) and equipment for specific subjects the least.

During interviews, participants explained that advice included community respect, assistance from other teachers and appropriate behaviour. As one said, “Principals should share community duties, obligations and responsibilities with the new teachers.” Respondents also mentioned advice regarding the teacher’s role and performance of duties; planning, teaching, classroom organization and corporal punishment. One participant offered:

The principal ensures there is accountability in the care and teaching of students, avoiding the use of corporal punishment, effective and efficient classroom practice, attendance and punctuality. In essence, novice teachers are informed of work expectations, ethics and teacher professionalism in their first year of teaching.

However, some teachers spoke about the importance of knowing one’s position in the staff’s hierarchical structure: “I had to observe and follow the practices of my superiors and senior teachers” suggesting that beginning teachers are aware that senior teachers are entitled to respect regarding their status and experience.

Novice teachers appreciated working with another teacher (44%), and during interviews indicated their preference for experienced teachers who are resourceful, reliable and know the job well. As one participant stated, “It is great to work with veteran teachers in schools that have the expertise to enhance one’s professional growth.”

Support with school resources (48%) consisted of text books, the new curriculum and old schemes. During interviews novice teachers referred to “Resources students use such as text books, the curriculum workbooks, informative displays and portfolio of students work.” The survey data also indicated support for Science equipment, SRA Readers, PE and Art. Data from the interviews suggested materials facilitated teaching and inspired teachers to conduct Science experiments. One participant pointed out “Experiments are easily carried out with Science equipment like primus, beakers, funnels, test tubes, and others. Likewise, sports and art equipment make activities for these subjects easier to learn and enjoyable.”

All participants interviewed had some form of professional development or training in their first year which included sports, literacy and numeracy strategies, curriculum unpacking and student assessment.

Question 4: What support was highly needed by teachers in their first year of teaching?

A significant number of participants (43%) regarded support from other teachers as the type of support the needed most assistance with. The interview data defined support types as novice teachers observing experienced teachers’ style of teaching, gaining sound knowledge of the ministry policies and maintaining good relationships with other teachers and the principal. One participant revealed, “I observed an experienced teacher teaching a class in relation to teacher-student interaction and questioning techniques. In addition, I was briefed about the MESC policies including working collaboratively with other staff members and the principal.” Another said, “The principal explained how to use the curriculum, to link concepts in each of the learning areas and the relationship to other subject areas”.

The preparation of resources ranked second, at 42%. One respondent said, “Experienced teachers provided resourceful and colourful activities that demonstrated creative and innovative ways to encourage and stimulate student learning.” Lesson planning at 41% was ranked third in new teachers’ priority list. One major difficulty encountered by novice teachers was planning which involved “weekly, unit and annual plans”.

Class management at 22% of the survey indicated a need in classroom organisation and supervision. One respondent agreed: “Classroom management and teaching are critical components and should guarantee that effective learning takes place.” Prepared lessons and units, relevant and applicable resources, and teacher attendance and punctuality augment student learning.

Question 5: Should MESC conduct and be responsible for a mentoring programme for new teachers? Why?

In the focus group sessions, all teachers welcomed a mentoring programme for new teachers and for MESC to institutionalise the programme. One said, “although new teachers are degree holders they still have a lot to learn to become effective teachers”. The same teacher believed “mentoring guidelines provide a solid basis to enhance new teachers’ capabilities.” Another said, “it is nurturing and developing teachers to extend

their expertise, a form of continuous development” or, as another pointed out, it is “sharing with others in order to develop and improve in the profession. One remarked “this would enable MESC to monitor teachers work during visits”. Another teacher referred to support as “enabling the new teacher to make links between the theories taught at university and the practical reality of the classroom.”

In addition, teachers referred to a school-based approach in mentoring new teachers with the principal to monitor. Others advocated the use of experienced and senior staff in the profession to collaborate and share with the new recruits “they have a lot of experience on to improve teaching and enhance children’s learning.”

Question 6: Why do teachers leave the service?

About 62% of teachers indicated they would leave the service because of work overload and inadequate salary, followed by 41% leaving the country, and another 41% for better job opportunities elsewhere. Only 8% felt that they were not getting enough support from the school, principal and staff.

During focus group discussions, teachers responded that principals had a major role to play in teachers leaving with regards to decision making, discrimination, exclusion, favouritism including language use, attitude and behavior of other colleagues and feeling suppressed. Teachers also pointed to unscheduled visits by MESC which was perceived as a set-up. In addition, community support was lacking.

When teachers were asked what would prevent them from leaving, close to 69% indicated more collaboration with the principal and staff, 47% felt more support in the initial years, 44% pointed to opportunities to grow on the job and 38% mentioned a good mentor. For most teachers the workload 61% was seen as breaking point, salary 42%, class size at 30%, and the lack of support from the school and behavior management was the least concern. To continue in the teaching profession, 60% indicated better salary, 28% pointed to smaller class size, 27% indicated reduced workload and behaviour management about 11%.

In focus group discussions, teacher retention would rely on good leadership and management practice, more job autonomy without unplanned MESC visits and better salaries.

Question 7: What preventative measures could be taken to offset teacher attrition

Over 90% of teachers had difficulties in their first year of teaching. Contributing factors were reported in the following order: resource preparation, classroom discipline, lacking confidence, getting to know the principal and motivating children. Other difficulties included class size, teaching advanced students, getting to know staff members and introducing new ways of teaching.

Teachers (83%) kept records of intervention measures carried out in the classroom, 72% mentioned sharing with more experienced teachers, 38% indicated the teacher’s record book, 36% on student portfolio and 30% on co-operation projects with other teachers. The data implied the importance of intervention practices to ensure new teachers plan activities, support each other and are accountable for student learning.

Responses relating to the support new teachers received indicated salary (60%) as the highest facilitating factor, adequate support from school and principal (41%), class size (27%), workload (27%) and behaviour management (9%).

Discussion and implications

The research aimed at exploring teachers' experiences concerning the concept of mentoring and factors affecting teachers' work. Discussion focused on the following: *mentoring concept, support, professional training, teacher challenges and preventative measures.*

Mentoring concept

The concept of mentoring involved a more experienced teacher supporting and guiding the new teacher into the teaching profession (Ng, 2012). The majority of teachers in the current study defined mentoring in a broad manner, which encompassed: continuous mentor nurturing; critiquing of observation lessons; working with a mentor; and professional development. Interpretation indicated teachers may not be quite familiar with the mentoring concept in relation to teaching. While mentoring plays a critical role in the Samoan culture within families, community activities and ceremonial functions, its application in the context of teaching is yet to be clearly defined. The findings showed a lack of mentoring for new teachers in the teaching profession could have attributed to teacher attrition over the years. Glassford and Salinitri (2017) argued that mentoring is essential for retention of new teachers and it is crucial for the MESC to consider a mentoring programme to curtail attrition.

Teachers' narratives connected mentoring to nurturing and guidance which is similar to the Samoan perception that highlighted the role of experienced and significant adults. Ng (2012) reiterated mentoring as the expert guiding the new teacher into the culture of the teaching profession. The mentors' role in developing the mentee was also echoed by Lee and Feng (2007) and Moir et al. (2009), as mentors guide novice teachers to become independent, accountable and responsible.

Significantly, trust in a mentoring relationship (Nash, 2010) was crucial and teachers could identify with this issue in the Samoan context. One of the challenges in a small community is trustworthiness in maintaining confidentiality. Burks (2010) stated, "Confidentiality is a hallmark of that trust and new teachers must know that mentors will not consider what is said in mentor-protégé conferences as fodder for water fountain gossip" (p. 54). According to McGee (2001), the importance of trust, openness and support in an effective mentor-mentee relationship is critical.

Support

Regarding teacher retention, Hudson and Hudson (2016) and Kearney (2014) noted that lack of support by schools and administrators for teachers in the early years led to teacher burnout. Participants indicated the importance of support or advice from principals and senior staff (Easley, 2006; Tufue, 2019; Villani, 2002). Others were not familiar with education policies which would be crucial for understanding their

role, expectations and entitlements as teachers. In the Samoan cultural context, the experienced elders would demonstrate to younger members, the protocols of society and their role in cultural affairs. Advice on how teachers conducted themselves in and out of class and building rapport with the community is crucial given the role society plays in children's education. Mentoring should support novice teachers in expected behaviours and strategies (Bigelow, 2002; Haney, 1997). Elafify (2016) noted that retaining novice teachers required continuous support which included pedagogical skills, policy familiarisation and relational issues. Moreover, new teachers should be supported in designing resources to demonstrate creativity, versatility and pedagogical variations in teaching and learning.

Training programme

Participants favoured new teachers undergoing a mentoring programme institutionalized by the MESC for effective service and teacher retention for quality teaching. Ingersoll and Kralik 2004 (as cited in Kearney, 2014, p. 6) showed that novice teachers' practice should be guided towards acculturation in the profession in a joint effort "involving orientation, support and guidance for beginning teachers." Effective mentoring programmes would reduce the pressure new teachers' face in teaching the most difficult classes, having more classes and extracurricular involvement (Danielson, 1999; Feiman-Nemsar, 2001).

Mentoring for beginning teachers has bridged the gap from student to teacher. Kearney (2014) identified characteristics of effective induction mentoring practice: a mentor; collaboration; structured observation; reduced teaching/free time for the beginning teacher; teacher evaluation; and continuous professional development. Significantly, Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) expressed that "Mentoring of new teachers will never reach its potential unless it is guided by a deeper conceptualization that treats it as central to the task of transforming the teaching profession itself" (p. 1).

Villani (2002) noted "The lack of support for beginning teachers appears to be grounded in the erroneous belief that they have learned all they need to know to be successful in their preparation programs" (p. x), and to "engage beginning teachers in self-assessment, reflection on practice, and formative assessment" (p. xi). Villani also encouraged mentors and mentees partnership, pointing to the "positive impact of these relationships on new teachers' orientation to the school system, socialization to the school culture, and improved effectiveness in promoting student learning" (p. 7). Furthermore, "Those who have had mentors said repeatedly that it was the support and encouragement of the mentor, sometimes on a daily basis at the beginning of the year, which made the difference in their ability to see the possibility of themselves becoming competent and successful teachers" (p. 9).

Kemmis et al. (2014) examined three contested practice in other countries to assist new teachers through probation, traditional mentoring and support, and peer-group. As Fletcher and Strong (2009) noted, the support for mentoring is widespread but research evidence of efficacy is inadequate.

Teacher attrition

Findings indicated salary and workload as influential factors facilitating and or inhibiting teachers' performance. Kardos and Johnson's (2010) study found that experienced mentors were present in new teachers' lives as they take on their teaching responsibilities but the mentor-mentee match could be tailor-made to fit the needs and expectations of the mentee. Furthermore, Kardos and Johnson mentioned new teachers were not observed, nor did they have discussions with mentors on some of the core functions of teaching. Research pointed to workload as a critical contributing factor that caused teachers to leave the profession (Australian Education Union, 2008; Danielson, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Dropkin & Taylor, 1963; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Hudson & Hudson, 2016). Tufue (2019) also mentioned education reforms in Samoa which have impacted on teacher performance and MESC should consider this. Novice teachers felt school and community support was lacking and has further added to tension, anxiety and fatigue (Kearney, 2014). The problems beginning teachers faced are felt worldwide and will continue to contribute to an incapacitated profession if not addressed.

Preventative measures

Most new teachers in this study encountered difficulties in their first year of teaching. Liston et al. (2006) stated that new teachers' theoretical grounding did not adequately equip them for the pressures of a classroom. Contributing factors included resource preparation, classroom discipline, lacking confidence, getting to know the principal and motivating children. Other difficulties involved class size, teaching advanced students, building relationships with staff members and introducing new ways of teaching. Problems were mainly overcome through discussions with the principal and other staff members, trial presentations, reading, researching and scouting for environmental resources. Betoret's study conducted in 2006 (as cited in Fisher, 2011) found that teachers with higher coping strategies and self-efficacy were motivated, satisfied and less likely to be stressed out. Intervention measures to assist, monitor, and share ideas would enhance quality mentoring relationships (Ozder, 2011). Moreover, student records, portfolios and displaying projects, group activities and group experiments would support teachers in identifying student learning and performance. Finally, McCarthy et al. (2009) suggested reducing excessive workload to offset teachers' negative feelings.

Classroom inequalities in the number of children with special needs, assistants, and teacher duties outside the classroom could affect teacher performance. Therefore, principals would need to reassess the classroom environment and consider reallocating resources so teachers perceive equity (McCarthy et al., 2009).

Generally, participants pointed to more collaboration with the principal, staff and novice teachers' in the initial years in order to grow on the job. Ozder (2011) reiterated collaborative work between the mentors and mentees for effective mentoring. In focus group sessions, school leadership was seen as a critical element in preventing teacher attrition regarding workload and reduced class size.

Conclusion

The research explored teachers' mentoring experiences and whether mentoring, or lack of it, affected performance. While most discussed the role of the principal and experienced staff, there was little evidence in terms of a mentor–mentee relationship to ensure new teachers were consistently supported in the early years. The broad manner in which teachers defined mentoring indicated familiarity with the concept of professional development, which is all encompassing of the Samoan way of life. Mentoring, or faafailelega, is perceived by participants as holistic, merging the school and the cultural context.

Participants' view on professional development was seen as one size fits all. Depending on what MESC had to offer and what schools felt was essential, then that was the focus for professional development. Minimal consideration was given to the new teacher being continuously mentored by a more experienced teacher, although the data collected pointed to those key people as critical for professional development.

Surveys undertaken in other countries replicate what was seen in Samoa with workload, class sizes and salary as contributing factors. Due to policy and curriculum changes and many education reforms the system had undergone in the last 10 years, new teachers are confronted with overwhelming expectations that some of them have difficulty fulfilling, and leaving was a preferable option.

Undoubtedly, small education systems like Samoa's would need mechanisms to minimise teacher attrition. A mentoring programme would support teacher retention, as most new teachers leave the system in the first five years of teaching. Teacher retention and teacher attrition are two sides of the same coin and should be addressed. Factors that have greatly impacted teachers' decision to leave are workload, huge class numbers, inadequate support and poor salaries. Resource preparation, motivating students and understanding policies, curriculum and education reforms were also critical in new teachers' decisions to leave.

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Orientation regarding exposure to failure and conceptions of failure: Two studies of cross-cultural comparison between Germany and Japan

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Abstract

Different students' motivational variables (goal orientation, perceived reference-norm orientation and orientation regarding exposure to failure) are in a complex co-action. In our first study, we focus on the correlations of these motivational variables in a Western country (Germany) as well as in an Eastern country (Japan). Further, we provide explanations for the statistically significant differences between both countries that we found and, in closing, we discuss briefly implications for learning processes, further scientific research and schools.

Our second study takes a closer look at teachers' and students' conceptions of failure in both countries in order to find out, through examples, whether cross-cultural comparisons are justified. Categories for the teachers' and students' conceptions of failure are identified and different weightings regarding those mentioned are shown. The results suggest that German and Japanese conceptions of failure are comparable. Differences between both countries hold hints for improving learning processes.

Keywords: Orientations, Conceptions, Failure, Germany, Japan

Introduction

Besides the cognitive aspects, the motivational aspects of learning processes have significant importance. Former research has shown that there is a complex co-action between different students' motivational variables such as goal orientation, perceived reference-norm orientation and orientation regarding exposure to failure (Helmke, 2009). It is a well-known stereotype that individuals from Asian countries tend to hide mistakes more than individuals from Western countries. On the other hand, we know that, in Asia, people try to improve (for example, industrial processes) in a very distinct way (Hemmi, 2006). How do these two tendencies fit together when it comes to exposure to failure regarding learning processes in school? This is a question that leads us to take a closer look to the correlations between the different students' motivational variables, as well as to make a comparison between an Eastern and a Western country.

Theoretical framework

Correlations between students' orientation regarding exposure to failure and other motivational variables, such as different goal orientations and the perception of

teachers' orientation on reference norms, have been postulated by authors of many publications (in summary: Rheinberg, 2006), but were rarely empirically investigated (but: Schöne et al., 2004). We first look at students' goal orientation, perceived reference-norm orientation and orientation regarding exposure to failure. Second, we focus on correlations between these variables and third, we report findings regarding academic and cultural differences between Germany and Japan, especially with a view to exposure to failure and conceptions of failure.

Students' goal orientation

In pedagogical-psychological research two types of goal orientations are generally discriminated: learning goals, which basically focus on the learning progress and the enhancement of competences, and performance goals, which rather focus either on showing the achievement (*performance-approach goals*) or on hiding own deficiencies (*performance-avoidance goals*) (Köller & Schiefele, 2006).

Students' perception of teachers' orientation on individual/social reference norm

Students' perception of teachers' orientation on individual reference norm tells to which extent the students think that their teacher observes individual progress in learning and achievement. This is important because the efforts of teachers to encourage their students are generative, especially if these efforts are perceived by the students (Rheinberg, 2006). Students' perception of teachers' orientation on social reference norm tells to which extent the students think that their teacher focuses on social comparisons between the students' achievement. There are inconsistent findings regarding the effects of this orientation (Köller & Schiefele, 2006).

Students' orientation regarding exposure to failure

Crucial is how students deal with experiences of failure (e.g., with a focus on mistakes as learning opportunities) in a positive way, or (with a focus on mistakes as deficiencies that should be hidden) in a negative way (Helmke, 2009; Oser & Spychiger, 2005). Tulis and Dresel (2018) as well as Tulis et al. (2016) report that feedback regarding mistakes has a strong influence both on a learner's motivation and on his or her emotions and that this influence normally is negative. The authors also emphasise that learners have to be able to deal with errors in an adaptive and reflexive manner in order to improve learning processes. Steuer and Dresel (2015) argued that a favourable error climate (that is, how pupils in a classroom deal with student mistakes), can foster learning processes by supporting learning from errors. Further analyses of the authors revealed interrelations between achievement in mathematics and the error climate.

Correlations between students' goal orientation, perceived reference-norm orientation and orientation regarding exposure to failure

Schöne et al. (2004) found that students prefer those reference norms providing information about the goals they pursue: A learning goal orientation is more likely to be associated with an individual reference norm orientation, whereas a performance

goal orientation is more likely to be associated with a social reference norm orientation. Therefore we assume that students with a higher learning goal orientation also have a more positive orientation regarding exposure to failure.

Academic differences between Germany and Japan

In most of the Federal States of Germany, students undergo a relatively early selection process. After the 4th grade, there is a tracking into three different types of school: *Hauptschule*, *Realschule* and *Gymnasium*. At the end of the 4th grade, parents can ask the class teacher to issue a recommendation for a specific kind of secondary school. This recommendation is based on the marks of the main subjects like mathematics, German and social studies, as well as on the appraisal of the social behaviour, learning behaviour and work habits. An important point is that the German school system is permeable, which means that students can switch between the different types of secondary schools after each year if they show certain competences (especially good marks).

In the Japanese school system, there is almost no between-class ability grouping during compulsory education for nine years and even within schools there is no external form of performance differentiation (external differentiation is rejected because it provides social and emotional damage to the pupils with learning difficulties).

It is generally known in Japan that the results of entrance exams for universities are very important for students' future career. The importance of school success determines the behaviour of Japanese students and their parents: Students learn more intensely and more persistently than students of the same age in Germany and they are intensively supported by their parents, i.e., by funding private lessons at a cram school (*Juku*).

Empirical research on cultural differences between Western and Eastern countries focus on the different roles of school in society (Sakurai, 2007). One finding is that Japanese students are encouraged to study by their parents even if their teachers are not very motivated (Ichikawa, 1990). Reusser et al. (1998) summarised the main results of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in which there were more than 230 lessons in mathematics recorded on video in Japan, Germany and in the USA. Comparative analyses (both quantitative and qualitative) showed several cultural differences in class between the three countries: The aspiration level regarding the content was the most distinct in Japan, followed by Germany and the USA. Mathematical terms and operations in German and Japanese classes were more often discussed whereas USA teachers more often explained and demonstrated them. During lessons in Germany and in the USA students mostly mastered exercise tasks, whereas Japanese students more often solved mathematical problems that were new to them. There were also differences in organisation of lessons and in both teachers' and students' activities in class.

In the German school system there are selection processes during and between each academic year. In Japan however, the school itself has no function of selection as this is linked to entrance examinations (Ichikawa, 1990; Schubert, 2001, 1992).

Cultural differences between Germany and Japan

Geert Hofstede defined culture as ‘the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one category of people from another.’ [...] When parents returning from the hospital carry their baby over the threshold, they have often already made one of their first culturally based decisions- where the baby will sleep. A Japanese child is invariably put in the same room as the parents, near the mother, for at least the first couple of years. British and American children are often put in a separate room, right away or after a few weeks or months. The inferences for the child’s dependence or interdependence and problem-solving abilities are obvious. (Lewis, 2013, p. 17)

“Western children quickly develop initiative on their own and gain early experience in problem solving. Japanese children, by contrast, are encouraged to be completely dependent on those close to them and to develop a sense of interdependence that will stay with them throughout life.” (Lewis, 2013, p. 509). The author further describes that we generally learn by interacting with people from the same cultural background, and that the closer we stick to the rules of our society, the more accepted we become. This might be a reason why – in general – there are tendencies to avoid mistakes and to hide failure from others.

Cultural differences regarding exposure to failure and conceptions of failure between Germany and Japan

There are no particular empirical results, either to differences regarding exposure to failure or to conceptions of failure between both countries to be found. A study by De Castella et al., (2013) refers to the classic distinction between fear of failure and success orientations that can often be found in the literature on achievement and motivation. They explored how these approach and avoidance orientations were related to self-handicapping, defensive pessimism, and experience of helplessness when they compared results from Eastern and Western settings. The first study was conducted with 1423 Japanese high school students. The results showed that helplessness and self-handicapping were highest when the students were low in success orientation and high in fear of failure. The second study was conducted with 643 Australian students and the findings of the Japanese study were replicated. The authors concluded that fear of failure is associated with a variety of maladaptive self-protective strategies in the absence of firm achievement goals.

Fundamental for learning processes, and also for orientations regarding exposure to failure, are communication patterns and listening habits. Both depend on the culture in which an individual is growing up. Lewis (2013) compared communication patterns and listening habits of different countries and remarked, concerning German culture:

The German communication style is frank, open, direct and often loud. Truth comes before diplomacy. [...] Germans listen well because they are disciplined and always willing to learn more. They have a long attention span when absorbing information and especially like repetition and plenty of background information. (Lewis, 2013, p. 225)

We have to say that here the author referred mainly to adults. Regarding Japanese culture, the following information is given: One of the major values in Japan is the “protection of everyone’s face.”

*According to the Benjamin Whorf theory, the language we speak determines, to a significant degree, our way of thinking. The Japanese themselves use language in a completely different way from the rest of us. Japanese is often described as a vague or ambiguous language. [...] This vagueness is frequently used on purpose by Japanese conversationalists who wish to absolve anyone of possible blame and demonstrate politeness. [...] Japanese audiences are disciplined and attentive [...]; they are there to be courteous and to create personal harmony. **How** [emphasis added] you address them is what matters. (Lewis, 2013 pp. 511-512)*

Research questions

Our first study presents research focused on the questions: Are there statistically significant correlations between students’ goal orientation, perceived reference-norm orientation and orientation regarding exposure to failure, and are there differences between Germany and in Japan in regard to the mentioned variables?

Our second study takes a closer look at teachers’ and students’ conceptions of failure in both countries. The purpose of this study is to find categories for the conceptions of failure that the students and teachers mention in both countries and to compare the numbers of mentions in order to show different weightings and their meaning for learning processes.

Methods

Instruments and analyses

In both studies we used questionnaires, but mixed methods:

In Study 1, we first compared the mentioned variables means of Germany and Japan. Item examples of the scales are shown in Table 1, p.34. Then we added cross-sectional analysis for each country.

In Study 2, each interviewed person had the opportunity to give an open response to the following questions:

Teachers’ questionnaire:

1. Imagine: A student failed during class. Which example comes to your mind first?
2. From your point of view: What is an example of a student’s typical failure during your lessons? (Choose one of your subjects!)

Students’ questionnaire:

1. Imagine: You failed during class. Which example comes to your mind first?
2. When did one of your classmates last fail during class? Tell: What kind of failure was it?
3. About which failure during class you have thought about for a long time after? Please tell!

Table 1: Constructs and Item Examples of the Students' Questionnaire (Study 1)

Construct	Item example
Students' learning goal orientation (8 items; Cronbach's $\alpha = .76$)	"In school it is important to me to learn as much as possible." The items have been processed using a 5-stage response format from <i>absolutely right</i> to <i>not right at all</i> .
Students' performance goal orientation (approach) (7 items; Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$)	"In school it is important to me that the others take notice if I'm doing well in tests." The items have been processed using a 5-stage response format from <i>absolutely right</i> to <i>not right at all</i> .
Students' performance goal orientation (avoidance) (8 items; Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$)	"In school it is important to me that nobody takes notice if I don't understand something." The items have been processed using a 5-stage response format from <i>absolutely right</i> to <i>not right at all</i> .
Students' perception of teachers' orientation on individual reference norm (3 items; Cronbach's $\alpha = .76$)	"My teachers think a good achievement is if it is better than my result before." The items have been processed using a 6-stage response format from <i>absolutely right</i> to <i>not right at all</i> .
Students' perception of teachers' orientation on social reference norm (3 items; Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$)	"My teachers think a good achievement is if it is better than the achievement of the others." The items have been processed using a 6-stage response format from <i>absolutely right</i> to <i>not right at all</i> .
Students' orientation regarding exposure to failure (7 items; Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$)	"When I make a mistake, I systematically try to correct it by myself." The items have been processed using a 6-stage response format from <i>absolutely right</i> to <i>not right at all</i> .

In Germany, we used the word *Fehler*, which is an equivalent for the English word *failure*. *Machigai* was the Japanese word for *failure* used in the students' questionnaire. This word indicates a general meaning of failure. In the teachers' questionnaire *tsumazuki* was used. This word is commonly used in school contexts, and its meaning is also close to the English word *stumble*. In order to investigate the students' and the teachers' conceptions of failure, a German language version in Germany, and a Japanese language version with a translation of the same items in Japan were used. The German questionnaire was translated into Japanese by a Japanese colleague who speaks German as well as Japanese. In order to receive a translation that is as precise as possible, the first version of this translation was presented to several other Japanese colleagues. They were

separately asked to give hints to words or sentences that could lead to misunderstandings. Their hints were also integrated into the revision of the questionnaire and they helped to improve the Japanese version.

In order to receive exact as possible results, we gave the completed Japanese questionnaires to a professional translator.

Based on qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2003), we identified categories for the teachers' and students' conceptions of failure and we traced different weightings regarding the mentions.

Data sources and design of the study

In both studies, questionnaires were used: A German language version and a Japanese language version with a translation of the same items.

In Study 1, investigations with $N = 999$ students from Germany and $N = 343$ Japanese students of the same age were made in 2008/2009.

In Study 2, we surveyed $N = 14$ teachers and $N = 77$ students from German primary schools and $N = 19$ teachers and $N = 170$ students from primary schools in Hiroshima, Japan, in February 2014.

Results

Study 1:

We assumed that students who have a higher learning goal orientation would also have a more positive orientation regarding exposure to failure. The results show that this is the case in Germany as well as in Japan.

Further, we found statistically significant differences of means between German and Japanese students' goal orientations, their orientation regarding exposure to failure and their perception of teachers' orientation on individual reference norm. We found no differences of means between their perceptions of teachers' orientation on social reference norm (shown in Table 2, p.36).

German students more often tend to deal with mistakes in a positive way, regarding them as opportunities to learn.

Furthermore, there were statistically significant differences between Germany and Japan mainly regarding two of these correlations: that between learning and performance goal orientation (avoidance) and between performance goal orientation (avoidance) and perceived individual reference-norm orientation (shown in Tables 3, p.37 and Table 4, p.38).

Study 2:

In Study 2, results show that in both countries three major categories for the teachers' and students' conceptions of failure can be identified: 1. Reasons for failure; 2. Types of failure; and 3. Students' coping respectively with reactions regarding failure (shown in Table 5, p.39).

In both countries, most mentions are regarding types of failure. In this category, both teachers and students of the two countries mostly mention *failure in major subjects* (e.g., mathematics, first language).

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of German and Japanese Students' Goal Orientation, Perceived Reference-Norm Orientation and Orientation Regarding Exposure to Failure (Study 1)

	Germany			Japan		
	M	SD	N	M	SD	N
Learning goal orientation	4.25	.50	999	3.82	.62	343
Performance goal orientation (approach)	3.66	.73	999	2.56	.69	343
Performance goal orientation (avoidance)	3.08	.85	999	2.40	.64	343
Perceived individual reference-norm orientation	4.98	.86	999	4.12	1.05	335
Perceived social reference-norm orientation	3.02	1.25	999	3.10	1.21	335
Orientation regarding exposure to failure	4.86	.72	999	4.03	.95	341

In Japan, students' second-most numerous mentions are regarding *failure in minor subjects* (e.g., music, art, physical education) and extracurricular fields; whereas none of the German students mentioned this sub-category.

In Germany, students' second-most numerous mentions are regarding *failure in social behaviour* and *breaking rules*, whereas only a few students (and none of the teachers) in Japan mentioned this sub-category.

Scientific and scholarly significance of the studies

Study 1:

The cross-cultural comparison shows that, in both countries, students' learning goal orientation is the highest score of all goal orientations. Further, the gap between the other goal orientations is noticeable especially in Japan. Our attempt to explain these findings uses a phenomenon called *Ganbarism*. *Ganbarism* means that, in Japan, always straining and improving oneself is a pattern of attitude and a virtue of Japanese culture (Haasch, 1999; Hemmi, 2006).

In respect of students' orientation regarding social comparison, the cross-cultural comparison shows: Students' perception of teachers' orientation on social reference norm in comparison to students' perception of teachers' orientation on individual

Table 3: Cross-section Analysis of German Students' Goal Orientation, Perceived Reference-Norm Orientation and Orientation Regarding Exposure to Failure (Study 1)

	L.g.o.	P.g.app.	P.g.av.	P.i.r.n.o.	P.s.r.n.o.	O.r.e.f.
Learning goal orientation (L.g.o.)	1	.41**	.20**	.31**	n.s.	.51**
Performance goal orientation (approach) (P.g.app.)	.41**	1	.64**	.23**	.31**	.26**
Performance goal orientation (avoidance) (P.g.av.)	.20**	.64**	1	.09**	.28**	n.s.
Perceived individual reference-norm orientation (P.i.r.n.o.)	.31**	.23**	.09**	1	.08*	.43**
Perceived social reference-norm orientation (P.s.r.n.o.)	n.s.	.31**	.28**	.08*	1	n.s.
Orientation regarding exposure to failure (O.r.e.f.)	.51**	.26**	n.s.	.43**	n.s.	1

Note: Only correlations that are statistically significant (* $p < .05$ / ** $p < .01$) are reported.

reference norm is more important in Japan than it is in Germany. Our explanation is that there is more defined competition in Japan, especially within and between families (LeTendre et al., 2003; Schubert 1998; Toyama-Bialke 1999), and that Japanese students are also sensitive regarding this strong competition in school.

In relation to students' orientation regarding exposure to failure, the cross-cultural comparison shows that there is a statistically significant higher correlation between *performance goal orientation (approach)* and *orientation regarding exposure to failure* in Germany than in Japan. This finding is not easily interpreted, which might be the starting-point for further research.

Study 1's findings point out the close relation and importance of students' mentioned variables. A strengthened focus on this correlation is crucial for a professional, high-quality planning of lessons and implementation of *best practice* in class. Further implications remain to be outlined for teacher education and training.

In regard to the study's limitations, we have to say that an examination with a larger

Table 4: Cross-section analysis of Japanese students' goal orientation, perceived reference-norm orientation and orientation regarding exposure to failure (study 1)

	L.g.o.	P.g.app.	P.g.av.	P.i.r.n.o.	Ps.r.n.o.	O.r.e.f.
Learning goal orientation (L.g.o.)	1	.30**	n.s.	.31**	n.s.	.50**
Performance goal orientation (approach) (P.g.app.)	.30**	1	.59**	.20**	.43**	.13*
Performance goal orientation (avoidance) (P.g.av.)	n.s.	.59**	1	n.s.	.32**	n.s.
Perceived individual reference-norm orientation (P.i.r.n.o.)	.31**	.20**	n.s.	1	.31**	.40**
Perceived social reference-norm orientation (Ps.r.n.o.)	n.s.	.43**	.32**	.31**	1	n.s.
Orientation regarding exposure to failure (O.r.e.f.)	.50**	.13*	n.s.	.40**	n.s.	1

Note: Only correlations that are statistically significant (* $p < .05$. / ** $p < .01$) are reported.

sample would be necessary in order to make further statements and that the results are based upon self-reported statements of the students.

Study 2:

First the results show that teachers' and students' conceptions of failure in both countries classify the word *failure* and its associations regarding class into the same major categories. This is a hint of validation regarding one of the main instruments of Study 1: We could show for example, that cross-cultural comparisons are justified in consideration of the possible meanings of the word *failure* in both languages.

A closer look at the numbers of mentions shows: In both countries, teachers as well as students, mostly mention failure in *major subjects* (e.g., mathematics, first language), but in Japan, students' second-most numerous mentions are regarding *failure in minor subjects and extracurricular fields*. Also Japanese teachers (but none of the German)

Table 5: Categories for the conceptions of failure that the teachers and students mention in both countries and numbers of mentions (study 2)

	Germany		Japan	
	Teachers (14)	Students (77)	Teachers (19)	Students (170)
1. Reasons for failure				
Lack of motivation	0	0	3	0
Lack of learning strategies	0	0	2	2
Lack of concentration	4	4	3	5
Lack of accuracy respectively laxness	1	0	0	4
Exam nerves	0	1	0	1
2. Types of failure				
2.1 Failure regarding a certain subject				
Failure in major subjects (i.e. mathematics, first language)	8	90	13	53
Failure in minor subjects (i.e. music, art, physical education) and extracurricular fields	0	0	4	32
Lack of factual knowledge (i.e. in routines and basic tasks)	3	3	6	1
Lack of understanding (i.e. in complex and solving problem-oriented tasks)	2	4	9	0
2.2 Failure in work habits				
Oversights	1	3	0	2
Failure in concentration	2	2	0	1
Failure in using strategies	2	4	2	2
Break of rules regarding work habits (i.e. not making the homework)	1	18	2	21
Lack of accuracy respectively laxness	5	4	1	27
2.3 Failure in social behavior; breaking rules	2	31	0	8
3. Students' coping respectively reactions regarding failure				
Cognitive and emotional aspects; aspects relating to behavior	0	22	0	18
Students improve themselves mutually (cooperative learning) AND students improve themselves individually (own fault diagnostics)	0	9	0	3
Denial of failure	0	2	0	32
Sensation of shame	0	2	0	1
Exam nerves (as reaction to failure)	0	1	0	1
Mindset of prevention regarding failure	0	1	0	5
Improving mistakes retrospectively	0	12	0	0

Note: Multiple answers were possible for each interviewed person.

mentioned this sub-category – this might be a hint for a more holistic view regarding class and learning processes in Japan.

German students' second-most numerous mentions are regarding *failure in social behaviour*; *breaking rules*, whereas only a few students (and none of the teachers) in Japan mentioned this sub-category. One might assume that, in Japan, various sorts of social behaviour are seen as characteristics of *individuality*, and not of *failure*. This might correspond to the *inclusion* of students with special needs in class that is common in Japan, whereas in Germany, at the present time, there are discussions about how to improve the acceptance of teaching all students together (instead of teaching students with special needs in separate types of schools) (Heinrich et al., 2013). Also, with a view to Japan's performances in the PISA studies, these results might be a link to the mentioned discussions in Germany that aim for the best advancement for every single student.

Conclusions

The findings of Study 2 suggest that German and Japanese conceptions of failure are comparable. Our Study 1 showed the importance of addressing the complex correlations between various motivational variables of students. Seifried et al. (2015) define professional error competence as an ability to diagnose errors and identify their potential causes in order to use them constructively for creating learning opportunities. The authors report results from a cross-sectional study with 287 prospective teachers (i.e., student teachers, preservice teachers, and in-service teachers) that shows deficits regarding professional error competence – especially of student teachers and preservice teachers – whereas this competence was much higher for in-service teachers. This leads to the assumption that professional error competence can be developed in learning processes and therefore can be trained during teacher education, too. This conclusion might be important for both Western countries and Eastern countries, regarding the reflection of learning processes in school as well as in universities and even in (business) life and last, but not least, with regard to the unfolding of the individual personality of each person in general.

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A case study on foundation education students' experience of academic culture in a small island nation

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to document and describe students' experience of the Foundation Certificate Education (FCE) at the National University of Samoa (NUS). Findings from the study using a mixed-methods approach indicated that: (1) most students opted for the FCE programme mainly to fulfil a dream; (2) over half the participants found enrolment and orientation informing and inspiring; 3) participants found academic strengths and weaknesses in the courses according to faculty. In general, the findings pointed to the need for more instruction time, for computer and library access, and for increased counselling support. Findings from this study would support an introductory programme that focused on initial teacher preparation staircasing into the BEd Programme that would be relevant for students in the Samoan context.

Introduction

When the Foundation Certificate programme was introduced at NUS there were great expectations, educationally and professionally, that this would assist in ensuring that the Faculty of Education (FOE) meets one of its important mandates – getting quality primary and secondary teachers for the profession. Teacher quality as defined in the National Teacher Development Framework (Ministry of Sports, Education, and Culture, 2018, pp. 5–6) emphasised improved student learning based on pre-service selection, teacher registration, professional standards and teacher performance appraisals. Most students enrolled in the FCE programme aiming to do primary teaching do not have the prerequisite requirements in courses such as mathematics or science. Statistics indicate that, in the last five years, graduates from the FCE programme have decreased from 45% to 22% in 2016 (FOE, 2016). This has implications for FOE in getting graduates from the FCE programme to continue the teaching profession and a high number of students with failing grades were a concern. In this respect it has become more apparent that students' cultural experiences need to be part of academic pursuits. This article reports on the research project that was undertaken to understand students' experiences in the FCE programme with a view to identifying and addressing concerns that may have led to increasing rates of non-completion and failing grades.

Background and context

In 2003, NUS endorsed the FCE programme for students who sat the Pacific Secondary School Certificate (PSSC) and, since 2013, the Samoa Secondary Leaving Certificate

(SSLC) to qualify for entry into the FOE programme. This exposed FCE students to a liberal education with courses offered in other faculties for personal development. Prior to the introduction of the FCE programme in 2004, students enrolled directly into the Diploma in Education to major in the Primary or Secondary Division. The FCE programme mandated four compulsory courses serviced by other faculties: the Faculty of Arts (FOA) offered the English paper HEN004, the Centre of Samoan Studies (CSS) taught Samoan SAU01 and SAU02 and the Faculty of Science (FOS) offered Computer Studies HCS081. Introduction to Education Studies HED001 was the only compulsory FOE course in the programme. Five electives were mostly from the other faculties. The FOE offered courses in the Expressive and Practical Arts (EPA) in Food and Textiles Technology, Health and Physical Education, Visual Arts, Music, Performing Arts, and the FOAS offered courses in Design Technology.

Since its inception, students in the FCE programme have had huge failure rates from courses offered in other faculties. Currently, students enter the faculty programmes based on their marks from the PSSC results requiring (for most) a total of 200+ marks. Consultations, at-risk reports and assessment meetings have not yielded information for resolving the problem. Most interfaculty reports pointed to high absenteeism in class, poor attendance and poor attitudes. Despite counseling from faculty members, individual tutors and lecturers, the Graduation Rates 2006–2015 management analysis indicated that a problem existed. This study strived to find out from students in the FCE what they perceived were some of the obstacles that have contributed to a high failure rate. After nearly 15 years of implementing the FCE programme, an investigation into the predicament may yield information that could address the problem.

Literature review

NUS programmes are developed to provide those who enrol in the various faculties with the best match possible for the profession that they will later pursue. The FOE, like the FOAS, is a service provider and students enrol in the programme on the understanding that they will either be teachers, nurses, or some other trained worker. The NUS, through its Foundation Year programmes, has responded to a specific need to ensure students successfully complete their programmes – especially in the faculties of Arts, Business and Entrepreneurship, and Science and receive scholarships to pursue further education in the rim universities. Foundation programmes were offered to provide students with specific content knowledge and skills to enter degree programmes. Others would continue in the faculty until they graduated and entered the workforce. Currently, students in the FCE programme do not receive overseas awards but some receive sponsorship of fees from MESC. After completing the FCE programme, most have the desire to teach and realize parental aspirations and enter the BED programme. Salary did not appear to be an incentive in students' choice to teach.

Greenbank (2007) examined students from the foundation year and how they handled the academic transition to the final year honours degree at a British university. Similarly, the NUS Foundation programme staircases into degree programmes. Findings illustrated that students faced a lot of pressure, for a variety of reasons, such as different approaches to learning and teaching (Owens, 1996), very little student support

(VanLehn et al., 2007; Owen, 2002) and considerable stress on academic orientation and independent learning (Waters, 2003). Replication of western education systems in academic institutions is divorced from students' cultural orientations that promote competition over collaboration, individualistic rather than cooperative learning, and differences instead of conformity. Ensuring that students complete the FCE programme requires a perspective that accommodate students' past experiences (Owens, 1996) and current expectations at NUS that align with societal and cultural norms.

Universities in England, Australia and New Zealand have one-year foundation programmes to enable students to gain entry to universities. Likewise, the FCE programme was to provide students with an open and flexible education to extend their knowledge and skills before enrolling in the BEd programme. Over the years there have been problems in effectively implementing the FCE programme, hence the huge dropout rates and the high failure rate (FOE, 2016). The foundation programmes are academically demanding courses and consist, primarily, of core academic subjects that specifically target clear career pathways for future studies. These guide students to specific degree courses in the related discipline. Such programmes also provide students with a preference in the areas of mathematics and science. As expected, the outcomes would be different for NUS students as more developed countries are able to meet the cost of these programmes and alternative funding is available for academic pursuits. In the last five years, secondary teaching has been accommodated into other faculties while the BEd Primary continues to reside at FOE. Ako Aotearoa (2010) cited in the 'New Zealand Needs Analysis for Foundation and Bridging Qualifications' stated, "Foundation learning is immensely valuable in that it creates new beginnings for many learners" (NZQA, 2014, p. 15). Access to computers (Thompson, 2012) and library facilities (Richards, 2016) provide students with opportunities to develop and diversify their skills and interests. Moreover, active student–staff engagement plays an important role in supporting student learning (Krause & Coates, 2008) while Stallman (2012) made a case for an adequate counseling support system.

Unlike the foundation programmes offered in other countries, where students enter to qualify for a particular area to follow, FCE students have already made a choice to pursue teaching as a career. Their course selection is provided by the different faculties that focus on a wide selection of courses that may not necessarily be aligned to the school curriculum – hence the disparities in the knowledge and skills students have. Students in the FCE programme do not engage in teaching practice based on the rationale that there is one core education paper and an extensive and insightful knowledge of the existing education system would better prepare them for the reality of the classroom. However, Zeichner (2010) points to a "disconnect between the campus and school-based components of programs" (p. 479). He utilises the concepts of *hybridity* and *third space* where academic practitioners and communities need to integrate knowledge that is less hierarchical and demonstrates a paradigm shift that is inclusive of all partners involved. The Education Act (2009) provides an avenue to ensure that the school and community work in partnership and their role as stakeholders is recognized. Studies by local researchers Tufue-Dolgoy et al. (2019) and Tuia (2018) have reinforced this. Staff believed it could minimize poor attendance as most students need support. According

to Grossman and McDonald (2008) research on teaching and teacher education need to be viewed as a holistic package and a stronger connection with the field could inform policy makers and move education programmes forward (Tufue-Dolgoy et al., 2019; Tuia, 2018). Darling-Hammond (2010) also noted that, in teacher education today, there is not only “the loss of tight connections to the field” (p. 39) but there is also a “fragmentation of courses” (p. 39). To this end, NUS stipulated that all programmes should contain a Samoan paper to ensure students are versatile in the language and culture. This also lends support to the inclusion of students’ cultural experience in the academic arena. While it is acknowledged that FCE students’ knowledge and skills be developed, their depth and breadth in school expectations, curriculum implementation, assessment and evaluation are important components and need to be reviewed.

Research questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate students’ experience of the FCE programme. An open survey with a qualitative component was circulated to solicit students’ responses to the following:

1. Which programme did you want to enrol in and why?
2. Why did you choose to pursue teaching as a career?
3. How were you counseled during enrolment and orientation?
4. Did you find the orientation programme inspiring and why?
5. What were your academic strengths and weaknesses?
6. Which courses were seen as relevant for teaching and why?
7. What was missing from the FCE programme?
8. What suggestions do you think the FOE staff could assist with?

Methodology

The study utilised a mixed-method approach comprising of qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007). Pragmatism was the paradigm adopted to conduct this survey in two phases, the analysis of quantitative data followed by the analysis of qualitative data due to its links and emphasis on mixed-methods research (Hall, 2013). Morgan (2014) considered pragmatism theory as woven into life itself, which is contextual, emotional and social. Application of the pragmatism paradigm in mixed methods is seen as a two-way prong where the qualitative data would contribute to a “breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration” (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 123) of quantitative data.

Research design

The FCE student population in 2015–2016 that took part in the study was 150. In the first semester of 2016, approximately 246 were enrolled; however, the FCE student number dropped to 168 in the second semester. The survey questionnaires were distributed to the FCE students in semester two, 2016 and semester one, 2017 and these were collected on the day of dissemination.

Students’ responses were classified according to questions and emerging themes,

and examined for their particularities, similarities or uniqueness. For some questions, student responses required quantitative analysis and, for others, specific views were provided and qualitatively analysed under specific categories. The integration of both types of analysis was “needed to understand the case at hand” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 43). By using a survey questionnaire, a dual function provided verification and confirmation for the phenomenon under investigation. Interpretation from the deliberate construction of authentic data gave considerable insight into FCE students’ experience of the FCE programme.

The data collected responded to the research questions investigating the FCE students’ experience of the programme. Participants were briefed on the purpose of research and student consent was provided. As the survey questionnaire was given during the last 10-15 minutes of class, they were told to leave if they did not want to take part. Although students filled in the survey there were some unanswered questions.

There was no specific time frame for the data analysis, which was dependent on the data collected from 2016–2017. Information gathered from the analysis of the survey questionnaire assisted the researchers in providing a more informed view of the nature of the FCE programmes and its effect on FCE students’ interest and motivational levels. In addition, an understanding of the support that FCE students needed was of particular interest notwithstanding there were courses that FCE student identified as relevant/not relevant to teaching. The information garnered, apart from the statistical component, could be categorised as emerging themes, concepts and patterns. Meaningful patterns or themes revealed participants experience that Corbin and Strauss (2015) referred to “integrating the concepts around a core category” (p. 81). Assumptions and inferences addressed the research questions and findings were synthesised and integrated into a holistic entity (Miles et al., 2014). Tables and graphs demonstrated the multidimensional approach to inquiry.

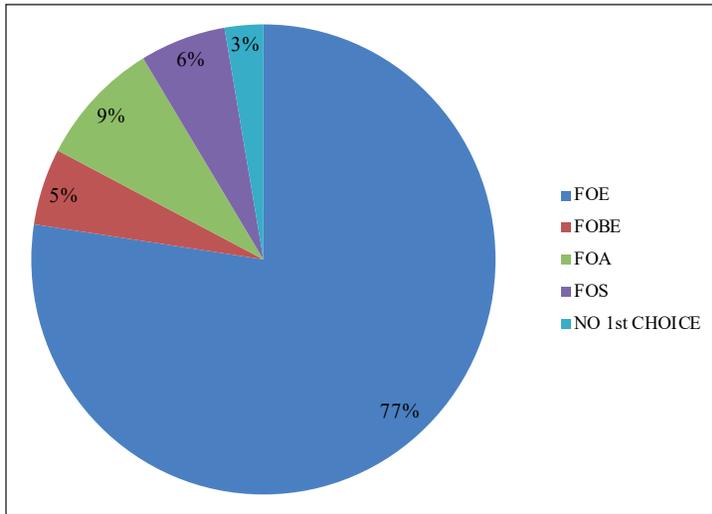
Findings

The findings are presented by question. Using a mixed-method approach, the qualitative component extrapolated on the quantitative aspects from the data that specifically targeted the research questions. This provided a more holistic and encompassing description of each research question.

Question 1: Which programme did students want to enrol in? Why?

The graph on p.50 indicates that, out of 150 student responses, 77% chose FOE as their first choice with the rest preferring other faculties. Students chose FOE as their first choice and gave reasons such as: dream job, following parents’ footsteps, pleasing parents and MESC sponsorship. Those who did not choose FOE, mentioned parents’ wishes, MESC sponsorship and marks inadmissible in other faculties.

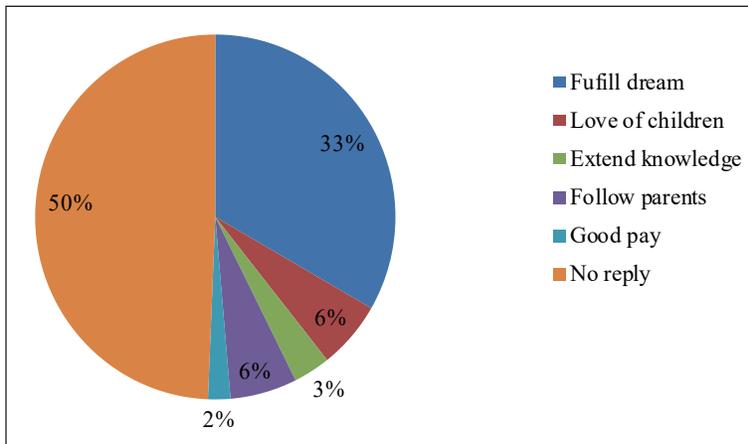
Figure 1: Percentage of Student's Enrolment Choice



Question 2: Why did you choose to pursue teaching as a career?

One third wanted to pursue a teaching career.

Figure 2: Percentage of Student Responses in Choosing Teaching as a Career



150 students were asked this question and only half responded. The most common reason for choosing teaching was to fulfill a dream to become a teacher, love for children, following in parents' footsteps, and it offered a good salary.

Question 3: How were you counselled during enrolment and orientation?

Most responses were positive.

Figure 3: Percentage of Student Response to Counselling

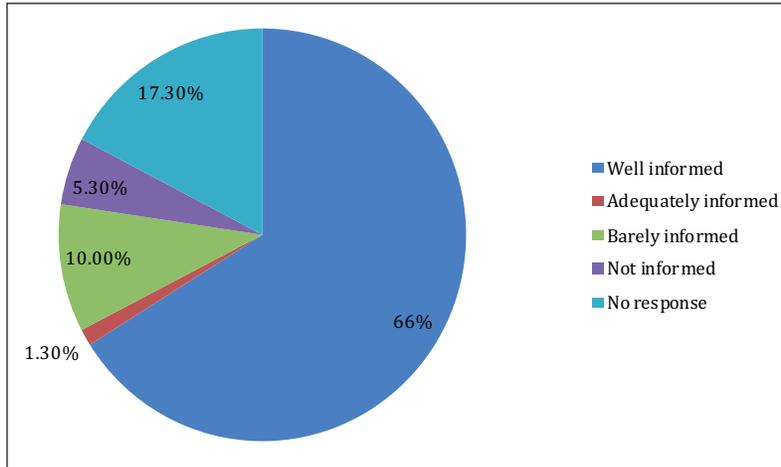
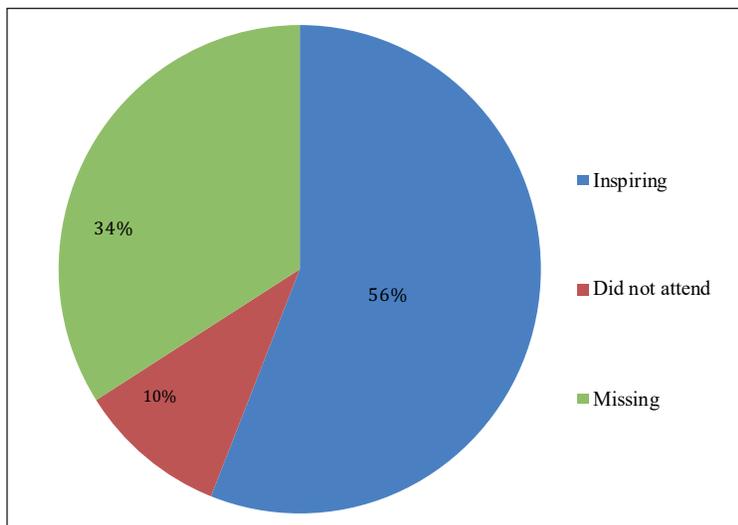


Figure 3 shows 66% replied that they were well informed of the programmes at the FOE and staff were accommodating, supportive and helpful. Despite the positive feedback, some responded they were not well informed. According to the data collected, 32.6%, nearly one-third of the students who attended enrolment and orientation were not able to receive adequate counselling.

Question 4: Did you find the FOE Orientation Programme inspiring? Explain.

Figure 4: Students' Response to FOE Orientation



Students' experience disclosed that more than half (56%) found the experience inspiring. Almost another half did not attend or gave no response. This indicated either they attended other faculty orientations, were lost or absent, and probably were not sure which programme they were in.

Question 5: What are your academic strengths and weaknesses?

Students' strengths and weaknesses in the academic disciplines, subjects and programmes per faculty showed a high percentage had strengths in education courses and a large percentage had weaknesses in science subjects.

Table 1: Subject Per Faculty Indicating Student Preference

FACULTIES	Disciplines	S	%	W	%
CSS	Samoan	53	35	13	9
FOA	English, History, Geography, Anthropology, Sociology	53	35	38	25
FOS	Math, Computer Studies, Physics, Biology, Chemistry	43	29	115	77
FOE	Health & Phy. Ed, Food Textiles Technology, Music, Visual Arts and Performing Arts	67	45	40	27
FOBE	Economics, Accounting, Law and Management	7	8	14	9
FOAS	Agricultural Science	1	1	0	0

Figure 5 indicated over a third of students had strengths in subjects taught at the FOE, followed by the CSS in Samoan language and culture, and FOA in courses such as Geography, History and Sociology. However, most found subjects in the FOS very difficult.

Question 6. Which courses do you see as relevant for teaching? Why?

Courses students found relevant for teaching were the FOS and FOE with over 20% each. Courses offered by other programmes ranked between 11%–17%.

Figure 5: Student Responses to Courses Relevant for Teaching

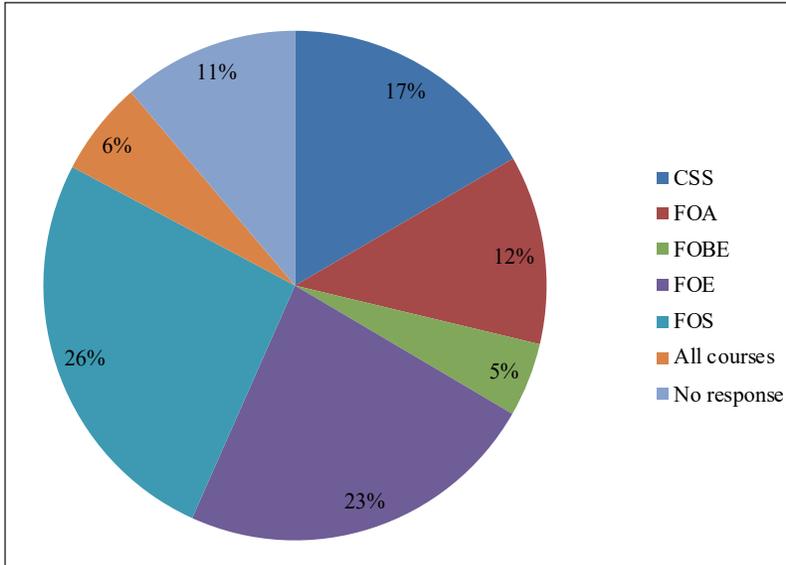
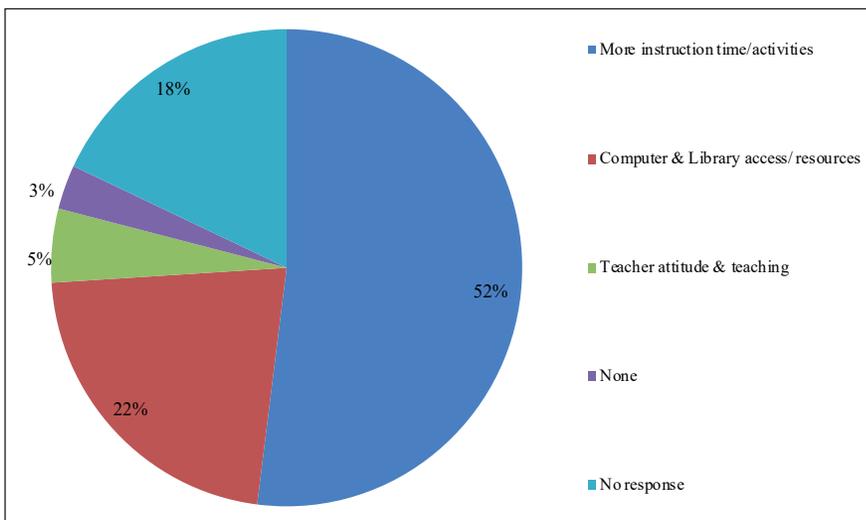


Figure 5 indicated courses offered by FOS and FOE were relevant for teaching. This was followed the CSS courses relating to the Samoan language and culture. The courses offered by FOA and FOBE were not considered to be more relevant compared to FOS, FOE and CSS courses. A small percentage indicated all courses were useful.

Question 7: What is missing from the FOE programme?

Figure 6: Student Response to What is Missing From the Programme

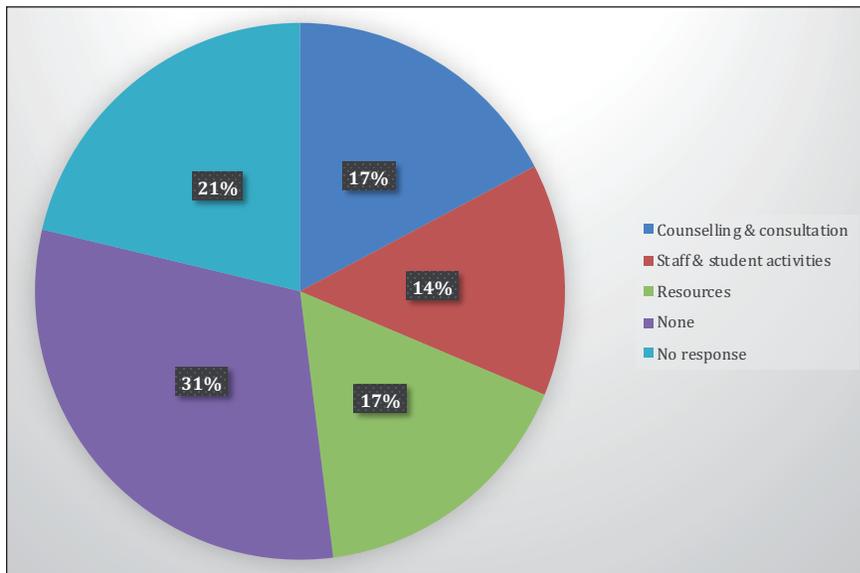


Over half of students (52%) indicated the need for more instruction time and class activities. Computer and library including resources access was considered by 22% of students as another missing element. Teachers’ attitude and teaching contributed to 5.3% with 2.7% pointing to the programme as fine. However, 18% offered no response to the question.

Question 8: Student suggestions on how FOE staff could assist with studies

Students responded that FOE staff could assist in various ways.

Figure 7: Student Response on how FOE Can Assist With Studies



About a quarter of students indicated that more counseling and consultation with lecturers and tutors, and 20% mentioned planned activities to encourage improved staff–student relationships. In addition, 17% indicated the need for sufficient resources to assist student learning while a third were either satisfied and the rest offered no response.

Discussion and implications

The results obtained from the questionnaire were quantitatively and qualitatively analysed. Over half of the students in the foundation programme chose FCE as their first choice and gave reasons that it had always been their ambition to become a teacher. For others it was a fulfillment of parental dreams. In Samoa’s context, students’ aspirations were aligned to familial ties and modeling. The teaching profession is perceived as a caring profession that consolidates cultural values of guardianship and service. Importantly, many prospective teachers enter teaching with a sense of mission: to transform the lives of young people and open opportunities for growth through learning and connecting. In Samoa, teaching as a nurturing and caring profession,

closely resembled the *fa'a Samoa* way of life. Parents view teaching as a stable and secure position. Some students who were accepted into teaching would not be accepted into other faculties that predominantly offer subject specialisation. Salary was not considered important in the pursuit of a teaching career.

A total of 50% of students did not respond to one or more questions. This could be attributed to a culture of silence where participants do not open up for reasons related to lack of ability or for concerns about being judged. Students may fear elaborating could leave them vulnerable of viewing teaching as a bus depot awaiting a better opportunity. Alternatively, not getting admission into another faculty could be seen as a form of weakness. As such, not responding may be seen as a safe and preferable option (Matapo & Teisina, 2020)

The questions that asked about students' experience during enrolment and orientation programmes seemed quite positive and students found staff supportive. More than half of the students responded they were well informed and were optimistic regarding their experience. However, about a third either did not think information was adequately provided or did not respond. Non-responders may not have attended the orientation programme. Reasons for non-attendance are unknown, however, Flores and Niklasson (2014) suggested that students may be less inclined to support such programmes if the aims of the programme are not clear.

Questions that focused on students' strengths and weaknesses in specific subject areas indicated that most preferred courses taken at FOE followed by the CSS in Samoan language and culture. Courses at FOE were designed to suit the needs of students who wished to embark on a teaching career, while the CSS courses drew parallels with students' home and cultural experiences. Significantly, FOS courses were considered important with the current FOE entry criteria focusing on mathematics as an integral component of the programme. However, it is not surprising that most students face difficulty in the areas of mathematics, science and computing. Palmer and Marra's (2004) study highlighted the differences in epistemological perspectives across knowledge domains of students. Their study indicated shifts from simple to complex epistemologies; the first shift from singular to multiple perspectives tended to happen naturally in the humanities and social sciences but the second shift required a more developed level of expertise which happened more naturally in the sciences. Samoan cultural knowledge is tied to the epistemologies of the humanities as both are people-oriented whereas the scientific epistemologies, based on the cosmos, require a different set of knowledge of the physical world and the environment. While traditional knowledge includes an understanding of the physical world and the environment such as ocean navigation by following the stars, using herbal medicines, and predicting the flow and times of the tides in order to know when particular sea delicacies are spawned, this knowledge is different from that tested through scientific methods and scrutinised against current scientific epistemologies.

When students were asked about courses they thought were more relevant for teaching, about half of the students indicated courses offered by the FOS followed by FOE, then CSS. It is worth noting that students did not consider the courses provided by FOBE and FOA as relevant as those offered by FOS, FOE, and CSS. This could

be ascribed to the fact that jobs needed in Samoa are mostly in the areas of science, mathematics and computing and the courses at FOE ensure a teaching position upon graduation. Students might also consider the courses offered at CSS as critical to the enhancement of a teacher's career as most would be practising teachers in the villages requiring an understanding of cultural knowledge. Few positions exist in the country for social workers, historians, geographers and sociologists. Students may see courses about these areas as not particularly relevant as others. As most graduates end up teaching in local and village schools their understanding of community protocols, expectations, their roles and affiliations would support their teaching career.

The last two questions addressed students' experience of what is missing from the programme. Most indicated the need for more instruction time and class activities. Students mentioned the need for extra time with tutors to discuss lectures and problems in class, providing more time for questions and explanations, assistance for teaching and improving skills, more active learning and more information to extend understanding, including mental and physical activities. Students were able to identify where they felt much help was needed but staff reports indicated that many students tended to have poor attendance particularly around the mid-semester break. It was evident from participants' responses that their preference in learning styles were interactive and practically oriented, which is typical of their contextual background.

Another factor students identified as missing was better access to computers and library resources. Thompson's (2012) results on both the library's desktop computers and laptops used by students found that, although students have access to mobile technology, they demonstrated a clear preference for desktop computers in the library. In addition, computer use in the library indicated that students were also in the position to make use of other library services which could contribute to more learning opportunities. About a third felt having access to computers and computer labs including library hours and resources would go a long way in supporting student learning. While there are computer laboratories at NUS and in the library, most students do not have access as these places are usually taken up for classes. Library space is also limited and by the time some of them got around to using these facilities, they would have to leave to catch the last bus home at 5pm. A variety of library hours especially during the evening and the weekend would support both day and evening students. According to Richards (2016), academic institutions are faced with retention rate problems, but extending library hours could ensure learners stay the course as they work with other learners. Resources such as course readers and photocopiers are needed and, although affordable, most students, especially those paying fees, find this an additional financial burden. Consequently, this propounds issues of access and equity.

Some students indicated teachers and their attitudes were not welcoming and that their teaching skills needed to be more interactive and activity-oriented rather than lecturing. Waters (2003) stated the attitudes of university teachers to support students can make a difference in their experience. In his study, while there was a general understanding that students needed to be independent learners, he also acknowledged that teachers have to assist students to develop as independent learners. This is significant, as most NUS students come from homes where parents' voice and influence are adhered to.

A small percentage did not see anything lacking in the programme, however, nearly 20% gave no response which could account for either not knowing how to respond or students did not want to be identified pointing out weaknesses in the programme despite the fact the forms they filled in provided anonymity.

On the issue of how they could be assisted by FOE about a third of the students mentioned counselling and consultation with lecturers and tutors. Stallman's (2012) study of counselling services for students in Australia and New Zealand found the lack of resources in the ratio of counsellor to students was a problem. Without adequate counselling, students could be negatively impacted resulting in students falling through the cracks. This seemed to be an important component that the FOE staff would need to revisit. While students are encouraged to seek consultation when staff support is needed, most find it difficult to venture into that area. A past practice where students were allocated to counselling groups was deemed effective but there were also problems with student attendance and the teacher focused on providing instructions on assignment and university life in general. A few staff would go the extra mile to use it as an opportunity to build good rapport with students.

Students felt more staff and student interaction through planned activities could better support and consolidate friendly and welcoming relationships thus contributing to effective teaching and learning. According to Krause and Coates (2008), student–staff engagement could be measured and monitored in institutions of higher learning. As such, institutional policy in support of such engagement could develop quality student experience through more staff and student sport activities and social get-togethers to know each other well. The Samoan context could be conducive to lowering the social barriers between students and staff and to ensure students are supported. The Samoan pedagogies of collaborative work, cooperation, team effort, trust, community building, empowerment of youth and skills building could be utilised at the academic institution. Again, resources were seen as an important component that students felt would contribute to the way forward. As a collaborative community, Samoan academics in partnership with the business society could harness support for the growth of the country's future generation.

Conclusion

The study investigated the academic challenges encountered by FCE students in their first or second year of the programme. From the findings, it became evident that students enter the programme as a matter of choice for various reasons such as pursuing a dream, following in parents' footsteps, satisfying parental aspirations and sponsorship incentives. Enrolment and orientation programmes were rated positively but there were quite a number of students who did not respond. It is the expectation that students' successful completion of the Foundation programme will staircase into a degree programme.

Participants responded to their academic strengths and weaknesses but did not align these to the subjects they considered relevant for teaching. This highlighted Palmer and Marra's (2004) findings of the differences in students' epistemological perspectives across knowledge domains.

Responses in relation to gaps in the programme indicated students needed more interaction time and more interactive activities to consolidate and reinforce learning. More computer access and library use were other domains that were singled out. Students also requested more counseling and consultation. However, there were a significant number of participants who did not respond, making it difficult to propose lack of accessibility or the recommended suggestions as conclusive.

Despite the areas that have not been adequately addressed, the research has provided a way forward to align the FCE programme with the needs of the students. It also signals the need for a more rigorous recruitment and marketing programme, for staff to take a more active role in counselling and consultation with students in class and individually, and for more staff and student engagement about course and career path discussions. Significantly, the elements of cultural knowledge, practice and expertise have to be accommodated in institutions of learning.

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Pacific educational success in Aotearoa New Zealand: comparing Ngā Tau Tuangahuru study findings with policy directions and research

Tracey Sharp, Tanya Samu, Rachael Trotman, Fiona Cram, and Reremoana Theodore

“Know your learner, know your families”
(Sita Selupe, Principal, Rise Up Academy)

Introduction

Here in Aotearoa New Zealand, Pacific-heritage peoples constitute the third largest ethnic minority group (8.1%), with Māori (16.5%) and Asian (15.1%) first and second respectively (Statistics New Zealand, 2018). With its young and fast growing population and a socio-economic location at the lower end of most indices, the Pacific population has been the focus of five targeted national education strategies over the last two decades (Samu, Mara & Siteine, 2015). The latest is the 10-year *Action Plan for Pacific Education* (Ministry of Education, 2020).

This paper shares findings from Ngā Tau Tuangahuru, a 10-year longitudinal study, relating to Rise Up Academy, a year one to eight school serving mainly Pacific learners and families in South Auckland. It compares study feedback from Rise Up Academy learners and families with the Ministry of Education’s ‘Pasifika Success’ discourse.

The paper begins with a review of the Ministry of Education’s discourse and recent research relating to Pasifika success. The Ngā Tau Tuangahuru Study and Rise Up Academy are introduced and feedback from Rise Up Academy families is shared. Discussion of study findings in light of Ministry discourse and recent research follows. The paper concludes with insights from the study to date in terms of policy, practice and research in Pasifika education.

Unpacking ‘Pasifika Success’

The Ministry of Education’s ‘Pasifika Success Compass’

The Ministry of Education’s (MoE) language associated with academic achievement for Pasifika learners has shifted over time. In the mid-to-late 1990s its language moved from ‘under-achievement’ to ‘closing the gaps’ in terms of wider socio-economic variables, including education (Ministry of Pacific Peoples, 2018). This deficit focus lingered for about a decade before a more strengths-based approach emerged in the Ministry’s fourth *Pasifika Education Plan, 2009-2012* (Ministry of Education, 2009).

In 2009, utilising evidence-based research, the Ministry produced a ‘Compass for Pasifika Success’. The Compass identified the need to understand, respect and

incorporate the identities, languages and culture of Pasifika students' and their families; the critical role of strong home-school partnerships and the reciprocal engagement of families and community; the need for culturally responsive pedagogy; and for strong leadership and governance to create change (Ministry of Education, 2016; 2019).

This first iteration of the Compass consists of five layers considered pivotal in supporting student success. The Pacific learner sits in the centre. Moving outwards in layers are 'Pasifika Values'; 'Pasifika Identity'; the Pacific Education Plan and its 'levers for change' in five key areas (literacy and numeracy; families and community engagement; governance and leadership; transitions; and effective teaching including culturally responsive pedagogies); and at the outer rim the 'New Zealand Education System'. Intersecting these layers are three themes of participation, engagement and achievement. The graphic illustrates the requirement of the education system, leadership and curricula to put the Pasifika learner at the centre, emphasising culturally responsive pedagogies and learners being able to draw on strong cultures, identities and languages.

The Pasifika Success Compass (the Compass) was iterated in the Ministry's *Tapasa: Cultural Competences Framework for Teachers of Pacific Learners* (Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 4). This conception places parents, families and communities *together* with the Pasifika learner at the centre. Education initiatives across the formal education sector must centre their efforts on this collective in ways informed by Pacific values and principles respond to the identities, languages and cultures of each Pasifika group, and ensure that Pasifika learners, parents, families and communities have adequate knowledge, voice and influence on the outcomes of the education system (Ministry of Education, 2018). The importance of home-school partnerships is reinforced, as is closer alignment between the learner's educational environment and their home and cultural environment (Brooking, 2007; Bull et al., 2008; Ministry of Education, 2012).

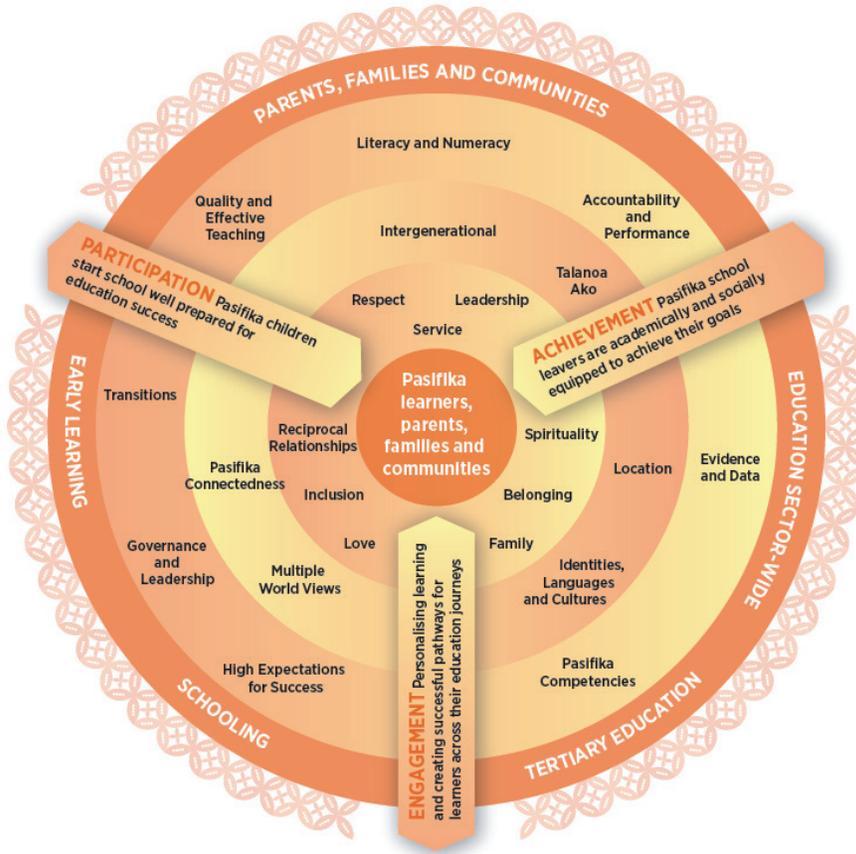
This Compass identifies nine supporting principles and values, understood as Pasifika cultural constructs, which are: respect, leadership, service, spirituality, belonging, family, love, inclusion and reciprocal relationships. Six domains are identified in the next concentric layer. These are: Intergenerational; Talanoa Ako; Location; Identities, languages and cultures; Multiple world views; and Pasifika connectedness. The next layer out contains eight components: high expectations for success; governance and leadership; transitions; quality and effective teaching; literacy and numeracy; accountability and performance; evidence and data and Pasifika competencies.

This Pasifika Compass, as described by Gaugatao (2020), is a tool to enable people to understand the essential need to ensure that Pacific learners, their parents, families and the community are present and engaged in the education of Pacific students. It is a framework for shared responsibility, setting out the connections and relationships required across the five layers, to ensure the educational success of Pasifika learners.

Recent research on Pasifika success

The growing body of research on 'Pasifika success' – often driven by a desire to intervene in educational disparities between Pacific youth and other populations – (see for example, Taleni et al., 2018) – largely aligns with the Ministry's strengths-based approach. The voice of Pasifika learners and their families is generally sought and incorporated (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2018; Sanders & Boyt, 2020).

Figure 1: The Pasifika Success Compass



Source: Ministry of Education, 2018, p.4

This research shows that definitions of educational success for Pasifika are broader and more holistic than that of the mainstream, and that pedagogy that encompasses and affirms the cultural identity, values, aspirations and knowledge systems of Pacific students and their families bolsters educational success. Similar to the Compass, the literature points to Pacific cultural values such as respect, collectivism, family, spirituality, cultural customs and protocols, humility, reciprocity, love and service (ACE Aotearoa, 2014; Rimoni & Averill, 2019; Ministry of Pacific Peoples, 2018; Porter-Samuels, 2013; S'ilata, 2014).

The significance of culture, identity and language to wellbeing and educational success, including cultural pride and cultural belonging, as presented in the Ministry's Compass is also strongly evidenced in the literature. Knowing your personal and collective identity, your history and genealogy and understanding your place in Aotearoa, are considered attributes of what it is to be successful as well as being core enablers of success as a Pacific person (ACE Aotearoa 2014; Ministry of Pacific Peoples, 2018; Taleni et al., 2018).

Strong family relationships are key to Pasifika students' success and wellbeing, providing motivation to succeed and the love, support and encouragement to do so (Chu et al., 2013). Peer relationships are also important, being either positive and supportive or negative and detracting (Alkema 2014; Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2018; Reynolds, 2017).

Personal or individual factors such as personal commitment, self-belief, goal setting and determination also play a part in educational success for Pacific learners (Chu et al., 2013). Institutional factors that facilitate educational success – that create a 'learning village' – include positive culturally responsive pedagogy, student-teacher (and other educational staff) relationships that are respectful and nurturing, that recognise cultural identity, are personalised, and informed by high expectations. Institutional commitment requires strong engagement with the Pacific community, Pacific role models and strong leadership (Chu et al., 2013; Mauigoa, 2014; Taleni et al., 2018). Since 2005, home-school partnerships have been seen as an essential vehicle for effective literacy and numeracy development and learning in the New Zealand schooling system (Education Review Office, 2006; 2010; 2012). Whānau and family involvement in their children's learning is crucial (Brooking, 2007). New Zealand based research and experience indicates that authentic partnerships between school and home require a large investment of school hours as well as committing 'for the long haul'. Challenges lie in establishing what sorts of relationships are most effective, and identifying causal links between increased parental engagement and improved student achievement. Up to 2007, such evidence was minimal, with researchers recognising schools as 'very complex and changing contexts' (p. 14).

The review of literature by Bull et al. (2008) shows that successful home-school partnerships are collaborative and respectful, multi-dimensional and responsive to the wider community. They are goal-oriented, embedded within school development plans, well-resourced and regularly reviewed. Their research showed that home-school partnerships were easier to establish in small schools with clearly defined communities, and noted that the special character of some schools often meant partnerships were qualitatively different and more firmly embedded than in mainstream schools. They comment that little is known about the effectiveness of home-school partnerships as strategies for reducing disparity and that more work needs to be done to assess how home-school partnerships are beneficial, and to whom.

Ngā Tau Tuanguahuru

Ngā Tau Tuanguahuru ('looking beyond for ten more years') is a longitudinal study emerging from philanthropic funder Foundation North's Māori and Pacific Education Initiative (2006 to 2014). This initiative was a \$20M commitment to raising Māori and Pacific educational achievement in Auckland and Northland. The initiative funded ten innovative community-led education providers, from early childhood to tertiary level (Kinnect Group & Foundation North, 2016; Trotman, et al., 2018).

Evaluation of the Māori and Pacific Education Initiative (MPEI) identified core enablers of educational success for Māori and Pacific students. These stemmed from by Māori, for Māori and by Pacific, as Pacific educational approaches and solutions, that:

- provide cultural legitimacy – positive reinforcement of young peoples’ cultural identity, language, practices, values and models
- support strong family relationships and resilient aiga/families - children and young people need love, safety, care and trust, and for their family to know how to support them
- provide educational models that affirm Māori and Pacific whānau and aiga for who they are, create a safe environment and a trusted, relational space, and support families to engage effectively in their children’s learning.

Ngā Tau Tuanguahuru is a collaboration between Foundation North’s Centre for Social Impact and five of the educational providers that received funding via MPEI (Trotman et al., 2018). One of these education providers is the Rise Up Academy.

The aim of the study is to track, over time, the persistence of MPEI outcomes and findings and to explore ‘success’ for families and their children. The study upholds a commitment to collective knowledge generation; to being strengths-based; to transformative outcomes for Māori and Pacific peoples; and to linking with other work nationally on cultural identity, success and education (see for example, Anae, 2010; Macfarlane et al., 2014; McNaughton, 2011; Milne, 2013; Samu, 2015). The study comes at a time of ‘potential significant change across the educational system’ as the new *Action Plan for Pacific Education Plan (APPE) 2020* is implemented.

Round one of the study in 2017 consisted of whānau interviews with 69 Māori and Pacific whānau (126 participants). Round two in 2018/19 interviewed most of the same families. For the second round 72 separate student interviews were also undertaken. Questions explored families and students self-defined understandings of family/general and educational success and what supports or hinders this success. Questions were also asked about schooling; culture, and future goals and aspirations. The focus in this paper is on findings from Rise Up Academy.

Rise Up Academy

Rise Up Trust began in February 2006 as a Saturday home schooling programme in the South Auckland garage of its founder, Sita Selupe, a Tongan Niuean primary school teacher. Rise Up Trust designed and delivered programmes for Pacific children and their families, based on empowering whānau to engage in their children’s learning from the early years. Programmes were built around children’s learning styles, identifying their ‘love languages’, setting family goals and using inquiry learning.

In 2009, Rise Up Trust received funding for its programmes from the Maori and Pacific Education Initiative (MPEI). Its strategic development resulted in the establishment in 2014 of Rise Up Academy, a junior partnership school catering for mainly Pacific Year 1-6 children (and from 2016, Years 1-8). A change of government in 2017 saw the partnership school model disestablished, and in 2019 Rise Up Academy became a designated character school, sharing premises with Sir Douglas Bader Intermediate School in Mangere, South Auckland.

The Rise Up mission is to nurture ‘Sharp minds, good hearts and strong bodies’. It operates as a faith-based school grounded in Pacific values of service, family and a village model of raising children. Fundamentally, Rise Up believes that by equipping

whānau, engaging them in their children's learning, nurturing strong relationships and fostering culture and identity, children will experience greater educational success (Trotman, 2015).

Families are told that when their child enrolls, their whole family enrolls at the school. Families are engaged in the school in many ways, including:

- A Whānau Educator and School Chaplain – who works with families to support children's learning and wellbeing and address issues affecting children
- Whānau Fono – a parent forum for school feedback and input into strategic planning
- Komiti Tupu Mai – a Parent Committee to facilitate parent partnership and talanoa and support the school
- Good to Go Volunteer Arm – whānau volunteer up to 40 hours of their time each year to the school.

A major point of difference with Rise Up's approach to schooling remains its family programmes, which all families are strongly encouraged to experience. The first two programmes were developed solely by Rise Up; three and four below have been adapted by Rise Up from other programmes:

1. Hearts and Minds – a six-week programme exploring children's learning styles, personalities, the five love languages, culture and critical thinking tools
2. Synergy – a seven-week programme exploring family values, cultural identity, personalities, talents and sense of purpose
3. PATH Planning - a two-hour family goal setting session. PATH is an acronym for Planning Alternative Tomorrows With Hope and is a tool to assist with individual and whānau/family planning (Pipi, 2010)
4. The Mutukaroa Programme for parents of children year 1-3 involves learning conversations to empower families to support learning at home. The Mutukaroa Programme emerged via another MPEI funded education provider, Sylvia Park School, and is considered a highly successful way to engage families in children's learning.

The school has a compulsory extra-curricular programme for dance, drama and choir for the children, and runs extra programmes based on healthy living such as Active Families and whānau cooking classes. Programmes are facilitated and coordinated by the Whānau Educator, who also plays a pastoral role at the school. Teachers and school management also support families to access health and social support.

Research undertaken in 2015 (Trotman) indicates the core elements of the Rise Up approach, as understood by the whānau of students attending the school, to be:

- A whole child, strengths based approach
- Faith-based
- Aligned with Pacific cultural identity and the village model
- Focused on family engagement, commitment and support and family empowerment.

Ngā Tau Tuanguahuru – Feedback from Rise Up Academy families

In 2017, 19 families with children attending Rise Up Academy in Otahuhu, South Auckland were interviewed. A total of 34 people took part in these interviews, including children, with their ethnic backgrounds described below. All but one of the same families was interviewed again in 2019, along with 25 students aged seven to 15 who were current or ex-students of Rise Up Academy.

Table 1: Participants by Ethnicity

Round One 2017*	Total	
	N=34	%
Māori	5	15
Samoaan	17	50
NZ European	8	24
Cook Island Māori	2	6
Tongan	10	29
Niuean	7	21

*Some participants noted multiple ethnicities

Key findings from Rise Up families and students interviewed in Rounds One and Two are shared below.

Part A: About Success

(i) What does family success look like?

Rise Up families describe success in holistic terms. ‘Success’ includes financial stability, living by family values, strong family relationships, collective wellbeing, good education, faith, physical, and emotional wellbeing. When asked to choose their top aspects of family success, families chose faith/spirituality (56%), having good family relationships (44%), living by values (33%), and being healthy (33%).

[Faith] is everything to us. Number one is God as the centre of our family. It leads to success in everying.

Faith gives us hope, and it’s how we live out our life everyday.

Unconditional love. Open communication. Having good family relationships means there is support all the time.

“Even in failure the kids know they are supported and ok.

Living by values was often seen to encompass other categories of success, *“Faith and living by our values go hand in hand for us. It all starts from from inner values, from the inside out. Success is inside out. It is not materialistic”.*

(ii) What supports family success?

Key factors noted were having support networks, strong family relationships, planning for the future, faith, and prayer. The top three things identified that support family success were living by family values (67%), love (44%), and education/school (39%).

One family described their values as *"...education, family relationships, communication, a caring, supportive, positive attitude. Goals aligning with purpose and values"*. Families noted the importance of values for their children, *"...we want our children to have a good future. Sharing and caring for others...having good attitudes, respect, love, listen, obey"*. Families also noted the role of values in family relationships, *"Teaching kids good values leads to good family relationships. Commitment, loyalty, faith, generosity etc"*.

Love was seen as integral to family relationships and to living a successful life in general: *"Love is very important. Nothing means anything without love, i.e. money, jobs etc, got to love what you do and love others"*.

Education/school was considered to facilitate a better future: *"Biggest success a person can have, to achieve a level of education, can build a business of their own and hire others, or purchase own home"*. Some parents spoke about wanting their student(s) to have a good education to have a better life than they did: *"The kids know what education can do for their future. I say to them...'You've seen how Mum has struggled...take that and do better', because I want them to do better than me"*.

(iii) What are the main barriers to family success?

Families spoke about lack of time, financial constraints, lack of resources and poor health as being the most significant barriers to their success.

In Round Two nearly all the families said 'lack of time' was a barrier to their success (N=17, 89%), often getting in the way of pursuing their goals and reducing time with family: *"Hard to have quality time with the kids, but we work hard to create moments"*. Work was discussed as the main contributor to a lack of time: *"Work long hours, often 7am to 10pm many days"*. This was often in combination with other obligations. *"Typical for [Pacific] Island families, because you're part of that community if something happens in wider family / church - expectations to participate / give - quite mindful of that now"*.

For two thirds of the families (N=12, 63%) 'lack of money/resources' was a constraint to family success: *"Money, resources. We have enough for basic needs, to just survive, but not much more"*. Families discussed how lack of money affected their relationships: *"Lack of money and resources effects relationships"*. One family expressed the idea they would structure their life differently if they had more money/resources, *"...with more money I could stay home and raise the kids"*.

'Poor health' was a top barrier to family success for two thirds of families (N=12, 63%). This was often linked to pressures in other areas of life: *"Poor health: the above two [lack of time / money] have a knock on effect. Lack of time means less time for self, no downtime. Lack of self care. Get home late, eat late, stay up late for 'my time'"*.

(iv) What does educational success look like?

Along with educational achievement, most families (N=17, 89%) chose ‘enjoying learning’ as an aspect of educational success. Also significant were ‘following your own path and dreams’ (N=16, 84%), ‘good attitudes and character’ (N=16, 84%) and ‘good friendships’ (N=15, 79%).

How does Rise Up Academy support family and educational success?

For Rise Up Academy families, the main reported ways the school supports family success were whānau engagement mechanisms, the overall support and pastoral care for the whole family that they receive, and Whānau Programmes offered by the school.

Whānau Engagement

There is an “*Expectation of whānau involvement*” at Rise Up Academy and families noted “*Rise Up has a great way of connecting families and engaging parents*”. When asked to talk about their involvement with the school, nearly all the families (N=17, 89.5%) talked about volunteering their time (typically 10 hours per term) in a variety of activities. “*Committed to volunteer 40 hours. Part of vision for it [school]. [Dad] created vege garden ... food tech, camps...*”. Participants talked about being on the Board or in the Parent Committee, about going to performances and events and about doing the programmes the school offers.

Pastoral care was often talked about when families spoke about how the school supported their family success, “*Rise up provides a lot of support for the family. Caters to needs of family*”. Pastoral care aligns with the Christian values most of the families at the school hold. “*Continue to pray for us, encouraging us and just being an outlet where we can talk. I can go through pastoral care, they have been so important for my family success and being happy*”.

Families feel supported by their communication with the school: “*Constant contact. Clear strategy set out for us to get [student] to national standards. Open door policy*”. Teachers were often talked about as approachable and communication as being two way: “*Can be honest, address concerns. Strong parent voice, get listened to*”.

Workshops were reported by some families as part of the way the school supports their students’ educational success. “*Workshops run by the school are really helpful i.e., math workshops, computer courses*”. Families also spoke about their role in learning how their students learn: “*Learning from school how to do what the kids are doing, to help them*”.

When asked how Rise Up Academy specifically supports their child as a **Pacific** learner, fifteen families (79%) talked about culture, with many noting the embeddedness of the school’s Pacific culture and values, “*School has very strong values that we are strongly connected to, same values, Pasifika school*”, “*Pacific run, wanted to support the vision, community. Philosophy is Christian. What is taught at home follows through*”. The importance of faith being a value both at school and at home was often discussed, “*Faith always in the environment, at school and home, leads to success*”. Families also described their appreciation of the holistic nature of the school: “*Holistic view, spiritual focus, academic, character, relationships, cultural values*”.

The strong role of culture in the school was clear in much of the feedback, “*Culture is engrained in the school. Advocate pride in culture*”. Families felt that the specific focus on ‘identity’ in the school supported their students as Pacific students, “*By incorporating learning about identity, kids know who they are*”. Sometimes this was through specific programmes, “*...I Know Who I Am, identity for the kids...*”

Families noted a connection between the extra-curricular activities the school runs throughout the week and their students’ success: “*Get involved in outside afterschool programme. Every Monday have culture. Every Tuesday sports activity. Wednesday SUPA [dance]. Implemented programmes to get kids involved with culture. Use culture and music to highlight talents and gifts of student. Helps to improve literacy and numeracy*”.

Families appreciated that the school set high expectations for their students, and that there was support for these expectations: “*National standards goal is 85% for whole school. Everyone plays a vital part. Everything that is part of the school is connected to the success of the child*”.

Families often talked about the whānau feel of the school, “*Rise Up is like a family*”. The small nature of the school lends itself to close relationships between staff, families, and the school community: “*We know everybody*”.

Whānau Engagement and Capacity

The positive role of Rise Up’s Whānau Programmes in increasing whānau engagement and growing whānau capacity was highlighted in both rounds of the study, affirming the 2015 research findings regarding Rise Up families’ experience of the school.

Overall, families were passionate about the impact of Rise Up’s programmes on their students’ educational success and on family success as a whole, “*... believe these [Whānau Programmes] support our family success. Biggest thing is the programmes*”.

Families talked about how programmes supported their engagement in their students’ learning: “*Hearts and Minds etc, helps create understanding of children and learning*,” about the role of the programmes in their own “*self development*” and learning alongside their child, “*Personal goals set by learning Pathway Plans, parents and kids both learn*”.

How Programmes Support Specific Family Success Aspects

Living by your Values

Families said the programmes contribute to helping them live by their values, an important aspect in self-defined family success. “*Created a Pathway plan through Rise Up Academy that helped us identify as a family what we value: love, honesty, integrity, cultural identity, faith. Everyone should have this, know their values, what we go back to*”. Another family discussed the role of the school in helping them live out the family value of ‘love’ – “*Love - learnt through Rise Up’s love languages course. Love covers everything*”.

Setting Goals

The PATH Planning approach helps families develop a vision for their future individually and as a family, and set goals and strategies to achieve these goals: “*Yearly Pathway Plans – having a plan, goal setting, plan for the future for good opportunities for our children*”.

Strengthening relationships

Families discussed the role of the programmes in strengthening family and parent-child relationships, and individual identity. When asked how Rise Up supported their family success, one family stated: *“In particular, their courses. ‘Hearts and Minds’ and ‘I know Who I am’. Identity for the kids...love it. I wish everyone could do it, all of New Zealand. Gave us what we need to be better parents and a better family”*.

One family discussed the potential benefit of Whānau Programmes for their wider community:

[Dad] wants to take these out into the community because they are very powerful and have changed our lives, already shares this information in his work place, his workmates appreciate what he shared and want to do the courses. Understanding children, their gifts and love languages, not taught at school or anywhere else. Think that for Pacific people these programmes could make a major impact, empowering families and creating positive change. Knowledge is power.

The next section looks at how the perspectives of Rise Up Academy families compare with national policy educational goals.

Relationship with the Ministry’s Pasifika Success Compass

The *Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020-2030 (APPE)* consistently refers to ‘Pacific learners and families’, maintaining a collective family focus. For Rise Up Academy, learners and their families are at the centre of their philosophy, approach and practices, providing a living example of a home-school partnership based on the notion of shared responsibility. Whānau programmes and workshops, whānau engagement practices, and pastoral support underpin pedagogical practices to enhance student success, and the school’s broader vision of success for whānau and community. Feedback from families indicates that whānau engagement with the school is high. Expectations of whānau volunteering and involvement invite a relationship of reciprocity between home and school.

Rise Up goes beyond supporting whānau engagement in their students’ learning, to increasing whānau capacity by providing tools to enable strong and resilient families. Whānau Programmes are core to Rise Up Academy’s whole family approach. The programmes support cultural legitimacy and identity, are designed to engage whānau in their children’s learning and to increase whānau functioning.

Positive feedback from Rise Up families about the programmes is featured in the study. Feedback from families indicates the importance of pastoral support. With the main reported barriers to family success being lack of time, limited resources, and poor health, attending to these barriers recognises that the wellbeing of students is nested in the wellbeing of their whānau (Office of the Children’s Commissioner, 2018).

As a Pacific faith-based school, Rise Up reflects key principles and values described in the Ministry’s Compass. Rise Up families affirm that living by values, including faith or spirituality, are key supports for family success. The alignment of values between home and school is considered vital to enhance the educational success of learners (Ministry

of Pacific Peoples, 2018; Office of the Children's Commission, 2018). Feedback from Rise Up families indicates the alignment of values between home and Rise Up Academy are a key factor in families' high levels of satisfaction with the school.

These values are also evident in the Compass domains. The 'Identities, languages and cultures' of learners and their families are integral to Rise Up philosophy and practice, with a faith based aspect of identity strong for many. In terms of Compass components, family responses note high school expectations of success, quality teaching, and Pasifika cultural competencies.

Core enablers of Pacific educational success identified in the MPEI evaluation were: a) by Māori for Māori, by Pacific by Pacific; b) cultural legitimacy through positive reinforcement of cultural identity, language, practices, values, and models; c) strong family relationships and resilient aiga/families; and d) a safe environment where families are supported to engage effectively in their children's learning. All of these enablers are evident in both the Rise Up educational model and in the Ministry's Pacific Success Compass.

Insights

Ngā Tau Tuangahuru and Rise Up findings align well with current policy directions and research on Pasifika educational success. Rise Up Academy provides a case study of an authentic, Pacific-led, home-school partnership. Educational success is linked to wider wellbeing and nested within an ecology of relationships from home, to school, to the wider community.

Rise Up proactively raises whānau capacity and strengthens relationships within its school community. It is a goal of Rise Up Academy to extend its programmes throughout South Auckland communities and beyond.

Creating and sustaining authentic, impactful partnerships between schools and homes requires a long-term commitment and investment of time and resources. Investing in wrap-around support for families, whānau programmes, and Pacific-led approaches holds great possibilities for the future of Pasifika educational success.

Community leaders in the educational space have knowledge of what works to support their community and whānau engagement in school, but the question becomes one of resourcing and enabling. Once philanthropic funding has nurtured initiatives such as MPEI, and where these initiatives have been successful, what government funding and support is available to ensure sustainability and, where appropriate, scaling and replication? It remains to be seen if significant resourcing will follow Ministry discourse to enable Pasifika student success through strengthening and scaling Pacific-led initiatives such as Rise Up Academy, and funding more of what has been shown to be effective for Pasifika learners such as in-school pastoral care, whānau programmes and, proactive home-school partnerships such as Mutukaroa and Path Planning.

The Ngā Tau Tuangahuru longitudinal study, with its focus on self-identified family success, widens the research focus beyond educational success, to encompass more of the context of Pacific students. Pacific families and students identifying what success looks like to them is needed to embed Pacific values into policies and practice. While there is a growing body of literature on Pasifika success, more can be done to understand

‘success’ through diverse Pacific lenses (ACE Aotearoa, 2014). Ngā Tau Tuangahuru adds to this body of research.

Critically, approaches to raising Pacific education and wellbeing also need to address the many structural barriers marginalising Pacific communities in Aotearoa, including structural racism, basic income levels and access to affordable quality housing. It is likely that the next round of interviews for Ngā Tau Tuangahuru will reflect the impact that COVID-19 is having on participants’ lives and perceptions of education, including the home-school partnership.

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Children's perception of place: A case study from Samoa

Susana Taua'a, Anita Latai-Niusulu, and Helen Tanielu

Abstract

The paper explores the perceptions of children in Samoa about the places they live and spaces that have a bearing on their everyday lives. Private homes, church, schools and close relatives' homes are places where children's life experiences are created and lived. A total of 35 children aged between 5 and 15 and living within the Apia urban area were selected for this study. The young informants' perceptions of their social-physical living environment are illuminated in their descriptive narratives of the things that are important and influential in their lives. Church, Sunday school and school are important social places where children spend most of their time outside of the home, and these are places that bear a significant impact in shaping the children's perceptions of social values and principles that help form their character in adulthood. The homes of close kin were also identified by the children as important and special places where they can go to have fun, play with cousins and skip chores. As demonstrated in this study, children's perception of places where their lives are lived help shed light on growing up in urban Samoa and the important influence of places in shaping their young lives as they grow into young adults.

Introduction

Children are important social agents with their own world view that adds value and influence to their communities and vice versa. More importantly, they grow up to replace the next generation of leaders, workers, parents, consumers and members of their communities (Harris & Manatakis, 2013). Engaging children in research and seeing the world from their perspective is a refreshing and exciting undertaking. The young participants in this study demonstrated much enthusiasm when they were initially requested to participate in the study. Their eagerness to engage in question-and-answer sessions and participate in the activities provided an enabling environment to observe and collect the information needed for this study. The Samoa children study is a component of a wider Pacific research on children spearheaded by Professor Claire Freeman and a team from the University of Otago (Freeman et al., 2020). The Report claims an under-representation of Pacific children's voices in expressing their ideas, knowledge and experiences on the impact of urbanisation and migration on their lives. This paper is one of a series to address this under-representation of children's voices in research. The paper explores how children in the Samoa case study perceive the places they live, their homes and surrounding environments. The series of papers emanating from this study are important for several reasons. First, they provide an avenue to

understand the implications of children's perceptions on their needs and preferences in relation to their living places. Second, it explores the impact of "change" factors such as technology on children. This is particularly important considering that the changes children face today "were unimaginable to children in 1989" (UNICEF, 2018, para. 10). And thirdly, it allows for children's voices to be heard, an important component of the rights of children as specified in the Convention on Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989) ratified by Samoa in November 1994. A total of 35 children under 15 years old (22 males, 13 females) and living within a 15 km radius of Apia town centre participated in the study (see Table 1).

Statistics on children in Samoa

Data on children in Samoa are highly fragmented and, in some instances, incomplete. Considering the lack of studies on children, particularly in areas such as children's health and wellbeing, child labour and violence against women and children, this study will provide qualitative data from the perspective of the children to complement existing statistics on children in Samoa. Credible statistics on children are important to enable governments to make informed decisions related to children's health, education, wellbeing and social protection.

The latest population count for Samoa in 2016 was 194,000 and, of these, 75,100 were children aged 0–14 years old (United Nations Children's Fund, 2017). Hence, children make up a significant number of the country's dependent population. The dependency ratio for Samoa in 2016 was 75 to 100, implying that for every 100 persons in the working-age group, 75 of them are dependants (Samoa Bureau of Statistics, 2016). As dependants, their needs, preferences and experiences differ from those of adults (Frank, 2006). Children are also the most vulnerable to violence and sexual abuse. For example, a 2017 Family Safety Study found high rates of violence experienced by both boys and girls where the life-time rate of violence against children was 89% for girls and 90% for boys, with a prevalence rate within the last 12 months of 69% for girls and 63% for boys (Ministry for Women, Community and Social Development 2017). There is also a growing number of children engaged in street-vending activities which places them at higher risk to a number of hazards such as abuse, accidents or harm from drunk people. Evidence from an International Labor Organization (ILO) report on children working on the streets of Apia found that children as young as 7 years old were working as street vendors in Apia and that 41% of working children were below the minimum age of employment which is 15 years old (International Labor Organization, 2017). The under-5 mortality rate in 2018 was at a level of 15.8 per 1000 live births; the measles outbreak in November 2019 recorded 83 deaths, 61 of them were children under the age of 5. The measles outbreak and spiked death rates among children under 5, prompted a nationwide measles vaccination campaign in 2019. These statistics are important as a backdrop to situate the Samoan children case study.

Data-collection methods

Engaging children in research requires multiple modes that are fun, exciting and enable children to express themselves freely about issues affecting them. Talking, drawing, coloring, movement, photography, and writing were some of the non-intimidating and

Table 1: Demographics of the Study Respondents

Respondent	Age	Gender	Place of Residence	School	Grade
1	13	Male	Matautu Uta	Falefitu Primary School	Year 7
2	9	Female	Saoluafata	Saoluafata Primary School	Year 4
3	10	Male	Saoluafata	Saoluafata Primary School	Year 5
4	11	Female	Vailele	Samoa Primary School	Year 7
5	9	Female	Vailele	Samoa Primary School	Year 5
6	12	Male	Siusega	Vaitele Primary School	Year 7
7	10	Female	Siusega	Vaitele Primary School	Year 5
8	9	Male	Siusega	Vaitele Primary School	Year 4
9	11	Male	Vaivase uta	Samoa Primary School	Year 8
10	7	Female	Leufisa	Tanugamanono Primary	Year 3
11	12	Male	Leufisa/Saleimoa	Tanugamanono Primary	Year 7
12	9	Male	Vailele	Manumalo Baptist School	Year 4
13	10	Female	Vailele	Manumalo Baptist School	Year 5
14	7	Female	Leufisa	Apia Primary	Year 3
15	10	Male	Moamoa	Marist Boys School	Year 6
16	9	Male	Sinamoga/Moamoa	Marist Boys School	Year 5
17	10	Male	Leufisa	Apia Primary	Year 5
18	7	Female	Leufisa/Safotu	Apia Primary	Year 4
19	6	Male	Leufisa	Apia Primary	Year 2
20	9	Male	Leufisa	Lepea Primary	Year 4
21	10	Male	Leufisa	Tanugamanono Primary	Year 4
22	9	Male	Leufisa	Apia Primary	Year 5
23	10	Male	Leufisa/Lotopa	Lepea Primary	Year 5
24	12	Male	Vailele tai	Samoa Primary School	Year 8
25	13	Male	Samoa/Vailele	Samoa College	Year 9
26	7	Male	Vailele	Samoa Primary School	Year 4
27	10	Female	Vailele	Samoa Primary School	Year 6
28	13	Male	Vailele-uta	Samoa College	Year 9
29	13	Male	Vailele-uta	Samoa College	Year 9
30	12	Female	Matautu Tai (Uta)	Falefitu Primary School	Year 6
31	7	Male	Leufisa	Apia Primary	Year 3
32	5	Male	Leufisa	Apia Primary	Year 1
33	8	Female	Leufisa	Vaivase Primary	Year 4
34	10	Female	Leufisa	Vaivase Primary	Year 6
35	6	Female	Leufisa	Vaivase Primary	Year 2

(Source: Samoa Children Study, June 2019).

inclusive tools that were used to enable children to express their ideas and thoughts about the research questions. The children in this study were selected from the Salvation Army church, a family in Vailele and from an urban village community in Leufisa. The children met at three different venues (family home, church hall and community house) to enable the researchers to conduct one-on-one interviews, and to engage the children in map drawing and photo-taking activities. The older children (11 to 13 years old) were given the opportunity to write their responses in a questionnaire whereas the younger children were assisted by research assistants. After completing the answers to the questionnaire, the children were then asked to draw maps of their home environment including their neighbours and the things or places that are important to them.

Conceptualising Samoan children's perception of places and spaces

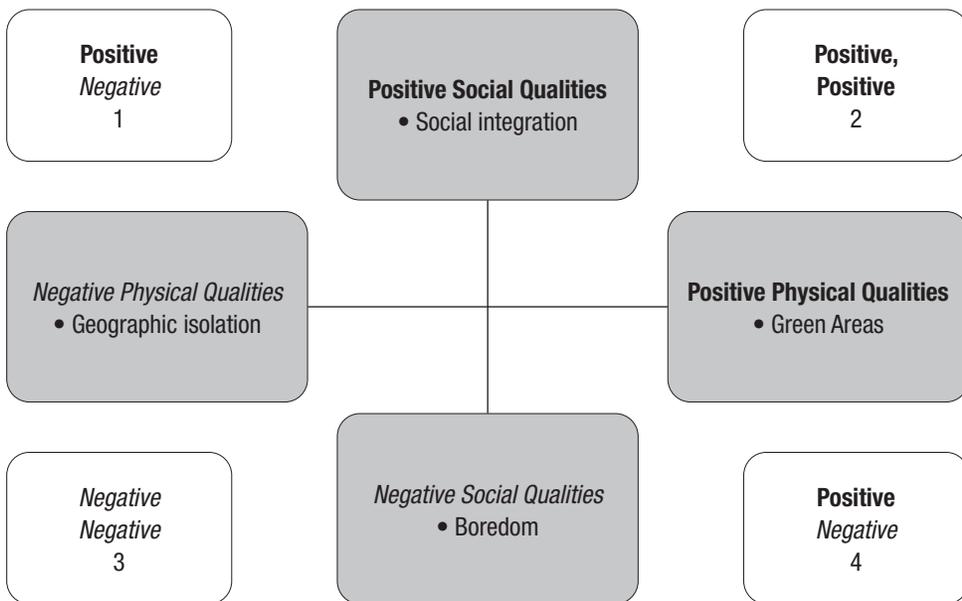
The children in this study come from different socio-economic backgrounds that would have some bearing on how they see, experience and react to the places in which they live. As such, their childhoods are constructed in different ways and in different places (Holloway & Valentine, 2000). The school, church, neighbours and the home are everyday places that provide spaces through which children's identities and lives are played out. Places give and acquire meaning in what they offer socially and morally (Tuan, 1974). For example, the physical and social qualities of the places that children grow up in affect their experiences, perceptions and expectations of the world around them. Green areas in the form of open fields for sports or tree-shaded spaces may not always be available to every child but they are always valued by children (Chawla, 2001). The church and Sunday school provide instruction for the children's spiritual growth and wellbeing, at the same time allow children to make new friends outside of school and close neighbours. Playing outside in the hot sun or in the shade of mango and tamarind trees are normal childhood behaviours while growing up in Samoa. It is also important to note that the childhood experiences of children growing up in the 1980s, 1990s and the early 2000s are markedly different from the cohort of children in this study. The latter group may be defined by their growing up in the age of technology and virtual games that may substitute conventional outdoor play, but this is another area of research yet to be fully explored.

Places that children call home are created and organised by adults. The home is where children receive their first instruction of the world around them. This is encapsulated in the Samoan maxim '*O le aiga o le faleaoga muamua lea o le tamaitiiti*', that is, the child's education begins in the home. Children regardless of their age, are very sensitive to their surroundings as they quickly pick up negativity related to emotional abuse in the home such as name-calling, tellings-off, being sworn at and not being spoken to for a while (Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, 2017). Likewise, in places where positivity is transmitted in the form of positive behaviour such as kind and softly spoken words to instruct and discipline children, provide lasting impressions that help form their young characters. To situate the Samoan children's perception of the places they live, Chawla's (2001) research is used to help conceptualise Samoan children's perception of their place of identity.

In Figure 1, the socio-physical characteristics of the local environment are arranged

along positive and negative poles aligned along horizontal and vertical axes to produce four quadrants. Quadrant (1) displays incidents characterised by negative physical and positive social qualities. Quadrant (2) projects both positive social and physical qualities of the local environment with Quadrant (3) reflecting both negative qualities of the physical and social environment. Quadrant (4) depicts a situation defined by a positive physical environment with the social environment presenting negative qualities. Examples of positive and negative qualities of the socio-physical environment from Chawla's study are included in Figure 1 for illustration. Similar positive and negative attributes about the places they live were identified by the Samoan children and are discussed in the following sections of the paper.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



(Adapted from Chawla, 2001)

Children's perceptions of where they live

The home environment in which the children are raised is a salient factor in determining their physical, mental and emotional development. The home environment includes the physical surroundings such as the availability and safety of living spaces and play areas, a stimulating and nurturing environment with daily parental/guardian supervision and direction. The children were asked a series of questions related to their home environment or where they were living at the time of the study. More than 80% of the children affirmed that where they live is a good place. The most common reasons the children provided to explain why they think their place of residence is good are encapsulated in four recurring themes that emerged from the thematic analysis of questions related to children's living places (Table 2).

Table 2: Positive Things about Place of Residence

Question	Four themes to capture the things that make it a good place	N = 31
What do you think makes it a good place?	1. House: nice, big, clean; good place, plenty of food, lot of land, safe, lots of space, 2. Location & proximity to: family & grandparents, school, church, good/nice neighbours, shops, buses to Apia, hospital, town, sea	26
	3. Physical Environment: Pleasant/peaceful surroundings, breeze, Fine weather, plenty of trees providing shade	2
	4. Relationships: People work together and help each other; lend a helping hand, protection, no conflict, look out for each other	3

(Source: Samoa Children's Study, June 2019).

Most of the children thought that the condition of the house being nice, big, clean, safe, with lots of space and plenty of food are important aspects that make the place a good place to live. Evidently, children have a clear idea of what constitutes a good place. It seems that Theme 1 (about their houses) captures an important aspect of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations General Assembly, 1989) which stipulates that every child has a right to basic needs of adequate shelter and food; 26 children (Table 2) identified as these as positive and good things about the places they live.

Theme 2 is related to children's perception of the location of the places in which they live. The proximity of where they live to family (grandparents), and familiar community spaces (school, church) and accessibility to services (shops, buses) are positive aspects of the places they live. In this respect, children are highly aware of the importance of their surrounding environment on the overall quality of the places they live. For example, the children identified proximity to where grandparents and other family reside as important for regular movement to visit and spend time with them.

Theme 3 deals with the state of the physical environment of the place. Two of the children pointed out the peaceful and pleasant nature of the natural environment with plenty of trees providing shade to play in, as a good aspect of the place. Theme 4 revolves around people's good relationships with others in the neighbourhood as observed by the children. Three of the children reported that people work together, look out for each other and are ready to lend a helping hand to their neighbours as positive things about the places they live.

Table 3 summarises the views of four children (11.4%) who thought that the place they live was not a good place. It is important to note, that incidents of violence in the home were reported by one child respondent as a reason why the home was not a good place (Table 3). As stated earlier, violence in the home, particularly against children, is an under-researched area, and a culturally sensitive area of research. However, it is not surprising that it emerged from this case study of children in urban areas. Studies conducted elsewhere in the Pacific have established strong correlations between urbanisation, poverty, violence and many other social problems where children have

been identified as victims (see Bryant-Tokalau, 1995; Jones, 2016; Kuruppu, 2016; United Nations Children’s Fund, 2017). In this study, one of the children reported that there is a lot of telling off, and a lot of harm and hidings that they are exposed to in their place. Another child pointed out that their household is ‘filled with boys’ implying a negative association related to gender imbalances in the home that warrant an urgent need to care and protect girls even in their own home environment.

Table 3: Negative Things about Places of Residence

Negative things in place of residence	N = 4
Our household is filled with boys. We don’t know other people from around our village.	1
It’s not good because when there is strong winds or a cyclone, the river floods and it reaches our house. Also where there is heavy rains, and water reaches the embankment.	1
This place would be better if I had a fun relative or friends who live nearby.	1
It is not good. I get a telling off a lot and there is a lot of harm, I have to do a lot of chores. It is not good. Hidings.	1

(Source: Samoa Children’s Study, June 2019).

Expanding on the notion of a “good place”, the children were specifically asked a question that targeted their knowledge of the friendliness and safety aspect of the place (Table 4). It is important to note that, when the children were asked what they thought about the places they live (Table 2), their responses indicated a basic level of awareness about the “good” aspects of the places they live in. Four respondents (11.4 %) identified “bad” or negative aspects of the places they live. When the children were specifically prompted to state whether the places they live were friendly and safe, 22.8% of the respondents (Table 4) identified the place as unfriendly and unsafe. They spoke of their places being burgled, people getting drunk, swearing, and throwing rocks. The children’s description of bad behaviour that makes the place unfriendly and unsafe suggests an elevated level of awareness of what is occurring in their community, particularly unpleasant behaviour. The friendly and safe aspects of the place correlate with the children knowing people in the area they live, and 57.2% of the children do not know lots of people in their place. Studies conducted elsewhere found that “knowing the neighbours” is one of many variables (others being social composition, physical characteristics) that influence the level of safety in urban areas (Takken, 2014).

Table 4: Friendly, safe place, do you know lots of people here?

Question	Yes	No	No response
Is it a friendly place, a safe place?	27 [77.2%]	8 [22.8%]	
Do you know lots of people here?	13 [37.1%]	20 [57.2%]	2 [5.7%]

(Source: Samoa Children’s Study, June 2019).

A follow-up open-ended question that required children to express their thoughts on things that they do *not* like about where they live and what they think makes it a bad place produced some interesting findings. Based on the thematic analysis of the children's responses, four distinct themes were identified (see Table 5). Themes 1 to 3 imply undesirable aspects of the places they live. Theme 4 suggests all is well, that "everything is okay and safe" (Respondent 14).

A challenging home environment is a recurring idea in the responses of nine children who spoke about family members behaving badly or fighting, suggesting some form of violent behaviour that is witnessed and or experienced by the children. It is beyond the scope of this study to follow through with some of the children's responses that allude to violence observed in the home and neighbourhood, but the study acknowledges that domestic violence is a community-wide problem and that women and children are the most vulnerable to this.

Eight children identified poorly behaved neighbours who "drink alcohol and swear", and "cause trouble" as threatening behaviour that makes their neighbourhood unsafe. An 11-year-old boy commented on a swear word he heard for the first time from a group of intoxicated young men. This, and similar comments from the children in this study, lends support to the general view that children are naturally curious and observant and are quick to notice things and people in their surroundings.

The third theme relates to the state of the outdoor environment in the vicinity of their living places. Ten children (29%) reported old cars piling up in the yard attracting mosquitos to their houses, and decaying breadfruit leaves and rubbish surrounding their homes (Table 5) as bad aspects that make them unsafe and unhealthy places to live. According to the children, poor maintenance and upkeep of outdoor areas contribute to the unpleasant appearance of spaces surrounding their living spaces.

Table 5: What do You Not like About Where You Live? What Do You Think Makes it a Bad Place?

Theme	Sample Responses	N=35
1] Challenging home/family environment	Problems or arguments. My mother's mother is cruel. People gossiping. When there are difficulties or problems like family members fight and it's not good for us children. My mum always gives my older brother and sister a hiding. I do not like it when my parents discipline us. My uncle gets drunk and he unsettles my family.	9
2] Challenging neighbours/ neighbourhood	People swear at night. It is not safe, because people drink alcohol and swear. There are people who cause trouble. Drunk boys swear and throw bottles. Bad people walk around everywhere at night. People who cause trouble. Neighbour tells me off when we play next to their house.	8

3] State of outdoor environment	Too many breadfruit trees, and many breadfruit leaves, rubbish... Bad [old cars] piling up next to our house, there is a lot of mosquitos and they come into our house. Rubbish scattered outside our house. When it rains, the river near our house overflows and floods our house.	10
4] None/nothing	Nothing really bad about it. Nothing, everything is ok. Nothing. Everything is okay and safe. None.	8

(Source: Samoa Children's Study, June 2019).

The children's opinions about what they thought other people (family and friends) would say if they were asked the same questions about the places they lived yielded almost similar responses to what the children expressed in Tables 4 and 5. Table 6 presents a deconstruction of children's opinions of what they thought other people (adults in particular) would say about the places they live. A total of 49% of the children thought that other adult family and friends would be happy to live where they are currently living considering the peaceful surroundings and convenience of location to shops, other family and proximity to Apia. Another 23% expressed negative views about the places they live, that deter other people from living in the area. The negative aspects of the places they live are very clear to the children who recalled past incidents of drunk people fighting and saying bad words (Table 6).

Table 6: If You Asked Your Family, Friends or Other People if this is a Good Place to Live, What Do You Think They Would Say? Do You Think They Like Living Here Or Do They Want To Leave?

N = 35	Yes	No	No response	Other responses
	17 children [49%] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • happy, it's a good place to live • parents are happy with it • peaceful place, conveniently located to shops • nice and quiet • family is all around it • close to Apia • huge space 	8 children [23%] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people steal/always drunk • too small space • too much noise • they would say no because drunk people always on the road and say bad words • heaps of fights and thieves (burglars) 	2 children [5%]	8 children [3%] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • my father working in Australia • we do chores and wipe the floor, clear the rubbish • I have many friends who I play with • they talk about how we need to listen to our parents • I do not listen to my parents

(Source: Samoa Children's Study, June 2019).

Table 7: If Someone Asked You What Are the Special or Important Places or Places You Love in Your Community, What Would You Tell Them?

Places	Why is it special/important?
Church; church community hall; Sunday School; school; pastor's house	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • peaceful and safe [4] • learn to read the bible, how to behave [4] • To hang out, feel good [2] • School, see and play with friends. [3]
Other family homes; grandma's house; Aunty and uncle's house Our home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • big garden to explore, play [3] • close to town, no chores [2] • nice surroundings, nice food [4] • Grandma's house where she passed away to remember her always. [2] • own place for privacy, breezy, beautiful ,quiet[4]
Hotel; Taxi stand; cemetery; nature reserve, shop, sports stadium and swimming pool Roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interesting visitors to use the hotel, earn income [1] • attract business, enjoy nature, fresh air [1] • good roads for travelling [2]
Australia, New Zealand, American Samoa; Lalomanu; Palisi Leufisa, Aleisa; Tafaigata	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • places where family members moved to live • spent Christmas, zoo, shopping. • places in Samoa where close relatives live, sleep overs, play with cousins, eat pizza [3]

(Source: Samoa Children's Study, June, 2019).

Table 7 summarises the children's responses to the question related to special or important places and places in their community they love. Some 13 children (37.1%) identified the church and church-related places (pastor's house, Sunday School), and school as special and important places they find peaceful, safe and nice to meet and play with their friends. Another nine children (25.7%) named other relative's homes as important places they love to visit because they have nice surroundings with big gardens to explore and play in. A couple of the children identified grandma's house as a special place they enjoy visiting because it helps them remember their grandma who passed away. Grandma's place provided a warm, loving and fun space where children are spoiled by grandparents with the best food including sweets, where they get to perform light chores such as picking up the rubbish outside the house with plenty of time to play. Regular visits to grandma's place provided a space that help children deal with death, particularly the passing of close kin.

Four of the children (11.4%) pointed out that their own homes are beautiful and special places that provide the privacy that they consider valuable. It is interesting that children picked up on privacy as a factor that makes their homes special places. For instance, having their own private space such as their own individual bedroom is important in developing social maturity and responsibility in taking care of and keeping the room tidy. Not all children have their own bedroom, most share with an older or younger sibling. In this study, three children had their own bedrooms, but did not identify it as a personal space that affords them privacy; rather they perceived it as

“mum’s preference to ensure us kids do not mess up the living room when family and other people come to visit”.

Some of the children made reference to infrastructure (roads) and services (taxi stands) or businesses (hotels) in the vicinity of their homes as important places that earn income for the owners and raise the socio-economic status of their community. Children notice the importance of these places as they observe people congregating at the sports stadium either to participate in sports or to support their teams on the weekends. The public swimming pool serves to draw people from Apia’s urban area and beyond for indoor swimming competitions. These public places provide the opportunity for informal vending activities such as food and drink stands operated by family members of some of the child informants.

Nature reserves surrounding the sports stadium and interspersed around the Apia urban area were also identified as special because they provide spaces for people to relax and appreciate nature. Sometimes, nature parks can be used as a rendezvous point for young people. For instance, in Vailele village, where one group of interviews was conducted, the nature reserve belonging to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment is sometimes used as a place for young men of the village to meet in the weekends to drink alcohol.

Three of the children identified Australia, New Zealand, American Samoa and other villages in Samoa (Aleisa, Lalomanu, Palisi) as important because they symbolise places that immediate and close relatives and friends have moved to live permanently. Children perceived good things about these places after visiting and spending time in New Zealand, for example, where they visited the zoo, sea life, shopping malls, and met other cousins for the first time. Regular visits for short stays with relatives elsewhere in Samoa yielded similar excitement particularly with the young boys, who get to spend time and sleep over at their cousins’ place. Young girls, however, are rarely allowed sleep-over opportunities, unless accompanied by a parent or a trusted older sibling or adult.

Places that make children feel safe and happy, where fond memories of growing up are created, and remembered are important in forging children’s cognitive connections and sense of affection for these places. The church, pastor’s house, Sunday school and school are important places that provide a space for children to play with friends, acquire knowledge and socialise, where they are safe and valued. Places such as the pastor’s house and Sunday school provide children with instruction in their young lives, and children as young as 8 years old seem to grasp the importance of what the “church and Sunday school” represented in their young lives.

Conclusion

As stated earlier, this study is a fraction of a larger study on Pacific children’s perception of places they identify with and feel connected to in their lives, be it Samoa, New Zealand, Australia or other Pacific Island countries. Children had clear perceptions about the places they live and good and bad things that impact on their childhood experiences. Children were able to differentiate between the good and bad aspects of the places they live. They also affirmed that other people will find the good aspects of the places they live such as close proximity to Apia and other services quite appealing, and

will undoubtedly enjoy living there. Challenging behaviour by intoxicated youth can give places a bad reputation as was stated by some of the children. Negative experiences such as scolding by a parent or adult are perceived as negative aspects of the home. Nonetheless, most children growing up in Samoa experience a telling-off at some point in their young lives. And parents can attest that telling off is a habit in a Samoan household as long as it does not amount to verbal and physical abuse. Social-physical spaces that are peaceful, clean, fun and safe contribute to good characteristics of these places that make children happy. Happy children grow up to be happy adults with better physical health and wellbeing. On the whole, most of the children interviewed for the Samoa component of the study reflected on being happy and content with the places they live in their community.

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A multi-case study approach to researching Chinese children's early literacy learning experiences in Auckland

Bo Zhou

Abstract

Early childhood services in Aotearoa New Zealand are offered to all children, including those with diverse language and cultural backgrounds. To sustain these children's early literacy learning, we need capture their experiences when they are travelling across diverse cultural contexts, such as home and kindergartens. The focus of this article is to describe, in detail, the multi-case study approach to researching the literacy learning experiences of four Chinese immigrant children from two kindergartens in Auckland. The findings show that these children were able to initiate and participate in multiple activities at home and kindergarten. The children's previous literacy learning experiences gained in kindergarten contributed to their engagement and further learning in home literacy activities and vice versa. This article increases the methodological scope for early childhood teachers and researchers when researching children's early literacy learning in, and across, different settings.

Introduction

The early literacy learning experiences of young children who speak languages other than English as their mother tongue in English-speaking countries has been a key focus in early childhood education (ECE) research. To promote children's learning and wellbeing, the Ministry of Education (2017) of Aotearoa New Zealand highlighted in *Te Whāriki*, the early childhood curriculum, that every child has "right of access to all learning experiences" (p. 39) despite their various ethnicities and backgrounds. This expectation calls for early childhood teachers and researchers to explore and understand the learning experiences of children, especially those whose home language is different from that at early childcare centres when they are travelling daily between the two contexts. The purpose of this article is to provide an exemplar of a multi-case study approach to capturing four Chinese immigrant children's early literacy learning experiences at home and in the English-domain kindergartens in Auckland.

Prior to coming to Aotearoa in 2014, I was an ECE teacher in China. It was there that I constructed my initial understanding of Chinese children's literacy learning experiences in kindergartens. Becoming an ECE researcher in Aotearoa, however, expanded my knowledge of children's literacy learning as well as the approaches to researching their learning in diverse settings. Children not only learn with parents and teachers by talking, singing, dancing, reading, drawing, and writing at home and kindergarten, but also transfer and expand their literacy learning as "competent and

confident learners” (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 2) through their engagement and meaningful communication with different individuals. To explore children’s real-life literacy learning experiences, I built relationships with four Chinese immigrant children, their parents at home, teachers, and peers in two kindergartens in Auckland, New Zealand. Many lessons were learned during the process and that is the purpose of this paper – to share my research experiences and highlight the factors that contribute to relationship building in a research context and undertaking a multi-case-study approach.

This article begins with brief review of relevant research on literacy and the relationship between learning at home and in an education setting in the early years. This is followed by an outline of the ECE context of Aotearoa. Next, the research design for this study is presented, highlighting its participatory, reflective, flexible, and ethical approach. The important nature of relationship building with, and recruitment of, children, teachers, and parents is described in a narrative style to elaborate on the complex but fruitful path the research took. Details of the access to multiple data sources (e.g., interviews, narrative tasks, observations, and artefacts) is highlighted, followed by the research findings. The article concludes with my reflections on the field work, including the factors that influenced the process and contributed to research success. Significant highlights include a primary understanding of children’s living and learning through informal conversations with them and their parents, voluntary work at the kindergartens before conducting the field work, and the contextual, understandable, negotiable, and traceable methodology of my field work in data gathering.

Literature summary

Traditionally, literacy in the early years is described as children’s ability to read and write (Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Such definitions, however, evolved with developments in robust research in ECE. Researchers argue that early literacy, beyond reading and writing – the indispensable components of literacy (Bissex, 1980; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982) – is understood as children’s meaningful interactions with other individuals in specific social and cultural contexts (Kress, 1997; McNaughton, 1995; Gillen & Hall, 2013). A synthesis of literacy research defines literacy as children’s meaningful communication, such as understanding and responding, with adults or other individuals through their use of discourses (Gee, 2009), such as oral or written language, facial expressions, and actions at home and in their early learning settings.

Along with the development of broader definitions of literacy, the conventional view of literacy learning starting at school has also changed. Researchers identify positive relationships between family support and children’s literacy development (Bindman et al., 2014; Clay, 1998). Some researchers acknowledge the contribution of early childcare and education settings to children’s future literacy development (Naqvi et al., 2012; Paley, 1981; Vincent, 2014). Other researchers have found that, while continuity of the practices between home and early childcare centres facilitates children’s literacy learning in the early years (Goodridge & McNaughton, 1994; Guo, 2010; McNaughton et al., 1994), discontinuity of the practices may enrich and benefit children’s literacy experiences, leading to higher emergent literacy outcomes (Schick, 2014).

Also, children, as well as adults, were able to bridge the learning gaps by re-introducing the literacy experiences gained from one setting into another and engaging adults in their activities (Hill & Nichols, 2009; Tangaere & McNaughton, 1994).

Although children's early literacy experiences have been extensively studied, little research has been focused on Chinese immigrant children's literacy learning experiences across home and early childhood centres in New Zealand. This study extended previous research by observing four Chinese immigrant children's real-life literacy experiences at home and in two kindergartens in New Zealand.

The research design

As noted earlier, the purpose of the article is to outline, in depth, the research approach, in order to provide a useful model for other ECE researchers to follow. The methodology was a multi-case study design, aimed at making the findings more compelling by strengthening the generalisability of findings from more than one case. A multi-case study can help qualitative researchers deepen their understanding of a problem or phenomenon through a specific and in-depth investigation with a small number of samples or cases (Guo, 2010). Yin (2014) emphasises that using four to ten cases can assist researchers gain substantial and powerful data – hence effectively and efficiently achieving their research targets. Considering the availability of participants, the time frame for data gathering, and multiple data sources, I purposefully selected four Chinese immigrant children as case-study children to describe their personal stories and enrich my understanding of their literacy experiences and learning both at home and in kindergarten in Auckland.

Four Chinese immigrant children, navigating between home and kindergarten in Auckland, were recruited as the focus children of this study. Other participants included the focus children's teachers and peers in kindergartens and parents and siblings at home. All the participants, at different ages and with various cultural backgrounds, were respected as human beings with "dignity, self-esteem, and the right to privacy" (Guo, 2010, p. 76). Ensuring the participants' rights, such as voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity, the right to withdraw and turn off the audio or video devices, was highlighted and observed throughout my field work.

Kindergartens, rather than other ECE services, were selected as research sites for two reasons. First, children's enrolment in kindergarten constituted 16% of the overall enrolments in ECE services in 2014 and 2015 and serve children between 3 and 5 years old, while education and care services, with an enrollment portion of 63% in both years, accept children from birth to primary school age (i.e., 5 years old). A wider age range in the services could make observation of focus children and their engagement in various activities more complex. Second, whereas kindergartens implemented *Te Whāriki* into their programmes based on teachers' understanding and the specific contexts in a kindergarten, the community and private education and care services may operate with a specific language and cultural focus (e.g., Tongan or Samoan) or teaching and learning philosophy (e.g., Montessori or Rudolph Steiner).

I selected six kindergartens using the official websites of the Auckland Kindergarten Association and the Education Review Office (ERO). Each kindergarten had a minimum

number of five Chinese immigrant children, aged 3–5, as well as within reasonable distance from my office. I also collected important information on each kindergarten, such as the physical address, environments, education team and programmes, and contact details from the two websites. A research advertisement was sent to each of the six kindergartens via email, highlighting the purposes of this study. Head teachers of Apple Kindergarten and Berry Kindergarten replied to my email invitation within two weeks and expressed their interest in this study. I set up a face-to-face meeting with teachers in each kindergarten and briefly introduced the goals and procedures of the study and requirements of participants.

At the end of the meeting, all the teachers verbally expressed their willingness to participate. We then discussed the list of potential focal children based on the following criteria:

- are of Chinese descent and between 4–5 years old when they are recruited;
- speak Mandarin as their first language;
- have attended Apple or Berry Kindergarten for 3 months so that they are familiar with the kindergarten environment;
- have at least one of the primary caregivers (e.g., parents or grandparents) who speak either Mandarin or English to assist with my communication with the caregivers.

The teachers advised that more than two Chinese children met the criteria in each kindergarten, which suggested that Apple and Berry Kindergarten were ideal research sites for this study. Before recruiting children and parent participants from both kindergartens, I volunteered to assist the teachers with preparation work in the mornings and tidy-up in the afternoons for a week. My volunteer days were designed to eliminate my interruption to the kindergarten routines and to increase familiarity between potential participants (e.g., children and parents) and myself. The teachers introduced me to all children at the morning mat time. I also greeted children and parents during pick-up and drop-off time and answered their questions about this study during my week of volunteer work. An envelope with a participant information sheet, a consent form, and an assent form was individually distributed to the parents by the teachers at the end of the week. Parents were asked to explain the study to their child based on the prompts in the participant information sheet and return the consent form and assent form with their signature if they and their child agreed to participate. Four Chinese immigrant children, three from Apple Kindergarten and one from Berry Kindergarten, met the criteria for focus children of this study and were recruited.

Multiple data sources (i.e., interviews, narrative tasks, observations, and children's artefacts) were collected from participants over four months to develop in-depth understanding in this study. Yin's (2014) list of six sources, namely, "documentation, archival records interviews, direct observations, participant-observation and physical artefacts" (p. 104), for researchers to collect case-study evidence supported the data collection of this study. The four sources assure that "the right information and interpretations" (Stake, 2000, p. 35) and "detailed, in-depth data" (Creswell, 2013, p. 73) were obtained. Other supportive sources and techniques, such as field notes, audio, video, and photograph recordings, were also applied to improve the validity and reliability of this study.

Interviews have been extensively used in case studies and they are considered as critical sources for researchers to understand the living world of participants (Dahlberg et al., 2001; Kvale, 1996). The parents and teachers of the four focal children were interviewed considering their close relationships with and possible influences on the focal children. One week after my voluntary work at each of the kindergartens, I interviewed the parents and teachers individually to understand their routines and experiences related to the focal children. A 1-hour, semi-structured interview with open-ended questions was conducted in a natural and conversational manner for each of the interviewees. Audio recordings and field notes were used to ensure that all information from the participants was recorded and to establish further questions, in the line of inquiry, based on the key points in the interviewees' answers.

The 1-hour, parent interview questions were arranged into two parts. Questions in Part one concentrated on the demographic and background information of the family. I selected the conversational interview rather other than a survey to collect the information after consideration that the interviewees may provide extended information in this friendly casual chatting environment, which may help me understand the focal children and their family better. Questions in Part two focused on the living and learning experiences of focal children at home and in kindergarten. Mandarin was mainly used in the parent interviews, as advised by the parents.

The 1-hour interview with each of the seven teachers was individually conducted in their respective kindergartens. Questions of the teacher interview were categorised into two parts. Background information of each teacher was collected through questions in Part one and inquiries regarding focal children's learning experiences at kindergarten were asked in Part two. The questions from Guo's (2010) study on Chinese children's learning experiences in early childhood centres in Aotearoa New Zealand and the teacher interview of Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey 2009 cohort (Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2015) informed the teacher interview questions in the current research. English was used in the teacher interviews.

Answers from the parent and teacher interviews deepened my primary understanding of the literacy environment and the focal children's learning experiences in both socialisation contexts. Important information, such as the games or activities that the focal children were interested and engaged in, peers with whom the focal children frequently communicated, and relationships between the focal children's family and kindergarten, was gathered. A schedule for narrative tasks and field observations in both settings was drafted after my negotiation with parents or teachers at the end of each interview.

People's narratives are critical sources for others to understand his or her experiences due to the person encoding his or her thoughts or concerns into the narratives (Gee, 2009). In Schick's (2014) research on children's emergent literacy skills, narrative tasks were applied as an observational measure. The children's conversational autonomy, grammar, and literate language, which were considered to be their reading readiness, were identified and coded while they were sharing the story of a wordless picture book, *A Boy, a Dog, a Frog and a Friend* (Mayer & Mayer, 1971), with the researcher.

To uncover the four focal children's interest, no designated storybook was assigned in the narrative tasks of this study. One week after the parent and teacher interviews, the focal children were invited to share two stories with me: one in Mandarin from their favourite storybooks at home and one in English from their favourite storybooks at kindergarten. There was no restriction on the language (e.g., Mandarin or English) of the storybooks. The stories based on their drawings were also accepted in the narrative tasks. Furthermore, the focal children were invited to the tasks while they were not engaged in any activities so that I could avoid interrupting their routines. They would be invited later, if they were not ready the first time, to ensure that the tasks were completed in a natural and relaxing atmosphere. Prompts in the same language (i.e., Mandarin at home and English at kindergarten), such as “真有意思! 然后呢? [Interesting! Then what happened?], were provided to encourage the focal children to complete their narratives, which had no time or word limit. Their discourses (e.g., language, actions, gestures, and facial expressions) were recorded in field notes throughout the tasks.

Field observations served as a critical source of understanding the focal children's learning and literacy experiences at home and kindergarten – two natural settings. Yin (2014) advised using two kinds of field observations, namely *direct* and *participant*, for case-study research. In the current study, direct observations were used to minimize my interruption to the routines and daily communication of the focal children and other participants. I undertook the role of observer because I only witnessed what was happening rather than participated in the activities. Video and audio recordings, with field notes, were used in the field observations.

Field observations at the four focal children's home and kindergarten started in the third week of data gathering and were conducted over 10 weeks. Table 1 (Zhou, 2019) shows three 3-day kindergarten-home-kindergarten observation cycles of each focal child. In other words, the interactions between each focal child and other participants (i.e., parents, siblings, teachers, and peers) would be observed 30 minutes per time and three times at home and 120 minutes per time and six times at kindergarten. The overall observation time for each focal child was 13.5 hours over the three observation cycles.

On the first day of each observation cycle, I observed the focal children's engagement in solo and group activities at kindergarten. The observation mostly occurred during free play time for three reasons. First, rich raw data of the focal children's communication with other participants could be collected as they spent 4.5 hours, which was 75% of the six hours at kindergarten, on various activities on free play. Second, the activities the focal children participate in could inform their learning experiences and interest because children were able to decide in which activity they wanted to be engaged, with whom they wanted to share, where they wanted to start, and how they wanted to continue the activities. Third, non-participants were more likely to be involved in the activities organised by the teacher during mat time, morning and afternoon tea and lunch time – the other 1.5 hours during a kindergarten day. In sum, the selection of free play time as the major field observation time at kindergarten facilitated data gathering and ethical considerations, especially “the rights and benefits of the non-participants” (Zhou, 2019, p. 106).

Table 1: Three Observation Cycles of Each Focal Child

Focal Child	Observation Cycle 1	Observation Cycle 2	Observation Cycle 3
Child 1	Week 3 (K1-H1-K2)	Week 7 (K3-H2-K4)	Week 9 (K5-H3-K6)
Child 2	Week 4 (K1-H1-K2)	Week 7 (K3-H2-K4)	Week 9 (K5-H3-K6)
Child 3	Week 5 (K1-H1-K2)	Week 6 (K3-H2-K4)	Week 8 (K5-H3-K6)
Child 4	Week 8 (K1-H1-K2)	Week 10 (K3-H2-K4)	Week 12 (K5-H3-K6)

Note: K = Kindergarten; H = Home

I visited the focal children's home and observed their solo play and interactions with their parents and siblings (if any) on the second day of an observation cycle. The observations were conducted when the children returned home from kindergarten, as advised in the parent interviews. The children usually had afternoon tea when they arrived home and communication between other participants and them frequently occurred during and after this time. Observations were again conducted for 120 minutes at kindergarten on the third day of the observation cycle. Ethical considerations (e.g., not disturbing the routines of all the participants and respecting non-participants' rights) guided the field observations. Meanwhile, I did not set any expectations or goals for what I could observe as I understood that literacy events in the two settings could happen at any time and in any form (e.g., oral and visual). The opportunities to witness the literacy events occurring across the two settings were increased by the continuing observation cycles, which increased the likelihood of my understanding of learning continuing across the settings.

I also observed the communication between focal children and other participants at drop-off time before each kindergarten observation and pick-up time before home observations. These observations were designed to supplement my understanding of focal children's learning flowing between the different settings and to triangulate the interview data related to the interactions among the participants. The focal children's communication with their parent(s) in the car on their way home could also be observed if conditions permitted (e.g., space available for me in the car and not interrupting their routines). The pick-up and drop-off observation time was between 10 to 30 minutes for every observation cycle, varying from family to family considering the participants' availability and observation situation, which led to the observation duration during the pick-up and drop-off time being approximately an hour for each focal child.

Overall, I observed the communication between each focal child and other participants for 14.5 hours, with a combination of 58 hours for all the focal children, over three observation cycles. Field observation time differed for other participants because of their various engagements with the focal children in the home and kindergarten activities. I initiated 2–3 minute spontaneous chats with participants after they finished an activity to explore their thoughts about the activity and verify my uncertainty about the focal children's discourses. My brief (between 3–5 minutes) and informal conversations with parents and teachers usually happened before and after each observation cycle for

them to clarify the focal children's literacy experiences between observation sessions and for me to resolve any confusion from the observations.

To enrich my understanding of the four Chinese immigrant children's literacy experiences in and across home and kindergarten settings, I included their artefacts (i.e., portfolio, drawing, and writing) as a data source. Kindergarten teachers share children's interest, engagement in activities, and progress with children's family via portfolios, which contain pictures, texts, artwork, and videos and can be either online or on paper. Teachers or parents may also write their thoughts or reflections on children's experiences. The portfolios of focal children served as important sources of their literacy artefacts because they "empower children and enhance their identity as a learner" (Peters et al., 2009, p. 4). I reviewed the portfolio of each focal child after every kindergarten and home observation, namely three times per observation cycle and nine times in total.

Information from field observations in both settings highlighted that the focal children's artefacts could be missing from their portfolios. I, therefore, reviewed and photographed the excluded drawing, writing, and artwork. Details of each photograph (i.e., time, activity, place, and participants) were noted in the same folder with the photographs to facilitate data transcription, analysis, and interpretation. A few photographs of child's artefacts (which they constructed before or after observation cycles) could be linked to corresponding vignettes from my field observations.

Analysis and results

This study was designed to provide ECE teachers and researchers with understanding of Chinese immigrant children's literacy learning in and across home and kindergarten settings. Multiple data from interviews, narrative tasks, observations, and artefacts were collected over four months. On the gap days between the observation cycles, I shared a 3-minute video clip taken in kindergarten with the teachers to verify my understanding of the focal children's experiences in kindergarten activities. Meanwhile, a 3-minute video clip from home observation was shared between me and the focal children's parents separately at their home to verify my understanding of the focal children's communication with them. The responses from teachers and parents added to my interpretation of the focal children's literacy experiences in the two settings.

I transcribed all the audio and video recordings in 12 weeks, considering the confidentiality of the data and languages, namely English and Mandarin, used in data gathering. Participants' discourses (Gee, 2009), such as language, gestures, facial expressions, and behaviours, were identified in the transcription. Discourses of the focal children were the foci of data transcription and then analysis. Finally, I constructed 2–3-page cumulative transcripts for each parent and teacher interview and 28–38-page transcripts for each focal child. My reflective field notes, photos, and descriptions of the artefacts were then woven into the transcripts.

All the data were analysed in three waves: a) identifying focal children's participation in various activities in 67 episodes and categorising the activities into six themes (i.e., spontaneous conversation, pretend play, early reading and storytelling, drawing and early writing, computer playing, and singing) to depict a holistic picture of each

case; b) selecting 17 episodes for further analysis with activity theory to understand the influential factors of the focal children's literacy experiences in and across the two settings; c) synthesising similarities and differences of the children's experiences across the four cases. For the current paper, one of the 67 episodes, which focused on Mengmeng's drawing and writing and the communication between her and her mother about the drawing and writing, is presented in the following paragraph to illustrate the focal children's literacy experiences in and across home and kindergarten.

Mengmeng was drawing mermaids, her favourite creatures, at kindergarten. She concentrated on the drawing and ignored the noise from other children who were playing nearby. Once she finished drawing two mermaids, she signed her English name under them on the same blue paper. Mengmeng cut a piece of white paper into halves and stuck one half of it to the blue paper, where there were her drawing and signature. She carefully put away the completed artwork into her school bag. In the following home observation on the same day, she put the artwork on the table and start her unfinished lunch as afternoon tea. Mengmeng's mother took out a big picture of the English alphabet, which includes 26 pictures of common objects in daily life, the name of each object starting with a letter (e.g., Apple, Boat, and Carrot), and then the capital and lower case of each letter (e.g., A and a). The mother-daughter dyads had a conversation about Mengmeng's name writing on the artwork, which Mengmeng advised was a "kite". Mengmeng's mother pointed to the letter "c" and said: "这样才是 'c' 啊。你写的是这样的。[This is 'c'. You wrote it like this.]" Mengmeng's mother pointed to the symbol Mengmeng wrote in her name. The mother said: "这样写是不对的。[Your writing is incorrect.]" Mengmeng continued: "Carrot is on the 'c'." She then used a finger to write "c" on the table. During the drop-off time the next morning, Mengmeng was asked by her mother to sign her name in the children's attendance checklist before she could go to play. Mengmeng observed her name for a while and slowly but confidently wrote down her name. Mengmeng said: "我今天写对了 'c' 哦。[I correctly wrote "c" today.]" The mother said: "我看一下。今天 'c' 从写对了。Ok, 把笔放下。你可以去玩了。[Let me see. 'c' is correct today. Ok, put down your pen. You can go to play now.]"

Mengmeng's interest in mermaids, which was initially revealed in her home narrative task, was identified in the kindergarten free play through this vignette. Mengmeng's drawings in her portfolio also provided evidence of her curiosity and fondness for this mysterious, but beautiful, creature. The early name writing behaviour following the drawing activity illustrated her literacy experiences at kindergarten. The experience was then advanced by further conversation and practice on name writing through her communication with her mother across home and kindergarten.

Based on the cross-case synthesis of evidence spread across the 67 episodes, three findings could be summarised. First, the focal children initiated six types of activities

(i.e., spontaneous conversation, pretend play, early reading and storytelling, drawing and early writing, computer playing, and singing) in and across home and kindergarten settings with purposes of entertaining, sharing, obtaining, and learning. Second, the focal children's engagement in the activities led to a range of learning outcomes, such as development of communication acts (i.e., action describing, repeating, attention calling, directing, language switching, and topic changing) and early literacy skills (i.e., word knowledge, syntax structure, phonological awareness, print conventions, and writing skills) to achieve meaningful communication. Third, the focal children's previous home-kindergarten experiences played important roles (i.e., as key conceptual tools to mediate focal children's language and behaviours in the activities, opportunities to invite the engagement and contributions of other children and adults, and sources to generate knowledge challenges and gaps and produce extended learning in and across the two settings) in new literacy opportunities at home and kindergarten.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate four Chinese immigrant children's literacy experiences transferring between home and kindergarten. The purposefully designed methodology assisted me to achieve my research goal. The 1-week voluntary work at each kindergarten prior to data gathering afforded precious time for me to fit in the kindergarten environment without unnecessary interruption and to make myself familiar with and to the potential participants. Participation number and quality benefited from the gradually stable connection between me and the teachers, children, and parents over the week.

Multiple data, such as interviews, narrative tasks, observations, and artefacts, were then gathered thanks to my well-established relationships with the participants. The parent and teacher interviews shed light on my understanding of the focal children and their living and learning environments at home and kindergarten. The focal children's interest and literacy learning experiences was further identified via their participation in the home and kindergarten narrative tasks. The focal children's artefacts also served as important examples of their literacy experiences in and across the two settings.

The 3-day kindergarten-home-kindergarten observation cycles increased my opportunities to witness the children's literacy experience transferring in and across home and kindergarten. Meanwhile, the observations during pick-up and drop-off time offered significant snapshots of the focal children's bridging literacy learning over time and across settings. Two out of nine of the observation cycles, however, were conducted over 2 days rather than 3 as planned, because the parents changed their routines occasionally. The vignette from Mengmeng was one example. Unscheduled changes turned out to be a good chance for me to observe the interactions between Mengmeng and her mother about her drawing and name writing. This evidence might have been missed if I had stuck to the original plan or changed the time of the whole observation cycle to another week. In other words, being flexible and adaptable in field observations of communication in natural environments does not predict failure of data gathering; rather, it could allow fruitful observation results, considering the respect, rights and real lives of the participants.

My identity as a Chinese immigrant and researcher living in Auckland may have influenced the process of data gathering. The participants of Chinese descent might have talked and behaved differently in interviews and field observations if the researcher were a person with whom they could not easily connect. Finally, with the merit of the purposefully designed methodology and my Chinese identity, the natural and real-life literacy experiences of the focal children in meaningful communication with their parents, teachers and peers in and across kindergarten were identified. This article hence provided a reasonable methodological option for ECE teachers, students, and researchers who would like to focus their study on children's literacy learning in and across diverse settings in the early years.

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