Voices from Manukau: Achievement, location and communities of practice

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Abstract

This paper describes a research project “Voices from Manukau” that investigated the impact of a joint initiative by a university and an institute of technology. The purpose of the initiative was to increase the participation of students traditionally under represented at tertiary level study, particularly Māori (indigenous New Zealand people) and Pacific Island men and women. Many of the participants were adults who had not experienced high levels of success at secondary school and lived in low socioeconomic areas. We found that participation of under represented groups increased. The “Manukau” students were as successful as other undergraduate students studying at other campuses of the University. Of particular interest was the increased success of Māori and Pacific Island students.

Introduction

Universities across the world report increased participation by more diverse cohorts of tertiary students, but what are the effects of this increased participation? High attrition rates have been reported in Australia (McInnes et al., 2000), the United Kingdom (Yorke, 1999, the United States of America (Braxton, 2000), as well as New Zealand (Scott, 2005; Zepke & Leach, 2007). Carnevale and Rose (2003) found the graduation rates for low income students, even when the most highly talented and motivated low income students were included in the sample. Tinto (1993) noted that low income students were disproportionately academically under prepared. This led us to question
why the “Manukau” students were successful when they experienced so many of the risk factors associated with under achievement.

The economic downturn has led many governments to identify education as a significant priority, particularly up skilling those from lower socio economic groups, who have traditionally been employed in occupations that are fast disappearing. Thus the answer to our research question could be of significance to governments, education providers and tertiary educators.

In 1999 the university signed a deed of cooperation with the institute of technology for the university to run degree courses located at the polytechnic in New Zealand’s fastest growing and most ethnically diverse city. Both parties recognised the benefits of differentiated systems of tertiary education, but agreed to work co-operatively in a spirit of mutual respect to recognise their complementary missions and to better serve students and the community. The first cohort of Bachelor of Education students was enrolled in the “Manukau” program in 2000. It was a small cohort consisting of twenty-three students who resided in one of the lowest socio economic areas of Auckland. Sixty-two percent of the cohort was made up of mature aged students, thirty-one percent were of Māori decent and thirty-five percent originated from one of the Islands of the Pacific. Thus this cohort was representative of groups who had been under represented at tertiary level study and who frequently experienced difficulties gaining access to tertiary education.

From the very beginning the “Manukau” experience was highly valued by the students. The location of the program was a key factor enabling many of the students
to enter teacher education. The students brought cultural, social and experiential perspectives to tertiary education that had not previously been well documented. We were interested to investigate the impact of this initiative by these two institutions, because the discourse of tertiary education has tended to reflect the understandings of majority and not minority groups. The “Voices from Manukau” project tracked the progression of the first four cohorts of students enrolled in the Bachelor of Education (Teaching) between 2000 and 2002. The tracking included the collection of enrolment data, academic results data and repeat interviewing. The data were analysed to gain some insights into the students’ experiences of their tertiary studies.

Research methods
Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to gather data for this study. The collection and collation of quantitative data enabled us to track enrolment and achievement trends for the different cohorts and ethnic groups within each cohort. Qualitative data were collected in order to access students’ personal experiences with the program. The researchers developed the project in collaboration with the first cohort of students to enter the program. The students were involved in the development of the interview questions and these were open ended. Interviews were held each year for the three years of the students’ teacher education program. The first cohort of students was also interviewed during their first year of employment as provisionally registered teachers. The interviews were between 60 and 90 minutes long. The interviews were audio-taped and then transcribed. Sixty students participated in the study, fifty-two were mature students, fifty-three female and seven were males. This represented approximately 78% of the students who enrolled in the
first two years of the program. The interview transcripts provided rich data regarding the histories and the experiences of the students.

Findings

The findings of this study are reported using our analyses of the quantitative data, which show recruitment and achievement trends, and our analyses of the qualitative data which we link to the themes of location and communities of practice.

Quantitative analyses

One hundred and ninety-one students enrolled in the “Manukau” Bachelor of Education (Teaching) program between the years 2000 and 2002. There were six intakes during that period with larger beginning of the year (A) and smaller mid year (B) intakes. Table 1 illustrates the enrolments across the program for the three years of this research project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of enrolment</th>
<th>Number of students enrolled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001A</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000B</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001A</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001B</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002B</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Numbers of students recruited into the “Manukau” Bachelor of Education (Teaching)
The “Manukau” Bachelor of Education (Teaching) program commenced in 2000 with just twenty three students enrolling in semester one and a further eleven students recruited to a mid year intake in semester two. Enrolment numbers increased from that point for both the beginning of the year and the mid year intakes.

The program was located at the technical institute in an attempt to attract applicants to train as teachers for their local communities. This particular city has significant numbers of Māori and Pacific Island residents. The university was mindful of barriers restricting representation from these ethnic groups at undergraduate level. The “Manukau” students were diverse in a number of ways as illustrated in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total numbers of full time students</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>130.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of female students</td>
<td>82.3</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>81.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of students from local area</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>98.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Māori students</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Pacific Island students</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Pakeha/European students</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Asian students</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage with no specified ethnicity</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Total EFTs, gender and ethnicity data

In the first two years of the program all of the “Manukau” students were recruited from the local area. The vast majority of the students were mature aged females. The
data identified that a relatively high proportion of the cohort identified as being of Māori or Pacific Island ethnicity. Just seven Māori students enrolled in 2000 but the numbers increased to twenty-three in 2001. Whilst the percentage of Māori enrolments declined slightly after the initial intake they remained at around twenty percent of the cohort. When the course was first introduced in 2000 it attracted mainly Pacific Island students. By 2002 Pacific Island students made up thirty seven percent of the cohort and were still the predominant group.

Academic achievement

Very few applicants had obtained university entrance qualifications from high school and the vast majority of students entered the program via the University’s special admissions pathway. Never the less, the majority of “Manukau” students achieved high levels of academic success as illustrated in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Combined pass rates across all courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 Student pass rates 2000 - 2002

Combined pass rates for all of the papers across the degree have been relatively high. Whilst Māori and Pacific Island students appear less successful than the Pakeha/European students, given the previously identified risk factors experienced by
these two ethnic groups, they were more successful than we might have expected.

These data are illustrated in Table 4

Table 4 Success rates of the various ethnic groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Maori</th>
<th>Pacific Island</th>
<th>Pakeha/European</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2002 the achievements of Māori and Pacific Island students were very similar to the achievements of Pakeha/NZ European and Asian students. These are pleasing results as Māori and Pacific Island students have been regularly reported as being over represented in underachieving groups.

The collated achievement data were reviewed further to identify whether more students were achieving higher grades. A breakdown of the achievement data is illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5 Achievement grades of the “Manukau” B Ed students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grade A</th>
<th>Grade B</th>
<th>Grade C</th>
<th>Fail/Did not complete</th>
<th>Withdrew</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>53.1%</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During the first year of the program the majority of students gained B grade passes and there were relatively few A grade passes. Since that time the percentage of A grade passes steadily increased. In the year 2000 five percent of the grades were A grades this increased to twelve percent in 2001 and twenty percent in 2002. We do note, however that the percentage of fails also increased as the program grew quite rapidly. It is pleasing to note though, that only a small number of students withdrew from the program across the three years of the study. In 2000 and 2001 there were no withdrawals from the program. In 2002 when the program had grown substantially the withdrawal rate was still quite small with just two percent of the students withdrawing. Even more impressive are the academic successes of the Māori and Pasifika students. Their successes became evident when the “Manukau” students’ results were compared to other undergraduate programmes across The university in 2002. These data demonstrated that once enrolled in the program students were largely able to overcome external factors commonly associated with limiting achievement. These are illustrated in Table 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>“Manukau” B Ed</th>
<th>University Undergraduate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total cohort</td>
<td>81.6%</td>
<td>82.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maori</td>
<td>78.3%</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Island</td>
<td>77.9%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakeha/European</td>
<td>89.3%</td>
<td>89.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>78.7%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6 Comparison of the combined “Manukau” B Ed and the combined university 2002 undergraduate student pass rates

These data demonstrate that overall the “Manukau” Pakeha/NZ European students achieved at an equivalent rate with other Pakeha/NZ European students across all of the university’s undergraduate programs. Pasifika students, however, appear to have achieved significantly better than other Pasifika students enrolled in other programs and Māori students achieved slightly better than Māori students enrolled in other programs.

Qualitative analyses

Two themes emerged from our analyses of the interview transcripts and these were location and communities of practice.

Location appeared to be important for several reasons. The convenience of the location was a factor mentioned by many students, for example:

I think because we’re all local. Most people live fairly close to the campus, so everybody’s sort of connected by locality. I suppose it’s because everybody lives in this area and we feel like we’re part of a community. Whereas with Auckland… Auckland is so spread out.

The notion of identity appeared to be another important aspect of the location of the program. Students talked about how they appreciated studying with people who were like them, rather than their perception of “traditional” university students.

There are a lot more Maori and Pacific people here- a lot more mature students. There’s a certain ethic in that we’re all in the same boat and we are all doing the same thing for the same reason- you know, to become a teacher. And yeah there’s a bond- it’s sort of like we’re a family, a whanau [extended
family], and you don’t feel so isolated. When you’re under pressure you know that there’s someone you can ring up and talk to about it and they can sort of calm you down.

The friendly environment of the institute of technology was also perceived as being an important aspect of the location of this program.

When I look at “Manukau” I feel at home. Looking at the buildings as well as the students, as well as the teachers I’ve met. I really like the place. When I actually came in – to the course I found the students were really, really friendly.

Another student commented:

I think it’s a place like home. I can easily approach the lecturers as well. I know all the lecturers and they understand my needs to support my course. The students are working together and support one another.

The second theme that emerged from our analyses of the transcripts was students’ perceptions of being involved in a community that was learning together. The concept of communities of practice originated in the business field and has increasingly gained recognition as a model of learning (Hughes et al., 2007). Wenger and Snyder (2000) identified that communities of practice could not be mandated and that they were as diverse as the situations that gave rise to them. They described communities of practice as being informally organized with each member sharing a passion for the topic being studied. This appears to be how the communities of practice evolved at “Manukau” too.

The usual study group is a person that … someone would say, or I would say, hey, if you want to do some study I’ll be at this point, I’ve booked up this room. Be there. And everyone’s welcome. There’s no exception. We don’t close any doors to anybody. Because we’re not like that, you know, because everyone’s welcome. That’s how study groups are formed.
Membership of the community was entirely voluntary with each participant willingly contributing to the learning of the group. A special feature of communities of practice noted in the literature is that they are not hierarchically organized but involve experts and novices learning from and with each other as they focus on solving problems directly related to the work of their particular community (Wenger, 1998; Wenger & Snyder, 2000). This seemed to be a feature of the communities that evolved from the “Manukau” program.

It’s like a family bond. The teachers are there and we regard them like parents and here we are a family and so we help one another. Up here in “Manukau”, students and our teachers work like a team. Like team work. They help the students and the students sometimes share their views and then there is more or less learning both ways. Like – the teachers learn from our cultures and the way we people are- and that’s where they really know where our needs are.

A feature of the “Manukau” program that perhaps facilitated the development of communities of practice was that each cohort was enrolled as one class (Tinto, 2003). Each cohort of students studied all courses together over a three year period. The students helped each other to assimilate into the new and very different environment of university education. Students described just how intimidating that new learning environment could be.

In the beginning I found it very new to me because I didn't know anybody. So that's a big problem to me, like I thought I would be by myself doing this study, and how will I survive, how will I come to the end of the course? I can't reach out to people because I am a quiet person … In the beginning I found it difficult because I am a Samoan and I only thought that I would relate to Samoans well, but not to other people because I'm scared of how will I reach out to them. I don't know their expectations and where they're coming from. Otherwise I will be offending them in the way I behave and in the way I say things and the words that I say. And their own culture as well, because they are all different, so I was scared. How will I fit into the multicultural community?

Instead of being isolated and alone, learning in a collaborative supportive environment became part of the students’ everyday lives.
I think it’s like a home environment. It’s more about cultures and bringing them together and having individuality. When I think of “Manukau” I think of a group of people from different backgrounds coming together, all the collectiveness and bringing in experiences and sharing… I think also you are not afraid to take on new challenges because you feel you have the support of your peers, especially your intake group. It’s a family environment, that’s what it is.

Communities of Practice were created and strengthened over time, through their shared pursuit students and lecturers found they could help and support each other. The study groups developed communal memory (Wenger & Snyder, 2000) as each person did not have to remember everything, as by working together they found they could support each other’s learning.

We’re sitting there, [we] listen and when the lecture’s finished, some understand, some don’t, so that was really important in our group. We all have a group discussion, you know on our own and discuss what we don’t understand and then if we don’t really understand it then it’s back to the lecturer. We walk in and say M. [the lecturer] help us. We have to find out [for] ourselves and then if we can’t [we’re] stuck we have to go back to M. And that’s what I found. That group was really, really helpful. We can help each other.

Different members of the community brought different strengths that could be used by the group at different times. Learning resulted from their participation with their peers rather than in isolation.

It’s very comfortable to discuss it with my fellow students, especially if we use my own language and it’s very important. Like I have some problems with maths, I didn’t understand what K. [lecturer] was explaining on the board. I noted it down. When we get together during lunch I pass it on. I ask my friends to explain in my own mother tongue what K. has been telling us. [I] found it helpful, very helpful.

Students’ learning was influenced through their participation in a setting in which learning came from a variety of perspectives, not just the view of a particular lecturer. Course activities allowed students to connect their personal experiences to class
content and to recognize the diversity of views and experiences of other class members.

You’ve got a broad range of ethnic cultures within a class, because you get people who speak from their own perspective and that will enlighten everyone. So it’s like hitting five birds with one stone. One person will speak – I can only speak for Maori. A Samoan person will speak for Samoan and so it gives everybody a richness of everyone else’s cultures.

Another student explained how her own learning was expanded through her engagement with other cultures.

All the Maori and Polynesian elements have really helped. It's given me a really good understanding. I mean I had no knowledge, no experience. I mean middle class white pakeha had no idea how different we all are.

Bronte 2003

The learning capabilities of the groups were developed through their collective efforts to resolve problems. The effective resolution of problems helped to build the learning capacity of the community (Wenger & Snyder, 2000). The students not only learnt themselves, but they also learned how to help each other learn. This resulted in success at the individual level and success for their community of practice.

Being able to understand maths, and being able to ring someone and say, “Do you understand this? How do you understand it?” And then they will tell you what they know about it and you can go away and think about it, and think, now does that seem right to me? I’ve really needed that.

Wenger and Snyder (2000) described the success of communities of practice as being self-perpetuating as they generated new knowledge and reinforced and renewed themselves. This point is illustrated in this transcript extract.

Well like we might be in a group and someone might say they’re struggling with this question and we’ll actually all turn to the question and sit there and talk about it and then one of us might get up on the whiteboard and draw it and then get the person who’s struggling to add the next bit and then someone else will add the next bit, so we sort of make sure that – we try and make sure that we’re not just giving them the answer.
These supportive strategies allowed students and lecturers to engage with and learn from each other in, what was for both groups, a new and challenging environment.

I found it very supportive and I feel a sense of family spirit in terms of supporting one another. I felt valued as a class member because we work really well with each other, sharing our thoughts and ideas about the notes that we read. So we build up our relationships as brothers and sisters, sharing our stories based on our home background. And it was great. Sharing our struggles and problems and cheering each other and praying for each other … and we all work together. We know that someone needs this and that’s how we come together and initiate a group. And we talk it over and we have fun and it is an enjoyable time to work together with students.

Another student commented on how the ethnic mix of the individuals impacted the practice of the community.

I think we’ve got the heart – big heart from the Pacific and everybody’s focus [is] on one thing that I’m here to study and that’s the aim – that’s the goal and everybody’s helping.

There have been many incredible stories from the “Voices from Manukau” project of students achieving individual success despite significant external limiting influences.

Three of these stories are shared in the remainder of this paper. The stories are told using the students own voices, but their names have been replaced with pseudonyms.

Faafetai enrolled in the very first cohort of the Bachelor of Education (Teaching) at Manukau. She left school prematurely and was the first person from her extended family to attend university. She entered the program after completing a Foundation Education program designed to prepare students for teacher training.

“No I didn’t like school. I was the worst possible student that anyone would want to have in their class. I was a bully I made children’s lives pretty miserable. I’m the youngest of 6 and so all my siblings had gone to boarding school and moved on. My parents were working round the
clock, working class Samoan parents. So I basically brought my brother up. He was the older one but I looked after him. I supported him, basically he was the little king. Most of the time I would have to do everything when I got home. I remember everyone saying about going to school to eat your lunch. Well I didn’t go to school to eat my lunch. I went to school to eat everybody else’s lunch because I didn’t have lunch to eat. I remember getting strapped at school, it was terrible. I just didn’t think anyone understood me. Samoan parents really believed that if you had a really strong Christian background and the same school that you were going to turn out alright. But what they forgot, and it’s not their fault, they would just work and send us to school and hope the school would care for all our needs. But what was happening was that I’d be taking reading books home and nobody would be there to mark any of my books, so I’d come back with my book unsigned and I’d get the ruler. Mum and Dad never came to my interviews. They hardly ever saw my reports.

When I left school I got into childcare. I did this TOPS programme with early childhood and I did the playcentre thing at Endeavour training. At Endeavour training they were just introducing the playcentre certificate. They did the Introduction to Playcentre, then Part 1 and Part 2. I only got halfway through part 1. I never completed anything in my life until I went to Foundation Education and did one full year. I got pregnant and had my son and that was it. You know I thought that I was headed down the solo mother track and all the rest of it. And doing all the things like being on the dole. By the time my son turned 4 he was reading and when
he started to read I came to Foundation Education and then I finally completed something at Foundation Education. I got As – you know that just didn’t happen in my life. And by doing Foundation Education I felt confident enough that I could get in to university. Right up until then I thought that I was dumb. Up until then I never knew it was going to be all right.”

Faafetai completed her degree in 2002. She passed all her papers at the first attempt. Upon completing her degree she won a position in a large highly regarded school in South Auckland. She has been teaching at this school for six years and is a fully registered teacher. She is a well regarded tutor teacher who is now responsible for the guidance and development of teachers during their probationary two years of provisional registration. She is also an associate teacher for trainee student teachers. She commenced post graduate studies in 2008.

Hinemoa was a mature Māori woman who transferred into the Bachelor of Education (Teaching) from the Bachelor of Arts in 2001. She achieved significant success in her undergraduate studies. She is now a highly regarded fully registered teacher in a large primary school in another suburb of South Auckland. Hinemoa is an influential person in her local community and a proponent of education for all people, but particularly encourages the success and achievement of Māori.

“We moved around a lot and some of the schools when we walked in there – my mother illiterate – she could hardly read at all and we were poor so they’d look at us and they’d put me in the bottom class straight away and then my cards came and they’d put me in the top classes
I left school when I was just 15. I loved school but I had a lot of personal problems. My step father killed himself and my mother had a breakdown and so someone had to be there because my younger brother and sister – like my sister was going to primary school when it happened so someone had to be the breadwinner so I left school when I was fifteen. I never thought of going back to tertiary then. I thought that was it. That was my chance gone. You know, you got school certificate and university entrance and then you went to university. You didn’t leave school at fifteen and have a family and then go to university. I read a book about goal setting and I decided I wanted a degree, so then I went about achieving that goal.

Before I took the BA papers I did a course – a study skills course with New Start. It was just focused on essay writing and study skills I was doing BA papers. I just tried two at first and I enjoyed the tertiary study and I kept doing more papers. It’s had a big impact on my whole family especially my husband and my children. I started off part time because my daughter was only four. My husband was supportive and when I started getting good marks he was standing on the hilltops yelling and screaming at everybody you know and he was so proud and that’s when I realized education isn’t just for me it’s for my whole family and affects my whole family. When I get my degree my husband wants to go to the town hall he says “because I want all those Pakeha to see how clever you are”.

17
 Hinemoa’s husband had much to be proud of. His wife achieved thirteen A, six B+ and two B grade passes in her undergraduate degree.

Mya is a gifted Tokolauan woman who speaks seven languages. She completed her Bachelor of Education (Teaching) studies in 2004 and her Master of Education in 2006. Whilst completing her post graduate studies she worked as a tutor for the Bachelor of Education (Teaching) program supporting Pasifika students, often in their own languages. She has subsequently taken up teaching positions in South Auckland primary schools. She is heavily involved in promoting educational opportunities for Pasifika people.

“Actually no, this is not my first experience in tertiary education. I went to Fiji first that’s where I took my Diploma in Laboratory Technology. So that’s my first experience in tertiary in Fiji. I was thinking about tertiary in form 5. I always wanted to achieve better for my family. To be honest, I am the one that has the higher education of all our family. I feel now I’ve got a family that I’m giving them, my children a lot as being a role model for them in the future.

When we migrated here I took my oldest child to the Tokolau Preschool but they didn’t have any Tokolau or full Tokolauan teacher educators to speak to the children fluently in their mother tongue. So I came home that day and said to my husband I think I need to help my community. In 1988 I went to the Auckland College of Education to do my Diploma in Early Childhood. Then I went to teach as a volunteer at the same Tokolauan preschool for one year. Then I changed my mind because my children were growing up. I said to myself I’ve got to move on my son
is growing and his education is growing as well. I also want to contribute because I want my children to have a bright future. To be honest, being a full Tokolauan and the commands I used to get from the community because the Tokolauan preschool is under the community umbrella and you know the feedback they really – they gave me has really touched my heart because they can tell there’s a huge change – the thoughts and the protocol and the language I implemented in the preschool and the preschool was growing day by day. Not only with Tokolauan kids but even just Samoans, the Tongans, you know, the families close to the Tokolauan preschool at Mangere, they bring their kids to the Tokolauan preschool.

You know I feel that education is very important for me, especially as a role model for my children, because I don’t want my children to end up in factories. I don’t want my children to end up on the dole. Being labeled as a university student to me it gives my family a name. A name that my parents will be very proud of. You know because in the Islands or in the community if they know that oh your son is at the university, meaning that’s the end of their dreams like that’s what they’ve been talking about right from when you were young. I want my children to go to university. So it’s important for me and my family and for me as a mother as well to be a role model. My husband is the breadwinner of the family at the moment so when I finish my education, I go and look for a job and then it’s his turn to further his education and it’s my turn to be the bread winner of the family. So that’s how things work.
Mya has certainly fulfilled the dreams of her family and is an inspiration and role model for all Pasifika people.

In conclusion the success of the joint venture to deliver the “Manukau” program at the institute of technology is clearly documented. One hundred and ninety-one students were recruited into the programme between 2000 and 2002. Ninety-seven teachers graduated from the programme over the period of the study. As a result of locating the Bachelor of Education (Teaching) program in South Auckland more highly qualified Māori and Pasifika teachers have been recruited to city’s local primary schools. The impact on families and the local communities of these dedicated and well educated people, the majority of whom are mothers, will benefit future generations. Of concern however, is the relatively high non-completion rate. Further research is planned in this area to investigate how the use of student achievement information can facilitate organisational learning by tertiary institutions, so that more diverse cohorts of students can be successfully recruited and retained through to completion of their qualifications.

References


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