Article

Pursuing Educational Partnerships in Diasporic Contexts: Teachers Responding to Pacific Voice in Their Work

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Abstract: In Aotearoa New Zealand, teachers have signaled that they would like to further their development as classroom practitioners, as a way of improving their capabilities as professionals. They want to foster strengths-based authentic partnerships between themselves and their diasporic migrant communities. This article attends to Pacific education, the education in Aotearoa New Zealand of students with migratory links to one or more Pacific Island Nations through a strength-based lens. We report on a Professional Learning Development (PLD) research endeavor, *Learning From Each Other*, that focused on supporting partnerships between Pacific communities and teachers. We provide a window on the sense making of teachers as they listen to, and are challenged by, diasporic Pacific community voice. Particular emphasis is placed on how teachers explore and transform their approach to partnership by negotiating with habitual practice. The examples given, selected for their apparent ordinariness, relate to new understandings of space and time. The study provides lessons applicable to other situations where access to quality education is problematic for diasporic, migrant communities and where teachers need support for the re-thinking that is required for enhanced partnership arrangements of benefit to all.

Keywords: teacher education; work environment; migrant education; time; space; Pacific

1. Introduction

This study sought to understand the relationship dynamics in New Zealand (NZ) Pacific education. The concept of Pacific success in the context of the education of Pacific students has become ubiquitous as an aspiration. However, there are limited learning opportunities for teachers to conceptualize Pacific education success in community terms, especially in relation to teacher learning, theorizing and changed practice. Teachers are continually told that student performance is reliant upon the quality of their teaching [1]. However, effective ways of providing training and support for teachers in Pacific education are less frequently elucidated.

In recognizing the demands placed on teachers' daily work, our study sought to provide communities, educational professionals and professional development providers with appropriate navigation tools capable of leveraging sustained positive change for Pacific students. These tools have enhanced educators' appreciation of NZ government policies such as Tapasā [2], the Ministry of Education document on Pacific cultural competency, and the Action Plan for Pacific Education [3].

Through the years, as educator-practitioners, we have listened to teachers talk about their concerns with their work and also what was missing for their on-going professional development. We noted their genuine perseverance and efforts to create meaningful teaching and learning relationships with students and their families as a core value for their work as teachers. We also heard stories of concern about cultural, structural and policy matters that were beyond their control, but which affected their practice.

As a result of these experiences, we decided to honor teachers' needs and do something about the situation, as well as honor the diasporic cultural needs of Pacific peoples in NZ.

In a nuanced and innovative way, the structure of this PLD pairs community consultation with teacher learning, and teacher learning with changed classroom practice. It acknowledges that all participants have various forms of expertise, i.e., cultural, experiential, and pedagogic. These are strengths that benefit from a shared and negotiated approach to the education of Pacific students, best advanced through the education of their teachers.

Culture is a significant aspect of education, shaping not only what is taught and how teaching takes place, but also concepts which underpin matters such as how time and space are understood. This article follows the cultural turn [4] by pursuing the significance of culture as a key aspect in education for peoples from various Pacific Island Nations [5] who have migrated as part of the Pacific diaspora to NZ. Schools are soaked in culture drawn from their histories and embodied in habitual practice. As a way of creating powerful, home–school partnerships in Pacific education, through this program teachers forged connections with Pacific communities and increased their understandings of Pacific migrant populations. Professional development and/or specific work programs for teachers which are focused on Pacific people and cultures are scarce in NZ.

For community aspirations to be realized, changes in educational practice, both individual and institutional, were required. Professional practice in schools has been based on theories, beliefs and traditions, whether these are conscious or not. For teacher mind shift to occur, education professionals needed to re-examine their beliefs; re-theorize; challenge the basis of educational traditions; and negotiate enhanced ways of teaching Pacific students. To that end, this PLD examines, through dialogic means, the relationships between community aspirations and voice, and the new learning, re-theorizing and adjusted practice of teachers. Through a cross-site approach, our PLD has provided a contextual and transferable model for schools. This form of PLD enables teachers and leaders to take action to demonstrate increased cultural humility with diverse Pacific learners.

We explored what local communities valued and mapped the effect of this knowledge onto teacher practice. We included achievement as one outcome, but also focused attention on the processes and day-to-day experiences of education as sites of other valued outcomes. These include relational warmth, mutual understanding and authentic partnership, aspects supported in policy [3] and research [6]. Our research imagines education as a journey in which Kahui Ako (local groups of schools) structures are valuable because they provide broad and coherent access to Pacific communities and the schools that serve them without regard to children's ages. Thus, where a cross-Kahui Ako community understanding of Pacific education is developed, consistency of approach and long-term deepening of relationships between educators and community can be facilitated.

The PLD program was built on the expressed needs of teachers seeking partnerships with the Pacific communities of their schools. The process we describe here is catalytic in the sense that it gains validity from the way it changes situations for the benefits of those involved [7,8]. Teachers were provided with PLD opportunities centered on listening to diasporic Pacific community voice and unpacking this through professional discussion. The methodology was constructed to invite teachers to reflect on their experiences in a spirit of exploration in a safe discursive way. This paper focuses on the PLD process for teachers.

In the article, we first sketch Pacific migration to NZ as a diaspora before discussing Pacific education as a field. Following this comes a positional discussion and a methodological explanation. Next is a thematically structured account of two everyday areas which teachers explored through the research: space and time. The discussion articulates the significance of rethinking to the creation of teachers' new practices. The article concludes with general observations regarding the significance of change, the role of individuals and methodological considerations when teachers pursue partnerships with diasporic migrant communities.

1.1. Pacific Migration to New Zealand

A country of islands in the Pacific Ocean, NZ is a bi-cultural state framed around the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi, versions of which were signed by representatives of some

Indigenous Māori groups and the British Crown. Despite disputes, there have been moves in recent years towards a national vision of two peoples, Māori and non-Māori [9]. Non-Māori with migratory links to Pacific Island Nations 'sit' on the 'Crown' side of the Treaty, but there has been a history of Māori/Pacific aggregation in both educational research and practice [6]. This article, however, honors Māori and Pacific as distinct peoples.

The presence in NZ of Pacific peoples as a diaspora is complex but increasingly significant. In the 2013 census, the Pacific group represented 7.1% of the total NZ population [10]. The NZ Pacific population is fast-growing, with numbers projected to rise from 344,400 in 2013 to surpass 0.5 million people in 2026–2031 [11]. The family is a central unit in Pacific migration, which for many is partly motivated by the desire or obligation to support family in the place of origin [12]. A consequence of continuing linkages is the presence in the land of settlement of cultural understandings and practices indigenous to the place of origin. Thus, as a diaspora, Pacific migrant communities encounter new contexts in which to exercise what they know. One such context is formal education in NZ. Pacific cultures have evolved over a number of generations, which has led to educators needing to be increasingly culturally skilled to make Pacific diversity a strength in their classrooms.

1.2. Pacific Education

'Pacific' in the context of Pacific (or Pasifika) education is a contested umbrella term [13], employed circumspectly here to signal the strength of connection that Pacific peoples may find together, while acknowledging the diversity that a collective approach can conceal. Most teachers of Pacific students are of European origin [14], placing priority on authentic, power-sharing [15] partnerships that are inter-cultural. These require teachers who have European cultural roots and who work in schools and an education system that have been set up on European models, to explore understandings of what Pacific peoples value and to find means to enact their priorities in education. This kind of exploration deserves the support of initiatives such the one we are describing.

Historically, the voices of Pacific communities have not been well represented in education. On-going professional development about Pacific cultures and students has been neglected. A strengths-based approach to Pacific education honors the potential of Pacific parents and communities to contribute much as Pacific indigenous knowledge and wisdom holders. Gorinski and Fraser [16] highlighted the negative effect of differences in values, beliefs, assumptions and experiences between Pacific homes and educational institutions against the backdrop of a mono-cultural schooling model and pointed to a general failure of education to consult Pacific parents. Chu, Glasgow [17] identified discrimination, cultural discontinuity, and lack of consultation with Pacific parents as issues in Pacific education. Recent literature [6,18] suggests a little positive relational change between schools and Pacific peoples, although Pacific parents are willing and able to contribute to their children's progress [6].

As teachers go about their work, they are presented with a wide range of resources which they are required to know and act on without much socialization. One of these policy documents is Tapasā [2], subtitled a 'Cultural Competencies Framework for Teachers of Pacific Learners'. This has been developed in partnership with diasporic Pacific communities to educate teachers. In addition, Rimoni, Glasgow [19] provided an account of the values held by Pacific educational practitioners to help teachers navigate, and other grey literature [2,3], also developed in consultation with Pacific communities, provided further assistance. From a professional learning perspective, success in teaching needs to be described not in terms of teacher mastery of new strategies, but in relation to the impact that changed practice has on students. Teachers work in varied settings, and there can be no assurance that any specific approach to teaching will have the desired outcomes for students [20], especially given the diversity of Pacific people in NZ. However, little research has examined the development on the ground of local and authentic partnerships between European-origin teachers and Pacific communities through PLD based on Pacific

voices, nor the kinds of PLD capable of upskilling teachers to meet their responsibilities in this field.

1.3. Training Teachers and Culture

As described by Reynolds [21], the upskilling of teachers in NZ has been influenced by global movements to teach diverse students effectively [22]. In the US, a key moment in the 1990s was when research-promoted asset-based pedagogies began to counter deficit-based approaches [23]. Examples of asset-based approaches in the Pacific context include Si'ilata [24]. Aronson and Laughter [25] identified two strands in these developments. Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) [26–28] involves challenges to teachers' habitually narrow cultural practices by taking account of students' histories and experiences. Culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) [29–31] focusses on developing teachers' understandings of diversity. CRP intersects with critical race theory.

The idea of cultural competence has been critiqued for encouraging anachronism in the face of cultural fluidity because the concept implies the potential mastery of a dynamic force, and for casting teachers and students in a subject–object relationship of expert and client [32]. However, from cultural competence has come cultural humility, a stance [33] or way of being [34]. Cultural humility involves self-awareness that pays attention to power and indicates a 'hearts and minds' aim for educational training. In cultural humility, there is no 'competence box' to tick, but an approach to people as and where they are. This research values PLD that leads to teachers adopting a sustained stance of cultural humility.

Aronson and Laughter [25] suggest culturally relevant education (CRE) as a way to encompass CRT and CRP. In CRE, teacher educators (or researchers) provide challenges and experiences to support teachers to appreciate diversity, and opportunities to act positively with diverse students. Helpful opportunities include interacting with communities, time for self-examination, and reflective development of pedagogic skills. *Learning From Each Other* as a training program embraces CRE and aims for cultural humility as its marker of success.

An aspect of uniqueness of *Learning From Each Other* is that Pacific community experience and practice are leveraged as tools for teacher learning. Pacific community experience provides the matter of the training–information about what Pacific parents value in classrooms, for example. Talanoa, the mode of learning, is a Pacific practice through which teachers in the PLD experience Pacific values, for example, the significance of relationships, the value of a safe discursive space in which to explore ideas, and reciprocity. The mutual reinforcement of matter and mode offers deep 'hearts and minds' learning that encourages teachers to take account of fundamental aspects of education space, time and relationships, re-thought from a new position. In effect, habitual thinking is disturbed through gifts of information from Pacific parents and through the cultural immersion of teachers' personal Pacific-informed learning experiences. This combination encourages cultural humility because the self is examined through personal experience as well as by processing gifted information.

1.4. Navigating the PLD

We believe that it is critical to foreground our positionality. Our partnership values experience and learning of diverse origins. Cherie is an activist member of Pacific communities, NZ-born of Tahitian and Chinese descent. She is based in tertiary education but is involved in Pacific education in the primary sector as a parent and educator. Martyn is Anglo-Welsh with a long experience in education, including the development of in-school PLD. Our partnership began when Cherie was Martyn's doctoral supervisor. We have been learning to pursue the same goals–enhancement of Pacific education and community autonomy. This enhancement is evident through the PLD program.

We premise this work by acknowledging that Pacific parents know about their children and have cultural understandings from their Indigenous roots—but seek to navigate better the education system; teachers know about education—but seek to transform this for the

benefit of Pacific communities; the researchers know about previous studies—but seek to create contextual opportunities to enhance intercultural partnerships. A commonly held Pacific value that underpins this relational approach to research is generosity [19]. Therefore, we wanted to provide and analyze a PLD or additional work program for teachers which creates a space where time, knowledge and commitment can be gifted by all parties in trustful ways.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Methodology

When seeking the voice of diasporic Pacific communities and to garner veritable information in honorable ways, it is important to leverage methodologies that make sense to those involved. In Pacific communities, talanoa is a form of conversational interaction that pays attention to the ethics of relational space or vā [35]. Vaioleti [36] describes talanoa in research as a dialogic form that moderates power relations. Talanoa offers the research a Pacific orientation with which to navigate new possibilities of partnership as an essential foundation for the PLD.

Talanoa denotes our overall approach to shaping the PLD through dialogue between Pacific parents/community members and teachers, and the ways we carried this out. Traditional PLD programs in NZ are often styled as workshops with a top-down approach to the teaching content. Further, parents' voices are seldom evident in the teaching. To present an alternative, our endeavor began when invited schools asked Pacific 'cultural brokers', Pacific people known to them, to partner in initiating research in their setting. Consequently, in each of two settings, one in each main island of NZ, community research fono (consultative meeting) took place. The dialogic core of every fono was talanoa (fono talanoa) conducted with small groups of Pacific parents and supported by optional prompts designed to encourage future Pacific community–teacher dialogue. Prompts included 'What advice do Pacific parents want to offer their children's teachers?' A scribe (a community member or teacher) recorded comments during the 40-to-50 min sessions. As a result, a rich locally contextualized information set was available to support a mediated dialogue facilitated by the researchers as a basis for an enhanced partnership between Pacific families and teachers.

Mediated dialogue [37] acknowledges issues of power that can affect face-to-face encounters by creating opportunities for asynchronous communication designed to promote feelings of safety in participants. The technique involves shifting the words and/or ideas of one group to another in a different time and space. Ultimately, mediated dialogue is cyclical. In our mediated dialogue, the Pacific community voice from fono talanoa informed talanoa among teachers (PLD talanoa). The intention was that, as relationships of trust developed over time through talanoa, teachers would bring their experiences and dilemmas to the dialogue to create new practice possibilities.

Over two years, researchers and teachers met for talanoa between six and nine times, sometimes supported by an additional Pacific person. Through the mediated process, the fono talanoa came into a catalytic relationship with the PLD talanoa. Information from Pacific parents proved capable of stimulating discussion of elements of each context, including space and time. The PLD talanoa provided the research data for the endeavor. The final aspect of the dialogic loop, return to community, took place through further fono talanoa.

The participants, all self-identified as female and 15 in total, were experienced teachers employed in primary and secondary schools. The PLD talanoa, in which the role of the researchers was to offer experience and literature-based clarification on matters of practice and theory, were recorded, transcribed and subject to Informed Grounded Theory (IGT) [38] analysis. IGT privileges a set of sensitizing concepts as analytical nodes in data analysis. In this case, we found nodes drawn from recent Pacific education literature [6] such as relationship, language, culture, identity and space to be of value.

Among the research questions was 'What roles can Pacific concepts and voices (communities', families' and students') and practitioners' cultural humility play in developing Pacific education as a productive partnership?' This question links the productivity of Pacific voice in teacher training to the alignment of home and school through the stance of cultural humility encouraged in the teacher by their learning experiences.

2.2. The PLD Method

The design of the PLD had three foci: teachers' conceptual and cultural knowledge, their iterative developing professional practice, and student learning experiences as they relate to various forms of success, including achievement. In line with the literature [2,18,25], the design approached change in practice through educators' revised thinking based on the challenges of new knowledge, with the additional element of experience. Thus, the reciprocal relational spaces between practitioners' developing knowledge, changed practice and enhanced outcomes became the key areas of learning [25] for all. Partnerships between Pacific communities, researchers and school-based educators provided the effort required for new knowledge to develop and for opportunities to reframe practice and reshape outcomes. Through new thinking informed by Pacific sources—community and academic—teachers were challenged to learn so that they could enact new understandings, rather than simply 'do better' within an existing paradigm. The design was articulated in several phases.

2.2.1. Phase #1: Planning—Early 2021

The aim of this phase was to construct a solid relational platform for the research. At the start of 2021, when staff and student cohorts became stable, firm negotiations regarding partners and contributors took place. We worked with two Kahui Ako, one in the North, and one in the South Island. Steps were made to recruit teachers and others as cultural brokers, and teachers as team facilitators and as practitioner participants.

Cultural brokers were to facilitate the dialogue between communities and the research team, so that Pacific voices could be sourced as the basis for practitioner learning. The team facilitators were Across Schools Teachers (AST) within each Kahui Ako. Their role was to manage on the ground relationships in and across schools: between cultural brokers, practitioner participants, and researchers. This included attending to room bookings and supporting the recruitment of practitioners and relationships with school management.

The group of practitioner participants comprised teachers willing to partner in the PLD who were motivated to seek to learn new ways of thinking about and enacting Pacific education, and who were happy to provide learning for the research. The blueprint was for around seven practitioner participants per Kahui Ako, representing, where possible, diversity by school, age of students taught, level of experience, teaching subject, ethnicity and gender. The effects of COVID-19, however, made modifications necessary. The schools were at times unwilling to release teachers of already disrupted classes, and while there were a range of teachers keen to be involved, not all categories of diversity were met.

2.2.2. Phase #2: Consultation and Learning—Mid 2021

As described above, Pacific communities were invited through cultural brokers to participate and be consulted by talanoa on their priorities for learning, teacher knowledge and behavior and education, generally. Consultation fono took place soon after planning was completed.

Learning took place largely in Terms 2 and 3 of NZ's four-term 2021 academic year. Due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the PLD was disrupted, attendance was affected, and the sessions varied between face-to-face and online meetings. The team was fortunate that the relationships established face to face anchored virtual interactions. However, the slower speed and lessened dialogic comfort of digital encounters had potential negative effects on discussion. In the first year, this phase involved up to 12 h of group learning in two-hour blocks—six sessions in all for practitioner participants to cover

the following areas relevant to Pacific education as described by parents and community members in the fono talanoa:

- Pacific cultures and identity
- School culture and issues with schooling
- Pacific student–teacher relationships
- Pacific parent–teacher relationships
- Ideas of success.

A typical PLD talanoa involved a recap and reflection on teachers' previous learning, a period examining themed information from the parents' talanoa, talanoa about the significance of this, and opportunities to reflect on new learning and potential responses.

2.2.3. Phase #3: Embedding—Late 2021/Early 2022

The embedding phase was designed to give teachers opportunities to imagine and use new practices. Time and sufficient opportunities to learn proved crucial in the success of the PLD. In this phase, the participating practitioners were asked to:

- Self-monitor and record changes in their classroom (and other) behavior
- Pay attention to measures of progress for students
- Undertake paired observation where possible (badly disrupted by COVID-19 because schools could not foster unnecessary movement between classrooms under conditions of social distancing)
- Provide feedback to peers

This phase elicited data through further discussion, particularly for one group who decided to remain within the PLD for a second year.

2.2.4. Phase #4: Feedback and Evaluation—Mid/Late 2022

This phase involved taking the PLD learning back to Pacific communities as a form of exchange for the fono talanoa information and as a validation of their contributions. Feedback was also provided to the researchers about the initiative. The gifting of research back to communities is an instance of reciprocation, a Pacific value that underpins *Learning From Each Other*. For this reason, phase #4 can be appreciated as an ethical step.

3. Results

In this section, we present two themes drawn by IGT analysis from PLD talanoa from Phase #2 and from reflections from Phase #3. The themes pay analytical attention to everyday aspects of educational practice in Pacific education: space and time. These aspects were selected because, although the information is highly personal and contextual, space and time are features of diasporic migrant education in any context. Space and time are also matters that may appear to be universally understood but are actually culturally mediated aspects of life. Addressing the ubiquitous is significant for partnership in migrant education because power sharing based on enhanced mutual understanding needs to be enacted every day. Changing the ubiquitous is what programs designed to enhance teachers' contributions to their charges' education must seek.

3.1. Appreciating Space in Relationships

The NZ education system is cluttered with multiple and conflicting messages about what is most important to do in teaching practice with regards to supporting the needs of learners. However, from our fono talanoa, Pacific parents expressed the significance of relationships. Our PLD for teachers promoted a core value of appreciating relational space.

Drawing on Pacific teacher voice from the Pacific education context, Rimoni, Glasgow [19] discussed Pacific values. They said, 'attending to the value of reciprocal relationships means knowing yourself and knowing others. Relationships stem from responsibility, duty, and service, and everyone has responsibility for nurturing relationships' (p. 105).

Reciprocation in relationships is significant in Pacific education research [39,40] and the grey literature [2,3], as something to which teachers need to pay increased attention.

In several Pacific cultural traditions, relationships are understood as vā [41] or relational space. This approach ties physical, social and spiritual relationships as interacting dimensions in a unified space. Consequently, the way physical space is configured has physical, social and spiritual implications. Vā sits at the heart of the talanoa process. Nurturing reciprocal relationships involves taking account of both personal intent and effect on others. Space, as it relates to a diasporic Pacific students and families, requires attention to the configuration of relationships in a space, the collective good and how individuals' actions and words affect the group [42].

Teachers' thinking was challenged in PLD talanoa to respond to comments such as: 'parents and children may be too shy to approach teachers'; 'make relationships positive before working together begins'; 'school should be a safe place first—involving love and care'; and 'get to know the student better so they can trust you and talk to you'. Because relationships are enacted in space, the teachers explored their use of space to reconfigure relationships.

Through their learnings in the PLD program, the teachers explored reshaping space with relational outcomes. One set of information presented here relates to Pacific students, the other to teacher–parent interactions. In each case, the intent of teachers was to enhance educational partnerships through power sharing.

3.1.1. Space with Children

In the PLD talanoa, teachers reported exploring classroom space to encourage Pacific students to be reciprocal partners in education, changing habitual practice as a consequence. For example:

> *So, one child in particular is quite quiet, and I never really heard his voice, his strong voice. Getting alongside him is really effective. So, I've been doing it a lot, and he's become a bit more brave in class to give me his opinion and his thoughts. So that's been really good.*

This narrative portrays a teacher altering their habitual acceptance of a students' unproductive level of involvement by shifting the classroom geography. Proximity coupled with persistence is the tool explored to reshape the educational relationship. Reciprocity is present in the productive change the teacher reports in the student's behavior: the teacher's change of space encourages the student's active involvement.

A similar exploration was shared by another teacher. This narrative links alteration in the teacher's emotional mindset to a change in Pacific students' use of space:

> *So, unless I went around and noticed that they needed support, I'd only be going to the kids who are demanding it all of the time . . . Whereas now, they [Pacific students] don't mind coming up and finding me . . . I think it's my desire to know more and to create opportunities for you quiet Pacific students to share your depth of knowledge and to feel comfortable enough to do that . . .*

Here, the teacher deliberately became a learner as an act of partnership, paying attention to the comfort of the students. She also described (re)directing control away from demanding students towards a more inclusive approach. This acknowledges presence rather than volubility and focusses on the fact of being related in space rather than rewarding certain behaviors. These changes appear reciprocated by Pacific students' willingness to own more of the classroom and to actively approach the teacher.

Habitual aspects of classroom conduct eroded by these changes include teacher–learner hierarchies, the relegation of emotional and cultural comfort as significant aspects of schooling and correlations between attention-seeking behaviors and the gifting by teachers of attention. As a result, the shyness of diasporic Pacific students, which may actually be silencing as a result of the learning environment, is decreased in inverse proportion to increased visibility. In addition, the European 'rules' of educational space are expanded to

include Pacific (relational) ideas about space. Changes of this nature do not come without a 'cost'. Teachers recognized with humility the ineffectiveness of past practices when a new lens made change obviously necessary.

3.1.2. Space with Parents

Pacific parents in the diaspora are also sometimes stereotypically characterized as shy [37,43]. Taking a relational approach to Pacific parents' 'shyness' was also explored in the PLD talanoa. One teacher described employing a change of space to signal closeness to a parent as a way of reshaping relationships:

> *I think if I had that conversation behind the chair, it would've been quite cold . . . Whereas because we get to sit side by side on the little kids' couch . . . we were kind of knee to knee . . . it felt like I was talking to a friend or it changed the relationship I feel . . . It would've been very defensive, whereas now it's like, 'Oh yes we've noticed that happening too, have you tried this?' . . . So, it's become a little bit more two-way . . .*

This exploration attributes partnership-like interaction to changes in the teacher's habitual use of space. An institutionalized power imbalance expressed by the arrangement of chairs is disrupted, and deliberate physical proximity signals the teachers' desire for relational closeness. In the opinion of the teacher, the parent reciprocates the teacher's spatial move with valuable home-based information, and the encounter becomes an exchange. As a result of the changes made by the teacher, active participation by the Pacific parent in the encounter means that their presence and visibility in the school is enhanced.

Another example of exploring changes to the habitual use of space involves a teacher moving to space already occupied by parents. In the teacher's account, the potential of this move is to enable the celebration of the success of Pacific (and other) students.

> *My other thing was connecting with parents to talk to them about their children, how well they're doing. So, I made a point of . . . standing at the gate more often and talking to people, not just Pacific parents . . . and it's amazing how many good things you can think of that's been happening throughout the day talking to parents through that way.*

In this case, the outcome of breaking a habitual routine by acting on the significance of connection is increased informal connection that brings relational warmth to the teacher involved.

3.1.3. Summary

Practitioners operate in contexts where the way space is habitually understood and used mutes partnership by constructing unproductive relational (and sometimes physical) distance, rewarding volubility with attention and relegating the significance of emotional safety. These arrangements are challenged by relational thinking, and it appears that the catalytic relationship between fono talanoa and PLD talanoa encouraged teachers to explore actions to pursue closer connection. The everyday transformations of spatial use described enhance interactive partnership between Pacific students and parents on the one hand and teachers on the other. Small-scale everyday actions can be influential in school contexts when they are tangible outcomes of re-thinking—in this case, linking reciprocal relationships and space—so that teachers deliberately take the first step towards increased closeness and enhanced engagement, and invite reciprocation as a result. These steps require a PLD program with a foundation that takes account of perspectives other than those dominant and habitual in the teaching profession and of appropriate ways of teachers experiencing new ideas about space such as talanoa.

3.2. *Time*

Time is not universally understood. A Pacific respondent in Rimoni, Glasgow [19] said: 'I've worked in the Pacific . . . the notion of time is very different to New Zealand society's ideas' (p. 28). Tongans, for example, theorize time as circular as distinct to a European linear view [44]. Pacific relational ethics suggest that time is not 'owned' by individuals but is validated relationally through the time people have with each other. In

relational thinking, time spent making or enriching connections is valuable. Time is also a gift that can be returned in a circular fashion. These understandings of time as connection are alluded to in the Pacific community voice gathered in the fono talanoa such as: '[we value] a teacher who takes time to really understand [our children]'; 'it takes one village to teach a person—come back to the village and feed back'; 'and the children are very busy, just being part of the culture makes them busy'.

Practitioners often work in environments where time is allocated, constrained and valued in habitual ways. Schools run to timetables fixed well in advance. Many teaching programs center the delivery of material by teachers in a certain time, and engagement with parents follows time slots that make assumptions about parents' lifestyles. The value of efficiency privileges situations where the most curriculum knowledge is learned in the least amount of time, and essential skills in the curriculum that include making connections [45] receive less attention. Relationality and sharing are aspects of time explored by teachers in the research.

3.2.1. Relational Time

The nature of the research as talanoa meant that teachers' experiences were valued along with the Pacific voice in PLD talanoa. One teacher recounted her observations of a Pacific community at work at a church organizing a dance. She contrasted her habitual understanding of time in that context and that of a Samoan community, exploring the way expectations can be different according to priority.

> *But I guess just relaxing, you know, knowing its 'island time' and just saying, Okay . . . Appreciating that networking time . . . I'm like 'Why do we need so many practices?' . . . It's them and the community and I think like it's time, you know, like networking with themselves.*

What is significant is the emphasis on sociality. This transforms the dance practice in a way that initially seems to have frustrated the teacher but which she can also value. Her circumstance, a NZ European married to a Samoan, enabled this learning to come to the research. Another teacher responded by considering her own family upbringing:

> *. . . being a New Zealand Pakeha, time has always been a super important thing—being on time in the family . . . that's what you learn to do. And in my cultural group, that is seen as respect, you know? It's just being aware that you have your own values.*

The experience of rethinking time, when transferred into school-based learning, can bring benefits to students. One example is a teacher who organized time for work-focused relational activity after school as a reaction to rethinking the value of time spent deepening relationships:

> *I think that came down to stopping what wasn't working in class. And for me, it was setting up that time outside of class to really have that connection with the students who academically needed it . . . I started doing after-school Friday sessions . . . Now people know about it, they come around because we have biscuits, but we really have some good chats as well . . . they are starting to achieve because they have that connection whatever is happening in class. I haven't figured out how to change that in-class relationship yet.*

This account shows that rethinking how time is understood and used can move relationships towards partnership. In this case, time is spent in the same classroom as timetabled time but with different expectations. These are signaled through food (which cannot be consumed during 'class time') and networking—chatting—a contrast to the 'normal' expectation of staying 'on task'. What remains for the teacher to explore is how to reshape timetabled time use so that the gains from the after-school time over which the teacher has agency can be replicated—despite the institutional shaping that structures timetabled time. This negotiation is likely to produce discomfort for the teacher because changes to the cultural norms of a school are open to question from those in authority and those invested in the status quo.

3.2.2. Sharing Time

In education, time is a scare resource, and how it is used is often constrained by a series of habitual priorities and practices that are infrequently subject to scrutiny. In general, curriculum time is planned by teachers in order to deliver material about which the teacher is knowledgeable. However, teachers in the PLD were challenged to rethink this situation by Pacific parents' ideas about the importance of Pacific representation in classrooms, for example, 'success is being strong in who you are and where you come from. Identity and self-belief are important'. When teachers act on the value of identity, it is an act of partnership with Pacific communities. Two examples of deliberate practice in time allocation are given below. They cast the teachers' partnership roles as facilitators and inviters.

In the first account, the teacher facilitated the teaching of a Pacific language, Tongan, in their classroom.

> *So, another thing that I thought of . . . that's kind of about honoring who you are . . . We have two hours I said to the kids 'You can choose whatever you like to focus on' . . . Anyway, one girl said, I'd like to learn some Tongan so she can speak to her grandmother . . . So, we organized for [a senior student] to come down and spend half an hour, twice a week working with this one student, which has been awesome . . .*

The teacher explained this deliberate act as '*honoring*'—a matter of identity. The elements of the situation are freeing up time for student choice; respecting the students' aspirations—to talk to the grandparent; and providing leadership opportunities for a Tongan speaking student. As a facilitator, the teacher's role involves sourcing expertise from the community—a good basis for partnership.

The second example shows how behaving in invitational ways can develop partnership between teachers and Pacific parents.

> *I had one of my parents come up . . . she said, oh I've got a little wee You Tube about . . . making tivaevae (quilts) with the flowers . . . and my daughter, could she share it in class? I said, 'Look, if you'd like to come and join us . . . it would be wonderful . . . Don't tell me now, just go and have a think about it and let me know when that would suit you.' . . . And she came in full Cook Island dress . . . and she brought this beautiful tivaevae that was off her bed and showed the kids how to make it . . .*

In this case, the first step was taken by the mother offering a video, but the teacher replied with the chance for her to be personally involved and deliberately did not suggest a time slot. The teacher explained the aim here was to provide a '*pause*', so that control over time was passed to the parent. As a result, curriculum time accommodated the needs of family time, recognizing the parent's time commitments of being culturally involved in the community. In both cases, classroom time became spent on matters where the Pacific community held the expertise. The enhanced partnership required the teachers to adjust their control of time and trust the Pacific communities to use the scare resource well.

3.2.3. Summary

When teachers are engaged by PLD that features Pacific voice, they are able to explore time as a relational resource and create opportunities to pursue partnership. In relational thinking, time spent on relationships has more than personal significance. The literature suggests that teachers who cultivate personal connection with Pacific students also encourage students' relationships or positive vā with educational matters [46]. In NZ, little attention is paid to this dynamic, making the deliberateness and differentness of the Friday after-school sessions described above significant. Clearly, Pacific parents believe that the time spent reinforcing identity and self-belief is educationally significant, making partnership in the selection of materials and the dedication of time to explore them important. The examples given suggest that disturbing habitual relationships between time, power and different forms of expertise can lead to enhanced diasporic community–teacher

partnerships. Deliberateness is needed in education where there is continual competition for time. As one teacher explained:

> *You can quite easily go 'Don't have time today, we've got Structured Literacy, we've got this, we've got that . . .*

Deep challenges to prevalent ways of thinking about time in education require teachers to be exposed to alternative ways of thinking, be supported by the voices of the communities they serve, experience a safe space in which to explore the challenges and possibilities involved, and have time to assimilate, practice, observe and modify.

4. Discussion

Teachers of students of migrant origin benefit from PLD that enables them effectively to seek partnerships with parents/communities such as Pacific communities. Benefits that accrue to students and parents include enhanced visibility, greater presence, more active involvement in education and expanded opportunities to be valued and contribute. Authentic power sharing partnerships are not matters confined to high-level policy. Enacted on the ground, the lives of all involved are impacted day-to-day. Increased power sharing requires enhanced mutual understanding, a quality that can be supported when teachers hear the values and aspirations of their local migrant communities. Because education takes place in dynamic contexts, there can be no finite list of pedagogical techniques which teachers can learn in order to be effective partners. This is especially true in contexts such as Pacific education, where migrant populations are diverse. One can never become an 'expert' but can make progress as a learner. Encouraging teachers to be learners through talanoa as a safe discursive process was a cornerstone of this teacher enhancement program.

This research suggests the value for teachers of the involvement in a deep, extended PLD exploration in which both community and teachers' experiences and knowledges are valued. Making sense of community voice, implementing changes and reading the results is a process that challenges existing practice and the cultural logic that underpins it. For the teachers involved in this research, these aspects were made visible through the logic required to understand Pacific parents' values and aspirations as expressed in fono talanoa.

The Pacific community diversity involved provided teachers a challenge that was met by their participation in PLD talanoa. As indicated in the examples given, the teachers' enactments of new understandings were also diverse, reflecting variation in contexts across individuals, classrooms, schools and sectors. In the context of diasporic Pacific education where migrant communities are now four or five generations deep, accepting the challenge of responding to parents' aspirations positively is timely because previous educational inequalities have become calcified into everyday education life in various forms such as low expectations [47] and stereotypes [48] exacerbated by the effects of COVID-19 [49].

Three lessons can be drawn. First, pursuing partnerships in diasporic migrant education involves change because the cultural roots of education systems do not necessarily reflect the cultures of migrants [50], as is the case in Pacific education. Change is a costly process; habitual practice has its own inertia and legitimacy, which are expressions of seldom discussed cultural logics. However, when PLD programs make available appropriate resources, time, space, support and experiences, teachers can find ways of expressing their understandings of newly glimpsed logics. They can also explore embodying these logics by addressing the fundamentals of educational practice through the arrangement of space and time. Valuing connection can mean moving to the school gate, sitting on a couch rather than behind a desk, and time spent away from one's own expertise or knowledge. The 'cost' of these actions includes interruption to time in the school buildings/offices and loss of the professional comforts of distance and expertise. The benefits are centered on partnership.

Second, pursuing partnership in migrant education involves individual understandings and decisions which are enacted in social settings. Some decisions involve what is taught. For example, in NZ, attempting inclusiveness through identity in Pacific education is sometimes addressed by text/context choice, so that Pacific-origin students can 'see themselves', a complex process fraught with its own difficulties when it is simplified and

seen as a 'box-ticking' exercise. However, this PLD program suggests that partnership is as much about relationships as about the way things are done [51,52], matters that affect how quality and purpose in education are understood [53,54]. Reconfiguring who decides about time use, when parents might contribute, what time spent learning might look like: these are matters of partnership apparent in the process. In the research, the PLD talanoa provided a safe space for individuals to explore new ideas and practices in a community of support founded on common goals.

PLD practitioners and funders do well when they appreciate the potential of social support to shift processual changes devised by individuals into common practice in contextual forms. Our research found that teachers wanted to find ways to learn more and to engage with their students and communities in deep ways that are not 'tick-box' approaches, because of the real changes they want to make. The teachers progressively understood that they are in these communities as well. Consequently, an 'us and you' process is inappropriate.

Third, research is likely to benefit migrant communities when the methodologies employed are corollaries of communities' world views and therefore give a safe space for their voice to emerge [55]. In this case, a relational approach to research and PLD assumed that all involved—Pacific parents/communities, teachers, and researchers—had the same goal of authentic partnership and understood the value of a dialogic exploration of this. Talanoa produced highly personal results, clear in the emotive responses from the fono talanoa (e.g., '*school should be a safe place first—involving love and care*') and mirrored in the PLD talanoa (e.g., '*it's amazing how many good things you can think of*').

A relational methodological focus on individual aspirations, experiences and explorations honors the whole person through their family relationships, identity and culture [3]. Although partnership in Pacific education as pursued by the teachers in this research is framed in professional contexts, it is enacted by teachers as people. The talanoa explored and valued relational warmth (e.g., *it felt like I was talking to a friend)* and also respected uncertainty (e.g., '*I haven't figured out how to change that in-class relationship yet'*). Enacting this approach through mediated dialogue recognizes the way partnership and power require negotiation to address the historic imbalances present in migrant education.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, this research suggests that to meet the needs of teachers who seek partnerships with communities in diasporic Pacific education, it is required to: implement PLD that privileges the contextual voice which articulates communities' priorities and aspirations; create opportunities to explore this in a safe collegial environment that embodies Pacific approaches to life; allow time to reflect on relevant experiences and enact change; and provide the support of experienced changemakers. These components support teachers to manage change that comes at a 'cost' in the form of re-thinking and the deliberate effort required to challenge existing habitual thought and practice. Meaningful partnerships enacted at a small scale in relationships are valuable in Pacific education. Relationships between migrant groups and teachers in other contexts would also benefit from this kind of approach to supporting teachers to better perform their roles. All migrant communities carry rich cultural wisdom, understanding, ideas and practices, which, given opportunity, can contribute to educational partnerships. By learning from each other through the PLD process, Pacific students, parents and communities, teachers and researchers were able to share their gifts of knowledge and experience, reinvigorating the educational community and producing tangible benefits for those who matter most in education—the children.

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