



Pacific PowerUP Plus 2019

Case studies



REPORT INFORMATION

Prepared for Rose Jamieson, Deputy Secretary, Parent Information and Community
Intelligence
Ministry of Education

Prepared by Judy Oakden, Director
Pragmatica Limited

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Research team

An internal team from the Ministry of Education who were integrally involved with the PowerUP programme, consisting of Moe Sa'u and Gabrielle-Sisifo Makisi, designed the evaluation. Judy Oakden of Pragmatica Limited developed this case study report in consultation with the internal evaluation team and with peer review from Kellie Spee.

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We developed this report in good faith using the information available to us at the time. We provide this report 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 information or advice within this report.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Pacific PowerUP Plus (PowerUP) programme delivers targeted sessions to Pacific parents, families and communities and their primary and secondary students; and children in early childhood education (ECE). The key outcomes desired from the programme are to:

- build the capability, knowledge and voice of Pacific parents, families and communities to drive and accelerate Pacific educational success
- provide access to quality registered teachers in all education settings to ensure students get the right information at the right time
- ensure fit-for-purpose, culturally appropriate, inclusive and practical approaches to best meet the local needs of Pasifika parents, their children, students and families
- ensure value for money and achieving real results in real-time.

The Ministry of Education commissioned Pragmatica Limited to develop three cases that show:

- progress of the Ministry as a funder and providers as partners to contract and deliver the PowerUP Programme
- the changes that happened in a Pacific community where Pacific became visible in education because of PowerUP working well
- the place of the Pacific church in supporting parents to engage in their children's learning and with education settings.

These cases show the ways that the Ministry of Education's strong focus on developing PowerUP services with providers, using an "as Pacific" model, led to significant improvements. Changes in the way providers delivered services and in the contracting terms and conditions enabled the programme to better serve Pacific parents, children and communities. These cases show it is possible to contract for services for Pacific communities in an authentic Pacific way.

- **Case One: From providers to partners – contracting "as Pacific"¹:** This case study describes the journey the Ministry of Education and the Pacific community took together to develop the PowerUP programme. It explores how changes in beliefs, expectations and values about the best ways to offer the programme were strongly influenced by providers and the Pacific parent, family and child voice from previous evaluations (Oakden, 2017, 2018, 2019). Over time, Pacific providers and the Ministry developed trusted partnerships as they improved PowerUP delivery options.
- **Case Two: Pacific visible – the story of PowerUP in Oamaru:** The Pacific community in Oamaru came together to seek improved educational outcomes for their children. They made requests to the Ministry for support. This case presents their experiences of setting up and running PowerUP in Oamaru. The case describes several changes that occurred in Oamaru based on feedback from providers and parents. From Pacific parents' active engagement in education settings and with the broader community a positive ripple effect occurred. Through PowerUP, Pacific parents, children and families became more visible in the local community in ways that benefited their educational success.
- **Case Three: Partnership with the Pacific churches – the Au Lotu model:** This case describes the work of the Ministry in partnership with several Pacific church communities. It shows how churches created a learning community through PowerUP that is relevant to Pacific parents.

¹ This model draws on the work of Nan Wehipeihana (2019) originally developed for indigenous-led evaluation.

The case also looks more closely at the work of the Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (EFKS), a leading Samoan church, in providing the PowerUP Au Lotu model. Through PowerUP delivered in EFKS settings, Pacific parents became more confident in their parenting. They gained clarity of their roles and responsibilities as leaders of learning in the family. The case also shows that parents learned better ways to engage with school and teachers to support their children's education.

Key findings

The three cases featured in this report show the ways the Ministry worked with providers as partners. In particular, the Ministry worked with providers to focus on increasing Pacific parents' attendance at PowerUP. There were four essential learnings from these cases.

First, the needs and ambitions of Pacific parents, children and communities drove the strategic direction and continuing development of the programme. The cases show how putting Pacific parents at the heart of the work sharpened the focus of the PowerUP programme, and it continued to improve over several years, extending the delivery options.

Second, the cases reveal that relationships matter and the PowerUP programme supports relationship-building at many levels in the system. The Ministry believed providers had the expertise to engage with their communities effectively. Equally, many providers valued the support they received from the Ministry. The Ministry and providers' goodwill supported robust discussions when aspects of the programme, such as parent attendance, were not working well.

Providers also had strong connections within their communities and with parents attending PowerUP. The PowerUP programme encouraged parents to foster support networks among their communities. These multi-layered relationships helped build social capital among Pacific providers, parents and communities.

Third, the Ministry identified a diverse range of Pacific providers with cultural knowledge of their communities and drew on their expertise to mobilise Pacific parents. These cases demonstrate why it is vital to have a diverse pool of providers. Where some providers could not mobilise parents, others in the same community had more success.

Finally, the cases show that contract terms and conditions can help or hinder the potential outcomes of the PowerUP programme. In 2019 providers had more flexibility to test ways of being responsive to their communities. In 2020, the new contracts reflect the results of that testing. Where in 2019 providers could start any time of the year, in 2020 parent feedback showed they needed to start in Term One and finish in Term Four. On the other hand, providers retained the flexibility to offer 10 sessions at the best times for their community, over the year.

Conclusion

These case studies confirm the Ministry strategy of having diverse providers enables a broader group of Pacific parents, families and communities to gain access to PowerUP. The Ministry effectively collaborated with Pacific providers, parents, children and community, and with Pacific academics to develop PowerUP. Over the years, the programme evolved to meet the needs of Pacific parents more effectively. As a result of the Ministry's persistence in searching for alternative methods of delivery with the community, the programme reached far more parents in 2019. Community providers, educators and Pacific churches now deliver PowerUP in their communities. Now, more than ever before, PowerUP effectively reaches out to and communicates with Pacific parents. The programme is transformative for many Pacific parents, showing them how to support their children's learning to realise their migrant dream.

SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The Ministry of Education developed Pacific PowerUP Plus (PowerUP) in 2013 to support Pacific parents and communities to be informed, knowledgeable and confident supporters of their children's learning journeys. The guiding philosophy is that a whole-family approach is the most powerful way to raise Pacific children's educational success and that parents are children's first educators.

PowerUP delivers targeted sessions for parents, families and communities. The sessions build the knowledge of parents (and for the FlexiPlus model, their children) about aspects of the New Zealand education system. Session topics include why early childhood education (ECE) is essential and how to support literacy and numeracy. Session topics also cover National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) and academic pathways and career choices. The sessions ran at night in places such as schools, community centres and churches that are convenient for the Pacific community.

In 2019 the Ministry tested two service provision models of PowerUP:

- the PowerUP **FlexiPlus pan-Pacific model**: in which parents and children both attend sessions for between 8 and 15 weeks over the year
- the PowerUP **Au Lotu ethnic-specific model**: in which parents and extended adult family attend sessions (without children) for 10 weeks. Au Lotu means "the church" in Samoan. Most but not all the ethnic-specific sessions were delivered by churches.

The Ministry developed these two models, based on learnings from previous evaluations and from Pacific parent, family and child voice (Oakden, 2017, 2018, 2019). Parents and providers suggested it was important to provide opportunities for more parents to attend PowerUP. They pointed out that the church was an important part of the Pacific community and may be a way to reach parents. Also, the evaluation findings suggested that parents found 26 sessions too many.

In 2019 there were also other changes to the programme informed by the 2016–2018 longitudinal evaluation findings. These changes included:

- running an ethnic-specific programme and a pan-Pacific programme (as already noted)
- reducing the target number of families from 75 to 30
- offering FlexiPlus to both parents and children and focussing on parents and family adults for Au Lotu
- running the sessions for 8 to 15 weeks instead of 26 weeks
- allowing for local curriculum in three to four sessions of FlexiPlus
- allowing providers to run sessions in blocks or consecutively, rather than specifying consecutive sessions.

Community providers, educators and churches deliver PowerUP in their communities. Their personnel include teachers, champions of PowerUP from within the community, academic

mentors and church ministers. Highly committed teams engage effectively with Pacific parents, children, families, and communities.

Case study purpose

The Ministry of Education commissioned Pragmatica Limited to develop three cases to show:

- Progress of the Ministry as a funder, along with providers as partners, in contracting and delivering the PowerUP Programme. This case shows the changing relationships between Ministry and providers in supporting an “as Pacific” response to parents’ needs.
- The changes that happened in a Pacific community when Pacific became visible in education because PowerUP is working well. This case looks more closely at benefits of one PowerStation in a small-town setting.
- The place of the Pacific church as a holistic response in supporting parents to engage in their children’s learning and education settings. This case views the church as a proxy for the village in New Zealand – providing not only pastoral but educational care.

Philosophy that underpins these cases

The guiding philosophy of PowerUP is that a whole-family approach is the most powerful way to raise Pacific children’s educational success and that parents are children’s first educators. The results of these case studies confirm the Ministry working in partnership with different types of community-based providers enables Pacific parents, families and communities to support children’s learning.

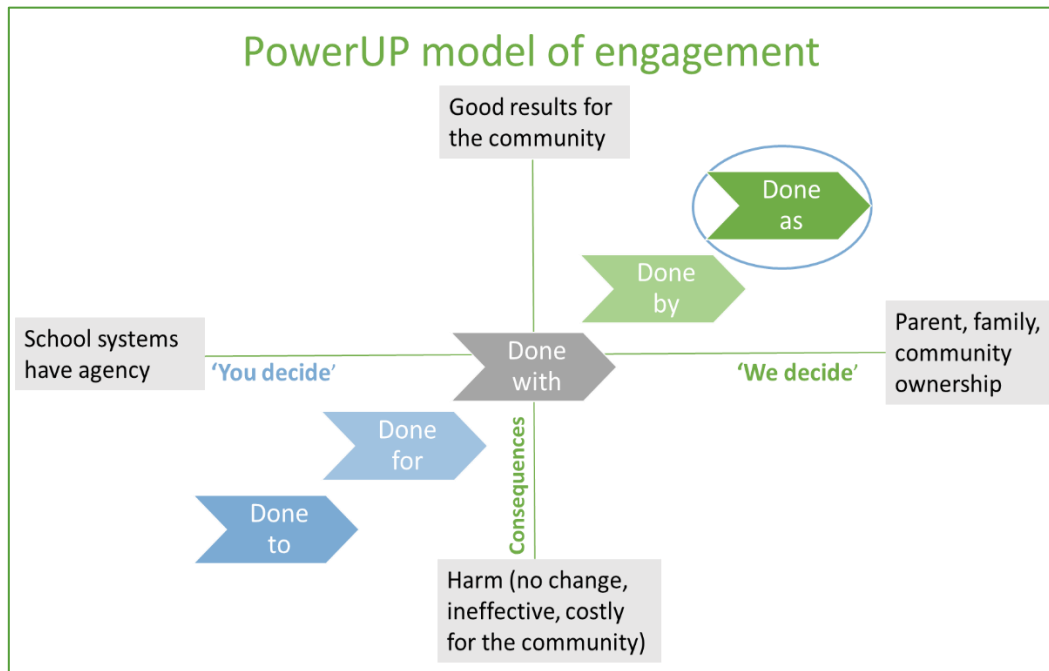
The PowerUP model of engagement encourages parents, families and communities as well as providers to take ownership of the programme. The Ministry believes PowerUP service provision should be “as Pacific for Pacific”, with delivery through the Pacific community. Nan Wehipeihana originally imagined this model of engagement for indigenous evaluation (2019). However, we suggest it is equally applicable in a service provider setting. “Done as Pacific” is where:

Indigenous people [in this case, Pacific people] have control over the [delivery of PowerUP], and Indigenous knowledge and science are the norm. The legitimacy and validity of Indigenous principles, values are taken for granted. [PowerUP] does not exclude Western methods but includes them only as far as they are seen to be useful.

(Wehipeihana 2019, p. 381)

The following diagram is an adaptation of Wehipeihana’s (2019) model. Instead of evaluation, this model shows service provision. Here we see the continuum of approaches from Western methods and models to Pacific methods and models. Wehipeihana suggests “a paradigm shift is needed... to radically shift the power balance by placing control in the hands of Indigenous peoples” (p 377, 380). PowerUP is an excellent example of where this approach works well.

Figure 1: PowerUP model of engagement



Source: Adapted from Wehipeihana, N. (2019). Increasing cultural competence in indigenous-led evaluation: A necessary step toward indigenous-led evaluation. *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation* (34, 2) pp 369–384.

Methodology

Guided Talanoa Series

An important aspect of this case study series is the use of a Pacific research method – *talanoa*. The Ministry Parent Information and Community Intelligence team developed the Guided Talanoa Series to be able to talanoa (converse) with the families and with providers. Talanoa is made up of “tala” – “talk” and “noa” – “normal”. Talanoa means to reach an outcome through talk, agree on a decision through discussion or to discuss a topic in open dialogue with each party having genuine chance to contribute. Used throughout the Pacific, talanoa is a formal, recognised research methodology (Vaiotei, 2006). Talanoa is primarily used in Pacific research to talk through a topic or phenomena in a conversational way to explore the thoughts, feelings, views and perceptions of the people talking. The evaluation team considered talanoa the most useful and genuine way to engage with the both providers and parents, children and families attending PowerUP and to gauge progress and change. The Ministry team developed a series of questions for talanoa over five sessions for the Guided Talanoa Series.

Information collected

The purpose of the Guided Talanoa Series was to obtain the voice of parents and family on the value of attending a PowerStation and also the voice of providers regarding the delivery of the programme. The Ministry of Education Pacific PowerUP team developed a set of guiding questions. The talanoa took the parents and families through their experiences of the programme. A series of questions for providers delved into the opportunities and challenges they faced. Where possible, talanoa occurred in the language most comfortable to participants.

The following table summarises the different talanoa approaches used for Au Lotu and FlexiPlus.

Table 1: Summary of Guided Talanoa Series for Au Lotu and FlexiPlus

<p>Au Lotu (18 providers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With parents of two families at each church on three occasions • One response from providers at each provider (mostly churches) on three occasions. 	<p>FlexiPlus (21 providers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With parents and children of two families at each PowerStation on three occasions. • One response from each provider on five occasions.
<p>Talanoa 1: Confidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents: Background information and questions about confidence 	<p>Talanoa 1: Confidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents: Background information and questions about confidence • Children: Background information and confidence • Provider: Response to FlexiPlus and feedback on set up.
<p>Talanoa 2: Flexibility and responsiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents: Flexibility and responsiveness of programme • Church: Feedback on ways adapting programme to local needs 	<p>Talanoa 2: Flexibility and responsiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents: Flexibility and responsiveness of programme. Includes separate questions for returning and new families • Children: feedback on benefits of attending PowerUP • Provider: Feedback on ways adapting programme to local needs and making links with schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talanoa 3: Change and Confidence • Parents: Changes in the way support student learning 	<p>Talanoa 3: Change and Confidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents: Changes in the way support student learning. Includes separate questions for returning and new families • Children: Changes in the student learning • Provider: Feedback whether provision is responsive to community needs
<p>Talanoa 4: Providers only</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback on the delivery of the programme 	<p>Talanoa 4: Providers only</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback on the delivery of the programme
<p>Talanoa 5: Providers only</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-assessment of strengths and weakness of the delivery 	<p>Talanoa 5: Providers only</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-assessment of strengths and weakness of the delivery

The Guided Talanoa Series showed:

- Pacific parental beliefs, values, attitudes towards and expectations of the education system and schools in New Zealand. The Guided Talanoa Series also provided a valuable window into what these families learnt during PowerUP, how they used what they learnt, and if and how this information changed their beliefs, values and attitudes to education. The Guided Talanoa Series also helped explain effective ways schools can engage with Pacific families to support their children.
- Children's voice allowed the correlation of adult and children's comments. Many of the observations or comments made by parents during the talanoa aligned with remarks made by their children in separate talanoa sessions.
- Provider feedback captured the ways they adapted the programme to local needs, delivered the programme, and obtained a self-assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of their delivery.

Other information sources

Along with the talanoa, survey responses from parents and children for Oamaru, and parent responses for Au Lotu, the case studies were developed drawing on the following information:

- For all three cases:
 - the PowerUP 2018 evaluation (Oakden, 2019) and 2019 evaluation (Oakden & Spee, 2020)
 - sense-making session with the Ministry team in December 2019
 - an in-depth interview in March 2019 and a subsequent discussion with a key informant from the Ministry, in February 2020
 - anonymised contract documentation from 2018 and 2019.
- For the Contracting “as Pacific” case
 - Chu-Fuluifaga, C., Reynolds, M., Abella, I., & Rimoni, F. (in press). *Pacific education literature review on key findings of the Pacific PowerUP Longitudinal Evaluation 2016-2018: Hearing the voice of Pacific parents*. Wellington, New Zealand: Victoria University of Wellington.
 - Wehipeihana, N. (2019). Increasing cultural competence in indigenous-led evaluation: A necessary step toward indigenous-led evaluation. *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation* (34, 2) pp 369–384.
- For the Oamaru case:
 - Halalele, H. (2018). *Milestone five, Talanoa four. Tālanga ‘a Waitaki*. Tālanga ‘a Waitaki: Oamaru, NZ. This was the final milestone report at the end of the first year of service provision from Oamaru
 - New Zealand Immigration. (2019). Good energy: Pacific PowerUP is working with students, families and the community to drive Pacific educational achievement. *Settlement ACTIONZ*, 16/17, 26–41. This was an independent article by MBIE on the strengths of the Oamaru PowerUP programme in 2019.
- For the Au Lotu case:
 - EFKS. (n.d.). *EFKS NZ Education partnership strategy: realising the potential of young people, their families and communities through collaboration*. Ekalesia Fa’apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa: Auckland, New Zealand. This document outlines the approach of EFKS, a leading Samoan church, to supporting strategic partnerships in education.

Case study approach

In 2019, the cases focus on the delivery of PowerUP by providers. The cases show how over time the relationship between the Ministry and providers shifted to one of partnership. The cases were compiled from several data sources and used a thematic approach for analysis.

The first and third cases were treated as local knowledge cases (Thomas, 2016) where the subject was an aspect of contracting and the object was a particular experience and learnings from running PowerUP. For the first case the object is the contracting processes. For the second case the object is working with Pacific churches.

The second case selected for the study is a single case (Thomas, 2016) that reveals exciting aspects of one PowerUP provider’s delivery in one region. The subject of the case was, naturally, the provider, and the object of the case was their participation in PowerUP. The Ministry of Education Pacific Education team selected the Oamaru provider to be profiled, based on the rich descriptions of change that were evident as a result of community involvement with PowerUP.

SUMMARY OF THE THREE CASES

Summary

These cases show how the Ministry of Education's strong focus on developing services with providers using an "as Pacific" model led to significant improvements to PowerUP. Changes in the way providers delivered services and in the contracting terms and conditions, enabled the programme to better serve Pacific parents and communities. These cases show that it is possible to contract for services in an authentic Pacific way for Pacific communities.

Case One: From providers to partners – contracting "as Pacific"

This case study describes the journey the Ministry of Education and the Pacific community took together to develop the PowerUP programme. This case explores the changes in beliefs, expectations and values about the best ways to offer the programme, strongly influenced by providers and Pacific parent, family and child voice from previous evaluations. Over time, Pacific providers and the Ministry developed trusted partnerships.

Case Two: Pacific visible – the story of PowerUP in Oamaru

The Pacific community in Oamaru came together to seek improved educational outcomes for their children. They made requests to the Ministry for support. This case presents their experiences setting up and running PowerUP in Oamaru. The case describes several changes that occurred in Oamaru, based on reports from providers and parents. The case describes the positive ripple effect of Pacific parents' active engagement in education settings and with the broader community. The case also explores how through PowerUP Pacific parents, children and families became more visible in the local community, in ways that benefited their education success.

Case Three: Partnership with the churches – the Au Lotu model

This case describes the work of the Ministry in partnership with several Pacific church communities. It shows how various churches created a learning community through PowerUP that is relevant to Pacific parents. The case also looks more closely at the work of Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (EFKS), a leading Samoan church, in providing the PowerUP Au Lotu model. Through PowerUP delivered in EFKS settings, Pacific parents became more confident in their parenting. They gained clarity of their roles and responsibilities as leaders of learning in the family. The case also shows that parents learned better ways to engage with school and teachers to support their children's education.

CASE ONE: FROM PROVIDERS TO PARTNERS – CONTRACTING “AS PACIFIC”

Introduction

This case study describes the journey the Ministry of Education and the Pacific community took together to develop the PowerUP programme. This case explores the changes in beliefs, expectations and values about the best ways to offer the programme, strongly influenced by providers and Pacific parent, family and child voice from previous evaluations. Over time, Pacific providers and the Ministry developed trusted partnerships.

Origins of PowerUP

As part of developing the *Pasifika Education Plan 2013–2017*, the Ministry held a series of talanoa around New Zealand with the Pacific community. During those discussions, the Ministry and the Pacific community saw an urgent need to raise Pacific student achievement. They identified one way to achieve this shift was to support Pacific parents and communities to become informed, knowledgeable and confident supporters of their children’s learning journeys. The Ministry and Pacific communities knew Pacific parents want the best for their children and are capable and able to guide them with the right knowledge and support.

[Often] education around Pacific things are framed in a deficit model. PowerUP... evolved from the positive. We know that our families want the best for our kids. We know that our families, if you look at the migrant story, came for a better way of life and that education is a key to that. But we know that our families need support for [education success] to become a reality and that’s what PowerUP [does]. (Ministry programme team member)

The mere fact that [PowerUP] is a programme designed specifically for Pacific education success carries huge significance and places great value on our Pacific people... It has been the avenue that parents and students need to voice their specific needs, concerns and get connected with the right people and information to be empowered in their education journey. (FlexiPlus provider talanoa)

From the start, the Ministry and the Pacific community collaborated to develop a Pacific-responsive partnership that could support Pacific parents in an authentically Pacific way. From the outset, PowerUP ran “as Pacific”, in collaboration with Pacific providers, Pacific parents and the community. This approach differed from traditional methods where a government agency acts as expert and makes decisions independent of Pacific providers, Pacific parents and the community.

Ministry promoted system change by collaborating with the community

As the funder, the Ministry encouraged three communities to engage in developing PowerUP – Pacific academics, Pacific providers, and Pacific parents, children and the community. This section describes how these communities contributed to the success of PowerUP.

Knowledge and expertise of academics

First, in developing the programme, the Ministry drew on the knowledge and expertise of an advisory group of Pacific academics with deep connections to and understanding of their community. The Ministry continues to seek academic support, most recently commissioning a literature review by Pacific researchers at Victoria University (Chu-Fuluifaga, Reynolds, Abella & Rimoni, In press). The literature review confirmed many of the findings from the PowerUP evaluations, adding greater rigour to the learnings from Pacific providers and parents.

The challenges are to implement more fully what is already known and to extend knowledge so that Pacific education can fulfil more fully its role in the migrant dream, responding to parents, learner, family and community 'voice' distilled from the talanoa gifted to the Pacific PowerUP evaluations. (Chu-Fuluifaga, Reynolds, Abella & Rimoni, In press, p. 7.)

Input from Pacific providers

Second the in-depth community knowledge held by Pacific providers guided PowerUP's development. The Ministry regularly sought to learn from providers what worked and what didn't. There were three channels for this learning. The first channel was Ministry discussions with providers and provision of guidance during visits to each PowerStation.

We developed our programme based on the guide given by the Ministry. Having the baseline of what needs to be covered as well as the flexibility of doing our own thing was great, as we were able to target the specific needs of our parents. (Au Lotu provider)

The second channel for learning was providers collecting data from participants, rather than independent researchers or observers checking up on both groups. The talanoa between parents and providers strengthened their relationship. It also helped shift the balance of power between the Ministry and the providers. It showed the Ministry's high trust in the providers. Providers were encouraged to draw on their local expertise and incorporate their learnings into the design of PowerUP, to meet the needs of their Pacific communities.

Topics were selected after discussion and sharing with officials and teachers. Parents provided feedback on where they want emphasis and focus placed as the programme started, as well as having experiences and questions tabled for talanoa with other parents. (FlexiPlus provider)

The third channel for learning was encouraging providers to suggest improvements during professional development, and more recently during provider conference sessions. A critical evaluation finding was that providers who successfully delivered PowerUP often drew on deep knowledge and were profoundly committed to serve their communities.

[Benefits as a provider are that through PowerUP we are]... able to give back to the community in terms of supporting their children's education... [We are] thankful the PowerUp programme [can] support its dream of supporting Pacific students' education in NZ. [We find we] connect better with members of the community because of the programme. (FlexiPlus provider)

While secure contracts, enough funding and prompt payment are essential to provider sustainability and survival, often financial motivations appeared to be secondary drivers. Many providers' primary motivation was to achieve systemic change in the way parents supported learning in their families. Providers could see the contribution they made when adapting the programme to be relevant to their community.

Churches (can) bring in the cultural aspect into the programme. What we teach within the programme aligns with the Minister's prayer or sermon at the end of the sessions, so it brings a spiritual and cultural balance to the programme. I think that it is key because the church is a community all the people come here. [PowerUP] allows the church to have an input into what they want and the success they want for their kids – instead of being dictated by mainstream schools and by the Ministry. (Au Lotu provider).

Therefore, the Ministry recognised the need to act as a partner. They saw the importance of listening, delivering on their promises and addressing issues providers raised. Providers appreciated the Ministry's attention to detail.

They know we listen... that we act. They know that if we say something's going to happen, then we do [it]... If we promise something... that is our absolute priority. (Ministry programme team member)

We also wanted to acknowledge the leadership and support from [Ministry of Education] National Office, which was greatly appreciated in the strong communications that could be held and their responsiveness to any issues that arose. (FlexiPlus provider)

Drawing on the voice of Pacific parents, children and the community

Third, the Ministry drew on insights from Pacific parents, children and the community through the evaluation that ran alongside the programme. The Ministry included many opportunities for Pacific parents and children to comment on the benefits of PowerUP and its delivery as part of the programme. The talanoa collected by providers provided longitudinal data – over 13 weeks with parents, and more recently, three weeks with children. These talanoa provided rich insight into the parts of PowerUP that worked well or not so well for Pacific parents. The *Pacific PowerUP FlexiPlus and Au Lotu Programme Evaluation 2019* (Oakden & Spee, 2020) include many of the parents and children's comments.

Collaborative cycles of adaptive learning drive change

Because the Ministry believed PowerUP should run as an “as Pacific” model, from the start, the Ministry championed Pacific ways of gathering information, analysing it for learning, and commissioning and contracting services. For instance, PowerUP used:

- *Fa'afaletui* as framing for information gathering and analysis
- a Guided Talanoa Series and self- completion surveys as a data collection system to gather Pacific parents' and children's voice and to further support learning and continuous improvement of the programme
- a collaborative and adaptive evaluation approach.

Fa'afaletui

Fa'afaletui is a systemic planning approach drawn from the work of Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese². The Ministry adopted the notion of *Fa'afaletui* to provide a framework to facilitate, gather, analyse and validate the knowledge through a Pacific lens. For this programme, use of Fa'afaletui enables the sorting and linking of the different parts of PowerUP to include all levels of thinking and activity in its planning and delivery. The PowerUP programme developed Fa'afaletui around three levels:

- policy and research – into Pacific parents, family and community ways of knowing
- implementation – within families and communities, churches and schools
- evaluation – of crucial parts of the work plan to inform the next steps.

Talanoa

The Ministry designed the Guided Talanoa Series for PowerUP to ensure data collection was done “as Pacific”. Talanoa is a way of discussing and consulting. Tausi Le Va is looking after the ‘space’ or Va – is the way of looking after the relationships between all three spheres, people and work. The talanoa were demanding for some providers to collect, especially in earlier years where providers managed 13 separate talanoa. Therefore in 2019, providers only collected three guided talanoa from parents, lessening the load on providers and parents.

The early Guided Talanoa Series served several important purposes. First, they allowed Pacific parents to reflect on and embed their learning. The evaluators saw, in comments over just a few weeks, that parents developed a much more nuanced understanding of how the New Zealand education system works and how to support their children. Over several years, the talanoa provided a strong information base which supported changes such as a move to running PowerUP for 10 weeks in 2020. Further, the talanoa showed providers their data collection was a rich source of evidence to drive change.

This is them saying what is happening with them. It's not someone's take on it. And I think that's really strong. (Ministry programme team member)

Evaluation

The Ministry-funded evaluation was a critical part of developing the PowerUP programme. Evaluation collated and voiced the views of both Pacific parents and their children, and providers. The evaluation also provided a clear and robust evidence-base for developing and adapting the focus of the PowerUP programme each year.

The evaluation report is based on the voice of the communities with whom they're working. And in sharing that, that's often an eye-opener. But it's also a really good tool for building their capability. (Ministry programme team member)

Learning cycles from data collection

The PowerUP programme design allowed many opportunities for learning and shared reflection for the Ministry and providers, with input from Pacific parents and children. The nature of the Ministry and providers' learning and shared thinking shifted over the years. In earlier years providers came together at the start of the year to receive professional development from the Ministry on delivering the programme. In 2020, the Ministry stopped calling the meetings professional development and positioned them instead as a conference, where providers and the Ministry shared their learnings.

² Fa'afaletui – developed by Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese – Samoan academic and royal title holder, is a Pacific epistemology of a three-perspective view of thinking and processes.

The Ministry respects providers' ability to think broadly and find innovative solutions and develop new ideas quickly. The Ministry values provider insights as being critical to the success of the programme. It takes on board many suggested changes to PowerUP. As a result of this shift in focus, providers now expect consultation as part of the contracting process.

We start off with the absolute premise that the providers are able to provide an environment which walking into it any Pacific person would find theirs, feel valued, visible, able to communicate [and] they use Pacific languages. There's food for hospitality, and, to remove barriers to attendance, transport is often offered. And because it's a community response you're sitting, the people attending are sitting along other people within their communities, [and] there's community leaders there. (Ministry programme team member)

The Ministry has to consult with PowerUP teams (current and potential) before the bidding process begins each year. This is to ensure that the process has been consulted both ways. (FlexiPlus provider)

The Ministry also encouraged providers to collaborate during the year. Some providers visited other centres, shared resources or supported one another to complete their milestone reporting.

Providers have high expectations of themselves and continually seek to improve the way they deliver services according to the Ministry. But the Ministry noted that even when service delivery isn't perfect, it could be invaluable for Pacific parents experiencing an affirming "as Pacific" education setting for the first time.

[Providers may feel their delivery could be improved]. But for the parents and the families that attend, this is the first time for many of them that they're coming into an education or a learning journey on a positive road in a positive way. (Ministry programme team member)

We really enjoyed the relevance of ideas... [We delivered] the message in a simple language so that parents and children will understand. (Au Lotu parent)

Ways PowerUP adapted, based on learnings

In 2018 many providers in urban centres struggled to attract parents to sessions. The Ministry recognised a different approach was needed, and this was backed up by the 2018 PowerUP evaluation (Oakden, 2019).

The Ministry, therefore, worked hard with providers to better understand what the barriers to parent attendance were and where parents needed more flexibility. The Ministry had robust discussions and sought honest feedback from providers, exploring in detail why they did not meet contract specifications. They found several reasons:

- Most providers could not attract 75 families to the programme. After discussions with providers, the Ministry reduced the target to 30 families.
- Some providers wanted to offer a pan-Pacific programme while others in settings with a concentration of people from a particular ethnic group could run an ethnic-specific programme. Therefore, in urban areas providers could offer an ethnic-specific service, whereas in the other regions' providers delivered a pan-Pacific service.
- Many parents struggled to attend 26 sessions. The Ministry looked at the attendance data and saw that the best number of sessions was much lower. They cut the target number of sessions providers ran from 26 to between 8 and 15 sessions (depending on the contract arranged) to better meet the needs of parents.
- As well, the Ministry and providers tested a parent-only programme in addition to a refined parent-and-child programme.

The Ministry then changed the providers' contracts to align with what they learned. It set targets that providers believed they could meet, and providers focused on attracting parents and enrolling 30 families. The Ministry noted that the new contracts were responsive to providers and also helped set up a better climate for programme delivery.

The real eye-opener was that the [earlier contracts] weren't responsive. So that in a way, [in the past] we were setting up the providers to fail. (Ministry programme team member)

Contracts allowed providers flexibility over when during the year they ran the sessions, whether they offered parent-only or parent-and-children sessions. Contracts also allowed for choices about whether providers ran sessions over eight weeks, 10 weeks or 15 weeks, and the local curriculum providers included.

We [make the] contract for deliverables... We want a program that's kind of like this, we want this many people. But on the other side, there's emerging or emergent; the program's never static. So the program is getting better and better and better and getting firmer and... it is becoming what those communities want. So that emerging knowledge then feeds into how the contract looks. (Ministry programme team member)

Attracting suitable providers required looking beyond traditional sources

At a broader system level, the Ministry also noted that there were not many Pacific providers of education, health and social services to approach. Therefore, the Ministry saw early on that they played a critical role as a funder in growing the pool of providers.

The Ministry and the Pacific community also thought a more diverse pool of providers might better ensure a broad range of Pacific communities could access PowerUP. The Ministry used their community contacts to find other possible providers. The Ministry and some of the leading Pacific churches recognised it could be worth exploring partnering together.

Working with providers from health and education

As a first step, in 2018, the Ministry considered a broader range of Pacific providers who were either providing health or education services. In 2018 the Ministry ran a request for proposal (RFP) process to choose providers who would offer FlexiPlus for 2019. The Ministry selected a range of different providers who were experts in their local Pacific community.

Working with churches

In 2018, the Ministry also started to approach Pacific churches to see if they would offer a parent-only version of PowerUP to their congregations. Several churches took up the opportunity to partner with the Ministry. In 2019, the Ministry procured services from several Pacific churches including those representing Samoan, Tongan, Fijian and Tuvaluan communities. The Ministry relied on the leadership of the churches to mobilise Pacific parents in their communities.

Good relationships are critical to the success of the programme

The Ministry aimed to set up a contracting system that was “as Pacific for Pacific”. The Ministry assumed that selected providers could deliver high-quality services to parents. Each provider was also expected to be capable of offering valuable feedback to strengthen PowerUP’s delivery and the contracts for services, based on their understanding of their community.

[PowerUP encouraged the] bringing-together of a group of community members who were committed to bringing a ‘purpose’ into action. There was a strong dedication from everyone involved to achieving a better understanding of the education system and gaining educational success for their children. There was a strong working relationship and communication between the provider and community steering group. (FlexiPlus provider)

In 2018, the Ministry clarified with providers the importance and urgency of attracting parents to each session. Where particular providers could not draw enough parents in 2018, the Ministry looked for other providers in 2019. The Ministry sought providers who could attract and retain parents to attend the programme. Providers’ contract milestones focused on attracting parents.

The contracts are structured so that the providers can do it, that they can succeed in every deliverable. Because if they’re not succeeding then in the end, our parents and family aren’t [having their needs met]. (Ministry programme team member)

The engagement of communities, local schools and MOE staff along with MPP [Ministry for Pacific Peoples] really brings everything together for the same goal. We have really got into our community to promote, and we have providers promote their services at our PowerStations. (FlexiPlus provider)

The Ministry had many new providers to bring on-board in 2019. To achieve this, the Ministry’s integration advisor and two contract managers worked in close partnership with the providers. An integration advisor oversaw the implementation of the programme and came with a deep understanding of both education and community services. Two people undertook the contract management role – one managed FlexiPlus and the other Au Lotu contracts. The contract managers sought to establish healthy relationships run in a “Pacific professional” manner, using Pacific language where possible. The Ministry considered it vital to listen to providers, act on their advice and keep their promises. Where appropriate, contract managers liaised with providers using a mix of English and Samoan, and providers appreciated this.

[It was beneficial] working with Ministry of Education processes [and] university-wide processes necessary to make sure this programme works [and] coming together to support Pacific students and their parents/families. (FlexiPlus provider)

To begin with, some providers needed extra support from the Ministry in order to undertake the governance, administration, contract management and reporting requirements.

We had great support from [particular people] from MOE. (FlexiPlus provider)

{We are} a new service provider for PowerUp this year... [We’ve been able to be] responsive and [are] adapting the programme when necessary to ensure needs of the families are met. [We’ve] develop[ed] a deeper understanding of what the realities faced by the Pacific families are in [this region]. (FlexiPlus provider)

As well, the Ministry carefully managed relationships with those providers they did not contract again. In taking a long-term view, the Ministry recognised that while some providers were unable to attract parents to attend PowerUP, many were very capable. Therefore, they might be able to provide other services in the future.

Building on success – the next cycle of adaptive action

The PowerUP evaluation found the church model of delivery of PowerUP was successful in 2019 (Oakden & Spee, 2020). A strength of Pacific churches, compared with other providers, is that some have a national governing body the Ministry could contract with to provide PowerUP in several locations. The evaluation found a key benefit of many Pacific churches was they had a robust governance group and existing administrative infrastructure for mobilising the Pacific parent community and for managing the contracts.

Later in 2019, the Ministry and providers reviewed the 2019 contracting arrangements. In addition, the 2019 evaluation also confirmed the benefit of tightening some aspects in 2020. These learnings led to a decision to contract PowerUP for 10 weeks to 25 families, with a focus on parents in 2020. Providers still have flexibility in the way they deliver the programme, to ensure they meet local community needs.

Both the Ministry and providers are accountable for ensuring the success of PowerUP. The Ministry took responsibility for setting up achievable contracts. They also have sought to learn from the providers, while ensuring that providers also account for the funding received.

Now, several different types of providers contract with the Ministry. But as well, some have built capacity and ability to contract with other government agencies. In this way, the Ministry has increased the broader pool of Pacific service providers available. Providers appreciate the trust the Ministry placed in them and the new opportunities that have resulted.

We want to thank MOE for this opportunity to deliver and facilitate Power Up Flexi Plus for 2019. We are humbled by the response, reflective in weekly attendance and the weekly arrival of new families. This program is working wonders: we are seeing more confident children, more engaged parents, but mainly we are seeing results of what can happen when parents and their children are being supported. Thank you for believing in us. (FlexiPlus provider)

Conclusion

The Ministry continuously learns in partnership with providers. By drawing on input from Pacific parents and children and the wider Pacific academic community, the PowerUP model continues to be changed each year to better meet the needs of the community. For instance, in 2019, the Ministry identified schools with Pacific principals and boards of trustees as a further group who could provide PowerUP “as Pacific”. Therefore, the Ministry has started working with them.

In 2020, the Ministry intends to extend the PowerUP model further: from 39 providers to 66 providers. This means more Pacific families in New Zealand will have access to PowerUP and the opportunity for parents to learn how to support their children in learning both at home and at school. Providers can clearly see the benefit of PowerUP for parents.

Parents spoke of building relationships with all areas of the education sector that they would not normally otherwise have had the opportunity [to do]. There was also the developing of friendships which will go past the time of the programme. [Parents] were able to speak freely about their own concerns for their families which resonated with other families and created an excellent support group for them. [Parents] have all spoken of the benefits of learning about the education system – which has changed from their time at school. EVERY parent believed that education is the key to their child’s success, and that was evident from their commitment to regularly attend each workshop. They have learnt about NCEA and beginning career pathways. In our juniors, parents understood how their child measures and if they need help who can they go to. (FlexiPlus provider)

CASE TWO: PACIFIC VISIBLE – THE STORY OF POWERUP IN OAMARU

Introduction

The Pacific community in Oamaru came together to seek improved educational outcomes for their children. They requested support from the Ministry to help them work with families. This case presents their experiences in setting up and running PowerUP in Oamaru. The case describes changes that occurred in the community from PowerUP running in Oamaru. The positive ripple effect of Pacific parents' active engagement in education settings and with the broader community is shown. The case also explores how PowerUP encouraged Pacific parents, children, and families to become more visible in the local community – and the ways they benefited from higher visibility.

In hindsight, we feel the journey we have taken since May [2018, to establish PowerUP in our community] has been immensely empowering to say the least. We have formed strong connections within our steering team, developed trust and deeper engagement with our Pacific and wider community and shown the country what a huge difference a small group of passionate individuals with the right guidance can make for the betterment of our community. The community responded by supporting and welcoming the [PowerUP] programme and the benefits it offers to Pacific families. (Tālanga 'a Waitaki PowerUP provider Milestone Report 5, Talanoa 4, 2018)

How PowerUP came to Oamaru

The Oamaru Pacific community wanted to better support their children in educational success. In early 2018, with the support of the Pacific Island network, the Oamaru Pacific community formed a Steering Team of Pacific parents. These parents “request[ed] specific educational support for our Pasifika community and... to deliver a Pasifika community-focused educational programme delivered by local Pasifika” (Tālanga 'a Waitaki PowerUP provider, 2018).

In May 2018, the Steering Team met with and explored ways they might collaborate with the Ministry of Education. After some discussions with the Ministry and a visit to Christchurch to see an existing PowerStation in action, the community decided that the PowerUP programme could meet the Oamaru Pacific community's needs.

At the time, the Oamaru Pacific community did not have a formal organisation set up through which they could contract for Government funding. As the community wanted to start PowerUP as soon as possible, they sought an organisation that could hold the contract on their behalf. Literacy North Otago, a non-Pacific organisation, acted as the umbrella fundholder through which the Oamaru Pacific community could contract for PowerUP. Here is a description of the establishment stage of the project from the Tālanga 'a Waitaki PowerUP provider Milestone Report 5, Talanoa 4, 2018.

For our Steering Team to have a contract with the Ministry, we had to find an organisation that was willing to be the umbrella fund holder. We have been grateful that Literacy North

Otago were able to provide us with that opportunity. As part of this experience, we have found it important to have a Memorandum of Understanding specifically identifying our key role and responsibilities for the umbrella organisation and role of our Steering Team. A big part of that has also been the importance of clear communication, conflict resolution, regular reviews and setting boundaries. (Tālanga 'a Waitaki PowerUP provider Milestone Report 5, Talanoa 4, 2018)

The Steering Team included skilled community members who recognised they needed to set up both governance and operational structures to run PowerUP well. The Steering Team also found they needed to set up robust procedures and processes to meet Ministry due diligence and contracting requirements.

Our team had taken much time to develop our governance and operational structure at the commencement of the project. Contractual requirements with the Ministry meant that we needed to develop all our structures, policies and processes from scratch in order to meet due diligence. (Tālanga 'a Waitaki PowerUP provider Milestone Report 5, Talanoa 4, 2018)

Setting up the suitable governance and operational systems, such as human resources, took time. As the Steering Team members were all in other employment, they completed the governance and operational work needed to run PowerUP outside of working hours. During 2018, the Steering Team shared the workload among 10 parents. At times team members delegated roles, at other times subcommittees provided “collegial and cultural support”. By the end of the year, the Steering Team estimated that they had spent around 3,000 hours of volunteer time to set up and run PowerUP for two terms. This amount of time represents a considerable in-kind contribution, in addition to the funding provided by the Ministry.

By the end [of] our first term, our Steering Team had amassed approximately 3000 volunteer hours that included attendance at planning meetings, travelling to Christchurch to visit the nearest PowerUP station, more planning meetings, planning our hub sessions, recruitment and mobilisation plan, redeveloping our session times and structure and policies where necessary. (Tālanga 'a Waitaki PowerUP provider Milestone Report 5, Talanoa 4, 2018)

The Steering Team appreciated the guidance and support they received from Literacy North Otago, as the umbrella organisation in setting up the first contract. By the end of 2018, the Steering Team felt they were rewarded for investing to set systems up well – and they had a solid basis for delivering the programme going forward.

This process helped us to build a strong foundation for us to move forward and be intentional with our plans and goals for the future in terms of education for Pasifika in the Waitaki region. (Tālanga 'a Waitaki PowerUP provider Milestone Report 5, Talanoa 4, 2018)

The Steering Team observed some crucial differences between Pacific and non-Pacific organisations. As they wanted to run PowerUP “as Pacific”, the Steering Team managed and navigated these differences in 2018, to maintain goodwill between Literacy North Otago and themselves.

Being under the umbrella of a non-Pacific organisation was at times challenging, in that different perspectives, values and cultural practices were shared... [W]hilst not always agreed upon, shared responsibilities and best intentions proved to be the foundation of ensuring that the service delivery was not compromised. (Tālanga 'a Waitaki PowerUP provider Milestone Report 5, Talanoa 4, 2018)

At the end of 2018, it became apparent that Literacy North Otago might close. Therefore, the Steering Team sought a new umbrella organisation as the fundholder. The Steering Team thought PowerUP would benefit from having a Pacific organisation act as the umbrella organisation for the

contract. In 2019, the Steering Team arranged for the Oamaru Pacific Island Community Group Incorporated to act in that role.

We have opted to go under the umbrella of a Pacific organisation, Oamaru Pacific Island Community Group Incorporated. The learnings we have taken from our journey thus far has placed us in good stead for the future and ensuring the service delivery remains the same as it has been under the guidance and umbrella of Literacy North Otago. (Tālanga 'a Waitaki PowerUP provider Milestone Report 5, Talanoa 4, 2018).

More uptake than expected challenged delivery

Tālanga 'a Waitaki PowerUP experienced some delivery challenges in its first year. In the beginning the Steering Team worried as to whether they would be able to recruit enough families. However, this concern was short-lived. Tālanga 'a Waitaki PowerUP was very successful in mobilising parents and nearly three times the target number of Pacific families enrolled. With high levels of enrolment, the focus of the Steering Teams changed to ensure they could deliver the service to greater numbers with integrity.

The contract target was to recruit and register a minimum of 20 families. Initially, this was our goal, as we were not sure how many families we would be able to engage. When 27 families registered in week one and increased to 45 and eventually 57 families, our focus changed to adequate resourcing. We needed staffing in the hubs and equipment and catering. We had to review our budget and it was important to us that the allocation of fees for teachers and mentors was not compromised.

As more people attended the sessions than the Ministry funded, the Steering Team undertook fundraising to find extra money to ensure they had adequate resources for all participants. Philanthropic funders provided funding support. But there was a time lag, and some caterers and teachers were not immediately paid. Instead, they had to wait until the money came through. Their goodwill meant that all the families who enrolled could attend and experience all aspects of PowerUP.

We developed a fundraising plan to supplement the contract payments from the Ministry of Education. We worked through the issues, reviewed our budget and we are extremely grateful to our community caterers and teachers who were patient with us as we disbursed payments and fees. We are thankful to philanthropic funders who have donated generously. (Tālanga 'a Waitaki PowerUP provider Milestone Report 5, Talanoa 4, 2018).

The Steering Team reflected it was a big stretch to establish PowerUp for the community. As individuals they had to “step up and utilise all the support and resources both locally, regionally and nationwide to ensure our community [did] not miss out on the PowerUp journey”. In the final milestone report in 2018 they noted:

A community that works together is a community empowered. The Tālanga 'a Waitaki PowerUp Steering Team have been humbled to deliver an educational support programme that acknowledges our Pasifika values. Our community have begun to reap the benefits this model offers, and we look forward to... opportunities in the future. Build Ako to Enhance Pasifika Success 2018. Mission successful. (Tālanga 'a Waitaki PowerUP provider Milestone Report 5, Talanoa 4, 2018).

Strengths of PowerUP in Oamaru

Built community cohesion

The Steering Team believes that a real advantage of PowerUP over the past two years was that it helped bring the Pacific community together in Oamaru. Even by the end of 2018, the Steering Team saw greater Pacific community cohesion.

Perhaps our key learning as a provider is that it takes a village to raise a child and working together has been the key. When we first met with the Ministry in May to discuss support options for the Waitaki area, the PowerUP model was described and offered to our community to implement a PowerUP station locally. In hindsight we feel the journey we have taken since May has been immensely empowering to say the least. We have formed strong connections within our steering team, developed trust and deeper engagement with our Pacific and wider community and shown the country what a huge difference a small group of passionate individuals with the right guidance can make for the betterment of our community. The community responded by supporting and welcoming the programme and the benefits it offers to Pasifika families. (Tālānga 'a Waitaki PowerUP provider Milestone Report 5, Talanoa 4, 2018).

Linked with the community

Tālānga 'a Waitaki PowerUP developed and strengthened relationships with many of the school principals, rectors and members of senior leadership teams in the region. Tālānga 'a Waitaki PowerUP also developed relationships with individual teachers from local primary, intermediate and secondary schools.

Building relationships and developing the connections they have with the teachers that attend PowerUP has been inspiring. Watching the children's eyes light up when they see their favourite teacher from school attend, giving their favourite teacher aid or academic mentor a hug for coming and witnessing the interactions they have in the hubs is a strong incentive for the Team. Tālānga 'a Waitaki PowerUP provider Milestone Report 5, Talanoa 4, 2018).

The Steering Team already had strong links with many people in the community, and PowerUP provided a conduit for local government and community agencies to develop relationships and engage with the Pacific community. For example, PowerUP has built strong connections with the Mayor, some, local and central government agencies in Oamaru and Dunedin, hospitals, other NGO's and the Otago Museum.

Pacific visible – what this means

The PowerUP programme was powerful in exposing the wider Oamaru community to the collective needs of the Pacific community. The Steering Team observed that PowerUP provided a vehicle through which the Pacific community could access input from the wider community. PowerUP also supported the Pacific community to meet, collaborate and share resources with social service agencies, tertiary providers and local schools. Through this engagement, the Pacific community gained greater visibility of the broader Oamaru community and vice versa. An early example of this was the request for PowerUP to discuss the needs of the Pacific community with the Otago Community Trust.

During ... PowerUp in the Waitaki, we received an invitation alongside the Pacific Island network to present to regional funder, Otago Community Trust in October 2018. This was a great platform to share with the Board about the Pacific Island community in the Waitaki

region, what our needs are including educational needs and the impact PowerUP has had in the community. (Tālanga 'a Waitaki PowerUP provider Milestone Report 5, Talanoa 4, 2018).

The vision of the Tālanga 'a Waitaki PowerUP community was to “build ako to enhance Pacific success”. Measures of success were things that show Pacific are visible in the community. So, for instance, there are now six Pacific parents elected to school boards of trustees in the region. As well, Pacific parents are now more visible in schools. They are more willing to voice complaints, as noted in a recent article *Good energy: Pacific PowerUP is working with students, families and the community to drive Pacific educational achievement*.

Oddly enough, one of the measures of Oamaru PowerUP's success is that following the 2018 programme, parents proved more willing to voice complaints. Another measure may be the increasing number of Pacific parents who have been elected to school boards. This is why they are in New Zealand. Like those who came to Oamaru before them, they want better lives for their families. They are committed to seeing their children do well. So is Oamaru. (New Zealand Immigration. 2019, p.41)

In 2019, in the final milestone report, providers noted that the team delivering PowerUP continues to work well together. Families continue to benefit from attending PowerUP. Feedback in recent Tālanga 'a Waitaki PowerUP milestone reports shows children and families have more energy and are building better relationships with each other. As with other PowerStations, mealtimes are a great way to help build community. A highlight of Tālanga 'a Waitaki PowerUP is that children enjoy performing to the community at the end of each session, again allowing them to be more visible in their own community.

There are strengthened relationships with schools and the principals, and other community leaders such as the Mayor are more involved with the Pacific community through PowerUP. Schools continue to be supportive of PowerUP and teachers from all schools take part at Tālanga 'a Waitaki PowerUP. Many teachers from schools have also come to visit PowerUP to learn the ways teachers engage with the community “as Pacific”.

Conclusion

This case provides an example of the way the Oamaru Pacific community have embraced PowerUP to ensure Pacific parents have the necessary information to support their children's learning. But as well, as a result of attending PowerUP, Pacific parents and children are becoming more visible in the community. PowerUP has supported a large group of pan-Pacific people to come together to celebrate their culture. Now Pacific parents and students are more visible, speak up and take part in community leadership. Involvement in PowerUP has also helped the Pacific community generate more social capital by becoming more connected with traditional community groups such as councils, schools, businesses and tertiary institutions.

CASE THREE: PARTNERSHIP WITH CHURCHES – THE AU LOTU MODEL

This case describes the work of the Ministry in partnership with several Pacific church communities. It shows how various churches created a learning community through PowerUP that is relevant to Pacific parents. The case also looks more closely at the work of Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (EFKS), a leading Samoan church, in providing the PowerUP Au Lotu model. Through PowerUP delivered in EFKS settings, Pacific parents became more confident in their parenting. They gained clarity of their roles and responsibilities as leaders of learning in the family. The case also shows how the church instilled in parents' better ways to engage with school and teachers to support their children's education.

How the Au Lotu model came about

Between 2017 and 2018, the evaluations of PowerUP showed that service provision was patchy (Oakden, 2018, 2019). Many of the providers in Auckland and Wellington struggled to mobilise Pacific parents to attend PowerUP sessions regularly. While providers genuinely tried to attract parents, they struggled to get parents to participate for more than a few weeks. Given the large Pacific populations in main centres, it seemed counter-intuitive that more parents attended PowerUP in some provincial centres which have smaller Pacific communities.

In the early days of PowerUP, many children attended PowerUP without their parents. In the urban centres this resulted in PowerUP becoming more of a homework hub for students, as opposed to the desired parent-focused sessions. Often there were too few parents to create the parent community seen in other regions around the country. Homework hubs had run for years without parents becoming leaders of their children's learning. The Ministry recognised that without parental involvement the intergenerational shift sought to raise Pacific children's learning achievement would not occur. There were many urban areas with high Pacific numbers where Pacific children experienced low performance at school. Something needed to change.

The Ministry recognised they must develop other ways to find and mobilise parents. They noted that many Pacific churches also wished to raise the educational success of their community. Therefore, there was a natural alignment between the goals of Pacific churches and the Ministry to raise the educational achievement of Pacific people. It turned out that several churches had an interest in partnering with the Ministry to deliver a programme to support parents to lead their children's learning. As a priority, the Ministry looked for church partners in regions of New Zealand with larger populations of Pacific people who had lower levels of educational achievement. Regions of focus were Auckland and some parts of Wellington.

Au Lotu as a new model of service provision

Pacific churches have historically been educators of their congregation, and many churches run early childhood centres. The Ministry and Pacific church leaders had an epiphany when they saw the church could lead both spiritually and provide parents with support to learn how to better access education. These Pacific churches came to see supporting parents to access education as a form of pastoral care.

In the later part of 2018, the Ministry met with the national leaders of Pacific churches – that is, the top of the church hierarchy, to discuss possible approaches. The Ministry staff and the church leaders wondered if it might be possible to develop a model of PowerUP that would work in Pacific churches. In 2019, the Ministry proposed a new model of PowerUP called Au Lotu. Au Lotu is an ethnic-specific programme for parents only, delivered over 10 weeks. Pacific adults come together in a safe church community to learn helpful ways to support their children's learning.

The church is a place that the parents know and trust. They know each other so they don't have to be shy about saying the wrong thing or not knowing something. (Au Lotu provider)

Ten weeks has suited me, also the days they were held. But I also feel that the time could have been a bit longer, especially some sessions that were helpful and interesting for the parents. (Parent talanoa)

With the 10 weeks, and the breaks in between, there is less pressure to attend every week on top of all other commitments. I think 10 weeks is the right amount of time. And [it] is sufficient in my opinion when you have good teachers presenting and delivering the programme. (Parent talanoa)

Some Pacific churches are big, with many parishes and a large congregation. There was therefore an opportunity for some churches to coordinate delivery of PowerUP in many settings. The Ministry team met with EFKS, Tongan Methodists and Tongan Catholics, and with Fijian and Tuvaluan churches. These churches expressed interest in providing PowerUP to some of their congregations.

The 2019 evaluation (Oakden & Spree, 2020) found the Au Lotu model was very successful in increasing parent attendance and suitable for delivery in Pacific churches. The Ministry found many advantages to working with churches. First, while other providers struggled at times to locate parents to invite to PowerUP, Pacific churches know their community: they know who has children and may benefit from the programme. While it is difficult to get names from schools because of privacy concerns, Pacific churches can access their communities through church services and other church communications.

We mobilised our parents using a church announcement following our Sunday service. We also shoulder-tapped some of our parents who we thought would benefit from the programme but had not yet registered. We also approached the local Pacific churches in our area asking them to tell their parents about the programme and inviting them to join us. We also invited parents and teachers from our pre-school, those with children and grandchildren at primary and secondary levels. (Provider talanoa)

Second, while some Pacific communities did not know some of the service providers, the congregation knows and respects the authority of the Minister. If the Minister suggests the congregation will benefit from the programme, grandparents and parents prioritise attending.

Parents (parishioners) and members of the community trust and feel safe with anything related to the church, particularly if it is promoted in church by the minister. (Provider talanoa)

Third, while some Pacific providers had little infrastructure to deliver PowerUP, Pacific churches do have existing infrastructure suitable to support the delivery of PowerUP. For instance, Pacific churches have existing governance processes, administration processes and proven ways of communicating with parishioners. Churches also have well-known venues where they can run PowerUP and kitchens for serving a meal.

From a Pacific parent perspective, attending PowerUP in the church community feels safe. In churches, attendance at PowerUP is intergenerational and includes both parents and grandparents. The influence of the grandparents often encourages parents to prioritise coming to PowerUP. The adults also said they know one another and find it easy to talk in a setting where they already have relationships.

The family-oriented nature of the church community enables for closer relationships and communications with its parents. Familiar people, familiar environment. (Provider talanoa)

One of the strengths of the Au Lotu model is that providers offer PowerUP bilingually. Often for the first time, adults who are fluent in Pacific languages can discuss aspects of parenting and ways to lead their family's learning. Talking together about education within the church is new to many parents. Parents appreciate having in-depth discussions within their existing community, because they trust one another and feel culturally safe. Pacific parents say Au Lotu helps them learn better ways to engage with school and teachers to support their children's education.

The other parents make me laugh. I feel comfortable because it is not always serious but fun all the time. The programme was fun especially the ice-breakers. Our group feels like a family, even though we are from different churches. Lots of laughs as well as learning. Some parents are very competitive when it comes to group presentations. (Parent talanoa)

Some Pacific churches have very able teachers within their congregation or have access to skilled teachers who can take part in PowerUP. Along with the Minister and his wife, who usually worked as a team, those running PowerUP 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 the programme.

The Ministry team noted during 2019, that some Pacific churches delivered Au Lotu better than others. Reflecting on the parishes that were most successful in delivering Au Lotu, a common denominator was that some churches set clear roles for the Minister, his wife and the teachers. PowerUP appeared to work well where the Minister offered spiritual guidance, signalling that education is important for families. In these churches, wives oversaw some of the more organisational aspects of the programme, for instance overseeing the meal. Skilled teachers provided the information on ways of leading learning at home and how to work effectively with schools.

The church Minister, which seemed to be me kind of, he was out the front, and you know doing what men do... [And] it was the Ministers wife, who was the real kind of force and tying things together. (Ministry comment)

According to the Ministry personnel there was another common denominator among the most effective parishes delivering PowerUP, and this was that the Minister, his wife and the teachers running PowerUP all attended the Ministry conference at the start of the year to learn about the programme. The conference ensured key people all had a clear and consistent idea of the vision of PowerUP. The Ministry team felt the conference also helped parish teams set up their roles and

responsibilities to deliver the programme to their community. Attending the conference also allowed Pacific providers to connect with one another.

While many Pacific churches successfully delivered PowerUP in 2019, there is no one-size-fits-all model to deliver PowerUP. Some churches experienced challenges, either to attract parents or to adequately resource their venues. A learning from the successful providers is that PowerUP needs a critical mass of parents. Where there are too few parents, discussions did not work so well because there were not enough people for a productive discussion, and that led to a drop-off in parent attendance.


As well, at times, there were resourcing challenges. Some churches found it difficult to heat their halls in the middle of winter. Others found their internet was inadequate to access the school portals.

As winter sets in, it gets very cold in our church hall. One of our sessions had to be cut short due to the cold weather. In response to this, we shifted from the hall to the church (as it has heaters) for the sessions that followed, and we will stay there until it gets warmer. (Provider talanoa)

While many churches were successful, a few church parishes could not mobilise their community. When contracting for 2020 PowerUP providers the Ministry sought church parishes that could consistently mobilise 25 or more parents. The Ministry plans other forms of service delivery for communities where churches struggled to mobilise parents.

EFKS Example

This next section provides a brief description of EFKS involvement with PowerUP in 2019. It shows that over the 10 weeks of the programme parents learned powerful ways to engage with their family to support their children's learning.



"We know our people are struggling. We know that the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of so many of our people are not being fully realised. We know that our young people are not reaching their full potential. We know that we must think and act differently. We know that we must change. We know that we must be prepared to lead this change. And we know that we can't do it alone."

*Rev Elder Tavita Taulealo Chairman, EFKS NZ
Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa Niu Sila*

For several years EFKS could see the education needs of their community were not met from current ways of working. They sought a strategic partnership, where the Ministry valued their contribution. In their strategic plan EFKS noted:

The EFKS NZ–Ministry of Education partnership will... be built around... EFKS' unique position within the Samoan community, its sphere of influence throughout the Pasifika community and its contribution to the wider community. The partnership will recognise the EFKS' significant and ongoing contribution to social, economic and community development and the potential to make a positive impact on the Pasefika Community. (EFKS Strategic plan)

The Ministry recognised it would be beneficial to partner with EFKS, which has an influential and reputable network amongst the Samoan community. EFKS also had an established trust structure (EFKS NZ) to use for contracting. The Trust has strong governance and operational processes and is designed to collaborate with other New Zealand government agencies and businesses. This contracting mechanism set EFKS up well to contract to deliver PowerUP. The Ministry had several meetings with the EFKS management group to explain the PowerUP programme to them and learn how it might be able to be delivered in their churches.

So .. we went to this... management group and had about three sessions with them on what our program was, what the benefits were, how the contracting would occur. And we listened to what they said. (Ministry comment)

The relationship between the Ministry and EFKS was at the national office level. EFKS selected 10 church parishes to deliver Au Lotu, which aligned with the Ministry's priority areas of Auckland and Wellington. The Ministry appreciated being able to liaise with the leadership of the EFKS NZ Trust, as the Trust had more capacity to work with the Ministry than individual churches. The EFKS NZ Trust took on the contract and was responsible for the co-ordinating delivery of PowerUP with the individual churches. This was beneficial to the churches, as they already had existing relationships within their national office. Another benefit of working through the EFKS NZ Trust was that some church providers were new to contracting with government agencies and delivering a programme such as PowerUP. This contracting arrangement allowed the EFKS church parishes to draw on the support from of their national office.

Benefits to families of PowerUP partnering with EFKS

Providers found during the talanoa that parents really liked the flexibility of the Au Lotu session delivered by EFKS. They felt comfortable at the sessions and enjoyed talking about education with other churchgoers. Providers thought parents were well supported to attend Au Lotu by the EFKS church community.

We regularly check on our parents and make sure they are ok. We engage with them over a cup of tea after the programme and congratulate them for how well they are doing with their children. We have a celebration event planned for the end of the programme to recognize how far the parents have come. (Provider talanoa)

Parent talanoa aligned with the providers' observations. The main ways families benefitted from attending PowerUP at EFKS were that parents:

- made changes at home to create a more conducive environment for learning, such as clearing time and space for homework and limited digital device time
- engaged in and celebrating learning at home more
- talked more with their children about what was happening at school
- engaged with schools more.

In the view of the researcher, some of the changes that occurred in parents were profound, and this is impressive given the small number of sessions they attended.

Since PowerUP, I am able to see my role in my children's education as something very important. I have come to realise that I need to make an effort to make better communication with my children/grandchildren. Prior to PowerUP, I used to just give orders to do their homework and leave them to it. But now I make the effort to follow up on their work. I am also trying to talk to them with a "softer" less harsher (sic) voice, as I feel it is my voice that affects a lot of our communication. (Parent talanoa)

The following vignette describes the changes another parent saw happening within herself and in her family from attending PowerUP at an EFKS church.

Changes for one family who attended an EFKS PowerUP programme

Firstly, this parent really liked that PowerUP was at her church. She felt church was a safe place for learning. She valued having the sessions in Samoan and that they were delivered by people she knew.

The teachers are Samoan and are able to deliver using simple terms for everyone to understand. It is also helpful for the elderly grandparents who are here on behalf of their children. Discussions are open and honest; the sharing is real and relatable. I value the fact that it's on our church grounds. It is a familiar place and I feel safe in this environment. I know the people attending and the faces are friendly and familiar, including the presenters.

Next, there were lots of changes that occurred both for her and her family. She reflected on her own actions first and changed the way she used her phone at home. As a result, she noticed she spent more time with her family and that her children's schools reached out more to talk to her.

It has helped me a lot, even the small changes that are taking place. [I'm] trying to spend more time with my children and distance myself from digital devices, such as being on the phone when my children are talking to me. I am making a conscious effort to avoid the use of devices at home and rather spend more time as a family. I feel communication lines are more open, I am communicating more with my children's school, especially the one at college.

This parent also noticed changes within the family from attending PowerUP. She said there was more focus on time management and on having a regular routine for homework. She also focused on what the children did well. She said she was also talking with her husband more about their responsibilities as first educators of their children.

We talk a lot more and homework is a family activity. There is more of a routine in our house and we are focusing on the positives. I am [also] talking with my husband a lot more about our responsibilities in making sure we are encouraging our children with their education.

Conclusion

A strength of reaching out to Pacific churches is the Ministry found some highly effective new providers. Pacific churches have successfully delivered PowerUP to parents in their communities, in partnership with the Ministry.

I think that's what surprised me... why we hadn't naturally done this [gone to churches] before, if we're looking for a Pacific response to a Pacific issue. (Ministry programme team member comment).

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