CONTRACT RESEARCH

Literature Review on the Effective Engagement of Pasifika Parents & Communities in Education

Report to the Ministry of Education

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LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT OF PASIFIKA PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES IN EDUCATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

This literature review on the *Effective Engagement of Pasifika Parents and Communities in Education* was commissioned by the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Group of the Ministry of Education (Ministry). It is back grounded against the Pacific Islands School-Parent-Community Liaison (PISCPL) Project which was launched by the Ministry in 1996, to support the more effective engagement of schools and Pasifika parents and communities in education in order to raise the achievement of Pacific Islands students in mainstream New Zealand schools.

The review explores both the conceptual and research based literatures on home-school relationships. The literature examined was sourced from a number of data bases, in addition to reports and publications by the Ministry of Education, a range of educational journals and texts, conference papers and unpublished theses. The analyses are based on a combination of a traditional narrative review and an interpretive synthesis.

Monocultural Paradigm

The review provides a three-pronged thematic overview of the international, as well as Pasifika-referenced literature related to the generic field of home-school relationships. These themes include the *monocultural paradigm*, underscored by Aotearoa New Zealand's colonial past and highlighted by the dominance of an Anglo-European education system. This approach works to disadvantage families from cultures with differing values, beliefs and first languages to the dominant culture, and all too frequently results in a disparity of academic achievement (Harker & McConnochie 1985; Nakhid, 2003). The compounded effects, and proposed solutions to acculturation and cultural mismatch have tended to be addressed in the literature by two differing perspectives: institutional practices, and theories of socio-cultural deprivation.

An Alternative Paradigm

A significant, and growing body of research supports the call for an *alternative paradigm*, in which all partners in the education process: parents, children, schools, teachers, and communities are involved in the co-construction of shared knowledges. Proponents of an alternative paradigm (Airini, 1998a; Bishop, 2003; Podmore and Sauvao, 2003), propose a bicultural/multicultural perspective, which includes an equity pedagogy within an holistic approach that supports learners physically, emotionally, spiritually and communally. An integral part of such a perspective is support for first language maintenance, bilingualism and biliteracy.

Relationships

Key to the effective engagement of Pasifika parents and communities in this revisioned approach to inclusive education, are the *relationships* which must be fostered amongst all partners. Such relationships are, in fact, a prerequisite to learning (Hawk, Tumama Cowley, Hill & Sutherland,

2005). The literature that discusses how relationships can best be fostered, explores issues around communication, responsibility and roles.

Identified Gaps

Two key gaps in the literature to date are identified. The first is the absence of a micro-political perspective - an approach which examines how human behaviour and purpose influence relationship dynamics (Bacharach & Lawler, 1980; Ball, 1987; Blasé, 1991). The second gap identified is the minimal literature that refutes deficit theorising as a reasonable explanation for the poor achievement of children from ethnic minority/low income families. Much literature is written from a deficit perspective, thereby absolving schools of responsibility in rectifying the cultural aspect of the problem. There is some discussion that home-based initiatives can help to address this (Walberg ,1985), but there remains considerable scope for ongoing research into how this is best effected.

Barriers

A number of barriers to the development of effective home-school partnerships for Pasifika communities have been identified from this analysis of the literature. These include barriers associated with notions of culture and acculturation; language needs and deficiencies; strained economic resources (both those of families and those of government); parents' uncertainties, and schools' preconceptions. Given the common aim that parents and schools share of enabling students to achieve better educational outcomes while affirming their own culture, there is a need to commit to practices that overcome all such barriers to Pasifika parent and community engagement in education.

Finally, a number of strategies that support parent community - school engagement identified in the literature are presented. These are generally focused around empowering, consultative, collaborative communication, that is underpinned by principles and practices of inclusion, rather than marginalisation.

In summary, the literature review highlights the need for schools and communities to develop a shared understanding of what effective home - school partnerships in education mean in terms of practice. Research conducted within a framework that acknowledges the cogency of cultural influences and the inherent challenges associated with a monocultural paradigm is requisite to understanding how Pasifika parents, communities and schools might work towards reciprocal engagement. The review demonstrates that there is broad scope within home-school relationships for increased reciprocity and power sharing.

INTRODUCTION

Aotearoa New Zealand's population of Pacific Island peoples is a multi-ethnic, heterogeneous group comprising different languages and cultures. This diversity is recognised by the authors of this literature review. We also acknowledge the cultural and ethnic complexities inherent in this literature review that explores the factors underpinning the effective engagement of Pasifika parents and communities in education. Throughout this review, the term "Pasifika peoples" is used to describe people living in New Zealand who have migrated from the Pacific Islands, or who identify with the Pacific Islands because of their ancestry or heritage. Terms used to describe these people vary considerably, for example Pacific Island, Pacific Nations person, Polynesian, Pacific Islander. The Ministry of Education uses the term "Pasifika peoples' to differentiate with other people who view themselves as being Pacific, based on New Zealand being a country in the Pacific region.

Pasifika peoples are not homogenous, hence the use of 'peoples' rather than 'people'. The terminology includes those peoples who have been born in New Zealand or overseas. It is a collective terms used to refer to men, women and children who identify themselves with the islands and /or cultures of Samoa, Cook Islands, Tonga, Nuie, Tokelau, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and other Pasifika or mixed heritages. The term includes a variety of combinations of ethnicities, recent migrants or first, second, third, fourth and subsequent generations of New Zealand born Pasifika peoples.

Because of the scope of this review, a pan–Pacific approach has been taken in organising the literature. This has facilitated the collation of the relevant generic international conceptual and research based studies, as well as literature pertinent to Pasifika groups generally. A more in depth literature review in the future might well collate ethnic specific studies that highlight inter and intra-ethnic nuances (Anae, Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu & Finau, 2001).

Scope

This literature review explores both the conceptual and research based literature related to the effective engagement of Pasifika parents and communities in education. The conceptual literature encompasses basic writings in the field, and provides a theoretical base for the review. As well as this theoretical and conceptual literature, the review also considers previously conducted research in the field. A number of data bases were searched to glean the research studies conducted to date, in addition to reports and publications by the Ministry of Education, a range of educational journals and texts, conference papers and unpublished theses.

The review first provides a thematic overview of the international, as well as Pasifika-referenced literature related to the generic field of home-school relationships. Second, gaps in the literature to date are identified, to inform potential growth areas for ongoing research. Third, the challenges to Pasifika parent and community engagement in education are noted. Finally, a number of strategies that support parent community - school engagement that have been identified in the literature are presented.

Definition of Terminology

Coxon, Anae, Mara, Wendt-Samu and Finau (2002) noted the importance of conceptual clarity around the key concepts of *culture* and *ethnicity,* in order to minimise the inherent risk of misunderstanding amongst readers. The following section provides some definition of these terms as a framework for the wider review of the literature. A definition of *partnership* within the context of parent community-school engagement is also provided.

Culture

Weiss, Kreider, Lopez and Chatman (2005) define culture as "a set of values, norms, beliefs and symbols that define what is acceptable to a given society, are shared by and transmitted across members of that society and dictate behavioural transactions within that society" (p.137). Helu-Thaman (1998, p. 120) adds to this definition suggesting that culture is:

> *A way of life of a discrete group, which includes a language, a body of accumulated knowledge, skills, beliefs and values. I see culture as central to the understanding of human relationships and acknowledge the fact that members of different cultural groups have unique systems of perceiving and organising the world around them. I also believe that the ways in which we have been socialised largely influence our behaviour and the way of thinking as our world view.*

Culture however, is dynamic and constantly evolving in response to influential social and physical structures and processes such as the family and school (Mara, 1998). Morrish's (1996, in Coxon et al. 2002, p. 6) definition of culture encapsulates this more fluid understanding of culture, suggesting that:

> *Culture is not merely transmitted, it is made; it is not simply historical and related to the past, it is functional and vitally concerned with the present; it is not the collective catalogue of discrete objects, ideas, mores and pieces of knowledge, it is configuration of the total inheritance and way of life.*

Ethnicity

Ethnicity takes the notion of culture to a deeper level in that it focuses upon how one group's collective beliefs and experiences within a given culture, differ from other groups. Gibson (1976, p.12) summarises this, noting that:

> *…ethnic groups are essentially social and political rather than cultural. Traditional customs are used as idioms and as mechanism for group alignment. They serve to form the boundary and to maintain the group's exclusiveness. Ethnic groups call upon their cultural distinctiveness, not out of conservatism or traditionalism but rather as a tool for maximising group interests. The degree to which a group emphasises or de-emphasises cultural differences is determined by the degree of profit to be gained.*

Partnership

Partnership with parents is an ideal with a long history in relation to education. Although varying interpretations of the term are inevitable, partnership is underpinned by a broad understanding that "parents and teachers… [have] complementary roles in relation to children's education and …that children benefit when the home-school relationship is characterised by reciprocity, trust and respect" (Beveridge, 2004, p.3). Further, Epstein (1992) posits that home-school partnerships are of vital importance for the three parties involved – schools, students and families.

A multiplicity of international educational and psychological research from the 1970s to the present day, attests to the link between parental involvement and children's educational achievement (for example Ball, 1998; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Coleman, 1998; Comer & Haynes, 1991; Delpit, 1995; Epstein, 1992; Fine, 1990; Hewison & Tizard, 1980; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Brissie, 1987; Hysop, 2001; Martinez & Velazguez, 2000; Peterson, 1989; Robinson, 1994; Simich-Dudgeon, 1986; Weiss, et al. 2005; Wolfendale & Bastiani, 2000). The literature that specifically explores the effective engagement of Pasifika parents and communities in educational partnerships is markedly less prolific (for example Coxon, Anae, Mara, Wendt-Samu & Finau, 2002; Mapa, Sauvao & Podmore, 2000; Podmore, Sauvao & Mapp, 2003; Sauvao, 2002; Siilata & Barkhuizen, 2004).

Despite the dearth of current literature that specifically explores issues surrounding effective home-school interactions in a Pasifika context, consideration of culture and ethnicity, and their implications in educational contexts, are of paramount importance if we are serious about embracing diversity and building engaged home-school partnerships.

Previous Reviews

One major literature review that specifically explored Pacific Island issues in education has been conducted in Aotearoa New Zealand to date (Coxon, Anae, Mara, Wendt-Samu & Finau, 2002). In addition, an independent evaluation report of the PISCPL project conducted by Mara (1998), included a literature review that was inclusive of both international and Aotearoa New Zealand based research that explored the field of home-school relationships. Both these reviews identified the lack of literature specific to building home-school-community relationships in Pasifika contexts. This situation remains somewhat unchanged, three years later. The present review then, draws on the wider base of international conceptual and research studies to augment the work done in Pasifika contexts, to identify key issues underpinning effective parent community-school engagement.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research review plays an important role in the dissemination of knowledge and in shaping further research and practice. Therefore the methodology of research synthesis is fundamentally important (Glass, McGraw & Smith, 1981; Dunkin, 1996). Traditional narrative reviews (Johnson, 1989), meta-analyses (Glass, 1976; Hunter, Schmitt & Jackson, 1982) and best-evidence syntheses (Slavin, 1986), are three frequently used methods of synthesising primary research in key education journals.

Methodology

This review draws on the strengths of narrative review, and a qualitative interpretive research approach, rather than the aggregative methods typical of a meta analytic methodology. In a meta-analysis, findings from different studies are expressed in terms of a common metric called the effect size. In general, the effect size is the difference between the means of the experimental and control conditions divided by the standard deviation (Glass, 1976; Wolf, 1986). Following a closer examination of the literature, this methodological approach was deemed inappropriate, given the dearth of research based studies in the area of analysis, available to date.

Qualitative Interpretive Approach

The purpose of an interpretive synthesis of qualitative research is not to generate predictive theories, but to facilitate a fuller understanding of the phenomenon, context or culture being explored (Cooper, 1989; Dunkin, 1996). With this in mind, conceptual as well as methodological studies relevant to the topic under consideration were included in the synthesis. Given the focus of this literature review, the combination of a traditional narrative review and an interpretive synthesis, provided the most useful methodological mechanisms. Further, this approach to synthesising the literature has facilitated an inductive and interpretive approach, rather than a rigid set of procedures and techniques characteristic of more quantitative methodologies.

Because of the paucity of literature specific to Pasifika parent community and school partnerships, this review draws on a collection of the more generic relevant international literature in the period 1980-2005. This literature provides an overview of the underpinning conceptual and research based understandings around parent community-school partnerships that can inform Pasifika specific practice.

This review extends the generic international literature base by examining Maori and Pasifika research relevant to the field of investigation. A number of sources of literature were consulted for the review including: Academic Search Premier, ERIC, Expanded Academic, Index New Zealand, MasterFILE Elite and Professional Development Collection databases; reports and publications by the Ministry of Education, a range of educational journals and texts, unpublished theses, conference proceedings and keynote addresses.

Selection of Thematic Categories

The thematic categories selected for presentation of the findings arose from an analysis of the conceptual/theoretical and research bases found in the literature. Merriam (1988) writes, "thinking

about one's data-theorising is a step toward developing theory that explains some aspect of educational practice and allows one to draw inferences about that activity" (p.141). Speculation, then, is the key component to contributing to theory in a qualitative study. Bodgan and Taylor (1975) developed Merriam's idea, defining data analysis as "the techniques you can use to make sense out of and to learn from the hundreds, or even thousands of pages of recorded statements and behaviour …" (p.79).

The analysis and interpretation of secondary conceptual and research data in this literature review, sought to describe and explain the pattern of relationships between parent - community - schools, within a set of conceptually specified analytic categories (Huberman & Miles, 1994). The literature revealed a number of recurring themes and/or issues that appeared to characterise parent community – school relationships in educational contexts. Hence, the analytical categorisations for organising the wider body of conceptual and research based studies, were established as a result of analyses of the literature review.

The themes that are used for purposes of organising the literature are:
- A Monocultural Paradigm: the background and resulting institutional practices, acculturation and cultural mismatch
- An Alternative Paradigm: bicultural/multicultural perspectives, including equity pedagogy, a holistic approach and spirituality
- Relationships: parents, children, school, teachers, community – communication, responsibility, roles.

FINDINGS

A Monocultural Paradigm

An education system exists within a social and cultural context. It moulds and is moulded by historical events and circumstances, and by the pattern of social relations in society (Irwin, 1988). No person is without a cultural identity, be that a singular or plural identity. Aotearoa New Zealand is a country which encompasses many cultures and ethnicities. Synchronous with this, is an egalitarian ideal that our education system will serve the families of the multiple cultures and ethnicities represented in schools (Schick & Donn, 1995). In reality however, the dominance and monocultural bias of Anglo-European culture, and the knowledge, values and modes of social interaction inherent in this, pervade the education system to the extent that acculturation is a social norm.

Consequently, families from a culture other than that from which the underpinning values and understandings of an education system originate, may be disadvantaged within the system. As Harker and McConnochie (1985) note, "Because the curriculum and teaching methods are not drawn from the 'general culture' but from the dominant culture, education cannot offer equality of access or opportunity….social and ethnic differences will mean that only those from the dominant culture will have the 'cultural capital' necessary to benefit from the system." Whilst there are notable exceptions - for example within the generic ethnic category "Asian", National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) results show significant numbers of minority students proportionally out performing all other students, including the majority ethnic culture, - minority students, particularly those from low socio economic backgrounds, remain potentially disadvantaged.

Research to date that provides a theoretical perspective of the influence of cultural processes on racial and ethnic minority family involvement in schools, focuses upon two specific cultural processes: *acculturation* and *cultural mismatch*.

Acculturation

The process of acculturation (Moreno & Lopez, 1999; Weiss et al. 2005), that is, internalising the dominant culture's values and identity, can cause acute difficulties in school contexts (Kelty, 1997; Lambourne & Zinn, 1993; Rodgers & Lyon, 1999). Perhaps the single overarching issue inherent in acculturation processes is that it locates the 'problem' of under achievement of ethnic minority students, including Mäori and Pasifika, with the learners themselves. Bishop, (2003) and others have written about the difficulties associated with acculturation (Airini, 1992; Gorinski, 2005a & b; Nakhid, 2003; Podmore & Sauvao, 2003). Most of this research focuses on the underachievement of Pasifika students generally, rather than upon parent community-school engagement.

Bishop suggests that the dominance of "Pakeha knowledge codes and the monoculturalism and monolingualism [are] attendant upon a long history of assimilations education" (2003, p. 222). This continues to result in patterns of non-participation by many children from minority groups. Bishop suggests that the solution to this issue lies in the wider principles of indigenous self-determination and local control, and advocating the theory and practice of *Kaupapa Maori* (Maori philosophy) as an alternative approach to inform mainstream practice. He argues that "the solutions to

marginalisation do not lie in the culture that marginalises…rather solutions…can be addressed by reference to Maori experiences…in ways that will eventually benefit all students" (p. 223).

Relevant to this review, Bishop suggests that family-school interaction patterns must draw on, and recognise, cultural 'sense-making processes' - ways of knowing. That involves acknowledgement of the cultural knowledge children bring to school, and contesting the differential cultural capital ascribed to them in mainstream schooling contexts.

Nakhid (2003) endorses Bishop's work, reasoning that schools fail to recognise and value Pasifika students' own constructing of themselves – a process Nakhid refers to as the "identifying process" (p.300). The valuing of this process by schools is considered a necessary condition for academic success. Further, Nakhid argues that school responses to their perceptions of Pasifika students result in acculturating structures, processes and practices that operate to perpetuate Pasifika underachievement. To address this situation, Nakhid advocates that Pasifika students must be able to "bring, form or connect with their own representations of who they wish to be…these representations, instead of being defined by the dominant culture, must originate from the students' own process of construction" (p 301). She adds that if the perceptions held by the school are incongruent with the perceptions students hold of themselves, then naturally, "the schools' responses to those students would be inappropriate" (p. 304).

Airini's (1992) research involved a review of School Journals to determine the representation of ethnic groups and cultures. She found that: "the majority of figures in the text (65%) and illustrations (63%) were Pakeha. Non-Pakeha characters were often presented in stereotypical formats…Names of people, places or objects were found to make up the majority of non-English language use" (p. 7). This study highlighted the degree to which acculturation processes can insidiously occur, even in an education system that espouses to serve the needs of multiple cultures and ethnicities.

Podmore and Sauvao's (2003) research further supported Airini's findings. They conducted interviews with parents and early childhood teachers exploring inclusion issues around minority students' education. Podmore et al. found that there was a lack of ethnic language visibility – either printed or oral, or Pacific resources in schools. This provided further evidence that despite endeavours to the contrary, learning and teaching resources represent the mainstream culture; they serve to acculturate other cultures, and in so doing, marginalise minority groups.

Similarly, Gorinski (2005a) suggested that cultural misunderstandings arising from acculturation difficulties are a very real barrier to home-school partnership. In her evaluation of the Pacific Islands School Community Liaison (PISCPL) project, Gorinski noted that "parents collecting children from school early, a lack of explanation for failing to send children to school; not replying to school notices and not attending school meetings are all examples of how cultural misunderstandings have the potential to impact negatively" (p. 16) upon the building of parent-community–school partnerships. Cultural mismatch presents similar difficulties in school contexts.

Cultural Mismatch

Cultural mismatch occurs when a family's beliefs and values conflict with those of the dominant culture (Weiss et al. 2005). Such conflicting beliefs frequently result in students and their parents

exhibiting behaviours and attitudes that are culturally appropriate in their home/community environment, but are incongruous with the school's code of conduct (Garcia Coll & Magnuson, 2000). In this way, cultural mismatch impacts upon family involvement in schools.

For instance, Garcia Coll, Akiba, Palacios, Bailey, Silver and DiMartino's (2002) research found that Cambodian immigrant families traditionally believe that schools are the domain of teachers as experts. To 'interfere' in school life is regarded as both inappropriate and disrespectful. Consequently, many Cambodian parents are perceived to be disengaged from school processes, when in fact the issue is one of a monocultural perspective being applied to behaviour which is culturally appropriate in a Cambodian context. A Pasifika example is noted in Fairburn-Dunlop's (1981) study of Samoan parents' perceptions of New Zealand schooling. Parents' supported the schools' instructional aims, but believed that schools also have a responsibility to transmit high moral standards to students "being those associated with faa Samoa: the following of the teachings of the church and 'right' behaviour, with the pupils showing respect to the teachers" (p. 342).

The literature is rich in accounts of similar misconceptions, grounded in cultural understandings around student under achievement and parent interaction with schools. For example, Gorinski (2005b) noted in the Parent Mentoring Evaluation, that unquestioned Pasifika parent obedience and respect for authority can preclude their engagement in inquiry focused dialogue with teachers and school personnel. This can however, be perceived as a lack of interest by schools that tend to operate from a monocultural paradigm.

Various agency reports, Ministry evaluations and academic research attest to the lack of academic achievement of Pasifika students in New Zealand education. Low levels of achievement in early literacy skills appear to set the trend for increasing numbers of Pasifika students leaving secondary school with no formal qualifications, and a disproportionately low percentage enrolled at tertiary institutions (Nakhid, 2003).

Other studies note however, that Pacific Islands households generally have high aspirations for their children, place a high value on education, and are not therefore, significantly different in their attitudes to the overall population (*Survey reveals interesting results,* 1996; Timperley & Phillips, 2003). The challenge then, is to explore why schools are failing to deliver successful educational outcomes for this group of students. The explanations and related strategies suggested in the literature generally fall into two categories that are aligned with a monocultural paradigm. These include: institutional practices, and socio-cultural deprivation.

Institutional Practices

Institutional practices are embedded in an awareness that expressions of culture, both unconscious and internalised, are reflected in "actions, reactions and interactions" (Pascoe, 2005, p. 15). These practices impact upon both student achievement as well as parent-community-school interactions. Teachers' low expectations of children from low socio-economic and/or ethnic minority backgrounds, and a prevailing belief within school communities that there will always be disparities in the achievement of Mäori and Pasifika students in comparison to European students, is prevalent historically amongst teachers. Such attitudes have been challenged by some, for example, Timperley (2003) and Timperley and Phillips (2003), who noted sustained improvements in student literacy as a

result of professional development for teachers that focussed on setting higher expectations of student performance. This finding shifted the locus of responsibility from students to teachers.

A longitudinal, cross-sectional study conducted by Phillips, McNaughton and McDonald (2004) also explored the impact of teachers' professional development in early literacy instruction. This study concurred with Timperley et al's. (2003) research, concluding that "it is possible to raise [the] achievement [levels of] minority children in schools serving low socioeconomic communities to near national levels" (p. 2).

Other studies by McNaughton (2003) looked at literacy programmes for at-risk children, specifically the instructional conditions and optimal opportunities for learning. McNaughton promoted profiles of developmental features, determined by research. These included "experimental intervention studies" (p. 2) that took cognisance of the fact that "development is a product of social and individual forces" (p. 3). To this end he acknowledged the importance of parent community involvement in children's literacy education

McNaughton's findings confirm earlier work by Wilkinson (1998) around factors contributing to the "language gap" (p. 13) between first and second English language speaking students. Wilkinson (1998) concluded that teachers' sensitivity to individual students' needs, teacher instructional practices, and school organisational practices were key factors influencing minority student achievement, not inability, family background, or a host of other explanations grounded in a monocultural deficit educational paradigm.

A later study in this area (McNaughton, Lai, MacDonald & Farry, 2004), notes that even where gains in literacy have occurred, there is a wide disparity in comprehension task achievement for Maori and Pasifika children, and a further related concern, regarding the sustainability of high quality intervention programmes. McNaughton et al. suggest that a key to sustainability is the building of strong professional learning communities. However, addressing ongoing disparities necessitates both researchers and teachers' commitment in their practice, to reflecting children's "local and global cultural identities" (p. 186) so that multicultural rather than monocultural institutional practices become normalised.

Socio-cultural Deprivation

While the vast preponderance of current writing on socio-cultural deprivation deplores the 'deficit' description of minority students, the literature evidences that such beliefs are still widely held in the community (by both dominant and minority ethnic groups), and, just as detrimentally, by many teaching practitioners (Bishop, 2003). This perspective readily accommodates the causality explanation of colonialism and its legacy of cultural and linguistic dominance and subordination as a key contributor to a myriad of negative social indices for Maori and Pacific Islanders, including low educational achievement. The deficit lens of socio-cultural deprivation assumes that students and their families are simply "not adequately prepared for the 'scholastic necessary' [sic] of the modern classroom" (Bishop, 2003, p. 223). This perspective is premised in the position that family resources, or their lack, are what create educational disadvantage, rather than the education system.

Such interventions are frequently associated with other areas of social welfare and health education, and are sponsored by government policy. For example, a study of Pacific Island families' attitudes to child training and discipline in Otara, South Auckland, found that many related parenting skills were at variance with those of European New Zealanders (Schoeffel & Meleisea and others, 1996). These authors noted that such socialisation practices contributed to difficulties that children have with interactive teaching techniques. They suggested "that considerably more emphasis needs to be placed on developing the interactive learning abilities of Pacific Islands Polynesian children" (p. 134); that is, the children should conform to the institution.

A later study by Gorinski (2005b), suggests there have been some gains made in reciprocal understandings between homes and schools. Gorinski's research evidenced that Pasifika parents in the Counties Manukau area, are in fact becoming more accepting of children being participants in adult-student discussions.

There is a very real difficulty here in the tension created by trying to craft ideologically and culturally sound solutions within a monocultural framework: "In this country, the knowledge we consider important, the philosophies underpinning our teaching, and our personal culture all reflect New Zealand culture and world view" (Pascoe, 2005, p.15). Further, the New Zealand Curriculum Framework states: "The school curriculum, through its practices and procedures, will reinforce the commonly held values of individual and collective responsibility which underpin New Zealand's democratic society" (p. 21).

This very principle however, automatically excludes the values of many other cultures. There is a growing call to escape the 'imperial habits of mind' (Willinsky, 1997, cited in Airini, 1998a) where alternative discourse can be "exoticised at best, marginalised, or even ghettoised at worst" (p. 11). We know that "quality teaching recognises and builds on students' prior experiences and knowledge" (Alton-Lee, 2003, p.vii), but how can schools best cater for this? Clearly, a new perspective is needed.

An Alternative Paradigm

Largely attributable to the monocultural perspective which has tended to dominate the policies and direction of education in Aotearoa New Zealand, statistical data show huge disparities between the educational achievement and retention rates of European New Zealanders, and those of Maori and Pasifika backgrounds. Rather than closing then, the gap continues to widen. "This pattern of disparity has become so commonplace that society has come to accept it as quite normal for Maori [and by implication, Pacific Islanders] to fail" (Airini, 1998a, p.10). There is an increasing call to respond to this situation by adopting an alternative paradigm: a multicultural pedagogy concerned with equity, bicultural/ multicultural perspectives, spirituality and an holistic approach.

An Equity Pedagogy

Some of the most influential studies in the area of equity pedagogy have been based on the work of Professor James A Banks and his colleagues at the Centre for Multicultural Education at the University of Washington. His framework proposes equity pedagogy as the foundation for multicultural education. Content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction

and an empowering school structure and social structure are natural developments with an equity pedagogy approach (Banks & Banks, 1995).

Equity may not always mean treating different groups the same way. In order to create equal-status situations for marginalised students, there may need to be a greater emphasis on views and issues which these students can relate to (Gay, 1993). An understanding of equity pedagogy and its relationship to home-school partnerships is important in redressing the problems in practice to date.

Bicultural and Multicultural Perspectives

Much of the literature developed around notions of what might be included in an alternative to the traditional operant paradigm, has a high level of congruency with the themes and needs identified by both Maori and Pasifika writers. There is a gap however, in the literature to date that specifically relates to Pasifika parent community - school relationships. Therefore, for purposes of providing an overview of these themes and needs, the literature that explores a Maori perspective is drawn upon to support the less prolific Pasifika research.

A number of researchers (Airini, 1998; Bishop, 2003; Bishop & Glynn, 2000; Banks & Banks, 1995), suggest that students must not only learn to work within the dominant educational framework, but further, they must also question its "assumptions, paradigms and hegemonic characteristics" (Banks & Banks, 1995, p. 152), including developing an awareness of power relationships and the "Hidden Curriculum" (p.154). Sources of knowledge regarded as authoritative must be questioned, and replaced instead, by a "language for being related" (Airini, 1998b, p.1). The literature suggests that as educators, we need to shift from responsive or tactical strategies regarding minority cultural needs in mainstream education, to a cultural construction of education. Airini (1998, p. 30) notes that "Cultural analysis is important because it is a vital, informing counterpoint to the economic and political machinery at the material centre of education."

More specifically, Bishop (2003) and Bishop and Glynn, (2000) propose Kaupapa Maori theory as a basis for power sharing in schooling. Bishop's framework identifies six key principles that need to be embraced by school management and leadership: *tino rangatiratanga* (relative autonomy/ self-determination); *taonga tuku iho* (cultural aspirations); *ako* (reciprocal learning); *kia piki ake i nga raruraru o te kainga* (mediation of socio-economic and home difficulties); *whanau* (extended family); and k*aupapa* (collective vision, philosophy).

Related to the application of this cultural philosophy to a new educational framework, is the focus on fostering first language proficiency among ethnic minority communities. One of the benefits for minority children in studying their mother tongue is "an improvement in … performance across the curriculum"…a second is "maintaining rewarding relationships with parents and caregivers, grandparents, other relatives and community members" (Narayan, 2005, in CLANZ, 2005). Sometimes however, families actively encourage their children to subjugate their own language in favour of English, believing that this has a higher status and will deliver better job prospects and/or social mobility (Coxon et al, 2002).

Airini (1998a) concurs with the need to value a first language, and identifies three other factors that define a multiculturally 'safe' environment: having a sense of whanau, or being in the company of

whanau; teaching intuitively and enabling student ownership of learning. In this perspective, the single overarching principle is that of *ahua,* or spirituality.

Spirituality

According to Airini (1998a), one of the keys to an alternative approach to mainstream pedagogy is the recognition of the spiritual dimension. She writes of *ahua,* that it is:

> an element of good teaching that has moral and spiritual significance for the individual and the group, as well as predictable technical and physical implications. A positive ahua in the teacher and the classroom is understood to be a pre-requisite for good teaching. It ensures a safe learning environment, a sense of belonging through whakapapa and whanau. The good teacher works to 'sort of magnify' the child's ahua (p 16).

The literature suggests that because of the holistic understanding of *ahua*, a positive regard will nourish the child, class and learning environment physically, emotionally, spiritually and communally (Puloto-Endemann, Annandale & Instone, 2004**).** This is a key component to the building of effective parent community – school relationships.

The argument that health and well-being are founded in these multiple dimensions is not a new one: this is the basis of the wide-reaching work of Professor Mason-Durie, whose concept of *hauora* (well-being) is expressed in the *whare tapawha* model. In this model, *hauora* is compared to the four walls of a *whare*, each wall representing a different dimension: *taha wairua* (the spiritual side); *taha hinengaro* (thoughts and feelings); *taha tinana* (the physical side); and *taha whanau* (family). All four dimensions influence and support the other, and all are necessary for strength and symmetry (Durie, 1994, p.70).

Related to the whare tapawha model is the *Fonofale* model, in which mental health is integrated with physical, spiritual and cultural beliefs (Crawley, Polutu-Endemann & Stanley-Findlay, 1997). Crawley et.al. (1997, p.1) use the *fale*, or house, as a metaphor:

> with the family as its foundation and the roof representing the cultural values and beliefs that shelter the family. The floor represents the genealogy that binds the family together. It also binds them to the land, the sea, the gods of the Pacific as well as to other cultures.
>
> The four Pou or posts that hold up the roof connect culture and family. They are continuous and interactive with each other. They represent spiritual well-being, physical well-being, the health of the mind and other elements that can affect health, including gender, sexuality, age and economic status.

These two models embody the cultural beliefs and value systems of Pacific people. Together they highlight the need for educational initiatives that take an holistic approach to supporting minority group children, families and communities.

An Holistic Approach

An example of an holistic approach to education is most evident in the different Pacific Island 'language immersion' early childhood centres, for example, the Samoan language, church-based Aoga Amata, which are growing rapidly across Aotearoa New Zealand (Mapa, et al. 2000). According to Mapa et al., parents generally see first language development and a cultural identity as important for their children, and therefore favour this type of centre as preferable to other options. Similarly Podmore and Sauvao, (2003, p. 38) reported that teachers and parents identified:

> *homes, early childhood centres and schools all provide education. They commented that*
> *all three settings are caring, and provide a secure environment, featuring discipline,*
> *routines and rules. ..[but] unlike primary schools, homes and Pasifika early childhood*
> *centres include spiritual aspects and religious practices.*

While schools may pay lip service to the notion of viewing children holistically, the categorisations of the curriculum into specific subject areas may preclude the reality of an holistic approach. The result may be a "distinct discontinuity in the children's cultural experiences at the time of transition to primary school" (Podmore & Sauvao, 2003, p. 40), that tends to alienate parents and schools.

In a separate study, Sauvao (2002) posits that successful transition to school is dependent upon the ways in which issues of continuity are addressed by the schools and families concerned. A key advantage is a teacher who speaks the mother tongue, or an aide who comes into the class with the child, at least initially. However, continuity of language between home and school is only one element impacting upon relationships between early childhood education, the family, and school.

Sauvao (2002) argues that two additional elements affect the ease with which students' transition to school. These include the nature of contact and the type of curriculum. Siilata and Barkhuizen's (2004) work parallels that of Sauvao. They investigated the effects on children of transitioning from a Pacific Island home setting using a first Polynesian language, to a monolingual school setting, using a small case study of four students. These authors argue for "a much greater emphasis [being]…placed on recognising and incorporating students' differing cultural knowledges within the school environment" (Siilata & Barkhuizen, 2004, p. 1). The way forward they suggest, lies in close home-school relationships that foster first-language use, bilingualism and biliteracy.

Relationships

The many benefits of successful home-school relationships which involve all stakeholders - parents, children, school, teachers, and community, are well documented in the literature (Christenson & Cleary, 1990; Gorinski, 2005b; Hoover-Dempsey et al. 1987; Robinson, 1994). Successful outcomes include teacher and parent efficacy; enhanced student achievement outcomes and the development of complementary knowledge, skills, and understanding. Such relationships are shaped by a number of factors, including communication, responsibility, and roles.

Communication

Between 1999 and 2000, three independent research studies took place in each of the educational sectors: primary, secondary and tertiary. The students involved were Maori and Pasifika, from

schools in low socio-economic areas. Each separate study identified as a primary theme, the critical importance of the relationship between teachers and students - in fact, it was a prerequisite for learning to occur (Hawk, Tumama Cowley, Hill & Sutherland, 2005). To facilitate communication, classrooms need to be non-threatening (Barker, Ross & Thorne, 2004) with teachers respecting and valuing students' contributions (Respect and disrespect in class, 2004). To foster the teacher/student relationship, behaviours need to include recognition of student perspectives, affirmation, responsiveness to unusual situations and a general attitude of non defensiveness.

Ironically, while the above studies reported strong communication initiatives from teachers connecting with their students, Nakhid's (2003) study revealed that teachers had very little idea of the role parents played in the educational lives of their children. She found in fact, that teachers tend to stereotype parents and believe they have little interest in their children's education. With disparate race, ethnicity, qualifications and socio-economic levels between teachers and parents, there are limited opportunities to learn about each other. Nakhid (2003), advocated therefore, that "teachers need to involve Pasifika parents more regularly and in more significant ways" (p. 310) in order to facilitate effective parent community – school engagement.

Nakhid's work echoes the suggestions made 20 years earlier by Fairburn-Dunlop (1981) for improved home - school communication and understanding. This seminal study identified the need for increased opportunities for parental involvement including 'directed guidance," that is, teachers demonstrating working with children and the use of equipment and resources; for written communications home to be produced in multiple languages; for teachers to receive pre-service and in-service cross-cultural training; and for the nomination of a 'mediating person' between school and community – often, but not necessarily, the classroom teacher.

Podmore and Sauvao (2003) looked to socio cultural theories that focused on the understanding of culture as an integral part of a young child's learning. They concluded that teachers need to understand children's cultural contexts, in order to foster effective learning relationships. The cultural context is tightly interconnected with the development of early language and literacy skills. Podmore and Sauvao's (2003) research identified that in the transition phase to school, teachers recognise their own inability to help Pasifika children, and consequently they encourage parents' help in school activities. Teachers noted however, that very few parents actually attended mainstream class sessions, yet grandparents and parents often stayed the whole day at Pacific Island early childhood centres.

Most teachers in Podmore and Sauvao's (2003) study felt that there needed to be improved links between Pasifika early childhood centres and schools (MacDonald, McNaughton, Tamarua Turoa & Phillips, 1999). It appears then, that teachers and parents see the links between effective home – school partnerships and student success. As Podmore and Sauvao (2003) commented, "teachers tended to stress the importance of 'understanding where children are coming from.' Parents wanted schools to support their children's home language" (p. 39). Yet there is a problem getting these sentiments actioned. Of the 19 schools in the study (with a 30% Pasifika roll), only two had actually established Pacific language and culture classes. A few more had 'Polynesian clubs' which operated for less than 30 minutes a week.

Responsibility

The awareness of, and goodwill for continuing to improve communication between home and school, is vulnerable to circumstances, contexts and the availability of resources. Along with the partners already identified (parents, children, school, teachers, and community), the Ministry of Education's input and policy has been critical. An early initiative was the establishment of the nation-wide HIPPY (Home Instruction Pre-school Programme for Youngsters) programme. This programme for Pasifika children, encouraged parents to be first teachers.

In the Auckland region, a fulltime coordinator and four part time tutors visited homes on a weekly basis, working with parents and children on a package of activity sheets and resource materials. "All of the principals in the cluster saw that this could break the failure cycle and establish a process of developing successful participants at a primary school level: kids who come to school prepared, and with parent support" (Early Start for Hippy children, 1999, p. 2). There was also a mentoring scheme at primary and secondary school level to target high achievers. The school created comprehensive seminars to teach necessary skills, and enlisted Pasifika people, mainly professionals from the community who were successful in their chosen career.

The themes addressed in these first home-pre-school programmes such as Hippy are still very much a focus for the Ministry. The Education Gazette reported the results of a series of Best Evidence Synthesis reports identifying "the influences of families and communities as key levers for high quality outcomes for diverse children" (Working with the Family, 2004, p. 1). Four important categories were identified including: family attributes, family processes, community factors, and school, family and community partnerships. "The evidence shows that ethnicity and culture, socioeconomic status and home language all impact on student achievement" (p. 1). The emphasis in these paradigms was upon the partnership between teachers and parents, with the focus on teachers as instigators: mobilising parents as partners working with children in supporting literacy, and ensuring homework is focussed on learning outcomes, rather than keeping children occupied, repeating tasks, or focused on presentation (Alton-Lee, 2003).

Parallel to the recognition of the vital role such partnerships can play, is the continued development of Ministry initiatives in primary and secondary sectors. The Pasifika Education Plan seeks to raise Pasifika student achievement, with a strong emphasis on language and literacy skills, responding to the flow-on effect from a decade of growth in bilingual and immersion early childhood education services (Pokoati, 2005). The three approaches currently being implemented are: Pasifika Languages Research/Guidelines, promoting bilingualism; Achievement through Pasifika Language Centres, supporting languages outside formal schooling – that is, within families and communities; and Pasifika Bilingual Language Assistants, training and funding assistants for classrooms with high numbers of Pasifika children (Pokoati, 2005). Despite these initiatives however, numbers in Pasifika medium education remain small.

Roles

In the 1990s, government and schools concentrated on getting parents involved with school governance, sometimes at the expense of fostering the connection with homes at parent-teacher level (Working with the Family, 2004). This early focus on governance was particularly evident in Ministry guidelines written to assist schools in their work to address Maori educational outcomes.

Velde, (1999, p. 1) noted that schools "have to take the cue from parents and the community about what needs to be done, rather than impose things," whilst recognising also that "schools, Maori parents and communities differ. Each school will find what works best" . In addition, to seeking to address Maori student educational outcomes, there was also the imperative that it is "…essential…to get greater Maori representation on Boards of Trustees" (Velde, 1999, p. 1).

Schools were directed to look at alternative ways to get cultural representation, whether through Maori committees, co-option, or dedicated representation. "The board is critical and if there is no Maori representation, it makes it that much harder for a school to meet its responsibilities under National Education Guidelines and Treaty of Waitangi" (Velde, 1999, p. 2).

There are currently a number of initiatives that are seeking to broaden the participation of Maori and Pasifika parents and community in their children's education, both within the classroom (Bishop, 2003; Bishop & Glynn, 2000; Gorinski, 2005a & b; MacDonald et al, 1999) and in educational governance, management, policy and research (Podmore & Sauvao, 2003). Answers to this issue are urgent, if as a nation we are serious about enhancing Pasifika parent community-school interaction. Future initiatives will clearly need to take cognisance of the gaps in the theoretical and practice based research, and work towards addressing the identified historical, structural and cultural barriers to Pacific Island parent community – school engagement. The following section explores two key gaps in the literature that continue to impact upon leadership and practice around home-school relationships.

D. GAPS IN THE LITERATURE

An Absence of a Micro-political Perspective

Research on the effective engagement of parents and communities in education has historically documented a basically conservative approach. Although cases of innovative approaches exist (Comer, 2005, Epstein & Salinas, 2004, Henderson & Mapp, 2002, Mapp, 1997), schools in Aotearoa New Zealand tend to remain highly bureaucratised. It is not surprising then, that notions of school-initiated power sharing are not a large part of the literature underpinning this review of the effective engagement of Pasifika parents and communities in education. A micropolitical perspective (Bacharach & Lawler, 1980; Ball, 1998; Blasé, 1991) on organisations, provides a useful approach to understanding how human behaviour and purpose influence relationship dynamics. Micro-politics is in essence about power and how people use it to influence others to achieve their goals within organisations.

Within the context of this review, a micropolitical perspective is of relevance, in that it highlights a key gap in the literature to date. That is, micro-politics enables a new perspective to be cast around home-school engagement that involves parents and communities in adding value to building teacher content knowledge, cultural competencies and knowledge of students in order to scaffold their learning, rather than parents merely being 'volunteers' and/or token helpers. The results of several comprehensive studies that explored political interactions between schools and parents, (Becker, 1980; Connell, 1985; Lortie, 1975) point out that teachers typically view relationships with parents as distant, distrustful and/or hostile. Consequently, school personnel develop strategies for dealing with parents that are not based upon notions of power sharing.

Connell's (1985) research found that teachers generally respond defensively to parental involvement; they create 'tokenistic' ways of involving parents in the school. Connell also found that there is an incongruity between teachers' general view of education – "particularly if their view emphasised intellectual growth, rather than the transfer of skills or the transmission of culture" (p. 7) and that of parents.

Micropolitical research represents an important, albeit rare lens through which to view parent – school relationships. Its importance is comparable to that of the more frequently documented and popular bureaucratic perspectives in the school relationship and management literature. Whilst this is identified as a gap in the literature examined for this review, it is also acknowledged that there are few studies of school politics that provide identification of strategies to address either the cycle of uncollaborative political behaviour evident in schools, or how to move beyond the superficial, to a reflection of the deeper issues that may have hitherto gone unexamined or been silenced (Smith, 1992). A deeper study of micropolitics - how it would look and how it might guide teachers and school administrators in their leadership of effective parent and community engagement in education, would provide a much needed contribution to the body of literature in this area.

Deficit Theorising

A common thread identified amongst the international studies, is the linking of poor achievement of low income family/urban students, with a perceived lack of parental interest and involvement in schooling (Hyslop, 2000; Lambourne & Zinn, 1993; Martinez & Velazquez, 2000). This deficit theory paradigm creates a tendency in the literature, to vindicate schools of responsibility for these students' lack of academic success, and places it instead on their parents' lack of involvement in schooling.

The contrasting, although less prolific research suggests that the more parents participate in schooling in a sustained way, at every level – from administration, governance, advocacy, volunteering, home-based participation, to para professional involvement, the better their child's achievement levels are likely to be (Ascher, 1988). There is a need then, for increased advocacy of the critical role of empowering, co-constructed models of home-school partnerships. Further research that explores the potential of mutually empowering, reciprocal relationships in which teachers and schools can support parental involvement at this level, and vice versa, is a necessary component to reversing the influence of deficit theorising that is prevalent in the literature to date.

Whilst the absence of a micro-political perspective, and deficit theorising are not major foci of the literature around Pasifika parent community –school engagement, they do pose particular challenges in this context. There are a number of challenges and/or barriers to effecting the successful engagement of parents, communities and schools in education.

E. BARRIERS TO PACIFIC ISLAND PARENT/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In schools across Aotearoa New Zealand, there is a broad range of ethnic and racial minority family representation. Concomitant with this cultural diversity, is the potential for conflict and misunderstanding within school contexts. Unresolved, such cultural conflict and/or misunderstanding can restrict or prohibit parent and community involvement in school life. Understanding the cultural barriers that racial and ethnic minority families face, and working towards the development of strategies to address these, is a starting point in effecting Pasifika parent community-school engagement. The following section identifies a range of such challenges and barriers.

Cultural Frameworks

Cultural frameworks have a major impact upon Pasifika parent involvement in school related activities. Simich-Dudgeon (1986) argues that there is a cultural framework which suggests that the overwhelming majority of limited English speaking parents believe that teachers have not only the qualifications, but also the responsibility to educate their children. Any 'interference' from parents is perceived to be counter productive to children's learning. The key task arising from such a cultural framework is to acculturate parents to the positive meaning of parental involvement so that engagement processes can be initiated.

Such cultural frameworks also operate in the dominant culture. This is most evident in school practices that are exclusive of the growing diversity of the communities they serve. Furthermore, unwillingness on the part of school personnel to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes requisite to effective school-family partnership, and invest the time needed to foster parent engagement, is a barrier to effective partnership building (Comer, 1991; Robinson, 1994).

Acculturation Issues

The process of acculturation (Kelty, 1997; Lambourne & Zinn, 1993; Moreno & Lopez, 1999; Rodgers & Lyon, 1999) and the misunderstandings arising from it, can cause acute difficulties and create multiple barriers to effective home-school partnerships. It may for instance, result in unquestioned parental obedience and respect for authority that precludes their engagement in inquiry focused dialogue with teachers and school personnel. Other issues that may create barriers include parent participation in school activities, perceptions of the purposes and responsibility for homework, and children's level of comfort with an interactive learning style, among many others.

The research (Kelty, 1997; Lambourne & Zinn, 1993; Moreno & Lopez, 1999) also suggests that the less acculturated parents are, and the less knowledgeable they are about school activities, the greater the number of barriers to their school involvement. For example, Fairburn-Dunlop (1981) noted that for many parents from ethnic minority backgrounds, there was a high level of anxiety associated with attending parent-teacher meetings. They had concerns for instance around whether they were simply being informed about issues teachers chose to share, or whether they were permitted to ask questions.

Lack of confidence

A number of researchers have explored issues of parental confidence and self esteem (Hughes, Schumm & Vaughn, 1999; Hyslop, 2000; Kelty, 1997; Mole, 1993; Paratore, Melzi & Krol-Sinclair, 1999). These authors suggest that cultural differences can create misconceptions that impact negatively upon the effective engagement of parents in their children's educational experience. For instance, when parents view teachers as 'experts' (Kelty, 1997), they tend to disengage from the educational experiences of their children. Further, low parental self esteem arising from parent's own unsuccessful or negative school experiences and the ensuing anxiety created from this, creates further barriers to their involvement (Comer, 1991; Hughes et al. 1999; Kelty, 1997).

First language needs

Parents, teachers and principals view the transition from Pacific Island early childhood centres to primary schools from different perspectives (Sauvao, 2002; Shivnan, 1999). Sauvao's research suggested that parents saw first language development as critical; teachers saw little difference in children from Pasifika 'language group' centres and mainstream kindergartens, and principals cited administrative reasons why language continuity could not be fully achieved (that is, no native language speaker on staff). Sauvao's research also intimated that English-only schools may not fully appreciate the importance of language continuity for bilingual children, thereby indirectly alienating parents from involvement in the school community. The barriers to provision of linguistic support include therefore, both the shortage of resources and a school's own policies and paradigms.

An initiative expressing true appreciation for first languages is the provision of settings for bilingual/immersion programmes in schools. Such first language maintenance must necessarily also be supported, acknowledged and valued within the community. A recent report by Meade, PuhiPuhi and Foster-Cohen (2003), suggested the need for study of the valorisation of Pasifika languages – the messages given about the value of languages in a variety of community settings, including homes, schools, early childhood centres and the church.

The research suggests that there is a need for "administrative coordination, curriculum continuity, parent involvement, language maintenance, [and] professional development and coordination amongst support services…in how to deal with factors constraining transition activity, such as divergent policies, traditional school practices, and difficulties in establishing working partnerships amongst services" (Sauvao, 2002, p. 20) if more effective parent – school relationships are to be realised.

Velde (2000) posits that speakers of a Pasifika first language, can be marginalised by inclusion in minority group initiatives where students are perceived to be 'special needs,' and where historically, schools' responses to needs tend to be reactive "responding to parents who may be angry, frustrated, upset or dissatisfied with a school's actions" (p. 2). Again, the key to addressing this barrier, lies in understanding how schools perceive the linguistic and cultural needs of their students: as integral to learning, or merely peripheral.

Language Proficiency

Language difficulties can preclude many parents from engaging in a number of school activities when parents feel powerless to make a difference to their children's education. (Paratore et al, 1999; Simich-Dudgeon, 1986). These parents can however, very successfully support parent-school collaboration at home, by reinforcing educational concepts taught at school. Indeed, Walberg (1985) and others (Cochran, 1987; Grau, Weinstein & Walberg, 1983) suggest that when parents have limited time for involvement in school activities, one of the most efficient mechanisms for engaging them in supporting their children's education, is in home based learning activities. These researchers highlight both the complexities associated with language, and strategies for addressing the barriers traditionally associated with second language speakers of English.

Further evidence suggests that the provision of opportunities to learn from, and collaborate with teachers can in fact mitigate the negative impact of limited English proficiency, low educational levels and limited economic resources, by empowering parents to become learners themselves (Gorinski, 2005a, Gorinski, 2005b).

Lack of expertise amongst teachers and school administrators

A lack of expertise amongst classroom teachers and school administrators in developing improved home-school collaboration with parents, and strategies to promote the involvement of parents in education, poses a further barrier to parent engagement in schools (Simich-Dudgeon, 1986). For instance, inflexibility on a school's part to meet the needs of families poses difficulties, especially in terms of working parents attending daytime scheduled meetings and so forth (Lamanna & Reidman, 1991).

Limited economic resources

Parental employment demands can act as a barrier to their involvement in school activities (Comer, 1991). In homes where parents are not readily available to support their children's learning because of employment demands, and where subsequently, interactions between children and parents are limited, there is less likelihood of effective home-school interaction (Paratore et al. 1999; Simich-Dudgeon, 1986).

Fiscal resourcing at a political level is also identified in the literature as problematic in terms of parent participation. For instance uncertainty about long-term funding of Ministry projects , such as PISCPL, can create a range of barriers for participants. It takes time to build relationships between Pasifika parents, communities and schools (Coxon et al, 2002). The prospect of funding being reduced or withdrawn could have a direct impact then, on the confidence and commitment of both liaison staff and the families they work with (Mara, 1998; Gorinski, 2005b).

Ignorance

Parents being simply unaware of the essential core skills and practices requisite to helping their children academically is a further barrier to their participation (Hyslop, 2000). Similarly, school personnel discomfort at involving parents in their children's education programmes because (through ignorance perhaps), they view parents as either incapable or incompetent in relation to

knowledgeable participation, creates barriers between schools and families (Fine, 1990). Often, a lack of clarity arising from ignorance around boundaries between schools and families can lead to confusion, misunderstanding and frustration regarding expectations of both parents and schools (Rotheram, 1989).

Communication Issues

Ineffective communication between school and home, particularly when this is either impersonal or alienating, creates barriers to effective parent-school partnerships (Epstein, 1992). In particular, professional jargon used by educators, can leave parents frustrated and/or disempowered (Robinson, 1994).

In summary, parent and community expectations of schools are varied and fluid, but almost universally, parents want a school to provide a physically and emotionally safe environment in which their children can achieve both academically and socially. There are however, a number of challenging factors involved in effecting positive parent community - school interaction. When these challenges are left unaddressed, school-parent relationships can become antagonistic or adversarial, when in fact, both parents and schools may share similar objectives and concerns for children's success (Fine, 1990).

A number of strategies have been identified in the literature that support the effective engagement of parents and communities in schools. An overview of these strategies is provided in the following section.

F. STRATEGIES THAT SUPPORT HOME-SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

There is a growing body of research that suggests there are benefits to be gained from parental support and involvement in the school setting. In 1998, Diane Mara conducted an independent evaluation of the Pacific Islands School-Parent-Community Liaison Project. She noted that pivotal to the early successes she reported were the positive relationships between the principal parties: "the parents/families; the students; the schools/teachers and principals; the liaison person/s; and the project management committee" (Mara, 1998, p. 43). Other research endorses the broad strategies that Mara identified. These include:

Tutors

Parent involvement as tutor, collaborator or co-learner is a key to effective home-school interaction. A number of studies highlighted the key role of collaboration between home and school as a mechanism for supporting and affirming the educational experiences of students (for example, Cochran, 1987; Coxon et al. 2002; Fine, 1990; Gorinski, 2005a & b; Grau et al. 1983; Walberg, 1985; Williams & Lundsteen, 1997). Gorinski's (2005a) Pacific Island School Community Parent Liaison (PISCPL) project case study clearly evidences the positive impact of parent involvement as tutors in educational activities. Similarly, Williams and Lundsteen's (1997) research of parents of kindergarten children in a school in Texas who take an active role in their children's education, highlights the positive benefits of parent -school collaboration.

Workshops

Parent workshops provide specific opportunities for parents to learn new skills and knowledge that enable them to become active participants in their children's education (Gorinski, 2005a; Shivnan, 1999; Siraj-Blatchford, 1996; Williams & Lundsteen, 1997). Gorinski (2005), comments on the positive impact of workshops that empower parents and families to help their children's educational attainment. Siraj-Blatchford (1996) and Shivnan (1999) also contend that the empowerment of parents through involvement in workshops that facilitate links between home and educational settings, is fundamental to young children having their home experiences affirmed and their languages valued within early childhood settings.

The importance of parent workshops that provide specific strategies that parents can use to become active supporters of their children's learning, is also highlighted by Williams and Lundsteen (1997). Opportunity for education and training via workshops at community centres, churches and school sites, and engaging the support of the local church community and other respected leaders to support the development of effective parent community – school partnerships is then, an important strategy identified in a range of literature to date.

Literacy Programmes

Literacy programmes that focus upon strategies that parents can implement to support their children's learning both at home and in the classroom, are particularly useful in facilitating parent engagement in educational activities. Gorinski (2005b) suggested that on-going, regular parent

support in literacy programmes - either in one-on-one, paired or small group reading activities was helpful in forging home-school relationship building. She also noted a variety of reading programmes such as "Reading with your Child", "Reading is a Partnership" and the "Home School Partnership" programme, with accompanying videos, and model reading strategies, that parents can implement when working with children either at home or in school settings.

Family literacy programmes are also a useful mechanism for facilitating home-school partnership. Project FLAME (Family Literacy: Apprendieno, Mejorando, Educando [Learning, Improving, Educating]) provides an example of a family literacy programme developed to train Hispanic parents in a range of strategies to help their children's literacy at home. The FLAME programme not only increased parent knowledge and understanding of literacy, but further, it provided opportunities for parents to act as positive role models, initiating, encouraging and supporting their children's learning. It also fostered improved relationships between families and schools (Rodriguez-Brown, Ran-Fen & Albom, 1999).

Collaboration

Friend and Cook (1992) and Fine (1991) suggest a collaborative model of parent and community involvement in education. Ideally, such collaboration will 1) educate parents for participation in decision making processes about their child's education 2) involve parents in decision making regarding their child; and 3) enable and empower parents to work actively on behalf of their child. Schools with a 'family' emphasis support the philosophical concept of *aiga* (extended family) and therefore maintain and foster similar values (Meade with others, 2005).

Reporting to Parents

Increasing interest internationally in the monitoring and reporting of student achievement has been noted in the literature (Briggs, 1982; Broadfoot, 1990; O'Donoghue & Dimmock, 2002; Weir, 1995). Essentially, what parents suggested they would like included in reporting from schools included:

- More information than what is currently provided, preferably in written report format.
- Diagnostic assessment of children's learning with problems identified early and constructive suggestions for future action provided.
- Information about a range of different aspects of achievement.
- Some indication of how the information provided is derived and what criteria are used in order to determine whether children are making satisfactory progress for their age.
- Indications of whether their children are reaching their potential.
- Information about attitudes, values and social adjustment.
  (O'Donoghue & Dimmock, 2002).

Broadfoot (1990) notes, there is a widespread problem around reporting, in that the purposes of school reports are often lost in the 'standards' debate. Traditional reporting is often linked to accountability functions, whereas O'Donoghue and Dimmock (2002) suggest that newer forms of reporting are needed including formal and informal; and ongoing and continuous feedback. Oral reporting is as important as other forms of reporting. Such reporting, needs to use language which is 'parent-friendly', honest and constructive, particularly for those parents who are not native English

speakers, if effective parent community – school engagement is to be realised (Marino, Nicholl, Paki-Slater, Timperley & Kuin Lai, 2001).

Communication and Support

The following initiatives are identified in the literature (Ascher, 1988; Comer, 1991; Gorinski, 2005; Hamilton-Lee, 1988; Martinez & Velazquez, 2000; Peterson, 1989) as effective strategies for enhancing parent community-school partnerships:

- The provision of a regular schedule of activities and programmes that are stimulating, informative and enjoyable, for example, science fairs, young enterprise projects, fairs, concerts and celebration dinners
- Bilingual community liaisons that helps bridge language and cultural differences between home and school
- Childcare, transportation and weekend activities that increase the likelihood of minority parent involvement
- Curriculum that reflects the culture, values, interest, experiences, and concerns of families
- Social and health efforts co-ordinated within local school communities
- Workshops for parents to help them develop a repertoire of home-based support strategies, and co-constructing with parents, learning activities that parents and children can do together
- Career education promoting higher aspirations amongst families
- Thinking "family" rather than "parent" when planning activities
- Getting parents involved in special activities for example as teacher aides, Parent Teacher Association, Board of Trustees, and incorporating them on planning and management teams.

G. SUMMARY

This literature review has highlighted the disparities that exist for Pasifika students and their families and communities, in terms of their engagement in, and full benefit from the education system in Aotearoa New Zealand. Leading researchers in school and family issues advocate that the key factor in a child's academic success is the parent (Olsen, 1990). The attitudes, values and behaviour of the family and community within which they live, strongly affect social and academic behaviour and learning (Comer, 1980; Nissani, 1993). It is paramount then, that home and school work together to support one another in educating children.

A discontinuity of values, beliefs, assumptions and experiences between home and school for those in cultural and ethnic minority groups, clearly acts as a barrier to their equality of engagement in parent community – school interaction. This is further exacerbated when schools fail to consult Pasifika parents about the issues surrounding their children's education. Pearson (1990) noted that the life experiences and community expectations of minority cultural and ethnic groups, often contrasts so widely with those of the dominant culture that even "the most dedicated teacher will have difficulties to be surmounted" (p. 160). The recognition, understanding and provision of mechanisms to engage parents are urgent then, in a Pasifika context.

Cultural diversity within a school community presents many challenges. It is particularly challenging for a school to establish and maintain strong, reciprocal relationships with the parents and communities of their students when staff, leadership, and Board of Trustees members are of different cultural backgrounds to parents. Recognition of not only cultural difference, but also ethnic diversity amongst Pasifika students and their families, is of critical importance for schools that are committed to developing effective and engaged parent community relationships. This is no easy task and indeed "the movement towards multi cultural politics and cultural involvement – namely the sharing of power and decision making among neighbourhood groups which compose a school's catchment population is a curriculum in itself" (Race Relations Office, 1988, p. 34). This literature review suggests however, that this is an urgent priority in effecting parent community - school engagement.

In the first instance, schools may need to go out to their communities rather than waiting for parents to come to them. As Donn and Schick (1995) suggest, "in effect, schools will need to negotiate comfortable working relationships in which the school empowers its community through seeking its advice and assistance, and in which communities in turn empower the school" (p. 185). This necessitates a shift in both thinking and practice around traditional notions of the locus of power and control in schools.

In a move towards a more inclusive education system, parents are expected to engage to some degree in their child/ren's educational experience. These expectations are however, guided by a set of mainstream assumptions, held mainly by teachers from the dominant culture, regarding the role that parents could or should play in their child/ren's education. According to Lareau (1989), teachers perceive parental involvement as including preparing children with school-ready skills such as alphabet and number knowledge; attending school events and fulfilling requests that teachers make of parents. Family involvement in school life has historically been prescriptive, with parents rarely invited to contribute to what the parent community-school partnership might look like (Valdes,

1996). This literature review has highlighted the need for a fundamental change of thinking and practice in schools, from a monocultural to a multicultural lens, in order to promote effective parent community – school engagement in Pasifika contexts.

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