



Talanoa Ako

Pacific
Talk about
Education
and Learning

Acknowledgments

Mālō lava to Judy Oakden (Pragmatica Limited), Moe Sa'u (Director, Programme Delivery), Gabrielle-Sisifo Makisi (Manager, Strategy and Integration, Programme Delivery), and the authors: Tagaloatele Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop, Dr Cherie Chu-Fuluifaga, Dr Martyn Reynolds, Dr Ivy Abella, and Dr Fuapepe Rimoni (Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington).

We acknowledge and value the voice of the Pacific parents, families, learners, and community who talked about education and learning.

Fa'afetai tele lava
Soifua



Rose Jamieson

Deputy Secretary: Parent Information and Community Intelligence (PICI),
Ministry of Education
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Foreword

Mālō le soifua, mālō e lelei, kia orāna, talofa nī, fakaalofa lahi atu, ni sa bula vinaka, tālofa, mauri, noa'ia, kia ora, tēnā koutou katoa. Warm Pacific greetings to all.

I have always been committed to transforming outcomes for Pacific communities in Aotearoa. Strong partnerships and reciprocal relationships between families, communities, and schools are critical in supporting Pacific learners to achieve success.

Aotearoa has a large, dynamic Pacific community – almost 66 percent of us were born here – a significant and increasing number. It's time for the education system to strengthen how it supports Pacific learners and their families to reach their aspirations by adopting an “as and by Pacific” approach.

Over 1,800 parents, families, learners, and community leaders shared their experiences of the PowerUP and Talanoa Ako programmes from 2016 to 2019. They shared stories and told us how these programmes have impacted their lives, aspirations, and wellbeing. They told us what works for Pacific in Aotearoa – now the challenge is for us to listen and act.

To all of those who have shared their stories and experiences, I wish to acknowledge and thank you. Talanoa Ako: Pacific Talk about Education and Learning has been built from your voices.

This resource supports Pacific practices, teaching, and learning. It will help schools reflect on their own practices and inspire teachers and leaders to walk alongside Pacific families and communities. Perhaps more importantly, schools and teachers will understand what “culturally safe spaces” look and feel like, and what is important culturally to Pacific learners and families.

Pacific families and communities play an important role in supporting our children and young people. It is my hope that this resource continues to drive change and innovation across the education system, and supports Pacific learners, families, and communities to be an integral part of any solution.

I speak of Pacific youth as the Generation 6Bs – Brown, Beautiful, Brainy, Bilingual, Bi-cultural, and Bold. I have every confidence that teachers and school leaders will step up to the mark for this generation.

Hon. Aupito William Sio

Associate Minister of Education (Pacific Peoples)



About this resource

TALANOA AKO: PACIFIC TALK ABOUT EDUCATION AND LEARNING

Talanoa Ako is a Ministry of Education programme delivered in Pacific communities by community groups, Pacific churches, trusts, health providers, Pacific teachers, Board of Trustee collectives, and schools.

The programme grows parents, families, and community educational knowledge so they can champion and support their children's learning journeys and form partnerships with their children's schools to achieve Pacific success.

Talanoa Ako: Pacific Talk about Education and Learning is the first resource of the Talanoa Ako Guided Resources series of six. This resource has been developed from the Pacific PowerUP to Talanoa Ako Evaluation findings and learnings. (2016–2019).

Author: Judy Oakden (Pragmatica)

This first resource contains three reports:

- » Talanoa Ako: Pacific parents, families, learners, and communities talk education together – Pacific Powerup to Talanoa Ako 2016–2019 (2021).
Author: Tagaloatele Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop
- » Talanoa Ako: From Pacific PowerUP to Talanoa Ako, AS and BY Pacific case studies (2021).
Author: Tagaloatele Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop
- » Talanoa Ako: Pacific education literature review of key findings of the Pacific PowerUP evaluations 2016–2018 (2021).
Authors: Dr Cherie Chu-Fuluifaga, Dr Ivy Arbella, Dr Martyn Reynolds, and Dr Fuapepe Rimoni (Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington)

Several short vignettes (videos) will also be available:

- » Talanoa Ako Community Voice: Talking about Education and Learning vignettes – filmed with Pacific learners, parents, teachers, principals, and community leaders in 2021 talking about education and learning from their own lived experiences.

THE REMAINING FIVE TALANOA AKO GUIDED RESOURCES

The remaining five Talanoa Ako Guided Resources will be released monthly. They will include a resource which supports the building of Board of Trustees Pacific capability, a Talanoa reporting cycle, a literacy booklet for families based on the PISA results, a resource to support school governance and school leaders to develop a Pacific strategy, and a resource of examples of best practice for Pacific learners and families occurring in schools presently.

THE TALANOA AKO DIGITAL APP

<https://www.education.govt.nz/news/talanoa-ako-digital-app-now-available/>

The Talanoa Ako digital app is another resource that supports Pacific parents, families, and communities.

It takes families through NCEA information, literacy and numeracy, learning pathways, careers and vocational pathways, school reporting, parent interviews, goal setting, and time management.

The content is in plain English and ten Pacific languages ('Gana Tuvalu, Gagana Sāmoa, Gagana Tokelau, Gasav Ne Fāeag Rotuām, Lea Faka-Tonga, Na Vosa Vakaviti, Solomons Pijin, Taetae ni Kiribati, Te Reo Māori Kūki 'Aīrani, and Vagahau Niue.)

Each Pacific language is also available in audio and has visually impaired functionality.



Talanoa Ako

Pacific Parents, Families,
Learners and Communities
Talk Education Together

**SYNTHESIS REPORT OF PACIFIC
POWERUP EVALUATIONS 2016-19**

February 2021

Report Information

Prepared for: Rose Jamieson

Deputy Secretary: Parent Information and Community Intelligence (PICI) Ministry of Education

Author: Tagaloatele Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop

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Fa'afetai to the research team from the Ministry of Education's Parent Information and Community Intelligence (PICI), who were closely involved in the PowerUP project: Moe Sa'u, and Gabrielle-Sisifo Makisi.

Fa'afetai also to Judy Oaken, Director of Pragmatica Limited Consultancy team, who evaluated the PowerUp programme (2016 to 2018). Together with the PICI, Judy prepared the monitoring and evaluation reports and case study materials used in this synthesis and with Kellie Spee (Director of Kellie Spee Consultancy Ltd) prepared the 2019 evaluation report.

Finally, a special fa'afetai to Adrienne Alton Lee for the final peer review. Mālō lava.

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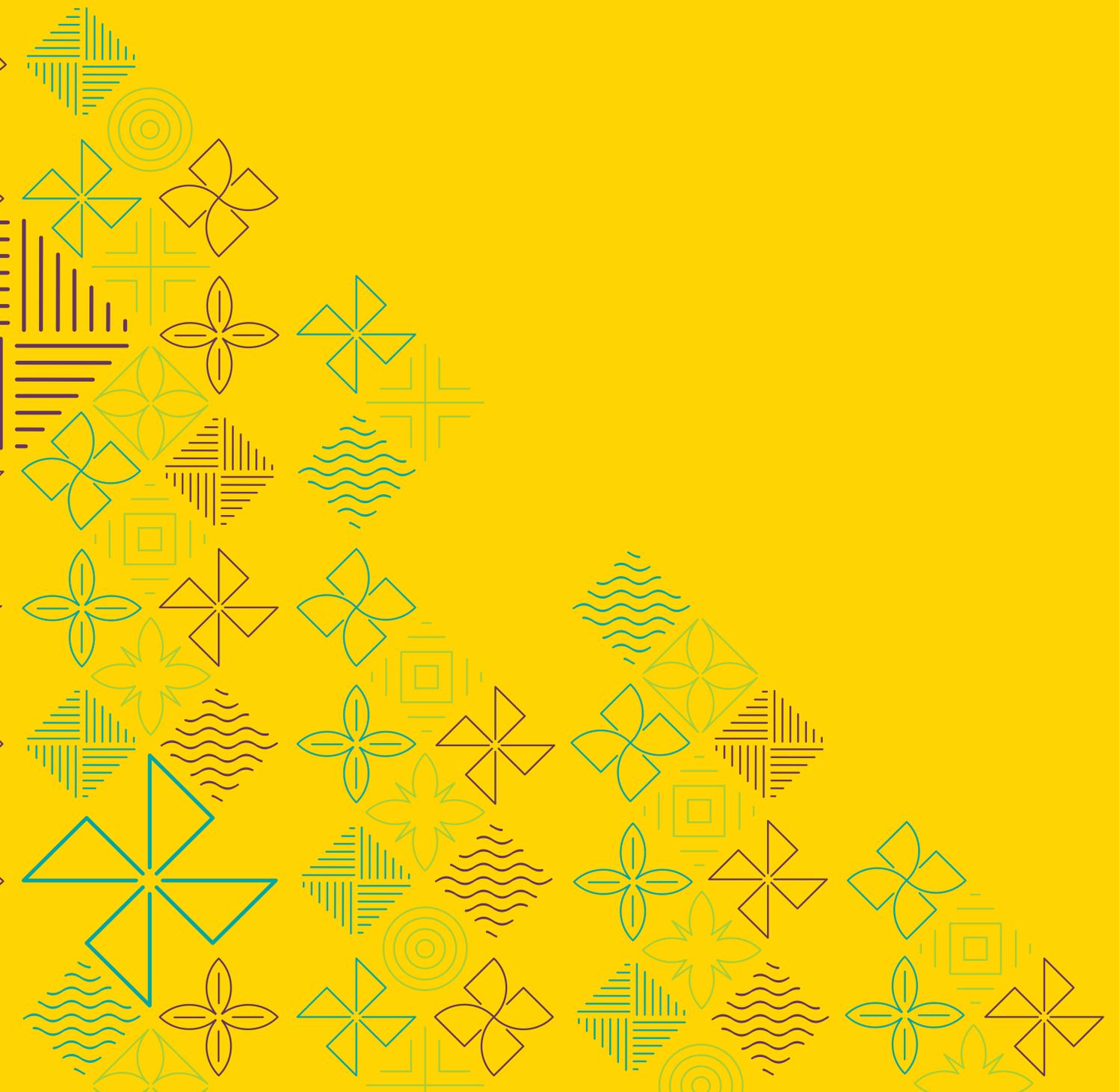
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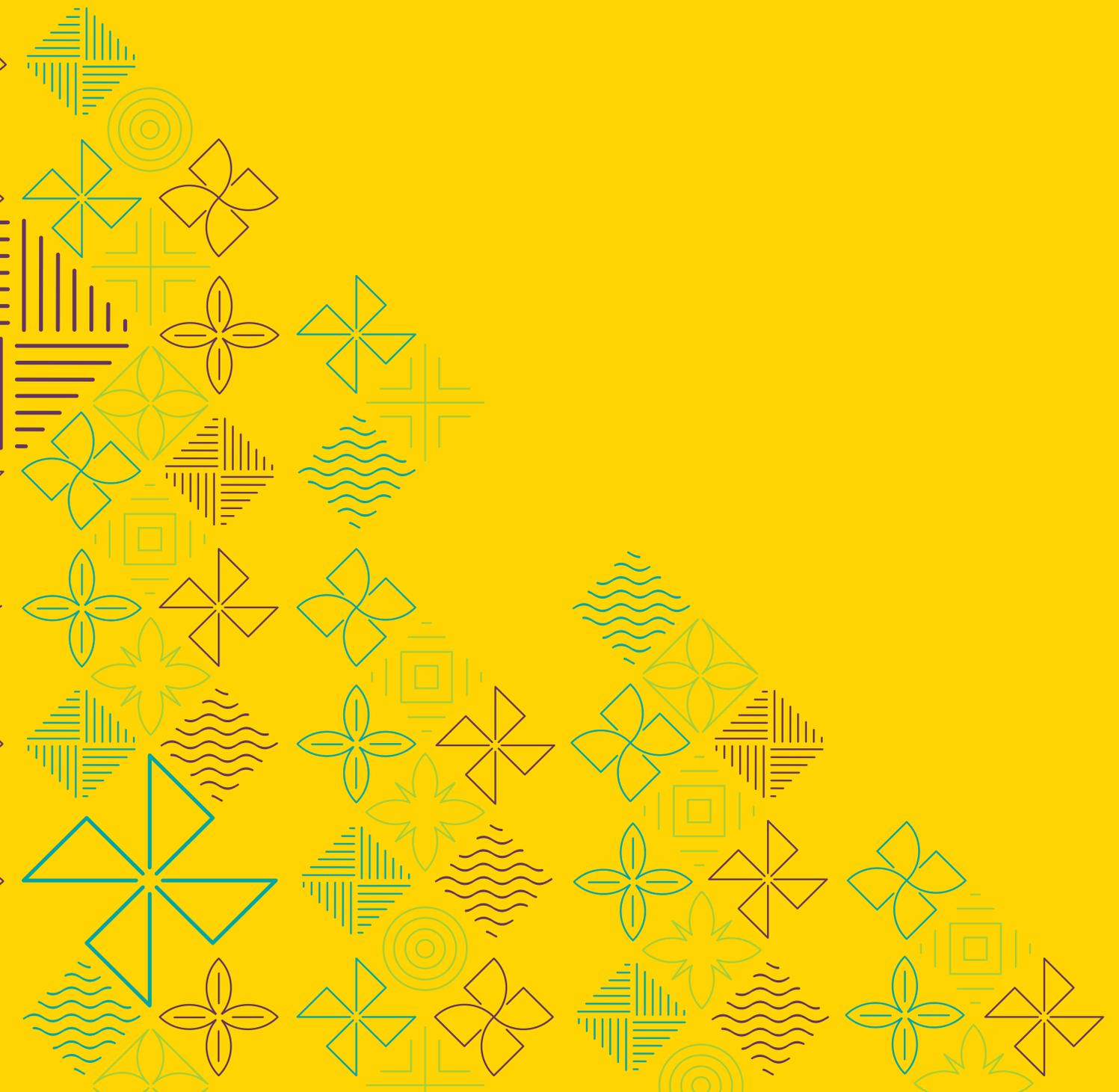
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Executive Summary



Executive Summary



This report explores the conceptualisation and practice of culturally safe spaces for Pacific learners, as experienced and co-constructed by PowerUP Pacific parents and learners, community leaders, teachers, and the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) team, in the Pacific PowerUP *as and by Pacific* community-driven programme. Using PowerUP Talanoa with parents and learners (2016–18) as the starting point, the synthesis focus was on the questions:

1. What worked at PowerUP and why?
2. What were the strengths that Pacific parents, children, and communities brought to the PowerUP learning programme (funds of knowledge)?
3. How did the programme recognise, apply, and enhance these strengths to create culturally safe learning spaces for these parents and learners?
4. What other funds of knowledge did Pacific parents need to know to play their role in supporting their children to reach their fullest educational potential and in partnership with schools?

This has been achieved by applying a Pacific lens of *what is of value* and *how this is achieved* to the learnings outlined in the PowerUP evaluation reports and case studies (2016–19). These source materials capture the voices of PowerUP parents and learners as gathered in talanoa and surveys over a four-year period. These comprise the over 1,500 talanoa, which took place in the programmes' pan-Pacific approach (2016–18), and a further 1,450 in the testing of the programme in the FlexiPlus/'Au Lotu model (2019).

In the first year, talanoa were carried out with parents only. Learner voices were included midway through 2016 and continued through to the end of the programme. The inclusion of learner voices brought to light the many significant learning outcomes that are achieved when learners and parents are “on the same page” and was instrumental also in transferring lessons learnt at PowerUP into family homes and communities. The role PowerUP teachers played in helping co-construct the PowerUP culturally secure learning spaces has been gained by listening to the talanoa voices of parents and teachers. The PowerUP source materials are an invaluable longitudinal, rather than episodic, picture of Pacific parents and family engagement in shaping the PowerUP programme, namely, what worked for them and what they said needed to be done to ensure Pacific engagement in schooling.

This executive summary begins with an overview of the synthesis method and approach followed by a brief review of the PowerUP *as and by Pacific* approach and then synthesis findings. It concludes by proposing the dimensions¹ that supported the creation of the PowerUP *as and by Pacific* culturally safe learning spaces and recommendations.

¹ This use of the term “dimensions” mirrors that used in School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration (BES) (Robinson, Hohepa, and Lloyd, 2009).

METHOD

Several points mark the synthesis approach. First, Pacific culture, language, and identity (funds of knowledge) have been treated as an asset. Second, the PowerUP teams (of Pacific parents and learners, families and communities, teachers, mentors, PowerUP staff, and the Ministry team) are considered to be communities of shared power and knowledge building. Each group played a major role in visioning and co-creating the PowerUP culturally safe learning spaces. They shared a collective ownership and pride and a stake in working together to establish a quality programme.

TIME

The synthesis focus on four years of the PowerUP programme (2016–19) was a strong reminder of the importance of time in learning and the processes of shift and change that are involved in learning. The importance of time has been evidenced in the talanoa voices: the more parents and learners participated in the programme, the more discerning and confident their voices became. For example, in the earlier years, students (politely) talked about the differences between their school and their PowerUP experiences. In 2018, PowerUP learners “saw, named, and labelled” incidents of bias and racism they had witnessed or experienced. They had learnt not to accept that this was “just the way things are”.

The four-year time span covered in this synthesis enables a fuller understanding of the processes that generated learning shifts by PowerUP parents and learners. For example, PowerUP parents – whose main engagement with schools had been report nights, fundraising, and Poly club and who had felt that “all that the teachers want to talk about is my son’s rugby” – became more informed and strategic in engaging

with teachers and schools on educational matters and with their children. In this process, parents were steadily claiming their role in supporting their children to achieve their fullest education potential. In sum, the synthesis has shown that, as their agency in education increased, parents and children moved from being largely users to being active contributors to their education.

Learning stories (boxes) were used as a way of capturing some of the learning shifts parents and learners experienced in participating in this educational programme where Pacific funds of knowledge were valued, visible, and practised. These boxes are a composite picture. At times, lessons learnt at PowerUP were set against global and New Zealand pedagogy and curriculum research models. These were kept to a minimum to avoid making the PowerUP stories fit into mainstream models and to let the PowerUP talanoa voices speak for themselves.

Time proved an important factor in refining the *as and by Pacific* programme in response to parent, learner, and community voices. These include the shift in 2019 from the pan-Pacific model to the FlexiPlus/Au Lotu model, which offered ethnic-specific options. Other changes in that year included a reduction in the number of sessions (from 25 weeks to between 8 and 15 weeks) and community decision-making regarding the sessions (for example, the use of block courses to allow for seasonal and shift workers) and the inclusion of local content.

CONSIDERATIONS

PowerUP was the first time most parents and learners had been involved in an education programme where they were in the majority or in a programme in which Pacific funds of knowledge were regarded as a strength and asset.

Parents' educational experiences were varied: some had enjoyed schooling and experienced success, while others had not. Many parents believed education was the responsibility of schools. PowerUP learners' educational experiences were similarly diverse: many had learnt to be silent in class and not to ask or answer questions for fear of being laughed at. Because the PowerUP stations were established for the programme, most PowerUP parents, families, and staff did not know each other, nor had they worked together earlier. As a result, PowerUP offered opportunities for fresh beginnings in learning, and parents and students said they enjoyed coming to PowerUP "just to learn".

The PowerUP focus on parents and family participating together was also a new experience for parents and families – and this synthesis has demonstrated that it was a powerful and mutually empowering experience for them. PowerUP's parent and learner approaches fitted the Pacific value of having families as the major educating and socialising agencies; positioned parents and school and home lives closer together, increasing the potential to reduce misunderstandings or educational barriers between school and home; and facilitated a transfer of PowerUP learnings into homes and communities. PowerUP's provision of learning materials, books, and other resources for families and learners facilitated the development of strong relationships between PowerUP and the homes (see Alton-Lee, 2003; Robinson et al, 2009).

PowerUP families represented a wide diversity of New Zealand's Pacific community. Families included New Zealand-born and recent migrants and reflected the effects of intermarriage; socio-economic, urban, and rural differences; and age.

THE AS AND BY PACIFIC LEARNING APPROACH

PowerUP aims were to establish culturally safe learning spaces for Pacific parents and families, where "academic"² support was provided in *as and by Pacific* ways. At first glance, these goals suggest a preparation or "head start" motive to preparing Pacific students for schooling – that is, a one-way process. This was not the case. The synthesis has demonstrated the huge strides Pacific parents and families made in working towards achieving the PowerUP model of Pacific engagement, leadership, and ownership of education. Talanoa voices have provided strong evidence of positive learning gains and the potential for creating new knowledge, which took place when Pacific and academic funds of knowledge and world views were brought together in the *as and by Pacific* programme.

The PowerUP ways of working and thinking comprised:

- » a whole-system approach based on the *fa'afaletui* (hearing and responding to the voices of parents and learners – often the missing voices)
- » a community-driven rather than school-based model, with a focus on parent engagement (leadership, ownership, responsibility lies with Pacific people)
- » the introduction of reflective practice (we are in charge, we can plan for change).

From visioning to design and delivery, and to the programme use of Pacific research processes such as *Fa'afaletui* and *Talanoa*, the PowerUP *as and by Pacific* programme observed and strove to reinforce Pacific ways of being, knowing, and knowledge sharing. In doing so, the programme made a significant difference in the lives and wellbeing of Pacific parents, families, and communities.

² "Academic" is the term used in the evaluation reports to refer to school learning or knowledge and skills that support school educational success. By applying this meaning, there is a suggestion that Pacific knowledge is non-academic.

FINDINGS

Agency and Ownership in Education – We Are Part of the Solution

PowerUP parents affirmed their essential and rightful role in their children’s education, in partnership with schools. In fulfilling this responsibility, they formed trusted relationships and partnerships in learning with other parents, teachers, schools, and their own children. Each learning step signalled a movement to Pacific leadership and ownership in education as in the PowerUP model of engagement.

The PowerUP has empowered me to take a lead in my children’s education. With the information, I am more prepared to guide and help my children throughout their education journey.

Parent, talanoa

Similar shifts in learners educational agency, have been evidenced in comments such as, “We have faith in ourselves that we can achieve our academic goals and future studies to get our future careers” and “We believe we can be as high achievers as other ethnicities if we are committed to

our education process”. Other comments included the fact that, through PowerUP, they had learnt to work and succeed in mainstream education settings and developed greater confidence that they could be successful learners.

Parents’ Agency Reinforced by the PowerUP Programme

In PowerUP’s culturally safe and trusted learning environment, parents and learners had voice. They learnt to “talk education” and to know that their views were being listened to. They gained self-esteem in seeing their knowledge valued and challenged in the programme pedagogy and curriculum, and felt able to take risks. PowerUP parents and learners played an integral role in the co-construction of the concept of culturally safe learning spaces for Pacific learners (as the “user” group in the fa’afaletui) together with PowerUP coordinators, teachers and staff, other PowerUP families, and the PICI team. Each member of the PowerUP team had a collective and a personal stake in ensuring a quality and robust programme. The parent and learner voices informed programme planning, organisation, and processes.



Box 1: “Talking Education” Increases Educational Agency

Parents said they had learnt to “talk education” at PowerUP – which they had never experienced in other groups they belonged to (such as family, church, and sports groups). In their workshop discussions, parents realised that they were not unique in their concerns for their children’s education, nor alone. Parents began to share their concerns with others “outside their family”, which had not been a practice (regarded to be a family weakness or failing and hence shameful). As they shared and debated their views with other parents, PowerUP parents came to appreciate and draw on the knowledge and ideas around them in their search for solutions. In this process, parents developed relationships in learning with other parents, teachers, and PowerUP staff, invited speakers, PowerUP learners, and their own children. PowerUP parents affirmed their role in supporting their children’s educational achievement and practised together the skills to fulfil that role, including ways of engaging with schools and teachers in respectful and informed ways.

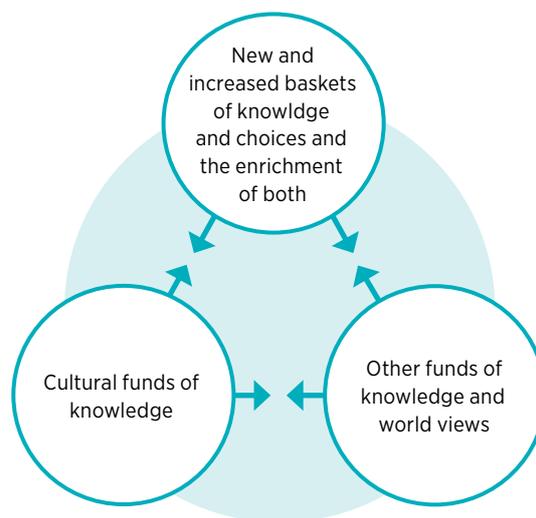
PowerUP parents were profoundly moved by the ways teachers and other staff communicated with their children. They also commented on the close and respectful relationships developed in these learning conversations and, the “out of the box” ideas generated as children’s views were debated and challenged. This caused parents to think about 1) the ways they talked to their children and 2) the value and valuing of children’s voice. Parents noted that education became the topic of conversation in their homes and, that they were more likely to consider their children’s voices in family decision making.

Note: In 2020 PowerUp was renamed *Talanoa Ako*. Programme changes introduced were informed by the 2016–19 evaluation synthesis outlined in this report.

Academic Support Provided by the *as and by Pacific* PowerUP Programme

The powerful relationship between affective and cognitive learning has been highlighted many times in this synthesis (Alton-Lee, 2003; Robinson et al., 2009). The synthesis evidence also strongly supports socio-cultural theories of learning and development, that interpersonal and intellectual learning are interdependent from birth and throughout life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bruner, 1997; MacFarlane et al., 2007).

Figure 1: Bringing Together Pacific and Other Funds of Knowledge and World Views



By presenting other world views, PowerUP prompted a deeper understanding of the commonalities and differences between and amongst Pacific ethnic groups and with Kiwi and other world views (Tongati’o, 2010; Du Plessis & Fairbairn Dunlop, 2010). In this way, PowerUP provided spaces for examining Pacific and other funds of knowledge and negotiating potential “trade-offs”. The place of questioning in learning was undoubtedly a major challenge. However, in engaging in “friendly arguing” (Hunter R., 2008); Hunter J. et al., 2011; Hunter J. et al., 2020), parents and learners learnt that questioning is at the heart of knowledge building. They also gained resilience and empathy in sharing their views with others.

Box 2: Knowledge and Skills to Engage in Learning Conversations

A concerning finding was that PowerUP parents and learners did not have an adequate knowledge or the information they needed to engage in education, particularly an understanding of the language and terms used in education discussions. While most school leaders probably believed they were sending out regular and comprehensive school information packages to families, this had not been the experience of these parents. And, as eloquently stressed by one, “everything’s in English ... how useful is that to parents or students whose second language is English?” This finding was a compelling reminder of the weakness of generic messaging in school information packages.

A pattern of three skills parents and learners needed to confidently engage in education, and education discussions, emerged in the talanoa. Parents needed: 1) to have accurate and up to date information about school-related processes and especially the language and terms used; 2) to learn the knowledge and skills to engage in education discussion, as in the power of identifying what they wanted to know and articulating a clear question; and 3) to have opportunities to practise and hone these skills “until these are in our bones”, thereby increasing their ability to engage in learning conversations with schools and teachers and in other places. A similar pattern of learning needs emerged in the students’ talanoa. In this case, there was a high urgency for students to develop their skills to engage in learning conversations (such as communication and questioning skills) and organisation skills (such as planning, focus, timing their work, and task completion). As with their parents, students learnt these and other skills in their interactions with other students, teachers, and staff at PowerUP (see also Chapter 4: What We Need to Know to Engage in Education).

PACIFIC FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE

The enduring importance of Pacific values and beliefs in the hearts and minds of PowerUP parents and learners was a major synthesis finding. Pacific funds of knowledge were a core strength – a strength that has been silenced in education and schooling conversations. PowerUP parents and learners were proud to identify as Pacific peoples and to be known by their ethnic-specific heritage. Elders’ words to “never forget who you are” were also a deep reminder of the value and valuing of secure identity. For some, PowerUP engendered a consolidation of identity security as notably evidenced in the ‘Au Lotu model. For others, the programme generated a rethinking, relearning, and revaluing of culture, identity, and language. For example, FlexiPlus parents regarded PowerUP as an opportunity to mix with “other people like us” and to participate in Pacific language and cultural traditions. PowerUP was also highly valued in areas where Pacific families were a minority (rural areas) and “acted as a bridge between Pacific-born and New Zealand-born families”.

PowerUP situated, responded to, and added to the knowledge parents and learners brought to the programme (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2013). Pacific values, ways of knowing, and being (faith, family, and community) were embedded and reaffirmed in everything that happened at PowerUP – from the opening prayers, workshops, and presentations through to shared meals where families caught up with the news of the day, while revisiting and making meaning of new PowerUP learnings by setting these against recollections from their own school days. Families may have laughingly referred to PowerUP as their “date nights”. However, the important fact is that parents were there: engaging and talking about education in their own way, time, and language.

Seeing themselves in the PowerUP learning spaces made a difference. PowerUP was “our own education standing place”. Parents and learners had the chance to observe, listen, and engage with educational role models in learning conversations and to enjoy learning together. The safe and trusted PowerUP learning environments also formed a protective factor and supported parents and learners to take risks in learning.

In sum, the synthesis has demonstrated quite compellingly that the PowerUP programme nurtured positive relationships and the formation of educationally powerful connections; increased parents’ and learners’ resilience and self-belief in achieving as Pacific people; and supported families to move from being largely users of educational services to contributors to educational pedagogy and curriculum.

Theme of Culturally Safe Learning Spaces for Pacific Learners

The theme of culturally safe learning spaces for Pacific learners is a major programme outcome. Cultural bias and racism are a negative overall. However, in seeing, naming (giving voice to), and seeking solutions to incidents of cultural bias and racism, PowerUP parents and learners learnt not to accept or normalise that this is simply “the way things are”. On this point especially, learners’ increased resilience in learning was couched in terms of the good of the Pacific community – the “group good” or the “we” – rather than an individual good of going together, looking out for, and keeping each other safe. The trusted relationships activated and reinforced in the programme were a protective shield against taking risks and bias. This aspect warrants further research.

Enriching Pacific Funds of Knowledge

In the culturally safe PowerUP spaces, parents’ and learners’ agency in education deepened as they formed trusted relationships in learning with teachers and mentors, other parents and families, and adults’ speakers and resource people. Engaging in learning conversations increased parents’ and learners’ educational agency that “the power to change is in our hands”. This also added to and expanded Pacific funds of knowledge and practice from PowerUP to family homes and communities and built a body of Pacific leaders in education. Talking education was also a challenge to Pacific communicating norms, including the importance of questioning and acknowledging youth voice, and contribution in co-constructing ways of thinking and working.

The synthesis has demonstrated the ways the PowerUP programme built on Pacific funds of knowledge and, in doing so, created further learning options for Pacific learners. The first column of Table 1 on page 14 lists a proposed set of Pacific funds of knowledge. The set is grouped according to “attributes of emotional or social value, communication (voice), and collaboration” (Alton-Lee, 2017). Column 2 demonstrates how Pacific funds of knowledge were reinforced, challenged, and enriched in the PowerUP learning experience, as evidenced in this synthesis.

Table 1: PowerUP Enriched Pacific Funds of Knowledge

	Emotional or value	Communication voice	Collaborative skills
Pacific funds of knowledge	<p>World view – faith, family, and community</p> <p>Identity as Pacific people – holistic and all encompassing (individual, family, and community) and expressed in language and culture, ways of knowing and being, and ideas of success</p>	<p>Confident and articulate voice, specific to role, age, context</p> <p>Concerns (and opinions) kept within the family</p> <p>Formulaic, for example, what is said and not said and who is involved in knowledge sharing</p> <p>Questioning is impolite/ acting above one’s station. Questioning is personal – a slight against the person rather than the idea being shared.</p> <p>To teu le vā (protect, cherish, maintain)</p>	<p>Relationships / Social skills</p> <p>Reciprocity, respect as in it takes a village ...</p> <p>Leadership</p> <p>Consensus decision making by rank and status</p>
	PowerUP 2013–2019		
Added to or new knowledges	<p>Visible, valued, and practised Enhanced</p> <p>Self-esteem in seeing Pacific values, language, and culture observed in education and pedagogy</p> <p>Increased resilience in bringing Pacific cultural values and language into education spaces and creating opportunities for the creation of new knowledge</p> <p>A collective protection in seeing and dealing with unconscious bias and racism</p>	<p>Parent and your voice in talking education</p> <p>Talk education with those outside the family (PowerUP parents, teachers, staff).</p> <p>Agency – and esteem voices count – we can make a difference</p> <p>Questioning is at the heart of learning and knowledge building.</p> <p>The power of “friendly arguing”, learning resilience, and empathy in maintaining the vā in education: communication, inquiry, resilience, and empathy in defending one’s view</p>	<p>Relationships / Social skills</p> <p>Many trusted relationships in learning were formed with teachers, other learners, parents, and local and national communities.</p> <p>Leadership</p> <p>Families and community leadership affirmed Pacific responsibility and agency in education.</p> <p>Individual and collective learnings extended to interactions in other spaces e.g., family, schools. communities</p>
	TALANOA AKO 2020		

Bridging Relationships between Pacific Siloed Worlds

Siope (2011) has proposed that Pacific students' funds of knowledge are "siloed"; that Pacific students can live in six or seven different worlds - such as the worlds of home, school, church, sports, friends, and part-time employment - each of which is kept separate "as much as possible". As a result, Pacific funds of knowledge are not shared or applied between or across silos, which would be to the mutual benefit of each. Siope describes the siloed experiences of home and school with these words, "my parents knew little of what or how we did in school ... unfortunately my siblings and me

became our own gatekeepers of learning and in many ways sabotaged our futures by not allowing our parents to be a part of our siloed work" (Siope, 2011, page 12).

The synthesis has shown the ways PowerUP parents and learners began sharing their "family" concerns and hopes with others who were outside the family, in this way, cutting across and bridging personal, schooling, and home boundaries. Moving across these "siloed worlds" enabled a mutual enrichment of the knowledge embedded within each silo and also effected a widening of protective networks and, in turn, parents' and learners' ability to take risks in learning.



DIMENSIONS CONTRIBUTING TO THE AS AND BY PACIFIC PROGRAMME

The following dimensions³ contributed to the achievement of culturally safe learning places for PowerUP Pacific parents and families.

Dimension 1: Recognising Pacific cultural values, beliefs, and ways of knowing and being (funds of knowledge) as an asset and strength in establishing firm learning pathways (‘auala) for Pacific learners

PowerUP was not a “one Pacific size fits all” programme. PowerUP situated, responded to, and added to the knowledge parents and learners brought to the programme. Pacific values and ways of knowing and being (faith, family, and community) were embedded and reaffirmed in PowerUP’s *as and by Pacific* ways of thinking and working. PowerUP parents and learners gained self-esteem and identity security in seeing their knowledge and ideas present, valued, and challenged in the programme’s pedagogy and curriculum. Knowing their voices counted also acted as a protective element in their learning – encouraging them to take risks. The feelings of safety and trust generated in the programme opened learners’ receptiveness to cognitive learning (Alton-Lee, 2003). Parents and families learnt “we have a role to play in our education, and we can do it”. Learning together at PowerUP reinforced the transfer of lessons learnt to home and other places. This and other descriptions cannot capture the joys, jokes, songs and dance, and alofa,⁴ which characterised the experiences of PowerUP parents and families.

Dimension 2: Community leadership, ownership, and responsibility

Programme leadership was in the hands of the Pacific community. PowerUP stations were coordinated by esteemed Pacific leaders, teachers, and mentors, and resource people were of Pacific ethnicity, as were the parents and learners. Academic and resource support was provided by the Ministry team. Each had a collective and an individual stake, as well as a pride in working together to ensure programme robustness, trustworthiness, and accountability. Bringing together the varied funds of knowledge to vision, fashion, and progress the programme involved a considerable amount of trust, individual and collective capability building, and a commitment to testing and adapting the programme to ensure robust learning systems. The dominant PowerUP message was “we have a voice in supporting our children’s education potential, and we are learning to use that voice”. Parents, families and communities learning together at PowerUP was described as an inspiring, empowering, and aspirational experience, and one that set the tone for further engagement in other family and community discussions. For many PowerUP families, the PowerUP programme of community engagement, interaction, and belonging became much more than an educational programme, as one parent said, “It’s bigger than my family: it’s like the community knitting together”.

³ “Dimensions” is the term used in School Leadership and *Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why. Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration* (BES) (Robinson et al., 2009).

⁴ The Samoan term for love, caring.

Dimension 3: A high-trust relationship with the Parent Information and Community Intelligence (PICI) team

The PowerUP teams and Ministry relationships featured a high-trust partnership model. The Ministry's commitment to the programme signalled a serious intent (this programme is working and is here for the long haul) against a more common one-off education intervention many Pacific parents were more familiar with. The communication systems formed between PowerUP stations with the Ministry team from the 2016-19 evaluation were effective and swift in identifying what was working and what needed to be done. The strengths, weaknesses, and interesting ideas that emerged in the PowerUP team discussions set the frameworks for further programme thinking. The adaptation of the Pan-Pacific model (2016-18) to a FlexiPlus/'Au Lotu model are a major example of this.

The PowerUP communication and organisation systems had mutually beneficial outcomes. For example, PowerUP leaders and staff had somewhere to go when they needed academic and/or resource support. In addition, the knowledge they shared with the Ministry added value and validity to the Ministry knowledge base of parents' and learners' experiences of education in the PowerUP community-based programme.

Dimension 4: Teachers who are highly skilled culturally and academically

Parents described the PowerUP teachers as highly skilled culturally and academically. They believed the teachers were "awesome role models"; had a good understanding of Pacific cultures, languages, and education journeys; and demonstrated the spirit of *tautua* (service) of "going the extra mile". Parents believed teachers cared for their students and for their education progress, as exemplified in a comment, "When my child goes into the classroom, the teacher knows my child's name and where they are at in their learning journeys". PowerUP teachers demonstrated considerable expertise in bringing Pacific funds of knowledge to bear on everyday teaching and learning within and across the core of schooling. They were skilled in promoting questioning and enquiry learning techniques and passionate in finding ways to support their learners to understand challenging concepts and processes. PowerUP teachers were described as "down to Earth" and "ruthless in sticking to task and encouraging learners to achieve".



Dimension 5: Putting communication and questioning at the heart of learning and knowledge building

PowerUP supported Pacific learners to maintain strong Pacific values and progressions in challenging and reasoning. This is a critical point and fits Hunter's term of "friendly arguing".⁵ The place of questioning in PowerUP learning spaces has been described as a game changer when considered in the light of so many research findings of unresolved conflict between values of politeness and the importance of questioning in learning.⁶

Learning to question and "talk education" at PowerUP increased parents' and learners' agency in education (see Box 1 on page 11). In the PowerUP multi-level and mixed learning programme, parents and learners gained resilience and empathy as their ideas were debated and critiqued in discussions. The use of questioning spurred changes in parents' and learners' relationships with teachers and other learners, as well as their understanding of the place of questioning in learning. By enabling parents' and learners' voices to be heard and responded to, PowerUP led to a repositioning of parents' and learners' attitudes to education from one of being "users of" to being contributors and leaders - a role that, for many, differed substantially from their own school experiences (Fairbairn-Dunlop & Makisi, 2003).

Dimension 6: Maintaining firm educational goals and teaching the skills to engage

The programme upheld firm educational goals and, by drawing on Pacific and other funds of knowledge, increased the potential for creating new knowledge. At PowerUP, learning was not left to chance. Learning priorities were identified, role-modelled, and reinforced in the programme's multi-level learning strategy, which was a tremendous contrast to a one-size-fits-all learning approach. Parents' and students' learning strengths, weaknesses, and interesting possibilities were the focus of systematic and ongoing review through talanoa and being responded to in "real time". The relationships in learning developed at PowerUP are powerfully illustrated in one parent's comment that "PowerUP teachers listen and recognise learner efforts". The provision of professional learning development (PLD) programmes aimed at increasing teachers' knowledge and understanding of working with diverse learners are a strong synthesis recommendation.

⁵ See Hunter and Anthony, 2011.

⁶ A. Alton-Lee, personal communication, December 2020.

Dimension 7: Building strong educational connections/relationships with families and communities, and supporting their engagement in wider learning communities and networks

Many trusted relationships in learning were formed by PowerUP families. The PowerUP strategy of parents and their children learning together was a powerful catalyst in the transfer of ideas and lessons learnt at PowerUP into family homes and communities. This transfer was reinforced by the provision of educational resources, such as writing materials and books, which, while an equity measure (ensuring a level playing field), also ensured lessons learnt at PowerUP were present and visible in homes.⁷ The holistic nature of the programme – from early childhood (ECE) through to senior college students – was a strong reminder that learning is a lifelong journey that begins in the early years and requires careful planning and choices along the way.

PowerUP also expanded parents' and learners' experiences by connecting them into wider learning communities and networks. For example, presentations by experienced experts and other invited speakers demonstrated the importance of resilience in dealing with challenges (which parents and learners could identify with) and prompted thinking about new career choices that parents and learners had not known about or previously thought possible. Several PowerUP parents became leaders in education forums in their communities, while some joined together to form further learning communities and networks of their own. An increasing number of PowerUP parents stood successfully for election onto school boards and other school committees, and some enrolled in tertiary education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The PowerUP community and family approach marks a significant paradigm shift in Pacific education: from a centralised and generic Ministry-delivered and regulated model, to a community-led and transformative model. PowerUP's *as and by Pacific* community-driven model presents a compelling challenge to top-down, one-size-fits-all education approaches. In treating Pacific funds of knowledge as an asset, the programme maintained identity security and supported parents' and learners' progress from being silenced users of education services to being leaders and shapers of their education journeying. The empowering experience of participating in the programme reinforced individual and collective agency and responsibility in education.

This synthesis has provided strong evidence that culturally safe spaces for Pacific learners are achieved when:

Pacific ways of knowing and being (funds of knowledge) are valued, present and become normalised in school curriculum, pedagogy and organisational process and, when combined with 'academic/other knowledges' increased the potential for the creation of new knowledge and, schooling success.

Chu et al., 2019.

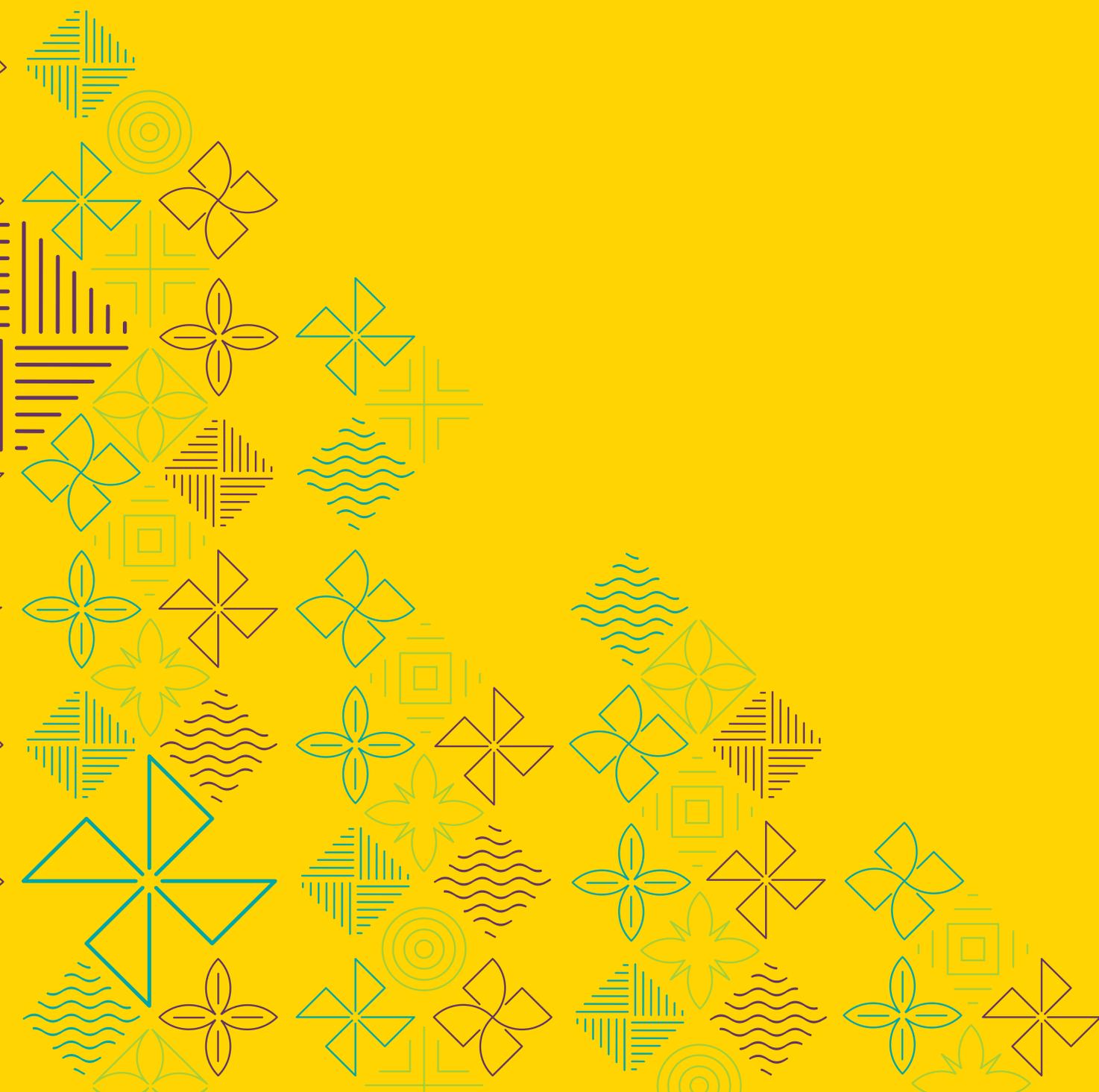
Many examples of significant and transformative shifts in parents' and learners' agency in learning were gained in real time during the PowerUP programme. How can these powerful PowerUP learnings be translated to empower transformative change for Pacific parents and learners in other education settings?

⁷ See Robinson et al, 2010.



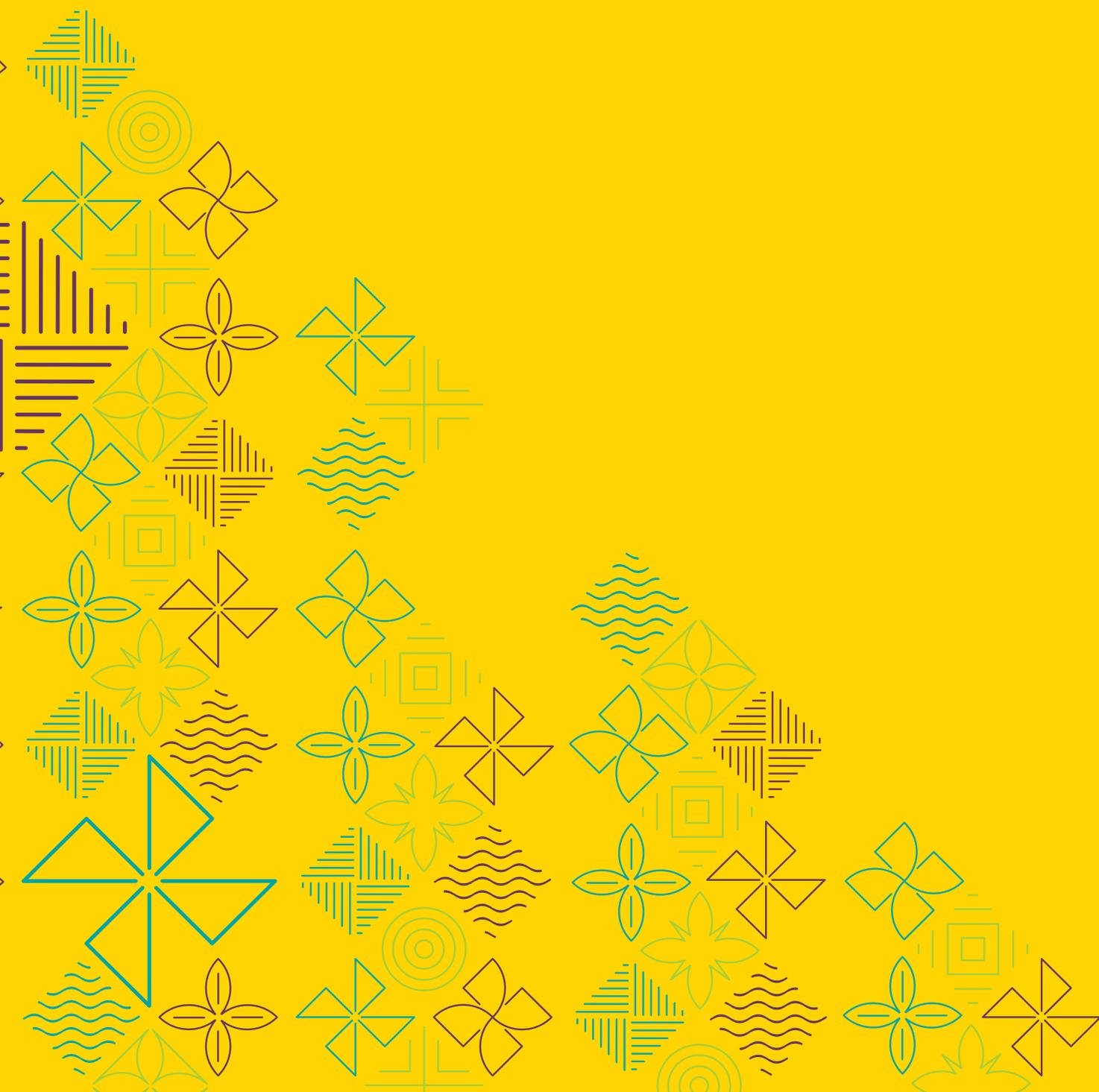
Chapter 1

Introduction to the Synthesis



Chapter 1

Introduction to the Synthesis



Documented evidence would make a significant addition to the PowerUP evidence base and support the full importance of PowerUP's *as and by Pacific* programme. The following recommendations are offered for consideration:

1. Evidence Base

The value of maintaining systematic baseline and change data for the programme could include the following:

- » There were differences in learning experiences by gender.
- » There were shifts in student experiences of identity security and learning at PowerUP and at school.

These could be tested in a small number of Talanoa Ako centres.⁸

2. Teacher Professional Development for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning

The PowerUP programme has demonstrated New Zealand's significant Pacific expertise in transformative change for culturally responsive teaching, in bringing Pacific funds of knowledge to bear on everyday teaching and learning within and across the core of schooling. However, Pacific teachers comprise only 3 percent of New Zealand's teaching workforce - with an estimated 8.4 percent of this 3 percent being in the ECE sector (Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2010).

There is an urgent need for a (compulsory) PLD cultural responsiveness. Phase 5 of Te Kotahitanga⁹ outlines a complex professional development programme that has strengthened the power and voice of both Pacific learners and parents to directly influence teaching and learning in everyday teaching practice across the curriculum.

3. Generic School Messaging

All parents and learners require accurate and timely information about processes and the language and terms used. Generic school messaging has little value for culturally diverse parents and families. Proactive school messaging could include: preparing messages in video/social media forms, which Pacific families could view many times and holding specific information sessions for parents and learners where Pacific teachers explain and respond to questions in Pacific languages. The Talanoa Ako online learning programmes for parents, which were developed during COVID-19 on the Pacific Media Network (PMN) and the Talanoa Ako app are prime examples of culturally secure and inclusive messaging.

⁸ PowerUp was renamed Talanoa Ako from 2020 with the programme changes informed by the 2016-19 evaluation synthesis outlined in this report.

⁹ Te Kotahitanga is a research and professional development programme that supports teachers to create a culturally responsive context for learning that raises Māori students' achievement in education. For more information on this programme, see the Ministry of Education webpage Te Kotahitanga at: <https://tekotahitanga.tki.org.nz>

The PowerUP parents-and-learners-based programme is one of a wider basket of Ministry of Education (Ministry) programmes to support Pacific education. The programme explores the concept of culturally secure places for Pacific learners and identity security as the vehicle to support Pacific people to engage, enjoy, and achieve in education – confident and secure in their diverse identities, languages, and cultures.

The aim of the PowerUP programme was to establish culturally secure learning environments for Pacific learners by providing “academic” support for parents and learners in *as and by Pacific* ways. The programme recognised the centrality of Pacific values, knowledge, and behaviours (funds of knowledge) in the lives of Pacific peoples and as the foundation for education achievement and wellbeing. The PowerUP model of engagement states the goal that culturally safe spaces for Pacific learners will be achieved when Pacific knowledge, principles, and values are present and become normalised in school curriculum, pedagogy, and organisational processes.

Indigenous peoples (Pacific) have control over the evaluation, and indigenous knowledge and science are the norm. The legitimacy and validity of indigenous principles and values are taken for granted. It does not exclude Western methods but includes them only as far as they are seen to be useful.

Adapted from Wehipeihana, 2019 (page 381).

In the PowerUP community-driven model, empowerment and knowledge sharing were viewed as holistic processes, involving parents, families, and learners; the wider Pacific community; the PowerUP leaders, providers, and teachers; and the Ministry as in the Samoan concept of Fa’afaletui.

PowerUP’s *as and by Pacific* approach marks a paradigm shift in programme delivery for the Ministry from a centralised and generic model to a community-delivered and transformative programme aimed at ensuring culturally secure learning opportunities for Pacific learners. From visioning through design and delivery, and the use of Pacific research processes of Fa’afaletui and Talanoa, the PowerUP programme celebrated and reinforced Pacific ways of being, knowing, and knowledge sharing. In all ways, the *as and by Pacific* approach was a step towards maintaining the *vā* (relational space) in education by protecting and valuing the relationship between the learners’ home values, behaviours, goals, and expectations and those of the school.

THIS SYNTHESIS

This synthesis explores the meaning and practice of culturally safe spaces for Pacific learners, as experienced by Pacific parents, learners, and communities in the PowerUP programme. Importantly, PowerUP was the first time that most of those involved had been the majority in an educational setting.

To explore relationship between culturally safe learning spaces and school achievement, a Pacific lens has been applied to the over 1,500 talanoa carried out with PowerUP parents in the pan-Pacific model (2016–18) and the estimated 1,450 talanoa gathered in the FlexiPlus/‘Au Lotu dual model programme (2019).¹⁰ Reviewing the reflective talanoa voices in this way has raised a number of challenges. For example, as demonstrated in the Samoan process of fa’afaletui, the talanoa represent multi-level perspectives – the voices of parents and learners, providers, and PICI policymakers.

¹⁰ The 2016–18 data is from 60 PowerUP stations (20 per year), and the 2019 data is from 38 stations (20 FlexiPlus and 18 ‘Au Lotu).

Notably, also, the PowerUP evaluation reports primarily focused on programme delivery against the programme key objective questions (KOQs). However, what might be regarded as a “moving feast of talanoa data” fitted Pacific norms of fono, consensus decision-making, and community engagement in the co-creation of knowledge (Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, 2001). Taken together, in this way, the talanoa voices reflect and validate Pacific beliefs around what is of value and how this is learnt and shared, including shifts over time. In sum, the PowerUP talanoa capture an iterative and cumulative community knowledge-building process. The talanoa featured the varied learning journeys of PowerUP Pacific parents and learners as they made meaning of their PowerUP learning experiences in their own way and time. It was powerful to read the deepening in talanoa voice in the successive evaluation reports. Clearly, the more parents and learners participated in the programme, the more discerning and authoritative their voices became. In a similar vein, the PowerUP ways of working also involved a process of listening, reflecting, refining, testing, and evaluating by the whole PowerUP team of parents and families, teachers, and PowerUP leaders and staff, as well as the Ministry team.

The five themes of culturally safe spaces proposed in the 2018 evaluation report (Oakden, 2018) have been taken as the core and starting point for this synthesis. These five themes, provided in box 3, emerged in the grouping of themes shared in talanoa in the first three years of the *as and by Pacific* model (2016–18) and were re-tested in the FlexiPlus/‘Au Lotu programme (2019).

Box 3: Five Themes of Culturally Safe Places for Pacific Parents and Learners



Pacific visible: That Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities are acknowledged by and in equitable partnerships with schools in education. “Pacific visible” is also seen in the inclusion of community knowledge, Pacific ideas, and concepts through which Pacific education is understood



Identity, language, and culture: That Pacific learners’ developing identities are upheld by educational experiences that provide support for Pacific culture, and languages, and practices that value the contribution of Pacific parents, families, and communities through equitable and ethical partnerships



Pacific wellbeing: That the wellbeing of Pacific learners is understood in education in holistic Pacific terms and is supported by effective partnerships between Pacific parents, their children and families, and communities in education



‘Auala (pathways into learning): How Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities are facilitated to gain access to and be welcomed in education, such as curriculum pedagogy and through consultation



Cultural bias and racism: The attitudes, processes, and practices in education that limit the flourishing of Pacific learners, parents, families, communities, visibility, language, culture wellbeing, and access.

Together as well as individually these themes emerged as major motivational factors in parents' and learners' engagement in learning at PowerUP. Cultural bias and racism are negative factors. However, in the safety of the PowerUP learning environment, parents and learners gained the confidence to speak up, to see and to name incidents of cultural bias and racism they had witnessed or experienced themselves and not to accept these as the norm or "just the way things are". PowerUP was a culturally safe space where parents and learners could voice and share their experiences of cultural bias and racism, and identify ways of dealing with such incidents.

Taking these five elements as a given, the synthesis focus was on how these themes were present and practised at PowerUP and how learning from them inspired and empowered parents and family learning journeys. In line with the PowerUP model of engagement, this synthesis asks:

1. What were the strengths Pacific parents, children, and community brought to the PowerUP learning programme? (funds of knowledge)
2. How did the programme recognise, apply, and enhance these strengths to create culturally safe learning spaces for these parents and students?
3. What other knowledge did Pacific parents need to know to play their part in ensuring learners reached their fullest educational potential and in partnership with schools?

Information about education outcomes was not part of the PowerUP mission. However, the many successes of the programme are well-evidenced in the feelings of belonging and safety parents and learners experienced by "seeing ourselves" in an education programme; their increased understanding of school processes and informed engagement with teachers and schools on education matters; parents' affirmation of their role in supporting their children to achieve their fullest education potential; and the pride, esteem, and self-belief gained in achieving as Pacific learners.

POSITIONING

A number of factors influenced the positioning of this synthesis.

Treating Pacific Funds of Knowledge as an Asset

The theoretical framing of funds of knowledge is that all people and cultures have bodies of knowledge and skills that are historically accumulated and culturally developed and support individual and household function and wellbeing (Gonzalez et al, 2005). Pacific funds of knowledge are co-constructed and sustained in family daily events and ceremonies. Knowing and understanding Pacific student, family, and community funds of knowledge enables educators to use daily events and ceremonies to bring students' lived experiences into school in meaningful ways (Hunter et al., 2020). The *Pasifika Education Plan 2013–2017* (Ministry of Education, 2013) lists core Pacific values as belonging, family, inclusion, leadership, love, reciprocity, relationships, respect, service, and spirituality. These core values signal and underpin Pacific funds of knowledge.

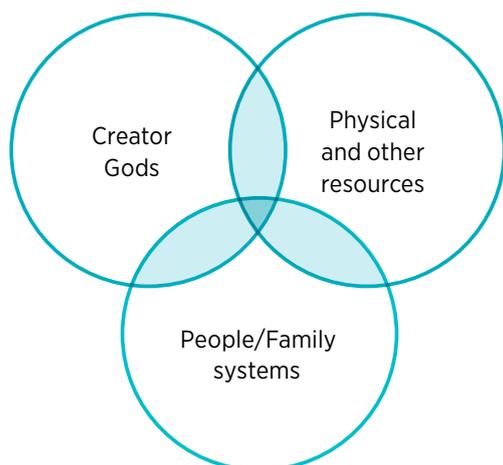
A Pacific World View

Pacific peoples see their place in the world as connected to the creator gods, family, and family resources of land and environment (see figure 2). As described by Tui Ātua Tupua Tamasese Tupuola Tufuga Efi (2003):

Imagine if you will a worldview that understands the environment, humans ... all natural life – as having its course in the same diving origin, imbued with the life force interrelated and genealogically connected ...

(page 50)

Figure 2: A Pacific World View



Source: Fairbairn-Dunlop et al., 2014.

In Pacific kinship communities, wellbeing (basic needs, identity, and mana) is achieved by maintaining a harmony between these three elements of spiritual, social, and physical resource use. Family roles, behaviours, and decisions are determined by the desire to *teu le vā* (vā)¹¹ between these three elements. A consideration often missed in discussions is the Pacific belief that knowledge and talents are a *tofi* (a gift) bestowed by the creator gods.

The Ministry of Social Development report *Social Wellbeing Indicators for Pacific People* notes:

Wellbeing occurs when all aspects of the individual and collective are in balance, in harmony and integrated and co-exist with environments, kinship support systems, language, fulfilment of roles and responsibilities and recognition of mana and tape ...

(page 4)

Culturally Safe Learning Environments

Culture refers to the sets of protocols, rules, and communicating patterns that develop to support the Pacific world view. Culture influences how people view, comprehend, and respond to physical and social phenomena. It extends beyond language and ethnicity. Factors such as age and generational issues, gender, sexual orientation, geographic location, religion, and socio-economic status may have as much – or more – cultural significance for an individual or community (Bennett et al., 2005). Macpherson and Macpherson (2010)¹² define culture as comprising material elements that people create and assign meaning to and non-material elements, such as language, beliefs, ideas, rules, customs, myths, and skills, each of which is encapsulated in the concept of culturally safe spaces for learning. Williams (1999) describes the holistic nature of culturally secure environments as those that are:

Spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people; where there is no assault challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning together ...

(page 213)

¹¹ See Airini et al., 2010.

¹² See also UNESCO terms intangible and tangible heritage.

Pacific Peoples - a Diverse Community

New Zealand’s Pacific population is youthful and fast growing. The 2018 census indicates Pacific peoples comprise 8.1 percent of the total New Zealand population, and this number is expected to increase to 10.9 percent by 2026. The median age for the Pacific population is 23.4 years (compared with 41.4 years for non-Pacific), and one-third are in the schooling aged population group (between 0 and 14 years of age). The Pacific community is also increasingly diverse, by factors such as cultural group ethnicity, length of time in New Zealand, and increased intermarriage. Of the 381,642 people who self-identified as “Pacific peoples” in the 2018 census, 65 percent – or two people in every three – were New Zealand born. The endurance of fa’a-Pacific values and beliefs as evidenced in, for example, the priority of faith and family, the sustaining of Pacific languages, and the significant remittances to families in the homelands. Studies have also highlighted the intergenerational transfer of fa’a-Pacific communication and parenting norms in New Zealand, such as an unquestioning respect for the views of elders and those of higher status (such as teachers) and parent-child conversations marked by emphatic instructions (“do this”), with fewer opportunities for children to question or voice a view (Wilson, 2017; Fuka-Lino, 2015; Fa’alau, 2015). While Pacific values are respected, questioning and communication can be “at the heart of learning” through clever Pacific-led change processes, such as “friendly arguing” that support learning and respect while decreasing bullying (Hunter et al., 2020; Alton-Lee, personal communication, Dec 2020).

Knowing, understanding, and taking account of the diversity of Pacific parents and learners is fundamental to providing culturally safe learning spaces for Pacific learners. While fa’a-Pacific values and

behaviours are often presented as a binary or polar opposite to what are described as the more individualised values believed to prevail in Western communities, in reality, there can be a range of potential behaviours across and within this binary spectrum and as influenced by time and place or occasion (see table 2).

Table 2: Fundamental Values: Pākehā Versus Pacific Peoples/Māori

Pākehā	Pacific Peoples/Māori
» Individual	» Communal
» Secular	» Spiritual
» Consumer	» Ecological
» Conflictual	» Consensual

Source: Tamasese et al., 2010

In a similar vein, Berry’s acculturation model (2017) has proposed a range of intercultural strategies to mark individual and group preferences for engaging with their own and/or other cultural groups. Berry notes four types of acculturation strategies: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalisation. Berry’s range of potential actions is also influenced by a consideration for time, place, and purpose as seen in this example:

When I asked a prominent Samoan leader the best way to introduce him to a group of Pacific students from New Zealand who were visiting Sāmoa for the first time, his response was ‘o le a tonu le pogai ole tou malaga mai? What is the purpose and, relationship (auala) in which you are coming here today?’ (for example, friend, colleague, teacher, family member, advocate for a group). His question focused on the nature of the visit, and the relationship being observed. Our response, in turn, determined his role, status and conduct on this occasion.

Fairbairn-Dunlop

THE APPROACH

This synthesis presents a strength-based picture of PowerUp parents' and learners' experiences of education in New Zealand and the challenges and shifts in their attitudes and approaches to learning that occurred through joining PowerUP. The synthesis also applies an equity approach: to provide Pacific learners with a full range of opportunities and benefits. The theoretical approach used is the sociocultural theory of learning and development: that interpersonal and intellectual learning are interdependent from birth and throughout life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bruner, 1997; Macfarlane et al., 2007). The approach of this synthesis takes the view that, to understand the meaning PowerUP parents and learners attribute to the concept and experience of culturally safe learning spaces, it is necessary to give equal attention to how the programme's ways of working and thinking inspired, empowered, and guided family learning journeys at PowerUP and through to their participation in school, home, and other communities.

Therefore, this synthesis begins by using the five themes of culturally safe learning spaces as a starting point, followed by the rationale, goals, and delivery of the programme, and concludes by returning to a fuller discussion of the five themes. Priority is given to parents' voices, as the initial aims of the PowerUP model were to "build the capacity of parents to support their

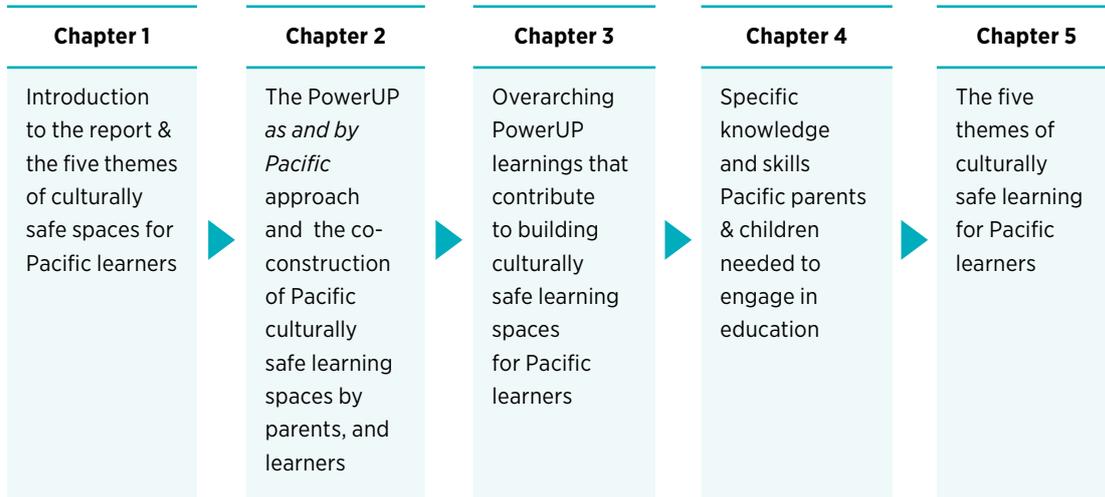
children to achieve their fullest educational potential". The inclusion of learners' voices in 2017 provided deeper insights of the programme and enabled a triangulation of adults' and children's experiences. Where the provider and Ministry voices have been included, these are signalled. The teacher voice is informed and reflected through the eyes of learners and parents, as expressed in *talanoa*. The data in the pan-Pacific programme cycle (2016–18) was not disaggregated by ethnicity, age, gender, or location. The data gathered in the FlexiPlus/'Au Lotu option (2019) is more detailed.

On this point, the synthesis is a composite and co-constructed picture of parents' and families' experiences of education in schools, and at PowerUP where, for the first time, they were the majority in a learning context. The patterns of learning highlighted are not time-bound by year (unless noted) nor by individual parent, learner, or family. This approach captures the truth that learning is not a passive or a linear process – people connect and make meaning of their experiences in their own way and time. For example, providers said that sometimes major shifts in parents' attitudes to learning occurred within a few weeks, for others it was a longer process. An overarching finding noted, is that, as parents learnt more about school processes, they also began to affirm their roles and responsibilities in supporting family learning journeys.

THE STRUCTURE

This synthesis is presented in five chapters as outlined in table 3 below.

Table 3: Synthesis Organisation and Process



This chapter has presented the synthesis purpose, positioning, and approach and introduced the five PowerUp themes of culturally secure learning spaces that emerged in the parents and learners talanoa (2016-18) and were re-tested in the FlexiPlus/'Au Lotu programme. The focus of Chapter 2 is on the rationale and goals of the programme and how the *as and by Pacific* programme and Pacific values, beliefs, epistemology, and pedagogy were embedded in the programme's ways of working and thinking in the pan-Pacific cycle (2016-18) and the flexible option (2019). As in the fa'a-Pacific way, parents and learners brought their knowledge, values, and aspirations into the programme, while teachers and mentors incorporated and built on these strengths to establish new and extend existing 'auala (pathways) in learning. The use of reflective thinking (the "What?, So What?, What Now?" approach (Borton, 1970) is evidenced in the quality of talanoa voices.

Chapters 3 and 4 present the programme in action. Chapter 3 comprises three parts. Part 1 presents the bones of PowerUP's multi-task learning programme. Part 2 provides a

helicopter view – holistic and longitudinal – of the cumulative learnings by parents and learners across the four years, for example, the empowerment of parents' and learners' voices in this learning environment where Pacific ideals and behaviours were honoured; the reinforcement of the relationship between effective and cognitive factors in this learning; and the self-esteem in achieving as Pacific students. Part 3 discusses the importance of supporting the "best" teachers for Pacific learners. Chapter 4 focuses specifically on the knowledge and skills parents and learners needed in order to engage in school learning, and how PowerUP supported them to master and apply these learnings in connecting with teachers, schools, homes, and communities. What is highlighted quite compellingly is the fact that Pacific parents and children do not have adequate access to information about school processes or terms and language, largely because information packages are in English but also because of the cultural environment in which school messaging is carried out. Chapter 5 returns to a deeper discussion of the five themes of culturally safe learning and Chapter 6 provides some concluding comments.



DEFINITIONS

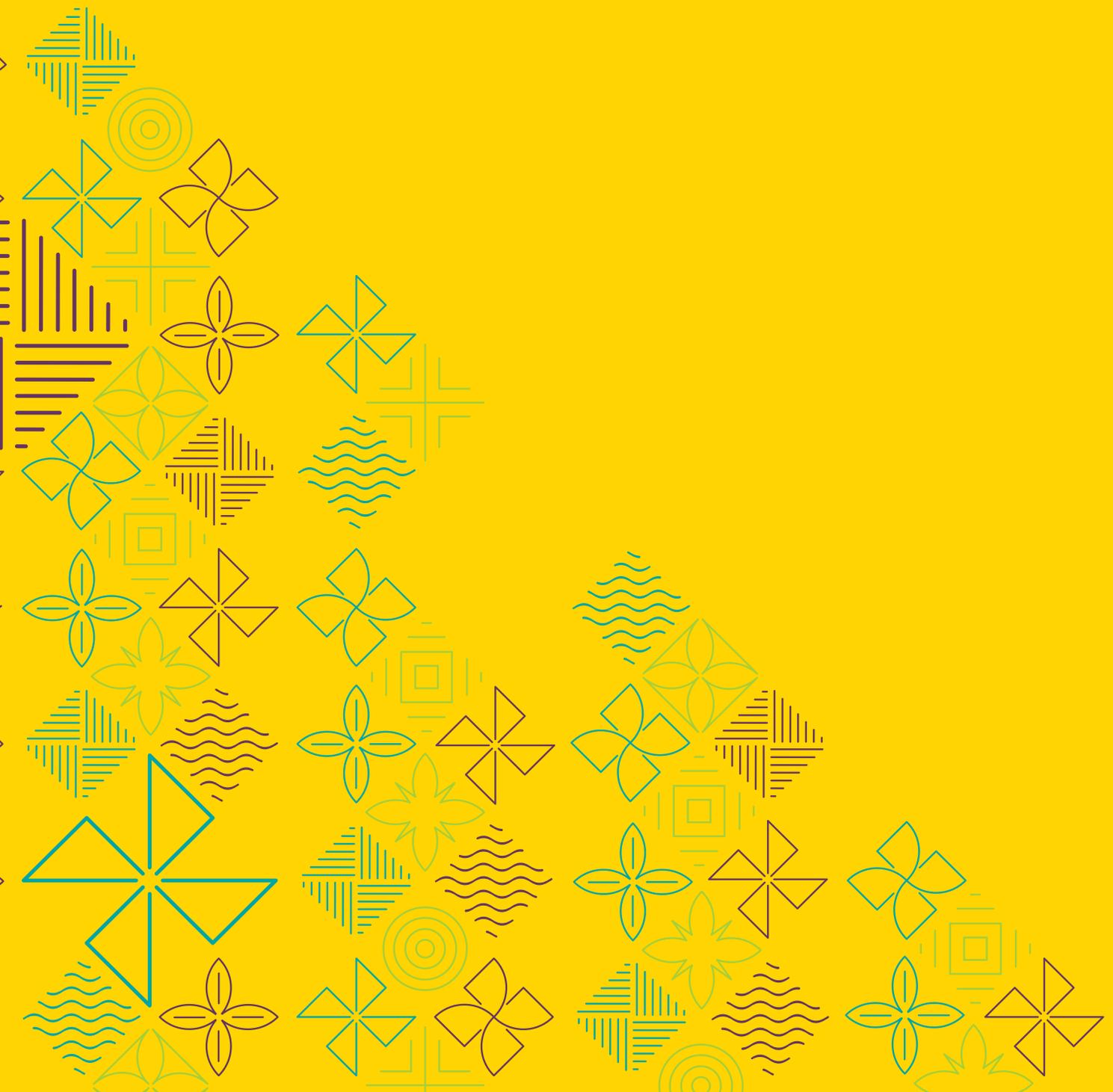
Academic	As in the PowerUP evaluation reports, in this synthesis, the term “academic” is used to refer to “school knowledge/other world views” and is used as a contrast to Pacific funds of knowledge.
Culture	Culture influences how people view, comprehend, and respond to physical and social phenomena. It extends beyond language and ethnicity. Factors such as age and generational issues, gender, sexual orientation, geographic location, religion, and socio-economic status may have as much – or more – cultural significance for an individual or community (Bennett et al., 2005).
Funds of knowledge	The theoretical framing of funds of knowledge is that all people and cultures have bodies of knowledge and skills that are historically accumulated and culturally developed and support individual and household function and wellbeing (Gonzalez et al., 2005).
Learners	Students attending PowerUP comprised a mix of ECE, primary school, and secondary school learners. In this synthesis, the term “learners” is used to represent all student age groups.
Parents	In this synthesis, the term “parents” refers not only to parents but to other family members who attended PowerUP, for example, grandparents, siblings, and in some cases caregivers.
PowerUP/Ako	The programme reports cover a span of four years and two project phases.
Providers	The providers are the community leaders responsible for organising and delivering the programme at each PowerUP site. In the 2016–18 pan-Pacific cycle, the providers were local community leaders. Church leaders were the providers in the ethnic-specific ‘Au Lotu model (2019). The ‘Au Lotu programmes were run in Wellington and Auckland only.

Pacific terms used

‘Auala	Pathways, learning choices
Fa’afaletui	The weaving together of multiple perspectives to form a complete picture
Fia sili	To act above one’s station
Mā (fa’amā)	To cause or experience shame
Talanoa	The Pasifika cultural practice of conversations and talking issues through together (Vaioleti, 2006)
Teu le vā	To protect the relationship – to keep relationships and people at the centre (see Airini et al., 2010)
Tū mālosi	To stand tall, strong

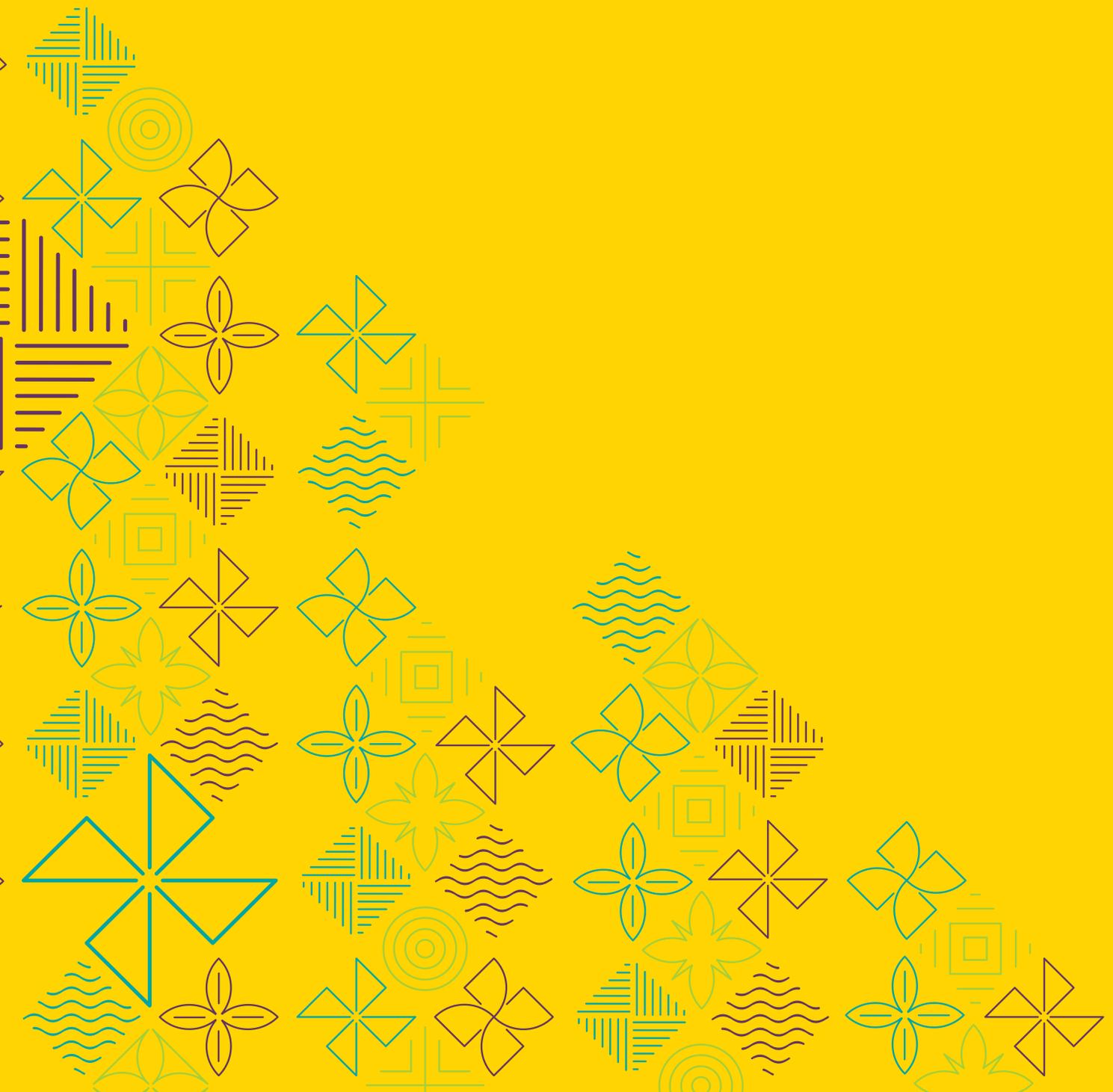
Chapter 2

The PowerUP Programme
(2016–19)



Chapter 2

The PowerUP Programme
(2016–19)





KEY POINTS

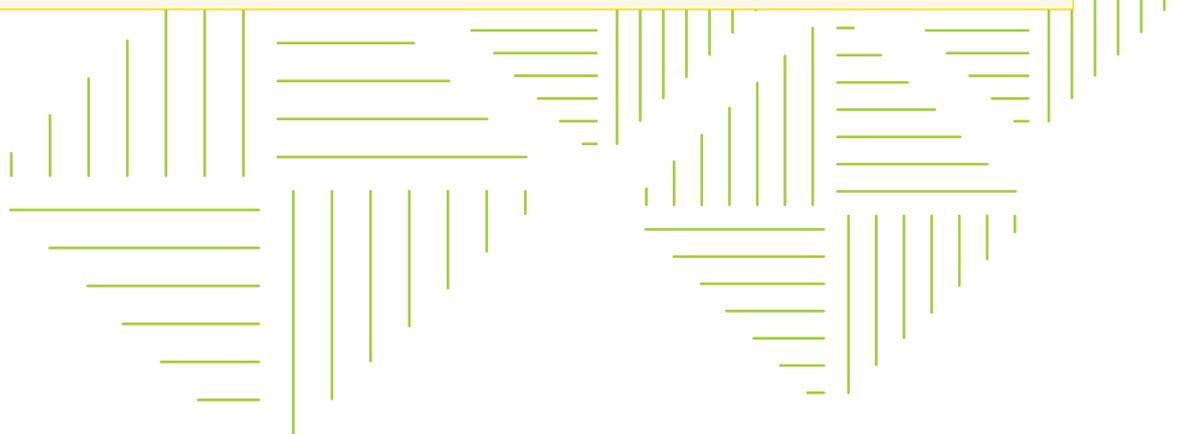
The PowerUP priority to providing academic support for Pacific families and learners in an *as and by Pacific* offered fresh starts in learning for parents and families. Pacific funds of knowledge (culture, language, and identity) were valued and treated as assets in the programme, and programme decision-making and delivery at each PowerUP station was shared by the PowerUP teams of community leaders, parents and families, teachers, mentors and other staff, and the Ministry team. As in the *fa'afaletui*, each group contributed to and were instrumental in working together to create culturally secure learning spaces for Pacific learners.

PowerUP gave priority to hearing and responding to the voices of parents and learners; the voices most often missing in education discussion. These voices were gathered by the use of guided *talanoa* and self-profiles and:

- 1) reflected parents and students learning strengths and priorities, supporting them to take responsibility for their education and choices made
- 2) contributed to a refining and adaption of the PowerUP ways of thinking and working. For example, the change from a pan-Pacific model (2015-18) to the FlexiPlus/'Au Lotu model in 2019 was in response to parents' expressed preferences for an ethnic-specific option. So too was the reduction in the number of sessions in that year (from 25 to 8-15) and the timing of these, which made it easier for parents to attend.

The strategy of parents and learners attending PowerUP together fitted the Pacific norm of holding families as the major educating and socialising agency and challenged the belief that education is the responsibility of schools. It also facilitated the transfer of lessons learnt at PowerUP into families, homes, and communities. Learners regarded their parents' participation at PowerUP as a clear signal that education mattered and as an expression of parental love. PowerUP parents began to better understand their children's learning journeys (which were so different from their own) and learnt ways to support their children to achieve their fullest education potential in partnership with schools. The programme reduced some of the cultural mismatches between learners' school experiences and the realities of their daily life experiences.

Each year, the total number of parents and families participating in the programme increased. However, the recruitment of families remained a challenge. The spread of the programme is seen in the 'Au Lotu data (2019), which indicated that 75 percent of parents attending were Pacific born.



The PowerUP programme is one of a range of Ministry of Education (Ministry) programmes to support Pacific educational achievement. The Ministry's PEP goals are to ensure every learner can achieve in education to realise their full potential and gain the skills to succeed in life and in the workforce. These goals align with New Zealand's national goals of equity and justice and aspirations as a culturally diverse nation.¹³

This chapter is divided in three parts: Part 1 outlines the framework of the PowerUP *as and by Pacific* programme, the PowerUP model of engagement, and the ways of working and thinking established to achieve the PowerUP goals, including the introduction of reflective thinking into the programme in 2018. In Part 2, the focus turns to the PowerUP programme in action, including delivery targets and mobilisation strategies in the 2016–18 years and as adapted in the FlexiPlus/'Au Lotu model (2019). The chapter concludes in Part 3 by exploring the question: What difference does it make to have parents and children learn together?

PART 1: THE POWERUP AS AND BY PACIFIC PROGRAMME

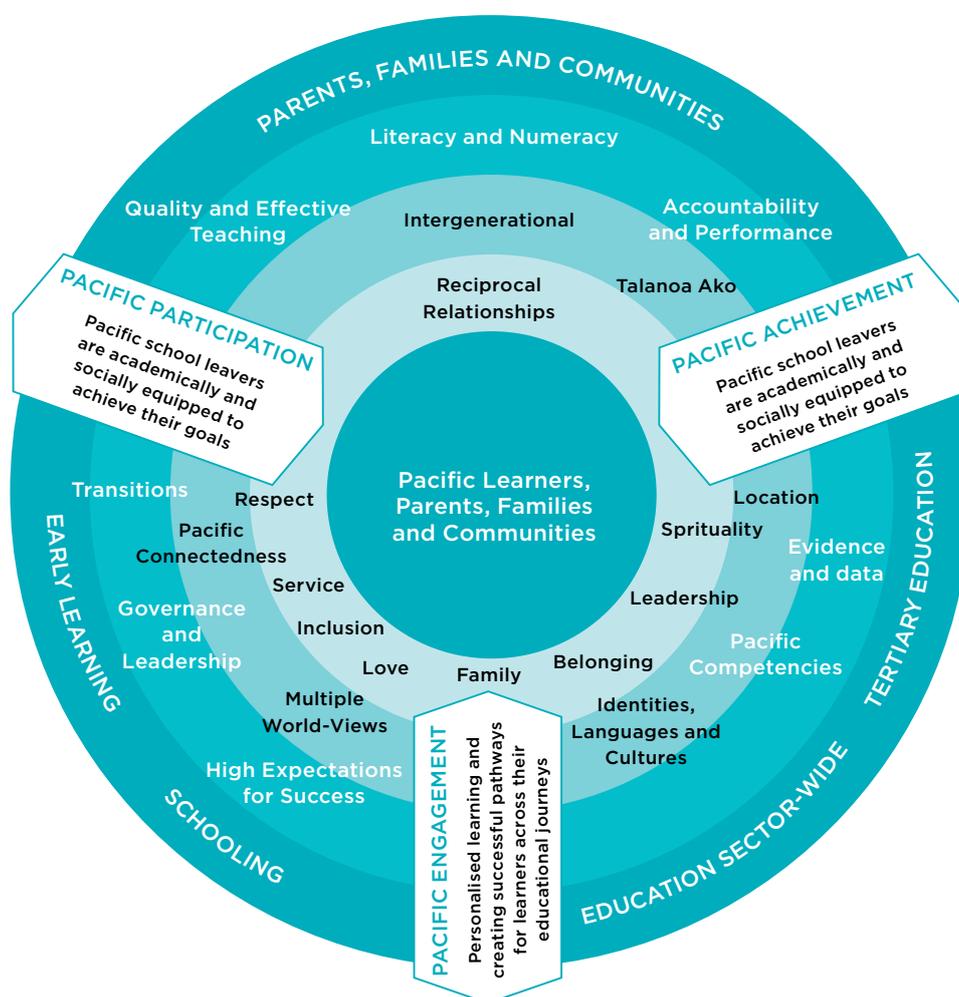
The philosophical basis of the PowerUP programme is that a whole-of-family approach is the most powerful way to raise Pacific educational achievement. PowerUP aims were to ensure Pacific parents and communities were informed, knowledgeable, and confident supporters of their children's learning journeys. These goals were to be achieved by providing academic support to parents and children from ECE through primary to secondary school learners in an *as and by Pacific* way.

The programme addresses *Pasifika Education Plan* goals (Ministry of Education, 2013), that "Pacific identities, languages, and cultures" are central to the concept of educational success for Pacific learners. PowerUP also recognises fa'a-Pacific cultural norms that parents, family, and community are the major socialising and educating agencies. They are the heart of identity, security, and wellbeing for Pacific peoples, as shown in the *Pasifika Education Plan (2013–2017)* spiral (Figure 3, page 37).

¹³ See also other definitions of wellbeing.



Figure 3: Pacific Spiral PEP



PowerUP’s family-based approach also aligns with global research, which states the significant relationship between identity, security, and school achievement (Purkey, 1970), and evidence from New Zealand’s Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) that “quality teaching involves creating effective links between school and other cultural contexts in which students are socialised (Alton-Lee, 2003).

For many years, New Zealand’s Pacific community and Pacific educators have argued passionately for Pacific knowledge to be present and practised in education. At the 2018 series of national Pacific education forums hosted by the Hon. Jenny Salesa, (then) Associate Minister of Education, strong arguments were again made for integrating Pacific knowledge and

ways of knowing into school curriculum and pedagogy, together with stressing the urgency of investing in effective ways of building teacher capability for culturally responsive pedagogy to achieve this. Pacific calls for culturally safe learning spaces mirror the growing body of research findings that draw attention to the negative effects associated with the subordination (neglect) of tikanga Māori in New Zealand schooling. That devaluing of Māori knowledge and language in education has contributed to an erosion of identity security, which in turn has impacted negatively on Māori educational success. The *PowerUP as and by Pacific* programme captures the heart of Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s clarion call for community- and indigenous-driven learning models that reclaim and celebrate Māori knowledge and pedagogy (Smith, 2012).

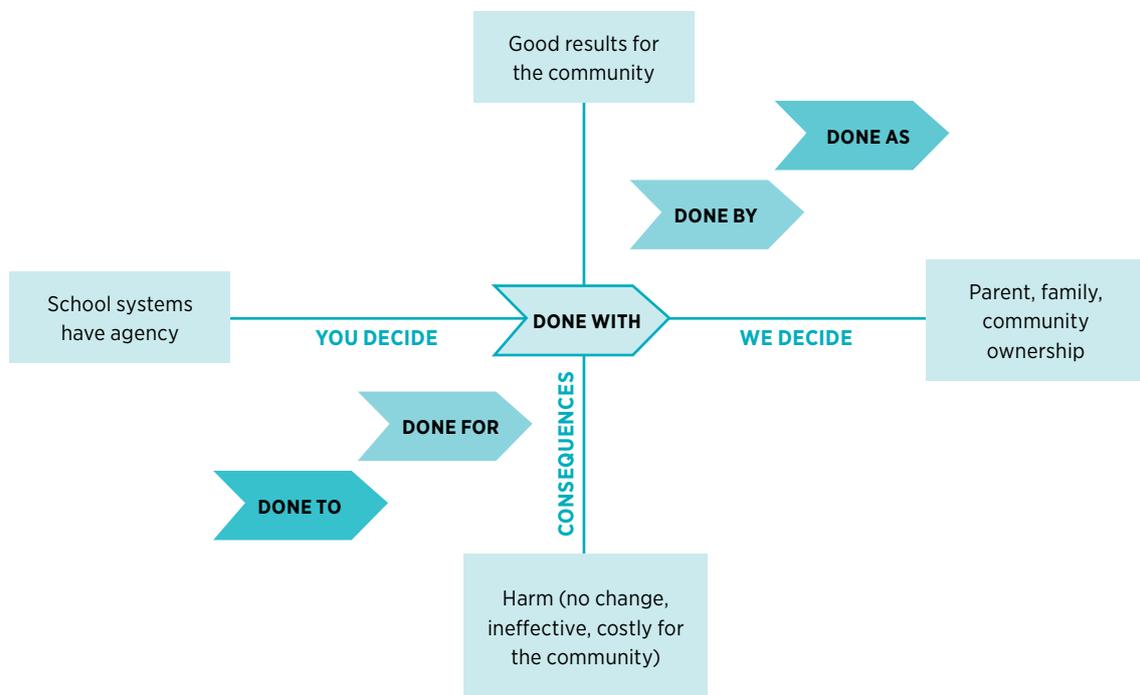
The PowerUP Model of Engagement

The PowerUP *as and by Pacific* model of engagement takes the view that culturally safe learning spaces for Pacific students will be achieved (and harms reduced) when Pacific parents and communities affirm their ownership in education in partnership with schools (see figure 4). That is, where:

Indigenous peoples [in this case Pacific peoples] have control over the evaluation, and Indigenous knowledge and science are the norm. The legitimacy and validity of Indigenous principles, values are taken for granted. It does not exclude Western methods but includes them only as far as they are seen to be useful ...

Wehipeihana, 2019 (page 381)

Figure 4: The PowerUP Model of Engagement



Source: Adapted from Wehipeihana, 2019

The PowerUP programme marked a paradigm shift for the Ministry from a centralised and generic model to a community-delivered and transformative programme that, by supporting Pacific parents, families, and communities, allows them to gain ownership, agency, and responsibility in education. This would result in culturally secure learning opportunities for Pacific learners.



Key Objectives

PowerUP aims were to build the educational capability, knowledge, and voice of parents, families, and communities, so equipping them to: 1) champion their children's educational journeys; 2) be more demanding of the education system; and 3) foster changes within their families and communities that enhance educational success and wellbeing. In the PowerUP family-based programme, academic support for parents and learners was provided from ECE through to secondary school learners at PowerUP's community mobilised stations, so covering the whole education spectrum, including career advice.

Key objectives (KEQs) were established to meet these aims in 2016, and these were applied across the four years of the programme reviewed in this synthesis. KEQ1 was the overarching objective, with KEQ2-KEQ4 being the objectives set in place to supportive the achievement of KEQ1. The KEQs were:

- » KEQ1: To build the capability, knowledge, and voice of Pacific parents, families, and communities to drive and accelerate Pacific educational success
- » KEQ2: To provide access to quality registered teachers at every level to ensure the right information is available at the right time
- » KEQ3: To ensure fit-for-purpose, culturally appropriate, inclusive, and effective approaches to best meet the local needs of Pacific parents, children, and families
- » KEQ4: To achieve real results in real time.

PowerUP programme evaluations (2016-18) and the 2019 dual option model reported back on these KEQs. The KEQs are "present centred", that is, providing "information at the right time" and "real results in real time". However, more is needed for transformative change to be effective. The PowerUP empowerment model or engagement represents a complex and long-term task, given the systemic and deeply embedded power imbalances in education policy and programme decision-making.

The Powerup Ways Of Working And Thinking

From visioning to the design and delivery of the programme to the use of Pacific research processes of *Fa'afaletui* and *Talanoa*, the PowerUP *as and by Pacific* programme observed and strove to reinforce Pacific ways of being, knowing, and knowledge sharing. The programme incorporated the following ways of working and thinking:

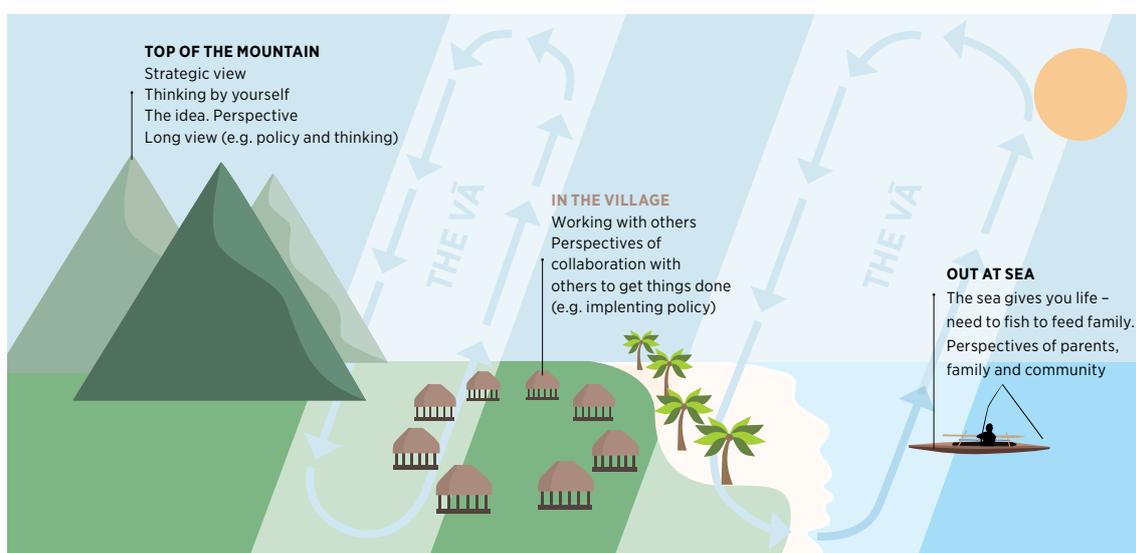
1. A whole-system approach based on the Fa'afaletui model
2. A community-driven rather than school-based model, with a focus on parental engagement
3. The introduction of reflective practice as a way of understanding and learning as a community - encouraging cycles of adaptive action to support positive and ongoing changes for parents and families that benefit the whole family and community and to inform the evolution of the PowerUP programme design.

Each of these three ways of working and thinking is discussed in more detail on page 41.

***Fa’afaletui* – a whole-system approach**

The *Fa’afaletui* process of gathering communities together to weave their experiences, expectations, and aspirations, is one many that Pacific communities are familiar with. The principles underpinning the *Fa’afaletui* are that sound decisions require consultation with a range of voices, namely the views of those sitting at the top of the mountain (policy level), those in the village (practitioners), and those “out at sea”, each of whom will or are impacted by the decisions made. In the *Fa’afaletui*, each perspective is a valued contribution and, consequently, each “voice” has a stake in ensuring decisions made achieve positive programme outputs (see figure 5).

Figure 5: The Fa’afaletui Framework



Source: Adapted from Tamasese, et al., 2005

Fa’afaletui is about the safety and comfort of the fale (house) to do the tu’i (the putting together of ideas). Fa’afaletui is to collaborate and share ideas and innovations in the comfort of a house.

In the PowerUP application of the Fa’afaletui model, knowledge and power was similarly viewed as a holistic and shared process. However, in PowerUP priority was given to the users’ voices, that is, the voices of families, learners, and the wider Pacific community, which are so often missing in education decision-making.

The Fa’afaletui model was also adapted and used by the Ministry team as a framework to link the different parts of PowerUP’s work: to facilitate, gather, interpret, and validate the knowledge shared in the programme; and to ensure all levels of thinking and activity were taken account of in programme planning and delivery. In carrying out this weaving of ideas, the Ministry team observed the Pacific value of *tausi le vā* aimed at protecting and maintaining the relationships between 1) policy and research into Pacific parents’ family and community experiences and ways of knowing and being; 2) programme implementation within families’ communities and schools; and 3) evaluating parts of the programme work plan in order to inform next steps.

Community-driven

Community ownership was the driving principle in the PowerUP *as and by Pacific* programme. The programme was offered at PowerUP stations established throughout New Zealand for this purpose.¹⁴ Leadership was in the hands of esteemed community leaders, and teachers and mentors were of Pacific ethnicity and drawn from the local community. Teachers were qualified and had a knowledge of Pacific languages and culture. In the PowerUP hub-like communicating and reporting systems, providers were the local PowerUP champions and liaison points for the Ministry’s team. Providers implemented the programme and adapted it to community needs and context, recruited families, organised venues and sessions, kept attendance data and other records, and carried out the talanoa. In sum, ownership of the programme and decisions regarding programme content and delivery were shared by parents, families, and community, together with the Ministry’s team.

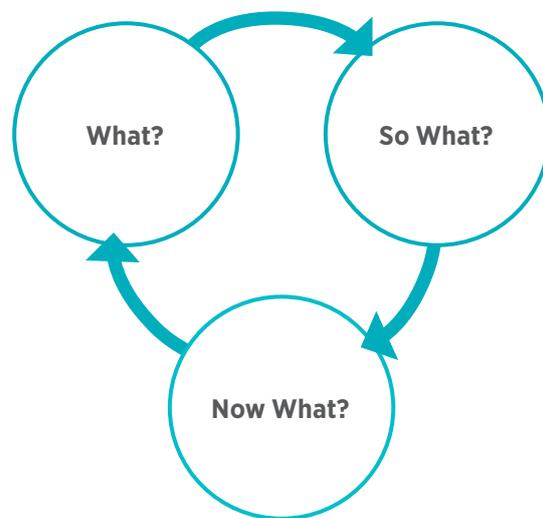
Reflective practice

Several reflective practices were built into the PowerUP programme. The practice of talanoa – conversations, talking through issues – is a commonly used communicating and decision-making process in many Pacific communities (Vaiolleti, 2006). In the PowerUP programme, talanoa were used as a way of listening, hearing, and responding to parents’ and learners’ voices about their experiences of education generally and in the PowerUP programme. The programme’s use of talanoa is discussed further in the Monitoring and Evaluation section below.

The Adaptive Action Cycle (AAC) of sensing, transforming, and acting was incorporated into the PowerUP programme in 2018 (see figure 6). AAC supports people to develop alternative ways of handling themselves,

other people, and their environment, thereby “increasing the personal options open to them” (Borton, 1970, page 86). The use of the AAC reflective processes of “What?, So What?, What Now?” gave PowerUP parents and learners the power to consider and take responsibility for making decisions about education, including the choice of learning pathways.

Figure 6: The Adaptive Action Cycle



Source: Borton, 1970

The depth and quality of the voices shared in PowerUP talanoa suggest parents and learners had internalised AAC as a way of thinking, making decisions, and acting. Furthermore, they knew that their views were listened to and could make a difference.

[Taking part in the talanoa] means I am able to reflect and work towards goals for our family, in our journey with our kids.

Parent, talanoa

Providers and the Ministry team also used AAC as a strategy to ensure programme relevance, robustness, and appropriateness to community context and needs.

¹⁴ Note: 20 PowerUP stations in the 2016–18 cycle and 38 in the 2019 FlexiPlus option.



Powerup Targets And Delivery

Programme targets were set in 2016 and applied through to 2018. These were to establish 20 PowerUP stations in communities spread around New Zealand for parents and ECE, primary, and secondary school learners. Each of the PowerUP stations would provide 26 two-hour sessions, which were scheduled consecutively. Programme attendance targets set in 2016 were similarly intensive and detailed: 800 Pasifika parents and families, along with their children aged 5 years and under; 1,000 primary school students; 1,000 year 9 and 10 students; and 1,500 Pasifika NCEA students.

Significant changes to programme delivery were introduced in the FlexiPlus/'Au Lotu model (2019) in response to community voice and with the aim of growing the programme. Parents had found the earlier programme targets of 26 consecutive sessions hard to meet. These changes are highlighted in red in table 4. In summary:

- » The FlexiPlus programme was a continuation of the pan-Pacific programme and parents' and children model. The 'Au Lotu programme involved ethnic-specific and parent-only stations.
- » The number of PowerUP sessions per year was reduced from 26 to 8-15, which could be scheduled according to community context (for example, as block sessions to suit local activities, such as seasonal work).
- » Providers had an allocation of three to four of these sessions, which could be used to discuss local concerns (provider choice).

Table 4: The PowerUP Pan-Pacific Model (2016–18) and the FlexiPlus/‘Au Lotu Dual Model (2019)

2016–18	2019		2020
PowerUP plus	FlexiPlus	‘Au Lotu	Talanoa Ako
APPROACH	Tested and refined		
<i>As and by Pacific community driven model</i>			
DELIVERY			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Community-driven » Pan-Pacific » Parents and children » Nationwide x 20 stations » 26 consecutive sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Community-driven » Pan-Pacific » Parents and children » Nationwide x 20 stations » 8–15 sessions (flexible scheduling) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Church-driven » Ethnic specific » Parents only » Wellington and Auckland only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *10 weeks Pan-Pacific or ethnic specific 7 sessions and 3 provider choices Parent focused, or parent and their children focused
Five themes of culturally safe spaces for Pacific learners identified	Tested and refined		
			

Monitoring and Evaluation

As noted, PowerUP priority was given to hearing the voices of parents and learners. Guided talanoa series and self-completion evaluation surveys were the main programme monitoring and evaluation tools. Talanoa were carried out with parents and learners at each of the PowerUP stations at set times during the year, and data were systematically gathered throughout the programme and immediately lodged with the Ministry team.

Guided talanoa series

The guided talanoa series were developed by the Ministry team with the aim of documenting shifts in family educational expectations and behaviours, which occurred as a result of attending PowerUP. The guided talanoa focused on seven thematic areas:

- » Pacific demography: including place of birth, family size, languages spoken
- » Early learning and primary education experiences, decisions parents made for their children, how they supported their children, home-school relationships, the parents' educational knowledge, beliefs, and assumptions about education
- » Secondary school education: parental choice, expectations, involvement with their children's learning, and ambitions for their children
- » What parents learned at PowerUP about the education system and how they supported their children
- » What actions parents took from having this information or knowledge, and how this altered their beliefs and perceptions about education
- » The outcomes from their new knowledge: the actions they took around their children's education, and their attitudes towards education; their messages for schools and other parents and families; and what made the difference for them
- » For children: the value of PowerUP, how they felt, and why they felt this way.

Table 5: Longitudinal Approach to the Selection of Talanoa Families (2016-18)

Family sample from each PowerUP station	
2016	» 2 x year 1 families (Pacific parents or adult family members only)
2017	» 1 x year 1 family » 1 x year 2 family (Pacific parents or adult family members and their children)
2018	» 1 x year 2 family » 1 x year 3 family (Pacific parents or adult family members and their children)
2019	» Talanoa with 64 families, including parents and their children, and 32 with community providers and church providers

Over 1,500 talanoa with parents and learners were carried out in the first three-year project cycle (2016-18), and 1,450 were carried out in the FlexiPlus/'Au Lotu model (2019). This is a combined total of more than 2,950. These source materials were used in the PowerUP annual evaluation reports. Together, these data form an invaluable longitudinal picture of what Pacific families learnt at PowerUP, how they used these learnings, and ways these learnings influenced their beliefs, values, and attitudes to education. These talanoa voices contributed to the co-construction of the five themes of culturally safe spaces for learners, which are a central platform in this synthesis.

Self-completion evaluation surveys

Self-completion evaluation surveys were developed by the PICI team to explore what parents and learners had gained in the programme and what they regarded to be the programme's strengths and weaknesses. These surveys were conducted in English. Three versions were prepared: 1) an adult's version [6 questions]; 2) a secondary school student's version [11 questions]; and 3) a version for students in years 5–8 [14 questions]. The PICI distributed copies to providers at each PowerUP station, who then returned the completed surveys to the PICI for data processing and analysis.

The response rates for the self-completion surveys are outlined in table 6. The response rate for the adult survey, based on attendance data, was 21 percent; for students, the response rate was 25 percent, based on all students who attended PowerUP. Providers said that it was usually the more regular attendees who completed the surveys.

Table 6: Responses to Self-completion Surveys, 2016, 2017, 2018

Responses	2016	2017	2018	2019
Parents and other adults	126	329	209	634
Secondary school age students	344	753	579	-
Years 5–8 students	Not collected	272	286	857

Interpretation

In line with the PowerUP whole-of-system approach, data analysis, synthesis, and reporting were a joint task between the Ministry team and the external evaluators (Pragmatica Ltd). The process was as follows: on receiving the data from PowerUP providers, the Ministry team entered all survey responses into an Excel spreadsheet. The Ministry team members read all the talanoa responses and assessed evidence of change around several aspects, which were then coded into coding sheets for further analysis. Pragmatica Ltd then analysed this data, using pivot tables, and prepared a summary of key data, using descriptive statistics. These key data were then discussed with the Ministry's team through a sense-making process, which involved five stages of identifying key generalisations, exceptions, contradictions, and "surprises", such as themes that were present or missing and puzzling (Poyang and Oakden, PowerUP Plus Report 2017, page 58).¹⁵

¹⁵ The sense-making method originates from the work of Phil Capper and Bob Williams (Capper & Williams, 2004).

Box 4: The Sense-making Process

Stage One: We took a broad view, looking at the data overall before getting into the detail. We asked, “In general, what is this data telling us?” Then we identified the key generalisations. For instance, we noted that, in general, parents were attending the PowerUP sessions, and some of them had attended many sessions.

Stage Two: We asked, “What exceptions can we see?” We also looked to see if there were any outliers – either excellent or poor ratings that should be considered. For example, we identified a sizeable group of children who attended sessions without a parent or family adult.

Stage Three: Then we looked for any contradictions – aspects that might provide insights. For example, we saw that students said they talked about PowerUP with their parents even if parents didn’t attend. Notably, children said that they would have come more often if their parents had attended.

Stage Four: We considered findings that were surprising – either because they were present or because they were missing. Also, we thought about what we might learn from these findings. For example, we noticed through the talanoa that many of the parents who attended PowerUP sessions experienced noticeable changes in understanding how to support their children in just a matter of weeks.

Stage Five: Finally, we considered what still puzzled us and explored these “puzzles” rather than explaining them away. For example, we wondered, given the benefits to students of families attending PowerUP, how we might mobilise more families to participate.

When these stages of sense-making were completed, judgements were made on the performance in each of the evaluation criteria. Checking indicated that there was sufficient evidence to suggest that the judgements being made were credible and reasonable. These learnings were applied in the programme, taking into account the specific contexts of each PowerUP station, which saw a cumulative refining of the programme.

Table 7 outlines some of the shifts and refining of the PowerUP focus and ways of working by year over this period.



Table 7: PowerUP Report 2017

How PowerUP builds the knowledge, capability and voice of Pacific parents, students and families over time

MOBILISATION	EARLY ON IN THE PROGRAMME	MID PROGRAMME	BY THE END OF THE PROGRAMME
<p>ADULT LED</p> <p>Invitation from someone they know and/or respect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » An adult they know (family or friend) » PowerUP champion » Community leader (in education, possibly from child's school) » Someone from church or through church notices <p>CHILD LED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Hears about PowerUP at school » <u>Other family members attend</u> » Friends attend <p>MEDIA DRIVEN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Facebook » Pacific radio/community radio » School, community or church newsletter 	<p>ADULT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Settles/relaxes into a "safe" learning space (at PowerUP) » Starts to understand the <u>education system and how it works</u> » Reports listening to children more » Has a better understanding of each child's aspirations » Helps children set goals and keep track of them <p>CHILD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Feels safe, has fun at PowerUP, <u>reduces anxiety and builds confidence to ask questions</u> » <u>Builds trusted relationships with teachers and mentors at PowerUP to get the help they need</u> » Talks more with parents at home <p>FAMILY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Sets up routines around talking with each other, studying, going to school regularly » Prioritises education and learning in the family and makes space for this » Enjoys time out/change of scene at PowerUP and the family meal 	<p>ADULT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Starts to see their role in relation to education more clearly and learns skills to engage with schools in a child/parent/teacher learning conversation » Enjoys sharing ideas with other parents/feels supported/forms cohort <p>CHILD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Enjoys learning success » Enjoys being with others from the Pacific community also experiencing learning success » <u>Teachers at school notice child is motivated to learn and this improves their at school relationships</u> » Understands learning is important for their future » Develops goals, possibly a career path, and a plan for achieving their goals <p>FAMILY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Parents report things are more settled at home – less family stress, better communication, <u>broader communication</u> » Enjoys family time at PowerUP » Engages with a broader Pacific community 	<p>ADULT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Confident to engage with school on their own terms » <u>Can critique what's happening</u>, ask for explanations and extra help and can advocate for their children » Enjoys the support/ideas from the other parents at PowerUP » Enjoys PowerUP and commits to returning <p>CHILD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Understands what they are trying to achieve » Views education more positively, regularly attends school and experience positive outcomes » <u>More resilient in their learning</u> » Says teachers notice they are more vocal in class, asking more questions, more engaged, <u>doing better quality work, getting improved grades</u> <p>FAMILY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Understands how to support and access education for the family » Understands how to support education, makes it a family priority » Addresses learning challenges – accesses help to resolve them » <u>Raised parental expectations of student success</u>
<p>Key</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Changes observed in participants attending for the first year » <u>Changes observed in participants attending for the second year</u> 			



PART 2: WHO CAME TO POWERUP?

The Programme Uptake and Attendance

In the early years of 2016 and 2017, attendance data gathered from the 20 PowerUP stations was reported in a variety of ways, as providers and families familiarised themselves with and learnt to manage the reporting systems and procedures. Data robustness was achieved by the third year (2018). PowerUP aims were to have parents and children attend the programme together. However, parents' attendance was impacted by factors such as employment (seasonal labour shift work), family, church, and health. As much as possible, PowerUP staff provided transport for families as needed. However, there is no data on this point. Table 8 sets out the 2018 attendance data against the 2019 data. In the table, critical change points are noted in red. Notably, the 2019 data represents 38 PowerUP stations compared with the 20 stations in each of the previous three years.

Table 8: Total Attendance by Pacific Parents, Adult Family Members, and Children at PowerUP, 2018 (n: 20 PowerUP stations) and 2019 (n: 38 PowerUP stations)

	Total visits to powerup stations	Reached overall	Average per week	Average per session
PARENTS/ ADULTS				
2018 FlexiPlus adults	8,542	945	301	19
2019 Au Lotu adults	4,625	569	463	29
2019 FlexiPlus adults	6,192	878	431	21
Total adults 2019	10,817	1,447	894	50
Percent increase in adult attendance (2019)	27%	53%	197%	32%
CHILDREN				
FlexiPlus children 2018	24,452	3,458	1,041	52
FlexiPlus children 2019	12,386	1,669	825	40
Percent decrease in child attendance 2019	49%	52%	21%	23%
ADULT-CHILD RATIO				
2018	1 adult to every 3 children			
2019	1 adult to every 2 children			

Note: 2018 data features 20 PowerUP stations; 2019 data features 38 stations (20 FlexiPlus and 18 'Au Lotu stations).

The data for the four years covered in this synthesis indicates:

- » an increase in the total number of parents and learners attending PowerUP
- » an increase in parents' total attendance and by session (A consideration here is that the 'Au Lotu was a parent-only programme.)
- » an increase in the adult-to-child ratio from one for every three in 2018 to one to two in 2019, indicating that fewer children attended PowerUP without a parent
- » a decrease in child (learner) attendance, which was likely associated with the introduction of the 'Au Lotu parent-only model (2019).

Recruitment and Mobilisation

By year, there were significant differences in total attendance by area, for example, between rural areas (high) and urban centres such as Auckland and Wellington (low). This raised questions about programme fatigue in urban areas and whether PowerUP was best suited to smaller and/or rural communities.

The effectiveness of the recruitment process was raised many times over the four years, despite the fact that the Ministry team took part in an extensive media training programme. There were comments such as, "I thought PowerUP is just for students" (parent survey) and "I didn't know about PowerUP ... I was worried about [my daughters'] achievement, and 'āiga suggested I go" (parent talanoa). By contrast, 'Au Lotu providers said they had found it comparatively easy to recruit parents and adult family members into the programme. This matches to comments by the Ministry team that 'Au Lotu providers enjoyed strong buy-in and guidance from the church ministers; that they received vital support from the ministers' wives; that the programme's priorities of language and cultural knowledge were already embedded in church programmes; and that the churches had robust and effective administrative community networks.

Churches are able to bring in the cultural aspect into the programme. What we teach within the programme aligns with the Minister's prayer or sermon at the end of the sessions, so it brings a spiritual and cultural balance to the programme.

'Au Lotu provider



I think that it is key because the church is a community; all the people come here. It allows the church to have an input into what they want and the success they want for their kids instead of being dictated by mainstream schools and by the Ministry [of Education].

'Au Lotu provider



We mobilised our parents using a church announcement following our Sunday service. We also shoulder-tapped some of our parents who we thought would benefit from the programme but had not yet registered. We also approached the local Pacific churches in our area, asking them to tell their parents about the programme and inviting them to join us. We also invited parents and teachers from our pre-school and those with children and grandchildren at primary and secondary levels.

'Au Lotu provider

Some FlexiPlus providers said they had experienced difficulties recruiting sufficient families into the programme, especially in smaller communities.

It has been a challenge to get 30 families to attend from our ... community. We did identify [fewer] than 20 families from the start, and from that, not all have been able to attend consistently. Some have taken real advantage of the workshops. But there have been close to 30 adults and 30 learners participating.

FlexiPlus provider

FlexiPlus providers had tried a wide range of strategies to publicise the programme, including radio interviews, posts on community Facebook groups, and distributing posters.

We approached community liaisons ... to talk through most suitable times to gain higher parent attendance. We explored times [when] parents finish work, especially considering when fathers finish work so they could also attend. We also considered the family not being home too late, especially with younger children.

FlexiPlus provider

They had also carried out presentations at local community meetings. Some had approached schools to see if they might advertise the programme through school networks and newsletters.

We asked if we could be put into contact with any families that [might] be interested in registering for PowerUP. We knew that, due to confidentiality, they would not be able to pass on the details of the students and families, so we tried to make a connection through the school and have them pass on the information. This wasn't very effective ... [Principals] were aware the programme was happening and were happy that it was going ahead, however, it wasn't an effective strategy to get families registered.

FlexiPlus provider

Some schools were encouraging. However, others were not, which is concerning. This lack of principals'/schools' support for the programme may signal a disconnect in the leadership space and warrants further attention.

A major change in the re-branding of PowerUP to the Talanoa Ako in 2020 was the inclusion of school communities, Board of Trustees, and teacher collectives in the programme. These are primarily Pacific

people who have strong links to their communities. New strategies currently being tested set the groundwork for the potential involvement of local schools and principals as partners in the PowerUP programme.

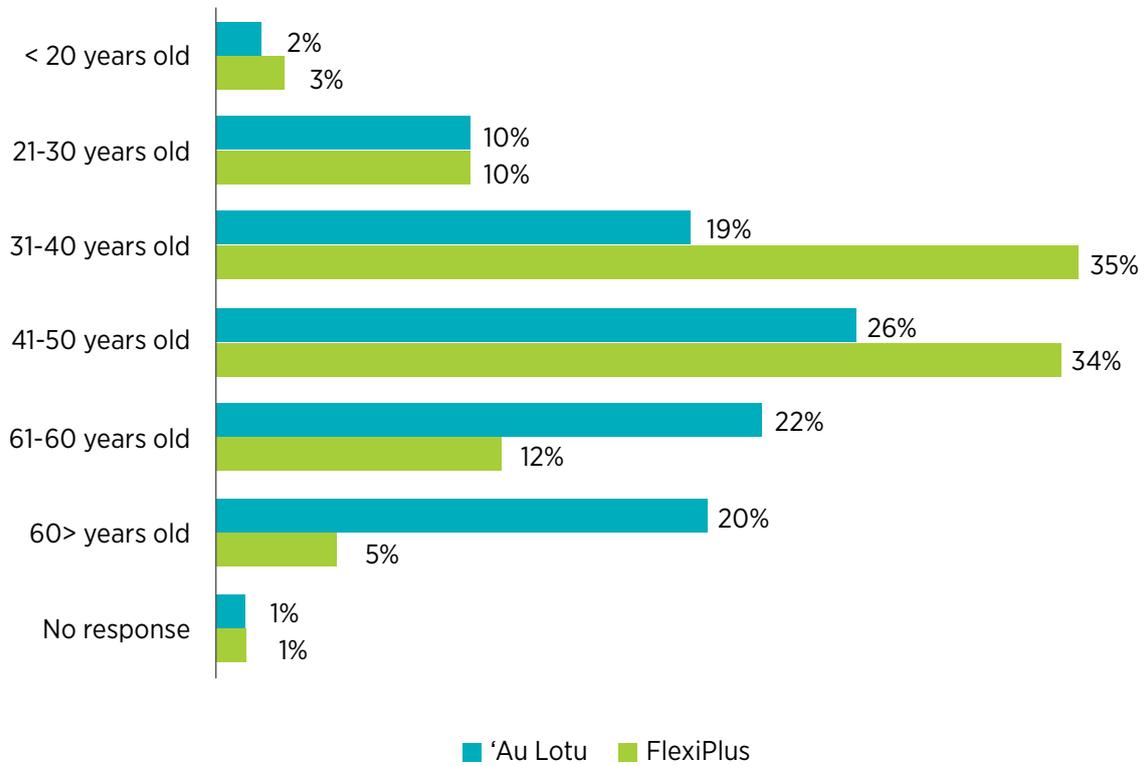
The PowerUP Families

Data from the 2017 PowerUP profiles indicates PowerUP families were typically large: family numbers ranged from an average of four or five children, up to 10. This factor indicates the potential for shared learnings by siblings at PowerUP and in their homes and opportunities for senior PowerUP students to mentor younger students. Shared learning between Pacific siblings and mixed-age peer groups is a common norm in Pacific families (Ritchie and Ritchie, 1979; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2013).

Mothers were the main parent attending PowerUP. Over two-thirds (71 percent) of the 44 talanoa profiles in 2018 were completed with a mother, 14 percent with a father, 9 percent with both a mother and a father, and 5 percent with a mother and sister. Undoubtedly, this spread of attendance by family members relates to which family member was available at that time. The 2019 source materials suggest more fathers were attending. It also suggests that fathers' attitudes and behaviours had changed as they came to understand how to help encourage and support their children's education.

Family data gathered in the FlexiPlus/'Au Lotu (2019) highlight the wide reach the programme was achieving, especially to Pacific-born parents. 'Au Lotu parents/adults were more likely to be Pacific-born (75 percent) compared with FlexiPlus parents/adults (58 percent), and nearly three-quarters of the children attending FlexiPlus were New Zealand-born (73 percent). By age, a broader range of adult family members attended the 'Au Lotu sessions: those attending FlexiPlus were a younger profile (see figure 7).

Figure 7: The Age Profile of Adults Attending ‘Au Lotu and FlexiPlus



Source: Unpublished PowerUP report, Oakden, 2019

FlexiPlus had a broad representation of primary and intermediate school-age groups and those attending secondary school. By age, the most prevalent learner group at FlexiPlus was the 15- to 16-year-old group (22 percent).

In response to other programme options introduced in the FlexiPlus/‘Au Lotu programme in 2019, some parents and providers said they would have liked to hold more sessions throughout the year to support learners. Most parents favoured starting PowerUP at the start of the year or having the programme spread throughout the year.

Start early in the year, as soon as school starts. With the fine weather, daylight savings, no winter sport commitments, parents and children would then, hopefully, be more encouraged [and] available to attend. And the day would not feel as long. Heading into winter, I have noticed how attendance numbers have dropped. Lessen the number of so-called barriers, be it cold weather, dark nights, which makes it feel like a longer day, if at all possible. Also starting earlier would give our children an extra boost of confidence heading into a new school year.

FlexiPlus parent, survey

Spread out the workshops within each term. Maybe four to six sessions per term, for example, term one: report/NCEA understanding; term two: preparing for interviews with teachers; term three: exam planning/careers/institutional pathway; term four: reflection and cover anything else.

'Au Lotu parent, survey

Some providers had difficulty ensuring the venue's Wi-Fi signal was strong enough to support the sessions presented. The coldness of some venues during the winter sessions was also raised.

We wanted to show our parents how to use the school portal app that shows how their children are doing in school, but we can't connect to the Wi-Fi here at church. Not everyone has access to computers. Some parents don't have up-to-date mobile phones as well to download the app onto their phones.

'Au Lotu provider, talanoa



During the winter, several providers, particularly those in churches, commented on the difficulty of heating [the] venues. At times, this impacted on programme delivery. Also, some providers thought some winter sessions ran too late for younger children. Maybe [we] need to reassess and make a change, for example, on winter evenings maybe [PowerUP is] too late for the younger children to stay out late.

FlexiPlus provider, talanoa



PART 3: WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE TO HAVE PARENTS AND CHILDREN LEARN TOGETHER?

Talanoa indicated a positive relationship between parents attending and children's motivation to learn and their discipline around completing tasks. In addition, parents and children learning together reinforced and sustained the transfer of learnings from PowerUP to family homes and the wider Pacific community. Parents said they enjoyed attending PowerUP. They also believed their children appreciated their presence.

[My children] definitely enjoy me coming with them to PowerUP. They show me their books with their work they did at PowerUP. I often go and sit in the classes just to listen to their mentors help them. It allows me to participate in their studies and know how to help them at home ... Their learning and outlook on learning has changed.

Parent, talanoa



My kids enjoy that I play a huge part in their learning. It also helps me to understand where they are in their education. The best thing about doing things together [PowerUP and then at home] is showing my kids that their learning is important to me; they know that I care about how well they do or not. And they see me being active in their education.

Parent, PowerUP 2017



[Support at PowerUP] has helped my children have higher expectations of themselves, knowing that they are not in it alone. As a family, we now have conversations about education, and I'm hearing from my kids how they want to keep trying to do their best with their education, in learning and gaining more.

Parent PowerUP 2017

He is more focused in [his] schoolwork and is going back during study break to catch up. This has been a major shift in his attitude towards education ... He gets great support from the PowerUP team and teachers, which helps him in his academic work ... I think, for my son, he is at that age where he would prefer not to have me around all the time – which I understand. But for programmes such as PowerUP, I know he doesn't mind me being here. I just have to make sure I give him his space to learn freely ... I just make sure that, after the session, we make time to debrief in the car.

Parent, talanoa

PowerUP's parent and learner sessions also meant that education discussions were not abstract or theoretical but offered parents the chance to relate the discussions and concepts discussed directly back to their children and in real time. Simply put, PowerUP parents and families learnt the habit and skill of talking about education together.

... an easy way for a family to learn together and support children in learning/education excellence and for children to receive amazing support by way of teachers, mentors, and support staff.

Parent, survey

In doing so, PowerUP's family-centred programme effectively acknowledged and maintained the "vā" between parents and children, that is, we are together and on the same page. In doing so, PowerUP contributed to a strengthening of home relationships and home-school relationships.

Parents' participation at PowerUP had also increased their understanding of the role and responsibility they had to support their children's educational endeavours – a movement along the ownership trajectory outlined in the PowerUP model of engagement. Some parents also viewed learning gains as positive “steps forward” for the whole Pacific community, including the empowerment possible when Pacific people worked together and “didn't put each other down”.

When parents attended, PowerUP learning conversations carried over almost seamlessly into their home environments.

At home we talk about what new knowledge Mum and Dad have learnt at PowerUP and what happened at PowerUP on the night. My parents [now] respond a lot if we talk about something that happened at school. This is because they have learnt a lot from PowerUp, and when we talk, they understand what we're trying to explain. Dad questions a lot about our school results, both academic and extracurricular activities, and our future careers.

Student, talanoa

Learning transfers into homes occurred even when parents couldn't attend the programme. An average of 57 percent of students said that they had started talking to their families about their studies. However, there were only slight differences between students whose parents had attended the programme with them in the last eight weeks (62 percent said they talked “a lot” at home, and 61 percent said they talked “a bit” at home) compared with those who said they talked about education with their parents at home even though their parents had not attended the programme. In other examples, a mother said her husband couldn't attend PowerUP due to his work hours. However, his first question when he got home after work was “What happened at PowerUP today?” And she and their

children would tell him. A young working mother whose children were minded by their grandmother after school said she carefully outlined to her children the homework they must do and packed the materials they would need. Then, she would explain to the grandmother what the children should be doing, just to make sure this time was used wisely.

Learners said having their parents come to PowerUP indicated the parents cared about them and understood how different their children's learning journeys were from their own. Having parents at PowerUP was also a strong reminder that learners were not alone in their educational journeying. A learner's beautiful tribute to a mother captured a total appreciation of the learning together PowerUP experience.

Mum keep coming. You are learning heaps from PowerUP, and you have really tried your best to help us with homework, even though you didn't study here in New Zealand. We love that you are learning with us, and we thank you for caring about our future.

Student, talanoa

Provider Voice

As early as 2017, PowerUP providers said PowerUP worked best when students attended with adult family members; that there was also a “quickness” in shifts in parents' understanding of school processes when parents attended and a swift transfer of learnings into homes. Providers also said most learners enjoyed seeing their parents at PowerUP, and one learner had told a provider that he “loved taking his work to show his parents, and this spurred him to work harder”.

The 'Au Lotu Parent-only Sessions (2019)

The introduction of the 'Au Lotu parent-only sessions was greeted with a mix of views. Some providers believed parent-only sessions were useful because adults could learn without being distracted, and sharing would be more open and honest when children were not present. Some providers and parents said they would have liked senior students to be present at some sessions because the information shared would have been “really beneficial for them”.

If it is specialised information for parents only it is OK – but [I] would really like my secondary school kids to attend some of the sessions with me, like NCEA information and so forth.

'Au Lotu parent, talanoa



It's great to have intermediate and high school students attending the workshops [with parents] as they will be able to pick up the discussions.

'Au Lotu provider, talanoa

Some parents viewed the 'Au Lotu sessions as like “bringing education back to the family”. However, they still regarded parents as the first point of contact in their child's learning.

Parents-only should be the first point of call. [I] understand that it takes a village to raise a child, however, a grandparent's point of view on learning may not be as driven as a parent's.

'Au Lotu parent, talanoa

Provider Voice – The Talanoa Ako

The availability of options is a clear mandate and call by parents for flexibility, because not all communities are the same.

Different models mean communities can select what is best for them and then deliver this in their Pacific language, or a pan-Pacific bi-lingual model.

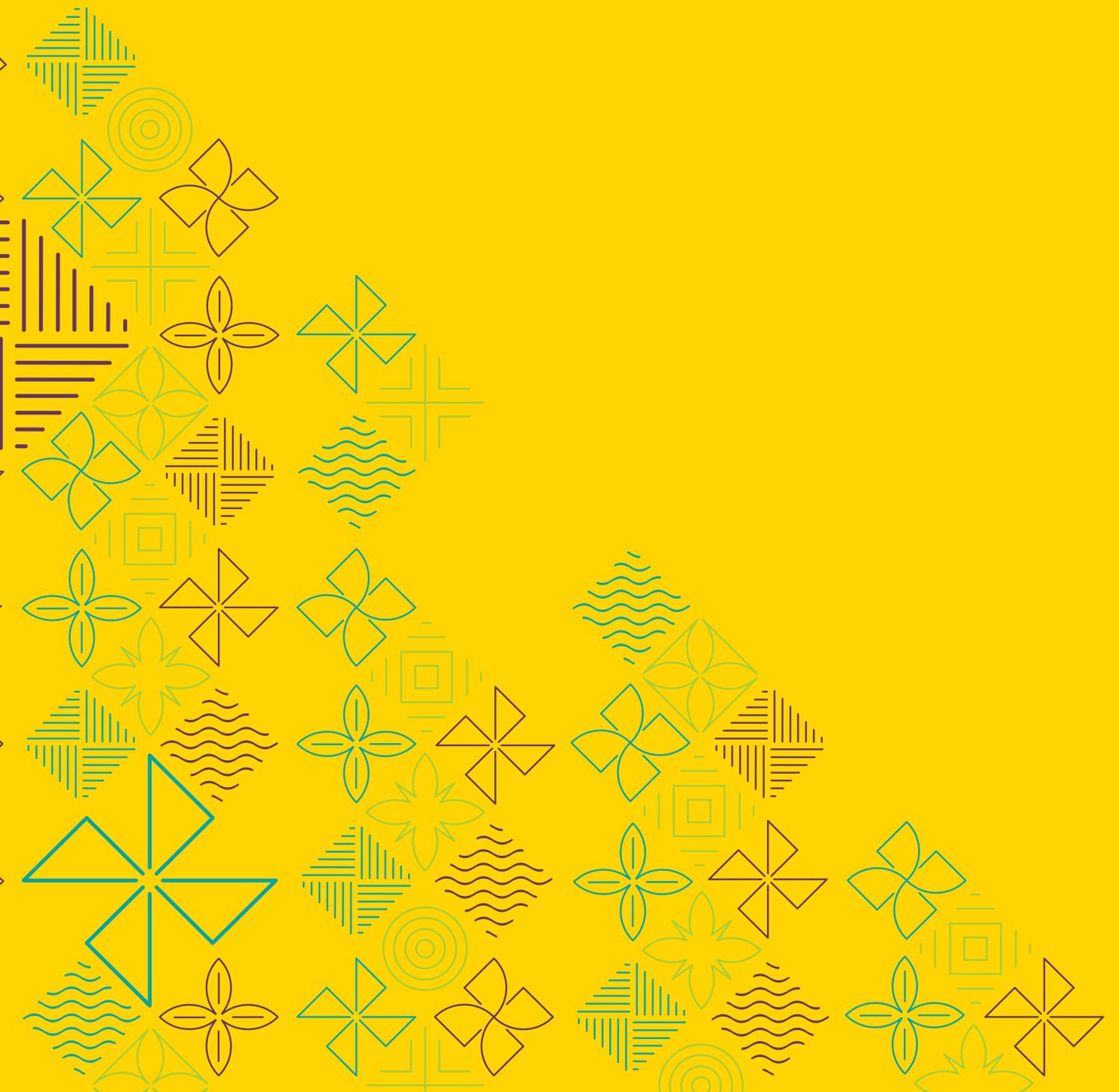
Talanoa Ako is truly flexible with providers operating as partners.

[It may be that] partners, that is, providers, start a parent-focused programme and then, as they build their capability, they look to deliver a family-focused programme. The latter involves greater staff and resourcing.



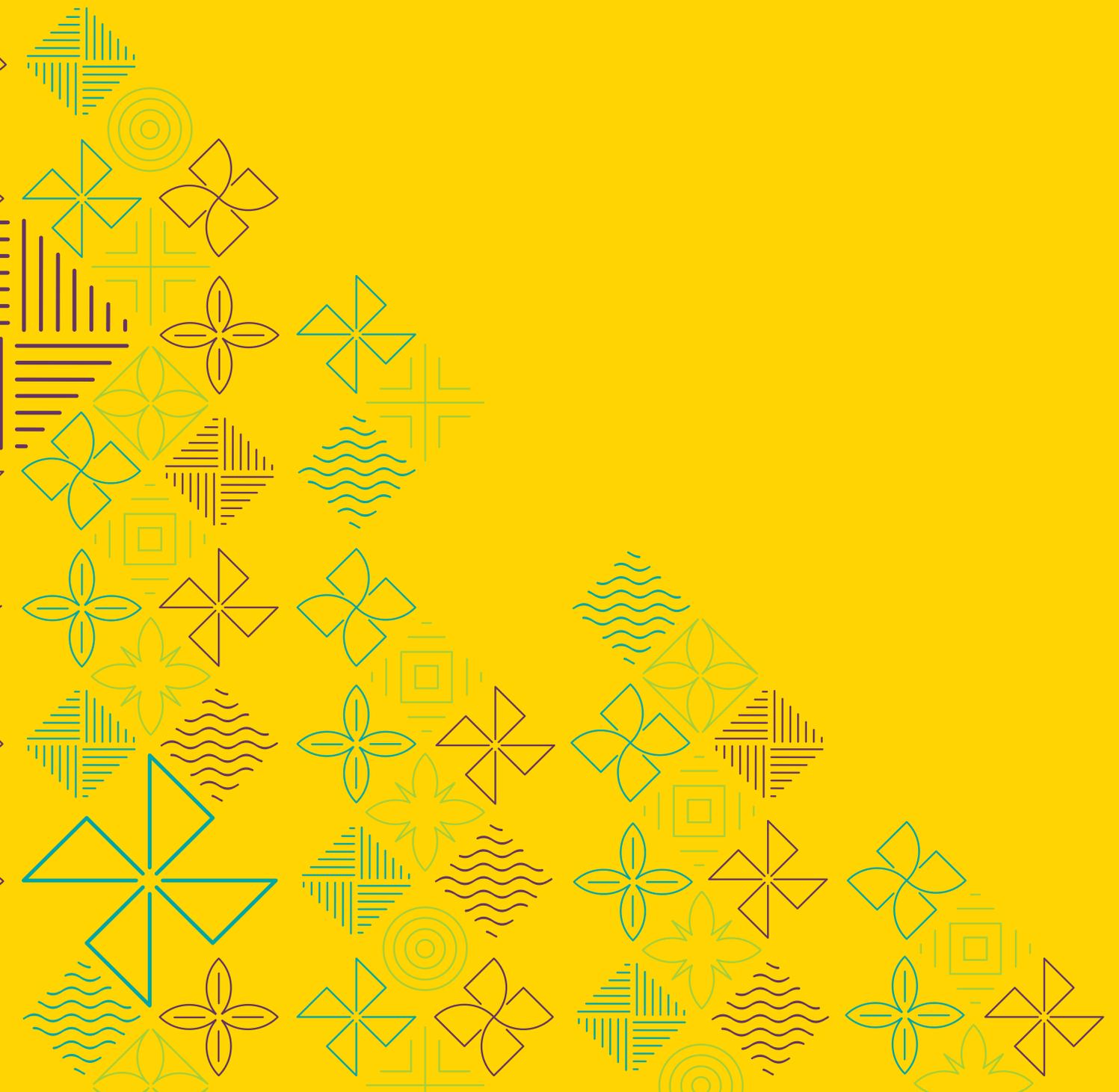
Chapter 3

PowerUP in Action



Chapter 3

PowerUP in Action





KEY POINTS

In the culturally safe PowerUP spaces, parents', and learners' agency in education deepened as they formed trusted relationships in learning with teachers and mentors, other parents and families, and adult speakers and resource people. Engaging in learning conversations: increased parents and learner's educational agency; reinforced the idea that "the power to change is in our hands"; added to and expanded Pacific funds of knowledge and practice from PowerUP to family homes and communities; and built a cadre of Pacific leaders in education.

Talking education was also a challenge to Pacific communicating norms, including the importance of questioning and acknowledging the contribution of the youth voice in co-constructing ways of thinking and working.



There are three parts to this chapter. Part 1 focuses on the PowerUP's *as and by Pacific* ways of working. Part 2 presents a helicopter view of major points that marked parents' and learners' PowerUP experiences over the four years reviewed in this synthesis (that is, the pan-Pacific programme years of 2016–18 and the FlexiPlus/'Au Lotu model tested in 2019). Part 3 discusses the question, "Who are the best teachers for Pacific students?"

PART 1: THE AS AND BY PACIFIC WAYS OF THINKING AND WORKING

Parents and learners used words such as "safe", "caring", "non-judgmental", "positive fun", and "cool" to describe the PowerUP environment, teachers, and other staff. Commonly repeated comments included "it's like learning as a family" and "it takes a village" as parents and learners shared their expectations and helped shape this community-led programme. They said they could see themselves in the PowerUP ways of working and felt safe, engaged, and energised in the buzzing PowerUP environment.

[PowerUP] provides a safe, fun, and warm learning environment for learners of all ages as well as the community. Secondary students are able to receive one-on-one learning time with specialised teachers and/or in smaller groups, or they find space to work on their assignments quietly. The atmosphere is always buzzing, with a mixture of highly engaged students and those who are there to "stress-release" (aka socialise). The light supper provided by PowerUP after every session is a bonus also.

Parent, survey

Community learning is totally a different environment and offers different experiences that our children can develop from. Their engagements, leadership skills, confidence, positive social relationship, trust, and feelings of belonging are all built up in the PowerUP gathering.

Parent, talanoa

It takes a village to raise a child; they need all the support they can get to excel in their studies. I learnt so many things in this community and really appreciated the help that I had.

Parent, talanoa

... [you're] not only coming to it because you're Pasifika, but [also because] it helps out with study preparation, sharing knowledge with other students, and much more.

Student, survey

The main standing points (tū mālosi) that marked the PowerUP approach included: the prioritisation of communication and questioning skills in every activity, Pacific visibility, the use of mixed-ability grouping, and a multi-task learning environment.

Communication and Questioning

The priority to questioning/inquiry learning was strongly embedded in every part of the PowerUP programme and activities. Teachers and staff constantly encouraged learners and parents to communicate when they were unsure, needed further information, or wanted to add a point. The programme demonstrated that questioning wasn't being rude, impolite, or *fia sili* (that is, acting above one's station) but was at the heart of learning and knowledge building. A pivotal learning for parents and learners was that you don't always have to be right, and there may not be one right answer. However, you must be able to explain and give reasons for your responses. As their ideas were critiqued and added to in the many learning conversations at PowerUP, parents and learners developed resilience and empathy in learning.

Hunter and Anthony's concepts of "friendly arguing" and "productive talk" (2011) relates well to how parents and learners learnt to "talk education" at PowerUP.

Box 5: Resilience and Empathy in Learning

Resilience and empathy are fundamental behaviours in learning and in dealing with adversity in the classroom and other contexts.

The definition of resilience used in the PowerUP evaluations was “the quality of being able to recover quickly or easily from, or resist being affected by, a misfortune, shock, illness, and robustness and adaptability”. In learning to consider issues from different perspectives, PowerUP parents and families developed resilience in learning. They became more positive, optimistic, and curious, and their self-control increased along with their “discipline to task completion”.

Empathy was defined as “The ability to understand and appreciate another person’s feelings, experience”. To build this capacity, the evaluators considered it necessary for parents and children to believe others can see them, understand them, and can feel what they are feeling.

Warranting further review: A significant number of comments and observations suggested that PowerUP learners experienced and learnt resilience as a group, that is, a community sharing and building knowledge and skills together rather than as individuals. Talanoa comments referenced a concern for the good of the “others”, that is, resilience as a community (“the bros”, Pacific peoples) rather than an individual good. As noted by one parent, “I see that the programme is helping my children, but it is also helping my community. This gives me confidence that I know something positive is happening within my kids and my community.” (Parent, talanoa)

Pacific Visible

Trusted relationships and role modelling were the glue and catalyst in the PowerUP programme. Each activity was a “learning other ways to learn” experience and one that aligned with Pacific family and community values. Parents and learners spoke about being seen, noticed, included, and cared for at PowerUP. In the safe and culturally secure PowerUP spaces, parents and learners gained confidence to share their ideas and to question and search for possible solutions.

Mixed Grouping

PowerUP activities were not ability grouped. Increasingly, research has been identifying the negative effects of ability grouping and streaming in education, as described by Gamoran in Alton-Lee (2017).

Ability grouping rarely benefits overall achievement, but it can contribute to inequality of achievement as students in high groups gain and low-group students fall further behind. The more rigid the tracking system, the more likely these patterns are to emerge ...

Gamoran, 1982

Closer to home, New Zealand educational expert John Hattie (2012) writes:

As typically implemented, the greatest effects of ability grouping are to disrupt the learning community, socially ostracise some learners, and compromise social skills ... Effects on minority groups are much more serious, with more minority students likely to be in lower ability classes, destined to low performance based on low expectations, and often with the least effective teachers ...

(page 328)

Multi-task Learning Environment

PowerUP provided a multi-task learning environment. The growing research on the strengths of a multi-task programme (as opposed to a one-size-fits-all approach) indicates that it enables parents and learners to make meaning in their own way and time; encourages diverse students to perform well because it engages different student strengths at different times (Bossert, 1979); enables “the valuing of each members knowledge and skills” (Nuttal, 1999); and has the potential to disrupt hierarchical patterns of interaction (Bossert, 1979).

PowerUP provided academic support for parents and learners through workshops and discussions on topics specific to their expressed needs, for example, ECE education, exam processes, and career pathways. Activities for primary and secondary school learners included one-on-ones and group work, and for ECE children there were stories and literacy and numeracy activities, including art and music. In this family-based programme, parents could observe teachers and mentors interacting with their children, and children could watch their parents engaging in programme activities as well.

The different activities are described in more detail below.

One-on-ones: you can't be invisible!

Parents were profoundly moved by the way PowerUP teachers, mentors, and other adults interacted with learners in the one-on-one and group sessions. They said teachers encouraged students to “question, question, question”, listened to and accepted their ideas, and then probed for further explanations – always in a respectful, positive, and non-judgemental manner. PowerUP parents also experienced the pride and self-belief gained by learners as they shared and debated their ideas in these exchanges.

Great interaction with teachers one to one [and] parents' sharing time. Fantastic to have a space weekly to discuss and receive clarity [around] issues that are not accessible at school.

Parent, survey

A major challenge (and benefit) of the one-on-ones for learners was that they couldn't be invisible (as some said they were in schools). They were expected to engage in learning conversations with PowerUP teachers and other adults and learners. In PowerUP's multi-task learning environment, learners learnt to engage in learning. They learnt study skills and to bring discipline to task, the joys of completing assignments (and to a good standard), and self-belief that “I can achieve in my own pace and time”.

PowerUP is an opportunity for me and my siblings to come and use the tutors here for help and to understand schoolwork that teachers [at school] have failed to explain.

Year 12 student, survey

... I learn a lot of new things that I would say [I] haven't heard of before. Therefore, when I go back to school, I understand everything because of the help I get at PowerUP.

Student, survey

I always leave PowerUP with all my questions answered and feeling confident about the subject.

Student, survey

Time to catch up with all assignments, to complete assignments, and then, when I go back to school, I understand ... I'm on track.

Student, survey



Monafen's Vest

Illustration by [unreadable]

© [unreadable]

Learners said the PowerUP teachers were approachable and proceeded with the learning at a comfortable pace.

I also find the teachers and mentors very helpful and friendly. Teachers are more approachable here.

Student, talanoa



Teachers at PowerUP help and explain things in a way I enjoy, so it makes it easier to do my revision and less boring.

Student, talanoa



My teacher [at PowerUP] assists me where she can see I need help, for example, helping me read words that I don't understand. It's easier learning [at PowerUP than at school] – they help us and teach us at our own pace. At school, they are more strict on us. I enjoy learning [at PowerUP] together with my peers at our own pace. And it's good that we feel comfortable asking our teacher any questions ... I improved my reading at PowerUP. I got four out of five in my reading assignment that my mentors and teacher helped me with at PowerUP.

Student, talanoa



Like ... they slow it down. Because I'm not a very fast learner, so they break it down for me ... they wait until I get it. At school, because the teachers have lots of kids, they have to kind of forget about slow learners like me and just move on, and then I don't get it.

Student, survey

Workshops and group work: “talking education”

Many relationships in learning were formed at PowerUP, for example, parents with the children, teachers and mentors, and other parents. Parents described the relaxed and open sharing of ideas in the parents' workshops as a revelation and that their workshops were vastly different from other groups they belonged to (mainly family and church groups) because the PowerUP workshops focused directly on education.

“Talking education” with other parents, teachers, and programme staff at PowerUP was a new experience for most parents and one they came to appreciate. The use of Pacific languages made these knowledge-sharing conversations so much easier, enjoyable, and finely nuanced.

A big part of PowerUP for me as a parent is having a better understanding of the education system, especially because English is not my first language. This has helped me understand more about the level my child is at and [upcoming] NCEA. This helps me to be more of a help to my child.

Parent, talanoa

Participating in PowerUP's parents' workshops helped break down barriers some parents felt in discussing their children's education with others. Parents who had initially been shy (mā) about discussing their concerns quickly realised that other parents held similar fears – and sometimes answers! In their workshops especially, parents gained an appreciation that they were not alone in their endeavours: there was an abundance of knowledge and support that they could draw on.

The parents' workshop gives us a lot of information to [help us] understand the curriculum. I am now confident to support my children in their studies.

Parent, survey

Getting to talk with other parents, having a laugh with other parents, listening to examples of how other parents deal with issues.

Parent, survey



I share with them how the PowerUP helps my children in their learning and education, not only the kids, but for me, the mother, too.

Parent, talanoa



For me, it has been [about] surrounding myself with likeminded mothers who come and share their journey. We all come together and debrief about the highs and lows of the week and ways to help support our families. I feel empowered when I see that the programme is helping my children – and also my community. This gives me confidence that I know something positive is happening within my kids and my community.

Parent, talanoa

At PowerUP parents also witnessed their children become more open and relaxed around sharing their ideas with others – in doing so, learners were reducing their fear of being made fun of.

PowerUP is a great environment to be in – it brings positive vibes. It has brought new friendships (for my children) that are different from [those they have at] school – they enjoy the relationships with other children they don't normally associate with. Our children are more confident [about working] alongside their peers. They share their ideas and concentrate with their peers so that they not only learn from the teachers but also from one another.

Parent, talanoa

I enjoy working with other students from different schools. We are able to share our experiences with the families and what it means to be a student now. I meet new people every week and love sharing about our learning and our challenges as well.

Student, talanoa

Inspirational speakers: Pacific role models

Storytelling is a major knowledge sharing activity and recreation in Pacific communities. Listening to presentations by prominent Pacific speakers was a highly motivating experience for PowerUP parents and learners and added to their funds of knowledge. Parents and learners could see themselves in these tales of resilience – such as discussions about the steps forward, setbacks along the way, and a rethinking of the best way to proceed and then a going forward again. Speakers also shared options for career pathways that parents and children had never considered nor thought possible. They were also generous in sharing their time and contact details, thus opening further pathways and networks for PowerUP parents and learners. That people connect and make meaning in their own way is evidenced in the different reactions to one of the PowerUP presentations.

With my baby at ECE level, we encourage play and learning. There was a workshop at PowerUP where a lady came in and explained how the ECE students helped design an app in the Sāmoan language. I was so amazed. This helped me with supporting imagination. My daughter loves to draw. Before PowerUP, [I saw] her drawing as just added rubbish. But now, I actually talk with her and ask her to explain her drawing – why she drew the pictures. It has helped me identifying colours, objects, and even some words.

Parent, talanoa

At PowerUP we had a speaker come in and talk about coding. It was so cool because this is what we do at school too. It was interesting how she displayed this so we could understand it better. It was so cool to know that the guest speaker works at the preschool and her preschoolers helped develop an app to help little kids read and write and learn in the Samoan language. I am into the whole animation thing, and I am an artist too and want to make my own cartoon show one day.

Student, talanoa

Shared meals - laughter, bonding, and reinforcing community

The PowerUP custom of sharing a meal together at the end or start of the session fitted Pacific values of hospitality and hosting. This was also a practical way of enabling parents/adults to attend when they might otherwise have needed to stay home to prepare the evening meal. PowerUP parents and families enjoyed the shared meals. And, as in the Pacific way, new ideas and lessons learnt were challenged and clarified and set against remembrances of their own education journeys in discussions during the meals. Providers said sharing meals together was the right way to start or close PowerUP sessions. A parent referred to PowerUP as their “family date night”.

Provider Voice

Food is a powerful way of bringing our people together; they gather around the table and share food, stories, and laughter in an informal environment. Providing meals encouraged participation at PowerUP and was both culturally appropriate and sensible. Parents and children said they enjoyed eating with other families. Many stated, “We don’t have to worry about food on Wednesday night” – they knew that they were supported in education and also in nutrition.

PowerUP provided resources such as pens and reading books for all students, and materials such as toys, play dough, puzzles, and blocks for ECE learners. All learners were provided with workbooks, lesson worksheets, and workshop information; tutors recorded comments in these workbooks, and learners and parents were encouraged to add their own feedback. The provision of these resources ensured a level playing field for PowerUP learners and facilitated a sustained transfer of lessons learnt at PowerUP into homes. Transport was also provided for families as needed, and PowerUP staff made a point of linking families into other services, such as food banks and health networks. Many PowerUP families did not have access to internet, and so the availability of Wi-Fi at PowerUP stations was written into provider’s contractual arrangements. These and other actions reinforced relationships in learning between PowerUP staff and PowerUP families and communities.

Parents described PowerUP as an empowering, inspirational, and transformative experience and one that embedded and reinforced Pacific values of family, faith, and community.

Some PowerUP parents joined together to form their own education focus groups; others were recruited to leadership roles in other community national education networks and agencies. Some parents stood successfully for school leadership roles, such as the Board of Trustees, and others enrolled in tertiary study.

PART 2: GETTING TO THE ESSENCE OF THE PACIFIC EDUCATION JOURNEY

Part 2 presents an overarching picture of the strengths that marked PowerUP parents' and learners' learning journeys, with a focus on what worked at PowerUP and why. While presented separately, these points are mutually reinforcing and evidence "the interface between the social world and the cognitive processes of students as a critical influence on student achievement" (Alton Lee, 2003, page 25).¹⁶

We Can See Ourselves in Education

As has been noted, PowerUP was the first time most parents and families had been the majority in an educational programme. PowerUP was a place where they could stand together as Pacific people: be themselves and not have to worry about fitting into a learning environment that might feel foreign or uncomfortable to them. PowerUP gave parents and learners many and varied opportunities to engage in education and talk education.

I found that I was more comfortable with my own people. And PowerUP is somewhere where we can express ourselves through homework and also through coming together every Monday.

Secondary school student, survey

The feelings of safety and trusted relationships that encompassed the spaces acted as a protective shield against risk-taking at PowerUP and as a strategy to deal with cultural bias and racism (see Chapter 5: The Five Themes of Pacific Culturally Safe Learning Spaces). In the PowerUP learning spaces, parents and families drew on their collective strengths as Pacific peoples: the "we go together", rather than the "I".

The environment is safe, reliable, and encouraging. Being inspired and motivated by guest speakers, staff/teachers who go the extra mile, relationships built with everyone, support in schoolwork and family wellbeing.

Parent, talanoa



[PowerUP] is run in a laidback and friendly atmosphere, with a multicultural environment. Teachers, leaders, and mentors provide great leadership skills and are awesome role models to our children; that is why we take them to PowerUP every week.

Parent, talanoa

Parents felt PowerUP was run "like a family" and that Pacific values of faith and family and identity security were strongly embedded in the programme's ways of working and thinking.

I feel that PowerUP meets these needs in the way we cater not only for the child but also for the whole family, not only for the academic need but also covering the physical, social, faith. At PowerUP, there is more opportunity for engagement – [the learners] become students who not only learn academically but are also prepared socially and in faith-based values.

Parent, talanoa



... setting rules and regulations, setting the culture for them ... PowerUP gives the kids a sense of identity ...

Parent, talanoa

¹⁶ See also the socio-cultural theories of learning: that interpersonal and intellectual learnings are interdependent and continue to remain so through life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bruner, 1997; Vygotsky, 1978).

For many, the programme inspired a revaluing, relearning (in some cases), and an enrichment of Pacific funds of knowledge. For example, while both the FlexiPlus and 'Au Lotu parents stated identity, language, and culture were programme strengths, they gave different reasons for this belief (see Figure 8).

For 'Au Lotu parents, the programme had been instrumental in strengthening relationships between older and younger parents in “ethnic-specific and faith-based ways”. The 'Au Lotu parents gave high rates for the programme’s spiritual/faith and church involvement high (82 percent), the use of Pacific language (65 percent), and the fact that sessions were run by Pacific staff (65 percent). The use of mother tongue was another powerful enabler for those who were not fluent English speakers to engage in discussions.

[The] church is a big part of my child's life and her upbringing. I find a combination of her church values and cultural values are something she can use in her education ... It is most definitely run in a Pacific way. It is held in [a] church where God is the centre.

'Au Lotu parent, talanoa

The facilitators spoke in our mother language. There will be a few English words that we may get stuck on, and [this] will be brought to the attention of the facilitators who will break down [the word] until there is a full understanding.

'Au Lotu parent, talanoa

FlexiPlus parents valued the ways PowerUP offered Pacific families the opportunity to mix with “other people like us” and to participate in Pacific language and cultural traditions. PowerUP was highly valued in rural areas, where Pacific families are often a minority. FlexiPlus parents also believed the programme acted as a bridge between older and younger generations and between Pacific-born and New Zealand-born families. They rated learning together as a family alongside their children and with other Pacific families highly.

Our Pacific ways of family support and encouragement are relevant in promoting learning for the children. It also promotes transparency, inclusiveness, and shared responsibility to ensure no one lacks support in their learning.

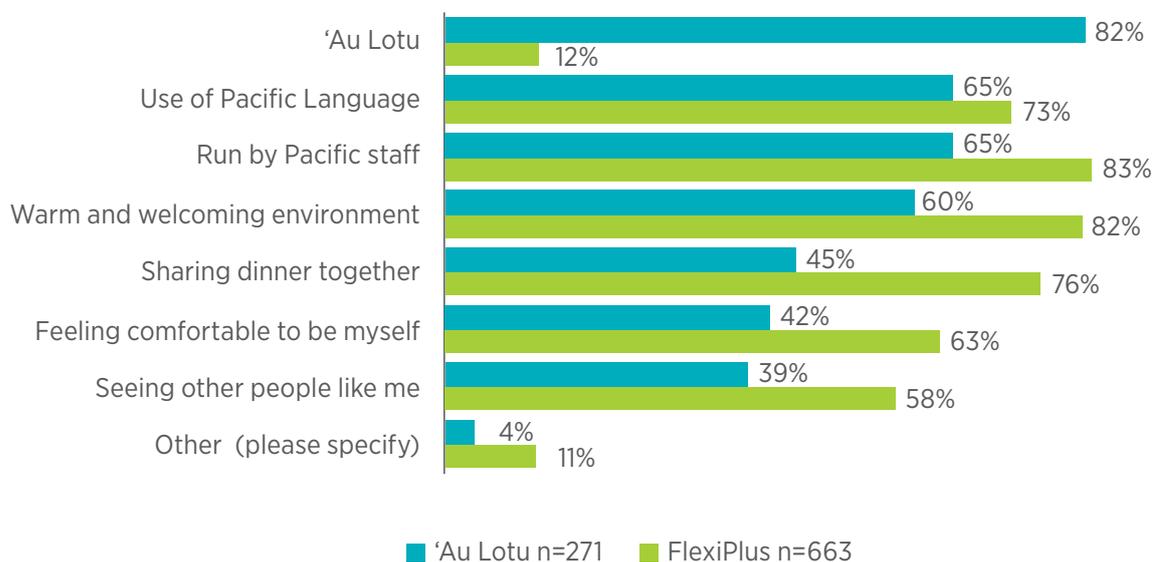
FlexiPlus parent, Talanoa

Knowing that we go along with our children to learn ourselves. And [we are] giving them the opportunity to feel confident about themselves in their PowerUP learning environment and to be more aware and confident of their Pasifika fānau [Pacific family]. It's important for our children to have the sense of being connected, not only to their Māori heritage but to their Pacific Islands side too.

FlexiPlus parent, talanoa

Figure 8 presents 'Au Lotu and FlexiPlus views of the main things that made PowerPlus feel Pacific.

Figure 8: The Main Things that Made PowerPlus Feel Pacific



Source: Unpublished PowerUP report, 2019

Other perspectives of the value and valuing of the PowerUP *as and by Pacific* programme are evidenced in PowerUP evaluation reports.



Box 6: The Inclusion of Pacific Funds of Knowledge Spurs Agency

Three of the six items listed as important in the 2016 PowerUP report featured Pacific funds of knowledge. These were: PowerUP's use of Pacific languages, its use of Pasifika champions and trusted family members to mobilise parents and families, and the practice of sharing a meal together.

In 2017, students described PowerUP as a place 1) that was run in a Pacific way 2) where students were visible and 3) that provided access to high-quality teachers.

Learners also said that the programme had built their faith and self-belief that they could achieve academically and on a par with non-Pacific students:

We have faith in ourselves that we can achieve our academic goals and future studies to get our future careers or jobs. We believe we can be as high achievers as other ethnicities if we commit to our educational purposes. (Student, talanoa)

In the 2018 summative evaluation reports (Oakden), learners stated emphatically that irrespective of whether the school or classroom climate was favourable towards them, at PowerUP, they had learnt to work and succeed in mainstream education settings and developed greater confidence that they could be successful in learning. Notably, the five themes of culturally safe Pacific learning spaces, which were outlined in the 2018 report, featured a robust discussion of cultural bias and racism.

Voice in Education and Knowing Your Voice Counts

Many reports highlight the strength of Pacific “voice”, as demonstrated, for example, in ceremonial events, in the practice of consensus decision-making and in the confidence of the youth voices shared in White Sunday celebrations. Reports also support that, in Pacific families, silence is seen to be a good behaviour and arguing is bad behaviour. As a consequence, Pacific people have fewer opportunities to master the art of questioning and inquiry, which are at the heart of learning and knowledge building. (Faalau, 2011; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014). The PowerUP programme brought Pacific parents' and learners' voices and funds of knowledge into education. In turn, this had an empowering spiralling impact on their agency in education.

Learning to talk education in the PowerUP programme:

1. encouraged parents to share their concerns with people who were not members of their family and kinship groups and to listen and consider the views raised by other parents and PowerUP staff and to contribute their own views – as in the saying “it takes a village”, parents learnt to explore and draw on the knowledge around them in productive talk
2. spurred parents' understanding and affirmation of their role in supporting their children to achieve their fullest education potential, in partnership with schools
3. supported parents to be more deliberate, informed, and confident in their engagement with schools and teachers.

Source data from 2016 shows 81 percent of PowerUP parents said they had gained knowledge of their role in supporting each of their children in education, and 77 percent said they could take a leadership role in setting conditions for and reprioritising learning to make it a family focus. In 2018, most PowerUP parents reported that they knew what they could expect from schools and how to navigate education and school processes. They were happy to engage with schools for positive but also challenging conversations.

[PowerUP has given us confidence in] communicating as much as possible with the school - by emailing the teachers or ringing up the office for more information. If we can do our part at home and help out where we can, then we are confident that our girls will be more confident at school and that they know we are working together with them to achieve their goals.

Parent, talanoa

PowerUP was a powerful reminder that education is a lifelong journey and one that requires careful planning and choices along the way, for example, to realistically assess “Where am I now? What do I hope to achieve? and What am I prepared to do to achieve those goals?”.

Education is a high priority in our family. PowerUP has helped to affirm what we believe to be a strong value. Helped unpack report reading, the importance of knowing right subject choices and the responsibilities/partnerships we (us and the school) play with our children. For success to happen for our children, we have to know the education system well and not be afraid to ask questions.

Parent, case study

Since the session with Careers New Zealand, I noticed that they are talking more of the future careers ... For example, the older girl, when she was in year 12, she was dreaming of becoming a lawyer ... In year 13, she [said she] wants to do work in the tourism industry, but now, since the PowerUP session ... she said “Mum, I am going to be a teacher” ... As a parent, we just support them.

Parent profile



PowerUP helps parents understand how important it is for our kids to succeed in school and what us parents need to do to support our kids. Attending PowerUP helps me understand how important NCEA credits are and how they can be used.

Parent, talanoa

The valuing of children’s voices

The main PowerUP learnings for students were that they were expected to engage in learning conversations – they could not be silent. In the safe and trusted PowerUP spaces, students (who initially had found teachers’ use of questioning to be disquieting) learnt resilience and empathy as their ideas were debated and challenged. They gained confidence in asking questions and knew their questions would be listened to and respected.

The teachers at PowerUP, the way they do it, it’s kind of like asking me the same question but in a different way [than the teachers at school] until I understand.

Student, talanoa



Three key things I have learnt in the last few weeks at PowerUP are ... to talk with my teacher... to learn together with the other kids here ... working with the other kids is fun because we help each other out ... to ask for help when I need it and not be shy. Sometimes, I don’t like talking to anyone or if anyone looks at my work. But now it’s a little easier to ask for help.

Student, talanoa

Teachers Who Are Highly Skilled Culturally and Academically

Parents believed PowerUP teachers were highly skilled, both culturally and academically. They said the PowerUP teachers understood Pacific languages and cultural ways, identified with students' learning journeys, were awesome role models of achievement, and demonstrated a spirit of tautua (service) in going the extra mile to support students' educational success. Stories shared demonstrated quite compellingly the powerful effect of the seemingly little words and acts by PowerUP teachers on students' attitudes to learning and their learning behaviours.

When my child walks in ... they know his name, they know the course he is taking and where he's at.

Parent, talanoa

Overall, if you have a teacher [who] cares for the child's learning, it shows in the change of attitude, not even in their school marks but in their attitude; in their effort to try.

Parent, talanoa

Parents also believed PowerUP teachers were experienced, educationally astute, and had great leadership skills. They were down-to-earth and firm and ruthless in finding ways to support learners to understand challenging concepts and processes. PowerUP teachers challenged learners to question, explain, and justify their responses and, equally importantly, they recognised children's learning efforts.

The teachers are so experienced and know their material so well that it is no wonder the kids love coming here. [Learning at PowerUP] is different in a way [from school]. PowerUP is more one-on-one, and the effort [the children put in] is recognised in every session.

Parent, talanoa

My boys have a good relationship with the teachers and students at PowerUP – being comfortable to ask questions and having someone explain things to them from a ground level. Now, they begin to love being at school because they understand.

Parent, talanoa

My children enjoy the teachers in the PowerStation because they always ask to help us. Learning in the PowerStation is like learning together as a family.

Parent, talanoa

One thing that I have seen in my [year 1 son's] learning is his reading with the assistance of the PowerUP teacher. We have recognised more interest in reading [from him], especially when the attention is focused on his reading at our PowerUP session and then there is a follow-up at home. [My son] feels supported to read, and the extra support with someone he knows and trusts has been good for him.

Parent, talanoa

An indication of the ways teachers set the tenor and tone of the buzzing PowerUP learning environments are captured in this parent's words.

... the genuine interest from other educators that they don't just have contact with and just being in such a positive space with passionate people who are Pacific and mostly Cook Islands is amazing. I am just glad we have such a programme. I am thankful to [the organisation] who just provide all of the other stuff around it, the mentors, transport, food, and other resources, and my parents' group, which is led by [name] who is so down to Earth but really firm about encouraging our children to succeed. She is ruthless. It really shows how the school, family, and community can work so well together.

Parent, talanoa

In sum, the approaches used by PowerUP teachers supported learners' wellbeing, built their social and emotional competencies and resilience, and in doing so, increased their capabilities for productive participation in heterogenous groups (see Alton-Lee, 2017, page 12).

Transfer of Relationships in Learning to Homes, Schools, and Communities

Culturally sustaining pedagogy is the development of respectful, reciprocal relationships between educators, students and their families, and communities.

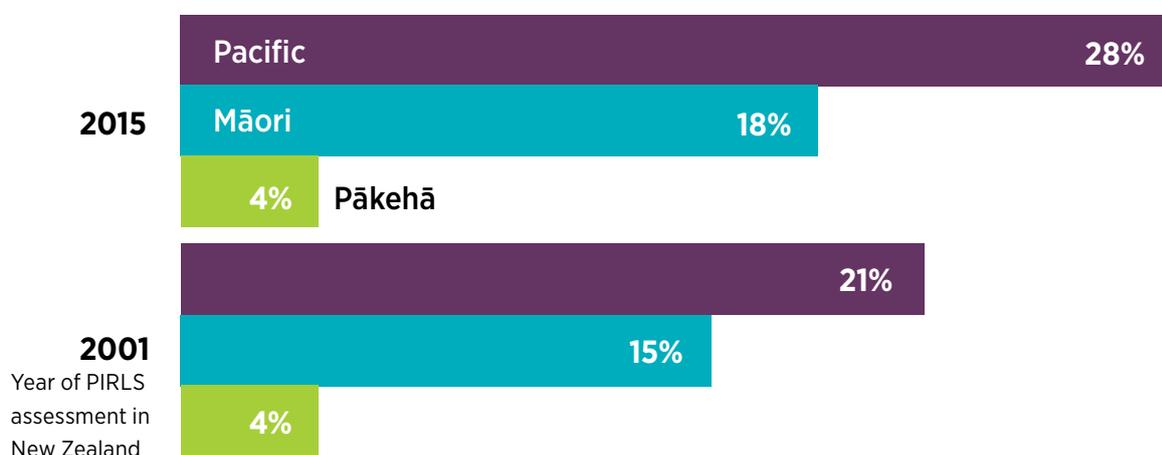
Hunter et al., 2020

The PowerUP strategy of parents and students learning together brought home and family lives together and was a crucial factor in smoothing the transfer of lessons learnt at PowerUP into homes, families, and communities. The PowerUP priority of getting books and other educational materials into PowerUP homes in meaningful ways was another pivotal strategy, given the robust relationship between the number of books in homes and educational success (see Figure 9).

PowerUP family sizes ranged in number from 5 to 12 children and represented ECE through to senior secondary school learners. This powerfully reinforced the potential for knowledge sharing within families.

Figure 9: The Relationship between Books in Homes and Education Progress

Over time, the proportion of Māori and Pacific children with 10 or fewer books in the home has grown disproportionately compared to Pākehā children



Ministry of Education. (2020). *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study. New Zealand analysis for 2001 and 2015. Year 5 students with 10 or fewer books at home by ethnicity*



The strong and warm relationships generated in the PowerUP learning spaces increased personal and family agency and set in motion a spiralling train of learning gains, which in turn, impacted family feelings of unity (“we are on the education road together”) and wellbeing.

... there has been encouragement from my son’s school – very punctual, school reports have been very encouraging. PowerUP has really had a big influence on my son’s learning in the last two years. For me, attending PowerUP gives me the motivation to continue encouraging my son like they do at PowerUP. So, it’s not just being done at PowerUP but also in our home. I’m also very proud of the progress that my son [is making] ... Some changes that have impacted my son are: he’s more independent, simple things, like, I no longer have to wake him up each morning for school, he just gets up and gets ready on his own. Changes at school are little improvements in his school report. He’s a creative thinker, which has been a highlight through his school report. He’s very respectful of his teachers and other students. He’s doing well and improving in his studies.

Parent, talanoa

Families gained considerable pride when their children experienced success in education.

I know our child looks forward to PowerUP every week. We also get to see his performance there first hand at PowerUP every week ... during the sharing time at the end of each session. It helps to make it normal for our children to share, and we parents have to share, too. We enjoy our time at PowerUP.

Parent, talanoa

As learners and families experienced more success in learning, they became less stressed and enjoyed learning more. Family life became more peaceful as arguments about educational concerns decreased. Parents also noticed positive changes in their children’s behaviours at school and at church. Education became a topic of conversation in family homes.

We have recently started more family time on Mondays ... prayer time, we discuss school stuff, what their daily life [is] like. My wife and I see this as a way of strengthening our family with education. We are able to help each other out and support each other with the things that we have taken away from PowerUP.

Parent, talanoa



More happy because my children are more reliable and confident in doing their chores at home, schoolwork, and whatever they [are] involve[d] in our church youth society. There’s no longer complaints and laziness in doing their schoolwork, no more calling from school to inform me [Dad] about any troubles for my boys!

Parent, talanoa

Family routines were reorganised to enable learners time and resources for study. And, in some instances, parents gave precedence to children’s study (before exams for instance) ahead of family and church commitments.

We get to communicate more and understand each other and how to work and help each other. I do not expect them to attend any church or youth programme during the weekdays or even an extended family occasion at [the] weekend, especially when they have to prepare and complete assignments or schoolwork. My children are more confident about talking to me about their schoolwork and letting me know if they need not to attend a church fakalavelave.

Parent, talanoa

Parents also said they tried new family experiences together, such as visits to the library, art galleries, and museums. Table 9 summarises changes in parents' and family adults' attitudes to learning as a result of attending PowerUP.

Table 9: Reported Changes in Pacific Parents' and Family Adults' Attitudes to Learning

Before PowerUP	After PowerUP
Parents came to PowerUP with their knowledge of their families and communities.	Parents contribute and negotiate their Pacific "baskets of knowledge" with academic and other funds of knowledge. Parents and learners affirm the value and relevance of Pacific knowledge in education.
Parents were reluctant to talk about their children's education with other people.	Parents learn to share their hopes and concerns with other likeminded parents, providers, and teachers. In doing so, parents learnt they are not alone in their concerns and identify potential solutions, drawing on the knowledge around them. Parents learn that education is a lifelong journey that begins in the early years. They also learn the importance of planning and choices, which will open rather than reduce options.
Parents were unclear about educational processes and their role in education in partnership with schools.	Parents affirm their rightful role in their children's education in partnership with schools. They develop capabilities to fulfil this role and develop relationships with other people and resources to support family learning journeys. Opportunities open for the parents to take on leadership roles, education, or employment.
Many parents considered that it was the school's role to educate their children and they trusted the educators to do this professionally.	Education become a topic of conversation in family homes and communities for the very first time.

Source: Adapted from Oakden, 2017.

PART 3: WHO ARE THE BEST TEACHERS FOR PACIFIC LEARNERS?

The PowerUp programme supported using the best available teachers. PowerUP parents strongly believed that having Pacific teachers in schools was crucial for Pacific parents and for Pacific learners. In schools where there were few or no Pacific teachers, learners and parents missed out on opportunities to engage with educational role models who understood their cultural perspectives and funds of knowledge. They were also denied the protective elements that Pacific teachers afforded Pacific learners.

I think another step would be to hire more Pasifika teachers; classrooms equipped with more Pasifika resources.

Parent, talanoa

A student expressed a different view: that you didn't need to be Pacific to be a good teacher for Pacific students; cultural respect and sensitivity were the main qualities teachers needed, and the non-Pacific PowerUP teachers and parents they had worked with had supported them in culturally secure ways. Importantly, this learner then described working with non-Pacific teachers as a strength that reinforced their Pacific values of respect and taking care of each other. In other words, it was the Pacific learners who had been culturally responsive.

In this programme, we have our parents and teachers of non-Pasifika descent working with us. We work together and learn from each other by sharing our views and looking at best ways to understand them in schools. This makes us feel very proud to be more culturally sensitive and respecting others and elders in our schools. We feel the importance of sharing and taking care of one another and, above all, respecting our teachers no matter where they come from.

Student, talanoa

A learner supported the need for more Pacific teachers but also emphasised the importance of upskilling non-Pacific teachers' expertise to engage with Pacific learners.

We think our schools should employ more Pasifika teachers who could understand Pasifika students better. We also think non-Pasifika teachers should attend some Pasifika cultural exchange programmes to learn and understand our Pasifika culture and way of life, our patterns of behaviour, and how best to deal with them in a Pasifika approach.

Student, talanoa

This learner voice is a critically astute view, given estimates that Pacific teachers form just 3 percent of New Zealand's teaching population, and just over 8 percent of Pacific teachers work in ECE settings (Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2010).

Provider Voice: Teachers Who are Culturally and Academically Skilled

Providers believed that teachers participating in the PowerUP programme had grown knowledge and skills in culturally responsive teaching.

Even those skilled in working with Pacific families said they had learnt by seeing families working together – how parents wanted their children to succeed at school, the role parents could play in supporting their children in education, how Pacific communities work, and how their Pacific students react in their community settings.

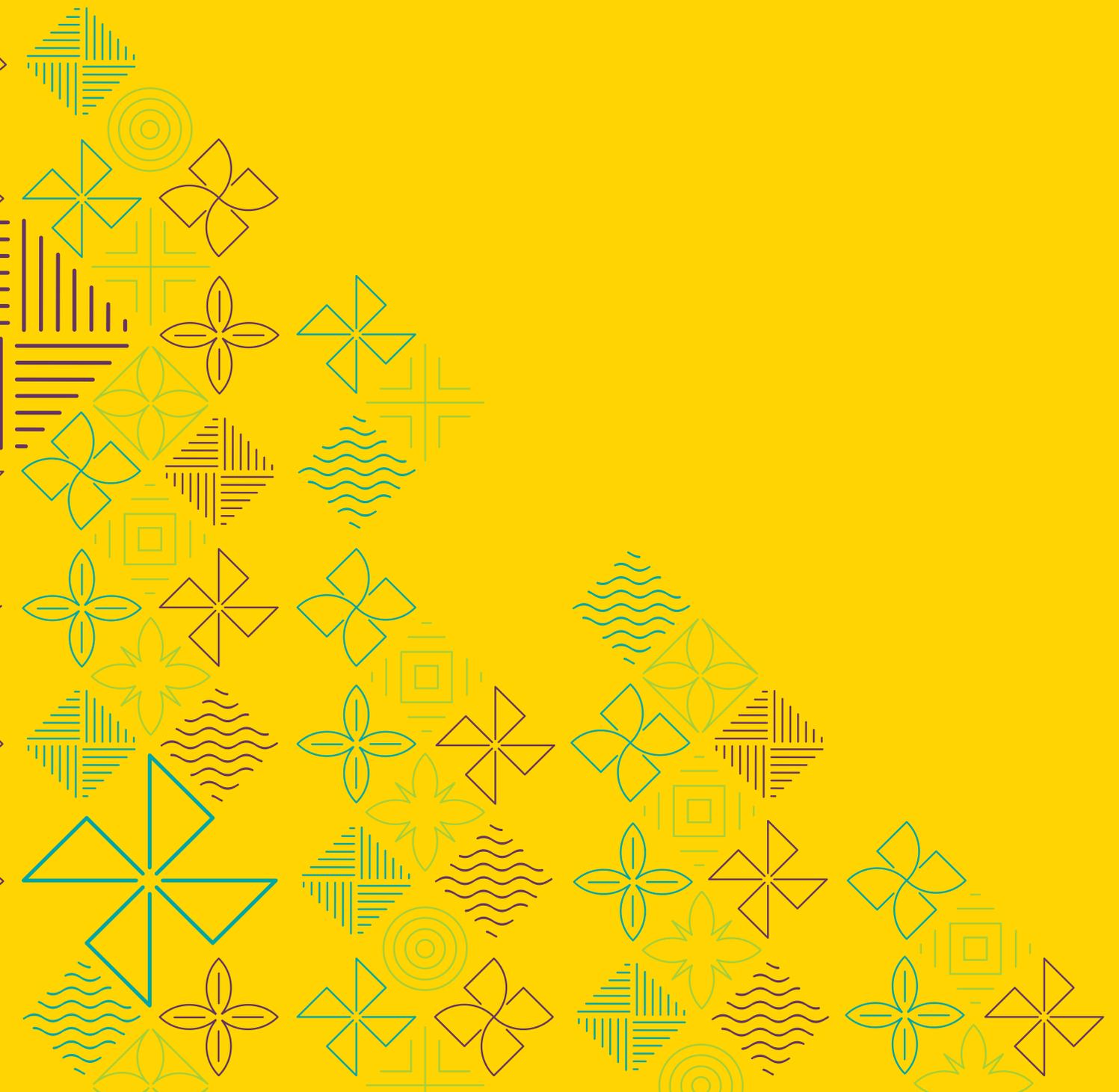
PowerUP had provided the opportunity for non-Pacific staff to work with Pacific students in a different environment. They had seen Pacific customs and practices that they had not necessarily witnessed at their own school (such as the use of Pacific language and prayers). PowerUP increased their ability to teach/communicate in a culturally safe environment, for both themselves and their students.

Teacher trainees (invited to PowerUP) were able to observe inclusive teaching and learning strategies that can be used in the classroom to create a more effective learning environment for Pacific students.



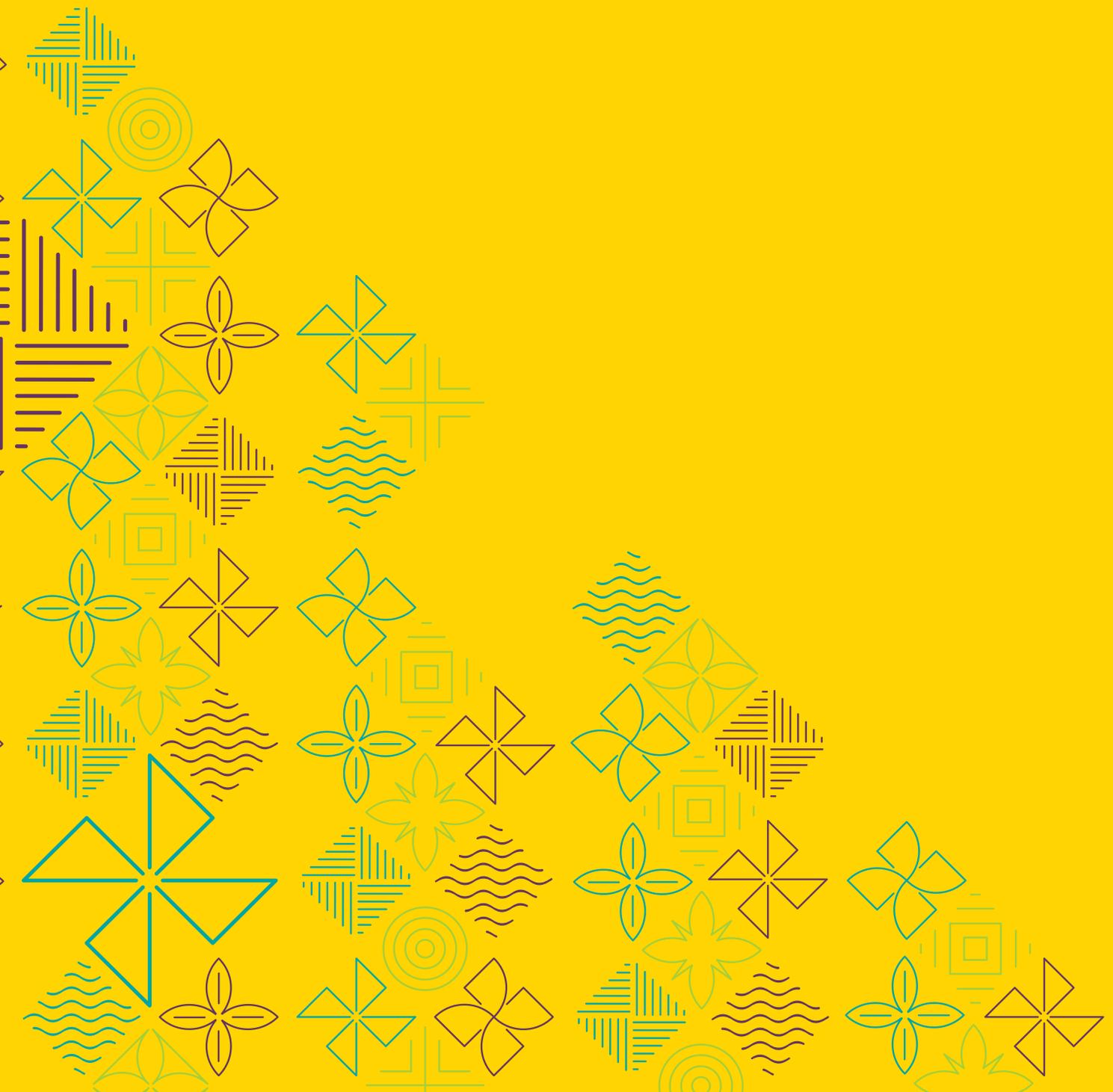
Chapter 4

What We Need to Know to Engage in Education



Chapter 4

What We Need to Know to Engage in Education





KEY POINTS

In PowerUP's community-driven spaces, parents identified and learnt the skills they needed in order to take the lead and support their children's education journeys. A pattern of three learning steps for parents and learners has been outlined. Each step is critical to support Pacific (and other) parents' confidence and engagement in school learning. First is to have accurate knowledge and information about school processes, especially the language and terms used. Second is to have opportunities to master the skills they need in order to connect and engage in education in informed and strategic ways, including the power of articulating a clear question. Third is to increase their confidence and apply these skills in their connections with schools, teachers, and the wider learning communities.

PowerUP parents and children quickly learnt the power of a good question and developed significant resilience and empathy as they participated in the mutual "give and take" of critical debate with teachers, mentors, parents, and other adults and peers at PowerUP. Watching the ways teachers and other adults at PowerUP talked to their children and the warm relationships developed in these conversations caused parents to think deeply about their own parenting practices, including how they communicate with their children, their relationships with their children, and their children's voices.

Centring Pacific funds of knowledge in the PowerUP programme reinforced the relationship between identity, security, learning success, and individual and family wellbeing. Parents described PowerUP as the place where they and their children had been given the chance to learn and achieve in their own time and way.

Community learning is a totally different environment and different experience that our children can develop from. Their engagement, leadership skills, confidence, positive social relationships, trust, and feelings of belonging are all built up in PowerUP gatherings.

Parent, talanoa

Systems have their own sets of knowledge skills and attitudes that facilitate engagement and success and have the potential to transform the systems. To succeed in any system, you need to know how that system works, your place (role) in the system, and how to engage with the system in informed and strategic ways.

The focus of this chapter is on what learners and parents needed to know to engage strategically and confidently in learning conversations. The term "skills" is used in this chapter to encompass shifts in both knowledge and attitudes. Talanoa materials demonstrated very compellingly that parents and learners did not have an adequate or clear understanding of education and school processes or the skills set to facilitate robust educational discussions. As a result, conversations with schools and teachers were more likely to be at a surface level rather than deeply meaningful.

This synthesis identified three learnings that parents and learners need to know in order to engage strategically in learning discussions. These learnings, which many might consider to be a "taken for granted or basic" knowledge, represented a serious challenge to Pacific parents' and learners' full engagement in learning.

They are:

- » To know and understand school processes and the language and terms used
- » To identify and learn the “rules of engagement” in educational conversations
- » To learn to apply these skills in other contexts, such as school, home, community, the workforce, and heterogenous spaces.

Together and separately, the learnings signal an extension of parents’ and learners’ funds of knowledge and agency into a “new” context. Parents and learners were also challenging a view that asking questions is “not Pacific” and that schools are responsible for education. In the safe and trusted PowerUP environments, parents and learners developed the communication skills of questioning, resilience, empathy, and collaboration, which are central to engaging in learning conversations (Alton-Lee, 2017). Competence in these skills also served as a protective factor against cultural bias and racism. Making sure Pacific parents and learners master these skills is a key synthesis recommendation.

The focus of Part 1 of this chapter is on the skills parents need to know. Students’ priorities are discussed in Part 2. Both parts follow a similar process and embody the reflective approach of “What? So What? What Now?”, including ownership, responsibility, and agency.

PART 1: PARENTS

To Know and Understand School Systems, Language, and Terms Used

A major synthesis finding was that PowerUP parents and learners did not have confidence that they were receiving accurate or up-to-date information about school processes and the language and terms used. While schools likely believed they were sending out adequate and clear information to all parents and families,

this had not been the experience of the PowerUP parents. It was not determined whether this was due to families not receiving these information packages or difficulties understanding what they did receive. However, parents were vocal about the fact that they hadn’t been able to gain this necessary information at their school’s parents’ evenings. A common practice had been for schools to schedule a meeting, distribute information sheets, and talk to these (usually supported by a PowerPoint of flow charts and diagrams), followed by a short question time and an invitation to those with further questions to “please contact the school”. Not only was everything in English, it also appears that PowerUP parents had been challenged by the generic nature of the meeting messaging. Parents strongly questioned how accessible this essential education information had been for Pacific parents and learners and others whose first language is not English.

PowerUP parents had many varied opportunities to access the education information they needed, in either their preferred Pacific language or in English; in workshops, discussion groups, and in conversations over their shared dinners. Parents also found it easier to attend PowerUP because: there were many sessions; the sessions were scheduled to better suit work commitments; and at some PowerUP stations, staff provided transport as needed. Some parents also said they adjusted their night-shift hours so they could attend.

The shifts in understanding captured in Table 10 indicate that PowerUP was successful in meeting parents’ educational priorities. Confidence in National Standards and NCEA (including grades) almost doubled, and understanding of ECE learning almost tripled. However, the significant number who placed themselves in the “somewhat confident” category across all levels is concerning. An uncertainty about the meaning of the term “literacy” was echoed throughout the programme cycle.

Table 10: Shifts in Understanding of Educational Processes (2016–17)

	2016 – before attending PowerUP	2017 – after attending PowerUP	
	Confident	Very confident	Somewhat confident
Better understanding of ECE benefits	33%	82%	–
Understanding how to engage with National Standards:			
» Literacy	34%	68%	31%
» Mathematics	33%	68%	23%
Better understanding of NCEA	40%	70%	16%
Better understanding of grades used in NCEA	33%	71%	15%
Improved understanding of vocational pathways (Youth Guarantee ¹⁷)	30%	54%	25%

Parents said that, before attending PowerUP, they had been afraid to talk to their children about educational matters.

We were afraid to talk about school stuff before because we did not know enough to talk to the kids about it ... The strengths from attending PowerUP were that now I am able to talk to my kids about anything that is bothering them about school ... [PowerUP is a] great opportunity to engage with your kids about NCEA or other school actions and things you don't fully understand.

Parent, talanoa

Getting to understand school processes better proved to be an essential step in parents engaging in an informed way in schooling, especially for parents whose second language was English. As they gained more information about school processes and terms, parents' confidence to support their children's schooling increased, and they also became more specific in using "school language" in articulating their concerns.

A big part of PowerUp for me, as a parent, is having a better understanding of the education system, especially because English is not my first language. This has helped me understand more about the level my child is at and NCEA. This helps me be more of a help to my child.

Parent, talanoa

¹⁷ A Ministry of Education initiative aimed to support learners in developing their own pathways towards future work and careers and help educators meet their students' needs. For more information, see the Ministry of Education webpage, Youth Guarantee at: <http://youthguarantee.education.govt.nz>

When my son and niece talk about it, [they say that they have] already passed NCEA, which means they both already have more than 80 credits. I feel excited and thankful that my family chose the right thing, to join the PowerUP.

Parent, talanoa



[I learnt] strategies and ideas on how to improve and support my child at home with any struggles they have in a subject. I do fun things with [child's name] for maths, like, when I do cooking, we measure things and count things.

Parent, talanoa



Understanding NCEA achievement standards ... There is more to life than just settling for what makes them comfortable. I want them to challenge themselves and be more than what they just settle for.

Parent, talanoa

Comments indicated quite compellingly that in understanding school processes PowerUP parents were also learning that they had a role in their children's education.

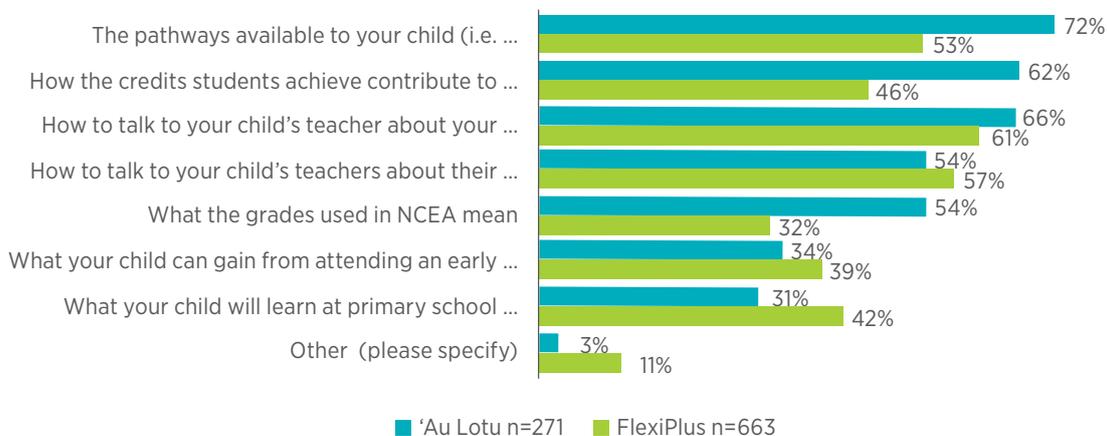
Learning about NCEA and reporting helps us build confidence, can help to understand my role as a parent and the role for our kids. We are still shy about going into school to ask questions.

Parent, talanoa

The responses by FlexiPlus/'Au Lotu (2019) parents to the question of the main things they had learnt at PowerUP aligned strongly with the priorities set by parents in earlier years (2016–18), namely, access to information about learning pathways, systems, and processes. FlexiPlus parents also held concerns about their communications with teachers:

- » The 'Au Lotu parents most appreciated learning: about educational pathways (72 percent), how the credits that students achieved contributed to NCEA qualifications (66 percent), how to talk about and work with teachers to support their child's progress (42 percent), while 57 percent of adults prioritised improving access to educational information, systems, and processes as their main learning need.
- » FlexiPlus parents most appreciated learning how to: talk to teachers about their child's development, work with teachers to help their children (61 percent), and speak to their child's teacher about the child's learning (57 percent).

Figure 10: Four Main Things Adults Learnt at ‘Au Lotu and FlexiPlus (2019)



Source: Oakden, 2019

An important indication of PowerUP parents increased confidence in school processes was seen in their openness to talking about their children's progress with others, which had not been a practice in the past.

My daughter, who is doing NCEA Level 1 this year, is feeling more confident and is working harder at gaining her credits to not just pass but also to aim to get higher than what she sets out to get.

Parent, talanoa

My child did well in 2017. She enjoys writing especially, but I know she can always do better. I encourage her to study and focus this year as she is now in year 8. I know the extra work she puts in all helps towards her academic results. This [PowerUP] space allows her to ask questions and get more help outside school. She has gained more confidence and feels empowered to always aim high.

Parent, talanoa



To Identify and Learn the “Rules of Engagement” in Educational Conversations

To support their children’s education journeys, PowerUP parents needed to know the skills to engage in education discussions in meaningful ways (for example, communication, emotional and social skills, and collaboration). The place of questioning in learning and knowledge building sparked deeply challenging conversations for PowerUP parents generally, and about their own parenting practices and children’s voices.

The Power of Asking a Good Question

A highly confronting learning for PowerUP parents was that asking questions wasn’t being rude or speaking above one’s status (fia potu) but is an essential strategy in exploring and testing ideas. It is highly likely that PowerUP parents and learners alike had little practice in the skill of questioning (Faalau, 2011; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014).

As noted previously, questioning is a challenging practice in Pacific communities, where communication and decision-making practices are based on seniority (status, age, gender, role). This determines who talks (and who is listened to), what is talked about, and how decisions are made. Often also there is a pressure to get answers right, fuelled by a fear of bringing shame on the family by being wrong.

Parents watched the PowerUP teachers and other staff encourage students to question when they were unsure, wanted to know more, or had other ideas to add. Parents also witnessed the excitement and fun generated as teachers gently, but also unerringly, probed students’ explanations. Parents also saw the resilience and empathy students displayed as their ideas were debated and they dissected learning conversations, and the parents were amazed, proud, and surprised at the profusion and complexity of the ideas children came up with in these learning conversations.

PowerUP sessions empower our children to think outside the box, not just think within their comfort zone.

Parent, talanoa

Parents began considering and fine-tuning their own questioning and communicating skills to make sure that the questions they asked and the words they used didn’t “come out the wrong way” or cause offense. Parents found that questioning involves an elaborate set of skills, which include having a clear understanding of the issue or what they wanted to know; gathering information (evidence) to support a view or argument; bringing this information together to formulate a question that captured the points they were seeking to make (and also anticipating responses they might need to counter opposing arguments); and being able to identify the best person or appropriate forum to lodge their enquiry.

Talanoa demonstrated that PowerUP parents made more enquiries, attended parent teacher interviews, were more confident about the questions they should ask, and were respectfully challenging and engaging with teachers and schools about their children’s progress and ways they support their children.

Being at PowerUP, I have learnt what questions to ask. Like, before, my whole body would give off an attitude that said (without me saying) “What are you doing to my child? She is finding it hard to read that certain book.” Now I am calm and ask the teacher, “Is there an easier book that she can read as it seems hard for her?” The teacher takes time to answer me in a way that I understand better by saying that she believes she can read it and just to keep encouraging her.

FlexiPlus parent, talanoa

I am a little bit more knowledgeable about what is expected from me as a parent. I can speak to my child's teacher about my child's learning and have some understanding of the learning conversations. There is also a strong relationship built between me, my child, and their teacher.

'Au Lotu parent, talanoa

A growing number of parents said they engaged more frequently with their children's school and understood their involvement was critical to a positive, successful, educational experience. In addition, more PowerUP fathers were now engaging and participating more with their children's school by attending parent-teacher interviews with their wives and supporting changes to home routines. There was evidence also that parents were initiating discussions with teachers rather than waiting to be contacted by the school.

[I am] gaining the confidence to ask more from those who teach my child. I was always apprehensive about asking my child's teacher for more work for her, as I understand they already have a lot on their plates. However, I have a renewed confidence, through PowerUP, that it is my duty and responsibility to be proactive when it comes to my child's education.

'Au Lotu parent, talanoa

Importantly, parents' engagement with schools was no longer a one-way process: they were contributing partners in maintaining their relationship with the schools and their children.

I have been able to apply what I have learnt in [the] parent-teacher interview. Many a time, I have sat and agreed to everything the teacher has said about my kids learning. [Still] I feel I have been empowered to speak up and not just take my child's learning at face value and from one person's opinion.

'Au Lotu parent, talanoa

PowerUP has enabled me to better support my children's learning through strategies that are aligned with what their teachers are using in the classroom. Always important is to keep the three-way lines of communication open – which are for myself, my children, and their schools.

'Au Lotu parent, talanoa

The 2019 review examined two further aspects of parents' increased agency. These were: interacting with teachers and becoming more involved with schools – for example, in parent groups, friends of the schools, Boards of Trustees, and at parent-teacher meetings. Parents' talanoa showed mixed experiences on these points.

PowerUP parents also gained confidence and involvement in community and national educational forums and in initiating and leading discussions. Some stood for and were elected to Boards of Trustees and other locally elected bodies.

Encouraging Children's Voices

PowerUP parents also began encouraging their children to question their teachers, which again had not been a Pacific practice.

My children are slowly starting to build confidence, especially through attending PowerUP. I encourage my children to come and ask questions because the [PowerUP] teachers are able to support them more than I could regarding English and maths. Sometimes my [year 7 child] doesn't bring homework to PowerUP, but now I see that he is slowly beginning to bring work and also ask questions.

Parent, talanoa

Watching the ways PowerUP teachers and other adults talked to the children and the warm relationships that developed in these conversations caused parents to think of the ways they communicated with their children and the power of their children's voices (see Box 7).

Box 7: Children's Voices

Parents were overwhelmingly moved by the positive ways PowerUP teachers and other adults talked to students. The warm relationships generated in these learning exchanges made parents think about the ways they communicated with their children and the creative energy and authority of children's voices:

I believe that, before PowerUP, I was, like, narrow minded – closed to my way of thinking being the only way. It has really opened my eyes: my kids can do it; they are allowed to make mistakes; and they learn from it. It's their learning journey. I need to stop comparing it with my time at school. It was more about me being scared and trying to protect them more. It wasn't easy, but I have really tried my best. And I'm glad I did, otherwise they might not be here at PowerUP. (Parent, talanoa)

[I'm] actually stopping and listening, letting the students and kids know they are worthy. Kids don't always get it right. Listen to your gut, listen to your kids' views. It's not always [just about] what adults are saying. Giving them a chance to tell their story. Giving the attention; thinking of what else you can do [to support them]. (Parent, talanoa)

Since I came to PowerUP, I've changed the way I communicate with my children. I discuss with my children their individual goals and how to achieve their goals. (Parent, talanoa)

These and other similar comments mark critical shifts in PowerUP parents' attitudes to parenting and parenting practices.

Applying and Sustaining the Skills to Engage in Education, from PowerUP to Home, Schools, and Communities

Before joining PowerUP, the parents' main connections to schools had been report nights, when children had broken a school rule, and when supporting fundraising and cultural nights. One parent said that when she met with her son's teachers, all they wanted to talk about was his rugby, and she hadn't gone to school to hear that!

Parents said that by attending PowerUP 1) they were better informed about school processes, and 2) became more strategic in raising their concerns with teachers.

Understanding NCEA was very instrumental to me. One of my children is doing Level 2 NCEA and had only 75 entries [credits] for all subjects chosen, but with the assistance of the PowerUP programme, we were able to understand and therefore went to school and asked her teachers if they could allow her to do more courses in order to have more entries. And now she could pass well if she passes them all.

Parent, talanoa

One parent expressed the view that it was parents' right to ask questions about their children's progress.

I have a right to know what the school can offer and ask for help if I cannot understand something from the school. I want more confidence to [be able to] ask teachers about their strengths and weaknesses.

Parent, talanoa



The positive shifts in PowerUP parents' confidence to approach ECE and school teachers with their concerns is outlined in Table 11. Before attending PowerUP, two out of five parents were very confident they knew how to support a child with their learning. After attending, this increased to nine out of ten parents. Fewer than half of this group were very confident to talk with teachers in early learning services and primary schools before attending PowerUP. After attending, this increased to three in every four parents. One-third were very confident they knew about educational pathways before attending PowerUP, and this increased to nearly three-quarters after attending PowerUP.

Table 11: Parents' and Family Adults' Shifts in Confidence after Attending PowerUP

Attribute	% Very confident	
	Before	After
Knew how to support your child with their learning	39%	88%
Could talk to the staff at your child's primary school about your child's progress and how the staff and you could support your child's learning	42%	84%
Could talk to the staff at an early learning service or school about a child's learning	41%	80%
Understood the educational pathways available to children, that is, further studies, vocational pathways, employment	33%	73%

Parent-initiated Engagement – Don't Wait for the School

Parents said that the more they learnt about school processes, the more aware they became of the challenges their children faced, including incidents of cultural bias, racism, and inequity. Parents said this knowledge had spurred their more active engagement with their children's teachers.

I am a little bit more knowledgeable about what is expected from me as a parent. I can speak to my child's teacher about my child's learning and have some understanding of the learning conversations. There is also a strong relationship built between me, my child, and their teacher.

'Au Lotu parent, talanoa



PowerUP has opened our eyes in terms of how our children have been misrepresented at school. PowerUp empowered us parents not to be afraid to challenge the school and make sure that our children received the maximum learning and support.

FlexiPlus parent, talanoa

In addition, 'Au Lotu parents began initiating discussions with schools themselves, rather than waiting to be contacted by schools – one parent described this as a duty and responsibility.

Parents also began contacting teachers when their children made comments, such as “my teacher talks too fast”, “I don't understand what is happening”, or “things are moving too quickly in class”, which they might not have done previously.

I have learnt from PowerUP that it could be better not only from the teacher's end but also from mine. It is not enough to be passive and sit back. [Instead, I need to] to engage and be proactive.

'Au Lotu parent, talanoa

Parents gained a satisfaction and pride as they saw that their interventions had made a difference.

I am now very confident to ask questions at school – how [my children] are learning and what is being taught. Now I know how they are learning at PowerUP, and I see that they are making good progress and their confidence ... at school is building.

Parent, talanoa



I am now more demanding at school [asking for] work to be brought home now – I want to make sure my children to understand their subjects and if they need extra help to make sure they take their work to PowerUP.

Parent, talanoa

Reciprocal Learning Exchanges

Importantly, parents felt that teachers were responding to their questions in “a reciprocal manner”.

[my daughters' teacher] communicates better with me. How? For example, “Your daughter's doing better in this, but with your help, she can better in another area.” The teacher uses positive language, and I notice my daughter is doing better now she is reading more.

Parent, talanoa

Parents have a role in supporting their children to reach their educational potential. Positive experiences, such as the one described above, had helped confirm for parents their responsibility to work with schools to support their children's learning. One used the term "triangle of success" to explain the child, parent, school relationships in learning.

It is absolutely essential for schools and parents to work together to support children's learning. Working together, there is a triangle of success. The teachers, student, and parents working together is the only way I believe that our Pacific kids will achieve. That being said, it takes a whole village to raise a child, so it has to include the communities you are in.

Parent, talanoa



Mum and Dad are able to talk to the teachers and principals that are part of PowerUP, and they are happier to approach our teachers at school now. They would have never done that before.

FlexiPlus student, talanoa

A number of PowerUP parents became more involved in school management posts, such as, Boards of Trustees. They said that the learnings they had gained at PowerUP had increased their understanding of the critical influence of such roles and gave them the confidence to become actively involved.

PowerUP learners confirmed that their parents had become more motivated to engage with principals, teachers, and other school staff, which had not been an earlier practice. One student said that his parent's engagement with teachers and schools had become so much the norm that he (the student) no longer had to be the "go-between" (mediator) between home and school, which had been his role in the past.

... they [parents] don't have to ask so many questions; they know now.

Student, survey



PART 2: STUDENTS – “AT POWERUP, I’VE GOT A CHANCE”

Student’s learning priorities aligned closely with those of the PowerUP parents.

To Understand School Processes, Language, and Terms Used

A significant number of secondary school students said that, before joining PowerUP, they had been unsure about school processes. The programme had helped reduce their uncertainties. Students reported increased understanding of NCEA units, achievement standards, credits, grades, and which credits were needed to achieve an NCEA-level qualification (Table 12). However, and again a concern, up to one-third placed themselves in the “not sure” category.

Table 12: Students’ Understanding of School Examination Processes Before and After Attending PowerUP

	Before	After	Not sure
Adequate understanding of unit standards and achievement standards	32	49	xxx
Clearer understanding about how credits contribute to NCEA	35	62	28
Confident understanding of the grades used in NCEA	35	59	26
Better understanding of which NCEA credits they need to achieve their NCEA-level qualification	38	59	31

Figure 11 lists the activities learners chose to do at PowerUP alongside those they had found to be useful. Four out of five students said they did homework and study at PowerUP (79 percent), and 65 percent of this group believed that that had been their most useful learning at PowerUP.

It helps you to complete your homework if you cannot manage your time. They also help you be up to task and also top of the class.

Student, survey

Time to catch up with all assignments, to complete assignments, and then when I go back to school, I understand ... I’m on track.

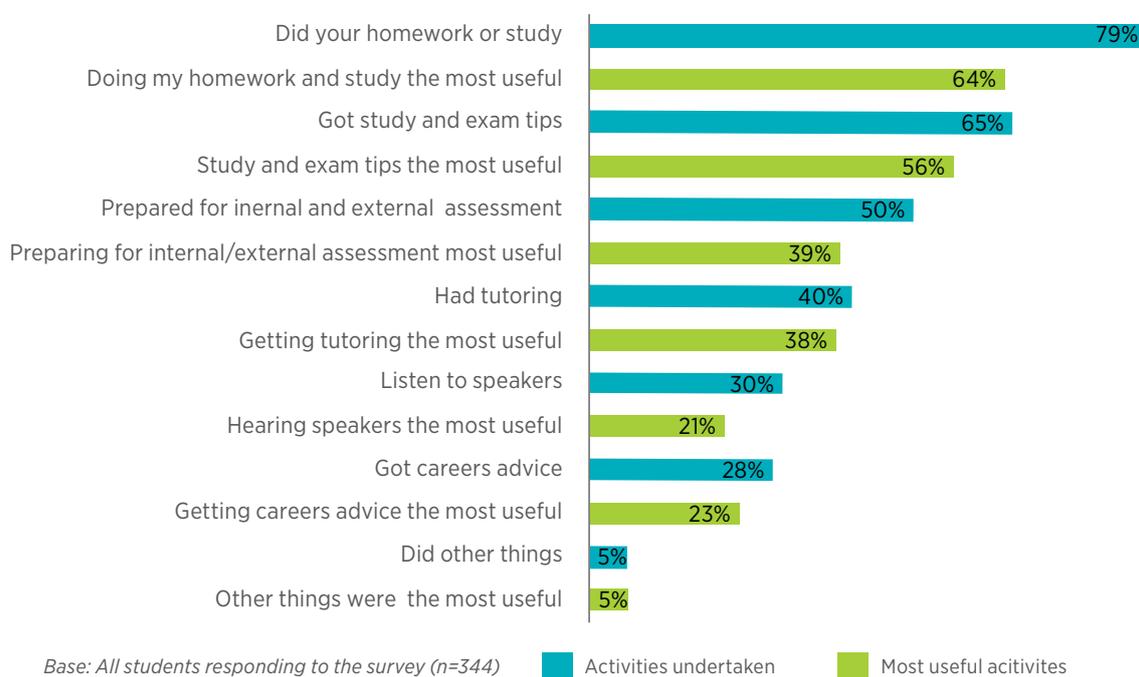
Student, survey



It’s a good way to finish assessments and makes it understandable for students as to why it is very important to pass NCEA.

Student, survey

Figure 11: Activities Undertaken by Students at PowerUP and Those they Found Most Useful



Source: PowerUP report (Oakden, 2019)

To Identify and Learn the “Rules of Engagement” in Education Conversations

It would appear that before taking part in PowerUP, the students did not have adequate study skills and learning approaches, and the PowerUP teachers and mentors played an important role in fostering these necessary skills. Also, PowerUP highlighted the importance of learners having sufficient and guided time so they can get a full understanding of school curriculum content and processes.

The Skills to Engage

Discipline to task, task completion, planning and using time wisely, and being better able to deal with pressure featured highly in students’ comments about what they had learnt at PowerUP. The relationship between these skills is notable.

PowerUP has helped me understand how important it is to work hard and prepare myself for Level 1 once I get to year 11. Also, the teachers are available to work with me one-on-one.

Student, survey



It is really beneficial to helping you cope with stress and managing your time.

Student, survey

A significant number said they had found listening to speakers who had overcome similar educational challenges had been particularly valuable – this reinforces the place of “story telling” in supporting Pacific peoples to make sense of their own lived experiences. Hearing of such experiences caused students to think more deeply about learning and the effectiveness of their own approaches to learning.

Questioning

As with their parents, students found PowerUP teachers' use of questioning techniques a bit startling in the first instance. However, in learning to question, they became linked to a whole new vista of ideas. Students highlighted the new ideas and ways of thinking they had experienced as they worked with PowerUP teachers.

... I learn a lot of new things that I would say [I] haven't heard of before. Therefore, when I go back to school, I understand everything because of the help I get at PowerUP.

Student, talanoa



The teachers at PowerUP; the way they do it; it's kind of like asking me the same question but in a different way [than the teachers at school ask questions] until I understand.

Student, talanoa



I wish I had joined from the start because the tutors and teachers helped me with all my questions I had when I came to PowerUP. I always leave PowerUP with all my questions answered and feeling confident about the subject.

Student, survey

Students learnt to question their PowerUP peers and teachers thereby extending their boundaries of learning.

[Asking questions] is very helpful, it builds up your confidence and supports you with your learning for your future, and it is fun and cool.

Year 8 student, survey

Provider voice

There were several noticeable changes in student's behaviour. For example, their study skills improved; they became more focused on achieving their goals; and they seemed to enjoy learning more as they experienced more success and were more likely to persevere to get a good result. In addition, students became more confident about asking questions at PowerUP and then at school as well as they gained greater knowledge and understanding of subjects. In some cases (especially older teens), students became more self-motivated and were striving to achieve the results they wanted.

Learners also drew attention to the nature and quality of their relationships with PowerUP teachers. They valued teachers who took the time to make sure the learners understood challenging concepts and the associated work tasks required.

... an opportunity for me and my siblings to come and use tutors here for help and to understand schoolwork that teachers [at school] have failed to explain.

Student, survey



My teacher [at PowerUP] assists me where she can see I need help, for example, helping me read words that I don't understand. It's easier learning [at PowerUP than at school] – they help us and teach us at our own pace. At school, they are more strict on us. I enjoy the learning [at PowerUP] together with my peers at our own pace. And it's good that we feel comfortable asking our teacher any questions ... I improved my reading at PowerUP. I got four out of five in my reading assignment that my mentors and teacher helped me with at PowerUP.

Student, talanoa



Like, they slow it down because I'm not a very fast learner; so they break it down for me so I get it and know it ... they wait until I get it. At school, because the teachers have lots of kids, they have to kind of forget about slow learners like me and just move on, and then I don't get it.

Student, talanoa

Sound learning relationships developed as PowerUP spurred learners' positive engagement in learning at school and across curriculum areas – for example, maths.

I learnt a lot about maths at PowerUP. One of the academic mentors was able to help me in this area. I used to hate maths, but when she helped me, I learnt to enjoy it more because I can understand it. This made attending PowerUP fun. Maths is something that I always find hard when I am at school, but I am learning all the time. I had a writing test, and I got a 5B. I only need one more [mark] to get 5A, which is the highest mark in writing.

Student, talanoa

This happened because I had that extra support. I was shocked to see how I improved. It made me feel happy that I am on the right track.

Student, talanoa



I learnt a maths problem at PowerUP [and] was asked the same maths problem at school and no one in my class knew it but me! So, I was very happy with myself.

Student, talanoa

Applying these Skills in Other Situations and Having the Faith to Achieve

Students' positive relationships with PowerUP teachers and other adults gave them confidence to approach their teachers at school as well.

A small number of students in years 9, 10, and 11 said their confidence to talk to their teachers about education almost doubled. Similar gains were made across secondary school age groups during the first year of PowerUP, and these increased through 2017. However, a significant number placed themselves in the "not at all" confident category (see Table 13).

Table 13: Level of Confidence Asking Teachers for Help (2017)

	Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not at all confident
Before year 13	46%	39%	13%
After year 13	74% (+28)	23%	-
Before year 12	32%	47%	29%
After year 12	73% (+41)	23%	
Before year 11	23%	49%	23%
After year 11	58% (+35)	36%	
Before year 10	24%	41%	29%
After year 10	49% (+25)	39%	8%
Before year 9	19%	39%	28%
After year 9	49% (+30)	32%	7%

Views shared in 2019 indicated that PowerUP learners were responding differently in class; they were more confident about engaging and raising questions with teachers.

I have the confidence to challenge what subjects I want to take and what I need to take because they relate what I want to do in the future. Also [I have] the confidence to ask questions in class and outside class too.

FlexiPlus student, talanoa

We were learning about [the] perspective of yourself, and I took that, and I'm going to use it with school and rugby too. It's helping me learn new things I can apply in school. It's teaching me new techniques for learning and speaking too. It's increasing my confidence to, like, put my hand up when I'm in class, when usually I'm afraid because people will judge [me].

FlexiPlus student, talanoa



Table 14: Changes in Pacific Parents and Family Adults after Attending PowerUP (2017)

Before PowerUP	After PowerUP
Just under one-third (30%) of parents were very confident about talking to staff about their children's learning (data from the adult survey).	57% of parents were very confident about talking to staff about their children's learning (data from the adult survey).
Feedback from parent-teacher interviews was limited.	Parents had effective conversations with teachers about their children's learning.
Parents' engagement with the school focused mainly on their children's behaviour.	Parents were affirmed that they had an important and rightful role in their children's education.
Many parents considered that it was the school's role to educate children, and they trusted the educators to do this professionally. There was no well-defined role for parents in partnership with the school.	Parents learned details about the education system, language, and terms used. They developed trusted relationships with PowerUP providers, teachers and coordinators, and like-minded parents. They gained access to people and resources through PowerUP to support their families in learning. They provided more effective support for their children's learning.
Parents engaged with their children's learning by reminding them to do their homework.	Parents listened to their children more. They set up routines to help their children succeed in their schoolwork. They enjoyed seeing their children succeed and had raised their expectations of what their children could achieve.
The possible pathway for each child through education to employment was not particularly clear.	Parents had a clearer understanding of educational pathways and, the importance of planning and choices made. They became more visible in schools, and opportunities arose for them in leadership roles, further education, and employment.

Source: Adapted from the 2017 PowerUP evaluation report (Oakden, 2017)

Table 15: Changes in Students' Reports of their Learning Experiences

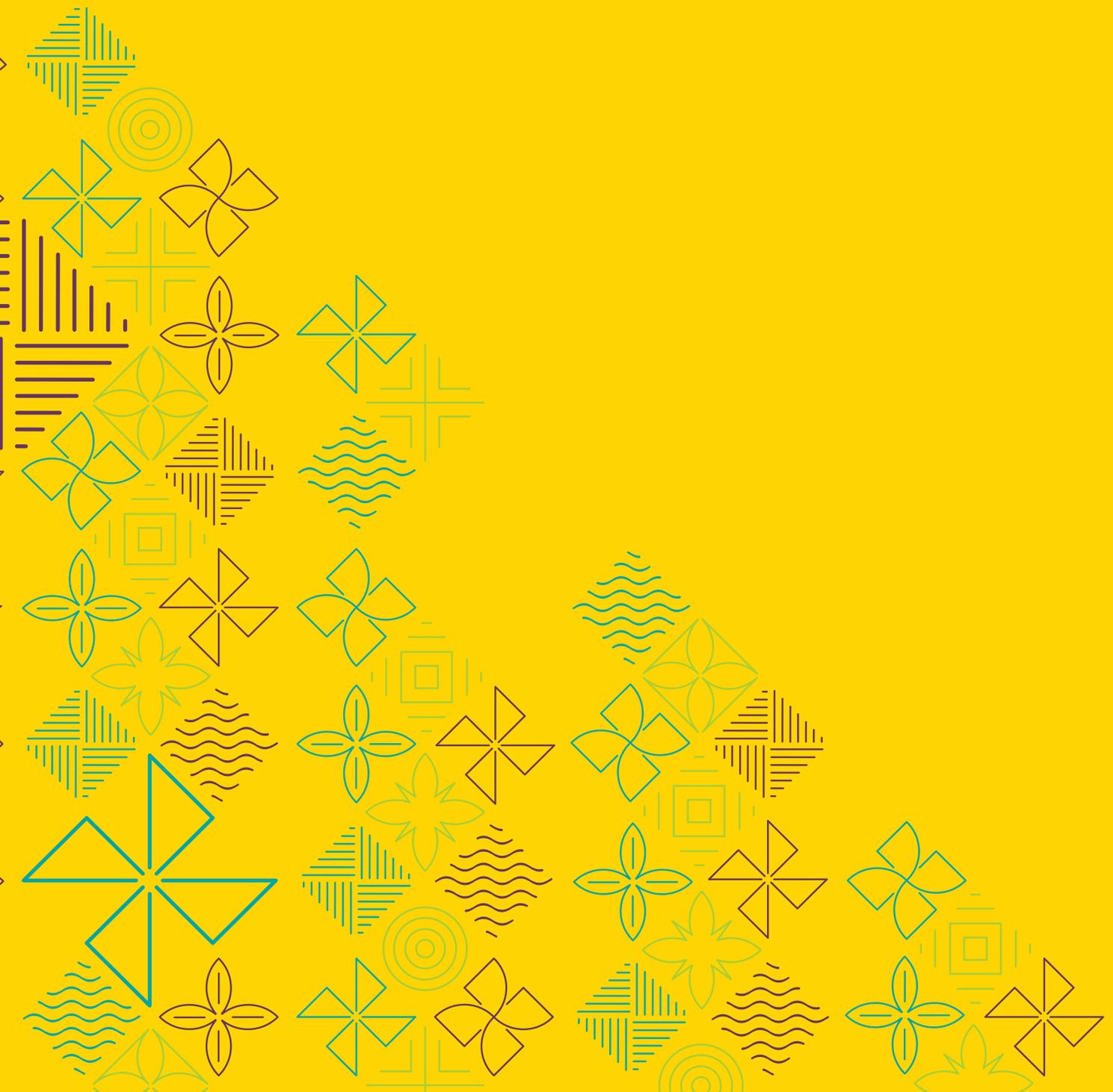
Before PowerUP	After PowerUP
Just over one-quarter (28%) of students completing the student surveys were very confident about talking to teachers about their learning.	Nearly two-thirds (62%) of students completing the student surveys were very confident about talking to teachers about their learning.
Some students reported being anxious and feeling lost in class.	Students said PowerUP is a safe place to learn.
Many students felt the pace of class was too fast and reported feeling left behind.	Students feel more confident and believe they can learn. Some said it took them more time to learn, but they are determined and resilient.
Many students only partially understood the education system.	Students reported their school teachers commented on a change in their engagement with learning and now worked with them more.
Some students were not particularly engaged in school or had disengaged with school.	Students who were not attending school started attending again. They understood what they need to do to be successful in learning. They developed a love of learning when they believed success was possible and consistently experienced success.
The students' peer group may not see it as cool to be smart and succeed at school.	Students were part of a peer group where it was cool to be successful in education. They felt their parents (if they attended PowerUP) better understood what their education was about and supported it more.
There were no clear links between education and after-school pathways in many cases.	Students understood why succeeding at education was worth pursuing. They started seeing exciting possibilities for themselves, were motivated to work towards those possibilities, and were resilient when there were setbacks.

Source: Adapted from the 2017 PowerUP evaluation report (Oakden, 2017)



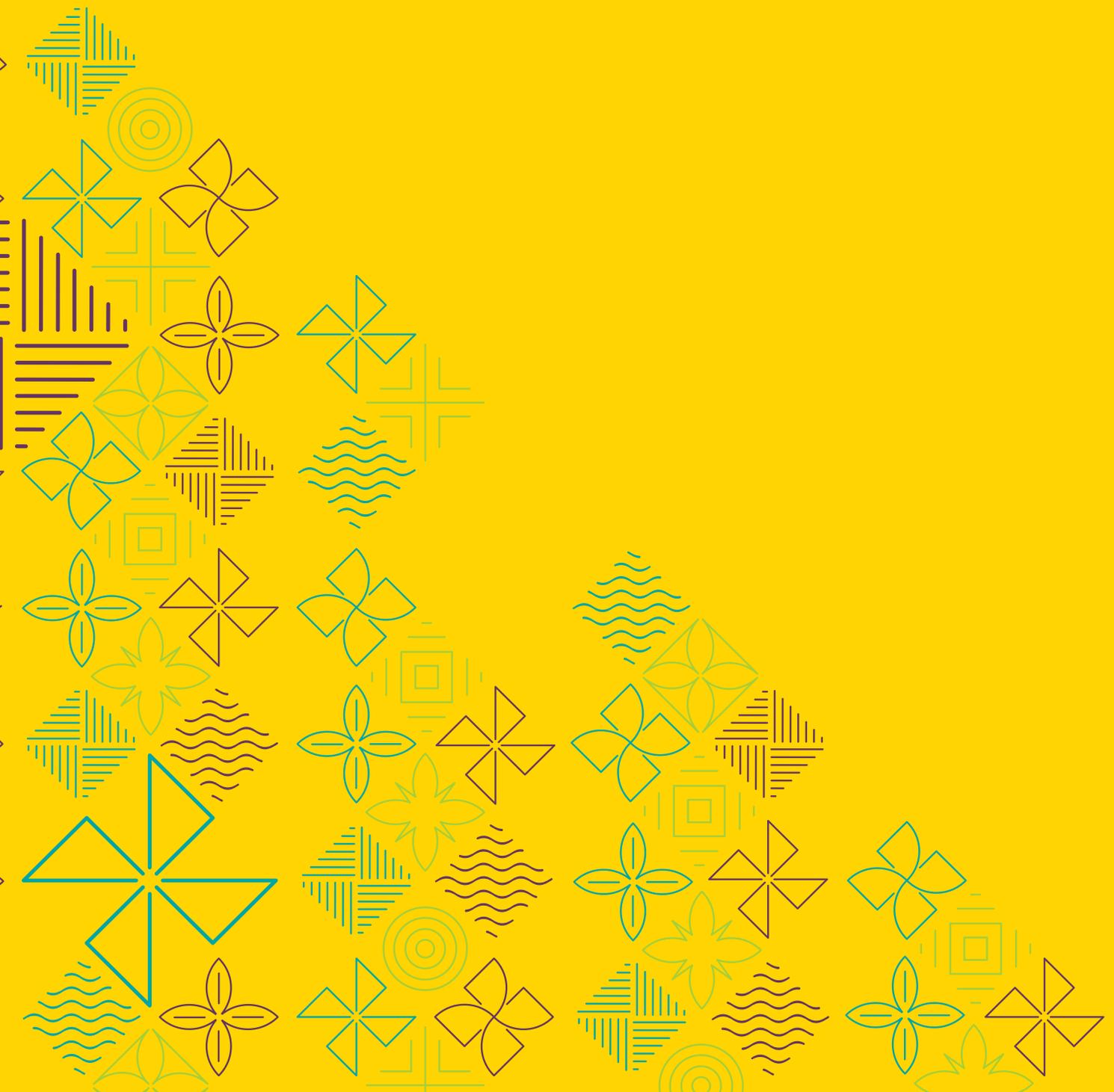
Chapter 5

The Five Themes of Pacific Culturally Safe Learning Spaces



Chapter 5

The Five Themes of Pacific Culturally Safe Learning Spaces





KEY POINTS

The PowerUP's Pacific ways of working and thinking supports the creation of culturally safe learning environments. The visibility of Pacific culture language, beliefs, and expectations in every facet of the programme proved to be an inspirational, aspirational, and transformative experience for Pacific parents, families, and learners. It also reinforced and reminded programme participants of the place of Pacific knowledge and pedagogy in their own lives and was validated in their increased understanding of school processes and improved schooling achievement. At the same time, in the safe and trusted programme spaces, parents and learners had the chance to interrogate the meaning of fa'a-Pacific ideals and practices in the light of changing times.

For parents and learners, the PowerUP education experience reinforced the relationship between identity security ("knowing who I am"), learning, and success in schooling. Parents' and students' self-belief as learners was increased. So too was their resilience in interacting with others and their joy in learning and achieving. Parents and learners viewed the sustaining of Pacific language and cultural ways of thinking and doing they experienced at PowerUP to be a demonstration of tautua (service) to the quality of life and wellbeing today and to future generations of Pacific.

Educational Successes and Guidance in Life Journeys

Parents and children were proud that their 'auala into learning and success in learning, had been achieved through the inclusion of fa'a-Pacific values, beliefs, knowledge, and pedagogical practices in the PowerUP programme. Parents and children said education was now a topic of family conversations. The programme formed a foundation for their increased resilience in formal school systems and a protection against acts of cultural bias and racism. Relationships between family members had been enhanced: members communicated better with and supported each other and engaged together as a family in other activities. For some families, there had been a rethinking of time spent on cultural and church obligations.

In the PowerUP *as and by Pacific* space, parents and children learnt to mediate between the values, beliefs, and norms underpinning school and home learning, which is an essential skill to learn in today's rapidly changing world. In learning to break across siloed worlds, PowerUP families gave truth to and progressed the PowerUP model where:

[Pacific] people lead and are in control and [Pacific] values, principles, approaches and methods prevail. It does not exclude other ... methods but only as far as they are seen to be useful.

Wehipeihana, 2013

This chapter returns to focus more deeply on the five themes of culturally secure learning by building on the snapshot of programme learnings raised in the previous chapters. Again, it is a composite picture of how these themes were conceptualised and experienced in the 2016–18 period, and the further perspectives that emerged in 2019 in the two-model flexible programme. Whilst interrelated and mutually reinforcing, the five themes are treated separately to highlight their individual and combined strengths as PowerUP became more than an educational programme for parents and learners.

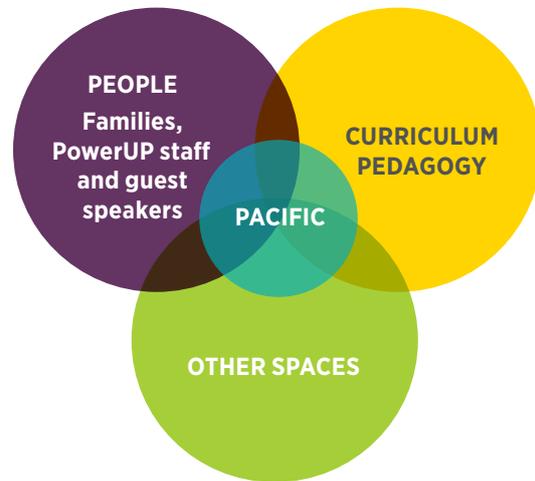


THEME 1: PACIFIC VISIBLE “WE CAN SEE OURSELVES IN THIS PROGRAMME”

That Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities are acknowledged by and in equitable partnerships with schools in education. “Pacific visible” is also seen in the inclusion of community knowledge, Pacific ideas, and concepts through which Pacific education is understood.

As in the PowerUP model of engagement (Chapter 2), the programme crafted an *as and by Pacific* perspective to help parents, families, and Pacific communities achieve a deeper engagement and ownership of their schooling and education matters. PowerUP signified a tremendous contrast for many parents, whose previous engagement in schooling had largely been to support cultural performances, school fundraising drives, and report evenings, and as one parent stated, “All [the teachers] wanted to talk about was my son’s sporting prowess”. Pacific ways of knowing and being were visible in every aspect of the PowerUP programme (Figure 12) and encouraged the parent and learner voice and agency in education. Through PowerUP, parents and learners moved from being apprehensive and “fearful” to being comfortable and confident to talk about education and, in particular, about their children’s education.

Figure 12: PowerUP is “Pacific Visible”



As noted, Pacific peoples were highly visible in leadership roles at PowerUP (as coordinators, qualified teachers and mentors, and invited speakers) and understood Pacific cultural ways and language. In the ethnic-specific ‘Au Lotu programme (2019), everything took place in the language of that community.

Teachers

Parents and learners described the PowerUP teachers as approachable, positive, and easy to talk to: they felt comfortable asking questions and knew that their questions would be respected and encouraged. Pacific knowledge became more visible in PowerUP curriculum and pedagogy as parents and learners added their experience into this *as and by Pacific* learning programme.

While parents and learners valued Pacific knowledge and ways of working, they also learnt to draw on “other” knowledge and support networks. As in the saying “it takes a village to raise a child”, they learnt that schools do not hold sole responsibility for children’s learning and that there are many pathways to learning.

PowerUP is more value-based and strengths-driven compared with their schools. They are more nurtured, and educators are more aware of their culture and how as individuals they learn.

Parent, talanoa



I found that I was more comfortable with my own people. And PowerUP is somewhere where we can express ourselves through homework and also through coming together every Monday.

Secondary student, survey

Provider Voice

Providers said they had worked hard to ensure PowerUP provided a quality learning experience for Pacific parents and children, especially in selecting skilled teachers who had strong empathy and understanding of Pacific children.

A learner made it clear that you did not need to be Pacific to be a good teacher for Pacific students and that cultural respect and sensitivity was a major factor, and non-Pacific teachers and others could also support Pacific students in culturally secure ways.

As a result of joining PowerUP, parents' engagement with schools was no longer a one-way process – they were contributing partners in maintaining their relationship with the schools and their children.

I have been able to apply what I have learnt to [the] parent-teacher interview. Many a time, I have sat and agreed to everything the teacher has said about my kid's learning. [Now] I feel I have been empowered to speak up and not just take my child's learning at face value from one person's opinion.

'Au Lotu parent, talanoa

In the 2019 review, two further aspects of Pacific visibility (voice and agency) were explored. These related to parents' visibility in interactions with teachers and with schools, as for example, parent groups, friends of the school, boards of trustees, and parent-teacher meetings. Parents' talanoa showed mixed experiences on these aspects.

PowerUP has enabled me to better support my children's learning through strategies that align with what their teachers are using in the classroom. Always important is to keep the three-way lines of communication open – which are for myself, my children, and their schools.

'Au Lotu parent, talanoa

PowerUP parents also gained increasing visibility and voice in community and national educational forums and in initiating and leading discussions. For example, some stood for and were elected to their school Board of Trustees and other locally elected bodies.



THEME 2: IDENTITY, LANGUAGE, AND CULTURE

That Pacific learners' developing identities are upheld by educational experiences that support Pacific culture and languages and practices that value the contribution of Pacific parents, families, and communities through equitable and ethical partnerships.

Parents strongly believed PowerUP followed well-understood Pacific values and beliefs and world views (Chapter 1). As in the words of Tui Ātua Tupua Tamasese Efi (2003), at PowerUP, there was a relationship between spirituality, family, and resource use, together with the core values that underpin this relationship; namely sacred bonds, love and compassion, reciprocity, respect and deference, humility, and family.

When I come to PowerUP, it's like going to my family. We pray together, talk in our language, and we know each other from here and the church.

Parent, talanoa



The other big thing for me is how the space is made to feel "Pacific", which my children love because it's like being at home.

Parent, talanoa



PowerUP is a positive, health environment for our Pacific families. Everything is Pacific and to find out how amazing it is ... just get in, and you will be thankful for making one right choice ... we feel very comfortable coming to PowerUP because it is a gathering of familiar people.

Student, talanoa

Parents and learners talked about experiencing a Pacific ethic of care: that families engaged with integrity and genuine support for one another. As outlined by Oakden (2019), identity security was achieved at PowerUP:

- » Pacific parents and adult family members can be themselves and feel at ease and comfortable. They do not have to fit into a learning environment that feels foreign or uncomfortable to them.
- » PowerUP encourages a strong sense of belonging and fellowship develops. There is a strengthening of culture. Pacific parents and adult family members have a place to stand firm as Pacific people. The talanoa signal that this has particular importance for PowerUP families in pan-Pacific settings, where people participating are a minority in their communities numbers-wise.
- » PowerUP is more than an educational programme for parents and adult family members. It is about community engagement, interaction, and belonging – "It's bigger than my family; it's like the community knitting together".

Identity Security

PowerUP reinforced parents' and learners' feelings of identity security, and there is strong evidence in the source materials of a relationship between identity security ("knowing who I am") and learning success.

It's important for my children to know where they come from and who they are to do well in school. Because you would be lost if you didn't know your identity. If they are proud of their identity, they will do well in education.

Parent, talanoa

[PowerUP gives] my children confidence in identifying themselves correctly in their schools, allowing them to appreciate and take pride in who they really are.

Parent, talanoa

A mother shared her pride when teachers identified her children by their ethnic group (Tuvaluan) rather than by the more commonly used “Pacific” label. She regarded this as an important step in her children’s identity security.

For the first time, my children have told me that they are happy to be identified as Tuvaluan students at school. Previously, they were identified as “PIS” [Pacific Island students] along with other dominant PI groups. This is a positive trend as it gives my children confidence in identifying themselves correctly in their schools, allowing them to appreciate and take pride in whom they really are.

Parent, talanoa

One learner attributed her learning achievements to her father’s reminders to “Never forget who you are and where you come from”. Most learners took great pride in being known as Pacific. They also talked about the importance of identity security to the wellness of all Pacific peoples.

Being a Pasifika of [xx] descent is very important to us. It is our identity; our culture, and it is important because it is what we are and what we stand for. We are proud to be Pasifika. We are very confident, and never will we be ashamed of it. Our language, our culture is our life. Our Pasifika is always in our hearts, and we will always be Pasifika, and that is who we are, and we will hold it high and proud.

Student, talanoa

A person without a culture does not have an identity and hence deserves no place in society ... our identity, language, and culture make a great difference to who we are. They remind us every day of who we truly are. They remind us of the hard life our ancestors have lived and ... encourage us to strive for excellence and to make a difference to our lives and the lives of our future generations ... Without identity, language, and culture, we would be like a vessel in the ocean without a compass to get ashore safely. Our identity, language, and culture are the adrenaline that pumps hope and direction to our learning.

Student, talanoa

Providers’ comments that “children talked of identity, language, and culture in more depth than their parents” warrant further research. For example, is this because the youthful years are the years of identity security? Are these issues being discussed at school? Or are these students experiencing a deeper cultural divide in New Zealand and in schools today?

Our Pacific way of family support and encouragement is relevant in promoting learning for the children. It also promotes transparency, inclusiveness, and shared responsibility to ensure no one lacks support in their learning.

FlexiPlus parent, talanoa

Pan-Pacific and Ethnic-specific

The availability of the two models in 2019 provided some answers to questions about the ethics of offering pan-Pacific or Pacific ethnic-specific programmes.

I feel that PowerUP meets the needs of our Pacific community in the way that we cater for not only the child but the whole family, not only for the academic need but ... the physical, social, and faith [needs and] setting rules and regulations, setting the culture for them. If they learn that at PowerUP, they can take it back home ... PowerUP is very Pasifika, especially when we incorporate the language weeks. PowerUP gives the kids a sense of identity, as it is a struggle [sometimes for them to maintain that in the wider society]. During Samoan language week, all the Samoans were excited; they were proud to be in that culture; we were praying in that culture, talking about what they love in that culture. We have also covered all the cultures [represented] here at PowerUP ... PowerUP is very inclusive.

Parent, talanoa

'Au Lotu parents said they preferred that model because they had a limited knowledge of English and they had been encouraged by church ministers to be involved in that model and believed that the church could and should play a greater lead role in supporting Pacific education. In addition, they liked the fact that the 'Au Lotu operated in a faith-based way and followed cultural protocols. Some who chose the 'Au Lotu programme indicated this was because they preferred learning with other adults.

Being able to communicate in our ... mother tongue and be with people [who] we are with in the church family makes a big difference. Our mother tongue being utilised and having shared knowledge of our cultural and religious upbringing [also] helped. We are like a village connected.

'Au Lotu parent, talanoa

Younger members said the 'Au Lotu model had given them the opportunity to work more closely with elders. One said that the programme had supported her to have a voice in church matters and speak in a church environment, which was usually reserved for elders.

It's helped me to open up [and] get to share my ideas to show I have a voice; in [the] church, it's always the elders. It's helped my confidence when I have a few things to say ...

'Au Lotu parent, talanoa

Some parents in areas where 'Au Lotu was available chose to join FlexiPlus. They wanted to participate in a pan-Pacific learning community that was parent and child focused. FlexiPlus was also valued by New Zealand-born parents and learners who indicated they had fewer Pacific community connections.

The most important thing that happened to me was when [person] delivered " 'o 'oe o le fofō" to us students. He spoke about [the] migration of our ancestors, [the] push and pull factors. I was born in Sāmoa, and I came here when I was one or two. When I go back home for family holidays, I see my cousins struggle with basic reading. [This] makes me really appreciate my parents for the sacrifice they made so we can have a better future; makes me want to do better in school and not muck around.

FlexiPlus student, talanoa

As in the earlier programme years, the FlexiPlus parents believed their attendance at PowerUP was a major influence on their children's participation and learning.

It is really important [for parents to attend] ... Also, having some time out ... with my kids and then meeting and talking with other people together is nice.

FlexiPlus parent, talanoa



You can drop your kids off to wherever, but if you're not there to support them it doesn't really mean anything.

FlexiPlus parent, talanoa

In a few instances, non-Pacific parents and learners attended FlexiPlus. A few Pacific parents made the point that they would prefer the programme be only for Pacific because Pacific parents were less comfortable speaking when non-Pacific parents attended.

Limit PowerUP Pacific to only people of Pacific descent. Incorporating non-Pacific in a space intended just for Pacific somewhat takes away from Pacific people. I've noticed that.

FlexiPlus parent, talanoa





THEME 3: 'AUALA IN (ACCESS)

How Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities are facilitated to gain access to and feel welcome in education, such as curriculum pedagogy and through consultation.

Major PowerUP strategies to facilitate robust pathways access ('auala) to education for Pacific learners included:

- » Valuing and reaffirming Pacific funds of knowledge
- » Developing intentional strategies that support parents' and children's 'auala into learning
- » Instilling the concept of lifelong learning
- » Encouraging self-belief and resilience in learning.

These four strategies are described in more detail below.

Valuing and Reaffirming Pacific Funds of Knowledge

PowerUp valued and celebrated Pacific identities, languages, and cultures as assets, strengths, and the vehicle for learning. It provided opportunities for parents and learners to weave their knowledge and life experiences together in their learning journey. In this way, fa'a-Pacific ways of being and knowing were constantly reaffirmed. For example, elders and parents shared and passed on their knowledge, older students assumed leadership roles and supported younger learners, and the whole PowerUP community of parents, providers, and mentors took care of and responsibility for each other's safety and learning progress. The feelings of belonging and identity generated in the programme were highly motivational for parents' and learners' confidence, sense of purpose, and self-esteem in learning.

Developing Intentional Strategies that Support Parents and Children 'Auala into Learning

PowerUP supported parents' and learners' voices in education and worked to ensure they had accurate information about school systems and opportunities to learn and master the skills needed to engage with teachers and schools. PowerUP also supported the transfer of knowledge and lessons learnt into parents' and families' relationships with schools, with communities, and in other learning contexts.

Instilling the Concept of Lifelong Learning

PowerUP's holistic programme was a reminder to parents and learners that learning is a cumulative process that has its beginnings in the early years and requires setting goals, planning and making choices, and taking responsibility for achieving the set goals.

Encouraging Self-belief and Resilience in Learning

Parents and families learnt that learning takes place at any time and any place: it is not teacher directed or confined to the classroom. In weaving their cultural and school knowledge together, parents and families learnt that there are many 'auala (pathways) to learning: to lead and take the initiative in learning and to "hang in" and negotiate further learning pathways. Participating with other Pacific learners at PowerUP built learner resilience, faith, and self-belief that they could achieve academically and on a par with non-Pacific students.

We have faith in ourselves that we can achieve our academic goals and future studies to get our future carers or jobs. We believe we can be as high achievers as other ethnicities if we commit to our educational purposes.

Student, talanoa, 2017

Other students stated emphatically that irrespective of whether the school or classroom climate was favourable towards them, at PowerUP they had learnt to work and succeed in mainstream education settings and developed greater confidence that they could be successful in learning (2018).

THEME 4: PACIFIC WELLBEING

That the wellbeing of Pacific learners is understood in education in holistic Pacific terms and supported by effective partnerships between Pacific parents, their children and families, and communities in education. This builds on the holistic picture discussed in Chapter 3: PowerUP in Action.

Wellbeing

PowerUP parents and learners demonstrated a palpable pride in being Pacific and in achieving educational success “in our own way”.

I see education differently after attending PowerUP Plus. It's not just pen to paper. With PowerUP, it helps students feel more relaxed about school, especially P.I. students. The programme helps the whole family.

Student, talanoa

Wellbeing was generated in the reciprocal learning relationships developed at PowerUP, and the resilience and empathy generated in supporting each other's learning served as protective factors against bias.

The environment is an excellent place for my kids to enjoy and be part of this community push for the Pasifika people. We are constantly encouraging one another and not pushing each other down because it will not solve anything. We encourage each other to be confident and not afraid to ask for anything if we need help, especially in a classroom.

Parent, talanoa

Parents learnt skills to support their children's education achievement (see also Chapter 4: What We Need to Know to Engage in Education). However, and as has been noted previously, PowerUP became much more than that. In learning together at PowerUP, parents gained a better understanding of their children and the pressures they might face at school. Parents began to set aside time to listen and learn more about their children's interest and strengths.

I am more attentive to them, and I don't try to force them to do their schoolwork straight after school. Instead, I give them time to relax, and then we work together using different strategies.

'Au Lotu parent, talanoa



I learnt the importance of being there and spending quality time with the children. This way, I am supporting them with their confidence in themselves as learners. They are achieving better at school.

FlexiPlus parent, talanoa

At PowerUP, parents also learnt more about themselves, their strengths and weaknesses, and how their behaviours influenced the educational and personal growth of their children.

Well, when I first started, it's not that I was an angry person, but sometimes that's how it looked to others. Now I just bring it down: I listen; I am more patient and really just want what's best for my children. Which is the same for others: we just do it in a different way. Now I stop and listen before I say anything, which makes them more able to talk more to me about school. We have really good conversations [now] ... I do talk more positively with my son, as before I would be hard on him to always get excellence.

FlexiPlus parent, talanoa

In fact, PowerUP proved to be an inspirational, empowering, and transformative experience for parents as well as learners.

[Attending PowerUP], it's a huge change for everyone; not only for my kids but for me [as their mother] too. It helps and encourages me to go back to school so that's what I did. I did Level 4 in ECE. I feel good and need to continue next year.

Parent, talanoa

I am currently studying, and I truly understand the structure of studying. So, it is good to be heard and listened to through the talanoa sessions.

Parent, talanoa

As more fathers began attending PowerUP (2019), indications are that there were improvements in parents' relationships with each other as well, as they began to share responsibility for their children's education.

Yes, I talk with my husband a lot more about our responsibilities in making sure we are both encouraging our children with their education. I am also advising my husband to let the kids go to more school activities, for example, camps and sports ... [and] to be more open and spend more time with the kids. We try to do things together outdoors to get away from the devices, for example, we go to the park or spend time at the shopping mall.

'Au Lotu parent, talanoa

Taking part in this very important programme for me, personally ... it has directed us on the right path and [provided] a better understanding of the education system that our kids are in. It has shown my husband and I ways to identify and address any barriers. [It has shown us] how to improve and support our fānau in pursuing their academic achievements - not only that but also to be aware of the health and wellbeing of our kids and our Pasifika 'āiga.

'Au Lotu parent, talanoa

Parents also developed strong friendships with other PowerUP parents, and these friendships extended to them working together in other educational spaces.

From PowerUP to Homes

Parents reported that, since joining PowerUP, they had become closer as a family.

PowerUP has helped us talk more as a family. This has allowed everyone in the family to be able to express their thoughts and feelings. We communicate about the positive and any worries or concerns that the children may face at school, but mainly we focus on the positive things. An example of this is when I ask the children how their days has been; I will encourage them to give more than a one-word answer. I will help them give an in-depth answer by helping them explain their day and ... reflect on the activities they did at school.

FlexiPlus parent, talanoa

Education becomes a topic of family conversation for the very first time.

Wow! It has made a major transformation around the dinner table or at breakfast.

Parent, talanoa



Schoolwork has become very important to my children now. There is a sense of competitiveness amongst themselves, which I see is crucial to their learning. We talanoa more at home, and I don't have to give instructions and remind [them of] their priorities.

Parent, talanoa



Our conversation is not just [about] getting credits but [about] getting ready and being prepared. We all have dinner, we sit down together, and my kids are telling me what they want; they share; they have better understanding now.

Parent, talanoa

Whereas parents said they used to only instruct their children to “do your homework” and then left them to it, now their support had become more positive and directly focused.

We have been talking about education more now, especially with my daughter getting ready to sit her exams for Level 3. This has allowed us to be more open and speak life into our kids, encouraging them to try their best and [encouraging them] that they are capable of doing whatever it is that they put their minds and hearts to. I want the best for my kids, and it is a joy to see them grow and enjoy the things that they are learning along the way.

Parent, talanoa

Changes in the nature and tone of family conversations were also noted.

I know it has changed how we talk to each other. Right now, our family talk about succeeding, further education, personal and professional development, and other things that we didn't normally discuss before. Coming from Sāmoa, where our jobs ... were considered really good paying jobs, back there, we took things for granted. Living in New Zealand and finding ourselves struggling financially has made us see life from a different perspective and appreciate opportunities. It has made us realise that, sometimes, our comfort zone may not always be our [optimal] comfort zone and that we need to be evolving in our way, so we are able to adapt to the changing world we live in.

FlexiPlus parent, talanoa



Our communications with our children are way better now than before. Mainly [it's] because we are now asking the right questions to them. So, they are able to converse and share with us their concerns, their peaks and lows in school, and any other matters that concerns them and their education.

FlexiPlus parent, talanoa

New Family Routines

New home routines aimed at supporting children's learning were introduced, such as reading with younger children; spending less time on devices; starting a goal-setting book for family members; and moving children to a more visible place to do their homework, where they could engage with parents if they needed support.

He now does his work in the lounge where we can see him. We picked up this advice from the PowerUp sessions we attended this year. He now has a timetable he needs to follow, and we make sure he does his homework in the living room. His marks have now improved from achieved to merit, and it's only been a month now of PowerUp.

FlexiPlus parent, talanoa

Parents began using terms such as "shared journeys" and "working as a team" when talking about their children's learning. Learners used words such as "absolute family strength" and "strong healthy families now and for the future".

My children share with us parents their successes and failures. We are now able to approach the school for assistance. We are working together as a team to achieve in education. The children are regarding homework at home as a normal part of their evening schedule.

Parent, talanoa

There is an absolute positive strength in our family. As children, we see that, with good education, we will have a good, strong, healthy family in the future. It takes everyone to build a good, firm family.

Student, talanoa

Prioritising Family Time

Again, the words used indicated that, while in the past, parents had usually made all family decisions, decision-making was becoming more shared.

We in our family had been too busy for each other, but now we find time to bring the family together - PowerUP has helped with that. We are doing more things together, and we support each other more. The best thing is getting to know each other better.

Parent, talanoa

As a family, we made a decision that we would involve ourselves in church activities on Sundays, and the rest of the week, we focus on work and schoolwork of my children.

Parent, talanoa

[We are] not pressuring them into church activities if it interferes with their schoolwork. We are proud of our culture and our children, but at least we can have open communication to discuss things like this.

'Au Lotu parent, talanoa

There was also evidence of strengthened family unity. PowerUP parents and children reported that their homes had become more positive, encouraging, and motivating environments and that relationships were more open and honest between family members. Children were more open to sharing their strengths, weaknesses, and any challenges they had at school and, in turn, parents were more confident to approach the school and teachers when help was needed. Senior learners said their parents now tracked their academic progress and asked for ways they might provide extra help or support. Learners reported that they had come to understand the sacrifices their parents had made generally but also specifically in attending school meetings.

Mum and Dad are much more responsive to my learning needs now. I have heaps of confidence [that I can] have open conversations about school with them because of the support they give me. Even in my struggles, they still support and encourage me. [Their support and encouragement] help me be a better learner and respect my teachers.

FlexiPlus student, talanoa



THEME 5: CULTURAL BIAS AND RACISM

The attitudes, processes, and practices in education that limit the flourishing of Pacific learners', parents', families', and communities' visibility, language, culture wellbeing, and access.

Cultural bias is experienced in many ways. It is present in school when people – be they school leaders, teachers, administrative staff, or teacher aides – hold attitudes and behave in ways that best “cater for European thinking” but may not be particularly relevant or meaningful for Pacific or non-Pacific parents and students. Cultural bias effectively undervalues and disenfranchises learners. It includes assumptions made about the Pacific learners and the families they come from, the way they learn, and why they do or do not engage in the classroom (see also Smith, 2012). For instance, as has been noted previously, only one-quarter of secondary school students felt very confident to ask teachers for help before attending PowerUP. This confidence increased to more than half after attending PowerUP (Oakden, 2019). This finding indicates that Pacific children want to engage constructively with teachers about their learning, but they need the right environment for this to occur.

It is 20 years since prominent education researchers Anae, Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu, and Finau (2001) drew attention to the unconscious cultural biases in New Zealand’s educational structures and the challenges to educators these biases presented.

Educators must recognise the nature and extent of intra-group diversities; they must take a more pro-active role in becoming aware and informed of these and acknowledge the cultural bias inherent within the structures of New Zealand’s education system. Having done so, such educators would creatively consider their own practices in terms of how to bridge the quite complex cultural and social gaps, or mismatches that exist.

Anae et al., 2001 (page 91)

In 2018, national attention was drawn to unconscious bias and institutional, racism in New Zealand education settings in the New Zealand Speech-language Therapists’ Association (NZSTA) and Children’s Commission report.

When tamariki and rangatahi feel undervalued or underrated because of their culture, this has a negative impact on their experiences in education and [on] their identity.

NZSTA and Children’s Commissioner, 2018
(page 13)

The focus of this discussion is on PowerUP parents’ and learners’ views and experiences of cultural bias and racism, including whether and how such incidents have influenced their engagement in learning. An overarching rider to be kept in mind is that PowerUP was the first time the majority of parents and children had participated in an education programme where 1) they were the majority group or 2) they were part of a programme that recognised, understood, and prioritised *as and by Pacific* ways of knowing and being.

For me [the] most important thing that happened was probably [the] celebration of Samoan Language Week. It made me really respect my culture and identity and my family and where I come from. I really want to do best by it, big time. I think that really helped me change the way I looked at my schooling and how I can do better.

FlexiPlus student, talanoa

Seeing, Naming, and Dealing with Cultural Bias and Racism

In the trusted and culturally affirming spaces of the PowerUP programme, parents and students gained confidence in seeing, naming, and drawing on their growing confidence as informed and resilient learners to deal with incidents of cultural bias and racism. They also learnt that learning could be fun and “cool”.

Naming

Students didn’t use the terms cultural bias or racism in earlier talanoa. However, the many finely nuanced comments made about the differences between PowerUP and their school environment suggested that such behaviours had become normalised for Pacific students.

The PowerUP programme offered learners protection from being intimidated, for example, by teachers going too fast so that the students did not fully understand the instructions, and of being made fun of or becoming invisible in the classroom. Students also used terms such, “no one is left behind” and “comfortableness” in asking for help and said that PowerUP overcame their language challenges.

PowerUP is a programme where students can just come together and share their troubles/ understandings with each other. It’s a place where there is no judgement.

Secondary student, survey

Pacific students are still finding it difficult to learn in the classroom as there is the language barrier ... [There is a] lack of education in the classroom, compared with on the sports field where we tend to excel ...

Student, talanoa



You feel comfortable to be able to ask any questions and can guarantee that you will not be made fun of, and also, [there is] the positive atmosphere from when you arrive to when you leave.

Student, talanoa



They are open to answering any questions about any of the subjects that we are struggling with in school, and with their positive, laidback, and helpful attitude, [it] not only makes learning fun but also makes us want to learn.

Student, talanoa

Occasionally, students talked specifically about discrimination and racism.

Although we feel valued as Pasifika students at school as a whole ... we still, at times, feel discriminated against. We feel that, at times, teachers don’t care to understand our problems as raised from cultural perspectives, [and this is] leading to clash[es and] verbal disagreements, [and] Pasifika students [being] pointed at for being rude. We fairly think that, as a school, students should be allowed to express [themselves] freely, and teachers [should] be more culturally sensitive in addressing issues that we face.

Student, talanoa



Parents were more vocal in stating the relationship between cultural bias and racism, and equity and access issues. They stated that many of the education systems, processes, and language used were not conducive to Pacific children's academic success.

They don't get how things are different for us families that struggle to speak English. [And they] practise cultural models from our country so often, we cannot ask questions because it would be seen as disrespectful.

'Au Lotu parent, talanoa



I think promoting equality within the school will go a long way. Encouraging leadership skills and empowering Pacific parents and students [to understand] their worth and value and to know that they have the same opportunities as other students.

Parent, talanoa



Previously for [child], he has had a lot of help from teachers with his schoolwork and rugby. This year, they have only focused on his sports. They used to talk about his grades – his maths – but all I hear about now from teachers is rugby. This has affected [child's] enthusiasm in school where he is not really fazed about his grades because he is quite far behind. He has been through a lot – grief, pressure from everyone, hurt.

Parent, talanoa



Schools are supposed to be safe, hence we send our children with trust that they will be safe at all means. Yet, I am not 100 percent comfortable with the safety of my children at schools, given the increasing number of fights in schools these days.

Parent, talanoa

At PowerUP, parents and students became more sensitive to distinguishing quality teaching. This, in turn, made them more conscious of cultural bias and racism and more confident to call it out and deal with it.

PowerUP has opened our eyes in terms of how our children [have] been misrepresented at school. PowerUP empowered us parents not to be afraid to challenge the school and make sure that our children received the maximum learning and support.

FlexiPlus parent, talanoa

Acting

In the PowerUP culturally safe learning spaces, parents and students developed a number of skills, strengths, and strategies that served as potential protective factors. The overarching protective factor was their increased belief and confidence in themselves as capable and resilient learners. The reaffirmation and reclaiming of Pacific identity security (being Pacific) in the *as and by Pacific* programme was a major protective strength, as was learners' increased (academic) knowledge and understanding of how to engage in school systems and processes.

The talanoa indicated that many of the PowerUP children began responding differently in class, even where the school environment was not conducive to Pacific children's learning. They became more confident in questioning and talking to teachers.

I have the confidence to challenge what subjects I want to take and what I need to take because they relate what I want to do in the future. Also [I have] the confidence to ask questions in class and outside class, too.

FlexiPlus student, talanoa

As a matter of policy, each PowerUP session sought to strengthen Pacific identity, language, and culture.

We were learning about [the] perspective of yourself, and I took that, and I'm going to use it with school and rugby too. It's helping me learn new things I can apply in school. It's teaching me new techniques for learning and speaking too. It's increasing my confidence to, like, put my hand up when I'm in class, when usually I'm afraid because people will judge [me].

FlexiPlus student, talanoa

Parents' Views on the Changes Needed

Parents and learners emphasised that change is needed because Pacific cultures are not well recognised in schools. Parents stressed their views of what educational measures must be put in place in order to turn the tide and raise Pacific education success. In the 2018 summative evaluation, parents outlined the following five points that were necessary to address cultural bias and racism in classrooms and schools and to grow resilient and confident Pacific learners.

1: Some schools have little knowledge or understanding of what Pacific communities value, and many don't know how to approach Pacific peoples.

I think schools could learn how reciprocal relationships with parents and families help support learning for ESOL students. I think they could learn how to explore Pasifika perspectives on inclusion, beliefs, family expectations, learning and support, and kids with learning disabilities. They could learn how to make personal connections to develop understanding and trust.

Parent, talanoa

Question: Do you think Pacific children and young people are well catered for within our education system? Parent answer: Not a hundred percent, but I think it's slowly getting there. The support and help from the communities, like PowerUP, make a huge difference, and it's making changes in our young kids' lives. The thought of learning [while at the same time there is] caring, loving, and fun, is a great way to encourage kids to embrace education and allows them to do [so]. It is a very positive aspect in their lives.

Parent, talanoa

2: School curriculums are Eurocentric: Parents talked of how PowerUP used Pacific examples in teaching and learning.

I think, at the moment, the curriculum [and] teachers [cater] for European thinking. They don't know what they're doing.

Parent, talanoa



And [it would be better if schools are] just being encouraging, being more positive and caring when communicating with parents. "When you can walk in my world as comfortably as I walk in yours, only then can we be Treaty partners" – Whaea Mata from Parihaka.

Parent, talanoa

3: Some systems and processes schools use to communicate with them are not easily accessible to the Pacific parents and students; at times, school communications led to more confusion for parents.

I also think they could relay information better to secondary students and parents [about] NCEA. I went to Pasifika NCEA night with my eldest daughter at her school, and the terminology they used left me [confused]. A Sāmoan mother next to me left more confused than when she entered.

Parent, talanoa

4: Engaging with teachers is a variable experience for parents and students: Some parents formed excellent working relationships with teachers, but others did not.

With [Child], his attitude was really bad at the beginning of the year; halfway through, things started to change. I never thought that happened because of school, but when I went to the parent interview, which they have changed to talanoa, [I realised what a difference a teacher made]. At the talanoa, the child introduces their parents to the teacher, and [Child] tells me what they are working on. One thing that stood out for me is when [Child] was talking, the teacher was prompting him in a positive way. I spoke to the teacher, and she mentioned that [Child] has a place to go to when he is upset. She doesn't ignore him, and it's not about rewarding him but giving him a safe place to express himself in. It comes down to the teacher, who is there for the kids, who is not there for the money, not just to do the job and leave. [Child] said himself that he loves [Teacher]: "She knows what I need and want to do." [Teacher] is a reliever, and he's not looking forward to his main teacher coming back. [Child] said, "She always growls me, yells at me."

Parent, talanoa

Overall, if you have a teacher [who] cares for the child's learning, it shows in the change of attitude, not even in their school marks but in their attitude; in their effort to try.

Parent, talanoa

Overall, both parents and teachers expressed their strong desire for mainstream education systems to have teachers like the PowerUP teachers.

5: Having Pacific teachers in schools is crucial for Pacific parents and children: if there are no or too few Pacific teachers in schools, Pacific children miss out on Pacific role models and people who understand their cultural perspectives at school.

I think another step would be [to hire] more Pasifika teachers [and have] classrooms equipped with more Pasifika resources.

Parent, talanoa

We think our school should employ more Pasifika teachers who could understand Pasifika students better. We also think non-Pasifika teachers should attend some Pasifika cultural exchange programmes to learn and understand our Pasifika culture and way of life, our patterns of behaviour, and how best to deal with them [using] a Pasifika approach.

Student, talanoa

Evaluator's Voice

PowerUP helps parents and children to address cultural bias and racism when they experience it in other settings. Through PowerUP, parents and children develop skills, strengths, and strategies that act as protective factors. The changes in participants' skills, strengths, and strategies are evident in their talanoa, for example: Pacific parents and children experience a more positive and inclusive learning experience. Parents and children also gain a stronger sense of their potential and ability. Pacific parents realise they can contribute in positive and equal ways to their children's education. Also, the sense of cultural belonging and identity that is encouraged at PowerUP builds the children's confidence and sense of purpose around learning.

Table 16: Differences between PowerUP and Schools, from Parents Who Attended PowerUP

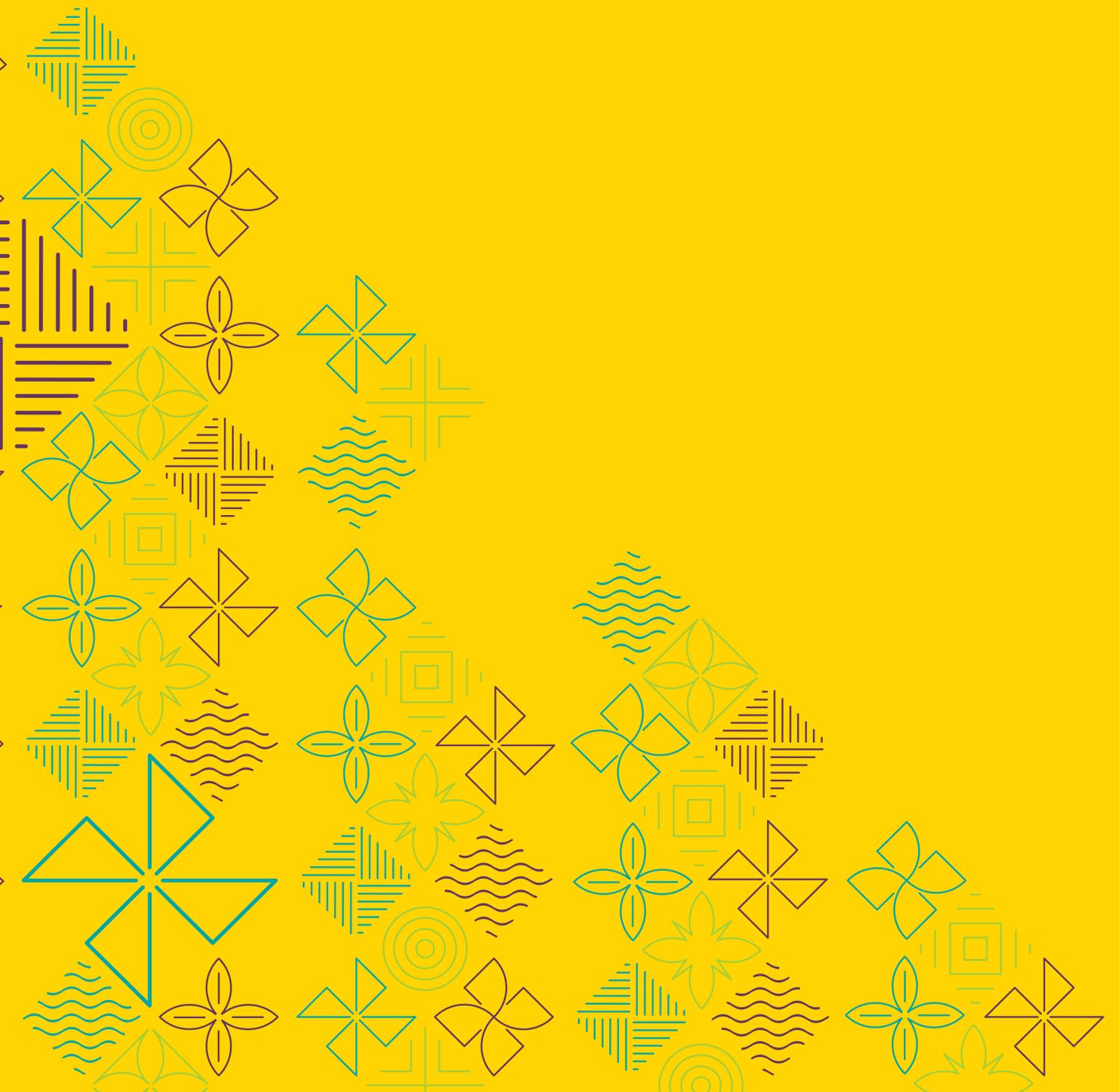
What was present at PowerUP	What was missing at school
A Pacific environment based on Pacific identity, culture, and language, incorporating parents' spirituality. PowerUP knows the families well. Discussion is in a mix of English and different Pacific languages.	School is an environment where, for Pacific parents and students, a Pālagi culture dominates. Pacific identity, culture, and language may be present in Pacific cultural groups but, at times, Pacific aspects of identity, language, and culture come across as tokenism.
Parents find it transforming when they receive explanations of NCEA and other school systems in ways they can understand. Use of multiple languages is important.	At times, sessions at schools are confusing, and communication is not clear. For instance, the way schools explain NCEA is unclear to many Pacific parents.
Pacific parents and children realise they must ask questions to learn. At PowerUP, they can practise asking questions in a culturally safe space. Parents and children quickly become more confident about asking questions at school.	Parents and children feel uncomfortable asking questions – before attending PowerUP, fewer than half the children felt confident asking a teacher for help at school.
Parents focus on how to have learning conversations with children and teachers. After attending PowerUP, parents better understand the education system, and the nature of conversations at school changes to be more focused on learning.	Initially, parent communication with schools may focus on student behaviour rather than learning. Pacific parents often say the only contact with schools is when their children do something wrong.
Children believe the PowerUP teachers deeply care about them.	At times, teachers care and form great relationships, but some teachers do not seem able to engage effectively with Pacific children.
The environment at PowerUP allows children to learn at their own pace, so they understand and become confident to ask questions. Children come to believe they can achieve educational success and want to be at PowerUP. They feel they are in a supportive peer group with others who also want to learn.	The classroom environment may not support Pacific learners. For example, at times, students felt confused and left behind and did not really understand the purpose of the lessons. Many Pacific children did not feel confident to ask questions in class. They felt ashamed or worried about other students mocking them.
The PowerUP learning environment supports taking risks in learning and achieving success. Both the parents and children take on leadership roles. Success builds success and leads to Pacific parents and children being more visible and vocal; willing to ask questions and to partner.	At first, Pacific parents aimed to be polite, and children tried not to stand out.

Source: Adapted from PowerUP evaluation reports (Oakden, 2017, 2018, 2019)



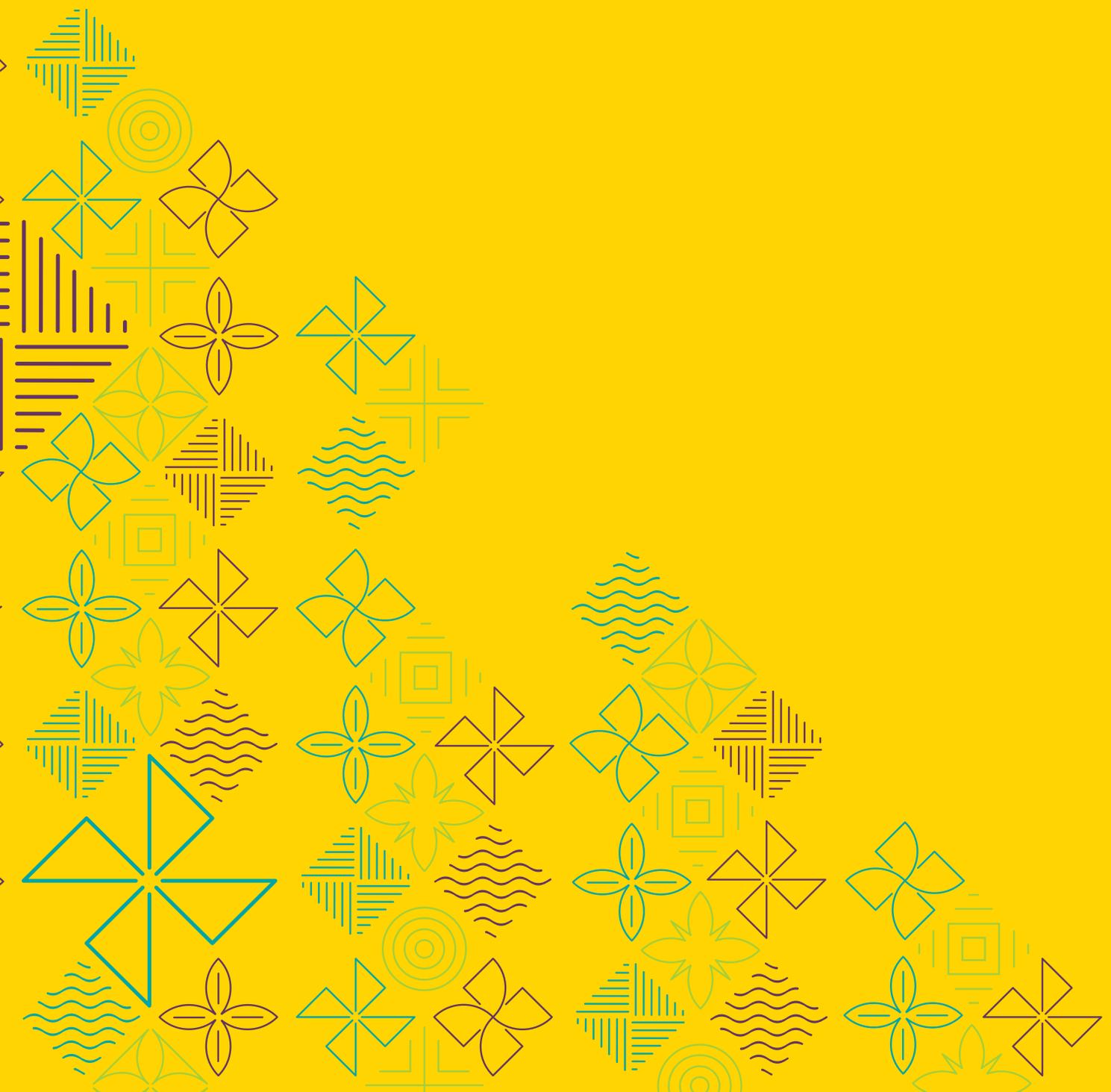
Chapter 6

Concluding Comments



Chapter 6

Concluding Comments



The PowerUP community-led programme is a major contribution to the theorising and practice of culturally safe learning spaces for Pacific parents, families, and communities. Pacific identity, culture, and language (funds of knowledge) were embedded in the PowerUP ways of working and combined with academic (school and other funds of knowledge) to create new knowledge, some of which has been highlighted in this synthesis.

The valuing and validity of the themes of culturally safe spaces for Pacific learners, which are a major programme finding, lie in the fact that these were co-constructed in a process of listening and responding to the voices of Pacific parents, learners, coordinators, and teachers as shared in talanoa. These voices informed PowerUP ways of working and adaptations made in the four-year period covered in this synthesis (2016–19).

The major and powerful synthesis finding is that PowerUP parents affirmed they had a role and responsibility in supporting their children's education journeys, and they learnt ways to explore and master the knowledge and skills they needed to do so. Parents' and learners' increased agency in education was powerfully reinforced by the fact that Pacific identities, language, and culture (funds of knowledge) were valued and present in PowerUP pedagogy and curriculum. When combined with academic (other funds of knowledge and world views), these created the potential for further developing existing understanding as well as new understandings.

Of equal importance, PowerUP parents and learners played an integral role in the co-construction and practice of the concept of culturally safe learning spaces for Pacific learners together with the

PowerUP coordinators, teachers and staff, other PowerUP families, and the Ministry of Education. Each of these groups had a collective and an individual stake in ensuring a quality and robust programme. Parents' and learners' voices (the users of the programme) were gathered in talanoa over the four years covered in this synthesis and used to inform programme planning and organisation and processes.

- » KEQ2: Providing access to quality registered teachers at every level to ensure the right information is available at the right time
- » KEQ3: Ensuring fit-for-purpose, culturally appropriate, inclusive, and effective approaches to best meet the local needs of Pacific parents, children, and families
- » KEQ4: Achieving real results in real time.

The PowerUP *as and by Pacific* model of culturally safe learning spaces signals a significant paradigm shift in Pacific education, from a centralised and generic Ministry-delivered and regulated model to a community-driven and transformative model that, it was proposed, would afford equitable learning opportunities for Pacific peoples, in their own way.

This synthesis has demonstrated how the PowerUP programme addressed these parent-focused goals but became so much more because it gave voice (educational voice) to Pacific parents and children about what education for Pacific people could and should be. The model of Pacific culturally safe learning places that emerged from the over 1,500 talanoa voices (2016–18) and was then tested in the dual provision model (2019) is a foundational and evidence-based marker for further discussion by Pacific peoples and educators, researchers, and decision-makers.

The model highlights Pacific aspirations and expectations of what education for Pacific people could and should be, together with the knowledge and knowledge-building strengths Pacific people bring to learning processes. At the same time, the synthesis has highlighted, quite glaringly, the fragility in Pacific peoples' 'auala into education: that parents and students had a hazy knowledge of the school systems, some of the terms and language used, and the skills needed to engage in education respectfully, strategically, and in an informed way. Much, but not all, of this related to the fact that English was not their first language. The PowerUP programme addressed this need; parents and children identified for themselves and learnt the knowledge, information, and understandings they needed to improve the schooling and education journeys.

The many talanoa stories shared in this report indicate compellingly that PowerUP parents and children learnt that they did not need to be alone in their educational journey. They learnt to "talk education" with others (which had not been a norm), to understand that learning takes place in many places (not only in the classroom), and to draw on the ideas and knowledge that was all around them (as in, "it takes a village"). Equally importantly, as their knowledge about educational processes increased, through PowerUP, so did parents' claiming of their roles, responsibilities, and rights to support their children to reach their fullest educational potential. For many, there was also a transfer of the knowledge and skills they learnt at PowerUP into their relationships with teachers and schools, their other family members, and their connection to their wider communities.

Relationships and role modelling were the glue in the PowerUP programme and the Pacific pathway to learning. Relationships opened up receptiveness to learning for many parents and their children, especially for those who had not experienced success in school. Many relationships in learning and learning as a community were formed at PowerUP, for example, parents' relationships with other parents, with teachers and mentors and invited speakers, and with their own children.

This synthesis has highlighted challenges Pacific parents and children often face in coming to terms with the important role of questioning and communication in learning, and of children's voices. There is evidence that the messages gained by watching teachers and mentors and other adults interacting at PowerUP made parents think about their own relationships with their children and helped them understand the importance of giving priority and more attention to spending family time together and to listening to their children.

Another major point raised was whether you had to be Pacific to be a good teacher for Pacific students. In response? It was the quality of the relationships that counts.

In the *as and by Pacific* programme, where they could see themselves and the values they hold dear, parents and children experienced success and gained resilience in learning as Pacific students. This confidence and self-belief as learners became protective factors against cultural bias and racism. As beautifully coined by one student:

We have faith in ourselves that we can achieve our academic goals and future studies to get our future careers or jobs. We believe we can be as high achievers as other ethnicities if we commit to our educational purposes.

Student, talanoa

The talanoa shared over the four years emphatically reinforced the fact that the programme was a transformative experience for Pacific peoples in showing what learning and schooling can be. It also highlighted the centrality of identity security and self-esteem in learning and as a protective factor against cultural bias and racism. The voices shared in talanoa validate these culturally secure learning spaces as ensuring equitable pathways for Pacific learners.

GOING FORWARD

The PowerUP data, evaluation reports, and case study materials are the most important evidence-based and longitudinal portfolio of Pacific parents' experiences of education in New Zealand. It shows how, in this culturally safe programme, the parents learnt the value of and strengths of their fa'a-Pacific cultural values and behaviours as the bridge to becoming resilient, informed, and confident learners in school systems. These materials are a story of growing self-belief in learning achieved within the *as and by Pacific* learning programme, where "I can see me" and "I can be me" stand at the forefront of learning.

The model of culturally safe places that emerged and was piloted over this period has set an evidenced-based platform for further review and exploration of teacher education, programme and policy making, and school organisation. This model of culturally safe learning spaces contributes to the Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) (Alton Lee, 2003) and sits alongside tikanga Māori education models (see Smith, 2012; Bishop and Glynn, 1999; and Macfarlane et al., 2007).

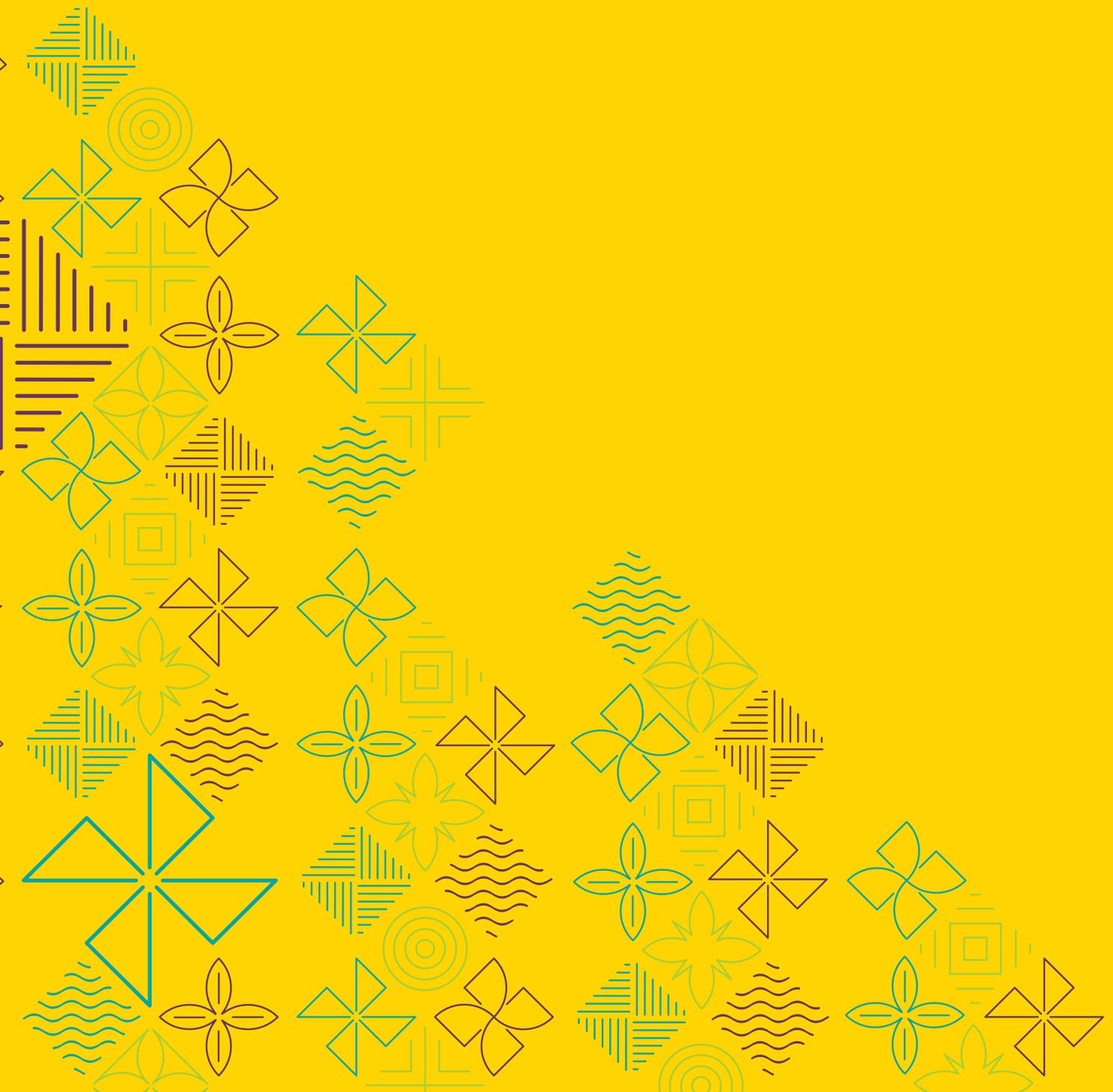
The PowerUP model of culturally safe learning spaces signals a paradigm shift in Pacific education, from a centralised and generic Ministry-delivered and regulated model to a community-driven and transformative model that offers equitable learning opportunities for Pacific peoples. The data raises the need to interrogate the assumptions and meanings underpinning terms and language used in educational discussion if we are to stop "talking past each other in education" (Metge and Kinlock, 1978). In listening and hearing Pacific parents' and children's culturally inflected voices in this way, the PowerUP programme has also opened up wider learning and leadership horizons for Pacific parents and learners, as was visioned in the PowerUP model of engagement. In the 2019 literature review for the PowerUP programme, Chu et al. answers the question "What does partnerships in learning mean, and how is this experienced by Pacific peoples?"

Pacific education is framed as a partnership. Yet Pacific ideas, beliefs, values, and practices, including language and concepts, are at times recognised, valued, and supported by progressions but at other times are ignored. ... Optimal environments and practices likely to benefit Pacific parents and their children are not in place at all schools. These factors include the exclusion of parents and families and communities from various aspects of Pacific children's education, the devaluation of Pacific aspects of Pacific culture and practises, such as language, beliefs, and experiences and a lack of understanding and support for the negotiations Pacific students perform in order to be successful in all the cultural spaces they inhabited.

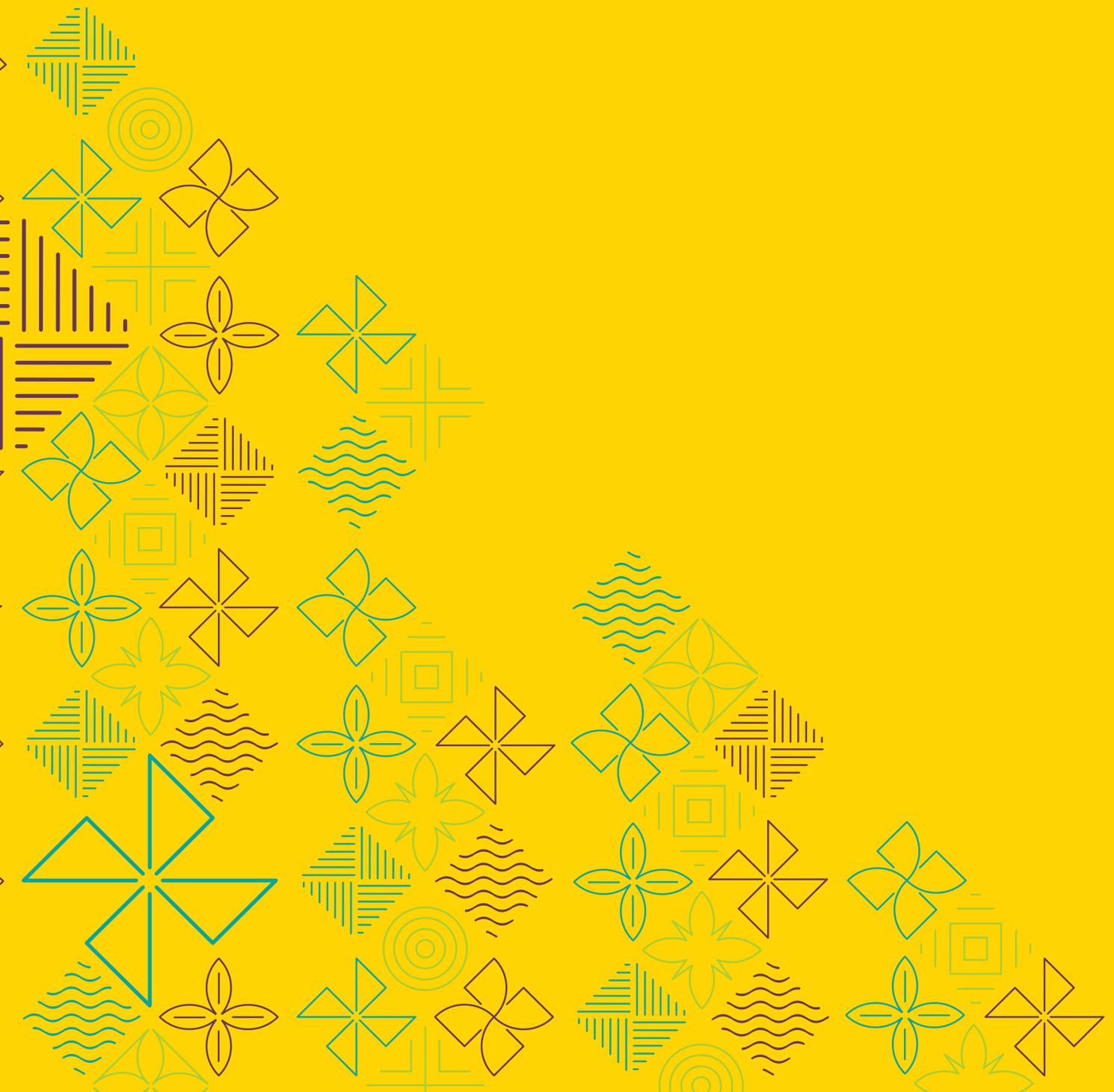
Chu et al., 2019



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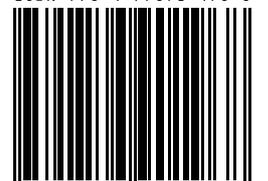
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