"WE'RE ALL IN IT TOGETHER"

Māori and Pacific student voices on ethnic-specific equity programmes in a New Zealand university

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Abstract

Ethnic-specific equity (ESE) programmes are a common feature in New Zealand universities, aimed at ameliorating the educational disadvantage experienced by Māori and Pacific students at tertiary level. Despite the prevalence of ESE programmes, research has seldom used student voices to critically analyse programme practices. In this study, which conducted focus groups with 90 high-achieving Māori and Pacific students from a New Zealand university, the contribution of ESE programmes to student success is highlighted. Student voices are used to explore how programmes act as a source of support, safety and role modelling for Māori and Pacific students. Participants also provided reflection on their experiences of ESE programmes, including critiques regarding teaching quality, recruitment and retention, stereotypes, and the heterogeneity of Māori and Pacific identities. Recommendations to universities based on student critiques are offered.

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Introduction

Discourse regarding the educational disadvantage experienced by Māori and Pacific students in New Zealand has occurred at all levels of schooling. Numerous measurements of disadvantage have been articulated, such as lower participation in pre-school and kindergarten (Ministry of Education, 2012), lower literacy and numeracy levels in primary and secondary schooling (Ministry of Education, 2013, 2015a), fewer students achieving secondary school qualifications and university entrance (Benseman, Coxon, Anderson, & Anae, 2006; Earle, 2008), lower completions rates at university (Scott & Smart, 2005) and fewer going on to postgraduate studies (Anae, Anderson, Benseman, & Coxon, 2002). Explanations for these problems were historically attributed in deficit terms, placing the responsibility of failure on Māori and Pacific students, their families and communities (McKinley & Hoskins, 2013; van der Meer, 2011). However, evidence and explanations of educational disadvantage today generally highlight the role of the teachers, schools and the education system itself (Adams & Codd, 2005).

Movement towards systemic or institutional explanations has resulted in considerable interest in how New Zealand's education system may be improved to respond better to Māori and Pacific students' needs. Accordingly, the educational disadvantage they experience has been a primary target for government and institutional intervention (e.g., Ministry of Education, 2012, 2013). While at times controversial (Durie, 2005), education providers in New Zealand have persisted in adopting new strategies to ameliorate this disadvantage. Casting a critical eye over such interventions is imperative if they are to adequately support Māori and Pacific students.

Using data from a study aimed at identifying the protective factors that assist Māori and Pacific students to succeed in tertiary education, this article will present students' own experiences of one such intervention. Guided by the kaupapa Māori framework from Curtis, Reid and Jones (2014), Māori and Pacific student voices will provide insights about how students believe one university intervention facilitates their academic success, as well as their critiques of it. The article will also use these student critiques to show there is significant scope for such interventions to be improved, and thus proffer some recommendations for how universities may refine and enhance their programmes.

Māori and Pacific students in higher education

Given the increasing necessity of tertiary qualifications to quality employment prospects and reducing income inequality (Earle, 2007), Māori and Pacific participation and achievement in higher education is critical. Accessing the tertiary education system is a significant hurdle: while 54% of non-Māori students completing secondary school achieved university entrance in 2009, only 29% of Māori students and 25% of Pacific students did the same (Ministry of Education, 2010a, 2010b). Underrepresentation is also a problem at postgraduate level (Theodore et al., 2015). For example, in 2013, 9.2% of doctoral students in New Zealand were Māori, and only 2.7% Pacific (Ministry of Education, 2014). These statistics illustrate how ethnicity-based disparities are present and persistent in tertiary education. Furthermore, as Māori and Pacific

populations are predicted to grow at a faster rate than the Pākehā population, students from these backgrounds will become a greater presence in educational institutions and ensuring their success is vital (van der Meer, 2011).

Ethnic-specific equity programmes

In the tertiary sphere, interventions have been employed to encourage Māori and Pacific students to enter degree-level study and facilitate the successful completion of their degrees. Interventions have included targeted admission schemes (Durie, 2005), additional tutorials and academic support (Henley, 2009), open days for students and their families (Oh, Patterson, Fa'alogo, & Henley, 2013), culturally safe study spaces (Pukepuke & Dawe, 2013) and mentoring programmes (Wilson et al., 2011). Some programmes combine multiple strategies, utilising a wraparound approach to supporting Māori and Pacific tertiary students (e.g., Pukepuke & Dawe, 2013; Wilson et al., 2011). Across the board, these types of interventions may be broadly considered ethnic-specific equity (ESE) programmes; that is, they distribute university resources and support services with an intention to bring about equitable outcomes for Māori and Pacific students.

Many programmes emphasise academic support, stemming from the disadvantage Māori and Pacific students disproportionately experience at both primary and secondary schooling (Shulruf, Hattie, & Tumen, 2008), where their previous learning has not prepared them for tertiary study (Horrocks, Ballantyne, Silao, Manueli, & Fairbrother, 2012). In some programmes, academic support is focused on essential generic skills, such as referencing and academic writing (Pukepuke & Dawe, 2013). Others focus on ensuring students engage with and understand core content from the course they are studying (Henley, 2009), but may also include teaching basic academic skills.

At the heart of many ESE programmes are Māori cultural principles that inform their purpose and practice. These principles include whānau (Ross, 2008), whanaungatanga (Pukepuke & Dawe, 2013), whakawhanaungatanga (McMurchy-Pilkington, 2011), manaakitanga (McMurchy-Pilkington, 2011, Pukepuke & Dawe, 2013), tuakana–teina (Royal Tangaere, 1997), tino rangatiratanga and mana (Airini et al., 2011; Pukepuke & Dawe, 2013). By placing these principles at their core, programmes are constructed in ways that may be considerably different from those of universities in which they are located, founded on Western ideals of individual excellence and competition (Morunga, 2009).

ESE programmes have largely reported positive outcomes. The Āwhina programme at Victoria University in Wellington offers mentoring support to Māori and Pacific students in several faculties by using a kaupapa focused on "high expectations, high aspirations and high achievements" (Wilson et al., 2011, p. 705). Wilson and colleagues (2011) reported increased participation in the programme between 1999 and 2005, as measured by the number of students using programme resources (such as computers and dedicated study space) and attendance at tutorials. Additionally, the numbers of students reporting improved relationships with teaching staff increased in two measures: staff understanding of Māori and Pacific cultures, and ease of approaching staff.

An evaluation of a tutorial programme, Tuākana, in one department at the University of Auckland found considerable benefit for Māori and Pacific students who attended tutorials (Henley, 2009). This programme, which is present in several faculties across the university, offers additional tutorials at undergraduate level, led by Māori and Pacific postgraduate students. Henley (2009) found that students who attended Tuākana tutorials had higher pass and course completion rates than those who did not. Henley concludes that attending Tuākana tutorials significantly improves course completion and pass rates for Māori

and Pacific students. Moreover, research from another faculty found that when students were ranked according to their entrance scores, those Māori and Pacific students who participated in Tuākana tutorials achieved grades that were significantly higher than their entrance score compared with those who did not attend tutorials, suggesting students gained academically from the programme (Mitchell, 2006).

Pukepuke and Dawe (2013) reported a positive pilot year of the Tutorial Assistance Teaching Team (TATT) programme. The TATT programme offers academic (e.g., workshops, dedicated study space, online resources) and pastoral (e.g., counselling) support to Māori and Pacific students enrolled in a Bachelor of Social Practice degree at Unitec Institute of Technology. They measured high levels of attendance, which is their primary criterion for success. However, they also received positive feedback from students, who reported that the programme contributed to their persistence in the programme, improved the quality of their work, and provided supportive and knowledgeable teachers. Notably, the TATT programme relied heavily on Māori student input when shaping student workshops, thereby contributing to tino rangatiratanga (Pukepuke & Dawe, 2013). With accumulating evidence of the effectiveness of tutorials for Māori and Pacific students, the current study amplifies student voices by providing an opportunity for them to reflect critically on their experiences in such programmes.

Methods

Participants

This article draws on data from a study examining protective factors for Māori and Pacific tertiary student success (Mayeda, Keil, Dutton, & 'Ofamo'oni, 2014). In an effort to move away from deficit model explanations (DePouw, 2012), focus group interviews were conducted with high-achieving Māori and Pacific students at a New Zealand university. Potential participants were identified through a purposive sampling procedure (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996) using university records that showed participants identified as Māori or Pacific, and earned a B– or higher grade point average in the semester immediately previous to the research being conducted. Ninety students were interviewed in 17 focus groups. Forty per cent of participants nominated Māori as their primary ethnic identity (n = 36). Fifty-four per cent identified primarily as being of Pacific heritage, namely, Samoan (n = 23), Tongan (n = 12), Cook Island (n = 7), Fijian-Indian (n = 3), Fijian (n = 2) or Niuean (n = 2). Five participants identified primarily as New Zealand European/Pākehā, but also as Māori or Pacific. Although participants were required to identify as being from either Māori or Pacific ethnic backgrounds, almost half (42%) identified as belonging to two or more ethnic groups. There were twice as many female (n = 60) as male (n = 30) participants, and students were mostly studying at undergraduate level (82%). Participants were drawn from eight faculties across the university (for a detailed breakdown of participant descriptive statistics, see Mayeda, Keil, et al., 2014).

Procedures

Facilitation and analysis of focus groups combined culturally grounded and Western research methodologies (Ka'ili, 2005; Naepi, 2015; Smith, 2012; Vaioleti, 2006). Focus groups varied in size, ranging from three to eight participants, accompanied by two or three researchers. Protocols intended to minimise power inequalities between participants and researchers were followed (e.g., arranging chairs in a circle with participants and researchers interspersed, engaging in humour, and inviting participants to analyse and disseminate research findings). Culturally appropriate practices of hospitality and introduction were also used,

such as sharing of food and ethnic and tribal affiliations in introductions to foster social connections (Ka'ili, 2005). This included research team members, who identify in author order as Pākehā/Māori, Japanese/haole, Samoan and Tongan/Pākehā. After a brief overview of the research and its kaupapa, and collection of consent forms, participants and researchers engaged in whakawhanaungatanga via a humorous ice-breaker.

Each focus group commenced with a researcher asking what participants believed contributed to their tertiary success. From this point, focus groups were largely guided by the natural conversation (Vaioleti, 2006). Accordingly, focus groups offered variation with regard to topics traversed and the depth in which they were discussed. When conversation between participants halted, researchers prompted conversation by asking for more detail regarding something already discussed, introducing new topics based on previous focus groups, or asking questions grounded in existing literature on minority students and higher education.

Focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim by two members of the research team. A third member cleaned the transcripts by listening to the recordings and correcting errors in transcription. Transcripts were then coded and imported into NVivo9 qualitative software. Content analysis identified the most salient themes from the focus groups (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007), and was followed by extensive discussion between all four researchers to ensure analyses were an accurate representation of the participants' voices. The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee approved all research procedures.

Results

ESE programmes were one of the most common topics to emerge from focus groups (for a discussion on other study themes, see Mayeda, Keil, et al., 2014). Participants consistently shared their experiences and observations of both positive and negative aspects of these programmes. ESE programmes were active across faculties and consisted of additional weekly tutorials for Māori and Pacific students. These tutorials were generally facilitated by Māori and Pacific postgraduate students or high-achieving undergraduates. This section will draw on a kaupapa Māori framework gleaned from Curtis and colleagues' (2014) assessment of the Māori and Pacific Admission Scheme at the University of Auckland, an ESE programme that also links Māori and Pacific students together as "Indigenous nations of Te Moana Nui ā Kiwa (Pacific Ocean)" (p. 151). Throughout this article, non-ESE tutorials are referred to as "mainstream" as they are a requirement of study for all students, including Māori and Pacific students. Since mainstream classes are inclusive of all students, the participants in this study often discussed and compared their experiences in both mainstream and ESE tutorials. Student quotes are attributed to randomised participant numbers (P).

How ESE programmes help Māori and Pacific students

Curtis et al. (2014) contend that ESE programmes focusing on Māori and Pacific tertiary success can enhance their effectiveness by incorporating kaupapa Māori practices into their structure. Specific examples of this include providing culturally safe spaces for Indigenous and Pacific students, developing and utilising Indigenous leadership, making curricula culturally relevant to Māori and Pacific students, and designing pedagogy that is group oriented rather than competitive and exclusive. Participants in the present study identified with many of these themes.

Participants noted that Māori and Pacific academic staff were "seriously underrepresented", indicating that tutors in ESE programmes are

important in terms of cultural visibility. Tutors from Māori and Pacific backgrounds not only counterbalanced a predominantly white teaching staff. They were also frequently described as rigorous but still "fun", "informal" and "helpful", able to engage with students on a more personal level than tutors in mainstream classes, and fostering a sense of comfort, belonging and whanaungatanga. One student who had been both a student and a tutor commented that ESE programme tutors "are a little more personal, we try and . . . know our students' names, and when we see them around campus it's just like saying 'hi' . . . [we're] not on a separate level to the students" (P55, male). Participants noted that this engagement with tutors was important for those students whose culture values deference to authority, making it difficult for them to approach teaching staff.

Additionally, participants emphasised how mainstream university spaces put them at risk of being embarrassed or ridiculed if, for example, they answered questions incorrectly. A Māori student described ESE tutorials as "fortifying" because "we come from a minority perspective and . . . can be quite overshadowed in the main tutorials . . . everyone else in the room doesn't see the world the way you do" (P28, female). A Tongan participant from a different focus group added, "you can relate more to those . . . who have the same kind of background . . . and you're not afraid to speak up or to show your weaknesses" (P3, female).

Although feelings of embarrassment may be experienced by all students, they are heightened for Māori and Pacific students, who carry an acute awareness of how their potential failure reinforces negative stereotypes about their academic and intellectual ability. Thus, participants argued that the collective spaces in ESE programmes shielded them from pejorative stereotypes about Māori and Pacific communities that were sometimes reified in teaching curricula. Instead, ESE programmes allowed participants to embrace their ethnic identity or identities as an asset that facilitated, rather than obstructed, their academic success in a university environment that was dominated by Western systems, staff and students.

Within ESE programmes, valued connections were also established with other students. Participants discussed the benefits of meeting and socialising with peers in ESE programmes. These programmes afforded students the opportunity to develop academically driven forms of cultural capital by building peer support networks. A Tongan student who came to university with a large group of secondary school friends shared her observations:

> I never understood this whole idea of why do you need each other to succeed? It's all within yourself. You know, if you just study hard you can succeed, you don't need to band together with other Pacific Islanders . . . [but] when I finally got involved with [name of programme] last year, I finally understood that these were students from high schools who didn't necessarily have other people from their high school make it to uni. (P39, female)

Feelings of whanaungatanga were bolstered further when collective spaces fostered a sense of collaborative support among peers, as discussion groups "give us the freedom to learn how we learn naturally, which is usually just discussion as opposed to just reading a book and processing the notes on a computer" (P18, female). Participants also emphasised the social aspect of learning in ESE programmes, often in contrast to mainstream university spaces, which tend to be more individualistic. A Māori participant, for instance, spoke passionately of her desire for more university spaces where an inclusive, non-competitive and helpful pedagogy could be employed:

> I find that the university is kind of very much based around individual competitiveness which is totally against my values . . . I believe in . . . manaakitanga where we all help each other and then when somebody is

down and out we help them, and when we're down they will help us and this idea of sharing and learning and I don't think there is any room in the university for that and I feel really uncomfortable trying to put myself forward just specifically for myself, I want to do it for everybody else and help other people. I don't believe in this kind of triangle [gestures with hands] thing where we have all these people pushing one person to the top . . . I want to be at university . . . and help the people who don't have that so I can help them maybe turn the triangle upside down [inverts hand gesture] so I'm the bottom helping everyone up . . . but I don't feel that that's what university is trying to shape me into. (P66, female)

In short, ESE programmes represented academic spaces where Māori and Pacific students felt they belonged, and where they could engage to a greater degree in a learning format that emphasised teamwork and support over competition. Participants often referred to their ESE classes as their "university family" or whānau. Thus, by encouraging students to bring their cultural knowledge into the classroom and integrate that knowledge into curricula, ESE tutors established practical ways to nurture manaakitanga and whanaungatanga. Likewise, tutors were complimented when using their own cultural knowledge to increase curricula relevance. One participant noted how her tutor's approach helped her "because that sort of incorporated the business side of my studies with the Māori side as well" (P2, female).

The final way that ESE programmes were seen as beneficial was that they simultaneously exemplified and built leadership. Because most tutors were Māori or Pacific postgraduate students in the subject they were tutoring, tutors represented models of academic success. Seeing someone like them succeed was a powerful motivator for many participants in this study, as tutors "give you something to look up to". This is particularly important for those Māori and Pacific students who are the first in their

family to attend university and may not have those types of role models in their social circle. Furthermore, a number of participants perceived tutors as social and cultural models who demonstrated how to achieve a balance in their university and home life. For example, a Samoan participant remarked that one of his tutors had "been through times that could've ended her studies but she's back and she got her BA and now Honours. [That] just makes me . . . want to go on even more" (P88, male). To this end, tutors within ESE programmes pushed towards tino rangatiratanga, as they and their mentees expanded their leadership skills and maintained a level of academic excellence.

Student critiques of ESE programmes

As this study was framed in terms of Māori and Pacific academic success, ESE programmes were generally discussed in terms of how they contributed to students' academic accomplishments. However, there were thoughtful critiques of student experiences and perceptions of these programmes. As ESE programmes are a popular intervention in New Zealand universities, taking a critical approach using student voices is an insightful way of considering the impact and effectiveness of equity programmes, as well as providing a rich source of possibilities for their future development.

Despite consistent comments about the positive aspects of many tutors in these programmes, participants also acknowledged that some tutors lacked adequate teaching or communication skills. They were quick to distinguish between having curricula knowledge (which, as postgraduate students, most tutors have) and the ability to clearly explain concepts and ideas, as well as managing classroom discussion effectively. One Māori student commented, "a lot of them [tutors] don't know how to facilitate a conversation . . . you sit there for half an hour . . . just sort of staring at each other" (P40, female). Another Māori participant remarked that the tutor for one of their papers was not of Māori

or Pacific background. This was problematic for the student as the tutor "had no appreciation for the Māori worldview, so I had resistance in that respect" (P86, female). Conversely, several students who had Pākehā tutors found them to be "awesome", with one remarking "we were like . . . why is she tutoring us? [But] she fully took us all on-board" (P80, female). Ultimately, these comments reinforced that tutors must have curricula knowledge, cultural knowledge and the skills to successfully facilitate classes. Within a kaupapa Māori framework, this means ensuring tutors understand why it is important to teach in ways that build manaakitanga and whanaungatanga, and why learning is enhanced by integrating Māori and Pacific examples into curricula. Additionally, tutors must be taught to deliver curricula effectively through this cultural framework.

Participants also shared observations regarding the challenge of getting students to attend ESE programmes. Study demands, in addition to family and cultural commitments, may make it difficult for students to attend additional tutorials consistently. A Māori student noted "there might be 20 Māori or Pacific [students] on the roll, but only five of them show up . . . or you see them at the first one, and then you don't see them again" (P40, female). Another remarked, "heaps of people don't even turn up" (P31, male), further highlighting student awareness of problems with recruitment and retention. With regard to university strategies for addressing these challenges, a student commented that programmes need to do more than just email Māori and Pacific students: "we're very shy people and [we] won't just come forward and say 'yeah, I'll come and see you'. It takes a bit of encouragement" (P1, male).

Several students expressed discomfort with how ESE programmes may affect how other students, staff and the wider university community perceive Māori and Pacific students. Their concern is that ESE programmes fuel problematic stereotypes: that participation in these programmes implies Māori and Pacific students require additional help to be successful, and that the broader perception of ESE programmes as remedial marks them as inferior. One Māori student argued:

> I think the real root of Māori and Pacific struggle is just the stereotype itself. There are all these extra programmes that we have, like extra help and . . . it helps, you can see that it helps a lot of students. But . . . [it has] become a new stereotype of Māori, that Māori need this free stuff and that they are inferior by nature. (P30, male)

A number of students discussed their discomfort when ESE programmes were promoted by equity staff in lectures at the beginning of semester. They reported hearing other students make disparaging comments about the necessity of ESE programmes and inappropriate, racist attitudes towards Māori and Pacific students based on stereotypes of their inferiority. For instance, one participant (P36, female) noted how "a massive sigh goes out in the lecture" when ESE programme tutors promote their programme in lectures. Comparatively, when lecturers promote ESE programmes, "we had a bigger turn out . . . it sort of legitimised the programme". One Samoan student expressed how these negative responses from other students "really puts ya down . . . I wonder what everybody else is thinking" (P1, male).

Similarly, many participants were critical of how misunderstood ESE programmes were in mainstream university spaces. There were numerous discussions regarding the disadvantage Māori and Pacific students experience in pre-tertiary education, as well as in other facets of social, economic and political life. Participants found that their non-Māori and Pacific peers were frequently ignorant of the rationale for ESE programmes. A Māori student described her experience:

> It's also interesting when you try to explain why they do tutorials, people are just like,

don't have a bar of it. They [medical and health fields] wanna have twenty percent of employees Māori and Pacific Island . . . and everyone's like "that's racist". I was like, "it's not, it's meeting population needs" . . . but even when you try to explain that you have valid reasons, people are just still like, "no, you're wrong". (P80, female)

Consequently, there was consensus among participants that the university could positively influence mainstream attitudes towards ESE programmes by framing them as a response to "institutional stuff endemic through the university, rather than a special . . . programme on the side" (P71, female). Hence, it is critical for teaching staff to present ESE programmes in ways that ensure cultural safety for Māori and Pacific students, who already face interpersonal and institutional discrimination. Furthermore, negative stereotypes and comments from non-Māori and Pacific students may also contribute to the issue of recruitment and retention previously discussed. If Māori and Pacific students feel uncomfortable when introductory information about ESE programmes is presented in lectures at the start of semester, they may be less likely to attend.

A final critique was raised concerning how Māori and Pacific students are combined into one group in ESE programmes. One Māori student expressed this discomfort saying:

I didn't go very often because it was Māori and Pacific students, and I found that strange that we were all pushed into the same group, like, just get all the brown people in one area rather than . . . looking at the Māori culture values and the values of people from Fiji or people from Tonga or whatever, because I don't think you can lump them all together. (P66, female)

Another Māori student in the focus group responded:

I find there's two ways to look at it. I can either look at it politically or I can look at it from a, I guess that whanaungatanga point of view, which is we're all in it together. Because there is issues around you know, brown being all lumped in together and stuff like that . . . [name of programme] itself is a Māori construct and yet you know, Pasifika peoples are pushed into that as well. (P74, male)

These students describe the importance of acknowledging the heterogeneity between Māori and Pacific cultures, while also articulating the potential value of being grouped together to access useful services. In this way, they express the complexity of balancing unique cultural identities with the pragmatism of potentially accessing increased services and resources through the formation of a coalition between minority groups. It is important that Māori and Pacific students are grouped together for meaningful reasons. As ngā iwi o Te Moana Nui ā Kiwa, Pacific students share numerous cultural values with Māori and with each other. Likewise, Māori and Pacific students face similar forms of racial discrimination in university settings (Mayeda, 'Ofamo'oni, Dutton, Keil, & Lauaki-Ve, 2014). Consequently, cultivating whanaungatanga between Māori and Pacific students is crucial to supporting academic success.

Discussion

This study reinforces research investigating similar university ESE programmes and argues there is significant scope for improving the support provided to Māori and Pacific students. The New Zealand government continues to signify that improved success—in the form of graduation and postgraduate qualifications—of these students is a national priority (Ministry of Education, 2015b). However, if universities do not adequately address the needs and experiences of Māori and Pacific students, the extent

to which programmes can effectively contribute to student success is limited. This study therefore provides an important glimpse into how students experience these programmes. Feedback from participants highlights several areas where universities can make improvements to the provision and management of programmes so they are responsive to Māori and Pacific student needs.

The credibility of ESE programmes rests upon high-quality teaching and learning spaces. Universities must take these programmes and their resourcing seriously (Chu, Abella, & Paurini, 2013). Māori and Pacific students often feel marginalised and alienated in mainstream university spaces. Providing quality tutoring staff can go some way towards ensuring ESE programmes do not feel like a "token" gesture of faculty or departmental management. Similarly, when the quality of ESE programmes is high, the broader university community can see that the success of Māori and Pacific students is valued by the university. A study of a similar ESE programme also found that Māori and Pacific students positively respond to seeing their tutors respected by the university as teaching staff (Henley, 2009).

For ESE programmes based on supplemental tutorial programming, providing well-trained and resourced tutors is imperative. Some participants discussed their frustration and disappointment at having tutors who were not sufficiently skilled at facilitating discussions and other related exercises. This has significant implications for programme effectiveness. If programme success is measured by the grades achieved by Māori and Pacific students engaged in ESE programmes, these are undermined by not having quality teaching in the tutorials. If programme success is measured by the number of students who attend these tutorials, inadequate teaching may deter students from making the time to attend an additional tutorial every week.

While Māori and Pacific postgraduate students or advanced undergraduate students may have the necessary subject and cultural knowledge to tutor, it is critical that they be able to communicate and engage effectively so that students become involved in tutorials and get the most out of each session. Whānau, whanaungatanga and manaakitanga have been cited as vital teaching practices (Manuel, 2010) and they should be utilised when developing tutorial teaching manuals. To this end, study findings suggest tutors in ESE programmes should be trained to teach course content and manage class dynamics effectively using culturally appropriate teaching practices. Furthermore, departments are encouraged to identify potential tutors during their undergraduate study, a system that could be enhanced if Māori and Pacific tutors communicated regularly with course convenors as part of the normalised teaching team. Doing so would show that permanent teaching staff have a commitment to building Māori and Pacific leadership and tino rangatiratanga.

Recruitment and retention are essential to supporting as many Māori and Pacific students as possible. Evidence has demonstrated that the first semester of their first year is a critical time for Māori (Earle, 2008) and Pacific students (Horrocks et al., 2012), and is often experienced as an overwhelming period of trying to navigate the unfamiliar spaces and systems of university (Mitchell, 2006; Oh et al., 2013). Therefore, it is important that strategies are put in place for students to be made aware of ESE programmes as early as possible—ideally, prior to enrolment—and be encouraged to participate from the very start, as consistent attendance of ESE programmes appears to be an aspect of Māori and Pacific student success (Henley, 2009; van der Meer, 2011).

Participants in this study frequently described the power of the personal. They felt welcomed and safe when staff reached out to them early and often, using their names, getting to know them as individuals and showing interest in their other commitments. These efforts, ostensibly fairly small ones from the perspective of a large

institution such as a university, forged strong personal connections, or whanaungatanga, which encouraged students to attend ESE programme tutorials and develop as high-achieving students. The value of a positive relationship between the university (generally via teaching staff) and Māori and Pacific students has also been found in previous research (Benseman et al., 2006; van der Meer, 2011). Therefore, this paper recommends that university departments make considerable effort towards establishing these connections as early as possible.

A significant barrier to participation in and credibility of ESE programmes is the perception that they are remedial. Some students, in this study and others (e.g., Henley 2009), resisted participating in ESE programme tutorials because they believed the purpose was to help students who were not capable of keeping up with material in lectures and mainstream tutorials. This belief also contributes to the challenges of recruitment and retention. Educational management teams must think of effective ways to package and present ESE programmes. For example, programmes could be framed as strategies that cultivate Indigenous student success and promote tino rangatiratanga, where Māori leadership and success are centred as part of the programme, rather than as support for "under-achieving" or "disenfranchised" minority students, which jeopardises students' cultural safety.

The onus is on departments and faculties to ensure their student population is better educated about the nature and purpose of ESE programmes. One suggestion, which came from several students in this research, was that ESE programmes ought to be introduced and promoted by lecturers rather than equity staff to lend credibility and demonstrate departmental support for these programmes. This article further supports this recommendation but cautions that lecturing staff must then be sufficiently trained in understanding why ESE programmes exist, who they impact and how they operate.

Study limitations

One limitation of this study is that it draws only on feedback from successful Māori and Pacific students and therefore does not necessarily represent the needs and experiences of students who have not been successful at the tertiary level. Considering the parameters for this study, this means students with lower grade point averages (under a B– average) and students who dropped out of university altogether are not represented. Given that these students may benefit the most from ESE programmes, research that explores their needs and the extent to which ESE programmes may help them is necessary. Similarly, another useful group of students that should be considered for similar research are those who attend ESE programmes one or two times and then disappear. Understanding why they discontinue attending these tutorials may reveal important needs that programmes are not addressing.

Conclusion

While there is growing evidence of effectiveness in the literature, little is known about student experiences of ESE programmes. Consequently, this article addresses a gap in the literature by using student voices to express their own perceptions of ESE programmes. In particular, by giving Māori and Pacific students an opportunity to offer critical feedback, they provide important insights for faculty and university management to consider. Because Māori and Pacific students often walk in two worlds as they manoeuvre between their own culture and the Western culture of the university (Morunga, 2009), universities need to develop robust ESE programmes and display a strong, visible commitment to them. Listening to the experiences of students and heeding their counsel would be a positive step forward for developing high-quality ESE programmes.

Acknowledgements

Glossary

haole (Hawaiian)	Caucasian
kaupapa	purpose
mana	respecting and honouring one another
manaakitanga	hospitality
ngā iwi o Te Moana Nui ā Kiwa	people of the Pacific Ocean
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent
tino rangatiratanga	Māori self-determination and autonomy
tuakana–teina	relationship between an older (tuakana) person and a younger (teina) person related to teaching and learning in the Māori context
whakawhanaungatanga	building relationships with others
whānau	family
whanaungatanga	kinship and feeling connected to others

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