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Pacific Students' Success in New Zealand Universities: A Literature Review

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Abstract

This literature review examines Pacific student success in New Zealand universities, with a particular reference to the Massey Business School, Massey University. It identifies disparities in participation, retention, and completion between Pacific and non-Pacific students, alongside evidence of significant improvement where sustained, targeted strategies have been implemented.

Key themes include the importance of culture, identity and belonging; the impact of socio-economic disadvantage and first-generation status; and the ways university structures can either marginalise or affirm Pacific learners. The review highlights culturally responsive pedagogy, relational teaching, and explicit scaffolding of academic literacies as critical for enhancing engagement and achievement.

Institutional initiatives – such as Pacific student centres, mentoring, dedicated learning support, flexible delivery, and community partnerships are discussed, with Massey University presented as an example of how these approaches can be embedded. The review argues that Pacific success requires systemic change in institutional culture, curriculum, and accountability, and calls for more Pacific-led, longitudinal and evaluative research to inform future policy and practice.

Keywords: Pacific Student Success, Belonging, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, Institutional Initiatives, New Zealand