Title or theme  “Fresh” Research in Pacific Education.

Abstract

This symposium uses the descriptor of ‘fresh’ in a number of ways. ‘Fresh’ research is that which is recently produced by people of relative newness to research (in other words, as emergent academics and scholars, they are in very early stages of developing their research profile). ‘Fresh’ is also a humourous term used in New Zealand Pacific youth culture, for those of their peer group who are recent arrivals (usually from the islands). Therefore, in this instance, fresh researchers are newer arrivals into some of the traditional forums of research disemination– for example, education conferences and journal publications.

This symposium focuses on three very recent (and therefore ‘fresh’) research contributions to the knowledge base of Pacific education in Aotearoa New Zealand. The first is a special edition online journal publication, which was the successful outcome of a capacity-building initiative for those contributers deemed as emerging researchers in Pasifika education. The second contribution is a completed Masters level study. Two of its unique features are the use of ethnographic data and analysis, to engage a group of Y10 south Auckland Pasifika boys in both learning and research processes. The third contribution is a near-completion doctoral investigation. Its unique features include the design and application of a mixed method approach to the study of Tongan parents, Tongan students and their teachers’ conceptions of Tongan academic achievement in secondary schooling.

In bringing the three afore-mentioned contributions together, it is the overall intention of this symposium to re-visit the meaning of Pacific research in education, and to demonstrate not only some exciting developments in ‘fresh’ research, but also to draw attention to the intriguing diversity of those who are generating principled, appropriate, and invaluable ‘fresh’ research in Pacific education.
Title and abstract of each paper

PAPER 173

Symp #1 Tanya Wendt Samu: An Example of Collective Capacity Building in Research

This paper provides an overview of a recent special edition online journal publication that focuses on education policy and practice for Pasifika communities in Aotearoa-New Zealand, in the 21st century. The contributions provide critically informed and evidence grounded insights into Pacific education. Many of the writers are optimistic in offering potential solutions to long-identified issues and concerns. A special feature of this edition are the contributions of emerging researchers. Themes include: New Zealand-born Tongan 'youth-at-risk' narratives of return migration; teachers allocation of Pasifika identity in New Zealand classrooms; Samoan and Tongan student teachers’ views of play (early-childhood education), and distance learning from a Pasifika perspective. Many of the papers explore new directions in both topics and research methodology, as well as confidence in Pacific peoples’ abilities to draw on their own cultural resources in determining strategies for moving towards solutions to old problems.

PAPER 171

Symp #2 Claire Coleman: “You can try sound brainy”- The contribution of student voice in current research on the use of process drama to engage Pasifika boys.

“You can try sound brainy”- The contribution of student voice in current research on the use of process drama to engage Pasifika boys.

This paper is based upon my recent Master’s research, which used a reflective practitioner case study to explore whether the use of process drama to teach social studies engaged Year 10 Pasifika boys at 1H1 College - a multi-cultural college in Auckland, New Zealand.

Currently Pasifika students struggle to achieve in New Zealand schools, supposedly due to barriers of language and culture and often lower socio-economic status. Previous attempts to improve Pasifika achievement have focused on increasing the presence of Pasifika curriculum content in schools while little attention is paid to pedagogy and the cultural limitations of a New Zealand education system (Bascand, 2008; Bruce Ferguson, Gorinsk, & Samu, 2008; Samu cited in Coxon, Anae, Mara, Samu, & Finau, 2002, p. 89; Harkness, Murray, Parkin, & Dalgery, 2005; Robinson & Timperley, 2004). This paper will examine how the use of process drama allowed for the authentic voice of the student to play a part in constructing the learning.

1 Pseudonym
This paper will place the research in context and provide an overview of the project. It will highlight how the use of process drama allowed for a contribution of student voice through their work in role. It suggests that in role students were able to be active participants in their own learning who could authentically drive the enquiry. Similarly interviewing the students at the conclusion of the study allowed them to contribute directly to research about their education and provide “thick description” (Geertz, 1993).

In the research, I worked with a class of Year 10 students through a process drama to explore issues of colonial New Zealand. Process drama creates a fictional framework, within which participants can engage with situations safely and reveal and explore their own knowledge from within a “no-penalty” space (Heathcote, Johnson, & O’Neill, 1984). During this process drama, the students took on the role of “historians” while I worked in role as a museum curator. This role gave status to the student contributions as equal as or greater than those of the “curator” and they directed the path of enquiry for the social studies work. In role they crafted paths of enquiry, requested further information, asked questions, interviewed key characters and developed theories. Using an intrinsic case study approach allowed for unforeseen findings to emerge and the use of semi-structured interviews gave student voice a place within the data collection.

During the research interviews the students discussed their enthusiasm for working in role, working alongside the teacher and their genuine surprise at their own ideas and contributions. Student comments revealed an awareness of the cultural limitations of the education system and the expectations held for them as a result of those limitations.

Through the use of process drama this study addressed the demand for research that values student voice and explored how the use of process drama, might engage male Pasifika learners (Amituanai-Toloa, McNaughton, Lai, & Airini, 2010; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; Rosler, 2008). It suggests a need for greater recognition of student voice and the use of authentically co-constructed learning for engaging students.

**PAPER 172**

Symp #3 Moale Otunuku: *The Conceptions of Schooling of Tongan Parents, Students and Teachers of Tongan students.*

The main purpose of this study is to investigate how the conceptions of schooling of Tongan parents, Tongan secondary school students, and teachers of Tongan secondary school students contributed to or detracted from, academic achievement. In order to allow multiple conceptions about schooling to be collected and analysed, a mixed method framework was designed.

Interestingly, the use of such an approach in Pasifika education research is infrequent, particularly the application of quantitative research methods. This study is the first instance of the design and application of a mixed methods approach, by a bilingual Tongan researcher, that integrates Pasifika research methodologies and
conceptions analysis. Its significance to the advancement of knowledge in Pasifika education is further enhanced through its focus on New Zealand Tongan secondary school students’ achievement.

This presentation will highlight the potential of the Study to (i) profile diversity within New Zealand Tongans (ii) emphasise the growing voice of Tongan parents and students and (iii) demonstrate the specificity and relevance of Tongan schooling experiences within New Zealand, and under the so-called ‘Pasifika umbrella’ (Alton-Lee, 2004).