

Le Tuiga

Samoan constructs of giftedness and talent within a Samoan bilingual educational context

MARTHA ASETA, CATHERINE RAWLINSON, AND RAE SI'ILATA

KEY POINTS

- Diverse ethnic and cultural groups value different skills, abilities, and forms of knowledge. There is also disparity in the degree to which people of marginalised cultural groups identify with and observe cultural beliefs, values, and practices.
- A growing number of New Zealand researchers have investigated the relationship between cultural identity and giftedness, finding that there is enormous potential inherent within gifted Māori and Pasifika students, potential that often goes unrecognised.
- Pasifika languages, identities and cultures play pivotal roles in Pasifika academic success.
- Research findings indicate that schools had a tendency to overlook cultural, spiritual, and emotional giftedness and suggested a need for increased teacher cultural understandings and professional development.
- Perspectives of identity, language, and culture are critical components of Samoan giftedness and talent, and the framework of bilingual education.

This research study explores the notions of cultural concepts of giftedness and talent within a Samoan-specific context. The focus of this article is on Samoan teachers of children who were enrolled in a bilingual education setting. It presents the perspectives of Samoan teachers around Samoan giftedness and talent and how these perspectives might be nurtured through Samoan bilingual education. The strong connections between education, language, and culture are explored and discussed. This study highlights the components of Samoan cultural forms of giftedness and talent and how these may be transferred from the home domain into a culturally sustaining school learning environment for enhanced student outcomes.

This article details research exploring Samoan bilingual education and gifted and talented Samoan children in a full primary New Zealand school setting.

The headings used for each key section of this paper follow the format of a traditional Samoan cultural performance from start to finish. *Pese* (song) and *Siva* (dance) are indispensable to Samoans (and Pasifika peoples in general) as a means of sharing our narratives and identities, and as symbolic expressions of our languages and cultures. The presenting and sharing of this research in this way is both meaningful and significant to me as a Samoan researcher, teacher, and the first author.

Pasifika values are ingrained into children's lives through family traditions and cultural and religious practices. To separate the Pasifika child from his or her value base is often impossible. Culturally sustaining pedagogies are a means of engaging all students in learning for success. Teachers and educators do their best with what they know to employ and implement culturally inclusive practices. However, for those who do not know or understand Pasifika values, this cultural inclusion can be elusive and problematic and may therefore be difficult to incorporate into teaching practice.

The purpose of this article is to assist in explaining how Pasifika peoples view giftedness and talent as a way of forging ahead in culturally inclusive practice. Through this awareness, teachers and educators can use this knowledge to plan, prepare for, and further engage their Pasifika learners and communities.

Ulufale (the entrance)

The ulufale connects to the main ideas and introduces the research focus.

The concept of giftedness and talent elicits differing and often conflicting views. Pasifika learners are generally more often lauded for their talented ball skills on the rugby field and their gifted sporting prowess than their academic intellect or creative abilities. Diverse ethnic and cultural groups value different skills, abilities, and forms of knowledge. There is also disparity in the degree to which people of marginalised cultural groups identify with and observe cultural beliefs, values, and practices. These cultural variations extend to how giftedness is perceived, the fields within which it is recognised and cultivated, and the importance given to these numerous areas (Bevan-Brown, 2003).

Current Ministry of Education policy privileges the heritage language resources of Pasifika bilingual children as a “bridge” to English-language acquisition, rather than the promotion of Pasifika bilingualism and biliteracy. The *Pasifika Education Plan 2013–2017* states that “The Ministry of Education and Education Partner Agencies will effectively transition and support Pasifika learners into English medium schooling using language acquisition strategies, such as strengthening learners’ first languages, as a foundation for learning English” (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 6). Bilingual literature, however, emphasises the efficacy of utilising children’s heritage language resources in bilingual education contexts to elicit the emergence of gifts and talents in emergent

bilingual children (Baker & Wright, 2017). Yet research on Samoan perspectives of giftedness and talent is limited as is the influence of Samoan bilingual education on Samoan perspectives of giftedness and talent.

The data presented in this article are taken from a larger study that explored two research questions:

1. What are Samoan parents' and teachers' perspectives of giftedness and talent?
2. How might Samoan parents and teachers see gifted and talented perspectives nurtured through Samoan bilingual education?

It is the Samoan teachers' perspectives in relation to these two questions that is the focus of this article.

Mā'ulu'ulu (the expressive artistic dance)

The mā'ulu'ulu connects to the accepted conventional discourse that informs and influences current theories of gifted and talented education.

The valued knowledge systems, linguistic domains, and cultural capital of traditional mainstream New Zealand schooling have often positioned Pasifika learners as “underachieving”. The New Zealand Government has prioritised the learning of Pasifika students through strategic plans, namely the Ministry of Education's Pasifika Education Plan (PEP), 2006–2010; 2008–2012; 2009–2012; 2013–2017. It states “The PEP adopts a Pasifika connected way of working. This ‘connectedness’ highlights the importance of Pasifika collective partnerships, relationships and responsibilities and demands consistently high quality and effective education for Pasifika success” (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 2).

Pasifika learners, their families, and communities form the nucleus of the Compass for Pasifika Success (Ministry of Education, 2013) surrounded and supported by essential core Pasifika values. With aims of closer alignment between home/cultural and school environments, in order to engage optimum learning, the PEP highlights the importance of Pasifika identities, languages, and cultures, but provides no specific targets or actions to promote Pasifika bilingualism. Nor does it fully address the pivotal roles that Pasifika languages, backgrounds, and identities play in Pasifika academic success.

Research by Riley, Bevan-Brown, Bicknell, Carroll-Lind, and Kearney (2004) investigated how New Zealand schools were identifying and supporting their gifted and talented students. Their research supported a developmental sociocultural approach, stating that “the concept of giftedness is dynamic, sensitive to time, place and culture” (p. 11). They discovered that schools had a tendency to overlook cultural, spiritual, and emotional giftedness and suggested a need for increased teacher

cultural understandings and professional development.

A 2012 Ministry of Education report highlighted growing reservations of an underserved population of gifted students from culturally diverse backgrounds (including Māori). Due to the narrow measures of giftedness and talent, many Māori and Pasifika students were excluded from school gifted programmes (Ministry of Education, 2012).

The Ministry of Education stresses the responsibility lies with schools to ensure that differences in cultural values are included and accounted for in their school gifted and talented policies. It recommends that schools consider the Pasifika values presented in the Compass for Pasifika Success (2009) as a guide in this process (Ministry of Education, 2012).

The National Administrative Guideline (NAG) 1 (c) iii (effective from January 2005) required schools to use good-quality assessment information to identify students who have special needs (including gifted and talented students), and to develop and implement teaching and learning strategies that meet those needs (Ministry of Education, 2012). The failure of schools to do so and provide proper identification processes for such students has been a cause for concern. The Education Review Office (2008) discovered that only 5% of schools had a description of giftedness and talent and the identification practices were extremely broad and applicable for the cultural milieu of the school. A further 40% of schools had descriptions that were inclusive and appropriate. That left 55% of schools whose definition and identification processes were only slightly, or not at all, comprehensive or culturally suitable (Scobie-Jennings, 2013).

A growing number of New Zealand researchers (Aseta, 2016; Bevan-Brown, 2009; Faea-Semeatu, 2011; Fuamatu, 2008; Galu, 1998; MacFarlane & Moltzen, 2005; Riley et al., 2004; Webber, 2011b) have investigated the relationship between cultural identity and giftedness. A common finding from these researchers is the enormous potential inherent within gifted Māori and Pasifika students, potential that often goes unrecognised (Ministry of Education, 2012). It is the economically disadvantaged and culturally diverse students who are “grossly under-represented” in gifted and talented programmes of which many are Māori and Pasifika. Schools therefore, need to be actively engaged in identifying such students (Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 25).

Cultural perspectives of giftedness

Cultural perspectives of giftedness are shaped by the beliefs, customs, values, and languages of different cultural groups (Bevan-Brown, 2011a; Sternberg, 2007). The common practice of schools withdrawing gifted and talented students for small-group specialised learning may not be culturally appropriate for Māori, as Bevan-

Brown (2009) stipulates the development of gifts and talents should not be done in isolation. She goes further to suggest that this development should be holistic in nature and incorporate the input of whānau and the wider Māori community as this is critical to Māoridom. Similarities to this notion can be drawn from Faaea-Semeatu's (2011) research where a key cultural identifier of Pasifika giftedness is representation, confirming the place of family in concepts of Pasifika giftedness.

Culturally sustaining pedagogy

Culture is pivotal in learning. It fulfils the functions of not only imparting and receiving of knowledge and information, but also by influencing the intellectual development of groups and individuals. A teaching practice and environment that acknowledges and incorporates, and responds to, a multitude of cultures offers full and unbiased access to education for all students. The culturally sustaining learning environment (Paris, 2012) is the ideal setting for identifying gifted and talented students of diverse cultural backgrounds. Teachers can build positive connections and encourage students to value their culture (Ministry of Education, 2012). It is the skilled and complete pedagogical actions of teachers that can impact and create an effective learning environment that will result in high achievement levels for diverse groups of learners (Alton-Lee, 2003).

The components of a culturally sustaining environment (Paris, 2012), according to Bevan-Brown (2005) have teachers who value cultural diversity (particularly Māori culture) and conduct programmes that include cultural knowledge, customs, and experiences. These teachers integrate cultural values, attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs into their practice, and use pedagogy and assessment practices that are grounded in culturally preferred ways. They create transformative opportunities that privilege cultural knowledge and ways of being so that children see themselves represented in the valued knowledge of schooling, and are able to succeed as who they are (Si'ilata, 2014; Si'ilata, Samu & Siteine, 2017).

Other teacher actions include having high academic and behavioural expectations of learners, caring for them as cultural beings, and having high expectations of their own teacher pedagogy. In these environments, students will often feel safe to take risks, student motivation is high, and learning is enhanced (Ford, Moore, & Milner, 2004; MacFarlane, Glynn, Waiariki, Penetito, & Bateman, 2008). MacFarlane et al. (2008) further promote these classrooms as engaging, with constructivist approaches encompassing a holistic perspective of collective learning, shared responsibility, and ownership of learning (Bishop et al., 2008), and a collaborative effort between teachers and students.

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Cummins' seminal empowerment model (Cummins, 2000) incorporates four institutional characteristics: cultural-linguistic incorporation; collaborative community participation; interactive pedagogies; and advocacy oriented assessment. In his framework, inter-group power relations are evident in the types of relationships that schools have with their communities, and in the relationships that teachers have with their students. He argues that schools can be collaborative and advocacy oriented or, alternatively, exclusionary and transmission oriented. Cummins (2000) further suggests that students who learn within this power sharing context have their identity validated, their voices heard and respected, meaning that schooling experiences will give voice to rather than silence their self-expression.

Bilingualism and education

For Pasifika and Māori students, language is the fibre that connects past to present as a means of reinforcing their existence in the cultural matrix of identity. In Pasifika cultures and particularly Samoan customary belief systems, language is God-given and a treasure to protect, for without language, there is no life. Pasifika students are predominantly in English-medium learning contexts which research literature consistently shows is the least effective educational context for emergent bilingual learners in majority culture settings (May, Hill, & Tiakiwai, 2004).

In research by Kennedy and Dewar (1997) and Nakhid (2003), the underachievement of Pasifika students for many years was attributed to deficit constructs held by teachers and educational policy makers of Pasifika families and communities, and having a subtractive view of their bilingualism (May, 2011). Si'ilata (2014) stresses the importance of utilising Pasifika learners' language and literacy resources when endeavouring to meet their language and literacy learning needs. Oracy and literacy are connected, and in order to be successful in reading and writing, there is a need for students to develop both communicative competence and the cognitive academic language needed to access the curriculum (Si'ilata, 2014).

Barriers to participation

When examining the lack of diverse students in gifted programmes, much of the research is focused on an absence of teacher awareness around cultural differences and perspectives (Bevan-Brown, 2009, 2011b; Esquierdo & Arreguín-Anderson, 2012; Galu, 1998; Milner & Ford, 2007; Scobie-Jennings, 2013; Webber, 2011a), deficit thinking (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006), low teacher expectations (Bevan-Brown, 2009), and the narrow margins of giftedness (Riley et al., 2004). These factors are key attributes to the low teacher nominations of diverse students.

The tapered view of giftedness is evident in the values and perspectives of the dominant culture which remain considerably influential in many New Zealand schools (Moltzen & MacFarlane, 2006). The prevailing conception of giftedness and the traits valued by largely middle class, monolingual Europeans form the biggest barriers to the identification of gifted and talented Pasifika and Māori learners within the school context (Reid, 2006).

Students who are often involved in gifted and talented school programmes are not representative of the student population or community as a whole. Therefore, students in gifted school programmes should closely exemplify the community itself (Ford & Grantham, 2003). Given these research findings, it is imperative for schools to undertake more concerted efforts to engage with families and their local communities if they are committed to ensuring an equitable pathway into gifted programmes for all students. A school's gifted and talented policy that incorporates multiple cultural concepts of giftedness and allows all students—English medium and bilingual—to be identified and have equal access to gifted programmes is needed. Incorporating other indicators that include the socio-affective domain, language, oratory, leadership, spirituality, service, and humility allow for the identification and inclusion of diverse gifted and talented students who have otherwise been excluded.

Sāsā (the seated, synchronised clapping dance)

The Sāsā connects to the movement of this research to raise questions, challenge, and transform thinking to propose change.

The cultural contexts and perspectives of parents and teachers are important within the bilingual setting of this research. Historically, research undertaken on, rather than with, Pacific peoples that has used deficit or disempowering frames and methods of research, has failed to produce any real progression in Pacific outcomes (Vaiotei, 2006). With this in mind, the inquiry into bilingual education as a linguistically and culturally

sustaining learning environment (Paris, 2012) that may support and develop cultural concepts of giftedness and talent in language minority learners, draws on a Pasifika strengths-based approach. This current research study focused on Pasifika perspectives of giftedness and talent as it converges with Pasifika parent and teacher aspirations for their children, to empower Pasifika communities.

This research was set within a cultural context of a group of Samoan parents and teachers who shared experiences of bilingual education and bilingual children living in the dual worlds of home and school. These experiences required cultural practice and knowledge of Samoan interpretations and realities. The participant group were representative of purposeful sampling due to the particular research focus. There were eight participants in the larger study comprising five parents and three teachers. The criteria for participation were parents whose children had been, or were currently being, educated in a Samoan bilingual setting of a particular school, and current teachers in the Samoan bilingual syndicate of the same school.

Data-collection tools

In keeping with data-collection methods consistent to a narrative inquiry approach and Pasifika research methodologies, in-depth semistructured talanoa sessions were used. As a Samoan researcher interviewing Samoan parents and teachers, the talanoa method is both receptive and pertinent due to the importance of relationships being the foundation on which Pacific events occur (Vaiotei, 2006). Talanoa is free flowing, meaningful, and rich with information as cultural etiquettes are observed, and its power lies in the participants choosing what information is disclosed when the time and context are right to do so (Halapua, 2004; Vaiotei, 2006). Participants were provided with the semistructured talanoa questions in Samoan and English prior to their individual interviews to allow time to reflect on the research topic and content of the interview. Talanoa protocols included the use of a digital voice recorder so as to record answers for accurate transcribing purposes. Transcribing took place as soon as possible after the interviews and participants were contacted individually by the researcher for clarification or checking of information. Eight individual interviews were conducted over a 3-week period in Term 3 of the school year. Interview times varied between 30 minutes to an hour and covered the guiding question prompts in conjunction with relevant issues that emerged during conversations. All eight interviews were conducted in both Samoan and English and participants responded in the language they were most comfortable with.

Pese o le Aso (songs of the day)

The Pese o le Aso connects to new ideas that emanate from the research, composing the contemporary narratives of those who have shared their stories.

For the purpose of this article, I have presented data from the teacher participants, and the next section provides answers addressing two research questions:

1. What are Samoan teachers' perspectives of giftedness and talent?
2. How might Samoan teachers see gifted and talented perspectives nurtured through Samoan bilingual education?

In connection to the first research question about Samoan teachers' perspectives of giftedness and talent, the teachers raised the following four themes.

Natural blessings (fa'amanuiaga)

All three teachers believed that giftedness was something innate—abilities individuals were born with and naturally occurred from birth as blessings from God. As one teacher articulated, “I believe it’s a natural gift that a child is born with, something that they carry with them all their lives no matter where they go, they will never forget the gift they have.” The teachers were clear in the separation of the two terms *giftedness* and *talent*, with one teacher affirming that “Talent is something different; people need to develop and be good at it.” The teachers agreed that talent was learned behaviour and developed through practice, age, and opportunities (e.g., sports coaching, music lessons, extra tuition, and scholarships). They explained further that talent development was possible only if the natural gifts were there to nurture from the start.

Language and cultural values (Gagana Samoa ma le aganu'u)

The teachers were unanimous in their beliefs that language and cultural values were critical indicators of Samoan giftedness and talent. Because they referred to language and culture/cultural values as a single entity (for the purposes of this study), these indicators have been integrated. The ability to speak Gagana Samoa (Samoan language) and exhibit the core fundamental cultural values of respect (fa'aaloalo), good behaviour (amio lelei), love (alofa), and service (tautua) were essential components of giftedness and talent according to the teachers. As one teacher explained, “Language and culture is a gift that you can't find anywhere but within yourself, for wherever you are in the world, with that language and culture, that will identify who and what you are.”

The strong link between language and culture in

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the establishment of a Samoan identity was reinforced, as one teacher pointed out: “the Samoan language and the Samoan culture is a gift. Language connects us to culture because without culture, identity doesn't exist.” A secure Samoan identity and a strong sense of community (familial and kinship ties) were interconnected and, according to these teachers, characteristic of giftedness.

Church and family

According to one teacher, strong church and family relationships were instrumental in displaying giftedness and talent. The ability for a child to stand up in church and lead prayers, to excel in and win church exams were held as common views of giftedness and talent. The strong affiliations between a child and the church also specified giftedness. To read the Samoan Bible, recite Samoan biblical scriptures and passages, and apply church teachings to daily life experiences were clear signposts of giftedness for these teachers. For another teacher, the confidence to perform in front of an audience determined giftedness. That confidence she explained comes from “what happens in the family and church, the connection between the two”. Therefore, the successful transfer of that connection from home and church domains into the school domain demonstrated giftedness.

Value-based perceptions remain at the heart of what is considered giftedness and talent because “we value different things, if God is at the top of your pyramid and then your parents, that's what we value and that's what we see as gifted”. Family representation (inclusive of loyalty and family pride) was also a key stimulus for individuals to embrace their gifts and talents because “as Islanders we take a lot of pride in that”. Another teacher spoke of particular family traits expressed over many generations as indicative of gifts and talents, highlighting musical, theology, sporting, tatau (traditional Samoan tattooing), academic, and oratory traits.

Holistic giftedness

Teachers indicated that giftedness was holistic and representative of the child as a whole. They agreed that a gifted child was academically capable, displayed the appropriate cultural values, and held a strong Samoan identity. As one explained, giftedness was looking “at the person as a whole; culturally, mentally, physically, and academically” and that all these facets were equally balanced and established. Each believed that giftedness was more evident in children who were raised and supported in the strong Samoan social milieu of family, home, and church. Such children could successfully transfer their gifts of cultural knowledge and value-based practice into the classroom to better support learning and talent development.

Interestingly, one teacher further expressed that, although she believed the Samoan language itself was indeed a gift and blessing from God, in her opinion: “A gifted child is a child who is good academically, good in the language, doesn’t matter what language, but you have an identity, you are a Samoan.” This teacher explained that an academic child, who identified as a Samoan, could also be gifted without Gagana Samoa provided that cultural socialisation processes were established and evident through the display of culturally appropriate behaviours and norms.

In relation to the second research question about how Samoan teachers might see gifted and talented perspectives nurtured through Samoan bilingual education, the teachers in the study responded with the following five themes.

Language (Gagana Samoa)

As Gagana Samoa was considered a natural gift, teachers agreed that its use between home and school through bilingual education supported children’s learning and the nurturing of natural abilities. The maintenance and survival of the Samoan language in bilingual education was considered vital. Teacher capacity to scaffold the children’s learning from home into formalised education through Gagana Samoa making things easier and more familiar for students was a clear benefit of bilingual education. One teacher voiced that, as bilingual teachers, they were “meeting the requirements of *The New Zealand Curriculum* and the school system, but also balancing it with our Samoan culture and language because that is the way we know to develop the child as a whole”.

The teachers believed that bilingual education enabled a child to “develop and shine because we can use their heritage language to help learn English. But in an English-medium class not only is the teacher struggling but the child will also suffer because they don’t have any way

of communication, they don’t understand each other.” Another teacher felt that some parents didn’t value the concept of bilingual education owing to “being colonised into that kind of thinking so it’s our job as educators and practitioners to try and change the parents’ way of thinking about bilingual education. Once they understand the main purpose of bilingual education then, I believe, parents will put their kids into bilingual classes.”

Cultural values (le aganu'u)

The allowances made possible in bilingual education for the cultural saturation of children were raised by all participants as key factors in nurturing giftedness. Bilingual education endorsed the motivation and encouragement needed in education by constantly reminding children of cultural expectations and behaviour norms that they were accustomed to in their backgrounds. The alignment between home and school culture, and its prominence for children’s learning and development, enabled teachers to “empower the gift”.

Through bilingual education, teachers were considered role models with the classroom being a site where cultural values were contextualised and reinforced daily. For teachers, the culturally sustaining pedagogy of their classrooms enabled students to feel safe enough to take risks in their learning, resulting in higher levels of self-esteem and confidence. As one affirmed, the culturally sustaining pedagogy in bilingual education was imperative in nurturing the holistic giftedness of a child “because we don’t leave the culture of the child outside, we need to bring all those things in”.

The freedom to advocate student self-efficacy through cultural discourse in school was considered a powerful teaching method in bilingual education. The opportunity for teachers to instil student self-belief by sharing realities of the hard life in Samoa (compared to New Zealand) and emphasising that success depended on hard work, prayers, and perseverance gave students the incentive to “work hard for their parents”.

Knowledge

Academic and cultural knowledge was another area stressed by teachers. Through the use of culturally sustaining pedagogy and established cultural expectations around behaviour, the teaching and learning of students was considered a smoother process through bilingual education. Because the values of respect, obedience, and service were ingrained in the ethos of the syndicate, teachers felt that learning became more purposeful and relevant for students. As one acknowledged, “we bring our culture into the context of the curriculum to better support children and their gifts”. The teachers stated

that imparting knowledge around tradition and history and the opportunity to plug any gaps that were “maybe missing from home” was a key element in bilingual education, particularly if “parents were New Zealand born, or were busy working with no quality time for them to sit down and talk about such things”.

Support

Teachers noted the strong collaborative support shared with parents and “the good relationships between us and parents is key to enforcing and merging their expectations of us and our practice into the school curriculum and our teaching”. The teachers considered this support important because it assisted them in fostering elements of Samoan giftedness and talent in their classrooms.

Home and school partnerships

Maintaining respectful relationships was a key attribute in bilingual education and necessary for cultural reinforcement. As children are taught from a young age to “teu le va” (look after the space/relationship) between themselves and their family, peers, elders, and those in authority, teachers, too, saw this as a necessity for keeping the lines of communication open between home and school. This held teachers accountable to parents. As one teacher explained, “sustaining the strong parent and community relationships” was important for bilingual teachers in continuing to nurture and develop giftedness in their learners. Another teacher spoke of parent interviews and home and school partnership meetings where, as teachers, they knew “the expectations of the family and the Samoan parents are for their kids to maintain their Samoan language and their culture”.

The findings from this research, and the voice of the teachers involved in the study have important implications for practice in our schools if we are genuinely committed to nurturing the gifts and talent of our Samoan children. These implications have been explained in the Tauluga section below.

Tauluga (the final dance)

The Tauluga connects to the possible actions and measures teachers and schools may take to support and nurture the gifts and talents of Samoan learners.

O tagata uma e maua manuia ae le o tagata uma e maua fa'amanuiaa

Everyone receives blessings yet not everyone is blessed

The proverb above indicates that blessings are abundant and everyone is a recipient of life's blessings in some form or another. In fact, as the research shows, Samoan language and culture are deemed blessings from God

for the benefit of all Samoans. However, only few are blessed. For the Samoan teachers in the study, Samoan students who are academically, musically, or athletically gifted and talented (in the traditional sense) are not truly blessed (in the Samoan context) unless they also possess, actively embrace, and manifest clearly the desired Samoan cultural values and traditional behaviours. These cultural values are specified as Samoan language, oratory (speaking), leadership, spirituality, service, and humility, all of which are encased in the core cultural tenets of fa'aaloalo and alofa (respect and love).

To interpret Pasifika values is to understand that, for many Pasifika students, their leadership abilities are nurtured and developed through their engagement of spiritual, cultural, and traditional protocols; their understanding of it and that which forms their core belief system. Pasifika students develop their common sense and initiative to lead through cultural expectations set in the home, being taught humility and service (from a very young age) primarily to family and church and extending out to school and sporting clubs. Their strengths in their languages provide the catalyst for many in becoming confident, engaging, and eloquent bilingual speakers in public domains. Their fierce loyalty to family and their family name comes through fa'aaloalo (respect) and alofa (love): fundamentally realising and accepting that their successes have more to do with how they are raised, the expectations set down by parents, and their cultural blessings from above than their own individual characteristics.

Incorporating Samoan valued knowledge, history, knowing, and learning and ways of being to best express themselves in varied outputs within the curriculum, will go a long way in supporting Samoan students to utilise their natural gifts and talents. In advocating for their cultural identity, cultural knowledge, and values-based capacities to be endorsed and integrated into school-based learning and development will only encourage and further motivate Samoan learners to draw on their Samoan-ness.

Try inviting parents into your classroom for a shared meal with your students. Or maybe ask to go along to special events that your students may be participating in, outside school hours (an important sports game on a Saturday morning, a music recital, a speech competition, or a show or production that they may be a part of through church or a youth group). These actions show their families how you value their children and their Pasifika identities. Shared feelings of inclusiveness and pride help to break down barriers between home and school. Through their personal and cultural connections to religion, self, family, and community, such steps will reinforce and enhance for Samoan students their naturally blessed gifts and talents.

Ulufafo (the exit)

The Ulufafo connects to the development of new knowledge as intrinsic motivation for this research.

The global underrepresentation of ethnic minority students in gifted and talented programmes has instigated a change from a narrow single category concept based on intelligence to a multi-category concept, inclusive of differing areas of ability and multicultural values (Moltzen, 2011). The Ministry of Education, through its policy changes and reports (2008, 2012) pertaining to gifted and talented students, has taken steps (albeit small) to address the need for understanding cultural conceptions of giftedness.

It would seem that the Ministry of Education could do more to support the framework of Samoan bilingual education as a model that empowers Samoan bilingual learners both culturally and academically. As teachers we also have a responsibility. It is hoped that the natural gifts and talents that so many linguistically diverse children possess, which are culturally valued and recognised in their homes and communities, can be acknowledged and celebrated within schooling.

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▶ **Martha Aseta** is a Samoan teacher currently teaching Years 7/8 at a South Auckland full primary school. She has an MA and an MProfStuds in Education (1st Class Honours) from the University of Auckland.

▶ **Dr Catherine Rawlinson** is a senior lecturer in gifted and talented education in the School of Learning, Development and Professional Practice, Faculty of Education and Social Work, The University of Auckland.

Email: c.rawlinson@auckland.ac.nz

▶ **Dr Rae Si'ilata** is a lecturer in biliteracy-Pasifika/TESSOL in the School of Curriculum and Pedagogy, Faculty of Education and Social Work, The University of Auckland.

Email: r.siilata@auckland.ac.nz