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How European Art Teachers in New Zealand Are Enabling Asian and Pasifika Students to Tell Their Stories Through Visual Arts

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Abstract

Paralleling the 2013 census statistics for the adult population in New Zealand, art teachers in Auckland, its largest city, are predominantly European. In contrast, young people under 20 are increasingly diverse with those of Asian and Pasifika ethnicities, the two fastest growing groups, comprising over half of Auckland's youthful population. Research conducted in Auckland in 2015 sought answers to how art teachers working in low to high decile schools are responding to the increasing ethnic diversity of students. Previous research had identified that Asian and Pasifika art and culture were largely absent from secondary school art programs compared with the emphasis on European and Māori. This paper focuses specifically on five European art teachers who are using culturally inclusive practices to enable 16-to-18 year old

students of Asian and Pasifika ethnicities to tell their stories through visual arts. These teachers believed that the students' art works which they brought to their interviews reflect their responsiveness to the students and their individual identities. The art works presented in this paper are eloquent devices that express meanings in ways that words cannot. They are not appendages to the research but an inseparable component for learning about the students and cultural aspects of their social worlds.

Key words

visual arts education, New Zealand, European art teachers, Asian and Pasifika students

Introduction

This paper draws upon research conducted in Auckland, New Zealand in 2015 which sought answers to how art teachers, working in different types of secondary schools, are responding to the increasing ethnic diversity of students. The paper focuses specifically on five European art teacher participants who use culturally inclusive practices to enable 16-to-18 year old students of Asian and Pasifika¹ ethnicities to tell their stories through visual arts. The research design was informed by the demographic contrast between predominantly European secondary school art teachers and the increasing diversity of Auckland's youthful population, particularly those of Asian and Pasifika ethnicities; by previous research which identified that Asian and Pasifika art and culture were largely absent from secondary art programs; and by national curriculum and assessment policies which emphasize 'cultural diversity'. It was informed by literature pertinent to teaching for success through culturally inclusive practices, and theoretical perspectives on using the 'visual' as a powerful tool in research.

This paper focuses on four key findings: art teachers in Auckland secondary schools continue to be European and female; the differences between low-decile and high-decile schools attended by Pasifika and Asian students, respectively, influenced students' art making; curriculum and assessment policies and culturally inclusive practices used by the five European-ethnic art teachers enabled Pasifika and Asian students to tell their stories through visual arts; and art programs in secondary schools had become more culturally inclusive.

Background to the Research

Demographic contrasts

In 2014, the *2013 New Zealand Census* (Statistics New Zealand, 2014) reported that the population of New Zealand was 4.24 million people. Nearly three-quarters (74.0%) identified with European ethnicities, followed by Māori (14.9%), Asian (11.8%) and Pasifika peoples

(7.4%).² The population of Auckland, the largest city, was 1.42 million (33.4%). While there were fewer people of European ethnicities (59.3%) living in Auckland, the number of Asian (25.1%) and Pasifika peoples (65.9%) was much higher there than nationally. Auckland had also gained a very diverse youthful population, with students of Asian (20.6%) and Pasifika ethnicities (35.7%) comprising over half of young people (56.3%) under 20. European youth (19.6%), along with Māori, Middle Eastern, Latin American, African and Other ethnicities comprised less than half of Auckland's youthful population.

A further demographic contrast was school decile, a socio-economic ranking from 1-10 used in New Zealand as a measure to support more needy schools. Reports show that 67.8% of Auckland's Pasifika students attend decile 1-3 schools, the lowest socio-economic ranking (Auckland Council, 2013). In comparison, many students of Asian ethnicities attend decile 6-7 schools, but most are enrolled in the highest decile 8-10 schools (NZQA, 2013).

Previous research established that Heads of Art Departments in Auckland secondary schools were predominantly European (83.0%) and female (76.6%) (Smith, 2005). The increasingly diverse student population, in contrast to the static European art teacher population, was confirmed in a later study (Smith, 2007). These demographic contrasts confirm a world-wide phenomenon in western societies that young people are becoming more diverse while teachers continue to be white and female (Feistritzer, 2011; Landsman & Lewis, 2006).

Curriculum and assessment policies

Art education is informed by the *New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2007) which contains eight learning areas, of which the Arts (visual arts, dance, drama and music) are one. It is stated that "the Arts are powerful forms of expression that recognize, value, and contribute to the unique bicultural and multicultural character of New Zealand" (p. 20); and that "European, Māori, Pasifika, Asian and other cultures add significant dimensions to

New Zealand visual culture" (p. 21). The curriculum cites 'cultural diversity' as one of eight principles that embody beliefs about what is important in education. However, an evaluation by the Education Review Office (2012), an independent government body, found that "cultural diversity ranked as the 'least evident' principle underpinning school decision making" in 201 primary and secondary school classrooms" (p. 19), and that bicultural Treaty of Waitangi obligations took precedence. This finding aligned with research which found that art education programs in secondary schools focused on European and Māori art and culture, a token obligation towards Pasifika, and an absence of an Asian dimension (Smith, 2007; 2011, 2014).

In the curriculum's visual arts learning area there is emphasis on students developing "visual literacy and aesthetic awareness" (p. 21). Theorists support the development of these competencies but recommend that art education needs to be framed around thinking, rather than formal art making skills (Duncum, 2010; Gude, 2007). These authors maintain that the inclusion of visual literacy, and a critical inquiry framework around images that expose diverse issues, is essential for meaningful art making by students.

In their final two years of secondary schooling, 16-to-18 year old students who elect to study art are assessed through the *National Certificate of Educational Achievement* [NCEA] Levels 2-3 Achievement Standards (New Zealand Qualifications Authority [NZQA], 2014). Underpinned by the curriculum, NCEA programs are designed by art teachers to enable their students to meet the achievement standards. At successive levels students are expected to demonstrate understanding of art works in cultural contexts; develop, clarify and generate ideas; and produce a cohesive body of work informed by established practice (the study of 'artist models') in one or more fields of painting, design, sculpture, printmaking and photography. The study of artist models is intended to enhance students' understanding of artists' art making processes and outcomes. The intention is not for students to imitate or

replicate artists' works, but to enquire into issues that artists depict, and draw upon their ideas, techniques and processes to make their 'own' art work (Duncum, 2002).

Literature on teaching for success through culturally inclusive practices

New Zealand researchers, Alton-Lee (2003, 2004) and Rubie-Davies (2008, 2010), assert that teaching is the most important factor in student achievement. This requires teachers to take responsibility for every student, value diversity, respect students' cultures, have high expectations, and build on students' experiences. Nash (2004) claims that achievement is affected by the degree to which a student's culture is respected, and the similarity between the culture of the community and the values of that school. In the context of Pasifika students, Si'ilata (2014) argues that the most important aspect is becoming knowledgeable about the languages and cultures of particular Pasifika ethnic groups, having high expectations, and taking into consideration the multiple worlds in which they live. For many students of Asian ethnicity, whether immigrants or New Zealand-born, there is pressure to conform by "fitting in" with the dominant European culture and western pedagogies that have prevailed in art education (Smith, 2014, p. 86). This acculturation points to "the imperative for art teachers to provide opportunities for all students to find their 'voice', and gain understanding of the voices of others" (Smith, 2014, p. 87).

Literature suggests that a critical approach to policy and pedagogy, and an ethic that gives priority to equity and democracy as social and educational objectives, is a way forward for an active engagement in cultural inclusion (Bianchi, 2011; Gay, 2010; Nieto & Bode, 2012). Hanley and Noblit (2009) claim that "culturally responsive pedagogy and racial identity are related to achievement and resilience" (p. 81). These perspectives informed the research.

Theoretical perspectives on the role of images in research

The decision to collect images as data was in response to the burgeoning literature on the theoretical grounding for using the ‘visual’ as a powerful tool in research. It was influenced by the notion that images are an illuminating means through which meanings can be expressed in ways that words cannot (Leavy, 2015; Weber, 2008). Stanczack (2007) argues that “images are not merely appendages to the research but rather inseparable components to learning about our social worlds” (p. 3). Weber’s (2008) advocacy for “the ability of images to evoke visceral and emotional responses in ways that are memorable, coupled with their capacity to help us empathise or see another’s point of view” (p. 47), resonated with the phenomena investigated. Leavy (2015) concurs that “as a persuasive social product visual art is a significant source of information about the social world, including cultural aspects of social life” (p. 227).

Using images as data also brings into focus the relationship between the image and the viewer. While images have the power to portray people’s social worlds, many argue that it is the viewer who applies the power of giving images their last meaning (Duncum, 2010; Leavy, 2015). Others claim that meanings of images need to be negotiated according to particular historical and social contexts (Sturken & Cartwright, 2009), or that interpreting images should be the result of dialogue between the image and an individual’s background (Sullivan, 2005). The collection of images in this research was intended to gain insights into the worlds of students in a sample of Auckland secondary schools.

How the Research was Conducted

Fifty-three state secondary schools in Auckland were randomly selected from the Ministry of Education’s (2014) *School Statistics: Culture Counts* website on the basis of location, school type (single gender, co-educational) and decile (a socio-economic ranking from 1-10). An art teacher in each school was invited to participate in the research, for which the research question

was “How are art teachers responding to the increasing ethnic diversity of students in Auckland secondary schools?”

The research was conducted in two stages: an anonymous online questionnaire and an optional face-to-face interview. Rich baseline data were gathered from the questionnaire.³ While not reported in this paper, these data informed the interviews. From the 28 teachers who volunteered to be interviewed, ten were randomly selected using the same criteria as for school selection. The ten art teachers were invited to bring to their interviews examples of students’ art works which they believed reflected their responsiveness to those they teach. The university’s ethics process required consent from students and their parents/caregivers, prior to art works being brought to interviews and used in reporting the findings. It was beyond the scope of this small-scale research to interview students, but it was anticipated that interviews with their art teachers, together with examples of art works, could provide important insights.

The research settings and participants

The ten art teachers interviewed taught across the range of decile 1-10 schools. Of the five European teachers who feature in this paper, three taught in decile 1-3 secondary schools with large numbers of Pasifika students, one in a decile 6 school with a wide diversity of ethnicities, and the fifth at a decile 10 school with predominantly European and Asian students.

Three art teachers were European-New Zealand, a fourth was European-New Zealand Māori, and the fifth was New Zealand-Dutch. The ethics process required pseudonyms to be used to protect the identities of schools and teachers, but students’ art works were able to be identified by their first names, ethnicity and age. Prior to the interviews, teachers completed a spreadsheet detailing their professional and academic qualifications and the school’s student ethnicity statistics. They provided a copy of their school’s mission/vision statement. These data informed the interviews and provided a rich introduction to the settings and participants.

Data collection through interviews and students' art works

Each art teacher was interviewed for up to three hours in their art department, followed by photographic documentation of students' art works selected by the teachers. The semi-structured, audio-recorded interviews were informed by the research question and the underpinning contexts presented above, the influence of each school's philosophy and mission/vision statement and decile ranking, and whether teachers were enabling ethnically diverse students to tell their own stories through visual arts.

Limitations of the research

The shape and form of the research highlighted potential limitations. First, the art teachers who volunteered to participate most likely did so because they held a particular interest in the research question. Second, most of those who agreed to be interviewed taught in low-to-mid decile schools with ethnically diverse student populations. Although beyond the scope of this small-scale research, a third limitation was that the 'voices' of students were not sought. The foremost limitation could be perceived as the issue of validity, especially since validity of interpretations and meanings has long been questioned in debates over the legitimacy of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This research is not generalizable in the traditional sense. Rather, it has verisimilitude through "the creation of a realistic, authentic, life-like portrayal" (Leavy, 2009, p. 57), as evidenced in the findings.

The Findings of the Research

The data collected during this research are presented through five scenarios expressed through the voices of the European art teachers and visualised through examples of art works by their 16-to-18 year old Pasifika or Asian students who were completing NCEA levels 2 or 3 visual arts programs and assessments.

Scenario 1: Art teacher Jacqui and her Pasifika students Vera and Nimo

Jacqui, who identified as European-New Zealand Māori, was in her tenth year of teaching. Her state co-educational school reflected the youth demographic and statistics for decile 1 schools. Of the 922 students enrolled, 77% were from Pasifika ethnic groups. Māori students at the school comprised 19%, and the remaining 4% included 24 Europeans. The school's mission statement was "To nurture in each individual a belief in the self, a commitment to achievement and the spirit of aroha (caring)." Core values were "acknowledgement of Māori as tangata whenua (the first people of the land), positive affirmation of cultures in the school and respect for all." The art department's mission statement was "to inspire in each student a creative outlet that will develop their confidence, support their wellbeing and help shape their personal identity in a positive way." Jacqui spoke of how language literacy level was low in the school and her priority was to develop "visual literacy" in art across all levels, from years 9-13. She approached this emphasis through the art curriculum strand, "Understanding the visual arts in context," and through the NCEA achievement standards for which students are required to demonstrate understanding of art works in cultural contexts.

The examples Jacqui brought to her interview were portfolios in progress by her year 13 painting class. She said, "It is at this level that the students, mostly 17-to-18 year olds, really want to make art about themselves." The mixed media works of Vera [Figure 1], a 17 year old Samoan girl, were indicative of the "personal identity" subject matter that most of the girls in this class explored. Jacqui spoke of how "the girls like to focus on their own image, especially their face, but also placing themselves in their own cultural contexts." She explained that many Samoan students, although New Zealand-born, are very proud of their heritage. This is constantly reinforced by the large Pasifika community in which they live and where the school is located, and by the positive affirmation of all cultures at the school. Jacqui explained that

when each student has decided what ideas they want to explore, what messages they want to convey, and what artists' styles and techniques they are attracted to she helps them locate "artist models" for inspiration. This happens primarily on the school's intranet because "for families in this low socio-economic area buying art books is not a priority." Jacqui spoke of how Vera's paintings tell the story of her dual contexts, living in New Zealand while retaining connections with Samoa. The portrait at left portrays Vera in reflective pose, wearing European dress, and seated before a backdrop of leaves from the taro plant, a root vegetable staple in the Pacific. At centre, she wears the casual attire worn by Samoan women in their day-to-day lives, a lavalava and shirt decorated with Pasifika patterns. This attire was introduced post mid-19th century when Christian missionaries taught that showing the naked body was shameful. The stylised hibiscus tucked behind Vera's right ear signifies she is unmarried. Employing techniques of line, blocks of solid or transparent colours and overlapping shapes, inspired by her artist model Jeffery Harris, Vera has overlaid this image with her outstretched arms. Jacqui suggested that this gesture could indicate a sense of loss or longing. In the third image the puletasi, a matching skirt and shirt worn for church, implies the importance of religion for Vera. A taro leaf, held out to her, signifies the importance for Pasifika peoples of growing and harvesting food, and of maintaining traditions. Vera's art works reflect Sullivan's (2005) view that interpreting images should be the result of dialogue between images and the individual's background.



Figure 1. Vera, Samoan girl, 17 years

The paintings by Nimo, a 17 year old Samoan boy [Figure 2], conveyed an immediate sense of sadness. Jacqui explained that Nimo's paintings were about his two siblings, the pain of losing his older brother in a house fire and the love he has for his little sister, Orchid. Nimo has drawn upon the work of David Schnell, who creates the illusion of architectural and foreshortened constructions through lines of perspective; and upon aspects of paintings by street/graffiti artist Connor Harrington. He has applied the subdued side of Harrington's work which relies on a dark palette, painterly gestural style, and juxtaposition of sharp lines alongside realistic self-portraits. The New Zealand ensign, with its Union Flag on the canton and the white stars of the Southern Cross, indicates Nimo's country of birth. Jacqui considered the black silhouetted images of Nimo holding Orchid's hand as they walk towards, and stand before their brother's coffin, to be his most powerful painting. This student's art work supports Weber's (2008) advocacy for "the ability of images to evoke visceral and emotional responses in ways that are memorable" (p. 47). It illustrates Jacqui's pedagogical approach to providing opportunities for her students to find their 'voice' and make art that was meaningful to them.



Figure 2. Nimo, Samoan boy, 17 years

Scenario 2: Art teacher Matthew and his Pasifika students Tafu and Brandon

Matthew, a European-New Zealander, had been teaching for over 30 years. He was head of art at his decile 1 state co-educational school which had a roll of 721 students, of which 570 identified as Pasifika (79%). Along with four European students, there were a number of refugees from South East Asia, India, and Middle Eastern countries. Matthew explained that the school's philosophy focused on the wellbeing of students. A feature of his teaching was transitioning students from being dependent on him at year 11 to a stage where they "develop their own ideas and bring something of themselves at years 12 and 13." A strategy Matthew uses is to show examples of previous visual arts portfolios by students' siblings, cousins, friends, and even aunts and uncles, to help them understand what lies ahead. He said he consciously thinks about the students as individuals when planning.

Matthew explained how his students "want to tell stories about themselves, but in their own way." He said he had "learnt to accept the student voice" and how important it is to back students up and support their ideas. The boy's stories were mostly about rough and tumble, bodily contact, fighting, wrestling, music, dancing and sports. Because Matthew is anti-

bullying and opposed to images of physical violence he had taken the fighting into animé which he found more acceptable. He looks for artist models which resonate with themes students want to explore. A favourite is Jon Cattapan whose political and social representations of the urban environment are generated through the internet. But it is the artist's techniques of using dots and lines, outlines of figures and blocks of colour that students exploit to give a sense of dynamism to their own work. Elements of movement and dramatic contrasts of light and shadow are used by the students to express aspects of their cultural milieu.

Matthew said he has no problems getting students to generate a cohesive body of work for their NCEA portfolios: "They take photos of each other, they do leapfrogs, it's just fantastic, but it's all about the hook isn't it?" Matthew's approach was evident in the paintings of 16 year old Tongan boy, Tafu [Figure 3], who uses sound waves, head-phones and gestures to depict his passion for music and aspiration to be a DJ.



Figure 3. Tafu, Tongan boy, 16 years

Matthew described the mixed media paintings of 17 year old Samoan boy, Brandon [Figure 4] as "high and low art and popular culture blending together in a animé theme, and that whole powerball thing...lots of physical contact...he's dealing with what he wants to deal with."



Figure 4. Brandon, Samoan boy, 17 years

Both Tafu and Brandon have referenced connections to their ethnic heritage through rhythmic depictions of traditional Pasifika patterns. Their art works implicate the power that visual culture has on “identity” (Freedman, 2003). Grushka (2009) concurs that the value of visual culture is that it contains images and issues that are relevant for adolescents because the visual is a large part of their daily lives.

Scenario 3: Art teacher Kaitlin and her Pasifika student Jade

Kaitlin, a European-New Zealander, had taught for six years. Her large state co-educational school had a decile ranking of 3 and an enrolment of 1892 students of whom 941 were Pasifika (50%). The next largest ethnic groups were Māori (24%), Asian (15%) and European (9%). Kaitlin explained that the school’s Mission Statement focused on “respecting each other, striving for academic and self-excellence, whanaungatanga⁴...sharing family values and embracing each other’s cultures, and akoranga...the education side of it.” In accord with Nash’s (2004) view, student achievement was enhanced by how the school and Kaitlin respected the students’ cultures. A feature of her programs was “placing cultural diversity at the centre of planning at all levels” and involving students as teachers with their peers.

Kaitlin's year 12 students, mostly 16-to-17 year olds, created "Symbolic Portraits" which included objects with which they identify. They are introduced to how artist models, such as Frida Kahlo and Rita Angus, treat symbolism in portraiture. For her striking self-portraits 16 year old Cook Island Māori girl, Jade [Figure 5], was inspired by the line and ink washes on woven cloaks depicted by Māori artist, John Bevan Ford. In some portraits her hair becomes a cloak. It is customary for Cook Islands women to wear flowers in their hair, notably the ei katu, a head wreath made of frangipani and gardenia flowers that symbolises friendship, love and respect. Kaitlin explained that "Jade really liked the symbolic gesture with flowers and because of the community she grows up in, the grid format of Pasifika patterns and tapa-effect is her anchor." As an outside viewer, who applies the power of giving images their last meaning (Duncum, 2010; Leavy, 2015), I was struck by Jade's frank depiction of herself with her ample figure and mole above her chin. The absence of idealization added power to these self-portraits. Kaitlin commented, "It's like a self-identity unit in some respects because I don't think the students realize exactly who they are until they start doing this."



Figure 5. Jade, Cook Island Māori girl, 16 years

Scenario 4: Art teacher Yvonne and her Asian students Lydia and Jeeun

Yvonne is New Zealand-European Dutch and had taught for over 20 years. Her decile 6 state co-educational school had a roll of 1900 students, including an international school. Although the largest group of students was European-New Zealand (47%), there were over 60 ethnic groups at the school. East Asian students comprised the next largest group (18%). The school's Mission Statement was twofold: "To inspire students to achieve educational excellence through a rich learning and social environment; and for students to become the best person they can be and contribute to society." Yvonne described the school as "multicultural in a harmonious way, in an environment of acceptance and respect." She recalled how her earlier teaching was from a western perspective, and that part of her subsequent learning had been to broaden her knowledge about a range of different art approaches connected to various cultural groups in order to support students. Yvonne was intrigued by how some of her year 13 students used visual arts as a research project of their own heritage, and as a means of connecting with their parents or grandparents through their art work. She noted that, for these students, "art making becomes a vehicle for research and output, rather than just output."

Yvonne discussed the work of Lydia [Figure 6], a 17 year old Chinese international student in her year 13 painting class. Lydia had become aware of how different the air and water quality was in New Zealand compared with her homeland, thus her focus became pollution in China. Yvonne said that through discussions and research, she and Lydia "came to understand what causes pollution, what underpins it, its effects, and how it's informing current art making practice in China." By doing research, Yvonne felt more informed and able to pose different questions. This approach also helps international students to understand the NCEA Level 3 assessment requirement to develop a cohesive body of work, and the emphasis in New Zealand on developing and expressing ideas, communicating and interpreting. In her multi-media paintings Lydia depicted pollution from coal used to generate electricity, water pollution

through dying fabrics, and consumerist forces of the garment industry and its purchasers, both in China and the western world. Her main interest was the decay that occurs. Yvonne described how, in the art work at left, Lydia embedded scientific information to reference areas in China that were guilty of the greatest pollution. Her transition from conventional painting techniques to experiments using rust and verdigras paint and gold leaf were designed to create differing textural surfaces to echo that decay. In Lydia's final works the buildings became grids of decay.



Figure 6. Lydia, Chinese girl, 17 years

Another example Yvonne brought to her interview was the work of Jeeun [Figure 8], a 17 year old Korean girl who had immigrated to New Zealand with her family. Jeeun had chosen to explore how a large percentage of young women in Korea undergo plastic surgery for their face. Yvonne said she had assumed that procedures to change eyelids, jaw lines, noses, and even lengthening the legs, were to meet a western ideal because that is how it is often portrayed on the internet and through imagery. But in conversation with Jeeun, and in research she felt compelled to do, Yvonne said she had discovered that it is driven by the role women have in Korean society, and how they gain value in their world is by looking after the physical body.

“Jeeun talked to me about ‘reading the face’... that it’s preferable to have a ‘happy face’ and more likely to lead to employment.” Through her art works Jeeun created a journey that told a very potent story. Yvonne concluded that “Jeeun’s work has tracked the research, and she seems to have located herself in it in terms of what her position is. She started off anti but now she’s researched it more...well this might be a possibility for her eighteenth birthday. About 80% of young women have this done, and that was part of our conversation.”



Figure 7. Jeeun, Korean girl, 17 years

Lydia’s and Jeeun’s use of research in art making resonated with literature about the role of images to enrich research (Smith, 2014). Their images were firmly located in the context of Jacqui empowering her Asian students “to find their voice and tell their own stories” (Smith, 2014, p. 87).

Scenario 5: Art teacher Sandra and her Asian student Hyemi

Sandra, a European-New Zealander, was in her tenth year of teaching. Her decile 10 state co-educational school had a roll of over 1700 students. European-ethnic students comprised 63.18%, with Chinese and South-East Asian students (20.16%) being the next largest ethnic groups. Sandra explained that the school’s Mission Statement was about “striving for our students to do their best and to achieve good academic results, but they also want students to

be good all-rounders.” She added, “There is definitely that care for students of different ethnicities and wanting the best for every student no matter where they have come from.”

A painting portfolio Sandra brought to her interview was by year 13 student, Hyemi [Figure 8], an 18 year old Korean girl. Hyemi was educated in Korea and New Zealand and, according to Sandra, “had a worldly response to certain things and a different take.” The issue she explored was connected to her homeland and cultural heritage, the “strict education prevalent in East Asian countries, pressure to succeed, and social problems students face as a result.” Sandra discussed how Hyemi had used her own image to convey her messages in a particularly powerful way. Drawing on the neoclassical works of Jacque Louis David (in particular ‘The Death of Marat’, 1793) and the blue-tinged porcelain-like portraits of Ivan Alifan, Hyemi seemed less concerned with rendering realistic physical characteristics, and more with creating a language of underlying sub-texts. In some of her works there is a feeling of drowning, of “sink or swim” and of keeping her head above water. In others, education is portrayed as a conveyer belt. Sandra explained that for Hyemi “schools are like factories that produce skilled individuals like a manufacturer.” In these paintings she has used Shane Cotton’s device of including small, but significant objects, outlined in white on a darker ground and using changes in scale. Hyemi has used her images to tell a particular story, and had been empowered by her teacher to do so. The art works in this student’s portfolio represent “inseparable components to learning about our social worlds” (Stanczack, 2007, p. 3).



Figure 8. Hyemi, Korean girl, 18 year

Discussion

Key findings that emerged from the conversations with the five art teachers encapsulate their professional beliefs, their pedagogical approaches informed by curriculum and assessment policies to support Asian and Pasifika students to tell their own stories through visual arts, and how the students' art making was positioned within the context of their decile 1-10 schools.

The art teachers' beliefs

These five art teachers firmly believed in the mission/vision statements and philosophies of their schools. Reflecting Nash's (2004) argument, each teacher was confident that the students' cultures were respected by their school, and the degree of similarity between the culture of the community and the values of that school were closely aligned. Si'ilata's (2014) concern for teachers to become knowledgeable about the languages and cultures of particular Pasifika groups, and the multiple worlds in which they live, was positively exemplified in Jacqui, Kaitlin, and Matthew's beliefs about teaching. Each was aware of their Pasifika students' ethnicities and cultural milieu. The effects of acculturation of Asian students and the pressure to conform by 'fitting in', reported in earlier research (Smith, 2014), had changed to a position

whereby students were enabled to find their own ‘voice’. This was exemplified in the beliefs held by Yvonne and Sandra about teaching students of differing Asian ethnicities.

These five teachers demonstrated that they felt responsible for their Asian and Pasifika students, had high expectations of them, built on students’ experiences, and emphasized a drive towards students achieving success (Alton-Lee, 2003, 2004; Bianchi, 2011; Hanley & Noblit, 2009; Nieto & Bode, 2012; Rubie-Davies, 2008, 2010). The visual arts was an ideal vehicle through which the teachers’ pedagogical beliefs could be realised.

The art teachers’ pedagogical approaches

The art teachers’ pedagogical approaches drew upon two key aspects of the *New Zealand Curriculum* (MoE, 2007). ‘Cultural diversity’, as a key principle that embodies beliefs about what is important in education, underpinned each teaching program for these 16-to-18 year olds. This was exemplified by Matthew who said he consciously thinks about his Pasifika students as individuals when planning, and Yvonne who spoke of how her teaching had changed from a western perspective to approaches connected to various cultural groups in order to support students. An emphasis on students’ developing ‘visual literacy’ was an imperative, particularly for those working with Pasifika students. Jacqui noted the low language literacy level in her school and how her priority was to develop ‘visual literacy’ across all year levels.

A key aspect of assessment for the *National Certificate of Educational Achievement* (NZQA, 2014) was also evident. The study of ‘artist models’ to enhance students’ understandings of artists’ art making processes and outcomes was prominent in conversations with the teachers. Without exception, each teacher assisted their students to locate artist models whose processes and outcomes resonated with the students’ aspirations for their art making.

The findings highlight that Asian and Pasifika art and culture, which were largely absent from art programs in secondary schools in the past (Smith, 2007, 2010), were being addressed by these art teachers through their pedagogical approaches.

The students' performance in art in the context of their decile 1-10 schools

The Pasifika students whose art works feature in this paper reflect the 2012 NCEA report that Pasifika candidates are heavily represented in decile 1-3 schools, less so in decile 4-7, and even less so in decile 8-10 schools (NZQA, 2013). In contrast, the Asian students whose art works are included were less likely to be represented in decile 1-5 schools, more likely in deciles 6-7, and even more likely in decile 8-10 schools. In 2012, overall achievement at NCEA Level 2 by Pasifika students was 69% compared with 85% for Asian students, and at NCEA Level 3, 60% compared with 80%. In this research, which focused on students' performance in visual arts, it was evident that each student, whatever their Pasifika or Asian ethnicity, had gained success regardless of their school's decile ranking.

Assumptions can be drawn from an analysis of themes portrayed in the images. The art works by Pasifika girls, Vera and Jade [Figures 1, 4], at decile 1 and 3 schools, focused primarily on their ethnic selves, portraying their physical appearance, including ethnic signifiers, and placing themselves within their cultural contexts. In the art works by Pasifika boys, Nimo, Tafu and Brandon [Figures 2, 3, 4], at decile 1 schools, there was greater preoccupation with placing themselves within their 'cultural milieu', the 'scene' with which they identified and their personal circumstances. The art works by Asian girls, Lydia, Jeeun and Hyemi [Figures 6, 7, 8], at decile 6 and 10 schools, were characterised by an exploration of 'issues' connected to their homelands and cultural heritage.

A key aspect of NCEA is for students to convey their 'personal signature' in art making. These eight students neither imitated nor replicated artists' works but, rather, enquired into

issues that artists depict and drew upon their ideas, techniques and processes to make their ‘own’ art (Duncum, 2002). The images presented in this paper are persuasive statements about the individuality of each of these 16-to-18 year old Asian and Pasifika students. They carry what Becker (2002, p. 11) refers to as “real, flesh and blood life” and are used not just as evidence, but as statements in a persuasive way. The students’ impulse to tell their story through visual arts is vividly portrayed in art works which reflect their ethnicities, cultural perspectives, and cultural background. This impulse aligns with Leavy’s (2015, p. 227) view that “as a persuasive social product visual art is a significant source of information about the social world, including cultural aspects of social life”.

Conclusion

This research sought answers to the question of how predominantly European secondary school art teachers are responding to the increasing ethnic diversity of their students. This paper reports specifically on how five European teachers enabled students of Pasifika and Asian ethnicities, the fastest growing groups, to tell their stories through visual arts.

The knowledge generated by this research is significant in its own right. The data collected through teachers’ ‘voices’ and examples of their students’ art works highlight the importance of building relationships between predominantly European-ethnic teachers and the increasingly diverse youthful population. The art works illustrate that “culturally responsive pedagogy and racial identity are related to achievement and resilience” (Hanley & Noblit, 2009, p. 81). The stories these students told through their art works encapsulate the importance of teachers empowering them to be themselves, and the capacity of images “to help us empathize or see another’s point of view” (Weber, 2008, p. 47). This research fills a gap in the literature. It has the potential of transferability of the teachers’ beliefs and pedagogical approaches, and of the role of images in research, to other settings within and beyond art education.

Notes

1. The term ‘Pasifika’ is unique to New Zealand and is used to describe migrants from the Pacific region and their descendants who now call New Zealand home (MoE, 2010). The largest group is Samoan (48.7%), followed by Cook Island Māori (20.9%), Tongan (20.4%), and Niuean (8.1%) (Statistics New Zealand, 2014).
2. Where a person reported more than one ethnic group in the *2013 New Zealand Census* they were counted in each applicable group, thus the population statistics are not rounded off to 100% (Statistics New Zealand, 2014).
3. The online questionnaire sought the following: teacher data (gender, ethnicity, academic and professional qualifications, years teaching); school data (type, location, decile, student population (including ethnicity percentages); curriculum data ('cultural diversity' directives); culturally inclusive pedagogy data (teacher knowledge, disposition).
4. “Whanaungatanga” describes the relationship through shared experiences and working together which provides a sense of belonging (maoridictionary.co.nz/word/10068).

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Dr Jill Smith is Associate Professor in the School of Curriculum and Pedagogy at the Faculty of Education, University of Auckland, New Zealand. She has been involved in graduate pre-service art teacher education in the secondary sector for over thirty years and leads these programs. A Pakeha (European) New Zealander, Jill's teaching and research interests include

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