



Te Tāhuhu o
te Mātauranga
Ministry of Education



**Talanoa
Ako**

Matamoana

*An as and by Pacific
theory and approach*

Gabrielle-Sisifo Makisi and Judy Oakden

Acknowledgements

Mālō le soifua ma le lagi e mama,

Matamoana: An as and by Pacific theory and approach has evolved since 2013 and frames the way we work. It draws on the knowledge and expertise of many people, and was developed in partnership with the Ministry, our provider partners, and the participants of our programmes and talanoa. We specifically want to acknowledge and thank the learners, parents and families, communities, teachers, principals, and Pacific leaders who were part of the Pacific PowerUP to Talanoa Ako longitudinal evaluations (2016-2020) and added their voice and *perspective* to our work.

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Malo lava Judy Oakden, co-author.

Ma lou fa'aaloalo tele

Gabrielle-Sisifo Makisi

Manager Ākonga Pacific Outcomes

Ministry of Education

Disclaimer

We developed this resource in good faith using the information available to us at the time. We provide it on the basis that the authors are not liable to any person or organisation for any damage or loss that may occur from acting or not acting on any information or advice within this report.

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Foreword

It is with both pride and humility that I write this foreword for a resource that stands as a testament to the power of collaboration, cultural integrity, and evidence-based inquiry in advancing equity in education for Pacific communities. At the heart of this work lies Matamoana, an approach that both centres and celebrates Pacific worldviews while fostering meaningful synergy with Papalagi knowledge systems. Through this deliberate fusion of Indigenous and Western paradigms, Matamoana offers a powerful example of how true co-governance and co-authorship can lead to reconciliation, innovation, and transformational change.

Since its inception in 2013, Matamoana has been a living and evolving approach, continuously shaped by the contributions of Pacific learners, parents, families, community leaders, educators (both Pacific and non-Pacific), and the broader education sector. It reflects years of dialogue, partnership, and shared ownership, serving as a potent reminder that progress is most effectively achieved when it is grounded in relationships, cultural identity, and the collective wisdom of those who have lived the experiences being addressed.

A core strength of Matamoana lies in its ability to operationalise and refine the integration of theory and practice. By rooting itself in Pacific ontologies, epistemologies, and pedagogies, it not only challenges colonial and one-size-fits-all educational paradigms but also redefines strategies for co-creating educational equity. This approach balances cultural authenticity with academic rigour, supported by an extensive evidence base that demonstrates its tangible and meaningful outcomes.

Of particular note is the innovative use of culturally-anchored methodologies, such as Fa'afaletui, which prioritise relationships, cultural identity, and power-sharing. These approaches highlight the participatory and community-facing nature of Matamoana, ensuring shared ownership and inclusivity while advancing theory development in Pacific education. By placing Pacific cultural narratives, oral histories, lived experiences, and relational dynamics at its core, Matamoana creates a contextualised and Pacific-centric model that bridges the gap between theory and application.

This resource is more than an account of progress; it is a forward-thinking template for inclusive education and governance. It challenges traditional structures while offering opportunities to rethink and reshape education, not only within Pacific contexts but in all settings where equity, cultural responsiveness, and reconciliation between diverse knowledge systems are essential. Matamoana demonstrates how such balance and integration can drive transformation, paving the way for educational practices that uplift and empower all learners.

At its foundation, Matamoana embodies a commitment to equity and a vision for research-led, culturally-inclusive, and evidence-based education. It is an inspiring positional space for educators, policymakers, and communities alike, providing an approach for advancing education that is as profound in its cultural sensitivity as it is groundbreaking in its methodological innovation.

For all who read this resource, may Matamoana inspire reflection, dialogue, and action within your own educational spaces. It stands as a beacon of what is possible when we honour the richness of diverse perspectives and work collectively toward shared goals of equity and excellence.

Dr Cherie Chu-Fuluifaga (ONZM, PhD, MA, BA, BA/Hons)

Associate Professor

School of Education

Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington

Aotearoa New Zealand



Chapter 1

Introduction

KEY POINTS

- » Matamoana is a theory (a way of knowing) and an approach (way of doing).
- » Matamoana puts Pacific learners, their families, and communities at the centre of their success.
- » The Pacific PowerUP to Talanoa Ako longitudinal evaluations strengthened the voice of Pacific in the Ministry and gave a strong mandate for privileging Pacific knowledge in Ministry responses.
- » Talanoa is integral to Matamoana and to the work of the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team.

This resource, *Matamoana: An as and by Pacific theory and approach*, was developed by the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team at Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga | Ministry of Education (the Ministry).

Beginning in 2013, this distinctive way of thinking was cultivated with the aim of engaging with Pacific learners and their families, schools, and communities to ensure greater access to education.

Matamoana takes a different approach to previous Ministry initiatives. It puts Pacific learners and their families and communities at the centre of their success.

The development of this resource marks a significant milestone in fresh thinking about Pacific education. It responds to the words of former Minister of Education, Honourable Hekia Parata: “If you just keep doing the same thing, you will get the same results”, which for Pacific learners, has been continued low educational achievement.

Matamoana: An as and by Pacific theory and approach documents the story of Matamoana’s development, as it underpinned the research, evaluation, and analysis of the Talanoa Ako programmes and resources. They include:

- » Talanoa Ako (formerly Pacific PowerUP) – a parent responsive education programme
- » *Talanoa Ako Pacific Talk about Education and Learning* (TA PTEL) – a resource and a professional learning development programme (PLD) for schools and teachers
- » Fakailoga Tino – a PLD programme that supports teachers to name, negotiate, and navigate racism in schools
- » Talanoa Ako Pacific Learners Support Programme (TA PLSP) – a programme that provides intensive support to enhance NCEA achievement among Pacific learners.

These resources include videos and other educational tools for the sector and communities that have been developed using a Matamoana approach. They are central to embedding the learnings from the different evaluative reviews, the Pacific PowerUP to Talanoa Ako longitudinal evaluations (2016-2019), and provide best practice for schools to focus on Pacific achievement and build their Pacific capability.

These resources are available on the Ministry’s online curriculum hub, Tāhūrangi.¹ For more detail of these programmes and resources, see Chapter 3: Matamoana in practice.

¹ Ministry of Education. Tāhūrangi – New Zealand Curriculum (2025, March). <https://newzealandcurriculum.tahurangi.education.govt.nz/talanoa-ako-pacific-talk-about-education-and-learning/5637167086.p>

Matamoana – a theory and an approach

This resource outlines the Matamoana theory and approach as a starting point for others to build on when working in the Pacific space.

Matamoana is a relational way of working where best practice and solutions are co-designed, developed, delivered, and evaluated with Pacific, *as and by Pacific*.

A Matamoana approach is strength-based and solution-focused. It adds to what is known about Pacific achievement in education – the knowledge base.

Matamoana is also a response to feedback from Pacific learners, parents, communities, and the education sector who expressed that the Ministry's traditional ways of working with Pacific communities were not fit for purpose and did not lead to significant shifts in learner achievement. Pacific communities also noted that despite being over-consulted, they felt their concerns and ideas were not listened to or acted on by the Ministry.²

Matamoana is a theory (a way of knowing) and an approach (way of doing).

- » Theory – A Pacific-centric³ understanding, a philosophical stance, and a way of thinking that is backed by academic theories and models.
- » Approach – The actions taken to implement a Pacific-centric way of working with Pacific learners, parents, and communities. This approach supports more equitable Pacific access to education, as described in programme evaluation reviews and case studies.⁴

The *Pasifika Education Plan*

The *Pasifika Education Plan 2013-2017*⁵ was a turning point in how the Ministry saw Pacific learners. The framework for the plan is the Pasifika success compass⁶ (Figure 1) that shows Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities at the centre of Pacific student success.

The *Pasifika Education Plan* encouraged students to operate as Pacific in their communities, bringing their identity, language, and culture to their learning. It also enabled Pacific parents, families, and communities to “step up” and be the village that children need to succeed.

In practice, this became the Ministry's Pacific PowerUP (later renamed Talanoa Ako), a community-driven programme that works to build Pacific parents' knowledge of education and assessment so they can support their child's learning journey.

The *Pasifika Education Plan* also planted the seed for the development of Matamoana.⁷

² Fairbairn-Dunlop, P. (2021b). *Synthesis report of Pacific PowerUP Evaluations 2016-2019*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.

³ Fairbairn-Dunlop, P. (2021a). *Case Studies: PowerUP Evaluations 2016-2019 Key Learnings*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.

⁴ Chu-Fuluifaga, C., Reynolds, M., Abella, I., and Rimoni, F. (2021). Pacific education literature review on key findings of the Pacific PowerUP Longitudinal Evaluation 2016-2018 Hearing the voice of Pacific parents. In *Talanoa Ako: Pacific Talk about Education and Learning*.

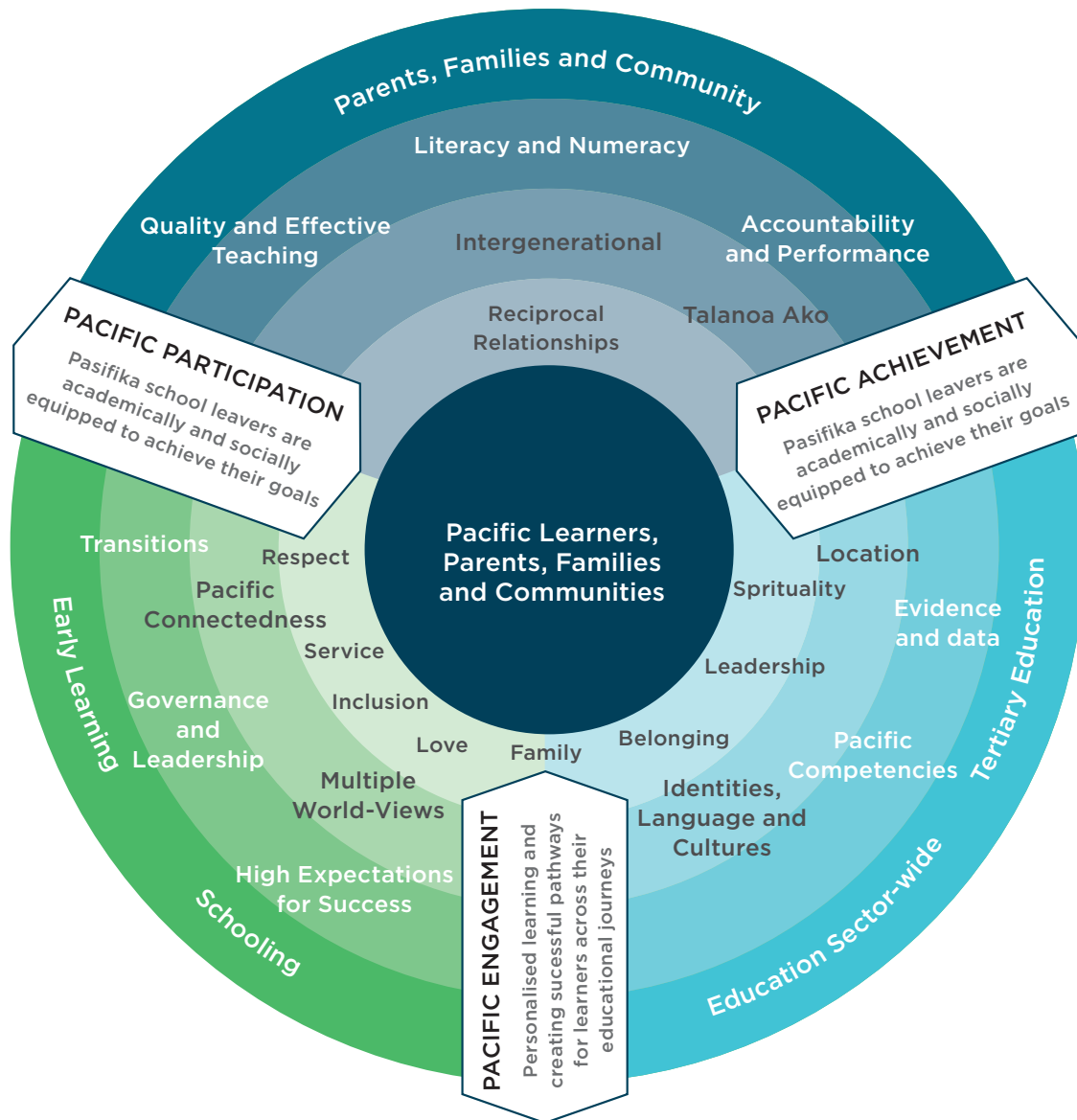
⁵ Ministry of Education. (2013). *Pasifika Education Plan 2013-2017*.

⁶ Fairbairn-Dunlop, P. (2021b). p. 37.

⁷ For more detail on the gafa of Matamoana, see Appendix 1.



FIGURE 1: THE PASIFIKA SUCCESS COMPASS



Source: Pasifika Education Plan 2013-2017



The purpose of Matamoana: An as and by Pacific theory and approach

The purpose of this resource is to describe Matamoana and share how it was developed and then applied within an educational context. While this resource provides examples from the education sector, it is also intended to serve as a model for other sectors and government agencies by demonstrating a responsive way of working with Pacific communities. Matamoana emphasises the accountability of agencies to engage with Pacific communities in a way that puts Pacific at the centre of decision-making.

Matamoana: An as and by Pacific theory and approach is intended for:

- » policymakers and procurement teams within government agencies, NGOs, and the education, health, and social services sectors to illustrate possible ways of working more effectively with Pacific communities
- » communities to demonstrate that government agencies and providers can offer support in ways that value, use, and respond to identity, language, and culture
- » the wider Ministry and Pacific communities to appreciate the *as and by Pacific* model of delivery and design.

The evidence base for Matamoana

The Matamoana theory and approach is built on a rich evidence base that began with the Pacific PowerUP to Talanoa Ako longitudinal evaluations.⁸ These evaluations drew on more than 1,200 in-depth talanoa with Pacific learners, families, communities, teachers, and principals across Aotearoa New Zealand.

The *Talanoa Ako: Pacific Talk about Education and Learning* (TA PTEL) resources were developed to capture these voices and quantitative data through a synthesised findings report, case studies on key findings, and a literature review on the learnings.

The five key themes diagram⁹ (Figure 2) shows the learnings from the longitudinal evaluations.

FIGURE 2: FIVE THEMES OF CULTURALLY SAFE PLACES FOR PACIFIC PARENTS AND LEARNERS



Pacific visible

How Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities are acknowledged by, and are in equitable partnership with, education. Pacific visible is also apparent in the presence of community-sourced Pacific concepts through which Pacific education is understood.



Identities, languages, and cultures

How Pacific learners' developing identities are upheld by educational experiences that provide support for Pacific culture(s), language(s), and practices that value the contributions of Pacific parents, families, and communities through equitable and honourable partnerships.



Pacific wellbeing

How the wellbeing of Pacific learners is understood in education in holistic Pacific terms, and supported by effective partnerships between Pacific parents, families, and communities, and education.



'Auala in – Access

How Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities are helped to gain access to, and be welcome in, education such as through the curriculum, use of pedagogy, and consultation.



Cultural bias and racism

The attitudes, processes, and practices in education that limit the flourishing of Pacific learners', parents', families', and communities' visibility, identity, language, culture, wellbeing, and access.

Source: Five key themes from the Pacific PowerUP to Talanoa Ako longitudinal evaluations 2016-2019.

⁸ Oakden, J. (2019). *Pacific PowerUP Plus 2018: A summative evaluation of stakeholder perceptions*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.

⁹ Fairbairn-Dunlop, P. (2021b). p. 5.

The findings from the longitudinal evaluations informed the development of the Ākonga Pacific Outcome team's work programmes from 2021. Each programme has been designed to respond to a theme using Matamoana. In this way these programmes are mandated by the voice of Pacific and research, data, and evidence. For examples, see Chapter 2: Theory in practice.

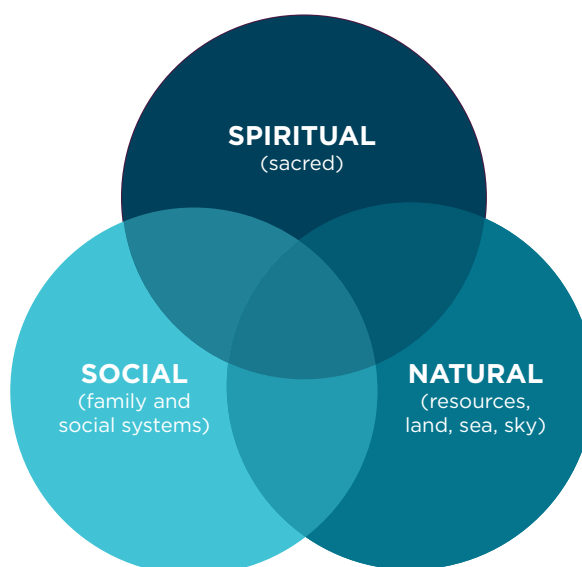
Pacific worldview

Integral to the Matamoana theory and approach is the Pacific worldview, represented by Endemann's Fonofale model.¹⁰

"I am not an individual; I am an integral part of the cosmos. I share divinity with my ancestors, the land, the seas and the skies. I am not an individual, because I share a 'tōfi' (an inheritance) with my family, my village and my nation. I belong to my family and my family belongs to me. I belong to my village and my village belongs to me. I belong to my nation and my nation belongs to me. This is the essence of my sense of belonging."

Tupua¹¹

FIGURE 3: THE PACIFIC WORLDVIEW



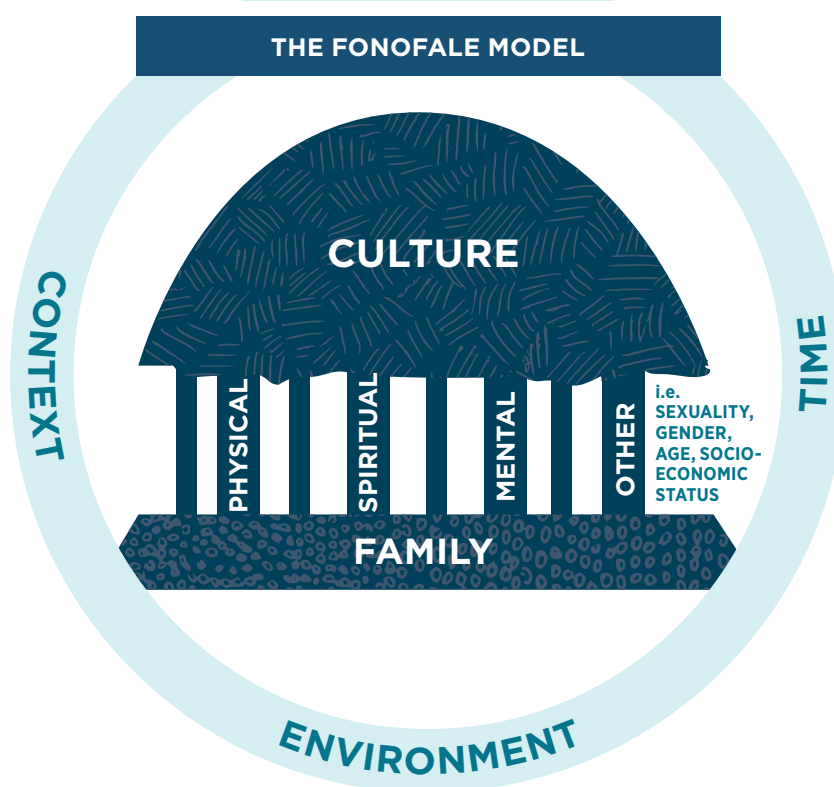
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The Fonofale model, Endemann recognises the spiritual, social and natural balance of a Pacific worldview. Adopting Endemann's Fonofale model empowered Matamoana to be holistically *as and by Pacific* – a Pacific worldview. This meant educational responses, co-design, and co-development of programmes, interventions, and initiatives started from a strength-based solution that considered the “wholeness” of a Pacific person.

¹⁰ Pulotu-Endemann, F. K. (2009, 7 September). *Fonofale model of health*. [Workshop]. Health Promotion Forum of New Zealand conference, Wellington, New Zealand.

¹¹ Tui Atua, T. T. T. E. (2003). In Search of Meaning, Nuance and Metaphor in Social Policy. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, 20, pp. 49-63.

FIGURE 4: THE FONOFALE MODEL



Source: Pulotu-Endemann, 2009

The Pacific worldview and use of Fonofale were strengthened through the use of Pacific research processes such as Talanoa, Fa’afaletui, and Tausi le vā. For more detail, see Chapter 2: Matamoana in theory.

Personal context of the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team

Throughout the development of Matamoana, the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team has been made up of a mix of first- and second-generation Pacific – from Sāmoa, Tokelau, Fiji, Tonga, and Niue – as well as Māori and Palagi.¹² The team predominantly identify as their specific Pacific heritage, and some place a further descriptor in regard to being New Zealand-born. They recognise the usefulness of the term “Pacific” for diasporic populations, to aggregate numbers, and to secure funding for their communities. Collectively they hold worldviews from many different Pacific nations that privilege their identities, languages, values, cultures, and Pacific funds of knowledge.

Funds of knowledge generally refers to knowledge and skills arising from life experiences, rather than schooling.¹³ Applying funds of knowledge theory involves focusing on people’s strengths and skills, emphasising engagement with individuals and evidence rather than groups and assumptions.

For more detail about Pacific funds of knowledge, see Chapter 4: Matamoana key characteristics.

¹² Palagi is a white or non-Samoan person.

¹³ Hogg, L. (2016). Applying funds of knowledge theory in a New Zealand high school: New directions for pedagogical practice. *Teachers and Curriculum*. 16(1), pp. 49-55.

Who are Pacific peoples?

The term “Pacific” is widely used by the New Zealand government, various agencies, educational institutions, and scholars to describe individuals with connections to the Pacific Islands who live in Aotearoa New Zealand. However, this broad usage has often led to oversimplified generalisations that overlook the richness and diversity of Pacific identities.

In our context, we use “Pacific” to refer to individuals who “trace descent from and/or are citizens of any of the regions typically recognised as part of the Pacific, including Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia”. This definition aligns with the Ministry’s current policy. However, we recognise that Pacific peoples are not a monolithic group; they represent distinct cultures, languages, histories, and worldviews shaped by their unique genealogies, values, and lived experiences. Their identities are deeply rooted in familial and communal relationships, spirituality, land, and oceanic heritage.

By acknowledging this diversity, we seek to ensure that our work respects, reflects, and empowers the varied voices and aspirations of Pacific communities in Aotearoa.

The Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team recognises that there are some Pacific-centric cultural values that are common across the Pacific. They refer to those commonalities as Pacific funds of knowledge and “Pacific-centric” values that include love, respect, collectivism, spirituality, family, reciprocity, and consensus¹⁴ and Pacific funds of knowledge (ways of doing, knowing, and, seeing, as well as current evidence, research, and data).

The origins of Matamoana

Matamoana: An as and by Pacific theory and approach describes how a Matamoana approach shares power, privileges Pacific-centric values, and builds trusted relationships to build engagement with Pacific learners, their families, and their communities.¹⁵

This resource documents how the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team’s ways of thinking and working evolved over several years to develop an *as and by Pacific* theory and approach, and ultimately Matamoana.

It retrospectively records learnings from 2013 to 2023 gained from the *Talanoa Ako Pacific Talking About Education and Learning* resources, as well as sense-making sessions with the Ākonga Pacific Outcome team between December 2022 and May 2023.

For more detail of how Matamoana developed, see Appendix 1: The gafa of Matamoana.

¹⁴ Ministry for Pacific Peoples. (2022). *Pacific wellbeing strategy: Weaving all of Government: Professing lalanga fou*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry for Pacific People, p. 18.

¹⁵ Robinson, V., Hohepa, M., and Lloyd, C. (2009). *School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why*: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.





Conceptualising Matamoana

Matamoana loosely translates to “eyes on the sea”. It is the name of the family malae (area) of the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team manager, Gabrielle-Sisifo Makisi, in her village in Sāmoa, Tanugamanono.

Pacific people are people of the sea. The sea impacts every part of daily life – food and livelihood, travel and the linking of communities, information sharing and networking, sports and recreation, the visual lives of the horizon and the lagoon, mood, and rhythm of life. Tagata Moana are people of the sea, commonly known through colonisation as a Pacific collective.

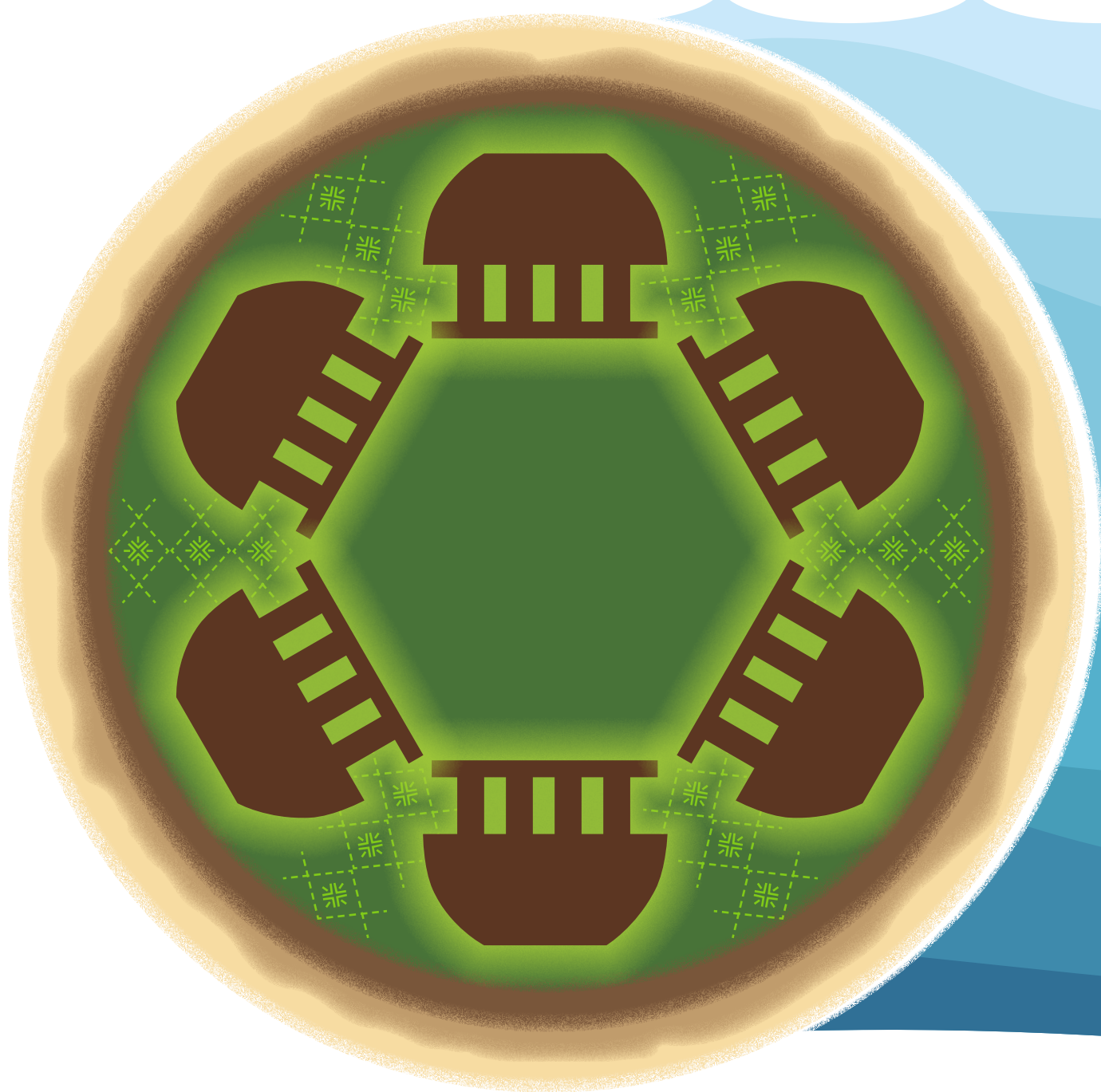
The sea context impacts our:

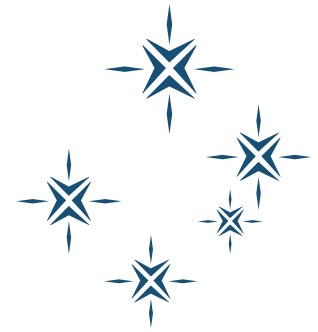
- » sense of knowledge of who we are – the stories, myths, and legends as nations of seafarers and adventurers
- » Pacific funds of knowledge – what we know and utilise, what explains the world we live in and how knowledge is constructed, validated, and shared (for example, wind ripples, rain)
- » values – what is important in life, the way of doing things, family, community (respect, relationships, sharing)
- » protocols – leadership, decision making, who talks, and who is silent.

Matamoana guides us to look forward, with our eyes on the sea, gazing out toward the horizon and beyond, in an innovative, knowledge-sharing process.

The following chapter unpacks the theory of Matamoana.

CONCEPTUALISING MATAMOANA





PACIFIC FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE

STRENGTH-BASED

RELATIONSHIPS





CHAPTER 2

Matamoana in theory

KEY POINTS

- » Relationships are central to Matamoana (the vā).
- » Matamoana is strength-based.
- » The Adaptive Action Cycle model provides a process for strengthening thinking and practice.
- » The Fa'afaletui framework is used to collate findings.
- » Matamoana is adapted from an Indigenous worldview of *as and by*.

This chapter outlines the different components that make up the theory of Matamoana – exploring Pacific concepts such as the *vā*, *Tausi le vā*, and *Talanoa*, as well as inquiry models such as the Adaptive Action Cycle, *Fa’afaletui*, and the *as and by* Indigenous model of engagement. This chapter demonstrates how these provide the theoretical and practical foundations of Matamoana.

The *vā* – relationships are central

The *vā* is defined by Anae et al. as “a spatial way of conceiving the secular and spiritual dimensions of relationships and relational order, that facilitates both personal and collective well-being”.¹⁶ The *vā* is a shared concept among many Polynesian nations and understanding it is central to understanding how people relate to each other and their surroundings. At its simplest level, it is the relational space between people.

Matamoana as a theory is strength-based. It draws on Pacific ‘voice’, aspirations, and funds of knowledge. It privileges Pacific thinking and evidence and data with best practice to develop solutions.

- Makisi

Tausi le vā is the Samoan term for respecting, nurturing, and maintaining the space within relationships, and is crucial for harmony between people, spirituality, and their environment. A careful focus on *Tausi le vā* builds and strengthens relationships. There are also opportunities for knowledge, queries, experiences, and observations to be shared.

Talanoa – space for open dialogue

Talanoa means to *tala*, talk, about *noa*, normal things. Timote Vaoleteti defines *Talanoa* as “a personal encounter where people story their issues, their realities, and aspirations”.¹⁷ Throughout this process – which is inclusive, participatory, and transparent – space is created for people to discuss normal, everyday things until an outcome is achieved.

Talanoa can be crucial to ensure the “silent, invisible voices” are heard and collected in an authentically-Pacific way and Pacific ways are valued.

In the Pacific PowerUP to *Talanoa Ako* longitudinal evaluations, Pacific students and their families described how *talanoa* ensured their voices were heard and included.

A Matamoana approach uses *talanoa* to put communication and questioning at the heart of learning and knowledge building. There are three aspects to *talanoa* in Matamoana:

- » engaging in ways that are culturally safe, reciprocal, participant-driven, and with an equitable power balance
- » learning to ask questions to support engagement in education
- » evolving through a reflective questioning process.

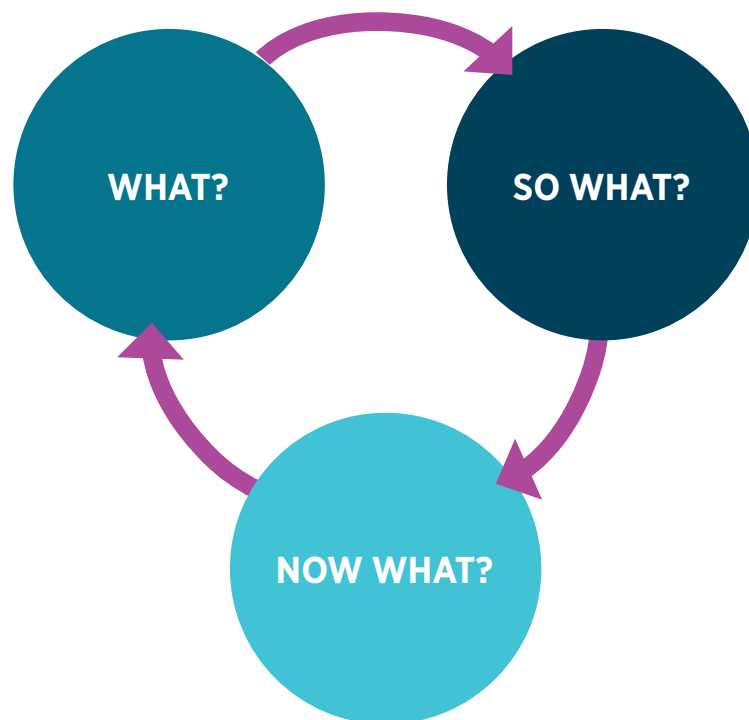
¹⁶ Airini, Anae, M., Mila-Schaaf, K., Coxon, E., Mara, D. and Sanga, K. (2010). *Teu Le Va - Relationships across research and policy in Pasifika education*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education..

¹⁷ Ministry of Education. (2023a). Overview of Tu’u Mālohi, 2022. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education, p. 8.

Adaptive Action Cycle

Talanoa is also adopted in the Adaptive Action Cycle approach used by the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team to ensure evaluation findings are responded to within a Matamoana approach. The Adaptive Action Cycle promotes systematic change by posing three questions as a cycle, with each question and accompanying action then prompting the next question and action.

FIGURE 5: THE ADAPTIVE ACTION CYCLE



Source: Borton (1970) and Eoyang & Holladay (2013).^{18 19}

Matamoana as a theory consciously thinks about how to Tausi le vā, Talanoa, and follow an Adaptive Action Cycle. This enables Pacific funds of knowledge to be prioritised as an appropriate way to mobilise, share knowledge, develop, and deliver programmes, as well as evaluate and make sense of learnings. This means that Pacific are at the centre of all decisions and that all programmes are strength-based, deliberate, flexible, evidence-based, and innovative. Pacific responses for Pacific issues allow for the ability to use Pacific languages, and Pacific practices and values such as hospitality, prayer, noting, and responses to hierarchy.

¹⁸ Borton, T. (1970). *Reach, Touch, and Teach. Student concerns and process education.*

¹⁹ Eoyang, G. H. and Holladay, R. J. (2013). *Adaptive Action: Leveraging uncertainty in your organisation.*

Using Fa'afaletui to collate findings

An adapted Fa'afaletui framework²⁰ is also integral to Matamoana as a way of thinking. Fa'afaletui is a methodology conceptualised from the Sāmoan term for the process of weaving together voices from different fale/houses.

In a similar way that Talanoa gives a voice to those who may not otherwise have the opportunity or confidence to share, the Fa'afaletui framework seeks to capture different perspectives from different “fale” – from different views within society – and use these to prompt ideas and propose a way forward.

The Fa'afaletui model has three views which are outlined in Figure 6.²¹

FIGURE 6: THE FA'AFALETUI MODEL



Source: Tamasese, 2005

Using the analogy of the Mountain Top, the Village and Out at Sea, the Fa'afaletui framework acknowledges the intricate relationships that exist in the process of planning, implementation, and evaluation. This framework recognises that decisions are made at three levels: the Mountain Top represents the policy and strategy level, the Village signifies the practitioners on the ground, and Out at Sea reflects looking to the future and identifying what will sustain growth.

Within and between each of these levels, is the vā – the relational space central to respecting, nurturing, and maintaining relationships.

The Fa'afaletui model is an important method for collating findings. For example, during evaluation sense-making sessions, the key ideas are grouped into these three “levels”, then developed into learnings.

²⁰ Tamasese, K., Peteru, C., Waldegrave, C., and Bush, A. (2005). Ole Taeao Afua, the new morning: a qualitative investigation into Samoan perspectives on mental health and culturally appropriate services. *The Australian and New Zealand journal of psychiatry*, 39 (4), pp. 300–309.

²¹ Fairbairn-Dunlop, P. (2021b). p. 41.

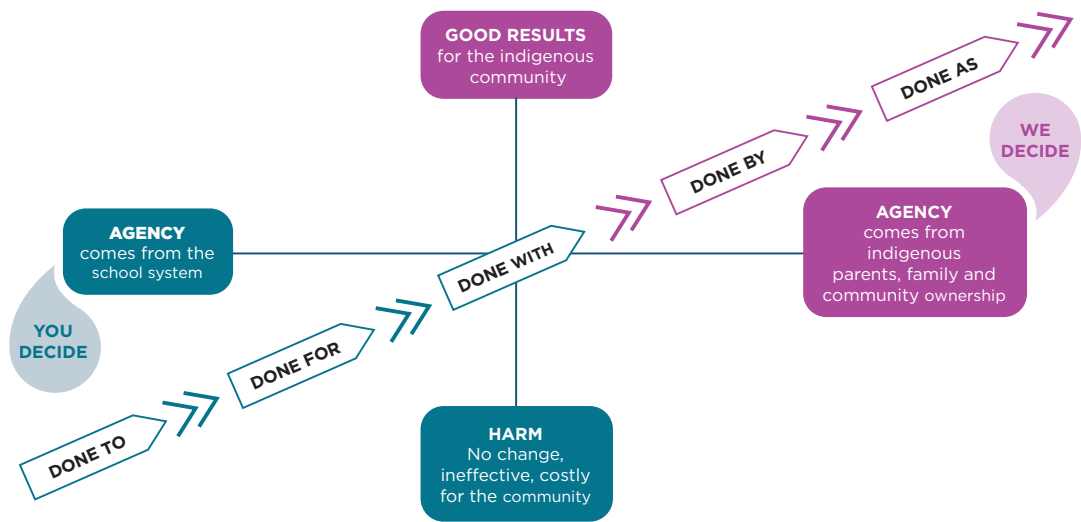
The as and by Indigenous model of engagement

The *as and by Indigenous* model of engagement²² developed by Nan Wehipeihana (2019) depicts a Pacific worldview that is inherent in Matamoana. The model shifts power and authority to privilege Indigenous knowledge, rather than Western knowledge, and builds on the work of many Indigenous practitioners who came before.²³

Wehipeihana is a Māori evaluator who adapted the model for an education service context, recognising its relevance for any context where power imbalance is an issue.

Using a Matamoana approach, Wehipeihana’s *as Pacific* denotes Pacific funds of knowledge, values, and language, and *by Pacific* denotes Pacific delivery and evaluation.

FIGURE 7: CONTINUUM OF APPROACHES TO WORKING WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES



Source: Adapted from Wehipeihana’s evaluation model, 2019

Figure 7²⁴ is an adaptation of Wehipeihana’s evaluation model that illustrates a continuum of approaches, ranging from Western methods and models (“done to”, “done for”, “done with”) to Pacific methods and models (“done by”, “done as”). Wehipeihana proposed that “a paradigm shift is needed ... to radically shift the power balance by placing control in the hands of Indigenous peoples”.²⁵

²² Wehipeihana, N. (2019). Increasing cultural competence in Indigenous-led evaluation: A necessary step toward Indigenous-led evaluation. *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, 34(2). p. 381.
²³ Wehipeihana, N. (2019). p. 381.
²⁴ Fairbairn-Dunlop, P. (2021b). p. 38.
²⁵ Wehipeihana, N. (2019). p. 377, 380.



Wehipeihana centred her discussion on why the *as and by* model of Indigenous engagement (adapted here for Pacific communities) was important for Indigenous communities.

When [a programme] is led by [Pacific] people, they are more likely to have the cultural capital for the following:

- » *to facilitate respectful engagement and the observance of cultural protocols ... to get relationships and the [programme] off to a good start (Durie, 2001)*
- » *to utilise [Pacific] knowledge, methods, and ways of working in [a programme]; they can provide a cultural 'reading' or assessment of the cultural fit or appropriateness of [ways of working] for [Pacific] peoples (Goodwin, Sauni, & Were, 2015)*
- » *... they can take the lead in sense making and analysis to ensure that the richness, subtlety, and nuance of meaning are not lost in translation and ensure the cultural validity of the evaluative conclusions drawn (Kirkhart, 2010).*

Adapted from Wehipeihaha²⁶

Education programme development and delivery for Pacific learners is more successful when guided by the *as and by* model. Figure 8 shows Wehipeihana's continuum of ways of working with Indigenous communities and the corresponding practical application through Matamoana.

²⁶ Wehipeihana, N. (2019). p. 372.

FIGURE 8: AS AND BY IN THE MATAMOANA CONTEXT

	WEHIPEIHANA ²⁷	MATAMOANA
Done by	“Indigenous people have control over the [programme] and Indigenous methods and worldviews prevail. [Programmes] may utilise Western methods.”	» The Ministry shares power with the Pacific community. The community decides what is best for them and identifies and co-designs a Pacific-led response with the Ministry. » Flexibility is built into service delivery contracts to meet the needs of individual Pacific communities, such as smaller community responses and ethnic-specific responses. » The community delivers and is part of the evaluation.
Done as	“Indigenous peoples control the [programme] and Indigenous knowledge and science are the norms. The legitimacy and validity of Indigenous principles and values are taken for granted. It does not exclude Western methods but includes them only as far as they are seen to be useful.”	» Pacific principles and values underpin the programme. Identity, language, and culture are valued. » Pacific learners and families are at the centre of Pacific success, as outlined in the <i>Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020-2030</i>. » Reflective processes occur through ongoing talanoa and frequent feedback from parents and community partners inform the Ministry’s next steps.
Done with	“Power and decision making are shared and negotiated. It is a collaborative and participatory space. Pacific and Western worldviews and approaches are utilised.”	» The “done with” space is still shared and negotiated. Because of power imbalances, this may still result in suboptimal programme design for Pacific.

²⁷ Wehipeihana, N. (2019). p. 380-381.

	WEHIPEIHANA ²⁷	MATAMOANA
Done for	“Seeks to improve the situation for [Pacific] peoples but there is minimal consultation with [Pacific] peoples. The [programme] is designed and managed without reference to [Pacific] values, principles, and priorities, and decision-making power resides with [non-Pacific]. [The programme] is paternalistic, and Western worldviews and Western science prevail.”	» These are the traditional approaches to programme development and design that often do not meet Pacific needs. In these cases, other worldviews prevail.
Done to	“[Pacific] peoples have no say or control over the [programme] and there are no clear benefits for [Pacific] peoples. [The programme] is done to [Pacific] peoples, and Western worldviews and Western science prevail.”	

Source: Oakden, 2019

Matamoana as a theory consciously considers the Pacific research processes Tausi le vā, Talanoa, and the Fa’afaletui framework. The Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team also use the Adaptive Action Cycle and an adapted *as and by* model to ensure Pacific funds of knowledge are prioritised as an appropriate way to mobilise, share knowledge, develop, and deliver programmes, as well as evaluate and make sense of learnings.

These theoretical models make up Matamoana, ensuring that Pacific are at the centre of all decisions and that all Ākonga Pacific Outcome team programmes are strength-based, deliberate, flexible, evidence-based, and innovative.



CHAPTER 3

Matamoana in practice

KEY POINTS

- » A Matamoana approach is used across all of the Ākonga Pacific Outcome team's work and in programme development, design, delivery, and evaluation.
- » Examples of current programmes are Talanoa Ako, *Talanoa Ako: Pacific Talk about Education and Learning* resources and PLD, Fakailoga Tino, and Talanoa Ako: Learners Support Programme.
- » Matamoana in practice follows a process which starts with learnings from evidence.



This chapter demonstrates how the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team applies the Matamoana approach to develop educational programmes that foster positive outcomes for Pacific learners, along with their families, communities, teachers, and schools.

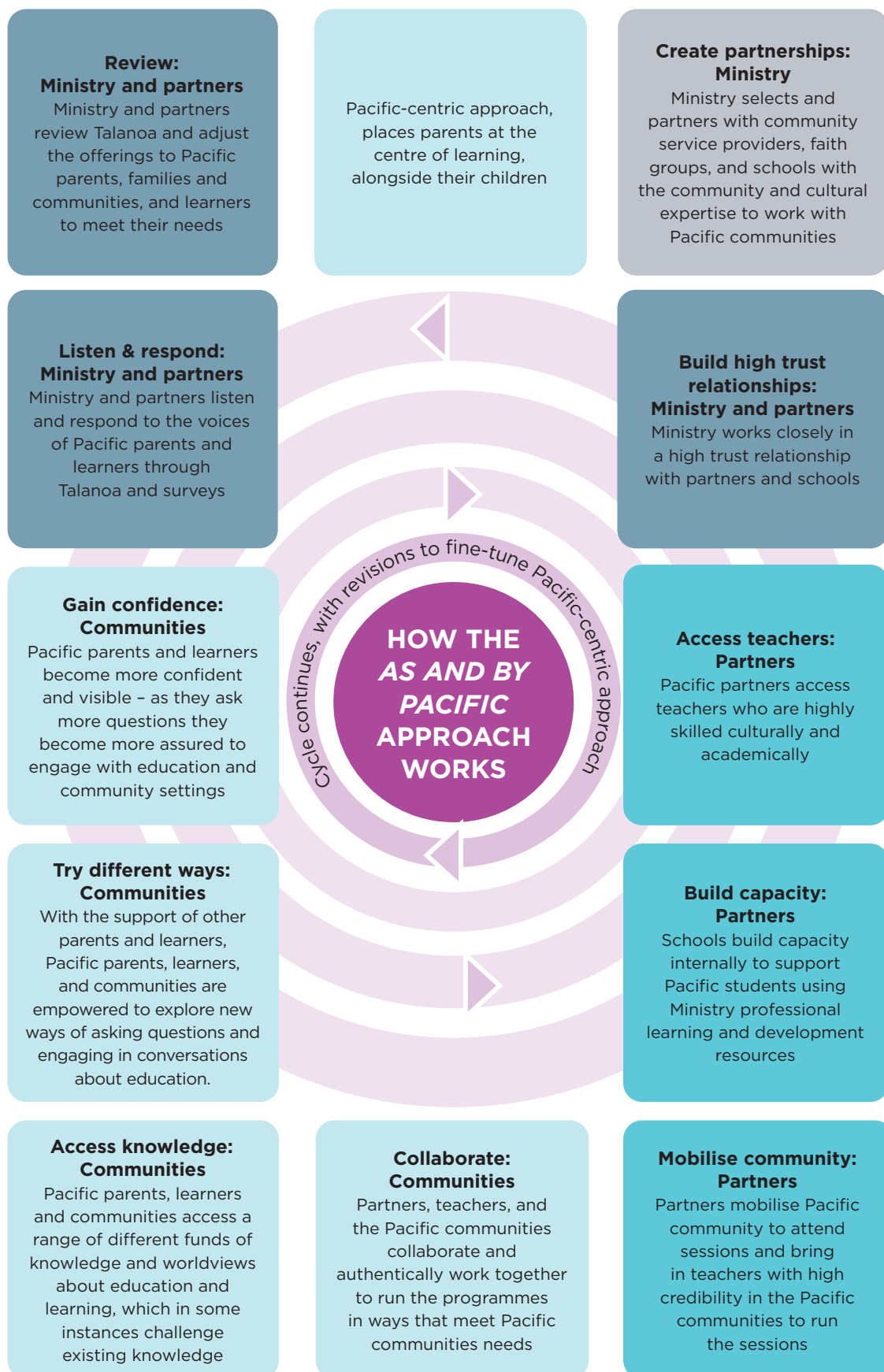
Pacific communities and the Ministry's Ākonga Pacific Outcome team used a Matamoana approach to identify interconnected elements that shape the design of educationally responsive programmes for Pacific learners. These include:

- » placing learners and their families at the heart of wraparound support to enhance Pacific achievement and engagement
- » drawing on insights from these groups to identify and address educational barriers and biases, therefore improving Pacific access to education
- » emphasising close collaboration between Pacific communities, schools, the Ministry, and other relevant stakeholders
- » establishing a foundation of power-sharing among Pacific communities, the Ministry, and delivery providers
- » emphasising the strength of Pacific funds of knowledge and Pacific values.

Matamoana was developed from 2013 to 2020 as an approach to engage Pacific learners, parents, families, communities, schools and teachers to raise Pacific achievement.
– Ministry of Education

Figure 9 illustrates how these interconnected elements work together to create a cohesive *as and by Pacific* Matamoana approach to designing and delivering programmes for Pacific students, their families, and their communities.

FIGURE 9: MATAMOANA APPROACH SNAPSHOT



This hierarchical structure symbolises the cultural foundation, Pacific values, community input, and strategic support integral to Matamoana's success. It highlights Matamoana as a culturally responsive approach, emphasising the interconnectedness of its elements, all of which are essential for achieving positive educational outcomes for Pacific communities.

**Matamoana:
As and By Pacific
Theory and
Approach**

Talanoa Ako

Talanoa Ako Pacific talk about Education and Learning PLO

Talanoa Ako Digital App

At the Table & Open Learning

Tu'u Mālohi

Talanoa Ako Online Space

Evaluations

Fakailoga Tino

Intervention Logic

Tegaia Scholarships

Change Management Theories

Taitou Feminist

Talanoa Ako on Air

Talanoa Ako: Pacific Talk About Education and Learning

Service

Respect

Identity

Alofa

Pacific centric Pacific values

Collective (e.g. family/hu'u/ church)

Spirituality

Language & culture

The Va (relational space)

Pacific Education Plan 2020-30

Te Pae Aronui Strategy 2022-25

- » Pacific programmes are Pacific led
- » the Ministry shares power with the Pacific community
- » the Ministry draws from best practice and research regarding engagement with Pacific communities
- » the community decides what is best for them and identifies and co-designs a response with the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team
- » flexibility is built into service delivery contracts to meet the needs of individual Pacific communities, such as smaller community responses and ethnic-specific responses
- » the community delivers and is part of the evaluation process
- » Pacific principles and values are at the fore and identity, language, and culture are valued (Pacific-centric)
- » Pacific parents and families are at the centre of Pacific success with learners
- » ongoing talanoa and frequent feedback from parents and community partners inform the Ministry's next steps.

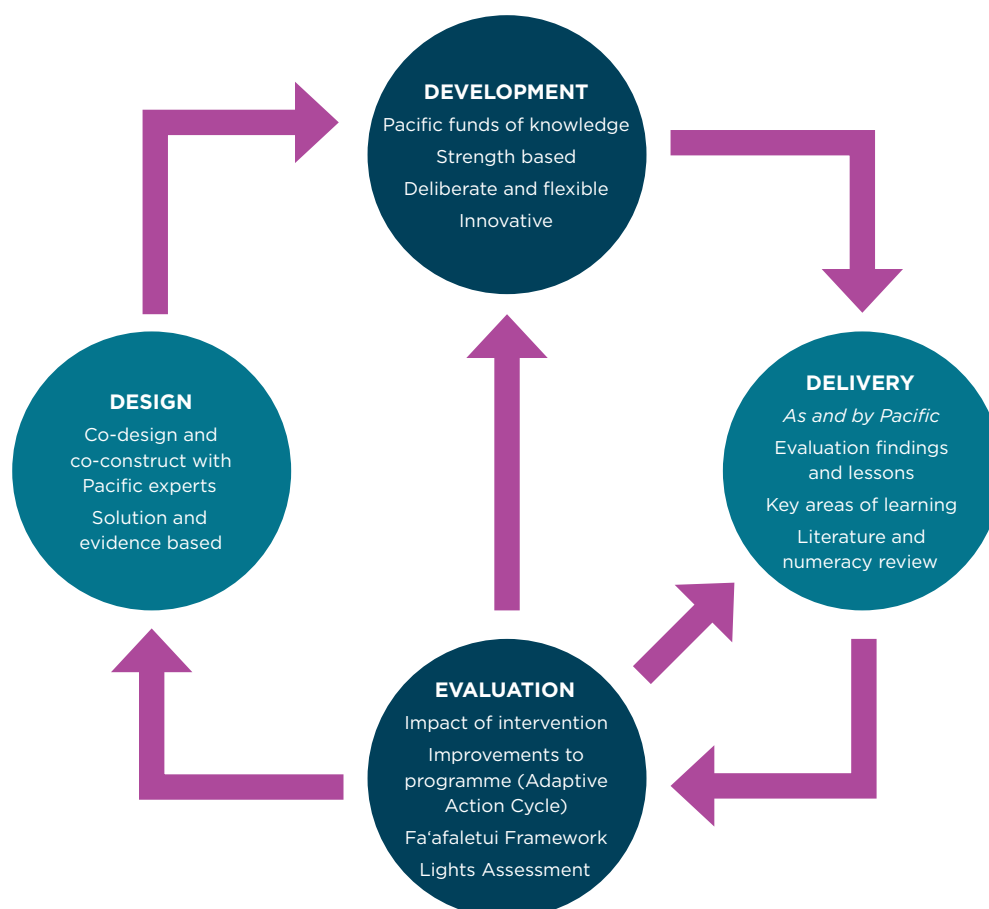
This collaborative framework empowers communities to shape educational strategies that reflect their cultural values and needs. The flexibility built into service delivery contracts enables programmes to meet the unique and diverse requirements of individual Pacific communities. Continuous feedback loops – facilitated through talanoa sessions – ensure programmes remain responsive and relevant.

Application of Matamoana across Pacific programmes

Matamoana is embedded as a way of working across all Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team programmes. Its implementation follows a four-step cycle where each phase integrates the principles and methodologies of the Matamoana approach.

1. **Design phase** – Grounded in theoretical underpinnings, literature reviews, and insights gained from talanoa consultations and evaluations.
2. **Development phase** – Draws from Pacific funds of knowledge, utilising a strength-based approach that incorporates cultural wisdom. Development is deliberate, incorporating flexibility to address the unique needs of Pacific communities, while providing a solid foundation for programme design.
3. **Delivery phase** – Tailored to ensure effective engagement and alignment with the priorities of Pacific learners, families, and communities.
4. **Evaluation phase** – Captures outcomes and feedback, which inform and refine all stages, ensuring continuous improvement.

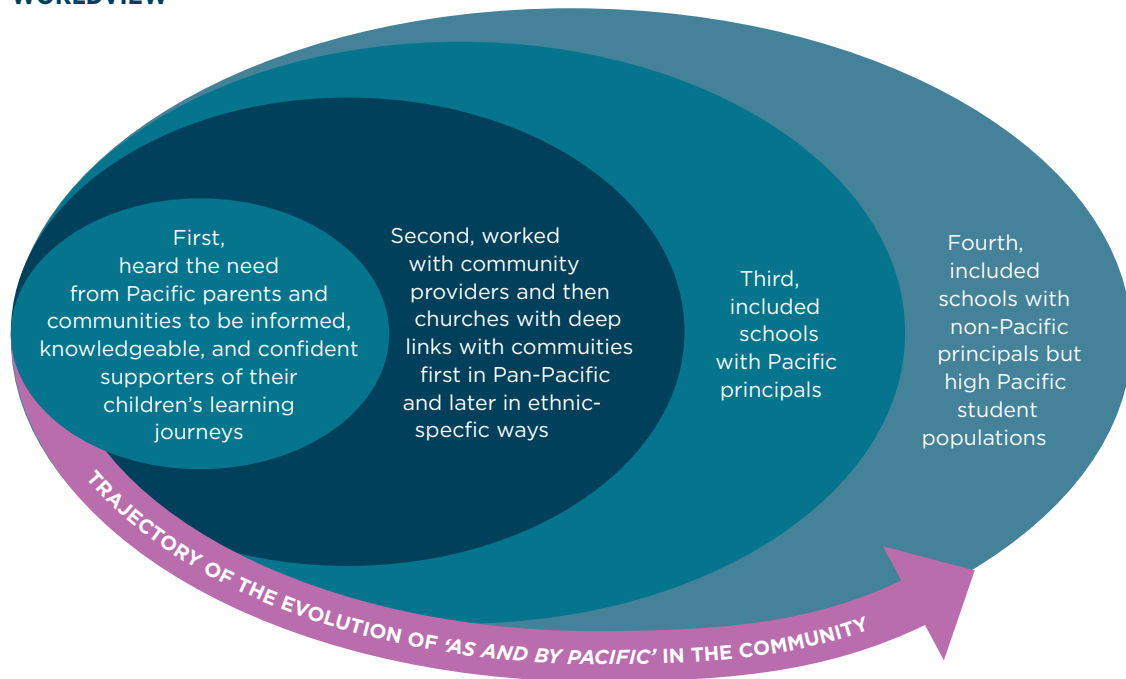
FIGURE 11: MATAMOANA FOUR-STEP CYCLE



Source: Ministry of Education, Ākonga Pacific Outcomes, 2024

Figure 12 shows how evaluation at each stage informed the development of the programmes.

FIGURE 12: EVALUATION PROCESS: BUILDING STRENGTH FROM A PACIFIC-CENTRIC WORLDVIEW



Source: Oakden, 2019

Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team programmes developed using Matamoana

These examples show how the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team develops programmes using a Matamoana approach.

Example 1: *Talanoa Ako*

Talanoa Ako, previously known as Pacific PowerUP, is a parent responsive education programme intended as a core component of implementing the *Pacific Education Action Plan 2020-2030*.²⁸ Since 2013, Talanoa Ako has equipped and empowered Pacific parents and communities with the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to champion their children's education. This enables Pacific parents to support their children's learning journey and form more equitable relationships and partnerships with schools.

“We love this programme. If it wasn't for Talanoa Ako I would have not understood about NCEA & how it works and where to direct my kids for a better future. We are grateful for our wonderful teachers here at Waitakere College. We are totally blessed.”

Talanoa Ako participant

The Talanoa Ako programme exemplifies Matamoana by drawing directly from the voices of Pacific parents, learners, and communities. It addresses the key challenges that Pacific students and their families face when navigating the education system and aims to foster positive educational outcomes through a culturally responsive and community-centred approach.

Talanoa Ako successfully implemented Matamoana in the following ways:

- » Achievement – Parents can support their children directly or know where to get this support. Parents felt confident and safe to advocate for their children.
- » Building culturally responsive programmes – Talanoa Ako was informed, developed, and co-designed in collaboration with Pacific parents, learners, communities, and educators. It responds to challenges when navigating the education system, identified by Pacific learners and their families, by offering tailored solutions to improve outcomes for students.
- » Strengthening community capability – Talanoa Ako empowers Pacific parents and communities by equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to understand and engage with the education system, enabling them to better support their children's educational journeys.

²⁸ Ministry of Education. (2024, April). Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020-2030. <https://www.education.govt.nz/our-work/overall-strategies-and-policies/action-plan-for-pacific-education>



- » Improving accessibility – Talanoa Ako facilitates access to critical educational information and resources, helping Pacific parents and communities navigate the education system with confidence. It fosters equitable partnerships with schools, educators, and the Ministry, enabling parents to actively participate in their children’s learning.
- » Promoting informed engagement – Designed to build capability and confidence, Talanoa Ako encourages Pacific parents, learners, and communities to engage meaningfully with stakeholders in the education system. This includes fostering partnerships with schools and focusing on improving student attendance, engagement, and achievement.
- » Empowering communities – By building parents’ confidence and empowering them to actively participate in their children’s education, Talanoa Ako promotes a culture of community ownership and lifelong learning. It reinforces the importance of collective effort in fostering educational success.

Example 2: *Talanoa Ako Pacific Talk about Education and Learning* resources and professional learning development

Talanoa Ako Pacific Talk about Education and Learning (TA PTEL) encapsulates the essence of Matamoana by providing tailored resources and professional learning development (PLD) opportunities for teachers, based on evidence drawn from the voices of Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities. The evidence is deeply rooted in the Pacific worldview and authored by Pacific voices.

“[The best thing about the training was the] stories from the lives of those growing up in a culture unlike mine. Excellent and interesting. Insight into family lives that affect the way students learn and study.”

PLD teacher participant

The approach is not only about addressing Pacific community needs, but is also co-developed, co-designed, and implemented by Pacific partners. This authentic Pacific-led and Pacific-authored framework ensures that resources are culturally relevant, responsive, and effective in meeting the unique challenges and aspirations of Pacific communities in Aotearoa New Zealand. The resources are distributed to schools, partners, and stakeholders and are part of a 12-session PLD programme for teachers across Aotearoa New Zealand.

Matamoana guided the development, design, and delivery of the TA PTEL programme in the following ways:

- » Achievement – Evidence, data, best practice for teaching, educators and schools.
- » Pacific tailored resources – Resources are specifically designed to meet the needs of Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities. This tailoring includes content that resonates with the Pacific worldview, values, and cultural contexts, making the resources more meaningful and relevant.
- » Pacific-centric perspective – TA PTEL reflects Matamoana’s Pacific-led approach by centring on Pacific voices and perspectives. The programme is co-created by Pacific partners, ensuring that it authentically represents the experiences and aspirations of Pacific communities in New Zealand.
- » Cultural relevance – Matamoana’s emphasis on cultural responsiveness ensures that TA PTEL resources are culturally relevant. This includes incorporating Pacific languages, traditions, and values into the materials, making them more accessible and engaging.
- » Community empowerment – Guided by a Matamoana approach, TA PTEL empowers Pacific communities to take an active role in shaping educational solutions. This collaborative model fosters ownership and agency among Pacific stakeholders, leading to more effective implementation and outcomes.

Example 3: Fakailoga Tino

The Fakailoga Tino PLD programme is a response to Pacific communities telling the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team that racism is a key barrier to well-being and educational achievement for Pacific communities. The Ministry for Pacific Peoples' Pacific Wellbeing Outcomes Framework²⁹ emphasises that cultural bias and racism harms Pacific learners and their parents, families, and communities if not addressed.

“It raised the awareness of racism in school and in the community. The racism is in different forms and it affects relationships among colleagues or among students or between teachers and students and others.”

PLD teacher participant

Fakailoga Tino supports teachers to name, negotiate, and navigate racism in schools. It allows teachers to examine and reflect on their own assumptions, beliefs, and teaching practices. With this knowledge they can better support Pacific learners, their parents, and their communities to help raise student achievement and to achieve positive educational outcomes. After a successful pilot, Fakailoga Tino is being delivered to 11 schools in 2025.

Matamoana is seamlessly integrated into Fakailoga Tino to empower educators to address racism within educational environments in the following ways:

- » Equipping educators – Fakailoga Tino adopts Matamoana's *as and by Pacific* approach, providing educators with tools and strategies to identify and confront racism. This specialised training empowers educators to create inclusive learning spaces.
- » Promoting cultural competence – The programme emphasises cultural sensitivity, encouraging educators to embrace Pacific cultures. This fosters mutual respect and understanding, and supports teachers to engage with diverse student populations effectively.
- » Creating inclusive environments – Fakailoga Tino contributes to inclusive classroom environments that prioritise equity and safety for all students. This fosters positive learning experiences and academic success, especially for Pacific students.
- » Supporting Pacific students – Matamoana's influence ensures educators can meet the unique needs of Pacific students, fostering their sense of value and empowerment in their educational journey.

²⁹ Ministry for Pacific Peoples. (2022). Pacific Wellbeing Outcomes Framework. <https://www.mpp.govt.nz/assets/Reports/Pacific-Wellbeing-Strategy-2022/Pacific-Wellbeing-Outcomes-Framework-Booklet.pdf>

Example 4: Talanoa Ako Pacific Learners Support Programme

Talanoa Ako Pacific Learners Support Programme (TA PLSP) provides intensive support to enhance NCEA achievement among Pacific learners. The programme targets learning gaps, promotes academic excellence, and improves educational opportunities, resulting in improved academic outcomes and increased equity. TA PLSP was delivered across six phases. Pacific students received 14 hours of targeted literacy and numeracy support.

“It helped me very well because we were working in small groups, I was able to focus on one subject, then focus on another, then finish them all....I saw a big change, a massive change from last year. Last year I just mucked around, but this year was the year for me so it was a big change for me.”

PLSP learner

The TA PLSP programme used a Matamoana approach to support Pacific learners to achieve at school. TA PLSP's implementation involves collaboration between educators, communities, and stakeholders, mirroring Matamoana's collaborative ethos. This collaborative effort ensures that interventions are informed by community insights, needs, and aspirations, leading to more meaningful and sustainable outcomes.

Matamoana guided the development, design, and delivery of the TA PTEL programme in the following ways:

- » Equity in education – Matamoana's focus on equity is evident in TA PLSP's efforts to improve educational opportunities for Pacific learners. By addressing barriers to success and providing intensive support, the programme contributes to levelling the playing field and promoting equitable access to quality education.
- » Targeted support – TA PLSP targets learning gaps specific to Pacific learners, aligning with Matamoana's focus on addressing unique community needs. This targeted approach ensures that interventions are tailored to the academic challenges faced by Pacific students, leading to more effective support.
- » Equity in education – Matamoana's focus on equity is evident in TA PLSP's efforts to improve educational opportunities for Pacific learners.
- » Promotion of academic excellence – Matamoana's emphasis on educational excellence is reflected in TA PLSP's goal to promote academic success among Pacific learners. The programme provides resources and strategies aimed at improving academic outcomes, enhancing learning experiences, and fostering a culture of achievement. Data showed shifts in NCEA achievement and e-asTTle literacy gains for students who participated in the TA PLSP programme.



The role of the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team

Drawing from the *as and by Pacific* theoretical underpinnings of Matamoana, the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team has a brokering role with schools and communities to implement Matamoana across its work programme. This role includes:

- » programme development based on evidence and data (voices of Pacific parents and learners)
- » drawing on a talanoa group of Pacific experts in each focus area to co-design and co-develop ways of working
- » developing programmes that can be adapted to the needs of each community
- » supporting Pacific communities, churches, and teachers to implement each programme based on Pacific values and languages
- » evaluating programmes in partnership with Pacific parents, learners, and communities using Pacific research methods such as Talanoa and Fa'afaletui.

Through its successful application in programmes such as Talanoa Ako, Talanoa Ako Pacific Talk About Education and Learning, and Fakailoga Tino PLD, a Matamoana approach has led to amplified Pacific voices and increased academic excellence. It is equally integral to the Talanoa Ako Pacific Learners Support Programme, driving efforts to enhance NCEA achievement and support Pacific students' pathways to success.

Across all examples, the Matamoana approach is firmly rooted in three key characteristics:

- » it is based on Pacific funds of knowledge
- » it is a strength-based approach
- » it focuses on relationships.

The following chapter unpacks the characteristics of Matamoana in detail.



CHAPTER 4

Matamoana key characteristics

KEY POINTS

- » The key characteristics of Matamoana are Pacific funds of knowledge, a strength-based approach, and a focus on relationships (the vā).
- » Matamoana elevates voices through connections and partnerships.
- » Matamoana brings together Pacific and other funds of knowledge and worldviews.
- » Matamoana creates inclusive spaces where Pacific learners and their families feel safe to share their experiences.

Matamoana is grounded in three core characteristics: it is based on Pacific funds of knowledge, it is a strength-based approach, and it focuses on relationships. These characteristics emerged from the analysis and synthesis of research on the Talanoa Ako suite of programmes, aimed at bettering education access and achievement for Pacific learners, parents, families and communities.

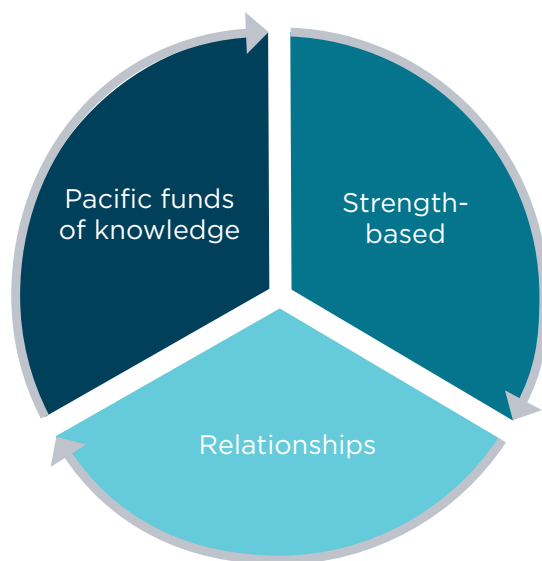
Matamoana is based on Pacific funds of knowledge, and is strength-based, and relationships focused.

- Fairbairn-Dunlop

The research encompassed:

- » research on the wellbeing programme for Pacific learners in Years 9 to 13, Tu'u Mālohi³⁰
- » research on Talanoa Ako³¹, including the *Talanoa Ako: Pacific Talk about Education and Learning* resources, produced to systematise learnings and develop resources to support schools to work with Pacific communities and learners³²
- » other research that underpins the work of the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team³³ and provides insight into useful approaches for Pacific participation in education
- » sense-making sessions run by Pragmatic Limited researcher Judy Oakden with the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team, between December 2022 to May 2023.

FIGURE 13: KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF MATAMOANA



Source: Ministry of Education, Ākonga Pacific Outcomes Team, 2024

³⁰ Ministry of Education. (2023a); Ministry of Education. (2023b). Implementation of Tu'u Mālohi, 2022. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.

³¹ Fairbairn-Dunlop, P. (2021a). ; Fairbairn-Dunlop, P. (2021b).

³² Chu-Fuluifaga, C., Abella, I. Reynolds, M. and Rimoni, F. (2021).

³³ Robinson, V., Hohepa, M. and Lloyd, C. (2009).



Pacific funds of knowledge

Matamoana recognises the significance of Pacific funds of knowledge – that is knowledge rooted in Pacific values, culture, identity, and language. Funds of knowledge theory involves focusing on people’s unique knowledge and skills. It is a strength-based approach.

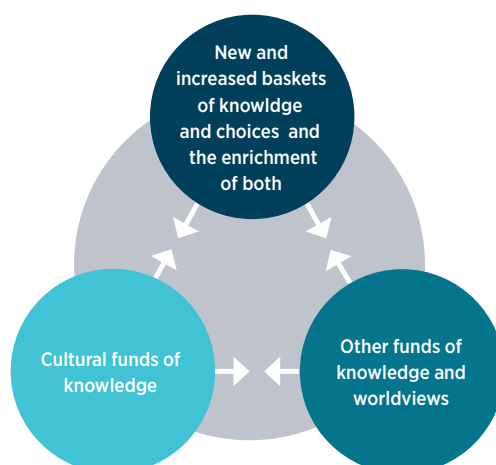
This approach aims to raise achievement and excellence among Pacific learners by drawing from their unique ways of knowing and being, alongside the inclusion of wider knowledge systems. Through this dual learning experience, Pacific parents and communities are empowered to engage confidently in educational decision-making and support their children’s educational journeys.

By adopting Pacific funds of knowledge, education systems can ensure that Pacific learners are safe, valued, and equipped to achieve their aspirations. This commitment to equity is foundational and shapes all decisions to ensure that programmes are innovative and rooted in evidence.

Pacific parents had the opportunity to mix with “other people like us” and to participate in Pacific language and cultural traditions.

– Fairbairn-Dunlop, Chu-Fuluifaga, Reynolds, Abella, and Rimoni

FIGURE 14: BRINGING TOGETHER PACIFIC AND OTHER FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE AND WORLDVIEWS



Source: Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2021a, p. 16

The *Action Plan for Pacific Education*³⁴ also describes Pacific-centric values. In practice, Pacific-centric values include:

- » family-centric – working towards the collective good for the family and community
- » faith based – drawing on a spiritual or church culture
- » reciprocity – building and maintaining positive collaborative and reciprocal relationships
- » Pacific diversity – respecting the uniqueness of the diverse Pacific populations
- » collective action – favouring learning as a collective, communal activity which focuses on the child first, not other organisational or government boundaries
- » sustained effort – prioritising equity, honest commitment, and resourcing for Pacific communities.

³⁴ Action Plan for Pacific Education (2020).

Pacific learners and families are diverse and dynamic, with distinct educational needs and aspirations. The Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team recognises that Pacific parents come with their own cultural understanding and can incorporate other funds of knowledge. By combining these various knowledge systems, families gain new and expanded baskets of knowledge that advances their engagement with education.

When Pacific parents and learners experience equitable access to education, the following occurs:

- » they feel valued and included, with their unique needs and aspirations recognised in education settings
- » learning and succeeding are collective activities, with Pacific parents and learners thriving in cohort-based environments
- » educators value, understand, and appreciate Pacific learners' unique identities, languages, and cultures, and they are trusted and seen as inclusive.

Pacific parents and learners appreciate when equitable access becomes the norm, replacing traditional mainstream practices that often exclude them.

Strategies developed using the Matamoana approach to meet the diverse needs of Pacific communities include:

- » providing support through community partners to help them envision what educational success would look like and to help them work towards that success
- » encouraging the wider family and community to support Pacific families and learners in setting learning goals, developing career pathways, and finding employment
- » offering Pacific parents and students access to teachers who are highly skilled, both culturally and academically
- » acknowledging and maintaining relationships between Pacific families and schools
- » providing the skills to confront systemic racism and discrimination where it occurs.

Matamoana actively supports a collective style of working for Pacific parents, learners, and communities to realise the dreams and aspirations their families sought in moving here.

– Oakden

By embedding these strategies into the fabric of educational practice, Pacific families and learners experience equitable access, collective learning, and an inclusive environment that values their identity, culture, and contributions.



A focus on strengths rather than deficits

Matamoana is built on the foundational strength of “community leadership, ownership, and responsibility”³⁵. It uses a strengths-based approach through Appreciative Inquiry³⁶, focusing on possibilities and aspirations rather than limitations. By applying the “4D cycle (discovery, dream, design, and destiny)”³⁷, Matamoana highlights what is already working well within Pacific communities, then builds upon those strengths to create even greater educational success.

Unlike deficit-based models, Matamoana sees Pacific parents as pivotal contributors to their children’s education, not as outsiders to the schooling process. Their involvement is framed as the most powerful tool for raising Pacific achievement, positioning them as co-educators alongside teachers. This collaborative effort between home and school reinforces Pacific parents’ role as central figures in their children’s learning journeys.

Parents clearly notice the difference in the Matamoana approach:



*[Talanoa Ako] is more value-based and strengths-driven compared to their schools. They are more nurtured, and educators are more aware of their culture and how as individuals they learn.*³⁸

Elevating Pacific voices through connection and partnership

Matamoana’s collective approach strengthens Pacific communities by connecting them with education programmes like Talanoa Ako and Tu’u Mālohi.³⁹ These programmes amplify Pacific voices, ensuring that educational strategies are shaped by Pacific perspectives and tailored to their unique cultural values. This alignment creates the types of strong home-school connections that Alton-Lee highlights as crucial for student success.⁴⁰

One parent expressed how the Talanoa Ako programme affirms and builds upon Pacific families’ existing commitment to education:



*Education is a high priority in our family. [Talanoa Ako] has helped affirm what we believe to be a strong value. [It] helped unpack report reading, the importance of making the right subject choices, and the responsibilities we (as parents and the school) share. For success to happen for our children, we have to know the education system well and not be afraid to ask questions.*⁴¹

The strength of these programmes lies in how they draw on community leadership and cultural knowledge to provide meaningful educational support for Pacific learners. By leveraging Pacific strengths, these programmes create environments where parents and students alike are empowered to succeed.

³⁵ Fairbairn-Dunlop, P. (2021a). p. 16.

³⁶ Abella, I. (2016). *Identifying Pedagogical Innovation in Cultural Minority Classrooms: A Cultural Historical Activity Theory and Appreciative Inquiry Perspective in the Philippines and New Zealand*. [PhD thesis, Victoria University of Wellington].

³⁷ Cooperrider, D. (2012). What is Appreciative Inquiry?

³⁸ Oakden, J. (2019). p. 38.

³⁹ Ministry of Education. (2023a). p. 8.

⁴⁰ Alton-Lee, A. (2003). *Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.

⁴¹ Fairbairn-Dunlop, P. (2021b). p. 71.

Creating safe, inclusive spaces that celebrate strengths

Matamoana focuses on building safe, culturally affirming spaces where Pacific families feel valued and free from bias. The learning environments fostered by Matamoana are caring and family-like, where relationships are built on trust and mutual respect. These safe spaces allow Pacific learners to develop their leadership skills, confidence, and sense of belonging – key strengths that are nurtured through the collective support of the community.

A parent involved in Talanoa Ako reflected on the power of these community-led spaces:



Community learning is a totally different environment. It offers different experiences that our children can develop from. Their engagements, leadership skills, confidence, positive social relationships, trust, and feelings of belonging are all built up in the [Talanoa Ako] gathering.⁴²

Matamoana recognises that safe spaces for Pacific learners and parents go beyond physical environments. It involves creating settings free from the cultural bias and racism that can often hinder their educational experience. Chu-Fuluifaga et al. point out the importance of addressing these issues by understanding equity in Pacific education, acknowledging the effects of direct racism, and valuing how Pacific communities are perceived and treated within educational contexts.⁴³

Alton-Lee (2003) challenges educators to reject deficit thinking, which sees diversity as a problem to be solved.⁴⁴ Instead, she calls for a strengths-based approach that positions diversity and difference as core strengths in the classroom. Matamoana embraces this mindset, ensuring that Pacific learners and families are central to educational decision-making and that their unique cultural strengths are celebrated.

Cultural identity as a source of strength

For Pacific learners, their cultural identity is a source of pride and strength, central to their educational journey. A young participant in Talanoa Ako described the deep connection between their identity and their drive to succeed:

Being Pasifika is very important to us. It is our identity, our culture, and it is what we are and what we stand for. We are proud to be Pasifika. Our language, our culture is our life. We embrace our Pasifika always in our hearts, and we will hold it high and proud.⁴⁵

STUDENT

This cultural connection motivates learners to excel, knowing that their success honours the sacrifices made by previous generations:

Our identity, language, and culture remind us of the hard life our ancestors lived, which encourages us to strive for excellence. Without identity, language, and culture, we would be like a vessel in the ocean without a compass. Our culture is the adrenaline that pumps hope and direction into our learning.⁴⁶

STUDENT

⁴² Fairbairn-Dunlop, P. (2021b). p. 81.

⁴³ Chu-Fuluifaga, C., Abella, I. Reynolds, M., and Rimoni, F. (2021).

⁴⁴ Alton-Lee, A. (2003).

⁴⁵ Fairbairn-Dunlop, P. (2021b). p. 107.

⁴⁶ Fairbairn-Dunlop, P. (2021b). p. 107.

Building relationships

A Matamoana approach means the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team is committed to building relationships and forming high-trust partnerships with schools and communities.

The vā is defined as the relational space that integrates both the secular and spiritual dimensions of relationships, essential for fostering personal and collective well-being. Understanding the vā is vital for grasping how individuals relate to one another and their environments.

The Samoan concept of Tausi le vā emphasises the importance of respecting, nurturing, and maintaining this relational space, which is crucial for achieving harmony between people, spirituality, and their surroundings.

In delivering services, a Matamoana approach prioritises the establishment of high-trust partnerships by practicing the vā. This involves embracing diverse communities as education partners and allowing for flexible delivery methods that cater to unique needs. This significantly contrasts with traditional programme delivery, which often struggles to engage Pacific parents.

Programme delivery approach with schools

As schools and Pacific parents were struggling to find a model for successful engagement, the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team started their work in Pacific community settings using a strengths-based response. Over time teachers and principals have come to see that a Matamoana approach is useful in schools. The resources were developed to support Pacific practices, teaching, and learning by helping schools and teachers to:

- » reflect on their own practices and walk alongside Pacific families and communities
- » understand what “culturally safe spaces” look and feel like
- » understand what is culturally important to Pacific learners and families
- » understand how powerful parent and learner voice is, in the development for fit-for-purpose programmes that contribute to Pacific success
- » understand the value of a Matamoana, *as and by Pacific* approach.

It has been the avenue that parents and students need to voice their specific needs and concerns and get connected with the right people and information.

– Talanoa Ako participant



Programme delivery approach with partners

The Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team seeks long-term, high-trust relationships with providers – who it sees as partners. The team selects partner organisations who have deep roots in their communities. Partners need to be able to reach, mobilise, and engage effectively with Pacific parents in their communities. When this works well, providers as partners:

- » build strong educational connections and relationships with Pacific families and communities
- » support Pacific families' engagement in wider learning communities and networks – in genuine, culturally suitable ways
- » bring in mentors and social services expertise (social workers, counsellors, and youth workers) to support Pacific learners, parents and families to challenge and overcome inequity (for example, dealing with unconscious bias and racism).

FIGURE 15: APPROACHES TO PROGRAMME DELIVERY

ASPECT	APPROACH WITH SCHOOLS	APPROACH WITH PARTNERS
Initial engagement	» Work started in Pacific community settings to address Pacific parents' needs using a strengths-based response.	» Seek long-term, high-trust relationships with providers who have deep community roots.
Resource development	» Development of resources to support effective engagement with Pacific families.	» Partners are selected based on their ability to mobilise and engage with Pacific families.
Goals	» Enhance schools' ability to engage with Pacific parents, families, and learners.	» Build strong educational connections and support Pacific families' engagement in wider learning communities.
Focus areas	» Reflecting on own practices. » Understanding culturally safe spaces. » Recognising cultural priorities » Valuing parent and learner voice. » Understanding the Matamoana Pacific mode.	» Involve mentors and social services expertise. » Challenge inequity, including unconscious bias and racism.
Learning channels	» N/A	» Discussions with partners during site visits. » Partners collect information through the Guided Talanoa Series.⁴⁷ » Partners suggest improvements during conference sessions with the Ministry.
Outcome	» Schools come to recognise the usefulness of Matamoana in their programmes.	» Partners build high-trust relationships, shift power dynamics, and strengthen their capacity to meet community needs.

Source: Oakden, 2019

The following chapter explores these relationships more in detail.

⁴⁷ Fairbairn-Dunlop, P. (2021a).



CHAPTER 5

Relationships to partnerships

KEY POINTS

- » Pacific programmes and resources rely on strong relationships and partnerships between Pacific learners, parents, families, communities, Pacific providers such as community organisations and churches, teachers, schools, Boards of Trustees, and the Ministry.
- » Stakeholders' experiences with programmes developed with a Matamoana approach are different to a traditional project management approach.

This chapter describes what it means for different partners and stakeholder groups when they engage with Pacific education programmes that have been developed and delivered using a Matamoana as and by Pacific approach.

Matamoana relies on strong, equitable, and reciprocal relationships and partnerships internally and externally.

– Makisi

FIGURE 16: KEY CHANGES FOR DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS



Pacific parents, families and communities

- » Became clearer about their role in their children's education to support learning
- » Expanded and deepened social networks - had more people to draw on for ideas and support
- » Became more confident to ask questions both of the school and in the wider community
- » Set up effective learning routines at home and built stronger learning relationships with their children
- » Learned of alternative education, vocation, and community leadership pathways for themselves.



Pacific Learners

- » Accessed culturally relevant quality teaching to address their learning needs
- » Asked questions to support learning and become more confident and visible in learning
- » Made links between learning and broader career possibilities
- » Came to be part of a wider collective with other Pacific learners, their families and communities
- » Assisted by home routines which support learning and supported by stronger family relationships
- » Experienced greater success in education and learning



Partner organisations; including community service providers, faith groups, teachers and schools

- » Provided greater Pacific access to education, reaching Pacific parents and families that other providers do not reach
- » Built service provision capacity, fine-tuning their services by learning from the Talanoa
- » Built trusted partnerships to meet the ongoing needs of their communities
- » Increased their community mana by offering successful programmes
- » Became more visible and gained more influence in the community.



Teachers and schools

- » Planned for Pacific success and identified Pacific needs
- » Determined inclusive Pacific education actions
- » Became more inclusive and are starting to confront systemic racism and discrimination
- » Identified Pacific students with gifts and talents that might not surface in formal learning settings
- » Committed to creating and contributing learning environments that recognise and support Pacific educational success
- » Wove Pacific success into teaching and leadership contexts.



The Ministry of Education, Ākonga and Community Delivery as a partner

- » Took courageous action to ensure Pacific learners, parents and families have access to education
- » Developed high-trust partnerships with Pacific community services, faith groups and schools
- » Considered multiple Pacific perspectives – and draw on the Fa'afaletui framing in developing programme delivery
- » Used a Talanoa approach to learn, reflect, adapt, develop new programmes, and publish learnings
- » Shared learnings with partners, communities, the Ministry, and with other government agencies.

Source: Ministry of Education, Ākonga Pacific Outcomes Team, 2023

Matamoana and Pacific learners

Programmes such as Talanoa Ako can positively impact Pacific learners. When Pacific learners come to either pan-Pacific or ethnic-specific sessions, they first comment that the space is “safe” and it is “relaxing to learn” with other Pacific children, parents, and families.

[This is a] safe space to be vulnerable and share experiences we face in racism.⁴⁸

STUDENT

The comments about safety suggest that classrooms could be safer for many Pacific learners. For example, in the Talanoa Ako evaluation in 2017, only 19% of Year 9s, rising to 46% for Year 13 Pacific students, said they were very confident to approach a teacher at school for help before they started the programme.⁴⁹ Also, learners experience micro-aggressions daily, such as mispronunciation of their names and low expectations of their aspirations.

An example of racism I have felt at school and in the community is mispronunciation of my name. Because people think I'm brown I won't understand, it affects me mentally and emotionally.⁵⁰

STUDENT

Having safe spaces makes learning possible. Once Pacific students feel safe and relaxed, the factors that make the biggest differences for their learning are:

- » having routines at home that support learning
- » having learning conversations with other Pacific learners and with their families and communities
- » seeing themselves as being part of a wider collective – that is, a family or community approach.
- » accessing culturally relevant quality teaching which addresses their learning needs in ways they understand
- » learning to ask questions to support learning and becoming more confident and visible in learning
- » making links between learning and their future career aspirations so there is a purpose to learning and an expanded sense of the possibilities.

Learners see themselves in *as and by Pacific* programmes and it gives them space to explore who they are.

⁴⁸ Ministry of Education. (2023a). Overview of Tu'u Mālohi, 2022. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education. (2023a). p. 4.

⁴⁹ Oakden, J. (2018). p. 23.

⁵⁰ Ministry of Education. (2023a). p. 4.

Matamoana and Pacific parents, families, and communities

When Pacific parents and families first experience education programmes that have been developed and delivered using a Matamoana *as and by Pacific* approach, they report feeling comfortable and welcomed in an environment that is familiar to them.

They appreciate the authentic and genuine way they can communicate with others in a Matamoana-influenced space. For instance, the programmes encourage Pacific parents and families to take ownership and responsibility for sessions. They select some of the topics, share ideas for running the sessions, and ask questions.

The programmes support Pacific parents and families to learn more about the education system in Aotearoa New Zealand and their possible roles in it. Parents see new ways of engaging with their children by observing their children interacting with skilled teachers.

Pacific parents and families build friendships with each other, providing continuing support and encouragement. They draw on each other's knowledge and that of the teachers and community partners and schools. Through this joint effort, Pacific families can set up new education routines at home to support children with their learning.

Bringing together different funds of knowledge and worldviews helps to bridge the Pacific-siloed worlds. Pacific parents and families become more comfortable discussing education⁵¹ and they feel confident to talk about education and to “friendly argue” about ideas.⁵²

PARENT

My kids enjoy that I play a huge part in their learning. It also helps me to understand where they're at in their education. The best thing about doing things together is showing my kids that their learning is important to me. They know that I care about how well they do or not, and they see me being active in their education. I think it's vital for a parent to take part, to show support and show their kids they matter, especially in their education.⁵³

⁵¹ Oakden, J. (2018). Pacific PowerUP Plus 2017: A mid-point evaluation of stakeholder perceptions of the programme delivery and benefits to participants. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education. p. 23.

⁵² Fairbairn-Dunlop, P. (2021b). p. 60.

⁵³ Oakden, J. and Kennedy, S. (2017). Pasifika PowerUP Plus: Talanoa Case Studies. Wellington: Ministry of Education, p. 24.

Matamoana and partner organisations

Many community partners, churches, and schools are intrinsically motivated to support Pacific learners, parents, and communities to gain better access to education and achieve equity.

When these groups partner with the Ministry to develop programmes using a Matamoana approach:

- » the partners' knowledge and expertise by the Ministry and programmes are established *as and by Pacific*
- » partners mobilise Pacific parents and families (and sometimes learners) who attend and benefit from sessions run by empathetic teachers with cultural and academic expertise
- » partners build deeper relationships with Pacific learners, parents, and families when they set up safe spaces for the Pacific community to discuss education.

A benefit for the community providers, faith groups, and schools of becoming partners in a Matamoana way is that they:

- » help provide greater Pacific access to education, reaching Pacific parents and families in a way that other providers can't
- » build their skills in service provision, learning from the talanoa to fine-tune their services
- » build trusted partnerships with the Ministry that allow partners to be more flexible to meet the needs of their communities in the future
- » have increased mana in their community by offering successful programmes that the community needs (success breeds success)
- » become more influential in the wider community as Pacific parents and families become more visible.

Through a Matamoana approach, partners build their capability, capacity, and confidence and open spaces for talanoa around Pacific culture in the diaspora.

The use of Pasefika concepts in the resources and learning(s) showed that all content and learning provided to our Pacific students should acknowledge and recognise bits of their rich, diverse languages. The facilitation guides and workbook resources were wonderful to work through. Students took pride in their work.⁵⁴

MINISTRY
STAFF

⁵⁴ Ministry of Education. (2024). Evaluation Report of Saili Malo 2023-2024. Wellington, New Zealand.

Matamoana and the education sector

Teachers

Partners work hard to ensure that the Talanoa Ako programmes provide a quality learning experience for Pacific children and parents by selecting skilled teachers with strong empathy and understanding of Pacific children's needs.

Many teachers who worked on the Talanoa Ako programme, both Pacific and non-Pacific, appreciated the chance to see students in their family context, for example, sharing a meal. Teachers also appreciated seeing Pacific families in Pacific contexts, such as having discussions in their Pacific language. The teachers gained more knowledge about their learners and about Pacific cultures from their involvement in Talanoa Ako. They reported that this extra knowledge helps them in their everyday teaching.

PROVIDER

Teachers enjoy spending time with the children and parents. They enjoy helping the students. Some teachers are learning more about the parents as they interact during sessions. They get to understand parents and the [Pacific] culture. [Pacific] teachers are learning more about their language and are more engaged with the community.⁵⁵

Several teachers, who were considered as capable teachers for Pacific students, found attending Talanoa Ako provided excellent professional development. [Talanoa Ako] is a great way for me to learn the things I have not learned at school about how to engage with the Pacific community. At [Talanoa Ako] I get to meet the Pacific community.⁵⁶

TEACHER

Teachers and partner providers noticed the difference the programme made for teachers.

PROVIDER

Non-Pacific staff could work with Pacific students in a different environment. They could observe Pacific customs and practices not necessarily witnessed at their own school. ([Such as] use of Pacific Language, prayer etc).⁵⁷

Partners also played an important role in facilitating a space for high-quality conversations to occur between teachers and Pacific parents and learners. As seen in the 2019 case studies:

Along with the Minister and his wife, who usually worked as a team, those running Talanoa Ako created a climate for some of the best discussions Ministry staff have ever seen between parents and teachers about learning. One long-time Ministry employee reflected the discussions were the kind they "dreamed of" back in 2012 when they were envisioning they programme.⁵⁸

MINISTRY
STAFF

⁵⁵ Oakden, J. (2019). p, 44.

⁵⁶ Oakden, J. (2019).

⁵⁷ Oakden, J. (2019). p, 44.

⁵⁸ Oakden, J. (2020). *Pacific PowerUP Plus 2019: Case studies*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.

Schools

The Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team also supports teachers in schools. Initially they focused on schools with Pacific leadership teams and high Pacific populations, later scaling out to the wider school community. The *Best practice for teaching Pacific learners: Pacific Evidence Brief 2019*⁵⁹ highlighted the challenges for Pacific children, parents, and communities when engaging with schools. While some Pacific learners are achieving, the system is failing many Pacific learners. The report found:

- » respecting and valuing identities, languages, and cultures is critical
- » home-school partnerships are highly beneficial
- » appropriately high expectations drive good pedagogy and achievement
- » culturally responsive pedagogy is a key strategy for lifting achievement
- » there are challenges for implementing and sustaining changes.⁶⁰

To support teachers in schools, the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team used a Matamoana approach to develop professional learning resources that are designed to support engagement between Pacific learners, families, communities and schools.

The Fanā Fotu – Transformation research methodology helped to “draw together participants’ voices to co-construct context appropriate school-wide practices for change, sustainability, and follow through for improvement and better outcomes.”⁶¹

A member of the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team remarked:

*We were deliberate in responding to our communities. Then we collected the evaluation information [which showed parents were more confident engaging with schools]. But, it’s not enough if our communities are confident. Because if they go into schools and the schools still keep the doors closed there’s no advantage. So, then we had to develop a way of building Pacific capability within schools and with teachers, which is now where the programmes have gone.*⁶²

MINISTRY
STAFF

Over time, schools and teachers taking a Matamoana approach are learning to meet the aspirations of the Pacific community by:

- » planning for Pacific success
- » identifying Pacific needs
- » exploring Pacific pedagogy
- » being more inclusive and confronting systemic racism and discrimination
- » identifying Pacific students with gifts and talents that might not surface in formal learning settings
- » committing to creating learning environments that recognise and support Pacific success
- » weaving Pacific success into teaching and leadership contexts.⁶³

⁵⁹ Ministry of Education. (2019). *Best practice for teaching Pacific learners*. Wellington, New Zealand.

⁶⁰ Ministry of Education. (2019). pp. 3-5.

⁶¹ Tongati’o, L. (2021). Ngāue Fakatahi ki he Ako ‘a e Fānau: Schools, parents and families working together to better understand and support Pacific students’ progress and achievement at school. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education. p. 2.

⁶² Ministry of Education. (2023a).

⁶³ Fa’aea, A. M. (2022). *Talanao Ako: Make it HAPPEN: Have an Action Plan for Pacific Education Now!* Wellington: New Zealand: Ministry of Education.

Matamoana and the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team

The Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team are determined to find ways to support Pacific communities to have better access education and equity.

*Achieving in education is achieving a dream of our parents' migration.*⁶⁴

MINISTRY
STAFF

A Matamoana approach is used by the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team to:

- » partner with Pacific community services, faith groups, and schools in high-trust relationships
- » consider multiple Pacific perspectives by drawing on the Fa'afaletui framing in programme delivery
- » use a Talanoa approach to learn, reflect, and share learnings online
- » be courageous when taking action to ensure Pacific learners, parents, and families have access to education.

The Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team's responses are always informed by Pacific learners and their families, feedback from Pacific partners, and relevant research and data.

*Our critical consciousness is built on listening to Pacific communities and supporting them.*⁶⁵

MINISTRY
STAFF

The Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team uses evaluative reasoning to assess “is this good enough?” and “what is the impact?” In addition, they ask “what needs to change?” to raise achievement for Pacific.

The Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team also:

- » uses Fa'afaletui and Talanoa methods to address accountability to Pacific communities and accountability for probity within the Ministry
- » builds Pacific knowledge within the Ministry and more widely
- » navigates internal systems such as procurement, legal, and financial systems with clarity of intent to serve Pacific communities
- » uses continuous cycles of reflection, learning, and evaluation to refine and adjust the services provided
- » identifies additional ways to support Pacific learners, parents, and families – there are now 14 different programmes.

⁶⁴ Ministry of Education. (2023a).

⁶⁵ Ministry of Education. (2023a).

The differences between Matamoana and a traditional approach

Matamoana is very different to a traditional programme management approach. Figure 17 highlights the differences between the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team's Matamoana approach and traditional programme management using an adapted complexity-informed mode.

FIGURE 17: COMPARISON OF MATAMOANA AND A TRADITIONAL PROGRAMME DELIVERY APPROACH

	MATAMOANA	TRADITIONAL PROGRAMME DELIVERY APPROACH BY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES
Principles of delivery	Pacific-centric values drive people and organisations to do the work. They are motivated intrinsically to serve their communities.	People and organisations must be incentivised to work well. They are extrinsically motivated by financial gain.
	Learning and accountability to the community drives the work – structured conversations through talanoa are a mechanism for improved practice.	Subordinates are held accountable for the results they produce as the mechanism for improved practice.
	Context matters. What works differs from community to community and is framed based on the community's needs.	There is one right way of doing things, which will produce roughly similar good results in many contexts.
	Outcomes emerge from the wider interaction between Pacific learners, families, communities, partners, and the Ministry.	Outcomes are delivered by organisations, who are held to account for delivering them, at times beyond their area of influence.
	There is interdependence between all the participants in the system, with the Ministry facilitating effective feedback between Pacific learners, families, and partners using Fa'afaletui.	A purchaser-provider split ensures and enables competition between providers.
Role of parents, learners, and community	Pacific learners, families, and communities are co-creators of outcomes. Pacific learners, families, and communities have continuing discussion with others in the system about services they receive and the benefits.	Service users may be involved in specifying desired outcomes. Service users provide feedback on quality of service.

MATAMOANA		TRADITIONAL PROGRAMME DELIVERY APPROACH BY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES
Role of the funding organisation (often a government agency)	The Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team identifies a shared purpose for a system – in this case building a whole-family approach – as the most powerful way to raise Pacific learners' educational success and building on parents as children's first educators.	The funder identifies needed outcomes and sets metrics and what counts as success.
	The Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team as a funder is an agent of change – they seek better Pacific access to education for equitable outcomes.	Funder provides money to respond to a need and holds providers at arm's length.
	The Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team builds and nurtures effective relationships with partners – supports building network infrastructure and helps to create trust.	Funder sets providers up in competition, believing this is the best way to deliver outcomes for the lowest cost.
	The Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team gives out resources to trusted partners to best meet the needs of the diverse Pacific communities.	Funder distributes resources based on competition, that is, on who writes the best proposals for service.
	The Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team creates feedback loops, enabling learning. They do not renew contracts with partners who cannot deliver, because this means Pacific communities miss services.	Funder manages the performance of funded/contracted organisations using outcomes metrics. There is often an automatic roll over process and services are rarely decommissioned.

	MATAMOANA	TRADITIONAL PROGRAMME DELIVERY APPROACH BY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES
Role of funded organisations (often contracted providers or schools)	Funded organisations are partners. The Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team works in collaboration with the partners to support service delivery.	Funded organisations are service providers held at arm's length. The risk of service provision all rests with the provider.
	Flexible delivery means partners can respond to the changing strengths and needs of those they serve.	Contract delivery means providers have little leeway and must meet the detailed specifications of their contract.
	Partners are accountable to the community, and to the Ministry, for their delivery.	Service providers are accountable to funders for meeting service specifications, which may be metrics (for example, numbers of people delivered to) not whether the service actually meets the needs of the community.
Prevailing culture underpinning the work	Learning is key. Achievement is key.	Delivery against agreed outcomes is key.
	People can talk about uncertainties and learn from mistakes to explore possibilities, recognising there is no one way that works best for all.	People focus on what works and assume there is one best way that is the only option.
	Openness to change. People recognise the nature of the challenge will change rapidly, with a need to respond. No one has all the answers.	Funder believes they are the experts who know what the problem is and what works. The task is to take it to scale and get providers to conform to specifications.
	Relationships and rich conversations are important for delivering equitable outcomes for Pacific learners, families, and communities.	Relationships are task-focused and transactional, based on delivering to contract specifications.

	MATAMOANA	TRADITIONAL PROGRAMME DELIVERY APPROACH BY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES
Processes	Enquiry, research, and evaluation generate information about current practice, potential gaps, and the people and relationships involved to sense a way forward.	Enquiry, research, and evaluation identify a problem and the known best practice in responding to it.
	Measure and collect data for learning to continuously reflect on and improve practice to better serve the Pacific community.	Measure and collect data for performance management to be accountable to others and demonstrate the impact.
	Developmental funding supports creating new ideas/ways of working. Relational/trust-based funding is longer term, flexible, and solution focused .	Competitive procurement. Tight, inflexible contract schedule.
	Funders and partners engage in facilitated conversations about practice improvement.	Funders and providers use outcomes-based performance management.
	Funders and partners build and nurture the partners' infrastructure so they can better serve Pacific communities.	Funders expect providers to build infrastructure without any time and investment allowance in the contract.
	Funders and partners invest in the quality of relationships.	Funders and providers focus on project delivery.

Source: Knight et al., 2017; Oakden, et al., 2021; Riboldi, et al., 2021



CHAPTER 6

Eyes towards the horizon

Matamoana is not just an approach – it is a commitment to ongoing evolution and improvement in how we engage with Pacific learners, parents, families, and communities. Rooted in Pacific funds of knowledge and values, its foundation remains steadfast even as practices adapt to meet the dynamic needs of Pacific communities.

The Samoan proverb “*E sui faiga ae tumau fa’avae*” – *practices may change, but the foundations remain* – aptly captures the enduring essence of Matamoana.

The evolution of the resource *Matamoana: An as and by Pacific theory and approach* is outlined in its structure – the chapters record the journey from conceptual beginnings to implementation and ongoing impact.

FIGURE 18: CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS OF MATAMOANA: AN AS AND BY PACIFIC THEORY AND APPROACH

CHAPTER	FOCUS	KEY HIGHLIGHTS
1. Our commitment	Reaffirming Pacific-centred approaches by placing Pacific learners, families, and communities at the heart of education systems.	Directly responding to the voices of Pacific communities and embedding them in decision-making processes.
2. Foundational theory	Establishing Pacific-centric methodologies and merging Indigenous worldviews with Western frameworks.	Talanoa, Fa’afaletui, and the Adaptive Action Cycle as key theoretical components.
3. Practical application	Translating theory into actionable practices across design, delivery, and evaluation.	Emphasising collaboration, inclusivity, and cultural responsiveness.
4. Core characteristics	Integrating Pacific values, strengths-based approaches, and privileging Pacific knowledge within education.	Bridging Pacific and Western frameworks while maintaining Pacific priorities.
5. Relationships	Highlighting the centrality of relationships in Matamoana’s implementation.	Ensuring partnerships are built on high trust, recognising the vā, and fostering educational connections across sectors.
6. The horizon	Envisioning the future of Pacific education while grounding progress in Matamoana’s enduring principles.	Leveraging ongoing collaboration and growth to ensure sustainable and equitable educational outcomes.

Continuing the journey

Matamoana's legacy lies in its ability to:

- » **Build on strengths** – By privileging Pacific voices and integrating Pacific knowledge with adaptive methodologies, it creates a robust platform for transformative change.
- » **Foster high-trust relationships** – Through partnerships with Pacific providers, faith groups, and schools, it bridges worlds and cultivates trust, enabling meaningful collaboration.
- » **Adapt and innovate** – As Pacific learners, families, and communities grow and evolve, Matamoana adapts while retaining its core focus on equity, cultural safety, and achievement.

A legacy of transformation

Matamoana has established a new standard for Pacific education. It has shown that shifting to an *as and by Pacific* approach results in:

- » greater visibility and confidence for Pacific learners, allowing them to thrive as Pacific
- » safer, more inclusive spaces for Pacific families to engage in education
- » stronger connections across education, home, church, and community
- » schools and educators becoming more culturally competent and responsive to Pacific contexts.

Looking towards the horizon

Looking forward, Matamoana is a reminder that education is not a static process. It evolves with the aspirations of Pacific communities, always guided by the foundational principles of respect, inclusion, and collective empowerment. As new challenges and opportunities emerge, Matamoana will continue to act as a beacon – shaping equitable education systems that reflect the rich diversity and potential of Pacific learners.

This is not the end but a continuation of the journey. Just as Matamoana invites us to adapt to the changing tides, it also calls us to remain steadfast in our commitment to Pacific success.







Appendices

Appendix 1

The gafa of Matamoana: An as and by Pacific theory and approach

Gafa is a Sāmoan concept much like the Māori term of whakapapa – referring to lineage and knowing where one comes from. The gafa of Matamoana emerged from an increasing awareness from the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team that they were taking a different approach to working with Pacific communities than previous Ministry approaches. The team committed to articulating this difference by developing a theoretical framework and adapting Nan Wehipeihana’s work.

A discussion with a Pacific principal and Samoan community leader in 2015 shaped this commitment. “Stop asking us what we think, what we know ... you don’t do anything. We can work together with you and be the solution ...”

The existence of an evidence-based theory and approach provided support for the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team to respond to Pacific learners, families, and communities – their hopes, observations, and experiences of the education system – alongside more traditional research, evidence, and data.

It meant the team’s response and relationship with the sector could be uniform and deliberate, innovative and based on Pacific funds of knowledge.

The gafa

Pacific PowerUP programme

A distinct and different approach to Ministry programme delivery naturally evolved between 2013 and 2015 within the Pacific PowerUP programme (now Talanoa Ako). Pacific communities, learners, and teachers took ownership of this programme – they mobilised parents, chose the venues, provided hospitality, and local church Ministers opened and closed the nights with elders present to ensure participants were building their knowledge, but also that families and communities were safe. The sessions were Pacific-centric, for example, bilingual and in some cases trilingual, and Pacific protocols were observed such as music, dance, dinner, and social hierarchies. This was a natural way of organising and mobilising communities for the community partners, schools, and churches.

This Pacific-centric response was supported by the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team as it was what the parents wanted and it was authentically Pacific.

Pacific PowerUP longitudinal evaluation 2016-2019

The longitudinal evaluation framework was developed in 2016 with the Data and Insights team at the Ministry to ensure qualitative and quantitative data was collected on the Pacific PowerUP programme. The quantitative data was attendance and baseline data such as gender, age, and ethnicity of parents. The data collection as part of the evaluation framework was developed by the manager of the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team, Gabrielle-Sisifo Makisi.

The team committed to using a Pacific research approach to evaluate the programme. They used talanoa as a method to capture participant “voice” and generate qualitative data on the programme’s strengths and weaknesses. This data was developed into a longitudinal evaluation, with research repeated in the following years to test if the initial positive results were one-off or consistent improvements.

Repeated evaluations showed a transformational change for Pacific families, who increased their knowledge about the education system and participated in conversations around learning with their children. The evaluations also found a large increase in the number of NCEA credits achieved by Pacific students.

Pacific and non-Pacific educators involved in Pacific PowerUP also changed their practice as a result of their increased knowledge and understanding of Pacific learners and their families.

Evaluations

The qualitative data for the longitudinal evaluation was gathered through guided talanoa⁶⁶ with parents and learners who were participants in the Pacific PowerUP programme. The talanoa took place at the start of the programme, half-way through, and at the end.

The talanoa were then collated and analysed using the Fa’afaletui framework and grouped into Findings and Learnings. This work was led by Gabrielle-Sisifo Makisi, who worked with Pragmatica evaluations led by Judy Oakden.

- » Findings – The data from the Guided Talanoa Series found that changes to Pacific PowerUP’s delivery model were needed. It was changed from a 26-week programme to 10 weeks, and a more flexible model was encouraged to meet community needs, for example, delivery could be bilingual or in a specific Pacific language. By 2019 the changes were significant enough that it was decided to change the branding from Pacific PowerUP to Talanoa Ako to signify this.
- » Learnings – The learnings from the Guided Talanoa Series were grouped into five themes. These were published as part of the longitudinal evaluations. The themes were Pacific visible, Identity, language, and culture, Pacific wellbeing, ‘Auala (pathways into learning), and Cultural bias and racism.

⁶⁶ Fairbairn-Dunlop, P. (2021b).



As and by Pacific

By 2018, an *as and by Pacific* approach was embedded into the work of the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team. The approach was adapted from Nan Wehipeihana's (2019) *Indigenous as and by* model⁶⁷ and prioritised Pacific funds of knowledge in all steps of the programme delivery process. It evolved to become Matamoana, a theory and an approach, used by the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team in their work. This work was started by Pragmatica researcher Judy Oakden and the Ministry's Gabrielle-Sisifo Makisi, Moe Sa'u, and Reno Paotonu.

The adapted *as and by* model was discussed in talanoa groups with Pacific PowerUP providers. The consensus was that the PowerUP programme was making a difference for Pacific learners, and it that the *as and by Pacific* approach should be the standard methodology for all Ministry programmes for Pacific learners, families, and communities.

Robust discussions were had around the difference between *with Pacific* and *by Pacific*. The general feedback was that *with Pacific* would be less successful, as the decision-making power was still held by the Ministry. However, an *as and by Pacific* approach meant that engagement, design, development, delivery, and evaluation would be more genuinely Pacific – built from Pacific funds of knowledge and ways of knowing, doing, and understanding.

Providers and participants agreed that the Pacific PowerUP programme was successful primarily because it was developed and delivered an *as and by Pacific* theory and approach, where Pacific voices were not only collected but listened and responded to.

As and by Pacific utilised a reflective practice model, the Adaptive Action Cycle, which is made up of three steps – what?, so what?, and now what? These built on an appreciative inquiry methodology.

Talanoa Ako: Pacific Talk about Education and Learning

Talanoa Ako: Pacific Talk about Education and Learning (TA PTEL) is a synthesis and analysis of the three PowerUP evaluations and marks Pacific PowerUP's evolution into Talanoa Ako. Published in 2021, TA PTEL is made up of three parts – a professional learning development (PLD) tool for teachers, case studies, and a literature review on the findings.

The guiding philosophy of Talanoa Ako is two-pronged: that a whole-family approach is the most powerful way to lift Pacific children's educational achievement and that parents are children's first educators. The Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team believed Talanoa Ako service provision should be *as and by Pacific*, delivering effectively through Pacific communities which include schools. Therefore, the Talanoa Ako engagement model encourages parents, families, communities, schools, and providers (as partners) to take ownership of the programme and effectively be the “village” that it takes to raise a child.

⁶⁷ Wehipeihana, N. (2019).

Matamoana: An as and by approach

From 2021, the embedding of Matamoana by the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team signalled a paradigm shift and a change in thinking for the Ministry. Recent programmes have been co-constructed, co-designed, and delivered by Pacific. These programmes are designed to respond to the needs identified by Pacific communities, needs that were discussed during talanoa with participants on the Pacific PowerUP programme and then grouped into five themes.⁶⁸

For example, Fakailoga Tino responded to the Racism, Pacific visible, and the Identity, language, and culture themes of the Pacific Action Plan.⁶⁹

Pacific communities could see the programmes as responses to their talanoa, and the Ministry could respond directly to the areas which had been identified as important for achievement.

The programmes have also been evaluated using Pacific methodologies, methods, and funds of knowledge.

Contracting providers using a Matamoana *as and by Pacific* approach allows more flexibility around what is happening in each community. It supports stronger relationships between providers and the procurement team within the Ministry. A Pacific panel is currently being discussed.

The team has developed this resource, *Matamoana: An as and by Pacific theory and approach*, to document the learning that has taken place over the last decade.

⁶⁸ Fairbairn-Dunlop, P. (2021a).

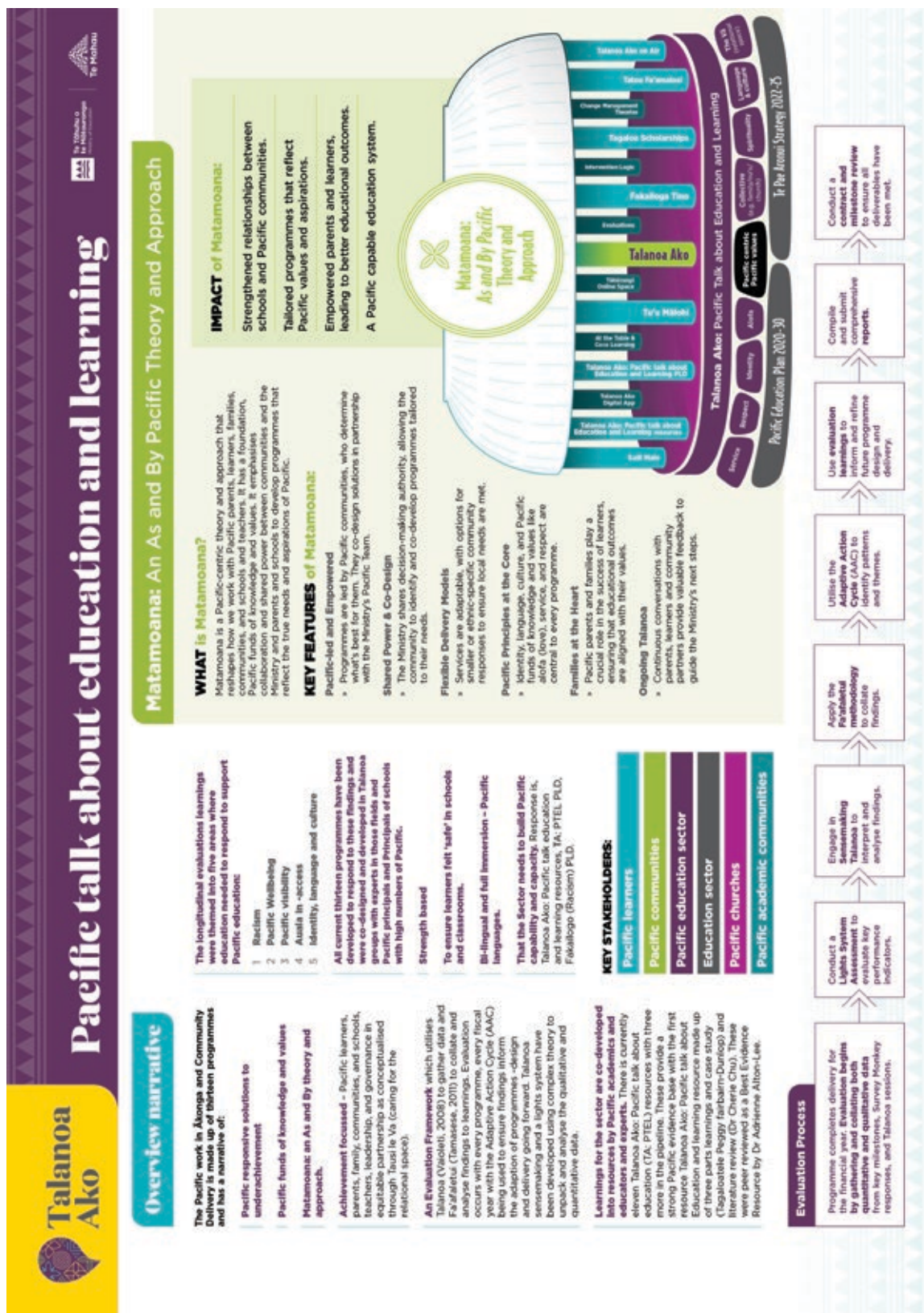
⁶⁹ Action Plan for Pacific Education (2020).



Appendix 2

Ākonga Pacific Outcomes Work Programme

These infographics in Appendix 2 have informed the basis of the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team’s work with learners, schools, and Pacific communities.



Source: Ministry of Education, Ākonga Pacific Outcomes Team, 2024

Pacific talk about education and learning

Gafia (Whakapapa)

- **Pre 2013 Pacific team**
 - provided Pacific lens and monitoring over Ministry work and developed and monitored the Pacific education plan.
 - In 2012 Pacific PowerUP was developed as a response to Pacific parents and communities stating that they needed to be informed about the state of the education system before they could become engaged.
 - BES - highest variable for achievement was engaged parents.
 - Championed by the then Minister of education Hekia Parata.

2016-2020

- Pacific PowerUP team became the Programme delivery team within PICL.
- Pacific PowerUP Longitudinal evaluation developed by team (2016-2019) - quantitative and qualitative data, Pacific 'voice'.
- Teams' programmes designed and developed in response to the findings.
- Findings informed changes in the Pacific PowerUP programmes design and delivery and renamed Talanoa Ako (Education talk, talking about education and learning).

2020-2022

- 2021 Thirteen Programme developed and resourced from these learnings and Pacific Theory and Approach developed.
- Evaluation framework developed.
- Learnings from evaluations developed into resources.
- Talanoa Ako: Pacific talk about education and learning resources (TA: PTEL) - currently eleven available. Two to three resources added per year.

2023

- Call from sector and community to increase funding and reach with waiting lists for each programme.
- Two year contracts.
- Ability to rewrite and deliver Tapasa, BES, education plan and ESOL (Pacific highest performing Pacific students), literacy and numeracy -learners and parents, early learning education - Pacific and non-Pacific centres.
- Programmes for Pacific learners, Pacific parents, Pacific teachers, principals, governance and two PLD programmes for teachers and schools.
- Presence on Tāhūrangi -TAPTEL resources

"It open my eyes to something that I didn't think that was racism. I will definitely change it and make it better and keep on learning."

- Teacher, about
Teahepa Tiro

"Being products of migration, our parents didn't have these opportunities. Thanks to PHL, we now have the chance to fulfil their academic dreams"

- Scholarship recipient, about
Tagaloa Scholarships

- Inquiry loop from programme evaluations - continually informing programme modifications and evaluation process -responsive, authentic, and educationally sound.
- Strong relationships (Le Va) with Pacific communities, Pacific organisations, and trusts -delivery of services to Pacific sector.
- Strong relationships with education sector.
- Strong knowledge of Pacific research and educational evidence and data.

Programme Summary Data 2023-2024

ENGAGEMENT



234,944
Parents



48,526
Learners



2,080
Educators

GENDER

67% Female **33%** Male

ETHNICITY

Samoa	35.6%
Tongan	16.9%
Fijian	4.9%
Cook Island	9.8%
Māori	7.0%
Other Pacific Peoples	2.7%
Non-Pacific	25.6%

"Getting me to further reflect on my practice and further strategies to build better relationships with challenging students and their families, and getting further ideas and strategies to support these students and their families"

- Teacher, about
Talanoa Ako PLO

"It's made a huge impact for me and my studies - it's helped me develop skills and techniques to help me get good grades on my assignments. It has not only helped me, but helped our Pacifica people pass their subjects. If it wasn't for [the BES], I would have been sitting and so chuffed on how to finish off my assignments."

- Learner, about the Pacific
Learners Support Programme

"There is a big advantage to Talanoa Ako for us Pacific parents. Talanoa Ako breaks down the school curriculum into minor steps and explains what each level means... Talanoa Ako provides understanding and knowledge within family as parent, children and school partnership."

- Parent, about
Talanoa Ako

"It open my eyes to something that I didn't think that was racism. I will definitely change it and make it better and keep on learning."

- Teacher, about
Teahepa Tiro

"Education for Pacific learners starts at home."

- Teacher, about
At the Table



CLICK HERE to review the
2023-2024 Evaluations

Or, for more information EMAIL:
Talanoa.Ako@education.govt.nz

Appendix 3

Ontologies, epistemology, and methodologies

The Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team evolved their thinking as they developed Matamoana as an approach and a theory. Figure 19 records the ontologies, epistemology, and methodologies that influenced their *Pacific pathway*.

FIGURE 19: ONTOLOGIES, EPISTEMOLOGY, AND METHODOLOGIES THAT INFLUENCE MATAMOANA

ASPECT	ĀKONGA PACIFIC OUTCOMES TEAM POSITION
Ontology – what we think we can know	Locating possible models to frame the work The work of the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team has deep theoretical roots. As part of developing the <i>Pasifika Education Plan 2013-2017</i>,⁷⁰ the team reviewed a range of literature on Pacific worldviews and ways of constructing knowledge and methodologies that might inform policy and programme development. The team collated and summarised this literature in <i>Tapasā: Cultural competencies framework</i> for teachers for Pacific learners⁷¹. In <i>Tapasā</i>, the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team described multiple Pacific models and frameworks “developed by Pacific researchers, educators, and practitioners to capture and articulate Pacific worldviews, knowledge and cultural frameworks”. The Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team selected to use and adapt models that would frame and progress their work. The models chosen, Fa’afaletui and Talanoa are outlined below. Pacific-centric is both an ontological and epistemological stance Pacific-centric refers to the common values across the Pacific cultures. In this way Pacific-centric is akin to a kaupapa Māori approach, which both Indigenous⁷² and Western-oriented researchers⁷³ recognise as spanning both ontology and epistemology. Pacific-centric underpins the <i>as and by Pacific</i> ways of working with Pacific parents, learners, and communities. The approach draws on Fa’afaletui as an epistemology and Talanoa as a methodology for engaging with Pacific communities.

⁷⁰ Ministry of Education. (2013).

⁷¹ Ministry of Education. (2018). *Tapasā: Cultural competencies framework for teachers for Pacific learners*. pp. 26-27.

⁷² Smith, L. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Dunedin, New Zealand: University of Otago Press.

⁷³ Braun, V., and Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. London, United Kingdom: SAGE.

ASPECT	ĀKONGA PACIFIC OUTCOMES TEAM POSITION
Epistemology – how we think we can know	Fa’afaletui as an epistemological approach Pacific-centric work draws on the Fa’afaletui model (Tamasese et al., 1997), which allows a whole-systems approach to frame, facilitate, gather, analyse, and validate knowledge through a Pacific lens. <i>Fa’afaletui relates to the critical iterative process of weaving (tui) together all the different expressions of knowledge from within various groupings ... [This allows for] the appropriate cultural protocols to be addressed and permit issues considered tapu (sacred and forbidden) to be discussed openly. [Differences such as] the person at the top of the mountain, the top of the tree and in the canoe but close to the school of fish [illustrate how people] will have different but equally important perspectives.⁷⁴</i> The Fa’afaletui model allows the sorting and linking of different parts of the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team’s work to include all levels of thinking and activity in its planning and delivery. The model also allows the inclusion of multiple and complex perspectives by incorporating different voices (such as different Pacific ethnicities, genders, and age groups) to ensure they all have a place. Importantly the Fa’afaletui model also helps create new pathways forward in collaboration with Pacific communities in a Pacific-centric way. Tausi le vā, looking after the vā (space), is the mechanism for looking after the relationships between all three spheres, people, and work.⁷⁵ The Fa’afaletui model helps ensure any engagement with Pacific parents, learners, and communities is carried out in culturally appropriate and safe ways.

⁷⁴ Ministry of Education. (2018). p. 27.

⁷⁵ Airini, Anae, M., Mila-Schaaf, K., Coxon, E., Mara, D., and Sanga, K. (2010).

ASPECT	ĀKONGA PACIFIC OUTCOMES TEAM POSITION
Methodology – ways of making sense	Talanoa as a methodology Talanoa is a Pacific methodology which underpins the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team’s work. Talanoa is the mechanism for discussion and consultation. Talanoa is made up of the words “tala” – “talk” and “noa” – “normal”. Talanoa means to reach an outcome through talk, decision through discussion, or to discuss a topic. Talanoa is used throughout the Pacific, and it is also a formal, recognised research methodology. In Pacific research, Talanoa is used mainly to talk naturally through a topic or phenomena to explore the thoughts, feelings, views, and perceptions of the people talking. The Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team considered Talanoa the most useful and genuine way to engage with the parents and families attending Talanoa Ako. An important development by the Ākonga Pacific Outcomes team is the Guided Talanoa Series⁷⁶ for evaluating parent and learner progress from attending Talanoa Ako between 2016 and 2019. Based on a set of questions, Talanoa guided the parents and families through their experiences of the programme. The Guided Talanoa Series: » provided parent and family voice on the value of attending Talanoa Ako workshop sessions » highlighted Pacific parents’ beliefs, values, and expectations of the education system and schools in New Zealand – lived experiences that shape how Pacific parents see their role in their children’s education » provided a valuable window into what families learnt during Talanoa Ako sessions, how they used this, and if and how this information changed their beliefs, values, and attitudes to education » helped explain effective ways that schools can engage with Pacific families to support their children.

⁷⁶ Fairbairn-Dunlop, P. (2021b).



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