

Wellington Institute of Technology

# Regional Facilitation Report

Pacific People's Perceptions of their Tertiary  
Education Needs, Gaps and Priorities

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## PACIFIC PEOPLES IN THE GREATER WELLINGTON REGION PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR TERTIARY EDUCATION NEEDS, GAPS AND PRIORITIES

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Pacific peoples (Pasifika) comprised 6.9% percent of the total population of New Zealand at the time of the last census in 2006, with the majority, 59%, born in New Zealand. It has been projected that by 2021 the number of Pasifika living in New Zealand will almost double. The main Pacific groups represented in New Zealand are Samoan, Tongan, Niuean, Cook Island, Fijian, Tokelauan and Tuvaluan.

The Pasifika community is not a single homogenous group. There are at least 13 distinct languages and cultures encompassed in the population. Each island nation has its own distinctive culture and identity and retaining these is important. When talking about the Pacific Island community here in New Zealand, WelTec recognises both that there are needs that are common across all cultural groups and some unique requirements. We recognize that in order to enable each island group to retain its own distinct identity, the formulation of unique approaches to meeting identified needs may be required.

As shown in the 2006 Census, New Zealand's Pasifika population is young and diverse (the median age is 21 years compared with almost 36 years for the total population.) Pasifika are growing at a faster rate (14.7%) than Māori (7.4%) and European (-9.1%).

The Pasifika community also tends to be disadvantaged when compared to the rest of the New Zealand population. They are less likely to be qualified or to be in high paid employment. At the same time they are more likely to be unemployed and live in crowded accommodation. The economic recession has been hard on young people and Pasifika young people in particular.

In 2008, the Government released a strategy for education, aimed at addressing the socioeconomic underachievement of Pasifika. The Pasifika Education Plan 2008 – 2011 sets goals and targets for increasing Pasifika educational attainment as a means of increasing social inclusion and wellbeing. Goals nine to twelve of this Strategy relate to the tertiary sector. There are to:

1. increase educational success for young Pasifika people;
2. increase literacy, numeracy and language skills for the Pasifika workforce;
3. increase achievement at advanced trade, technical and professional qualifications by Pasifika people to meet regional and national industry needs; and
4. ensure the needs and aspirations of Pasifika communities are addressed by building strong connections between tertiary education organisations and the communities they serve.

The Tertiary Education Strategy 2010 to 2015 also identifies Pasifika as a priority group, especially in supporting them to achieve higher qualifications (at levels 4 and above), to transition from school into tertiary study and to develop the language, literacy and numeracy skills (LLN) required to succeed.

This, Wellington's Regional Facilitation Report with a focus on the demands, needs and priorities for Pasifika in tertiary education, seeks to bring a Wellington region Pasifika voice to the debate. It seeks to identify the contribution that Pasifika is seeking from the tertiary education sector to meeting their educational aspirations.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND

Pacific People make up a significant proportion of the Wellington population with 8.0% of the population classified as Pasifika in the 2006 census. Of this Pasifika population, 35.7% were in the 0 – 14 age group (compared to 20.6% for the entire Wellington population) while 53.8% (approximately 19,690 people) were under 25. (This compares with 53.4% of Maori or around 29,388 people who were in this age group and 35.3% of the Wellington region’s population).

Table 1: Ethnicity by age and proportion in the Wellington region

Ethnicity	European		Māori		Pacific		Asian		Other		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Age												
0 - 14	68,544	19.8	19,041	34.3	12,393	35.7	7,998	21.9	1,572	28.6	92,448	20.6
15 - 24	46,878	13.6	10,347	18.7	6,297	18.1	7,398	20.3	1,041	19.0	65,790	14.7
25 - 44	101,181	29.3	16,038	28.9	9,675	27.8	12,417	34.0	1,947	35.4	135,105	30.1
45 - 64	84,003	24.3	8,205	14.8	5,025	14.5	6,621	18.1	759	13.8	104,202	23.2
65 - 74	23,367	6.8	1,359	2.5	1,002	2.9	1,413	3.9	105	1.9	27,654	6.2
75+	21,630	6.3	447	0.8	357	1.0	627	1.7	66	1.2	23,751	5.3
Total	345,600	100.0	55,434	100.0	34,752	100.0	36,480	100.0	5,493	100.0	448,959	100.0

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Dwellings, Statistics New Zealand

Note: This profile is based on people's own perceptions of their ethnicity. A number of people identify themselves as having multiple ethnicities, therefore, the percentages sum to more than 100%.

The majority of Pasifika in the Wellington region live in two sub-regions – Porirua and the Hutt Valley (25% percent of the Porirua population is classified as Pasifika) and these two sub-regions have 54.5% of Pasifika youth i.e. people aged under 25, and consequently represent the subregions with the greatest demand on education and employment. Thirty four percent of the Wellington region’s Pacific Island youth live in Porirua!

Pacific island students are less likely than any other ethnic group to engage in early childhood education (91.6% compared to 96.9% average across all populations) or to leave school with NCEA level 2 or above (56.3% compared to a 70.0% for the total population)<sup>1</sup>. Only 17.7% of Pasifika school leavers leave school with Bursary or higher qualifications, compared to 40.7% of the whole school leaver population.

Pasifika are half as likely as the general population to have a tertiary qualification with only 15.3% having a tertiary qualification compared to 30.7% of the general Wellington population. Consequently, Pasifika are more likely to face economic disadvantage with 21.3% having low incomes (compared to the regional average of 14.1%) and 35.6% being classified as living in crowded households<sup>2</sup>.

Pasifika and Pasifika young people are also over-represented in current unemployment statistics. In the September quarter of 2009, Wellington’s unemployment rate represented 5.1%, up from 3.7% in September

<sup>1</sup> 2007 data

<sup>2</sup> Based on 2006 census data using the Canadian Croding Index

2008. While this was lower than the New Zealand rate of 5.5%, the people unemployed were not evenly distributed across Wellington. There were significant pockets occurring in Lower Hutt and Porirua – the areas of high Pasifika populations.

At the end of June 2009, there were 6,637 working age people receiving the unemployment benefit. Their characteristics are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Unemployment characteristic June 2009

	Region		New Zealand		Region's Share of New Zealand (%)
	Share (%)	Number	Share (%)	Number	
Male	71.4	4,739	71.9	36,565	13.0
Female	28.6	1,898	28.1	14,290	13.1
Maori	28.1	1,865	32.8	16,680	11.2
Pacific People	10.8	717	10.6	5,391	13.3
18 – 24 years	31.2	2,071	32.8	16,680	12.4
25 – 39 years	35.5	2,356	32.8	16,680	14.1
40 – 54 years	23.0	1,527	24.0	12,205	12.5
55 – 64 years	10.3	684	10.3	5,238	13.1
<b>Total</b>		<b>6,637</b>		<b>50,855</b>	<b>13.1</b>

Source: Ministry of Social Development

Tertiary education has a key role in assisting people to gain employment and the Tertiary Education reforms are seeking to develop a responsive tertiary education system in which tertiary education providers:

- have a better understanding of the tertiary education needs expressed by key stakeholders,
- are able to respond more effectively to meet those needs; and
- are able to demonstrate that their provision is matched to demand and represents good value for money.

“Regional Facilitation” is the process by which Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs) facilitate development of a shared understanding of the education and training needs in their region. The process acknowledges that stakeholders’ needs do not emerge in tidy ways once every three years, and as a result, Regional Facilitation is a dynamic on-going process.

The key objectives of Regional Facilitation in relation to tertiary education are to:

- build a shared understanding of regional needs, gaps and priorities for Pasifika in relation to tertiary education;
- develop capability at a regional level through collaborative relationships between providers to support the development of responses to identified needs;
- deliver better outcomes for Pasifika learners and other stakeholders; and
- offer efficiency and value for money benefits for stakeholders and providers alike.

### 3.0 REGIONAL FACILITATION PROCESS

To identify the needs of Pasifika within the Greater Wellington Region, Wellington Institute of Technology (WelTec) convened a fono of Pacific Peoples where their comments and feedback in relation to their perceptions of their tertiary education needs, gaps and priorities was received. The feedback from this fono is outlined in the next section of this report.

The fono was attended by representatives of the major Pacific Island communities living in New Zealand, including peoples from:

- Fiji
- Samoa
- Niue
- Tokelau
- Tonga; and
- Cook Islands

## FEEDBACK FROM PACIFIC ISLANDS FONO – TERTIARY EDUCATION NEEDS, GAPS AND PRIORITIES

The Pacific Island (Pasifika) community is not a single homogenous group. Each island nation has its own distinctive culture and identity and retaining these as distinct cultures is important. When talking about the tertiary education needs of the Pasifika community, we recognise some requirements will come from the need for each group to retain its distinct language, culture and identity and some will be common to all nation groups. This report seeks to identify the common needs rather than focusing on the differences.

Pasifika representatives consulted as part of this Regional Facilitation process identified that the two main things the Pasifika community wants is:

1. A tertiary education system that supports them to succeed and to be fully participating citizens of New Zealand. i.e. not marginalised and seen as failures. They recognise that good education and literacy are critical to full integration into New Zealand society.
2. Pacific Island students having the opportunities to study towards qualifications that will prevent them from being marginalised and support them into full employment in sustainable industries including in trades and professional vocations.

New Zealand society is continually changing with associated changes to people's expectations and practices. These changes impact on employment opportunities and community development and need to be reflected in the education system.

Pacific people value education and the role it plays in supporting community development and their ability to retain their distinctive Pacific Island cultures while operating within the unique culture of New Zealand. This means that they need to be able to live and work seamlessly across a multitude of cultures. Key elements for them include:

- Language and literacy – speaking, reading, writing and understanding
- Numeracy
- Financial literacy
- Computer literacy
- Cultural literacy and understanding
- Cross cultural working

Pacific people want equal opportunities from the tertiary education system. To achieve this, the tertiary education system needs to connect with the Pasifika community and provide opportunities for Pasifika to learn within traditional tertiary education institutions as unique Pacific peoples. To succeed, the Pasifika Community needs to be able to work with tertiary education providers (TEPs) to support their people to succeed. This includes building mechanisms whereby the unique Pasifika communities are given opportunities work alongside the TEP to support learners using:

- Church groups
- Youth groups
- Social and cultural groups
- Homework Centres

- Family
- Mentors.

Pasifika consulted for this report believe that tertiary education should lead to employment and assist students to transition effectively from study and/or school into employment. This includes:

- Assisting students into apprenticeships. The Pasifika community sees that this is a key role of TEPs. They see that education that prepares people for apprenticeships, and that also assists students into apprenticeships once they have the basic skills, is key to their success.
- Having more bridging courses that prepare students to bridge the gaps in their learning between secondary and tertiary education. This includes providing opportunities to build language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills.
- Providing opportunities for students to build education pathways that enable them to build on previous learning. Where possible this should be based on unit standards and national qualifications to enable students to gain portable recognition for their learning. The Pasifika Community welcomes the introduction of national degrees that provide transparent and easily accessible pathways between certificates, diplomas and degrees in this context.
- Providing mechanisms for older workers who have no formal qualifications but who have been employed for many years in an industry to gain credentials for the skills. This is particularly important for people who have been made redundant.

The Pasifika Community is also looking to tertiary education providers to be welcoming environments for Pasifika learners. This includes having:

- more teaching staff from Pacific Island backgrounds;
- more opportunities for the wider Pasifika community to connect with the tertiary education providers;
- culturally appropriate student support programmes (possibly modelled on the Tamaiti Whangai programme);
- Learning support systems that support Pasifika to learn and succeed; and
- mechanisms for bringing tertiary education opportunities into Pacific People's homes. This could mean having:
  - mobile recruitment processes that build direct links between the community and the providers; and
  - a mobile mentoring service that enables learners to be mentored and supported in their community and in the tertiary education institution.

The Pasifika community priority is for tertiary education opportunities that enable them to succeed. This means a system that recognises:

- where these students come from, their distinct cultures and identities;
- their learning needs and preferred ways of working;
- their need to be validated as Pacific People within a predominantly Palangi/European learning institutions; and
- that Pacific People are no different from other learners in terms of what they can do and their potential as fully contributing employees.