

“Be true to one’s self”: Learning to be leaders in Pasifika education strategy

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Abstract: This paper is about strategic change in Pasifika education and growing the leaders to help make that happen. ‘Strategy implementation’ is of particular concern and refers to large-scale, future-oriented plans for optimising achievement of an organisation’s mission and objectives. Six categories (network; monitor and manage the implementation of the strategy; nurture personal attributes; develop the strategic plan; advance professional attributes; esteem the presence of Pasifika leaders) and 23 sub-categories are described of what helps in strategy implementation, as reported by leaders of Pasifika ethnicity. The categories and sub-categories are presented as a description of the core competencies for leaders of strategy implementation for Pasifika advancement, and for strategy implementation in education. This paper highlights ways in which leadership education might be usefully informed and expanded by Pasifika perspectives on strategy implementation.

Keywords: education; leadership; Pasifika; strategy implementation

Introduction

Improvement in education outcomes by Pacific peoples of New Zealand matters for the whole of New Zealand society. The Brief for the Incoming Minister of Pacific Island Affairs (2008) outlined a strategy for New Zealand’s Pacific peoples:

Investing in and committing to education can increase employment, raise wages and improve the level and relevance of skills. It can also build new role models, exposing the next generation of Pacific children to a greater range of career and educational choices...[I]f Pacific peoples' incomes converge to 96 per cent of those of non-Pacific by 2021 then the economy benefits by an extra \$4–\$5 billion. (pp. 2–3)

In addition, improvement in education outcomes has been linked to social, cultural, and health benefits, including positive measures of health, strong families, children's well-being, a clean environment, and absence of violent crime. (Behrman & Stacey, 1997). This paper is about strategy implementation. More specifically, it is about Pasifika leader perspectives on what helps the implementation of such strategies and what those perspectives might tell us about learning to be leaders for improved Pasifika education outcomes. In short, this paper is about strategic change and growing the leaders to help make it happen.

Why this research?

This study addresses the lack of literature on strategy implementation and skills associated with Pasifika leadership within education contexts. In an adaptation of Lawrence’s (1954) strategic management discussion, the research is based on strategy implementation as, essentially, the management of relationships before systems. In other words, the implementation of strategy necessarily involves having a deeper understanding of the human dimensions of change

management, some of which are to do with the leader themselves and some to do with the involvement of others in strategy implementation.

Strategy implementation in the field of education is particularly people-dependent and therefore in a continuous process of change. While extensive analysis has been undertaken into technical change factors, the social aspect of change requires ongoing investigation. For some time the social aspect of change has been recognised as the variable that determines the result in change management, not associated technical changes (Lawrence, 1954). Effective strategy implementation requires information about the social aspects of the work environment, not in terms of what it was (or is believed to have been) but as a continuing process of change in the present (Metge, 1990).

Finally, while international models of business practice and strategy implementation have been provided at national levels (Hofstede, 1993), there appears to be no literature available on strategy implementation from the perspective of Pasifika leaders in New Zealand. It can be argued that this study of Pasifika leaders is a form of educative case (Shulman, 1996) due to its bounded nature (Stake, 1994) and attributes. It adds to the body of knowledge on leadership education because it highlights particular approaches and invites the reader to reflect upon their own approaches in leadership and management.

Purpose & objectives

The broad purpose of this research was leadership education, with particular concern for understanding and informing skills in Pasifika education strategy implementation. The objectives were twofold. First, to obtain accounts of Pasifika managers' experiences of strategy implementation and descriptions of what helped in strategy implementation; and second, to establish a set of categories of good practice which can inform strategy implementation for improved Pasifika education outcomes.

For the purposes of this research, 'strategy' was defined as large-scale, future-oriented plans for optimising achievement of an organisation's mission and objectives. In the education sector this usually means a plan agreed to by government under a leader who implements it in part or in whole. 'Strategy implementation' was defined as the pattern of organisational moves and leadership approaches used to achieve objectives within the organisation's strategy. Particular attention was paid to what worked rather than what did not work, and to the highly influential variable of social aspects of change leadership rather than technical aspects only (Lawrence, 1954).

Data collection

The Critical Incident Technique (CIT) (Flanagan, 1954) was selected for data collection. This method has been used widely, including studies of Pasifika success in university education (Airini et al, 2008), teacher education (Airini & Brooker, 1999), care and medicine (Cox, Bergen, & Norman, 1993; Dachelet, Wemmett, Garling, Craig-Kuhn, Kent, & Kitzman, 1981) and in indigenous health programmes (McCormick, 1995; Williams, 1999).

The CIT is a form of interview research in which participants provide descriptive accounts of events that facilitated a particular aim. The technique includes collation of direct observations made by participants, in such a way as to derive solutions to practical problems. Upon completion of the interviews, critical incidents are extracted from the accounts and then grouped by similarity to form a set of categories that encompass the events and describe good practice. To ensure a consistent use of the key terms, each participant was asked to describe a particular strategy that they had to implement. Participants were asked to recall critical incidents from memory. In this

case the critical incident was to be “an experience that had helped them to implement strategy” and the specific interview question was: “Can you describe an experience that has helped you to implement strategy?”

Analysis then took the form of inductive classification of the information into categories, which enabled descriptions to be made at different levels of good practice in strategy implementation. The categorisation was then reviewed by the researcher and refined. Ambiguous events were used in the second round of categorisation to challenge the categories developed and provided additional refinement. This process of challenge and reconsideration continued until stability in the categories was achieved. These categories were tested for validity through examining the participation rate for each category and the reliability of categorising incidents.

The interview process also included dimensions of “interviews as chat” technique described by Bishop (1996, p. 31), and “conversations for being related” technique (Caddick, 1997, p. 63). In combination, these dimensions created an in-depth interviewing method of purposeful conversations (see Kahn & Cannell, 1957), which enabled further discussion and clarification. The tone of the interviews was that of an every day conversation. Every effort was made to offer the participant an environment in which they might feel comfortable to describe their experiences and appreciated for their time and sharing. Consistent with guidelines for research with Pasifika peoples, the assumption underlying this kind of research procedure is that the participant is to receive respect, patience, and care during and following the interview (Anae, Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu & Finau, 2001; Health Research Council, 2003).

Participants

To ensure a sufficient pool of participants, and to provide possible comparisons, participants were drawn from two major public sectors with Pasifika strategies – education and health. Consistent with the approved ethics procedures for this research, potential participants with leadership backgrounds and self-identified Pasifika ethnicity were made aware of the study.

Participation was subject to the following criteria: currently or recently (within the last 12 months) in a management role in education or health; self-identified as having Pasifika ethnicity; and recollection of an experience they had had which had helped them implement strategy. Seven Pasifika leaders with recent or current experience in the implementation of national strategic plans in health or education volunteered to take part. Participants ranged in age from about 35 to 60 years, and were of Samoan, Fijian, Niuean and Tongan ethnicity. Three were female and four were male. Although numerically small, given the relatively low numbers of Pasifika peoples in leadership positions in education and health, this cohort represented a proportionately large sample.

Results

From the seven transcripts, 113 incidents were reported by the participants in relation to the implementation of strategy. Analysis of the incidents produced six categories and 23 sub-categories that describe what helps in strategy implementation as reported by leaders of Pasifika ethnicity. Each incident was classified in one category only. In most cases the sub-categories were reported by more than one incident. However, a single incident could generate a sub-category where it was unique from the literature review findings, and where a participant reported it in part at least. Therefore, in deciding whether to place such an incident in another sub-category the decision would be made to preserve its distinctiveness. Table 1 lists the categories and subcategories, and an analysis of the frequency of category and incident reports.

Table 1: Categories and subcategories of what helps in strategy implementation, from Pasifika management perspectives

Category/ Sub-category	Count	% of total incidents	No. & % of participants with incidents in category
Network	37	33%	N = 5 71%
Internal stakeholders	18		
External stakeholders	15		
As ongoing practice	3		
With other Pasifika leaders	1		
Monitor and manage the implementation of the strategy	25	22%	N = 6 86%
Conflict/ resistance management	8		
Effective data management	5		
Effective team management	4		
Organisational capability and capacity	3		
Work <i>with</i> existing perspectives	2		
Relationship with government	3		
Nurture personal attributes	20	18%	N = 6 86%
Upbringing	12		
Sense of self	4		
Personal enthusiasm for the strategy	2		
Spiritual values	2		
Develop the strategic plan	16	14%	N = 5 71%
Development process	11		
Government statement	4		
Fiscal implications	1		
Advance professional attributes	10	9%	N = 4 57%
Management training	4		
Change agent role	5		
Qualifications	1		
Esteem the presence of Pasifika leaders	5	4%	N = 2 28%
Targeted capacity & capability building of individuals	3		
Strategic placement	1		
Historical role	1		
TOTAL	113	100%	

As Table 1 shows, the most frequently reported category was networking, with internal networking being the most frequently reported sub-category of that group. The only category reported by all participants was personal attributes. The least frequently reported category of factors helping in the implementation of strategy was the presence of Pasifika leaders. Possible reasons for this are discussed later in this paper.

Each of the six categories is reported on, along with their subcategories. A brief description of the category, associated outcomes, and examples of the incidents in the category showing the range or variation within each category is provided. The categories are presented in order of frequency of incidents. Similarly, the sub-categories are also listed in order of frequency.

Category 1: Network

This category was the most frequently reported factor identified by Pasifika leaders as helping in the implementation of strategy. Thirty-three percent of all incidents reported were in this category. 'Network' describes communication practices associated with the implementation of strategy. Those activities directly involved in enabling internal and external stakeholders to make sense of the strategy and what it means for their own practices were included in this section. Most often that meant networking with the actual change agents associated with a strategy. Although instances of networking were present in all participant interviews, recorded incidents occurred with 71 percent of the participants.

Four sub-categories are described. These are networking with internal and external stakeholders, as an ongoing practice, and with other Pasifika people in similar roles.

Internal networking

This sub-category refers to Pasifika managers using networks within an organisation to help in the implementation of strategy. This was the most frequently reported incident category in this research, with 18 references to internal networking (16% of all incidents reported in this study). In all cases the internal networking occurred at multiple organisational levels, and placed greatest emphasis on face-to-face communication. The participant might not always be directly involved in the networking; they might engage another person to communicate with a key person; for example, to either explain from a similar rank in the organisation or to reinforce a message.

Written communication with internal stakeholders was used after face-to-face communication, as a tool for bringing these people together for formal decision-making purposes. Group meetings followed preparatory discussions that the participant had had with individuals.

Examples are provided of ways in which internal networking can help in strategy implementation. Outcomes of internal networking included:

- CEO acceptance of strategy and its implementation;
- Reduction and elimination of resistance to strategy implementation, and acceptance of new proposals;
- Identification of mutual benefit to different organisational groups and individuals in supporting strategy implementation;
- Allocation of resources for strategy implementation initiatives;
- Expanded organisational support and accountability to the strategy; and
- Identification of those people within the organisation who are most amenable and 'warm' to work with, in regards to the implementation of the strategy.

Example 1: We got [the strategic plan] to a stage where there was a kind of draft and it went up to the Minister and it had gone out again and came back and this had to go through [the senior management team], so I was thinking how best to do that and I talked to [my Manager] about it and we agreed that a strategy might be for me to meet each

Group Leader individually and take them a board and what this is all about and gain their support. So I did that. I did the individual meeting with Group Leaders. You know, I'd already talked with their Senior Leaders and all the rest of it, because what we wanted was to prepare them to the idea, to get them used to it so that by the time the paper arrived at SMT, I'd practically already had three quarters of them agreeing to it so that it wouldn't be a big deal...So that's been a kind of strategy to implement the Strategy is to do the background behind the scenes. [The outcome was] they bought it. Once the paper came through they ticked it off.

Example 2: [A]t the same time [as I was pushing for changes], I was talking to my colleagues who were there to push from the other side. And the other issue, of course, you should be working well with the top one, whoever the top one is. You deal from the side and you deal from the top and you visit him all the time, you say 'Hello, how are you? Let's go [laughs]'. You know you don't need to take it as really hard or something, but those are the things that did [bring about change].

All the participants reported that they used internal networking to promote strategy implementation. The incidents reported indicate strong use of personal contact and professional relationships throughout the organisation. Internal buy-in and shared accountability and action in strategy implementation were achieved through networking within the organisation.

External networking

This sub-category refers to the participant using networks outside the organisation to help in strategy implementation. Fifteen percent of all incidents reported external networking as a way to achieve strategy implementation.

External networking predominantly referred to communication with Pasifika communities. This might take the form of regular community meetings in which an update would be provided on progress with the strategy implementation, advice sought on proposed related initiatives, or direct community involvement in implementation whether at the community level or family level. Networking with Pasifika peoples involves a diverse range of Pacific nations, languages and cultures, as well as intergenerational differences, status bearing roles (such as Church Ministers and wives), and expectations for health and education outcomes. An additional reported factor associated with external networking was the way in which the participant might be an agent to encourage greater collaboration *between* external groups in order to create an environment conducive to effective strategy implementation. This might include families so that strategy implementation would be sustainable. Reported outcomes included:

- Establishment of an ongoing monitoring mechanism on the effectiveness of strategy implementation;
- Increased participation, retention and achievement by Pasifika peoples;
- Strategic initiatives by the organisation are the ones needed by the community;
- Changes are made to programmes and practices;
- Focused, strong partnership between government officials and Pasifika communities;
- The development and implementation of a holistic approach to strategy implementation;

- Pasifika community perspectives and involvement accelerating the pace of change; and
- The identification of alternative implementation models successfully applied in other service sectors.

Example 1: *We are having a quarterly meeting [with] this reference group and the reference group is mostly representatives of the different ethnic groups that we have and we explain to them the progress that we've had. It's more or less like a monitoring mechanism that we've developed to see how effective we are with implementation.*

Example 2: *I remember one incident when [the CEO] set about formally trying to reposition the [the organisation] as a more responsive bureaucracy. I called the whole of the Pacific sector, all our top players ... all our top people out of the sector, (and I could identify them, we were a very tight group) to the [organisation]. And I said to them, "There are problems. We have a government that is about to come into power who is really responsive to Pacific stuff. We've got a bureaucracy that probably is not geared up to represent that policy. We need to help [the CEO] to do it." [The CEO] came to that, it was a two-day workshop. [The CEO] sat in that workshop and talked to that Pacific sector about what [as CEO they] needed to do. And they talked to the CEO about how the CEO should do it. [The CEO] sat there and heard the work and said, "I will do it. I will make this thing happen." And literally you have the CEO with the Pacific sector, literally turn the face of [the organisation] around in two days.*

This category shows that Pasifika leaders actively and purposefully engage in external networking as part of strategy implementation. In the incidents reported, external stakeholders were never the "outsiders" referred to by Johnson and Scholes (1999, p. 537). Rather, external networking was reported as fundamental to the integrity and sustainability of initiatives because of partnerships between provider and communities of interest. In this way, external networking helped achieve meaningful initiatives and successful implementation.

Networking as an ongoing practice

This sub-category refers to incidents that indicate participants use mixed mode methods for internal networking, and that there will be often be a sense of profound purpose in the networking—as exemplified in an appeal to prayer, or to a clear indication of intent.

Example 1: *[T]he strategy is to improve the number of Pacific students and if you ask How did you manage it? You know, it was basically through dialogue. Talking we talked and then acted and then prayed and we use all kinds of things you know not only this but we had to lobby around and then you also have to talk to the stakeholders, express the needs and all this. You talk [laughs].*

Example 2: *A question that was asked of me yesterday was... "Why aren't we bridging between Pacific Island and pakeha?" And I said, "We [Pacific peoples] believe in bridges too, but we believe more in the reason to have the bridge." That's the whole different view on it... And often that's what I hear, in strategic plans: "This is a bridge because we want to provide better [outcomes] for Pacific Island people." But my view to that is that the bridge has got to have a reason. If there is no reason to have the bridge, don't have the bridge... [If] you are building a bridge just to build a better service then no, that doesn't work anymore in my view. Build a relationship, then we can have, we can trust you with our stuff; you can trust us. You can't, in my view, you can't get health or education simply by just building a bridge without those reasons.*

The participants exemplify the tension between operationalising an established strategy and the achievement of goals through autonomous relations within the organisation. The use of a variety of forms of internal communication over time, along with a call for greater autonomy was reported by Pasifika leaders as signs of successful strategy implementation.

Networking with other Pasifika leaders

This sub-category relates to the positive outcomes reported to be associated with collegial interaction with other Pasifika leaders.

Example: But [those of us working in Pasifika issues], we actually had a meeting in Wellington. We found that really valuable because [the lead advisor on Pacific issues] was able to field, you know, sort of, information from us and we also banded together a possible strategy to make things happen quickly, now, within our separate organisations

While not frequently reported on in this study, peer interaction featured either as a complete incident or within other incidents. Participants facilitated the successful implementation of strategy through greater efficiencies achieved by information sharing and integration of activities as an outcome of peer interaction and support.

Category 2: Monitor and manage implementation of the strategy

In this category participants described the need for ongoing monitoring and management of initiatives associated with the roll-out of the strategy. In other words, strategic change is reported as incremental, and therefore requiring the ongoing use of a range of change management “tactics” (Johnson & Scholes, 1999, p. 541). Twenty-two percent of the reported incidents were associated with this category. All but one of the participants reported an incident associated with this category.

Outcomes of monitoring and managing strategy implementation included:

- Ensured up to date understanding of what the strategy is and accountabilities associated with the implementation of the strategy;
- Empowered providers and communities to be change agents;
- Encouraged collaboration by staff to complete responsibilities and roles in strategy implementation;
- Reduced and eliminated of resistance to strategy implementation and associated change;
- Identified management strengths and weaknesses;
- Increased understanding and support from government in relation to the strategy.

Six sub-categories of the ways in which participants reported they monitored and managed strategy implementation are described.

Conflict/resistance management

This sub-category identifies how the participants managed conflict or resistance to necessary changes associated with the implementation of strategy. The sub-category includes incidents where participants were working with Ministers of Parliament, government officials, Pasifika community groups and staff within relevant organisations. Information, including statistical analysis, was identified as being crucial. At a personal level, the ability to muster sufficient self-

belief and courage as a leader were identified as helping in the successful management of resistance to strategy implementation.

Example 1: I approach [change agent leaders] all the time. If they turn you away the first time, maybe the tenth time they will listen because sometimes leaders, we run away once we go around, and, you know, "You're busy?" "Oh, no way." And they go the second time and then they say, "No way," and then you withdraw. I don't think that good leaders should withdraw from a situation like that. But we have to grasp the best solutions of what we do because, personally, God has created all of us to behave the way we do [laughs], you know, and some are more harsh than others. But continuous approach and all that, and oh the change!

Example 2: [I go] through other colleagues who are at the same level. Rather than you pushing your ideas and your wants, you have to go through someone to deal with the issue.

Example 3: [It] helps the implementation of strategy actually by having some statistical, you know, data to show that actually we're not just going down a, you know, down another cliff edge here. "This is something we've tested and these are some of the indicators that we're getting." And so it helps the confidence of not only the people who are implementing it but more importantly though some of those the key stakeholders who you need to come on board. You say, "This is something that we haven't," you know, "that we haven't actually been down this track, but these are some of the indicators of what we have." So in terms of the process of implementing something...in, my experience again, I found that it's a lot more speedier than would otherwise. You have people who are really, who say "Oh here, here, we can see where we are going."

Six percent of the reported incidents described situations where the management of conflict and resistance to a strategy helped in its implementation. The reduction of these factors was needed with internal and external groups and individuals. Personal attributes of stamina and self-belief were identified as helping these leaders to successfully manage resistance to strategy implementation.

Effective data management

This sub-category describes ways in which the availability of reliable, valid data instils confidence in the strategy and ensures effective targeting of resources. Participants identified that data had to accurately depict stakeholder needs. This meant that in some situations new assessment tools and data collection processes had to be developed if strategy implementation was to achieve set goals associated with disparities in health and education.

Example: It is critical that, for me to get critical information and information of value; that the tool that I'm designing is actually designed through greater input by those for whom the tool is going to be used for. So for example, if it is about elderly people, it is important for me to involve ah 'elderlies' about the design of the tool so that the information or that which they are saying is fed into that tool and that tool will actually give me meaningful information, as opposed to something that I just want to hear (which unfortunately often happens to a lot of what we do)..... If you look at some of the quantitative surveys that are put out well, you know it's the same template used everywhere else. So why should we be surprised if the data comes out to be the same?

Participants identified the availability of meaningful data was essential in focusing services during strategy implementation. They reported that data management built a picture of unprecedented effectiveness in novel initiatives and the need for assessment tools designed in a consultative manner. They also reported the presence of crisis in their sector and, therefore, the need for new ways of operating and new solutions to galvanise change.

Effective team management

This sub-category focuses on the development of staff skills so that they are better placed to meet the aims and objectives of the strategy.

Example 1: ... *[A]lthough I need to complete the milestones, the work is actually completed by other people within the team. So it's ensuring that everyone that's included in working collaboratively together is able to complete their responsibility and role.*

Example 2: *[W]hen people are in new roles I think that sometimes you need to walk through quite carefully with someone. You need to give them more than verbal support you need to sit down and show them how to do something. I mean a lot of the work I do has been in a model where you demonstrate and they observe and then they should be able to, you know, duplicate it.*

Participants who reported incidents in this sub-category had a strong operational focus with front-line staff. Maintaining focus and effective time and resource usage were reported as critical for the effective implementation of strategy.

Organisational capability and capacity

This sub-category highlights the impact that expanded organisational capability and capacity in a strategic area can have on strategy implementation.

Example: *Okay [the situation is that] I need to know how well the [strategic] plan is doing. I need [a division] really looking up all the areas that needs research evaluation and so forth. I mean it wasn't my focus particularly but I wanted to make that happen so ... it was initially my idea to set up a Pacific research framework but over time leadership of it has moved to the ...Division which is really good ...I mean it's impossible for one person to be driving the whole thing, you need other people to be taking responsibility and that's a classic case for me of that responsibility, okay the idea might come from somewhere else, that's fine, but we needed to make sure that the strategy was used by other groups or divisions and they've picked up that work now and it's become an important part of their work, you know they've commissioned pieces of work to be done and they're coming up with new ways of doing that.*

Participants reported that strategy implementation required targeted change within the very organisation driving the change. This was achieved through collaborative activities led by the Pasifika Leader or the seizing of strategically significant “windows of opportunity” (Johnson & Scholes, 1999, p. 528).

Work with existing perspectives

This sub-category describes the ongoing management of the feelings of those with whom the participants worked. In particular, the importance of the reducing nervousness associated with change.

Example: *One of the things about working in a bureaucracy is that you need to help and*

faithfully guide the implementation of a bureaucracy. The risk issues are big. What you do is that you actually remove that stuff for them. You help them make those decisions safely and you manage the risks around that. So for instance, the Ministry wants to implement a policy that is problematic for Pacific people, like the funding of [a general service]; putting more money into high income areas, building infrastructure for middle class [service providers] who see no brown [clients] at all. What you do is you need to help the Ministry understand that this strategy, that you're not going...to remove disparities from a particular population. ...And what I guess we have done is to constantly help the Ministry understand government policy.

This sub-category recognises the significance of existing mindsets and practices that must be negotiated in order to help strategy implementation. The reported incidents highlight the complexity of strategy implementation as requiring not only sound logic, but also careful relationship management so that people feel safe in undertaking change.

Relationship with government

This sub-category relates to the importance of like-minded officials and Ministers for the implementation of strategy to be successful.

Example: [The Minister] believed in us. We worked really hard on that relationship. She believed in our community. “[My Lead Advisor Pacific] does know what the answers are. Here’s the dollars. Go do it.”

Reported incidents highlighted the ideal relationship between government and officials: one in which advice was accurate, believed and acted upon, whether in terms of the approval of resources, or for communications with sector groups or media. The participants facilitated strategy implementation by developing a strong, positive relationship with change agents within government.

Category 3: Nurture personal attributes

In this category participants described personal attributes that helped in the implementation of strategy. Participants identified a range of attributes developed over time and were significantly influenced by parents and grandparents, values and beliefs. Nineteen percent of all reported incidents described personal attributes as a critical success factor in strategy implementation. Overall, 86 percent (n=6) of the participants reported incidents involving personal attributes. Outcomes of personal attributes in relation to strategy implementation included:

- Recognised desire and skill to motivate others to participate in strategy implementation;
- Preference to be in leadership roles;
- Stamina to not give up;
- Confidence and ability to attempt something new;
- A sense of peace and assurance;
- Infusion of personality into messages and initiatives;
- Actions that combine values with contemporary situations; and

- Understanding that work done with integrity will endure beyond any manager.

Four sub-categories of the ways in which participants reported that personal attributes helped in strategy implementation are reported.

Upbringing

This sub-category identifies how participants recalled their upbringing influenced their work in strategy implementation. The sub-category includes early leadership training, the importance of role-models, and experiences that built stamina and challenged the participant. It does not include notions of self, which are less likely to be attributed to a particular person or incident.

Example 1: My father always brought me up to be the leader in my family because I was the oldest, so he would sit me down and say "This is your job." You would make sure that everybody is well, that they are organized and that when you had family events everybody knew what their role was. If anybody was ever in trouble, that you would be there to support them and that you would make sure they all listen to you. At the time I thought it was totally ridiculous but in hindsight ... my father was always driving me to drive other people and he saw it quite clearly as my job in my place in my family and so I just behaved like that [in strategy implementation as a professional]. I behaved like I had to do it and I wanted to do it and wouldn't be set back by obstacles.

Example 2: It's your ability to actually draw from other sources that aren't taught in classrooms. And I have been in situations where on reflection I would say where did that come from and if I spent long enough to analyse and look to the root cause you would find that somehow it comes it links to that environment it links to something in my upbringing, it linked to something in my traditional and cultural values. So it came outside of the square – where those are the norms inside the square of management tools.

Eleven percent of all reported incidents by Pasifika leaders identified upbringing as helping them to implement strategy. Not only did the participants report a *sense* of connection to an enduring community, purpose and legacy, but also the *skills* and *competencies* in leadership and people management that were developed through community and family based learning environments. In combination these factors from the participants' upbringing facilitated strategy implementation.

Sense of self

This sub-category refers to incidents which indicate that participants developed their own sense of self as part of the personal attributes used to implement strategy.

Example 1: It's like a little blueprint of who you are. Sometimes you will do things that are quite innate but it's because I suppose it's in your genetics rather than having been acquired you know from someone else.

Example 2: When you stand by the principles that you said you, you know, that you believe in; when you follow, when you model when you practice what you say, you will achieve...There is bravery that comes within knowing who you are, that even when David looked at the giant in front him, but said to himself, "You come to me with that sword of yours and everything else that you come, but I come to you in the name of my God." Why? He knew who he was...He understood who he was first. The sling [David had] was the tool. Isn't that interesting then? We understand who we are. Then the tool is understanding management.

In challenging the status quo by agents of change, the participants reported both the need to maintain a strong sense of self, and the intuitive practice of doing so. They facilitated their success in strategy implementation by connecting a sense of self with heritage and self esteem.

Personal enthusiasm for the strategy

This sub-category describes the ways belief in a strategy helps in its implementation.

Example 1: I'm a shy person basically, you know, but what makes me assertive is the passion of belief because basically if I was to be just left in the room on my own I would be quite happy you know, ...but when you know something has to be done, it changes your personality for me. I become someone that's that needs to be listened to because I haven't just turned up at the office and had nothing to do all day...And to satisfy the job that I've been paid to do I would always sit with all [the clients] sitting behind me and I would think about every word I said here would matter; that the risk that I took in everything is going to be picked up by these people behind. So it was really important that my personality added weight to the content that you were about to present.

Example 2: I need to believe in the strategy, that it is for the benefit of the greater population, the greater population, or for somebody else. And when I believe in that and once I see that and I believe that is the case, then the enthusiasm and the passion are the next two things that come into play and so it is then those two enablers that ensures the selling of it is really just formality.

The incidents reported in this sub-category highlighted that the absence of belief in a strategy would be likely to result in the manager's inability to encourage the involvement of others in strategy implementation. The participants identified belief and self-motivation as crucial to their implementation of strategy.

Spiritual values

This category focuses on the importance of spirituality in a participant's involvement in strategy implementation.

Example 1: [B]ecause of my Pacific background I was told to believe that somebody's up there to help you. You know. So what I am trying to say to you is aside from anything other thing you do I think that. Driving to work, when I hopped in my car and was driving to work, then I said, "God help me this day, with my management activities. You are there to guide me and you help me." So aside from that you know sometimes you have some tension, you feel the tension or if the staff are not with you in some of the issues then you have to share it with somebody and I mean, if you are alone you share it with God and if you are not alone you share it with your friend and your colleague...You are always at peace.

Example 2: So, at the end of the day, what is there to say? I only have to say, 'Be true to one's self'. Know who you are because in the knowledge of who you are you become so much more creative with what you've got and what you haven't got and how you could improvise and how you could carry yourself, even if you have to make believe. And there are times when you have to make believe. Nobody else believes, sometimes you don't believe in yourself but somehow it's intuitive...So intuitively you do that, when it seems stupid and illogical in the mind and the heart says, "I'm not so sure," but the spirit says, "Go."

This sub-category reports on the role and acceptance of spiritual factors, as reported by some participants (n=2), in the implementation of strategy. The reported incidents highlight the varied motivations and values systems affecting the implementation of strategy.

Category 4: Develop the strategic plan

In this category incidents that participants positively associated with the strategic plan itself are reported. Participants identified the significance of the development process for the strategic plan, along with the mandate it provided for sector change, and the lever for change that associated financial incentives provided. Fourteen percent of all reported incidents described events associated with the strategic plan. Overall, 71 percent (N=5) of the participants reported incidents in this category.

Outcomes associated with the strategic plan, as reported by participants, to have helped in its implementation included:

- The actual formulation of an effective, understandable (“simple”), objective centred strategic plan;
- Providers and communities empowered to be the change agents not policy; and
- Fiscal incentives for change;

Three sub-categories of the ways in which participants reported that the strategic plan itself helped in strategy implementation are reported.

Development process

This sub-category includes a range of incidents from which participants reported the strategic plan emerged. These included the historical context and the development process itself.

Example 1: [Before the writing of the strategy there were] things were happening in the sector: better information was being more available, providing a better picture of how bad or good things were. Secondly a workforce started to grow; and thirdly we had communities who were educated enough to begin to advocate and promote and say, “We want to do something about this right now.” So that was kind of the three elements of the revolution, over the last six to ten years.

Example 2: Why that I feel [the Pacific strategic plan] is very effective is based on, one: I think the plan is very simple. Two: all of us were involved in the development of the plan. Three: I think it was based on the needs of our overall Pacific people...And of course everybody will be saying that the finance would never be enough for anything but at least there is something to move the strategy.

Incidents in this category reported on the centrality of community involvement in the development process, and the need for a multi-faceted strategy that is readily understood and applied.

Government statement

This sub-category identifies the positive effect that a government mandate for strategic change and implementation had on the work of the participants.

Example: There were obviously lots of questions asked, because “...Why are they doing

this?" and "Why should I be involved?" But we would remind them of the strategic government plan and that we're here to stay, and that was the government's priority, for funding...[The outcome] was good in every case um it was good. I think there seemed to be an appreciation from all CEOs that what we were about was aligned with his overall strategic plan for the service that she was or he was the CEO of.

Participants reported feeling encouraged and empowered to implement strategy knowing that they could appeal to higher authority and accountabilities.

Fiscal implications

This sub-category focuses on the importance of fiscal incentives for helping leaders to implement strategy.

Example 1: The ... Strategy actually identifies where we want the Pacific links to grow. We want competent ... Pacific ...providers. We also want ...competent mainstream providers delivering Pacific responsiveness, yeah? ... How do you feel we can actually make people jump in? The policies are actually irrelevant, but if they tag funding to policy that says you do this and are paid for this then you know and we will measure your behaviour on this, then that's big.

Example 2: [The document itself] was really the yes or no of any implementation of any strategic plan. Um, especially when you're talking about strategic plans being based on funding. I think that is a real key. If there was no strategic plan I absolutely believe that this work would be really hard it would be burn-out material and no one would listen. It was really good to have a government priority. It was good to have a funding priority go hand in hand when these [strategy documents] would be implemented. It was the key to unlock the passion really for Pacific Island work.

Participants identified the effectiveness of financial incentives as levers for rapid adoption of the strategic plan. In relation to this factor, leaders were able to effectively manage and evaluate sector participation in initiatives focused on strategic goals and objectives.

Category 5: Advance professional attributes

This category refers to those reported incidents which enhanced the manager's professional capability to implement the strategy. Nine percent of all reported incidents referred to professional attributes. Outcomes included:

- The implementation of new entrance options in tertiary education;
- Appreciation of modern management concepts;
- Training programmes that boosted confidence to speak and prepare policy knowledgably; and in advance of many practitioners; and
- Perceptions of enhanced credibility due to qualifications

Three sub-categories of the ways in which participants reported that professional attributes helped in strategy implementation are described.

Management training

This sub-category identifies the way in which management-training incidents were reported by participants to have helped in the implementation of strategy. A range of incidents, including formal (qualifications based) and informal (e.g. seminars, inclusion in cross-functional meetings within their organisation) training situations was reported.

Example 1: They were very good at training [and], up-skilling us on [our] actual role of the reviewer, so we were kept up to date with ...research, with changes in the ...theory, ... Well every regulation would change we were, usually kept well ahead of, ahead of the teachers, so that we were at least a step ahead of classroom teachers.

Example 2: I guess where it's been that my managerial training has been of real value is that I have an understanding of modern day concepts and I now have an appreciation of those concepts...The beauty of having learned some managerial tools of modern day management is that I've been able to tailor some of that to measure the unmeasurable. For example, how do you measure 'culture'? ...[H]aving understood the mechanisms around measurement tools I've been able to design some measurement stuff around good relationships by looking at sort of the buy-in, team work.

The reported incidents highlighted the ways in which managerial training developed skills perceived by the participants to be essential for strategy implementation. This also meant expanding the body of knowledge about many facets of management practice, particularly when modern management tools are combined with more traditional value systems.

Change agent role

This sub-category focuses on the participant's understanding of their role as a change agent and key associated factors such as desire to influence all aspects of an organisation, skills to operationalise change, and the ability to 'sell' the strategy to the sector.

Example : First you have to create change and in order for you to create change you have to be strong first...For example, Pacific Islands [student participation]. For four years we have been trying to have an alternative option for recruiting Pacific students here. You have to lobby around. You have to be good with dialogue. And then with the top. And you have to inform all levels about the issue that you have and we from the Pacific of course we believe that whatever we do with the grace of our Lord then hopefully that something will come. And you see now we are very happy because we have a second option. We even have a third option for [entry into these professional studies].

The participants reported their awareness that the management of strategy was facilitated when they operated as a change agent. In all cases this included constant internal and external networking.

Qualifications

This sub-category describes the significance reported to have been placed on qualifications of the participant.

Example: I think one of the first things that made me accepted by the Ministry was the fact that I you know I had been through all this training and education and I've come out with good qualifications and I've gone into a Ministry that I can just foot it with everybody else and people look at me and think "Oh hang on a minute she's you know she's got some qualifications," I don't know whether they ever thought about Pacific

people in that sense before but people took you seriously because not just because you were Pacific but because you also had these other skills.

The perception colleagues had of the participant was enhanced by their academic qualifications. The implementation of strategy was reported as being helped because colleagues took the participant seriously due, in part, to his/her academic qualifications.

Category 6: Esteem the presence of Pasifika leaders

In this category participants focused on the positive effect other Pasifika leaders had on current strategy implementation. The reported incidents were all concerned with the positive impact of these leaders on the implementation of strategy associated with Pasifika health and education, rather than mainstream.

Fewer than five percent of all reported incidents were about the presence of Pasifika leaders. This should not be taken as a signal of relative insignificance of this category, however, as the reported outcomes of the presence of Pasifika leaders included:

- Sufficient change in the sector to prepare the way for the later formulation of a strategic plan;
- Increased Pasifika leadership capacity and capability to implement the strategy;
- Targeted programmes to grow sector leadership; and
- Strategic placement of Pasifika leadership in order to implement the strategy.

Three sub-categories of the ways in which participants reported the presence of Pasifika leaders helped strategy implementation are described.

Targeted capacity and capability building of individuals

This sub-category refers to the participants' actively growing sector capability and capacity for the implementation of Pacific focused strategies.

Example 1: [W]e would tiki tour people out into the sector, show them how big the problem was. And we'd also put in some of the possible solutions so that we would help the creative thinking. So we hit the leadership capacity of the Ministry and [professional] community.

Example 2: So in our leadership pilot this year we identified [more than 10] potential candidates who are leading the work and who are going to be leaders.

This participant highlighted the importance of Pasifika leaders to explain the importance of the strategy and develop understanding. This ongoing need, as well as cutting edge expertise, will require the establishment of programmes to engineer leadership growth, if strategy implementation is to be sustained.

Strategic placement

This sub-category relates to adopting a more determined approach to a Pasifika presence in a service sector, in response to identified strategic needs associated with strategy implementation.

Example: Bringing [a Pasifika Manager] to the Ministry a year ago was also strategic because we needed another kind of robust leader doing a whole lot of different work than

what I was doing. I was clearly focused on sector development, provider development, policy development. But we also needed a very technical technician to come in and sort out things ... We needed someone that was credible in the 'non-Pacific' end to do the technical things.

This participant illustrated the way in which effective strategy implementation requires the presence of a range of management skills in strategic locations within an organisation.

Historical role

This sub-category refers to the role that Pasifika leaders play in preparing the sector for the current strategy and its implementation.

Example: So I guess the revolution started with the key leaders in the sector ten years ago, [these Pasifika people] were the leaders, people like [a named Pasifika leader] for instance, who were clearly leaders. And there were particular people who actually facilitated the catalyst for this [strategy implementation] happening. So we can actually point who our leaders were at that time and through a lot of their energy catapulted the revolution into a serious place and that's what we've got today.

The participants recognised that their work today built upon the legacy of others who had gone before them, including Pasifika leaders in health and education. Through the incident and related accounts in this sub-category participants gained an understanding of the history and context they now worked within. Connection with historical efforts ensured greater understanding of the purpose of the strategy, as well as appropriate professional and personal attributes such as humility and checking paper trails.

Discussion

The advancement of Pasifika education outcomes is a government priority and a precise answer to the question “What helps to effectively implement education strategy?” has urgency. The ability to shift from plan to practice in education is increasingly under scrutiny. To date this question has been answered in part only, with a predominance of non-New Zealand data on strategy implementation, and no analysis of Pasifika peoples’ practices. With a view to generating informed professional development about good strategy implementation, in an environment increasingly attuned to meeting and including Pasifika perspectives, this paper describes factors identified by Pasifika leaders.

The knowledge and skills that Pasifika leaders have for strategy implementation have received little study, yet it influences current practice, and could be integrated into professional development. This research identified six categories that describe what helps strategy implementation from the perspective of Pasifika leaders: network; monitor and manage the implementation of the strategy; nurture personal attributes; develop the strategic plan; advance professional attributes; and esteem the presence of Pasifika leaders. While it is clear that the Pasifika leaders in this study have learned and applied relationship skills in strategy implementation, it is not clear how Pacific cultural knowledge enhances and is crucial to the fostering of multi-levelled relationships for effective management practices by both Pacific and all education leaders. The participants self-identified certain cultural reference points: faith in God (“[B]ecause of my Pacific background I was told to believe that somebody’s up there to help you”); understandings of self one inherits or is born with (“Sometimes you will do things that are quite innate but it’s because I suppose it’s in your genetics rather than having been acquired you know from someone else.”); a sense of linking to tradition and values (“...it links to something in

my upbringing, it linked to something in my traditional and cultural values.”) and upbringing (“My father always brought me up to the leader in my family”). This suggests that identity and culture are elements in how people learn to be leaders and implement leadership decisions; and that cultural knowledge might influence leadership decisions and practices associated with strategy implementation.

The extent to which this occurs and how it may be expressed in leadership practices could be usefully integrated into professional development for leaders in education strategy implementation. The professional development of leaders in organisations working on Pasifika education strategies could integrate and explore the categories identified in this study. The categories support management training and professional support initiatives that are recognise and value culturally relevant, multi-dimensional approaches to strategy implementation. For example, the categories could be used as a map (Williams, 1999) for improving relationship management during strategy implementation. Taken as a professional development tool, this map could encourage best (or better) practice (Williams, 1999).

This research complements earlier studies of the psychological patterns involved in strategic management. These studies confirmed the importance of the social and interactive factors. Senior managers strategise in ad hoc, dynamic, and implicit ways that reflect the typically unpredictable situations that they deal with (Mintzberg, 1973). They spend much of their time in developing and using a network of relationships for insights and details for making decisions (Kotter, 1982). Their decision-making is also highly intuitive (Isenberg, 1984). While previous research has highlighted the thinking processes of the decision-maker, the present study has profiled the influential position of those who are available to advise and inform the decision-maker(s). The results show how Pasifika leaders effectively work within flexible, dynamic and interactive environments; and in sites where success in strategy implementation is about relationships and leadership. In this sense the research findings add to the pattern of the general literature on strategy implementation by offering a novel contribution with particular insights for Pasifika education.

As with any research, there are several limitations. The cohort of participants was small and insufficient to focus on education alone. Further, while the interview technique provides large amounts of data, it has limitations including: its reliance on interviewer capabilities; the need for categorisation of data into single incidents only (when multiple incidents may have been possible); and the dependency upon the participant’s selection of incidents. These dimensions are characteristic of qualitative studies, and confirm that such research does not assert itself as replicable, yet may have “value and trustworthiness” through applying a number of criteria relevant to qualitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 148). In this research the criteria applied were an explicit data collection method, the data was used to identify characteristics arising from the analysis, negative instances of characteristics were found, and limitations affecting generalality were made explicit. Further studies will need to manage these limitations in order to enhance the trustworthiness of the categories from this research and their usefulness in practice.

There is a proverb: *Ua soona mitamita le manu o le tava’e i ona fulu*, which means: the tava’e bird is proud of its feathers (cited in Saipele, n.d.). The proverb encourages appreciation of ways of knowing and being; respectful pride in identity as an individual and as part of a community; and the sharing of who we are (Mulitalo-Lauta, 2001). The research focus was intentionally on leaders of Pasifika ethnicity working in the implementation of Pasifika-focused strategies. The aim was to draw from “the richness” that experiences of Pasifika leaders in education and health have brought to strategy implementation and contribute to a discussion about Pasifika models of

leadership (Autagavaia, 2000, p. 45). It is also intended that such Pasifika-attuned research should inform mainstream management practices. This study suggests that, in terms of strategies aimed at improved Pasifika education outcomes, effective leaders learn to be attentive to the visible and invisible characteristics of change management; that strategy implementation is both rationale and flexible, clinical and value-centred, secular and spiritual, administrative and organic. We should learn to work in ways that speak of the very best that is known, are true to one's self, and display the very best practices.

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