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PASIFIKA STUDENTS AND *LEARNING TO LEARN* AT UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

As a Samoan educator, I have frequently heard the claim that Pasifika students need to *learn how to learn* to succeed at university. As part of the He Vaka Moana Fellowship in 2018, I sought to explore this claim by conducting talanoa with 24 Pasifika students who had taken a Pacific Studies course at the University of Auckland. The talanoa focused on their thoughts about learning and learning processes inside and outside the university. This study demonstrates that Pasifika students know how to learn and frequently reflect on their learning processes. These findings are important for recognising that Pasifika students' learning processes are not an issue, but that educators need to be more aware of how Pasifika students learn at university to successfully support Pasifika student achievement.

Keywords

Pasifika students, learning, Pasifika pedagogy, higher education

Introduction

For Pasifika peoples, learning has always been a central and lifelong occupation. Pasifika communities value knowledge and have clear frameworks for learning centred on the multiple knowledge systems of Pasifika peoples. At the core of this is the understanding that Pasifika people know how to learn, think about learning and learning processes, have developed deep ways of knowing and doing, and above all value reflection and wisdom (Gegeo, 2006). This deep respect for learning encompasses both cultural knowledge and Western education. However, this motivation and passion for learning has not historically been recognised or translated into success within the Western education system in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Pasifika pedagogy and effective learning environments for Pasifika students are complicated issues that have been written about by many esteemed Pasifika academics (for example, Alkema, 2014; Benseman et al., 2006; Chu et al., 2013). We are told that Pasifika educational success is a governmental priority (Ministry of Education, 2014; Tertiary Education Commission, 2017). While many people and organisations have taken strides towards educational equity, universities in general have not yet figured out how to reconcile what has been proven through research to support Pasifika student success with the Western structures of education embodied in the university (Alkema, 2014). University systems in Aotearoa still prioritise Western-based pedagogical practices, but this system is looking increasingly outdated in the face of an evolving and increasingly multi-ethnic student body (Salesa, 2017).

Pasifika students in tertiary institutions in Aotearoa often fall into a division between those who adjust to the expectations of a Western institution and those who do not. While there is a push against deficit student blaming for achievement rates in education, my experience shows that excuses are still sought that overlook the teachers

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and the tertiary institutions themselves in order to place blame elsewhere. One claim I heard repeatedly is that Pasifika students need to *learn how to learn* in order to be successful at university. This justification places the onus on the student who does not know how to learn, alongside the secondary schooling system that did not teach them how to learn. Issues with the National Certificate of Educational Achievement and Pasifika student achievement have been well documented, although there has been positive development in recent years (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2019). However, more significant is the offering of *learning to learn* as an excuse to exonerate the universities themselves and place the burden of blame on the student and their secondary schooling. But do Pasifika students need to *learn how to learn* and what exactly does that mean in the context of a university? The increasing number of Pasifika faces in lecture theatres envisioned by Salesa (2017) makes urgent the argument that tertiary institutions "ought to be more culturally democratic, taking more serious consideration of the ways in which Pasifika people think, learn and communicate with one another" (Thaman, 2009, p. 1).

In this project, the 24 Pasifika students who participated and shared their experiences clearly showed that they know how to learn at university, think and reflect on learning, and adapt learning skills to circumstance. Learning is not a Pasifika problem. But it also became clear through this project that the underlying ideology for learning and assessment focused on at university is not effective for knowledge acquisition at the undergraduate level for Pasifika students. The demands of assessment and time pressures alongside Western-based pedagogical frameworks and environments contribute to settings that are at odds with Pasifika ways of learning. In the context of an increasingly Pasifika population, the inability of universities to separate themselves from outdated Western-based systems of learning increases the divide between Pasifika students and higher learning institutions.

He Vaka Moana CLeaR Fellowship

The He Vaka Moana CLeaR (Centre for Learning & Research in Higher Education) Fellowship was a one-year fellowship programme held in 2018 that brought together Māori and Pasifika professional and academic staff from different faculties at the University of Auckland to work on projects to enhance the success of Māori and Pasifika students. Led by Dr Hinekura Smith and Dr 'Ema Wolfgramm-Foliaki, the fellowship was framed through the Tongan adage "pikipiki hama kae vaevae manava", which speaks to the ancient voyaging practice of lashing together vaka on the ocean to share food, information and resources. Within this framework, this fellowship became a space defined largely by Māori and Pasifika women to tautoko and manaaki each other as we lashed our vaka together once a month and discussed our shared visions for our projects.

I was fortunate to pursue my questions about Pasifika students and learning through this fellowship and step outside my area of expertise. While not trained in education, I have a unique perspective as a Samoan educator and early career researcher who has focused on learning and Pasifika student support through both academic and professional positions within the tertiary education sector.

Literature

Pasifika student success in education has been a focus of research in Aotearoa for several years (for example, Airini et al., 2010; Alkema, 2014; Benseman et al., 2006; Chu et al., 2013; Ross, 2008; Thaman, 2009; Theodore et al., 2018). However, research on Pasifika students' processes of learning is rare.

Pasifika ways of knowing and learning

Pasifika ways of knowing and learning have significant value in contemporary education. Thaman (2014) explains the differences between Pasifika knowledge systems and Western knowledge systems on "contextual, substantive and methodological grounds" (p. 302). Western knowledge systems are commonly identified as scientifically based and located around recognised centres of knowledge creation, such as universities and governments, whereas Indigenous knowledge systems are generationally developed, tested and transmitted through specific ethnic groups or regions (Thaman, 2014). European colonisation of the Pacific undermined the value of Indigenous Pasifika knowledge systems and privileged a European structure of education that suppressed ancient systems of learning and teaching. Prior to European contact, a robust system of informal education existed in the Pacific with recognisable methods of teaching and learning. As Thaman (1995) points out, more formal education for specialised areas of knowledge also likely existed in areas such as warfare, navigation and the passing down of cultural knowledge to females.

The "classroom" for such education was the 'aiga and wider village community, with

teaching conveyed through oral history, dance, song, poetry, proverbs, material culture and cultural rituals (Thaman, 1995). Those with specialist knowledge would teach the younger generation to ensure the continuation and future development of the knowledge they had inherited. There was a clear method of teaching and learning prior to colonisation, through observation, listening and imitation (Thaman, 1995). Gegeo (2006) identifies key aspects of Indigenous Pasifika epistemologies, highlighting methods of learning acquisition that were communal and dialogic; practice oriented; based on memory, reflection and intuition; alongside learning using the senses of sight, touch, hearing, smell and taste. Significantly, he also highlights the importance of testimony in learning from ancestors and elders (Gegeo, 2006).

Indigenous Pasifika methods for learning and teaching have a long history and are by no means redundant in the contemporary world. In particular, the practical aspects of Indigenous Pasifika methods of learning resonate with research on active, experiential and student-centred learning that place the student within the learning process and not as a passive observer focused on theoretical learning (Lea et al., 2003; Moon, 2013; Tangney, 2014).

Pasifika students and learning

A significant amount of Western educational research analyses how students approach learning using analytical learning assessments (Biggs, 1987; Tait et al., 1998). Richardson et al. (1995) used a learning assessment tool, the Approaches to Study Inventory (ASI), at the University of the South Pacific (USP) to analyse two groups of undergraduate students. Results from this research were ambiguous and raised questions about applying ASI in non-Western countries. A decade later, Phan and Deo (2007) used a revised version of Biggs's Study Process Questionnaire at the USP to conclude that undergraduate Pacific students approach learning in two ways: either to understand information or to reproduce information for academic assessment ("Pacific" has been used when referring to these studies at the USP because the context is outside Aotearoa).

Both Richardson et al. (1995) and Phan and Deo (2007) support the centrality of context, culture and environment to learning approaches. The recognition that cultural differences affect educational experiences and achievement is not new (Benseman et al., 2006; Mayeda et al., 2014; Thaman, 2009). Mugler and Landbeck (1997) discuss cultural differences between Pacific students at the USP and the vague concept of the "Western" student. While generalisations about students are impossible because of the varied geographic and ethnic Pacific backgrounds of their participants, they acknowledge that culturally specific learning styles are of significance. One key point Mugler and Landbeck (1997) query is the assumption that Pacific students prefer collaborative learning to individual learning. Lesa (1995) conducted a study into learning styles of students at the American Samoa Community College and found that 83% of participants preferred collaborative and participatory learning. This aligns with Mugler and Landbeck's findings that most of their participants found group work useful; however, there were Pacific students who preferred to learn individually. As Ross (2008) points out, assuming learning preferences based exclusively on ethnicity is not conducive to effective learning support.

Mugler and Landbeck (1997) also report participant distinction between learning as acquiring new knowledge, often for assessment or to fulfil a requirement of the course, and "real learning", which points to understanding a topic. Real learning or understanding is not automatic to learning since learning for a purpose does not necessarily presuppose understanding. Similarly, according to their participants, rote learning or memorisation did not assume lack of understanding, which is often presumed (Purdie et al., 1996). Notably, Mugler and Landbeck (1997) emphasise that their participants knew what real learning was:

> Our interviews make clear that students are perfectly aware of what they consider "real learning", for instance, but "real learning" may not always be what they think is asked of them to pass a course. To paraphrase one of our students, there's real learning, and then there's studying for a course. (p. 236)

Learning for assessments is often only achieved at the surface level and reflects the significance of motivation in the learning process (Hattie & Donoghue, 2016). In the Pacific, Phan and Deo (2007) argue that for students at the USP, particularly Indo-Fijian students, the objective is to achieve good grades in order to have social mobility, which promotes a link between surface learning and assessments. They claim this is institutionalised, citing rote learning and memorisation as techniques learned at school that are continued into tertiary education (Phan & Deo, 2007).

Additionally, academic staff and students often identify time management as a key skill for

academic success. However, research has shown that the concept and management of time may be different for Pasifika students (Davidson-Toumu'a & Dunbar, 2009). Yet, limited attention has been paid to Western concepts of time as a barrier to Pasifika student success. Davidson-Toumu'a and Dunbar (2009) argue that Pasifika students find it difficult to adapt to a culture in which time is finite, using Hall and Hall's (1990) definition of polychronic time to illustrate that Pasifika students value relationships over keeping to schedule. Although Davidson-Toumu'a and Dunbar (2009) acknowledge that Pasifika concepts of time are unlikely to be embraced in a Western institution, an awareness of this by those who teach Pasifika students is paramount.

While much scholarly focus has been aimed at Pasifika student success, there is a gap in the literature on Pasifika learning processes. Filling this gap could contribute to a shift in tertiary education in direct response to the learning requirements of Pasifika learners.

Methodology

The research processes undertaken during this project centred Pasifika values. Although the data gathered from this project was exceedingly valuable, the process was not without difficulties, specifically with conducting talanoa and using a research assistant (RA) for the first time (Fa'avae et al., 2016).

This research project was qualitative and used talanoa as a method for interviews and focus groups to promote open, authentic dialogue (Fa'avae et al., 2016; Vaioleti, 2006). The methodological focus of this project was on ensuring the centrality of key Pasifika research values: respect, service, reciprocal relationships, Pasifika ways of knowing and being, and of benefit to Pasifika communities (Naepi, 2015; Penetito & Sanga, 2002).

Twenty-four participants took part in six semi-structured focus groups and nine individual interviews. Participants had to be of Pasifika ethnicity and an undergraduate student, and to have attended a Vaka Moana session. Vaka Moana is an academic enhancement programme in Pacific Studies in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Auckland for students who take Pacific Studies courses. It prioritises Pasifika ways of knowing through academic-focused workshops and study sessions, providing a Pasifika-centred learning environment for students.

An RA led the participant recruitment, and conducted and transcribed the talanoa. Participants were recruited through flyers around the University of Auckland City Campus and Facebook advertisements through the principal investigator's or RA's networks. Participants chose whether to do an interview or a focus group between July and August 2018 on the University of Auckland City Campus.

All of the participants were Pasifika students. There were 12 male participants and 12 female participants. Interview and focus group length depended on the participants, and none was over 90 minutes long. Questions were used to guide the talanoa because of the inexperience of the RA (Vaioleti, 2013). Each interview and focus group opened with prayer and shared food, and each participant received a $30 Westfield voucher in appreciation.

This was the first time I used an RA in a research project and there was much to learn. Because I teach in Pacific Studies, employing an RA to do the interviews was intended to counter any potential conflict of interest. Fa'avae et al. (2016) articulate the complications of putting talanoa into practice in a culturally competent way that does not contradict the research guidelines of a Western tertiary institution. This was further complicated through the allocation of this task to someone else. The RA for this project was a young Samoan male with whom I discussed the theoretical application of talanoa; however, I did not support him enough with practical models of the process. This resulted in some interviews and focus groups progressing like a free-flowing talanoa and others reverting to a question–answer style. From the recordings and transcriptions, it was clear the RA was more comfortable with the male participants, with whom he allowed a free-flowing conversation in which he offered his own insights and prompted further reflection. In contrast, in the recordings and transcriptions of the interviews and focus groups with female participants, the RA relied on the questions. The relaxed conversation with males was also characterised by periods of joking and reference to male participants as uso or uce, which contributed to the relational tone of these interviews and focus groups, but this was absent from his dialogue with female participants. This dynamic was not one I anticipated but should have in line with Pasifika cultural norms. Much reflection on the process of talanoa and how it is taught to young researchers has been done in the wake of this research project, although nothing could be done to mitigate effects. This has reinforced for me as an early career researcher the importance of fully anticipating potential cultural challenges and the significance of providing practical examples

instead of relying on theoretical models to guide young researchers.

Research data

Analysis of the data gathered through this research uncovered several subthemes for Pasifika students and learning. Key themes relevant to this article are thinking about learning and processes of learning inside and outside university.

Thinking about learning

Participants gave three types of responses to the question of how much they thought about their learning processes. They thought about their learning (9), did not think about their learning (5) or sometimes thought about their learning (8). Figure 1 is a representation of responses. Two of the 24 participants did not answer.

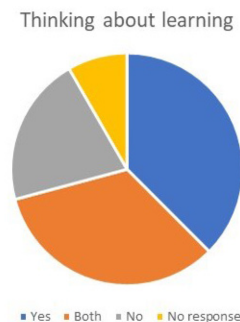

FIGURE 1 Thinking about learning

For the nine participants who both thought about learning and did not think about it, the decision to do so depended on circumstances: "There is a bit of a mix, so sometimes you just have to dive in and sometimes you have to think about it—depending on what it is" (D1).

Seventeen participants thought about their learning and recognised the importance of understanding how you learn in order to be better at it. One participant recognised the importance of analysing your own learning strengths and weaknesses:

> I definitely do . . . [you] definitely need to know yourself and how you can learn better, otherwise you're not going to do it . . . I had to be honest and identify what my learning difficulties were and what my strengths were [and] working around that to study. (G1)

For participants, the decision to think about the process of learning relied on three key factors: having the time to think about it, being interested in the subject and viewing the subject as important. Time featured as a key deciding factor in whether to think about learning or to just do it: "I do think about how I learn, how I study and stuff as well, but sometimes I probably just do it. If I don't have the time, then I'd just do it" (P1). Key to this was the immediacy of assessments in particular and the time factor in completing them for submission: "Previously I would do learning, instead of learn how to learn . . . Yeah, 'cause I was just, I got this assignment to do and I just have to do it" (J1).

Alongside time, interest was identified as a factor that motivated participants to think about how they learn because learning became important once the student was invested:

> I use[d] to be a just do it person, but . . . I changed my perspective on uni. I was doing something just for the sake of it, but I started taking crim—criminology—and it's some of the most interesting stuff I've ever come across. So I went from just doing it to appreciating the field and wanting to learn and know more about [it]. (N1)

The perceived importance of the course in terms of the overall degree programme was also a determinant, and less emphasis was put on courses that were not considered essential. General Education courses were identified as having fewer consequences, so were given less thought in terms of learning processes: "I reckon it just depends on what reason you're doing it for, for me, for my Gen Eds I just do it but for my other papers I would try and pass them" (O2).

One key theme discussed by participants was that thinking about how you learn develops over time. Several participants contextualised their thinking about learning as reflection at the end of their degrees:

> It's like you come to the end of your degree and then you do a lot of self-evaluation in terms of how I could of done this and this better and I feel like I should have done [this] earlier on in my degree 'cause I just like, previously I would do learning instead of learn how to learn. (J1)

Thinking about learning as a skill developed over time was also linked to taking courses that encouraged thinking about learning, developing interest or achieving better grades: "I started to, just do it . . . do it to get it out of the way, but then not realising that I sort of need to understand how I learn in order for me to get a better mark" (C1). One participant illustrated the impact of

senior Pasifika students encouraging them to think about their learning processes:

> I definitely think a lot more and I say that comes down to having [been] given that knowledge by other island mentors around the uni who would stress the importance of studying, thinking and planning before going straight in to it and then also my own personal experience of trying to straight do it. (K1)

Overwhelmingly, participant responses demonstrate that the majority of Pasifika students think about their learning, but in different ways and motivated by different factors.

Learning processes and assessments: Essays and examinations

Participants were prompted to discuss learning for essays and exams in different ways. For essays, students were asked what kind of learning they got from writing essays. The majority of participants responded with discussion of technical skills with much less emphasis on content-based learning.

Participants questioned whether any learning was done in the process of writing an essay: "Sometimes we don't even learn . . . 'cause some people just do it for the sake of the grade" (N1). Participants identified the learning achieved through assessment essays as based on skill rather than content:

> Sometimes it's not really the topic you learn about, I mean that is the gist of it . . . but the skills . . . it just depends how active you are in researching . . . and whether it actually sticks in your mind or if it's just used for that two days to write the essay then goes out the window. (D1)

In one case, a participant included that understanding was not even necessary to write an essay:

> When you don't know what you're talking about and you use a scholarly article, you instantly forget what you just wrote. You can write it in your essay, but you won't understand what you just wrote, and . . . once your essay's submitted you probably won't even remember that. (O1)

Participants questioned the learning behind the essay process, but none demonstrated the same opinion about examinations. For exams, they were asked to discuss how they would advise someone to study for them. The most common acknowledgement was that everyone is different and learning is individual. Four participants stated they would not recommend their processes of learning for exams. Even those students who would not recommend their own processes displayed awareness about their own learning, with one stating, "It's 'cause you gotta find what kind of learner you are, so you gotta find out whether you're visual, audio or the hands-on type of person" (N1).

Interestingly, only five participants would recommend studying in groups for exams, and two participants preferred to study individually:

> When you work in groups with people that are doing the same course with you, if there are holes in their argument [or] if there are holes in their understanding . . . you can fill them up . . . Then there's the fact that you . . . are all doing the same course . . . are all going through the same thing; it just adds to that whole collective—if you're struggling, I'm struggling, but we can do this together. (J1)

Seeking support from Pasifika academic support services such as Vaka Moana or the Tuākana programme also pointed towards participants believing communal support would be beneficial for learning for examinations. In addition, none of the participants mentioned learning for exams through memorisation. Three key learning techniques were mentioned repeatedly—drawing diagrams, practising from past exam papers and condensing notes—although responses in general focused on doing the readings and going over tutorial and lecture content. One participant included that they learned best when they had to teach someone else the content.

Interestingly, when discussing study skills, only two talanoa from the 15 focus groups and interviews did not identify time management as a significant aspect of their ability to learn and succeed at university. The majority of students identified being able to manage time as vital: "I think [time] management is a big one. I know a lot of students at the front [academically] who have a lot of outside commitments and so just being able to cope and maintain the workload [is important]" (F1). Participants recognised the need to balance academic commitments with responsibilities outside university, such as church and family.

Learning outside of university

Participants recognised their processes of learning outside university, discussing learning inside university and outside university as opposite. Often

learning at home or outside university was seen as practical, whereas learning at university was theoretical:

> At home . . . it's more of like practical work, it's not like the work we do outside where it's more theory where they give us what we have to learn and we have to learn it. Whereas practical work is when . . . they stand there and they teach you while doing it . . . We're so used to having a certain way of learning and our families understand the way we learn at home . . . but when you come to uni I think it's a totally different environment where they just give you the papers and you have to go study it yourself. (O1)

Participants joked about applying university tools of learning to what they learn at home or at church: "It's different, it's not like they have a PowerPoint to teach us what we have to do" (H2); "At church we don't write down notes" (H2). But these participants also pointed out that they learn something every day outside university, either at home or at church.

Participants identified providing examples and imitation as the way they learn at home. Most participants talked about what they learn from their parents and grandparents through observation and demonstration. According to participants, this way of learning encourages good work ethic, self-discipline, fa'aaloalo, using your initiative and multitasking:

> I feel like a lot of it wasn't even taught . . . you kind of grew up to know it . . . you see everything around you and . . . you're just expected to know that it's the way it is . . . [it's] much more informal, it's not like that whole, sit down I'm going to teach you about this, it's like . . . you should know this. You learn by seeing, it's not like . . . the theory part of learning, you have to see what's happening. I learnt what a si'i was through watching, I was not told what it was. (L2)

Participants also recognised similarities between learning at university and learning outside university. They identified three key similarities between learning in these different environments: both require initiative and multitasking, and encourage collective learning. Only one participant recognised that learning in the home can be the same as learning at university:

> I guess every Samoan can agree there is a saying vaai maka, faalogo kaliga, how to do chores at home, walk about, sit and eat. I guess that's the same with your university experiences or education in general—where [you] listen and see how things are done and take in what's been taught to you and how to do your assignments properly, just like how you do your chores at home. (G3)

While this participant recognised similarities between these learning environments, the majority regarded the way they learned in each environment as distinct: focused on Pasifika ways of learning in their home and church environments that centred on demonstration and imitation, and Western theoretical styles of learning at university.

Discussion

Learning as Pasifika peoples

Participant responses about their approach to learning and learning processes, inside and outside university, clearly indicate that Pasifika students think about learning, recognise their own learning processes, identify connections between learning and assessment, and can categorise different types of learning in different environments. This provides evidence that Pasifika students know how to learn and respond directly to the learning demands of university. The contradictory claim that Pasifika students need to *learn how to learn* seems to attribute blame elsewhere in the education system or even to the students themselves for their rates of achievement.

To promote Pasifika student success and reach equitable educational outcomes, educators need to recognise how Pasifika students learn and respond pedagogically. Although the majority of participants saw a difference between what they learned in university and what they learned outside university, a successful pedagogical model was evidenced outside university that helped participants learn every day—providing instruction through demonstration and encouraging imitation and practice. This is the way Pasifika peoples have learned and taught for millennia (Gegeo; Thaman, 1995). This research shows that Pasifika peoples still learn and teach this way today within their homes, churches and the community. These models of learning are not unrecognisable in education and are similar to active or experiential learning, but such models of teaching are not used regularly or effectively in universities. The dichotomy of theory-based learning at university and practical learning is an unhelpful division that is losing ground with the increased attention to student-centred teaching alongside constructivist and humanist theories of learning (Lea et al., 2003; Tangney, 2014). While

theoretical learning is the cornerstone of higher education, this does not preclude our ability as educators to use examples, imitation and practice to facilitate learning. Using pedagogic strategies that are familiar not only to Pasifika students but also to many students who have similar learning experiences outside of university would validate the value of this learning and potentially invoke more effective learning.

Learning to learn at university

Pasifika students are observant of their own learning processes when approaching essays and exams—key methods of learning assessment at university. Five of the 24 participants claimed they did not think about their learning, but then went on to discuss their learning approaches to assessments and could clearly articulate how they learned outside of university. Seventeen participants thought about their learning, reflected on the process and developed it through experience. It is significant that a number of participants discussed their learning as a development, and that they had various motivations to rethink the way they learned at university. Although effective learning is often the result of reflection and experience, students should be encouraged to focus on learning as a key aspect of their tertiary journey (Marouchou, 2012). Currently, the responsibility for learning development after secondary education is placed on the students alone, but this undervalues learning as an important process within the tertiary education system. While independent thinkers are valued in tertiary settings, becoming an independent thinker is not automatic for a first-year university student. Focus on learning and encouragement to reflect on the learning process will provide students with the tools to succeed in higher education.

Deciding to think about learning is often a development achieved through reflection. In this study, participants who developed awareness of their learning towards the end of their study displayed regret at not discovering this sooner, implying it would have made their early tertiary years easier. Participants who were motivated to think about their learning early in their tertiary study were led to it by courses that promoted it or by senior students, and while senior student role models are significant in Pasifika learning environments, this seems like a responsibility that should be placed instead on the university itself (Manuel et al., 2014). Emphasising reflection on learning in a culturally relevant way early in tertiary study could ease the strain of the first year of university and potentially bolster retention and completion rates.

Pasifika students, assessments and time

It is significant that students recognise that an essay, one of the major summative assessments they do in education, largely promotes skill-based learning rather than content-focused learning. Because the method of measuring academic success is through grades in tertiary education, assessments and the "how to" involved with completing them are a key focus. This was evident from participant responses when asked about learning in essays. While writing an essay involves many transferrable skills, the short-term surface learning that is done specifically to fulfil the assessment task undervalues the essay as a marker of knowledge acquisition. The objective and place of assessment should be considered in higher education, alongside the lack of emphasis on supporting students to reflect on their own learning processes.

While there is a place for surface learning dependent on the motivation for learning, there should be a greater emphasis on deep learning and knowledge transfer at university (Hattie & Donoghue, 2016). One method of exam learning that was discussed by participants is group learning, which is often assumed to be the preference for Pasifika students (Lesa, 1995). Only five participants included group learning as a learning technique for exam preparation, and two participants stated they preferred to study alone, which shows a variation of student preferences in line with the findings of Mugler and Landbeck (1997), who found both collaborative and individual learning preferences among the participants in their study. While discussing the communal learning emphasis in Vaka Moana workshops in the wider study data, participants expressed appreciation for the communal learning environment. However, it is significant that group learning was not a process participants saw as part of their own learning frameworks but rather one they participated in when attending workshops.

Time factored heavily in participant discussions about learning and assessment. The decision to think about learning was determined by the ability to have enough time to do it. The participants who thought about their learning later in their degree demonstrated that thinking about learning and developing processes takes time. The decision to either think about learning or to not think about learning was often linked by participants to the time pressure of assessments, which left them with little choice but to just do it. This pattern of students going from assessment to assessment is not new, but it should make us pause as educators to consider when students can find time to

learn and what the priority should be in tertiary education. Time pressures also determine a tendency towards surface, assessment-driven learning that sacrifices a student's ability to achieve deep learning. A culture of overassessing has been created in higher education, but when paired with the research-informed recognition that Pasifika students have multiple responsibilities outside university, what does this mean for Pasifika student success (Theodore et al., 2018)? If Pasifika student success is a priority, this becomes an urgent and unanswered question.

The impact of time-driven pressure needs to be considered if effective learning is the central goal in tertiary education. Pasifika concepts of time also imply there is a culture adjustment for many Pasifika students within the Aotearoa education system (Davidson-Toumu‘a & Dunbar, 2009). While some of the Pasifika students in tertiary lecture theatres have been raised within a Western education system, this does not apply to all Pasifika students, so concepts of time and ability to manage time pressures vary. Additionally, the connection between Pasifika students and their island homes is often strong, and many live within their specific cultural frameworks when not at university (Allen et al., 2009). Therefore, the concept of time, use of time and time pressures can mean one thing inside the home within their cultural frameworks and something completely different outside the home in a Western-informed environment. Added to this are the recognised multiple obligations Pasifika students often have to juggle with their university study (Theodore et al., 2018). While the time constraints of university cannot change, Davidson-Toumu‘a and Dunbar's (2009) call for awareness of this is certainly advisable and may go some way to preventing the rhetoric of disengagement that has historically been placed on Pasifika students.

Conclusion

This research project has put to rest the claim, often heard in my experience, that Pasifika students do not know how to learn or do not think about learning. Pasifika students think about learning, can identify how they learn and have frameworks for learning outside of university that are enduring. Learning is a developed process that requires attention, opportunity and time. We currently have an education system driven by time pressure that takes from students the ability to focus on effective learning. The impact of this pressure on learning needs to be recognised and acted upon by tertiary institutions and educators, especially for Pasifika students who have both different cultural frameworks of time outside of the education system and multiple responsibilities beyond their education. While *learning to learn* is not a Pasifika problem, there are barriers for Pasifika students within the Western-based university system that hinder effective learning. Traditional Indigenous ways of learning and teaching have applications within the university system that could go towards providing an answer to these problems.

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Glossary

Māori

Aotearoa	New Zealand
manaaki	hospitality, generosity and care in a respectful and sustaining way
tautoko	support

Samoan

‘aiga	extended family
fa‘aaloalo	respect
fa‘afetai tele lava	thank you very much
si‘i	specific cultural practice of giving (in goods or monetary terms) for a family, church or cultural event
uce; uso	(colloquial) brother or sister (not to be used between genders)
vaai maka, faalogo kaliga	use your eyes, listen with your ears

Tongan

pikipiki hama kavaevae manava	ancient voyaging practice of lashing together vaka on the ocean to share food, information and resources

Pan-Pacific

talanoa	talk to or to speak to; within research, a culturally specific, reciprocal, authentic discussion

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