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Analysing Pacific teachers' pedagogy inside New Zealand classrooms: A case study using a Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) perspective

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Abstract

Since teachers are one of the most important resources that can effect change and affect student achievement in any classroom, it is important to explore and understand how teachers operate inside the classroom. In her Ph.D. study the author examined the pedagogical practices of three Pacific teachers working in the public secondary school system in New Zealand. Data were collected through classroom observation, individual talanoa with participant teachers, physical artefacts such as audio-visual recordings and examination of related documents such as school publications (Abella, 2016). This article reports on one case study from this investigation into how Pacific teachers' classroom teaching and learning practice approaches can add value to students' learning. The results of this case study example suggest that specific tangible aspects or artefacts for learning, and intangible aspects or appreciative mediation for learning, are both involved in improving student learning and outcomes. However, other factors related to the social support system and the structural regulation of the school system affect the implementation of Pacific teachers' pedagogy in cultural minority classrooms with Pacific and migrant children in particular.

Background

Commentators note that in the new millennium, classroom teaching demands more innovation and improvisation (Sawhney, 2013) to respond to a broad spectrum of learners with different cultures, languages, experiences, economic systems and interests whilst simultaneously maintaining equitable access for all (Tomlinson, 2015). However, despite government initiatives to improve academic progress of students, there are still students who are left behind in the education system in terms of learning and achievement (Dustmann, Machin, & Schoenberg, 2010; Statistics New Zealand, 2010; Zorlu, 2013). The disparities in educational outcomes for ethnic minorities in mainstream schools in particular continuously pose a major challenge. In light of such disparities, how can one address this challenge?

This article has been taken from the author's Ph.D. study that focused on how teachers teach well when it is hard for students to learn (Abella, 2016). The aim was to focus on the teachers' voice, based on the recognition that teachers are key players in creating positive change in education and, in particular, the quality of teaching and learning inside their own classrooms. Through their teaching

and learning practices, teachers are better able to not only improve student learning but also to promote equity in education for all students. The study purposefully selected individuals and sites to understand in depth what teachers do that is of critical importance to Pacific and migrant students' learning. The reason behind purposeful sampling or intentionally selecting participants and sites for the study is in order for the researcher to gather relevant information that would help address the problem and the research questions (Creswell, 2003). Table 1 provides a summary of background information about the teachers who took part in the study.

**Table 1.   Background information of participant teachers**

Pseudonyms	Gender	Ethnicity	Age	Subject taught	Highest educational qualification	No. of years teaching	Grade/ year level observed
Ela	Female	Samoan-European	51-55 years	Math	Master's Degree	21-25 years	Year 9
Eden	Female	Samoan	46- 50 years	Music	Bachelor's Degree	11-15 years	Year 9
Elizabeth	Female	Samoan	51-55 years	Social Science/ ESOL	Bachelor's Degree	6-10 years	Year 9

All teachers taught in a mainstream state school that included over 50% ethnic minority students. Eligible teachers were required to have a minimum of three years' experience of teaching their subjects in the school. Such teachers were assumed to be more knowledgeable about the school system and better adjusted to the school culture than those with less experience. It was also assumed that the participant teachers' years of experiences would mean they were more fully aware of what they do inside the classroom and what needs to be done. Experienced teachers are more likely to easily anticipate, reflect and/or act on initiatives that would promote pedagogy and improve student learning.

Methodology

In the Ph.D. study, CHAT was used as a qualitative methodology with descriptive case study methods of data structuring and analysis to enhance understanding of human activity in a complex learning environment. As a theoretical framework, CHAT seeks to understand human activity and social systems in a real and complex environment. The PhD study used Activity Systems Analysis (ASA) to understand the activity and identify the elements in relation to their contexts and how these elements affected each other. Engeström's activity systems model (Figure 1) was chosen so to identify the following elements as integral to examining the subject, object and outcome of a teaching/learning activity. These include - the tools, the division of labour, the rules and the community on which the teaching is taking place. In this study, the subject is the Pacific teacher who knows and anticipates the object of the activity. The object-orientation includes the motive of the Pacific teachers' use of their teaching practices to mediate and improve student learning. The tools, division of labour, the rules and the community that constituted the wholeness of the activity are also identified. Through this identification the activity system of the Pacific teacher is bounded and explored.

Figure 1. Engestrom's activity system
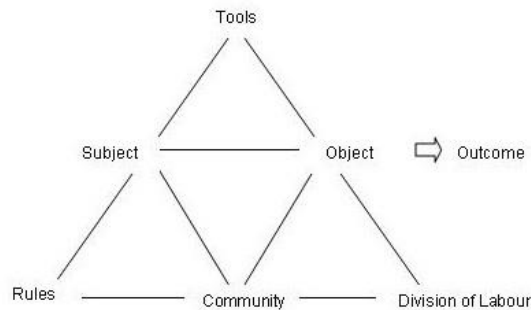
Method

A case study method of gathering data enabled an in-depth exploration of the activity systems of the Pacific teachers involved (Creswell, 2003). This provided a rich and thick description of the situation (Merriam, 1998), This method seeks to address the 'how and why' questions, and to understand a contemporary phenomenon within a real-world context (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) adds that when "the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (p. 16) then a case study is appropriate. In this study, data were generated through one-to-one interactions with participant teachers and the collection of documents and artefacts. Data collection methods included classroom observation, individual talanoa with participant teachers, physical artefacts such audio-visual recordings and examination of available and related documents such as school publications. This method allowed the researcher to apply the ASA to the data gathered.

Classroom observations were completed before individual talanoa with participant teachers ensued. Audio-visual material and documents were collected after the talanoa. The data gathered from these methods comprised each individual case. Each method in data collection represents how the gathered data were used in exploring and answering the research questions as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 1.   Data collection
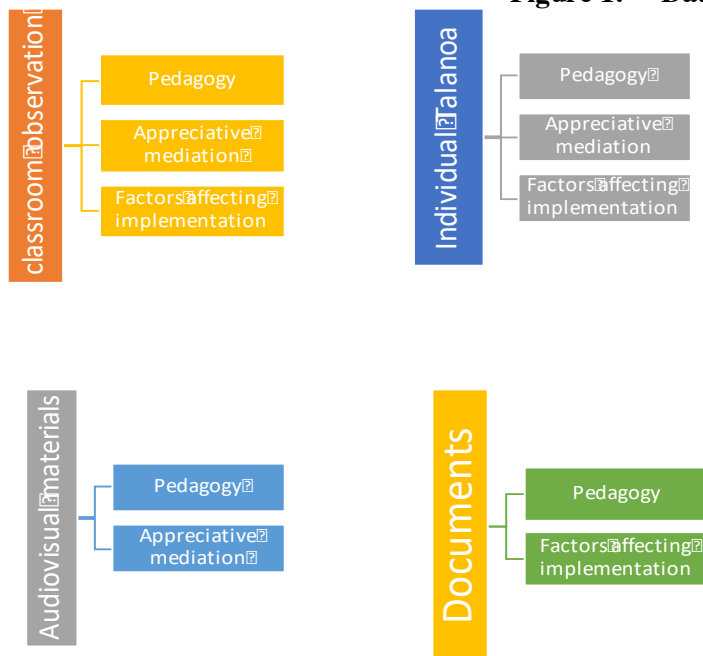
Once data collection was completed, findings were organised and prepared for analysis (Creswell, 2012). The activity systems of each of the teachers in the study were individually analysed with coding, construction of categories, identification of themes and their interpretation completed with the help of NVivo. Themes were analysed for each individual case and across different case studies. The second part of the article includes an analysis of one of the case studies gathered during fieldwork for the project.

Case study analysis – Ela

Ela teaches Math in a school in suburban New Zealand. She has 10 Pacific, two Asian, and two Latin American students in her class. Ela's teaching practices are described through the following subheadings: artefacts for learning and appreciative mediation for learning.

Artefacts for learning

Ela uses various artefacts for learning in her classroom. These include: Chromebooks, Internet and websites, practice test, and smart board. One tool that was very noticeable in Ela's Mathematics class is the Chromebook. Chromebooks look like a typical laptop but instead of storing data on the machine's hard drive, the data is stored in the 'cloud'. Chromebooks were first used in a South Auckland school and later adopted by Ela's school from the same Trust that began the practice in South Auckland. In this excerpt, Ela rationalises the use of Chromebooks as part of a wider shift of teaching/learning delivery in the mathematics programme in the school.

> Our year 9 maths programme has now been developed so it's now all online as well as using textbook or paper. The idea is students are doing a lot of individual learning and they can do it at home for homework. Homework is set online so they can print the paper out. So there's no excuse for not doing homework. Students have access during school and after school time to free printing and use of computers in schools. There is also homework club so there is really no excuse for not doing their homework. Also, we've got the Khan Academy, which is maths available for free. They could learn the whole curriculum just using Khan Academy if they want to. We are developing topics as we go and we have other websites we use as well (Ela, August 2016, p. 142).

Besides being cheaper than a regular laptop, Chromebooks have other various advantages. As she explains, students now have better access to learning.

> Chromebook makes access to learning easier because when they are stuck they could just Google it or they can replay it like in the Khan Academy. There are teaching videos there, which they can play or replay. There's also a hint to teach students. There would be four hints (Ela, August 2016, p. 143).

Through Chromebooks, students can learn at their own pace since they can start or stop activity whenever they are ready. Different Google education apps are readily available for students' use. Parents can monitor the learning of their children and can participate as well. Most importantly, teachers can easily give timely feedback on students' learning progress.

> The idea of using Chromebook was because more and more of our learning is online and because of technology teachers can access students' work and give feedback anywhere and anytime whenever online. The kids are more into ICT and so much of the learning or information is available online so it's just more appropriate to do it online. So, another reason is to increase engagement and learning (Ela, August 2016, p. 143).

Chromebooks are also more economical than purchasing textbooks and they can be used offline, as she explains.

> We got new textbooks but within a year, they are ready for the rubbish bin. They are tagged on. They are ripped. You can't take them home. So by having Chromebooks, you are reducing the cost. Textbooks cost \$25 but by having laptops and Chromebooks we can reduce the buying of textbook since some of them are already available online. Chromebooks can be used without Internet (Ela, August 2016, p. 143).

Ela uses the smart board to put up mathematics questions for students to answer and discuss interactively. She also refers to books for further exercises like word problems that are effective for her English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students.

> On the smart board I might have a file that I just show the questions up. At the moment with Year nine we've got a book that I was able to scan and there are five questions and they are all word problems, just so that the ESOL kids can get used to the wording. I use other resources or I make up mine. So there are a lot of resources available to do a quick data to present in class (Ela, August 2016, p. 144).

A third tool that Ela uses in her class is practice tests. The 'tests' are composed of mathematical skills and problem solving exercises.

> We decided that 20 questions would just be skills without using the calculator, with very little reading or language involved. The second half is problem solving, with all your work problems and calculator. We are also setting the test based on ARB (assessment resource bank) because we think maybe our tests are too low level, so we choose a site where questions are already available at the right level. (Ela, August 2016, p. 143).

These she gives out to students to answer before the start of the class.

Overall, Ela has come to appreciate how digital technology has helped her in her teaching work. She considers learning and using technology as an achievement that assists her in her teaching practice:

> I think most of the concepts of Math are better because I am using technology rather than a textbook. So it's good that now I have choices; that is, textbook, interactive whiteboard, and now laptop. So I've got a lot of choices now to use for teaching and I think some of the ideas are easier to understand now (Ela, August 2016, p. 144).

Appreciative mediation for learning

Ela also utilises a mixture of teaching and learning activities to further student engagement depending on the circumstances and students' needs such as the topic, time of the day or the year level. A lesson may be made up of teaching then activity, or, alternatively, doing a lot of activities more than teaching, as this statement suggests.

> Year 12 are expected to be doing more of their own learning and I just go and check them while Year 9 and 10 you have to do a lot of whole class teaching. Except when they come to you with their laptops, like the juniors; then that's a lot of individual learning. So it's a real mixture, but I prefer to do less teaching because I get tired, but sometimes you just really have to go with it (Ela, August 2016, p. 145).

Another initiative is integrated learning. Integrated learning is a collaborative teaching activity organised between subject teachers like Ela's that involves connecting student work within four

subject areas; Mathematics, English, Physical Education, and Arts. Ela has a particular liking for this teaching tool.

> The whole of my teaching has been changing because of technology. But the biggest change and the one I love was the integrated learning. I did that for one year and it made me realise that I don't like to teach Maths in a traditional way. I like integrated learning because it made Maths real in a real context. But it's a matter of time to sit as a team and develop that (Ela, August 2016, p. 145).

Setting high expectations goes a long way. Ela believes that some low decile schools do not set their standards high enough for their students. She says:

> To me, I think it impacts on what happens in the classroom. [At] one school, when they got strict on uniform, all the other things reduced like lateness, no homework. So you should really address simple areas and it will impact in the classroom (Ela, August 2016, p. 145).

Ela believes that for every amount of information she imparts to the class, a question of clarification or understanding is needed. During classroom discussion, Ela frequently asks the students if they understand the lesson.

> [What] I believe is that if you don't ask that the kids won't say anything. Because our Māori and Island kids won't say, "I need help" and so the assumption is if they don't put their hand up they don't need help, but they do because they are too shy or too embarrassed. So I ask it all the time and most of the time the kids will then put their hands up and say, "no, I need help" (Ela, August 2016, p. 146).

Use of space is a fundamental part of Ela's classroom activity and in students' individual learning, especially with the use of Chromebooks. Ela explains that the school building was structured as the future of teaching and learning:

> The whole buildings were built around the idea of computer pods and laptops. So the buildings were built with the idea of the 21st century teaching and learning to increase engagement in teaching and learning and to increase knowledge with the use of technology (Ela, August 2016, p. 146).

As such, Ela's classroom extends to the communal room where students can use the space and work independently:

> So for me I'm rewarding groups of students who can work independently. [They] can use the community space. So that has been another change, utilising the space (Ela, August 2016, p. 146).

Another advantage of the space is how it influences the organisation and structure of students per house and per year level, thus, resulting in better attendance and monitoring of students:

> Because of the building, we are now structured this way and that is working and it is a positive. There were less attendance issues because the juniors do all their core subjects here. The seniors have to move from house to house. But for the juniors, that's great because they don't need to move so much (Ela, August 2016, p. 147).

One can easily notice that Ela's classroom is adorned with various visual learning aids like photos, posters, diagrams etcetera. Ela assumes that these visual aids will stimulate student learning:

> I like my classroom to have a lot of things in it. So for me personally, I can't focus for very long, so I think if it's got posters, hopefully the kids would look at the posters and would read that. There's also a little bit of talk written on the window (Ela, August 2016, p. 147).

Obviously, Ela's teaching and learning pedagogy included the use of teaching and learning tools in the classroom and demonstrate appreciative mediation for learning in many ways to improve student learning.

Factors affecting implementation of both strategies

While Ela uses a range of teaching skills and tools to promote learning, she also talked about factors that made it more difficult for students to experience pedagogical success. Factors that inhibit implementation of strategies include: students' inability to purchase own Chromebooks, limited availability of Chromebooks at school, limited student knowledge about using Chromebooks, teacher training on Chromebooks, students' improper utilisation of Chromebooks, poor literacy skills of students, big class size, curriculum, time, school interruptions and lack of Pacific elements in the curriculum and system.

Not all students in Ela's class have Chromebooks. Parents of these students claim that they cannot afford it despite the three-year long-term payment of $4.00 a week set up and $45.00 deposit. Ela's teaching in particular has been affected to some extent:

> In one class all the students have Chromebooks. So all the teachers over there are using Chromebooks. In here I'm the only one that is teaching with an expectation that all students have Chromebooks, so it's a bit of unequal usage here at school really (Ela, August 2016, p. 147).

The school has one set of laptops for one whole class that all teachers in the same building must book and borrow. This issue can discourage the use of Chromebooks in teachers' class lessons and activities:

> The teachers are booking the laptops if they need to use it since not all students have Chromebooks. That is why we encouraged parents to buy the Chromebooks. In that way, we don't need to book laptops every time we need it. So that's the problem here; you can't always use the laptop in every lesson that I have because I have to book it. There is a computer room but, again, you have to book the computer room. So that's the problem (Ela, August 2016, p. 147).

Not all teachers are trained on how a Chromebook can be utilised to its maximum capacity, particularly as a teaching and learning tool, as Ela suggests:

> I am thinking that the teachers don't understand how they incorporate Chromebooks into their teaching. I think there is still a lot of learning on behalf of the teachers (Ela, August 2016, p. 148).

Further students do not always maximise Chromebooks as an academic learning tool. At times Ela has observed that students are using it for entertainment and social networking:

> The challenge is for students to really use it for learning, but most students tend to use it for games, Facebook, YouTube. So if you notice during lunchtime in the computer pods, the students are playing games or watching YouTube, there is nothing about learning (Ela, August 2016, p. 149).

New Zealand Pacific-born students are familiar with computers so it is easy for them to use Chromebooks. However, what Ela has found is that other ethnic minority students – especially those born overseas in places such as the Pacific Islands, Asia and Latin America – have yet to learn the basics about computer use.

> For a lot them that's new. They are not used to it. The students from Burma, Tokelau, Samoa, and even Colombia are not familiar because they have never used a computer. We actually have to teach them how to turn it on. So the reaction is more about them

having to learn it and it's quite overwhelming to those migrant students to learn, but they are quite resilient (Ela, August 2016, p. 148).

The practice test is another area of difficulty for ethnic minority students in class, especially the Pacific students whose English is a second language. These student tend to perform better in skills tests than in problem solving tests because the latter involve English comprehension and analysis, as she explains:

> I think the skills test definitely shows up that they can do the Maths because there is no English, but it also shows up the ones that did not study quite clearly. But problem-solving is showing up their weakness and using their Maths knowledge and context as well as literacy issues. So, in terms of measuring it is showing up a lot of deficit but also a lot of good things (Ela, August 2016, p. 149).

Class size is another factor that inhibits effective use of pedagogical innovation and in monitoring students' learning.

> The average class size is meant to be 25 and below but we have had to cut the staff (due to decrease of student enrolment) so some of our classes are hitting 30, nearly 30. Because there are so many special and academic needs, this means the bigger the class, the harder it is to see everybody (Ela, August 2016, p. 149).

Likewise, Ela finds the objective of finishing the curriculum restricting – especially with regard to students' real understanding and learning of the topic – despite the limited time and various school interruptions:

> I do a lot of formative testing during each topic and it shows what students have not learned. So, it's Catch 22; I have to finish the topic in a certain time but a lot of the time the students don't get it anyway. So, by the time they sit the test, I know they haven't learned. We are dictated by both time and the curriculum to finish the set topics/test despite the so many interruptions in school (Ela, August 2016, p. 149).

Ela identified a number of factors that prompt a pedagogical innovation. The first of these, Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) Restorative Practice has influenced her philosophy and practice as a teacher. This systemic approach is an initiative of New Zealand's Ministry of Education. The aim of the programme is to build positive and respectful relationships with students, teachers, staff and the whole school community. Ela recalls:

> Positive Behaviour for Learning, or PB4L, impacts a lot on how you teach and how students learn. It has almost become part of me. It's ingrained in me. It's part of my teaching practice. The programme is a pilot of MOE I see the school has progressed positively with PB4L and restorative together. When I first came here there were always big fights, like 20 kids. But ever since the implementation of PB4L, I can't remember the last fight big fight in the 3-4 years. I feel that this is a big part of the school environment (Ela, August 2016, p. 150).

Ela continues:

> And because of that I notice I speak differently with the kids. So I will say things like what's on the poster, like "are you focused on your learning?" or "do you think you are managing your school?" or "what's stopping you from learning?" or "what do you think you need to do to help you focus on your learning?" rather than telling kids off (Ela, August 2016, p. 150).

The ideals of restorative practice made her think about how she might become a better teacher:

> Also based around the restorative practices, which I've learned being here at the school, which I think is excellent, is that there should always be a positive relationship rather than a negative, put down, get out of my classroom sort of thing. This is

reinforced through the way we speak with the students, the way we talk about something that is not right and they understand that it is causing harm to somebody. So, when there is an issue we have processes but there is also restorative chat at the end. So, the whole restorative practice, I learned a lot from it and I like it because it keeps the relationships better (Ela, August 2016, p. 150).

She has also noticed a difference in her own behaviour

And because of that, I notice I speak differently with the kids. So, I will say things like what's on the poster, like "are you focused on your learning?" or "do you think you are managing your school?" or "what's stopping you from learning?" or "what do you think you need to do to help you focus on your learning?" rather than telling kids off (Ela, August 2016, p. 150).

Support from co-teachers, parents and the community and students are available and helpful to Ela in promoting pedagogical innovation. Teachers, including Ela, participate in facilitating homework club that assists students with their assignments after school hours. Ela works in a team of teachers located in one building. Although they represent different subjects, they all work with the same students. Working with passionate co-teachers who believe in integrated learning makes the collaborative work possible and successful.

So if we have problems with a class we talk about it and we do the same thing because we all know about the child ... I really would like to do integrated learning because I have seen it and it is fun. But you need the whole chain to be on board. Four of us teachers did it and it was great (Ela, August 2016, p. 151).

However, not all teachers agree when it comes to relationships with students, especially in a school in which the majority of students are Pacific, as Ela points out.

I guess for me with the schools like this and other schools I worked, it's all about seeing our kids doing well, which the European teachers would talk about that kids. While we Māori and Pacific teachers, we own it, our kids. While the European teacher wouldn't call it "our kids" but "the kids". They won't own it. So, when our kids fail, we fail, but the European teachers, they don't see it as their failure because they can leave. The only times they mix with Māori and Pacific kids are at work, whereas in my life the only time I mix with Europeans was here at work (Ela, August 2016, p. 151).

Furthermore, there is insufficient Pacific cultural and contextual input in the school system to support this position, despite the fact that the school is predominantly Pacific. Instead, the system remains dominated by mainstream European teachers and European ways of teaching and learning.

I'm not a teacher of Maths but I am a teacher of children, so I want to see the whole child. Being a Pacific school, I see the issues that frustrate me – like the European context, European teachers, European systems, European ways of talking and talking to our kids, the put downs, and the teachers who [reinforce this] without realising (Ela, August 2016, p. 152).

For Ela it is very important that there is an existing relationship and constant communication between herself and her students' families and the community. She comments on the difference between her approach and that of her European colleague to developing community contact.

I live in this community so we have relationship with community and the family. We do home visits, mainly the Māori and Island teachers. The European teachers don't even do that. One teacher said to me, "oh I would be too scared" and I said, "what are you going to be scared about?' Others, they just see it not their job, they would never go on home visit, which is okay. But I think sometimes teachers here, if they don't

know where our kids are coming from, you can't really teach (Ela, August 2016, p. 152).

According to Ela, the hardest thing among Pacific Island students is the island mocking and put downs, which she sees as quite destructive and shameful and which she wants to change.

It's the little Island mocking, which is quite destructive and shameful. But kids get used to it and I get used to it that we don't see it as hurtful anymore so that's one aspect that has to change (Ela, August 2016, p. 152).

Ela promotes students being proactive and sensitive in helping each other by finding solutions or answers to problems and questions respectively among themselves first before going to the teacher.

It's based on our two three before you asked for tea. So that's actively trying to solve the problems themselves instead of always relying on the teacher (Ela, August 2016, p. 152).

Conversely, some students are not keeping their part of the bargain, particularly with regard to their homework.

I'm a bit disappointed because not many of them are using Khan Academy. They could be doing every night. I ask them to do it each night at least for 10 minutes. But they don't have the engagement we were hoping for Chromebooks. There are computers and laptops available during and after school for those who don't have Chromebooks but the uptake is low. And when kids do use the computers they just play games. I've read research about the usage of computers at home. And the high socioeconomic family will use it for learning and the low socioeconomic used it for games, songs and movies. They don't really use it much for learning (Ela, August 2016).

Ela believes that students have the Maths ability but are not doing their homework or catching up online:

Have the kids done their homework and online, they will achieve ... constantly, I would think, "what can I do for them to get the topic, or what resource I can use to get the idea across?" But the biggest area that needs improvement is for students to do their homework and practice and reread it and think about it (Ela, August 2016, p. 153).

Discussion

As can be seen by Ela's comments, she used a variety of artefacts for learning or 'human-made objects' that are found in learning environments (Dalton and Tharp 2002) to engage her students in mathematics classes. These included using information and communications technology (ICT), the creation of student modules and using teaching instruments. Ela used information and communication technologies such as Chromebooks, Internet, websites, smart boards, and LCD projectors. She also used a number of appreciative mediation for learning approaches, including genuine appreciation and collaboration with students, teaching initiatives, a positive disposition and self-reflection. Furthermore, a genuine appreciation and collaboration with students involved having positive relationships with students, valuing students' feedback, knowing the students and their backgrounds, home visitation, having high expectations for students, and boosting their self-confidence.

Ela's teaching initiatives included making learning relevant to students, knowing students' learning needs, maximum proper use of space and making it safe for learning, giving clear instructions and integrating learning with other subject matter. However, Ela's comments reveal that some issues make it more difficult for Pacific students to learn. First, the availability, skills and cost of using ICT

in classrooms. Despite the low cost of Chromebooks, there are still some families in Ela's class who could not afford to purchase Chromebooks for their children. Though the school has an extra set of laptops, availability and accessibility is still limited. Moreover, some teachers lack the skills in maximising the use of Chromebooks inside their classrooms. An alternative way to meet this need is to partner with non-government agencies or companies that advocate corporate social responsibility, that support the educational needs of the students in terms of resources and tools and that provide training needs of teachers particularly in computer literacy. Another way is through networking with local polytechnic and universities to adopt a class or school so that assistance can be extended as part of their community outreach or service learning.

Conclusion

Low student expectations for learning can be attributed to personal, economic, cultural, structural and/or organisational factors. It is recommended that teachers must come together and try to be aware of the reasons why their students are behaving poorly and disengaged with schooling. Based on the experience of Ela, some of the best ways to find out is for these teachers to do home visits, personally check the situation of the student and dialogue with their parents. Teachers must also be aware of their expectations that somehow dictate how they handle their students. Having expectations is natural. It cannot be suppressed or avoided. However, it can also cause damage, particularly if teachers communicate negative expectations unconsciously. Therefore, teachers should be aware of their expectations and monitor these so they will change appropriately based on the current progress of the students (Good, 2002). Furthermore, in developing expectations, teachers should consider students' full range of abilities. He or she should keep his or her expectations flexible, current and positive while still remaining realistic.

Professional development for teachers contributes to students' success and enhances positive outcomes for teachers. Based on other studies, professional development equates with effective teachers (Lattuca, Bergom, & Knight, 2014). Supporting teachers to continuously take part in discipline-specific professional development, benefits not only teachers' personal and professional growth but also results in good outcomes for students as well. Therefore, it is recommended that continuous education or training of teachers should be institutionalised rather than optional. Such training is likely to promote their holistic wellbeing, especially in terms of being culturally sensitive and knowledgeable.

Finally, Ela's comments reveal an ongoing lack of relevance and cultural sensitivity in mainstream curriculum content. Samu (2006) asserted that the New Zealand education system does not accommodate all students well, particularly those who have different ethnic and cultural backgrounds from the majority, which is Pakeha. To establish relevance in the subject among Pacific students, the secondary social studies curriculum must incorporate Pacific material. Integrating topics on indigenous culture or cultures of ethnic minorities are essential to capture the interest of students, motivating them to learn and aspiring them to succeed in school. This approach will not only foster cultural awareness among students but will also develop better understanding and sensitivity towards fellow Pacific students among non-Pacific New Zealanders.

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