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Switched On:-

What factors motivate tertiary students to achieve 100% course attendance?

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of
Master of Philosophy
in
Humanities and Social Sciences

at

Massey University, College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Palmerston North, New Zealand

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2014

ABSTRACT

What causes tertiary students to never miss a day of class for their entire course? This study explored the narratives of students who had achieved 100% course attendance in a provincial tertiary institution in New Zealand.

The aim of this study was to identify factors that contributed to why students decide to fully attend their chosen tertiary course and provide some understanding of the underlying motivations that contribute to the achievement of this phenomenon. Kaupapa Maori and Western research methodologies were utilised to gather data from nine participants in the School of Applied Technology in a New Zealand polytechnic. Data gathered from semi-structured interviews was collated and categorised into themes. An important consideration for this research was that the participants' voices were heard and their meanings established through a collaborative process.

This study showcased some highly motivated and inspirational students who accomplished an amazing academic achievement, against all the odds. The majority of the participants were from non-traditional and commonly categorised 'at risk' student groups. Despite the many risk factors such as negative educational experiences and influences in their past, ethnicity, age, and level of academic abilities, these participants provide some valuable information on how they succeeded.

Findings from this research provide some confirmation that students are able to succeed in their academic endeavours and achieve their dreams if their motivation, goals and beliefs are strong enough to overcome obstacles that they may encounter in their learning journey.

Finally, the intention of this study was not only to capture the participants' stories as exemplars of student success but also to inform student engagement, retention and successful

completion policies and practices in tertiary institutions. Developing and trialling new interventions based on this study could potentially improve academic outcomes for students, teaching staff and tertiary institutions with benefits for families, communities and New Zealand's social and economic future.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to:

God Almighty, the God of Israel and our Heavenly Father,
and to Yeshua Ha'Mashiach, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son and Saviour of the world,
and the Holy Spirit who gave me the wisdom, strength and help to complete this work.

And to my mokopuna:

Marshall and Malachi Strickland

who inspire me every day and made all the effort worthwhile.

They will be the ones to carry on the legacy of attaining a good education.

Aim high and go for your dreams, e kare.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The journey to complete this research has been a long and arduous one. Many times, I have been 'at risk' of not completing this venture and am grateful for those people who have encouraged me and given me a reason to continue.

To the nine participants, I would like to offer my acknowledgements and thanks first. To me, you are the unsung heroes within the education arena and I feel most humbled and honoured to have heard your inspiring stories. I will always be grateful for your generosity in sharing a part of your learning journey, thoughts and experiences which are a taonga and will help others.

To my supervisors, Nick Zepke and Krystal Te Rina Warren, thank you for your support and guidance. Nick, I have appreciated your skill and expertise in feeding back what I needed to know to take the next steps. Thank you both for your patience and being there for me.

My heartfelt thanks to Gloria Abernethy whose generosity of spirit and time provided a much needed extra pair of eyes to look over the thesis when I became blind to what I had written. You helped me to fashion this work into something that I felt satisfied with and proud of in the end. Your encouragement and guidance was much appreciated and won't be forgotten.

Most of all to my whanau, thank you to my daughters, Lanea, Cherie and Angeline. You are all such a great support and encouragement to me and are always there to keep me on track. Thank you, Lanea and Cherie, for my korowai that I will wear at my graduation. When I felt like giving up, I thought of that korowai and the aroha that you both put into it and so that helped me keep going. To Nathan, thank you for your encouragement and leading the way for our

whanau to strive for excellence. And lastly, to Eddie, my husband, thank you for your undying aroha and support and giving me the time and space to complete this huge endeavour.

Nga mihinui ki a koutou katoa.

Approval for this research has been obtained from Massey University Human Ethics

Committee: Southern B Application – 13/55

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Ko te manu e kai ana i te miro, nōna te ngahere.

Ko te manu e kai ana i te mātauranga, nōna te ao.

The bird that partakes of the miro berry reigns in the forest.

The bird that partakes of the power of knowledge owns the world.

(Ministry of Education, 2007).

Research Title

Switched On: What factors motivate tertiary students to achieve high levels of attendance?

Introduction

Student attendance in higher education is a longstanding and pervasive issue that impacts significantly on student engagement, retention and successful completion rates (Cleary-Holdforth, 2007). A study by Rodgers (2001) revealed that, as far back as the 14th century, attendance was problematic at Oxford University, England. In more contemporary times, a myriad of educational research undertaken in the last few decades, have found that student attendance is still an area of concern (Devadoss & Foltz 1996; Dolton, Marcenaro & Navarro 2003; Durden & Ellis 1995; Kirby & McElroy 2003; Marburger 2001; Rodgers 2001; Massingham & Herrington, 2006).

Recent educational policies have included open entry access to higher education and widened participation opportunities for students who previously were not able to engage in tertiary

study and this has exacerbated the issue further. While this policy has provided access and equal opportunity for a more diverse range of students who desire to gain a tertiary qualification, sadly many do not persist and achieve their goal due, in part, to poor academic skills and inadequate social integration into the institution (Tinto, 1975, 1997; Wensvoort, 2013). It has been found that students become prone to absenteeism from their classes when faced with challenges inside and outside of the classroom, such as lack of confidence in study skills, financial needs, family demands and necessity for part time employment (Kantanis, 2002); McAllister, Newell, Perry & Scott, 2006).

Furthermore, the likelihood of tertiary students completing their courses is significantly impacted by their course attendance. Much research has found that there is a positive correlation between student attendance and academic achievement (Bashir & Jadayil, 2012; Chou & Kuo, 2012; Clark, Gill, Walker, & Whittle, 2011; Devadoss & Foltz, 1996; Fernando & Mellalieu, 2011; Fox & Medhekar, 2010; Marburger, 2006; Massingham & Herrington, 2006; Obeidat, Lyubartseva & Mallik, 2011; Schmidt, 1983). This suggests that a positive link has been found to exist between student attendance and successful course completions. In view of these findings, student attendance has become the subject of a myriad of research aimed at identifying reasons for high absenteeism and how to address this growing trend. These studies are elaborated on in the literature review in the next chapter.

Despite the plethora of research on student attendance, persistence, engagement, retention and success, there appears to be a need for still more research, as interventions already applied have not all or always resulted in lifting attendance rates to the levels that are needed and desired (Devadoss & Foltz 1996; Durden & Ellis 1995; Marburger 2001; Rodgers 2001; Dolton, Marcenaro & Navarro 2003; Kirby & McElroy 2003; Massingham & Herrington, 2006).

In the pursuit for answers, some research findings have placed significant responsibility for student attendance on teaching staff and teaching quality (Brewer, 2005; Fernando & Mellalieu, 2011; Friedman, Rodriguez & McComb, 2001). Educational staff have been blamed for students under-achieving and failing to complete their courses (Thrupp, 2010). However this is debatable because research by Hattie (2003, p 2), to identify what matters in education, reveals that students “account for 50% of the variance in achievement”. This means that students’ personal reasons for not attending and engaging in their learning play a greater role in attrition statistics. However, Hattie does suggest that improving teacher effectiveness can have a motivating effect on student engagement and academic outcomes and therefore needs to be optimised. One of the objectives of this study was to ask tertiary students how much influence the tutor/teacher has on students’ course attendance, given the important linkages that have been made between attendance and academic success.

Aims of this study

The intention and focus of this research is to explore the stories of students who have achieved 100% course attendance in a New Zealand polytechnic in order to extract the salient factors that contributed to their achievement. Specifically, the study was aimed at finding what motivated these students to achieve a high level of course attendance. It was envisaged that their in-depth narratives may provide some insight into the underlying motivations and factors that lead to this positive and important outcome.

From the outset, a clear decision was made to avoid a deficit approach to this kaupapa (study). Capturing participants’ stories of 100% attendance is a way of giving these students a voice and also honouring their achievement (Pohatu, 2005). Careful consideration was given to the means of gathering these powerful messages in a way that maintains participants’ mana and provides a non-threatening and collaborative space to engage in dialogue (Pohatu, 2005).

Kaupapa Maori methodology was deemed to meet these intentions and will be elaborated on in Chapter 3.

Ultimately, the aim of this study was to have some valuable information to help us to understand the phenomenon of 100% attendance, so this data would then form part of an evidential base to contribute to developing future strategies or interventions for improving successful outcomes for tertiary students. This has the potential to enable better life chances for students and their families and to increase the number of qualified graduates required to meet New Zealand's social and economic needs.

Justification for the study

With the current trend of fiscal cuts in the tertiary education sector and funding levels being directly related to the number of student course completions, it is imperative for tertiary institutions to find ways of improving student attendance, engagement, retention and successful academic outcomes (Tertiary Education Commission, 2010). Thus, educational staff and institutions have a vested interest in identifying and implementing strategies and interventions to address these issues. The continuing quest to find much needed answers must include how to increase student attendance rates and adds to the basis for more research on this topic (Kelly, 2004).

Despite the voluminous amount of literature on student attendance worldwide and over a long period of time, a search for studies regarding student attendance, specifically relating to Applied Technology (AT) courses such as automotive, carpentry, electrical and electronic engineering in New Zealand, has produced no results. Statistics may be located in individual institutions that provide trade courses but there was no research literature found on factors that motivate student attendance in these disciplines in scholastic educational research

databases in New Zealand. There has been some research in Australia about motivation and completion in engineering courses (Fernando & Mellalieu, 2010, 2011) but none specifically about attendance. Suffice to say that there is a paucity of studies undertaken in the field of AT to provide data that may indicate there is a problem relating to student course attendance in New Zealand or globally.

To add to this, there have been no studies found regarding the identification of factors that motivate students to achieve 100% course attendance in educational literature. Hence, this study fills a gap in the research literature and also provides valuable information from the people who have actually achieved this phenomenon. The assumption is made that the factors extrapolated from participants' stories will have the potential to make a valuable contribution to educational literature. Pohatu (2005, p.8) suggests that "[d]eveloping understandings of the messages within narratives opens unique possibilities for their continuing reapplication...at all levels".

It is hoped that the information and factors identified within this study will be helpful for teachers and institutions. Particularly this relates to providing a basis for devising and implementing effective interventions which can possibly impact student motivation causing them to persist and achieve higher course attendance and academic success. It is important to keep in mind that given the diversity of students in tertiary education, there is no one size that fits all (Acer, 2012). Moreover, Zepke, Leach, Prebble, Campbell, Coltman, Dewart, Gibson, Henderson, Leadbeater, Purnell, Rowan, Solomon, and Wilson (2005) suggest that while there are general guidelines that institutions can gather from research to address their general issues regarding student retention, which includes attendance, they need to find their own specific solutions that best fit their unique situation. Furthermore, Brock (2010) urged that

institutions need to be willing to trial new interventions that could potentially motivate higher student attendance and enable course completion rates to be achieved.

Background

This study was undertaken in a New Zealand polytechnic. Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs) offer technical and vocational courses that qualify and prepare students for employment in a wide range of industrial and professional workplaces. In the Applied Technology sector, these include engineering, carpentry, electrical and automotive study. The curriculum is based on theory and practice set by the related industry and ITPs are increasingly attracting students who are choosing not to go to university but want a skilled rather than academic profession (Dent, 2008).

The impetus for this research came from a group of polytechnic students who had achieved 100% course attendance. These students came from backgrounds of educational underachievement, had past negative schooling experiences, were academically challenged and categorised as 'at risk' students. A definition of 'at risk' students has been drawn from several studies and is typified as students who have not achieved academic qualifications at any level and are vulnerable to not completing their course of study (Grebennikov & Skaines, 2009). Not only did these students manage to achieve full course attendance but they also successfully passed their course, against all the odds.

My curiosity was piqued and memories flooded back of my own experience of attending school and its accompanying challenges. My story is shared here to illustrate the connection I felt to these students' achievement and the compulsion I felt to capture other students' stories for why they had achieved 100% course attendance.

My Story

My mother could not read or write and because of her own personal experience and negative encounter with education, she did not value education on the whole. Her view of education and her aspirations for me were learning how to clean the house, know and be able to look after the kids and be competent at cooking kai for the whanau. My mother's long term goal for me was to leave school at 15 (the legal school leaving age at that time) and get a job so I could supplement the whanau's income and help with paying the bills, or leave home and look after myself.

For me, from an early age I loved learning and was determined to do well educationally. I had teachers who recognised my academic abilities and encouraged and supported my own beliefs that I could aim high and achieve academic success. As a consequence, I did very well at school and had set my hopes high on attaining a university degree. However my goals for myself and determination to achieve them and my mother's desires for me were continuously in conflict.

Many times my mother would say to me "Maraea, you're not going to school today. You need to stay home and help clean the house or look after the kids". But I had other plans and I would work it out so that I could run away to school.

Where I lived, the school bus went straight past my house and it would go up the road for about five kilometres to pick up the school children and then it would turn around and come back past my house on the way to the school. I knew how long the bus took to make this trip to the end of the route, turn around and come back again past my house. To my advantage, there was a hill just before my house on the same side of the road and so on its return journey the bus would chug up the hill making a loud noise

and then it would come down past my house. What I would do was, I would hear the school bus go past my house and I knew how long it would take to come back. As the time got closer for its return, I would go to the front of the house, near the front door and listen for the bus to chug up the hill. When I heard it, I would run out of the front door, up to the road and jump on the bus as it came past. When I jumped on that bus, I was happy but I knew I was in for a hiding (physical punishment) when I got home but I didn't care. Such was my determination to go to school and achieve and that scenario played over and over again from when I was nine years old. I know what it is like to be determined to get a good education and I have remained like that all my life. I did achieve my dream of gaining a bachelor degree, even though it was not until later in life as a mature, second-chance learner.

I know the lengths I went to and was prepared to go to, to attend school and later on to commit to achieve academically at a tertiary level and I wanted to know why other students wanted to attend their courses. What made them want to keep going, no matter how hard it got? In doing this study, I wanted the privilege and honour of hearing and recording stories of other students' motivations to attend course and achieve academic success.

I thought that, given the usual life events that occur in people's lives, including students, there must have been many occasions such as illness, bereavement, transport problems, sleeping in, financial needs, late nights out, which could have quite easily deterred them and provided the perfect excuse for not attending class. Many tutors can attest to this fact. I wanted to know how did students motivate themselves to overcome whatever deterrents or barriers they encountered, persist in attending class and successfully achieve their qualification, no matter what. And were they internally or externally driven?

Questions came to mind such as; does a shift occur in their thinking, motivations, goals, for the student to persist in attending their course of study? What causes that change in attitude and behaviour? What factors/thoughts, makes them decide and make choices to attend their course when diversions or barriers occur, some of these beyond their control? How do they problem solve challenging situations? In short, what makes students decide to attend their course come what may?

Who are the participants in this study?

Nine participants took part in this study ranging in age from 18 years to 62. There were three females and six males. Two females were of Maori ethnicity and one female was an international student. One male was Maori and the other five males were of European descent. Apart from one participant, all the rest were non-traditional students, meaning they did not come directly from secondary school to tertiary study. They were second chance learners, all with a variety of educational challenges ranging from a language barrier to lacking study skills and requiring intensive academic support. Much like my own educational journey and status, participants in this study had experienced negative schooling experiences in the past and fell into the 'at risk' or vulnerable students' category.

Additionally, as with my own story, participants' narratives that give their own reasons for achieving 100% course attendance are worthy of being acknowledged and valued. They have much to add to the quest for finding solutions to high attrition rates in the tertiary sector and inform future activities (Pohatu, 2005).

Research Questions

- Why do students decide to achieve high levels of or full attendance in their course?
- What factors contribute to student's decision to always attend classes?

- When do students decide to achieve high levels or full attendance in their course?
- How do student's problem-solve and overcome barriers on a daily basis to ensure they keep on track and maintain full course attendance?
- How much do tutors influence students to attend every day?
- What other factors contribute to motivating students to attend classes 100%?
- Who achieves 100% course attendance?

Scope of study

The following is an outline of the chapters in this study and their content:

Chapter One:

This chapter introduces the topic for investigation, its aims, background and justification for this study. It ends with the research questions and the scope of the research.

Chapter Two:

This chapter introduces the literature review about student attendance. Its purpose is to provide some research from the vast array of international studies on this topic and identify some key theories and ideas of researchers in the field. Theories about motivation, self-efficacy, goal setting and self-regulated learning are integral to this research study.

Chapter Three:

This chapter outlines the theoretical perspectives and methodologies. Kaupapa Maori Theory and Narrative Inquiry provide the theoretical frameworks that underpin this qualitative study and methodologies utilised. Semi-structured interviews were employed to capture participants' stories and were personally analysed to extract the main themes.

Chapter Four:

This chapter provides the data analysis of the participant's narratives. Themes were identified and categorised and the data presented within these categories.

Chapter Five:

This chapter discusses the findings of this study utilising data from the participants and wider literature.

Chapter Six:

This chapter delivers the conclusions for the study and offers some final thoughts. A proposition is made to educators and institutions to consider trialling an early intervention using the findings of this study. Limitations of the research and future recommendations are also included.

Summary

This study investigated the factors that motivated a selected group of students to achieve 100% course attendance, in order to add to the body of knowledge available on student success. Using Maori theory and research practices, narratives were captured in a collaborative process to answer the research questions posed. It is hoped that these findings will make a positive contribution to informing policies and practices for student engagement, retention and successful course completions in the tertiary sector. The following chapter reviews literature on the key theories and findings that were explored in this study.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

I ore ate tuatara kapatu ki waho

A problem is solved by continuing to find solutions.

(Massey University, 2013)

Introduction

This chapter will explore the literature that is pertinent to factors that motivate tertiary students to achieve 100% attendance.

A significant body of international research in educational literature documents the issue of student attendance in the tertiary sector. Many studies have attempted to identify factors that contribute to student course attendance and it is to these studies that this literature review will draw upon. Although the course subjects and at times the demographics of students in international studies are not the same as those in New Zealand tertiary institutions, several studies indicate that similarities appear in the research findings that could be helpful in improving course attendance here, despite differences in disciplines and settings.

Consequently, this literature review will look at student attendance across multiple disciplines to distil salient factors that have contributed to course attendance in countries such as Australia, USA, UK, South Africa, and Taiwan. However, it is noted that in the end, it is necessary for individual institutions to find their own solutions for their specific situation (Zepke et al, 2005).

The phenomenon of 100% course attendance is a multifaceted construct. It comprises many facets including student characteristics, transition and preparedness for tertiary study, motivation, personal reasons and teaching and institutional influences. This review aims to encompass the various aspects that contributes to understanding the nature and complexity of student attendance in relation to the findings from existing research and those from this study.

Key themes examined are as follows:

- Characteristics of tertiary students in New Zealand ITPs
- Motivational theories and Motivation
- Intrinsic Motivation
- Extrinsic Motivation
- Self Determination Theory
- Self-Efficacy Theory
- Value of attendance
- Factors that motivate students to achieve 100% course attendance

Characteristics of Tertiary Students in New Zealand ITPs

Statistics from the Ministry of Education (2010) indicate that the number of students participating in some form of tertiary study in New Zealand has been increasing over the last ten years (Radloff, 2010). This is partially attributed to open entry policies in the tertiary sector which allow anyone to study in higher education at any level when they turn 20 years of age. Hence, adult students make up a growing percentage of the tertiary education population (Radloff, 2010).

These governmental statistics reveal that females make up more than half of the student population in ITPs. Maori and Pasifika students constitute under 20% of students taking

courses while mature or adult students, aged 20 years and over, represent over 60% of the student body in New Zealand ITPs. Eight out of the nine students in this study were mature/adult students (Radloff, 2010).

One classification of adult students has them categorised as either non-traditional (NT) or traditional students (Forbus, Newbold & Mehta, 2011). NT students have been defined as first time or returning students who are typically older, married, with lots of other commitments and potentially will struggle more with academic challenges and successful course completions. Traditional students are students who go straight from secondary school to study at either an ITP or university without a break in study (Forbus et al, 2011; Ministry of Education, 2010). Interestingly though, non-traditional students have been found to have higher intrinsic motivation than traditional students (Afzal, Ali, Khan & Amid, 2010; Daniels, 2010; Bye, Pushkar & Conway, 2007).

Zepke et al (2005) found in their study on first year students that numbers of NT students are increasing in higher education while traditional students are decreasing because of the general demographics of an aging population and fewer young people. NT and mature students make up more than 60% of students in ITPs who are doing a diploma or certificate course (Ministry of Education, 2010). NT or second chance learners, those with no former school qualifications and lack literacy or numeracy skills are heavily represented by Maori and Pasifika students. This makes them vulnerable and likely to not persist towards course completions. Thus first year students and mature students are particularly at risk of high attrition rates. The demand on tertiary institutions to increase successful student outcomes has become greater and more challenging with a more diverse spectrum of learner entering their doors with their accompanying academic needs (Ministry of Education, 2010).

Motivational theories and Motivation

There are several motivational theories that are useful for understanding and determining the motives that underpin student behaviour. As with human behaviour, motivation is complex and no one theory provides the answer to what drives a person/student to make specific decisions and engage in certain behaviours (Williams & Williams, 2010). Trying to pinpoint one theory that motivates students to achieve 100% course attendance is therefore not possible.

Therefore, the theories selected in this study were based on their relevance to the findings from participants' narratives. The foremost theory was self-determination theory (SDT) which includes definitions of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and self-efficacy theory. A general description of motivation follows.

Motivation involves energy and direction and provides some understanding of why people behave the way they do (Deci & Ryan, 1995; 2000). They assert that energy relates to the inner drive that enables a person to take action and to maintain those actions to meet internal and external needs. Direction determines where energy is directed to meet and achieve their needs and goals.

Other studies found that motivation plays a key part in student performance and in terms of what they want to do, how much they want to do it and how committed they are to achieving their desired goals (Ferlazzo, 2013, Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Ali, Tatlah, and Saeed (201, p29) claim that motivation affects student's behaviour and that it is the driving force behind all individuals' actions. They further suggest that "when students are motivated they display positive behaviours and conversely when they possess low motivation they tend to behave negatively towards the institution and don't perform at their optimum level "(Ali et al, 2011,

p.32). Moreover, Williams and Williams (2010) suggest that motivation is probably the most important factor that educators can target to improve learning or affect behaviour.

Researchers Deci and Ryan (1995, 2000) have focused on motivation for many years and claim that past experiences impact on peoples' goals and aspirations. These experiences affect the extent to which people are self-determined and intrinsically motivated.

Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory (SDT) was originated by Deci and Ryan (1995, 2000) and will provide the framework to present intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. SDT comprises of two main sub-themes; Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET) and Organismic Integration Theory (OIT). In CET Deci and Ryan suggest that all people, irrespective of culture and global placement, behave in certain ways because of motivations that are underpinned by innate psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness. In order to be psychologically healthy, they claim that people need to have all three needs satisfied and that one or two of them are not enough. Deci and Ryan conclude that people are intrinsically motivated when all three needs are met.

In their OIT, they postulate that there are distinctions within different types of motivations and these are located along a continuum from amotivation, having no motivation, through extrinsic motivation EM, then on to being fully intrinsically motivated.

In OIT, there are six types of different regulations which sit along the motivational spectrum and they vary depending on the amount of motivation that has been internalised.

Internalisation is how much a person values something internally. For example, a student may start reading to access information for an assessment (EM) and then begin to read more as they enjoy it and eventually read mainly because of the pleasure they derive from it.

The six types of regulations are amotivation; external regulation; introjected regulation; identified regulation; integrated regulation; intrinsic motivation and will each be discussed briefly.

- Amotivation is seen when the person is not motivated and is just going through the motions. They haven't chosen the activity and have no desired outcomes. An example is when a student takes any course only because their benefit will be cut.
- External regulation is part of EM and is evident when the person is just satisfying an external demand and does the activity for external reasons only. Taking night classes to catch up on assessments because they have been directed to, is an example.
- Introjected regulation is another type of EM. A student may start to take on an activity but does not accept it as their own when they want to avoid guilt or anxiety or to prove to themselves or others they can do it. Going to class so they don't feel bad or let their friends down is an indication of this type of EM.
- Identified regulation occurs when a person values a goal or action because it is important to them. For example, a student may take on an extra class in maths to help them pass the maths component of their course.
- Integrated regulation is the most internalised form of EM and is characterised by the person identifying the importance of a behaviour and integrates that into their lives even though it may not be something they are personally interested in. Taking a course that is not required but is consistent with a life goal is an example of this.
- Intrinsic regulation results in peak intrinsic motivation because both interest and enjoyment come together. When a person is engaged in this manner they lose track of time because they are engrossed in the activity. This is typified by students who play video games for long periods of time without thinking of eating, sleep or other commitments.

SDT asserts that people are not always motivated by external rewards.

CET, the other sub theory of SDT, explains the underlying reasons for how particular activities can come to be valued. Deci and Ryan propose that the three psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness underpin IM. Autonomy relates to the desire to act according to one's own desires and volition to determine one's own destiny. Wigfield and Eccles (2002, p.148) elaborated further by defining self-determination as involving 'the degree to which people experience themselves as autonomous or as having a choice in their actions and behaviours as opposed to being controlled or pressured'. Competence is about knowing and believing that they are good at something and have mastery and control over outcomes; relatedness refers to the desire to connect with others and experience meaningful relationships.

People who are self-determining experience themselves as autonomous, have an internal locus of causality which means they operate from motivations from within and act from their own volition and desires. Self-determination manifests most clearly in intrinsically motivated behaviour (Deci& Ryan, 2000). This was the case with Friedman, et al (2001, p.129) in their study where they found that when students were able to choose their own class, an elective, they were more intrinsically motivated to attend class. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are further discussed with reference to other researchers besides Deci and Ryan.

Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation (IM) involves the internal pleasure and satisfaction that individuals derive from the achievement or attainment of a goal or engaging in a particular activity (Deci & Ryan, 2000). According to them, the locus of causality or where motivation originates is internal with people having a deep yearning to become competent and this in turn enhances intrinsic

interest in activities and engagement. The willingness to participate and act is inherent within the individual. The thought that people innately desire to become competent and autonomous through skills development and training underpins intrinsic motivational theories (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Stipek, 2002). The key principles of IM are that people utilise their own volition, to engage in activities that brings them personal success and enjoyment and do not require anyone or anything to induce them.

Wigfield and Eccles (2002) stated that a variety of studies reveal that when a person has high levels of IM they also have higher levels of achievement, lower levels of anxiety and higher perceptions of competence. The importance of IM in educational circles relates to improving academic performance and achievement and can lead to increased engagement with learning and therefore a desire to attend classes (Deci & Ryan, 2009).

While Brewer and Burgess (2005) purport that there is no agreement as to whose responsibility it is to motivate students to achieve, academic staff or the students themselves, he does state that their motivation can be influenced by providing students with feedback on their academic performance and progress. Further discussion on other ways to achieve increased IM is beyond the scope of this research but quality of teaching (one strategy) and its relationship to student course attendance will be discussed later as it relates to influences that motivate students to attend classes.

Extrinsic Motivation

At the other end of the spectrum of motivation, EM operates whenever an activity is engaged in for external reasons and outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2000). For some authors, EM elicits only a short term response and “does not require any higher order thinking” or creativity (Pink, 2009:2; Stipek, 2002). Wlodkowski (1986) observed that EM did not decrease IM but may

decrease SD because external rewards take away choice and control of the situation. Brewer and Burgess (2005) suggests that caution needs to be exercised with the use of external rewards as their employment has been critiqued and viewed as bribes. The downfall of EM is that it is not self-sustaining and requires continual external incentives or pressure to ensure the individual continues in that action. Some studies have indicated that the use of rewards can have a detrimental effect on the desired behaviour and a negative impact on IM (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ferlazzo 2013).

Although there continues to be debates about the importance of both components of motivation, links have been found that have enabled theorists, over time, to move from extreme points of view in regards to IM and EM to a more general consensus that both forms of motivation (Girmus, 2011).

Finally, it is worth keeping in mind this quotation from Williams and Williams (2010, p. 2) who said “[f]ind out what motivates man, touch that button to turn the key that makes men achieve”. They further conclude that “the best way to motivate students is to use all motivational strategies as often as possible” (Williams & Williams 2010, p.18). In view of this assumption it becomes very important for teaching staff to motivate their students where possible as the value of attendance has been found to link strongly to achieving successful academic outcomes and course completions. Williams and Williams further add that students who are only motivated externally are at a greater risk of performing lower academically than intrinsically motivated students.

Self-Efficacy Theory

Originated by Bandura, self-efficacy theory proposes that an individual’s personal assessments of their own capabilities of achieving a task or goal predicts performance and action (Bandura,

1977, 1986). These internal assessments have been found to be powerful predictors of a person's academic performance and are an important precondition for behaviour change. In other words, this theory asserts that self-efficacy impacts on a person's motivation to take action in their lives so that when people are endowed with self-belief they have the ability to produce their future and not just imagine it. They are able to organise and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations and perceive success in a particular goal or situation (Schunk & Pajares, 2009).

Moreover, self-efficacy predicts not only motivation but also choices, levels of effort, persistence, learning, self-regulation and achievement. High self-efficacy does not compensate for lack of ability and can in fact be problematic if unreasonably high as the person may decide to do something based on false beliefs and estimations. Usually there is an equivalent correlation between efficacy and performance such as lower efficacy results in low performance and high efficacy in high performance.

Students who believe they are able and can do it are much more likely to be motivated in terms of effort, persistence and behaviour. Carmichael and Taylor (2005) in their study comment that student assessments of their confidence to successfully undertake mathematic questions were based in part on their current level of knowledge and skills and influenced their ultimate performance. There is also good evidence to suggest that confident students will also be more engaged in their learning (Pintrich, 2003). Self-confidence has also been found to be important as it strongly influences final academic performance and behaviour which can lead to improved attendance rates (Sleigh & Ritzer, 2001).

Bandura (1997) suggests that self-efficacy plays a significant role in how people approach a task or challenge. He purports that people with high levels of self-efficacy view challenges as

something to be mastered and in turn develop deeper interest in an activity. This stronger commitment to their interest enables them to recover quickly from setbacks and challenges. Those with low self-efficacy, on the other hand, tend to quickly lose confidence when faced with difficult and challenging tasks and may avoid those type of tasks altogether (Bandura, 1997).

Bandura also identified major sources of self-efficacy as:

- Mastery experiences – past success experiences
- Social modelling – from whanau, peers, teachers
- Social persuasion – validation and feedback from other people such as peers, teachers, family
- Psychological responses – internal drives such as fear of failure, wanting to prove something to themselves, strong desire to still want to do it

Positive feedback has also been observed as having a positive effect on self-efficacy and is one of the ways that teachers can boost student self-efficacy levels (Tolli & Schmidt, 2008). Goals also play a part in student success and full course attendance.

Value of Attendance

Course attendance literature has links to literature on student engagement, retention and student success. Attendance is not only the forerunner of engagement but also critical to academic achievement and success. Corbans, Burns and Chrzanowski (2007-08) in their study were convinced that if students are not there, they cannot engage with their learning and academic achievement is severely impacted. They also argue that there is something valuable about attending. There seems to be an interconnection and interdependence between attendance and the engagement and academic success puzzle which forms an integral part of

positive motivation for students to attend their courses. Again, Corban et al assert that course attendance is both a pre-requisite and driver of student motivation and engagement in courses designed around physical classes, which applies to AT courses.

Attendance has been found to have a positive effect on academic success. Studies to identify the determinants of student performance and achievement have been prevalent across time and disciplines. These include Romer (1993); Schmidt (1983); Bauer (1994) in economics, Devadoss and Foltz (1996) in agricultural economics , Massingham and Herrington (2006) in management, Marburger (2006) in economics; Westrick et al (2009) in pharmacy; Fox and Medhekar (2010) in engineering; Lyubartseva and Mallik (2011) in chemistry, Uyar and Gungormus (2011) in accounting; Clark, Gill, Walker, and Whittle (2011) in geography; Obeidat, Bashir and Jadayil (2012) in engineering and Chou and Kuo (2012) in English. This is by no means an exhaustive sample but highlight the extent of research that pervades in this area. The results from these studies provide strong empirical evidence that a positive correlation between class attendance and academic performance exists.

In Massingham and Herrington's (2006) particular study in the Faculty of Commerce, they found that students "attending classes regularly are more than twice likely to achieve good grades for their final exams than poor attenders" (p.95). Another research carried out by Chen and Lin (2008) also found that the more frequently students attend classes, the greater the benefits. Results from their research indicated that students who attended lectures scored 9.4% to 18% better on exams than students who did not attend. That could be a substantial difference between passing and failing at the end of the course.

However, there have been studies that have shown weaker links between attendance and academic performance (Marburger, 2001) and a study by Gump (2005) found strong negative

correlations between absences and final grades. Notwithstanding, the probability of students achieving higher academic achievement is higher when students attend their courses.

Other commentators have noted that classes become dead, boring and tiresome, with no-shows “creating an unpleasant classroom environment that makes do shows feel uncomfortable and the professor irritable and increase aggression” (Bauer, 1994:206; Rocca, 2004). Both students and teaching staff become demoralised by the lack of attendance by some students impacting on the learning environment in the classroom (Friedman, Rodriguez, & McComb, 2001). The sense of community in the classroom is diminished when all students within a course don’t attend. Westrick, Helms, McDonough and Breland (2009, p.18) sums it up precisely, concluding that “learning declines, student morale decreases and academic standards are comprised”. Furthermore, the socialisation that takes place in class is reduced exacerbating the situation because when students are absent their levels of motivation decrease and as a result they have a tendency to disengage with their teachers, their peers, the institution and subsequently their learning and performance.

In addition, attendance is a predictor of subsequent performance found in Moore and Jensen’s (2008) study where students at risk students were identified by non-attendance from the first day. These early warning signs alert teaching faculty to potential attendance problems and ensure that the issue of non-attendance is addressed with students early in the course (Kelly, 2011). Furthermore, early monitoring of class attendance provides opportunities to advise and counsel students about the value of attendance and its correlation to positive academic achievement.

Finally, Schmidt (1983) reported that “the most valuable and important time commitment in a course was the time actually spent in the classroom specifically, the time actually spent in the

classroom had the greatest possible impact on overall student performance". And Thomas and Higbee (2000, p.229) concluded "Nothing replaces being in class".

Factors that motivate students to achieve 100% attendance

Student attendance is a complex issue and there are many factors that influence or contribute to the reasons why they attend classes. A preliminary search of the current literature found the following factors affected student attendance:

- 1 Teacher qualities and quality of teaching
- 2 Class size
- 3 Autonomy over course selection and class attendance
- 4 Pragmatists
- 5 Peer influence
- 6 Timing of classes
- 7 Mandatory attendance policy
- 8 Technology

Teacher Qualities and Quality of Teaching

Brewer (2005) found in his research that students ranked teacher personal qualities as the highest in their reasons for attending classes. Students named teaching staff who have a positive attitude; teacher personal behaviour in the classroom; their openness to receiving feedback and criticism; having respect towards students; and being friendly and approachable as factors that motivated them to attend. Classroom management was also important so as to provide flexibility and a constructivist, collaborative and safe learning environment.

Other researchers have been found to endorse Brewer's (2005) findings. Devadoss and Foltz's (1996) research with economics students highlighted quality teaching and the nature of class

lectures as imperatives for class attendance. Fernando and Mellalieu (2011) study with Fluid Mechanics students in Australia identified quality and clarity of lecturer as a factor affecting attendance. Romer (1993, pp. 169, 170) postulated that “students attend class when quality of instruction is higher”. Friedman et al (2001) found students will attend classes when their teachers are interesting and there is interaction and participation operating in class.

A couple of studies show that teacher personal characteristics and attributes have also been found to be very important to motivate students to attend. Students value teachers who notice they are there, are culturally sensitive and show some care (Fernando & Mellalieu, 2011; Zepke & Leach, 2005).

Massingham and Herrington (2006, p. 84) state that “The reality is that the majority of students will attend lectures only if they perceive ‘value in them’. What is valued is the ‘teaching process and the lecturers competence”. Students need to know that they are getting value added knowledge when they attend. In a market-driven educational sector with students as customers who demand high quality from their lecturers or course deliverers, teaching staff must have a sound subject knowledge, know their learner and meet their students’ learning and pedagogical needs (Clark et al, 2011; Dolnicar, 2004). Finally, students articulate that in class, teacher enthusiasm needs to be high so that this can be transferred to the students and they in turn will feel enthused and more motivated to attend.

Students responded positively to teacher encouragement with research showing that teaching staff must take an active role in stressing the importance of attendance in achieving higher grades as an incentive for students to attend more classes (Chennerville & Jordan, 2008). Clark et al (2011) also emphasised the need for lecturers to tell their students about the effect that attendance has on their final grades as they found that strong attenders received marks

7-11 % greater than their non-attending counterparts. Chou and Kuo (2012) in their study of English with Asian students also endorsed the need for teaching staff to encourage their students to attend 100%. They found significant benefits of attendance for students, especially in the first three to four weeks of their study semester. They asserted that monitoring student attendance in the early stages of their course can provide evidential documentation and early warning signs for teachers to assess when interventions are necessary to ensure their student's academic success. These early interventions not only can prove beneficial in assisting weaker students in their retention and successful completion of their course but also act as motivators to encourage students to attend more.

A study by Moore (2003, p. 287) found that teachers simply stressing the importance of attendance to student at the beginning of semester raised average grades by 9% when compared to a similar class in which attendance was not stressed and reduced the failure rate by 70 (from 23% to 7%). This shows the impact that teachers have on attendance besides teaching quality (Massingham & Herrington, 2006).

Furthermore, Clay and Breslow (2006, p.1) found students in their study attended if they found the course challenging and wasn't too easy. A student's comment was "The absolute most important thing is if I feel that I am learning something in the class".

One of the most motivating factors for going to class was having the content related to the assessment. Clarity and explanations that enable better understanding of course content and how the information fits together in the bigger picture was also important. Students appreciated their teacher's varied pedagogical approaches in ensuring that new information is integrated into past knowledge demonstrating its relevance and applications.

Overall, Clark et al (2011) summarised students reasons for attending classes as ranging from utilitarian motives of getting better marks and avoidance of peer criticism to psychological ones that involve reassurance and confidence instilled by the teacher alongside the social benefits of being with friends and participating in social events.

Class Size

From their studies, Chou and Kuo (2012) emphasised that class size was an important factor in whether students attended or not. With large classes, students believed that these were places that lecturers were less likely to notice if they were there or not. Romer (1993, p.169) also found that “there is lower absenteeism in smaller classes”. Many other researchers also found that smaller classes tended to encourage students to attend because they had immediacy with the teacher and had better interaction and participation in the class (Dolnicar et al, 2009; Dolnicar, 2006; Friedman, et al, 2001; Gump, 2004). Higher attendance was an outcome of smaller classes noted in a study by Gump (2004).

Autonomy over course selection and class attendance

According to Chou and Kuo (2012) when students are able to make personal choices within their studies i.e. choice of electives and the freedom to do so, this engendered higher motivations for students to attend their classes.

Students also make deliberate and careful choices to attend classes where advantages and disadvantages pertaining to the usage of their time is weighed up carefully. Given the heavy workload that a full course of study can require means that students must be convinced that attending classes is worthy of their valuable time (Clay & Breslow, 2006). Other students’ personal motivations to attend their courses revolve around the social benefits of interactions with their friends and class peers, relationships with their educators and also to participate in

institutional activities. They want to have enjoyment and fun besides the acquisition of knowledge and qualifications for their future careers. These students are in the minority and are in contrast to a growing trend of students attending higher education institutions (Clark et al, 2011).

Clark et al (2011) suggests student's motives for attending class are all personal. They include:

- Going to class to get information for tests to get better marks as they are aware that attendance has relevance to passing assessments and they want to do well
- They feel obligated to attend class because of peer pressure especially when attendance is being monitored and they attend to avoid peer criticism.
- Importance of getting value for money as they have paid for the course and they don't want to waste that money.
- To get their money's worth and feel confident that lecture attendance will help them get good grades and pass their course.
- A sense of duty and obligation to attend as they feel guilty if they don't. This may be linked to both wasting money and/ or the opportunity to do well
- Funding their own education.

All of these reasons are underpinned by student's personal gain in attending classes and the locus of control is in their hands (Dolnicar, 2005)

Pragmatists

From the literature it is apparent that the student of today is an astute customer and requires satisfactory and self-beneficial reasons to attend classes (Clark et al, 2011). In her research, Dolnicar (2004) named students who attended class only to get what they want from the lectures 'pragmatists'. She stipulates that the reasons these students have for attending

classes are to access the required information and material to pass exams and nothing more.

Dolnicar insists that the social aspects of study and the pleasure of learning are low motivators for course attendance. Furthermore, Shultz and Higbee (2007, p. 72) categorised the reasons why students attend classes into two main groupings because of student's pragmatic goals; "acquiring knowledge and preparing for the world of work". They too found their students are focussed on their future careers and only wanting information that will get them a pass. Gump (2004) also noticed in his study that students assumed a customer mode, where definite roles were assumed, with the student being the buyer, the teacher was the seller and the class was the product.

From the literature, over the last decade or so ago changes have been noted regarding students' motives for attending classes and engaging in learning. Dolnicar (2006) in her studies has noticed a dramatic motivational shift from the 1970's. This is type of student was encountered by Ramsden (2003, pp.59-60) where students were described as learners who were "not looking for the qualitative outcomes associated with deeper approaches to learning".

Other research reveals that students nowadays focus on the attainment of their qualification as a means to an end and learning is not important to them (Dolnicar, 2004). There is a prevalence of students limiting their reasons for attending class to obtaining relevant information for assessments or the next exam (Dolnicar, 2004; Jordaan, 2009). This attitude is not a recent one as Simon (1957) cited in Clark et al (2011) nearly four decades ago remarked that students are "satisfiers rather than maximisers" and will settle for achieving adequate academic outcomes and not the best degree result. In other words, students will aim to just get over the line in attaining their qualification and not apply themselves to do their best.

Romer (1993) suggested that students value their time and don't attend if they think they are not going to learn much. According to (Marburger, 2006) students will count the cost and weigh up whether it is worthwhile for them to attend class or not.

Peer influence

Chou and Kuo's (2012) research with Asian students in an English class in Taiwan found that some students were disengaged with their learning to the point that they viewed attendance as perfunctory. They found that the particular students in their study would take stock of what's in it for them when deciding to attend classes. Depending on their priorities, they would come to class, not for the educational factor but to meet friends or just want credits to graduate. Their motivations were very superficial and again pragmatic. However, Chou and Kuo concluded that students do perform well despite their lack of interest in the subject content because their focus is beyond the classroom towards their future careers and they know that qualifications are important if they are to succeed in the workplace (Friedman et al, 2001).

Overall, Clark et al (2011) summarised students reasons for attending classes as ranging from utilitarian motives of getting better marks and avoidance of peer criticism to psychological ones that involve reassurance and confidence instilled by the teacher alongside the social benefits of being with friends and participating in social events.

Timing of Classes

Other studies found that certain times of the day, week and year had an impact on student attendance. For example, Dolnicar (2005) noted that there was poor attendance from students on Fridays whereas Mondays yielded the best results for attendance. In Dolnicar et als' (2009)

study in Australia, the optimum lecture times to encourage attendance during the day was between 10:00am and 3pm was recognised.

Mandatory attendance policy

Compulsory attendance was first raised by Romer (1993). In his study he found absenteeism to be rampant with one third of students not in the classes he studied. To improve attendance, he called for teaching staff experimentation with mandatory attendance policies because of the strong statistical relationship between attendance and classroom attendance. But there is much debate because students are adults and are able to decide for themselves if attending classes is worthwhile and the best use of their time (Crede et al 2010). While most educators agree that attendance is desirable, mandatory attendance is not the best answer and other options need to be considered to improve attendance.

In Marburger's (2006) experiment with economic student's findings showed that when there is no attendance policy in place, absenteeism increased continually and the percentage of students not present more than doubled throughout the semester. For the class that had an attendance policy, absenteeism remained fairly constant. This may provide grounds for course teachers to implement mandatory attendance policies but educators must take into account that research findings have found these measures to be limited in their effectiveness and there are no guarantees that mandatory attendance policies will result in improvement in academic achievement. Students may attend more from motivations of compliance but are not necessarily more engaged in the learning. For example, St Clair (1999, p. 177) advised against compulsory attendance policies as they take away from student choice and control and this can have an adverse effect on performance, and academic performance may not increase even though they attend more regularly (Chou & Kuo, 2012).

Technology

Technology is still being debated as to its effect on student attendance. Some research has found that attendance is still important for practical components in technological courses and for first year indigenous students (Crede, et al, 2010; Kutieleh, Egege & Morgan, 2004).

Technology can add to the learning experience but not entirely replace it.

In another instance, higher levels of attendance have resulted from blended learning in comparison to classroom instruction reported by Martinez-Caro and Campuzaro-Bolarin (2011). It appears that students engage more with their peers online and this in turn can motivate students to attend class to participate in peer/student interaction and access the teacher. This study in engineering concluded that blended learning has extra benefits that improve pedagogy, increase access and flexibility and increase cost effectiveness according to Martinez-Caro and Campuzaro-Bolarin.

Summary

This literature review did not identify any one reason that singly contributed to class attendance. However, much of the research agreed on the importance of attendance in relation to academic success. Teacher influence and institutional factors were rated highest in the reasons why students attend classes. Other factors that featured in the literature as motivating students to attend were class size, autonomy of choice, timing of classes, mandatory attendance policies and technology. This is possibly attributable to the increasing numbers of mature and pragmatic students entering higher education. It was apparent that the literature identified mostly external motivational factors as affecting course attendance.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology and Method

Ma whero ma pango ka oti ai te mahi

With red and black the work will be complete

(Woodward Ltda, 2014)

This chapter describes the research methodologies and methods that were applied in this study aimed at answering the research question:

What factors motivate tertiary students to achieve 100% course attendance?

It begins with a rationale for the methodologies selected, then discusses the theoretical framework that underpins them and the study's epistemological viewpoint. Within a qualitative research paradigm, Kaupapa Maori and narrative inquiry are discussed as suitable methodologies. Semi-structured interviews, which were utilised for data collection and the reasons why this method was chosen will be elaborated on next, and to conclude this chapter sampling, selection process and data analysis will be addressed.

Rationale for Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of students who had achieved 100% course attendance. Through the collection of participants' stories and the collaborative meaning-making of their experiences attempts were made to understand and explain this phenomenon. Participants' stories formed the basis of the data under examination in this study.

In selecting an appropriate methodology and the underpinning theoretical perspective for this study, careful consideration was given to the whole research process including engagement with the people involved and the way in which the study would be conducted. Of primary concern were the aspects of ethical and cultural considerations given that the participants for this study were of Maori, Asian and European origins. Positioning of the researched and the researcher within the study, privileging and legitimating the participants' voice, collaboration and co-construction of the meaning of their stories and issues of power in the research space were important aspects that were deliberated on in the methodology selection process. As such, Kaupapa Maori Theory (KMT) and Interpretivist theoretical perspectives were deemed to be appropriate ethical and cultural frameworks for this study. They were selected because they embraced subjective epistemologies that privilege and legitimate multiple ways of knowing and ascribed meaning and understanding of narratives to students' realities within multiple social contexts (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Crotty, 1998; Smith, 1997; Smith, 1999).

In conjunction with these theoretical perspectives, Kaupapa Maori and narrative inquiry shaped the methodologies that were utilised. Due to their particular assumptions and characteristics, these were chosen as best suited for providing the necessary conditions that would enable the eliciting of responses from participants through deep and meaningful conversations and sharing of their stories (Bishop, 1996). Furthermore, through these stories it was envisaged that possible interventions or other student engagement practices might be found to assist in increasing student attendance and successful completion rates. A fresh look at student attendance and the phenomenon of 100% course attendance was desired.

Kaupapa Maori Theory opens up the potential for new and unexplored solutions. It allows divergence from western research conventions to meet cultural and non-traditional viewpoints. In particular, KMT addresses unequal power relations within the research space

and seeks to intervene and transform these inequalities (Bishop, 1996; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Smith, 1999). On the one hand, positivist perspectives position the researcher as the driver and possessor of the power in the research space. On the other hand, KMT views the researched and the researcher as integral and equal parts, with both sharing the powerbase within the research relationship. This collaborative relationship enables a unique opportunity to make meaning of the participants' stories together rather than the researcher doing this separately (Bishop, 1996, Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Pohatu, 2005). I was aware of my experiences and passion for this topic and KMT and the other methodologies utilised here enabled me to concede my position as that of an insider in this research (Bidois, 2012; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Smith, 1999).

With regard to data collection, in order to create a context for facilitating the sharing of participant's stories, semi-structured interviews were appropriate for gathering information (Crotty, 1998). As stated by Seidman (2013, p.9) the rationale for employing the interview process was its suitability for pursuing "an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience".

In concluding this section on the rationale, it is noted that when all has been considered, it is at the most fundamental level that epistemology plays an important part in validating new knowledge from any study (Crotty, 1998).

Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with the theory of knowledge and involves understanding and explaining the various categories of knowledge and their legitimacy (Crotty, 1998). The range of epistemologies varies from scientific, positivist and objective knowledge through to subjective, post-structural and postmodern ways of knowing. Scientific and objective

knowledge is attained through controlled systematic processes that lead to the discovery of existent “truth, independent of human consciousness or involvement”, whilst post-structurally constructed and subjective knowledge depends very much on the meaning that is imposed on the object by an individual or group (Bidois, 2012; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Crotty, 1998). In addition, post-structural approaches are critical of “detached, distanced observations” and prefer to employ “dialogic forms of representation that emphasise the voice and perspective of the research participants in the narrative” (Bishop & Glynn, 1999, p. 58).

Kaupapa Maori epistemology embraces many ways of knowing and validates indigenous and cultural perspectives of how reality is known (Smith, 2005). According to Absolon (2010) indigenous epistemologies come from inner ways of knowing and are mindful that realities are created through the interconnectedness and interrelationships of relationships and experiences (Absolon, 2010). Similarly, inherent within Kaupapa Maori epistemology are notions that Maori understandings and meaning making of the world and their social interactions are diverse and do not constitute a homogenous world view that can be applied to all Maori or all peoples (Kukutai, 2003). Furthermore, embedded in this epistemology is a holistic view of individuals as unique and self-determining, able to exercise their free will in arbitering their own meanings and understandings of their reality (Bishop, 1999). Thus, knowledge and reality are viewed as very subjective and can be known legitimately only through an exploration of an individual’s experiences and views within their own context (Marsden, 2003; Smith, 2003).

A concern regarding subjective epistemology, as Crotty (1998) mentions, is that human beings make meaning of their world through many sources which are either real or make believe. Because meaning is imposed on the object by the subject, in a social context, people may be influenced by external relationships, perceptions and interpretations which then are not

necessarily the person's own view of reality. This may cause the findings of a study to be skewed and highlights the necessity for a safe environment to be established to engender trust and the potential for participants to share their true thoughts and feelings. Whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, tapu and noa become important elements to establish in the research relationship to mitigate these concerns (Mead, 2003).

In summary, Kaupapa Maori epistemology embraces a subjective epistemology which allows for multiple ways of knowing (Kukutai, 2003). This makes provision for capturing unique and varied meanings that students are likely to attribute to their experience and achievement of 100% course attendance. Kaupapa Maori also accommodates cultural perspectives and couples with Interpretivism as an acknowledgement and validation of participants' authority over the ownership and meaning of their personal stories.

Theoretical Perspectives: Kaupapa Maori Theory and Interpretivism

The theories that underpin the research methodologies employed in this study are Kaupapa Maori Theory and Interpretivism.

Kaupapa Maori Theory (KMT) embraces post-structural perspectives and originated in the crucible of Maori protest and revitalisation as a political discourse (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Pihama, 2001; Smith, 1997; Smith, 1999). Whilst its genesis and development was in response to the subjugation and marginalisation of Maori, Maori culture and way of life, KMT has pertinence to Maori and indigenous people but is still evolving (Bidois, 2012). Its tenets resonates with all cultures and peoples whose voices have been overshadowed and marginalised (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). This theory was especially developed by Maori researchers to enable Maori philosophy and approaches to be incorporated into conventional research perspectives and practices (Bishop, 1996, 1999; Pihama, 2001; Pohatu, 2005; Smith,

1997; Smith, 1999). It is an organic methodology that continues to meet the needs of the changing world for Maori (Bishop, 1996; 1999; 2006; Pihama, 2001; Smith, 1997; Smith, 1999). In addition, Bidois (2012, p. 7) claims that “[t]he universality of KMT is evident in its ethical and reflexive approaches to research and is relevant therefore, not only to Maori communities, but all cultures”.

Today, KMT sits alongside western research theories as a legitimate research methodology that privileges a Maori worldview (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Pihama, 2001; Smith, 1997; Smith, 1999). It provides the framework for analysing and addressing the detrimental impact that Western research approaches have had on Maori. It is “[a] strategic move to open up a powerful space for Maori in the academy” (Smith, 2012, p.11) with Kaupapa Maori being not just a theory of change but is also now seen as a legitimate form of academic inquiry.

Central to its essence is the notion that KMT validates and legitimises all things Maori from cultural philosophies, practices, language, to tinorangatiranga which can be defined as self-determination - to be in charge and control of one’s life and destiny (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Smith, 1997).

KMT espouses the provision of spaces that value relationships and their establishment and maintenance, which it is believed, precipitates the potential for capturing deep and meaningful stories (Bishop, 1996; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Smith, 1999). In this way, KMT serves to transform theory into practice Smith (1999). This process has been referred to as transformative praxis, whereby people are able to reflect on and critique their lives and this culminates in an ability to make positive changes. This happens, particularly in qualitative research, when stories are told by participants and as they do so they reflect upon events in their lives and the research becomes a site for their transformation (Bishop & Glynn, 1999).

Storytelling and the gathering of stories are very subjective activities and KMT is flexible in that it allows for meaning to be contextually grounded. Participants are able to shift and/or shape the meanings of their stories as contextualised in a time and place (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). This assertion acknowledges that participants are in a certain place in their lives when they share their story as part of a research study. Bishop and Glynn reiterate that the personal element is inextricably involved in the research process. This highlights the subjective nature of mutual storytelling and meaning-making as participant and researcher each share their stories and thoughts with each other. However, participants' ability to repeat their stories in exactly the same way in another research is uncertain and strengthens the notion that research is contextualised in a time and place. KMT validates and legitimises the concept discussed as part of the research landscape (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). It is recognised in this study that Interpretivism has some parallels with KMT and is explained next.

Interpretivism

Interpretivism focuses on understanding the individual's interpretations of social actions and their social worlds. It positions the meaning-making practices of human beings at the centre of research (Findlay, 2011; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). This viewpoint assumes that people create and associate their own subjective meanings as they interact with the world around them.

Interpretivism attempts to understand the reality that people assign to their experiences and espouses the notion that reality is relative and multiple (Findlay, 2011). Interpretivism maintains that meaning is not innate or inevitable for any object but rather that meaning is unique for everyone and happens when people interact with each other and their environment (Manning & Kinkel, 2013).

An interpretivist standpoint provides the context for researchers to attempt to capture and understand participants' accounts of their lives and interpret the meaning they attach to these events (Burns, 2002; Clandinin, 2007; Flick, 2011). It also assumes the perspective that there are "multiple ways of knowing and understanding human experience", and encompasses individually constructed realities that permit research participants to attribute their own personal meanings to their stories and events in their lives (Clandinin, 2007, p. 5; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This interpretivist philosophy corroborates with the aim of this study to explore and understand students' motivations to achieve 100% course attendance through the collection and interpretive processing and analysis of their stories.

Furthermore, Lincoln and Guba (1985) acknowledge that, while the locus of control for the analysis and interpretation of experiences lies with the participant, in the process of inquiry both researcher and participant are affected. The research territory becomes a space where researcher and participant are engaged in a collaborative and co-constructionist encounter that aims to ensure the participant's story is understood as they meant it to be. An interpretivist approach acknowledges a limit on objectivity for the researcher, however attempts are being made to understand the motives, meanings, reasons and other subjective experiences of the participants given that they are time and context bound (Findlay, 2011). This allows for an interconnected relationship between the researcher and the participant.

This research provided an opportunity for me to reflect on both the participants and my own educational journey in a space named by Anzaldua (1987) as the "borderlands" where encounters between the participant and researcher expose "deep similarities and profound differences between [them], neither of which can be reduced to the other part". As shared in the introduction chapter, my story was similar in parts to some participants' stories and in other parts very diverse. However, connections were made between us in the sharing of our

stories which made the interviews an intimate and meaningful encounter between participant and researcher.

Mitchell (2009, p. 78) advocates “listening with soft ears or ears that are malleable and open to subtle understandings and interpretations. This positions the researcher in a place where they are challenged to become students of the discourses that their participants draw from to make meaning”. The researcher must be mindful of the complexities that surround storytelling, hence the imperative to keep checking participants to ensure clarity and meaning has been heard, correctly interpreted and recorded (Mitchell, 2009).

In summary, KMT and the Interpretivist view underpinning the research methodologies in this study acknowledges that there are no absolutes in terms of what human beings think, do and understand in any given context (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Findlay, 2011). In doing so, it opens the way for participants to tell their stories afresh and attribute their own meanings to them and enables the researcher to gain some new understanding of the individual stories. In this instance, it provides the space to listen and comprehend participants’ motivations and actions in regards to achieving 100% course attendance from the exploration of their stories and as an insider in this study. Moreover, both theories allow the freedom and space for participants to have authority and control over their stories and in collaboration with the researcher to co-construct their meaning. The methodologies were chosen especially because they accommodate these notions.

Methodology

Qualitative methodologies were considered to be the most appropriate and effective way to collect participants’ stories as a means to understanding how students motivate themselves to achieve 100% course attendance. An overview of Kaupapa Maori and narrative inquiry will

now be outlined briefly. Both methodologies go hand in hand, they share the same values and practical viewpoints and concur in their implementation.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research provides the research space to explore and privilege the meaning that participants give to their lived experiences. They are viewed as the experts in their lives and are the final arbiters of their own stories and meanings of life. Ethical assumptions within qualitative research imbue a reverence for the subjective, self-determined and self-described realities of individuals (Munhall, 1994). Kaupapa Maori and narrative inquiry are approaches that actualise this potential (Bishop, 1996; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Creswell, 2002; Crotty, 1998; Pihama, 2001; Smith, 1999).

Qualitative research requires the researcher to consider subjectivity, consciousness, participation, positioning and agency (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). The power of individuals in the research relationship is granted recognition in the end result and this is a consequence of reciprocal interactions between researcher and the researched. Good conversation takes place between two individuals and is epitomised by “[o]ne listening to the other when what one says depends upon what the other has to say’ (Bishop & Glynn, 1999, p.105).

Qualitative inquiry rejects the notion that the research is not influenced and interpreted through the lens of the researcher. It is acknowledged that researchers play a part in defining and interpreting reality. No matter how hard one tries there will still be a bias and the task is trying to minimise that and allow the participant’s voice to come through (Munhall, 1994).

Kaupapa Maori Methodology

Kaupapa Maori (KM) privileges Maori epistemological and ontological understandings of the world in research practice. It champions an emancipatory praxis, for Maori who have been disadvantaged and marginalised (Pihama, 2001; Smith, 1997; Smith, 1999). Participants in this study were from both Maori and Non Maori ancestry and some from underprivileged backgrounds. KM advocates inclusion, acceptance and honouring of diversity (Bidois, 2012). Participants in this study were able to be encouraged and affirmed to be themselves and share their unique story.

The values that underpin KM methodology were integral to the processes of engagement and relationship used in this study. Intrinsically it incorporates practices that foster relationships with the research candidates in a way that is cognisant of people's wellbeing physically, mentally, socially and spiritually (Durie, 1994). Maori values, principles, processes and practices guided and informed this research (Bishop, 1996). This means that: whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, tinorangatiranga and utu were values that underpinned all processes in this research and was especially utilised in engaging personally with the participants in the interviews (Bishop, 1996; Mead, 2003; Pihama, 2001; Pohatu, 2005; Smith, 1997; Smith). Whanaungatanga focuses on the fostering and nurturing of relationships and making connections with the participants from the first point of contact; manaakitanga entails being cognisant that everyone has mana and dignity and respecting each person as unique and honouring who they are and what they bring. Tinorangatiranga endorses the control of their own stories and meanings attributed to those stories in the research (Bishop, 1996; Mead, 2003; Pihama, 2001; Pohatu, 2005; Smith, 1997; Smith, 1999). Tinorangatiranga also acknowledges and maximises the person's self-determination and control over their lives and own destinies. Utu embodies the concept of reciprocity and this was practised in the sharing of kai and other resources. These aspects were important for the researcher because it was

believed that the processes utilised for engaging with the participants would engender a rapport with them and enable a safe environment to be established to capture some rich and meaningful data during the interviews. (Bishop, 1996; Pihama, 2001; Smith, 1997).

In order to elicit responses from participants that would enable the gathering of information and understanding of why they achieved 100% course attendance, thought was given to the positioning of the participants within the research. Bishop & Glynn (1999) and Smith (1999) purport that an important feature of KM research methodology is that it allows the researcher to consider their positioning in the research and KM provides the means to not only capture the authentic voice but also to co-construct meaning together as equals, side by side.

The researcher must be willing to share the power and control of the story, its flow and its meanderings with the participant. Inevitably in the co-construction and collaborative process of telling their stories, participant and researcher become mutually engaged and part of the stories that are being told. Bishop (1996, p. 25) calls this process “collaborative narrative construction” which means that the research study provides the opportunity for the researcher to be a gatherer of experiences from all the participants in the study and together with the researcher’s experience they can be merged to form a new story. This co-operative process highlights the role of the researcher as inextricably part of the research study (Bishop, 1996). However, Bishop (1996) cautions researchers to be aware that the study must always be participant-centred and the focus on the participant and not on themselves.

I was cognisant that my intentions regarding research design, procedures, data collection, data analysis and reporting for this study were to be culturally relevant and pertinent for the participants. The aspects valued in KM philosophy and methodology met the desired way in

which I wanted to do this study. Non Maori participants' cultural perspectives were able to be accommodated in western methodologies such as phenomenology and narrative inquiry.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a method of collecting data for the examination of a phenomena and its subsequent meaning-making of the data. Narrative inquiry research provides a voice for individuals whose voices may not be adequately heard in education (Creswell, 2002). Clandinin (2013, p. 17) defines narrative inquiry as "an approach that honours people's lived experience and these have the potential to become valid sources of knowledge and understanding". Freedman & Combs (1996) assert that realities are organised and maintained through stories, hence the necessity to provide a safe and comfortable space to engage in this naturalistic inquiry to understand the participant's motivation and understandings of their achievement (Higgs, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Again this method dovetails with KM in its intentions and practices.

In narrative inquiry, stories constitute the data from which researchers analyse and extrapolate themes to provide some tentative answers to the issue studied (Creswell, 2002). Throughout the process of collecting and analysing the data, the researcher collaborates with the participant by checking their story and negotiating the meaning of the narrative in the interview sessions and by endorsement of the transcripts of their interview. The story of the researcher may also be interwoven into the final research report as he/she gains insight (Creswell, 2002).

Similar to KM, narrative inquiry can provide new understandings for the participant enabling them to re-story their story as they gain insight and make meaning of their experiences. This new reflected story is what assists the participant in acquiring a different view of themselves

and self-perceptions of their capabilities and identities (Bishop, 1996; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Creswell, 2002). For the students in this study, the sharing of their experiences appropriated new ways of being and behaving as they reflected on their motivations and achievement. Many said that they saw themselves in a different light and felt more confident and able to repeat their achievement of 100% attendance on future courses.

To conclude this section, Kaupapa Maori and narrative inquiry methodologies facilitate the engagement of the participant in ways that are safe and conducive to the collection of rich data to explore and understand the phenomenon of 100% course attendance. The inquiry process in this study will involve access to participant's expressions of their experiences and feelings towards course attendance and how they became motivated to attend full time.

Method

Semi –Structured Interviews as a method of data collection

In recent times, the interview process has gained much credibility and acceptance as a valid research method in the social science and education arena. Although it is a labour-intensive and time-consuming method in terms of establishing access to potential participants, making contact, interviewing, transcribing data and data analysis to draw out some conclusions, it has been deemed to be worth the effort in order to achieve the best outcomes for the study. The process utilised in this study was semi-structured interviews designed to elicit the participant's story by employing questions minimally as prompts to assist the participant to remain focused and as a guide to facilitate going deeper into their story (Hatch, 2002).

Kaupapa Maori methodology insists that research must take place within cultural worldviews and practices in which the participants function, make sense of their lives and understand their experiences (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). Principles such as tapu, mana, noa, wairua, manaaki and

mauri need to guide the interview process. However, I am aware and acknowledge that methodology and tikanga varies from nation to nation (Rangihau, 1992).

Within this study, the tapu of each individual was acknowledged and addressed by recognizing their sacredness, specialness, ancestry and connectedness. Tapu and wairua were embraced and incorporated in the interviews by starting each session with karakia (mainly done by the researcher before the interviews). Along with these, mana and mauri were acknowledged through treating each participant with respect and dignity, thanking them for their time; ensuring that the interview process was an open and collaborative by sharing the power and process within the interview space; providing all the information necessary; listening intently to their stories; collaborating and clarifying meaning by paraphrasing, summarising and checking back with them constantly during the interviews. Whakapapa was an important part of the process enabling connections to be made through the sharing of personal histories.

Other cultural values such as whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, kotahitanga, utu, were integral during the interviews. Whanaungatanga ensured that a relationship was built and maintained through making connections either through whanau and tribal affiliations, educational staff associations or family and personal information-sharing. This was essential to provide a safe space to facilitate the conditions to establish collaborative narratives and co-construct meanings.

Whanaungatanga and relationship-building engenders intimacy. "Johnson (2002) highlights the notion of intimacy and its significance in ensuring trust and allowing a free and open process of self-disclosure throughout the interviewing process" (Bidois, 2012, p.9). Participants were given time and space to tell their story. Care was taken to ensure that agenda concerns and intents did not swamp the voice of the research participant (Bishop & Glynn, 1999).

Conversations through the interviews allowed for the researcher to focus on depth, details and probing to provide a holistic understanding of the interviewees point of view. Such a position was respectful with the researcher taking a lesser position as that of attentive listener allowing participants' stories to gain authority and validity (Bishop & Glynn, 1999).

This opened the way for meanings to be contextually grounded, shift and be shaped by the participant resulting in stories that are contextualised in a time and place (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). This means that participants were in a certain place in their lives when they share their story in the research process. Re-storying can occur when participants are cognisant of their culture, status, age, purpose, parts of the story that are important to them at that time and place or feel safe to tell at that particular time of the interview. Bishop and Glynn purport that this illustrates the very subjective nature of qualitative research and particularly the interview process and must be acknowledged as this phenomena reinforces how the personal element is inextricably involved in the research process and is a condition in which research takes place.

Manaakitanga and utu (reciprocity) were other important cultural values that were implemented in the interview process. Where participants chose to have their interviews in their own homes, I took kai and for those who came to the polytechnic for their interviews, I made an offer of petrol money as a koha, as a token of appreciation.

In western perspectives, Seidman (2013, p.13) asserts that "Interviewing is a powerful way to gain insight into educational issues through understanding the experience of the individuals whose lives reflect those issues". He further states that the research needs to be mindful of whose meaning is brought forward in the study. Hence, the interaction between the researcher and the participant needs to be clear and overt with a continuous collaboration and co-construction of meaning and understandings occurring throughout the interview process.

This collaboration must also continue through to the post-interview stage when the interviews are transcribed and analysed to ensure that the participants are part of a communication and consultation process regarding the review and final version of the data.

An important consideration in interviewing was the positioning of the researcher in relation to participant. As the researcher, I acknowledge the participant as the expert in their own story who has the locus of control in terms of the meaning intended and verification of the final version of their story. It is possible that the relationship may become one of co-researchers as suggested by Seidman (2013).

Conduct of Interviews

Most of the interviews for this study were conducted in a classroom at the Polytechnic at an arranged time that was convenient for the participant. Two interviews were conducted in participants' homes at their request. The Polytechnic was selected for the interview venue as it was familiar and convenient for the participant. It also assisted in making the participant feel comfortable and at ease quickly. Time was of the essence as there was only a short time to build a relationship with the participant and develop a safe and trusting environment to have some deep and meaningful dialogue (Hatch, 2002).

Nine students were interviewed using open-ended questions as the basis for the interview (Crotty, 1998). These questions were prepared in an interview schedule beforehand to help in getting the interview started and provide a focus (Appendix 4). The questions sought information about their personal and social background, historical educational engagement and their thoughts and motivations towards their experience of the course they had completed. However, these were not hard and fast questions as the researcher wanted to remain flexible to allow for the flow of thought processes and feelings of the participant and

allow them the freedom to tell their story as they wished, in whatever sequence. The interview questions were sent to only one participant before the interview as she wanted to answer them before she came because she wanted the time to think about her answers. Clarification was sought during the interview to ensure the right meaning was understood by the researcher but the final endorsement of the accuracy of meaning and facts in their stories was done when the transcripts of the interviews were sent to the participants for their validation (Hatch, 2002).

The interviews were for an hour using the questions as prompts. Whilst this is the arranged timeframe for the interviews, depending on the individual student, the time was re-negotiated when necessary for an extension of time to allow the participant more opportunity to explore the question further and to provide as much depth to their answers as possible. Flexibility of time was allowed for participants to ask for clarification of a question or return to a question if they felt they needed to add some further thoughts. Each participant was advised they did not have to answer every question and that there were no right or wrong answers.

The interview structure was designed to facilitate a process whereby the participants were able to answer the questions and make sense of their answers to themselves as well as to the researcher, a process which Seidman (2013) states goes a long way toward validity of their story and the research study. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. A copy of the transcript was sent to the participants to check and change if they wish during the data analysis phase (Appendix 5).

Sampling/Selection Process

The selection criteria for this study was very prescriptive and specific as it was aimed at investigating a specific group of students who met a certain criterion. This process was approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B Application -13/55 on 3 September, 2013 (Appendix 1). Also approval had been given by the CEO of the Polytechnic to access their student attendance database and records and to utilise the resources of the Polytechnic, such as the interview room, conducting the interviews and taking time during work hours.

All students for this study were recruited from a pool of students from the School of Applied Technology who had achieved 100% course attendance. 100% attendance was based on students attending all classes with no missed days for the entire course duration. All participants passed their course.

Participants who were selected came from the following courses: National Diploma in Architectural Technology, Level 6 (full Year course); Certificate in Carpentry, Level 2 (full year course); Certificate in Engineering, Level 3 (full year course); National Certificate in Distribution & Logistics, Level 2 (12 week course with three cohorts per year); Certificate in Commercial Road Transport, Level 3 (16 week course with 4 cohorts per year); and Certificate in Preparation for Law Enforcement, Level 3 (12 week course with three cohorts per year).

The course administrator for these courses had access to the student attendance database and selected the students that met the criteria. Their names were given to the researcher who made up an information package and gave them to the administrator to send out to each prospective participant (Appendix 2) and Participant Consent Forms (Appendix 3) with self-addressed envelopes enclosed. The package provided information for the research and invited

students to participate if they wish. Students who accepted the invitation responded by sending their consent forms back in the self-addressed envelope to the researcher. The prospective participants were then contacted by person and a time and date set up for the interviews at a time convenient to them.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2002) views the participant's stories/answers in the research study as the raw data for analysis and thematic processing. Narrative voice within writing is intrinsic to the telling of a story. It contains the point of view of the narrator, tone and pace of the story. "Voice is the pervasive reflection... of an author's character, the marks by which we recognise his utterance as his" (Stoehr, 1968, p. 150). This voice moves and flows through the narrative, inflecting and intoning meaning where the author wishes to emphasis or express the emotions or actions of those within the story. The phenomenon that happens when stories are told through another person means that researchers need to be cognisant of whose voice is being heard in the study. Researchers also hold the power to colour a narrative by their own perspectives and inclinations. In analysing the written data transcribed from the interviews, it was imperative that the researcher consistently privileged the participant's voice. This was achieved by the process of checking back with the participant about what has been said and their meaning. Additionally, authenticity is maintained when consultation and collaboration happens at every step of the research journey. It is important to uphold a transparent and open process in the collection and analysis of stories (Creswell, 2002).

The data analysis in this study took place after the transcription of the interviews which was done by the researcher to aid confidentiality. The final version of the participants' stories was mutually agreed upon after corroboration and each participant's endorsement of their interview transcripts.

An inductive analysis was used to discover the significant categories, dimensions and interrelationships embedded within the data. This inductive approach allowed the data to “speak for itself” with themes being extrapolated from within the data without the necessity of conforming to any preconceived theory (Patton, 1990). The analysis process comprised of the stories/answers being analysed for common themes and elements with the focus being on the phenomena under study (Higgs, 1996). The end action of connecting participants’ experiences and meanings to the phenomena of achieving 100% attendance was done by the researcher from the final version of their stories endorsed in the signed transcripts.

Process for Analysis

The process used to extract the main themes from the semi-structured interviews followed a three layered approach postulated by Flick (2009). Initially the text was coded line by line with the aim of becoming familiar with the text and to begin the process of categorisation or coding. Each line was analysed to identify and highlight links to the research questions and the phenomena under exploration and underlined. Simultaneously demographic and background educational experiences were being gathered to provide a picture of each participant.

The next stage of coding involved collecting all the underlined texts and collating them under broader categories. This step assisted in formulating the meta-codes for the main themes which were pertinent to and provided some explanations for why these participants achieved 100% course attendance. Deci & Ryan’s Self-Determination Theory was used to categorise motivations into their continuum from amotivation, through extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation.

The final stage of data analysis included a closer scrutinisation of the text. This took the form of a refining process as different passages were specifically identified and mined as pertinent examples and verbatim quotes were highlighted and categorised to support the main themes.

This process was all done manually to maintain an intimacy with the data and to continually hear the participant's voice as each transcript and coding level was being dealt with. It is acknowledged that the use of a computer software programme such as NVivo may have produced more categories but the researcher is satisfied that the main themes produced manually from the data are the ones that are true to the participants' narratives and that every care was taken to honour and represent their accounts honestly and accurately as far as possible.

Summary

Qualitative research methodologies were appropriate for this study in its exploration to gain some understanding of the phenomenon of 100% course attendance and how it was achieved.

Kaupapa Maori and narrative inquiry methodologies allowed for the research process to be collaborative, interpretive and for the researcher to acknowledge her bias as an educator and historically challenged learner. The qualitative research process espoused collaboration and co-construction with the participant and permitted the researcher to be part of the inquiry as an insider and not located as an outsider as advocated by a positivist and scientific approach (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Creswell, 2002; Kumar, 2011).

Semi-structured interview was the method selected and provided the context for participants to tell their stories in collaboration with the researcher, to make meaning of their stories.

These were examined to understand what had happened during the course of their studies in

Applied Technology to induce them to aim for the achievement of 100% attendance. Key elements and themes were extrapolated and analysed to understand their motivations and reasons for full course attendance.

The researcher used appropriate cultural processes that were conducive to honouring and privileging participants' stories and was mindful to maintain their authority as owners of their stories and their tinorangatiranga in their own lives. Care was taken to ensure that the research study achieved endorsement from the participants in achieving a true and authentic narrative of their achievement utilising both Maori and Western research paradigms, methodologies and processes.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Analysis

Naku te rourou nau te rourou ka ora ai te iwi

With your basket and my basket the people will live

(Woodward Ltda, 2014)

This chapter presents the data collected through semi-structured interviews with the participants. Background information was elicited during the interviews regarding participants' schooling and past life experiences in order to identify possible turning points or a time when decisions were made in regards to achieving 100% course attendance and their reasons for doing this. An analysis of the participants' characteristics has been included in this section. Intrinsic motivation played a key part in the findings and is discussed first, followed by extrinsic motivations. A summary of the findings of this study will conclude this chapter. Throughout this study it has been a priority for the researcher to honour and ensure that the participant's voice is heard. This will be facilitated by each theme being elaborated on and supported by participant verbatim quotes. Anonymity has been intentionally achieved by having pseudonyms allocated to all participants and tutors discussed in this study.

Findings of this study

Analysis of the data gathered in this study revealed that the participants were highly motivated and this was a major reason why they achieved 100% attendance. The main themes that were evident from the interview data fell into two types of motivation; intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as postulated in Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory. It was found that the participants' motivations for 100% attendance were situated more towards the intrinsic/internalised motivation end rather than the extrinsic end on Deci and Ryan's

motivation continuum as shown in Table 2 below. Kaupapa Maori Theory was also used to assist in categorising the data and aided in the understanding of participants' narratives as they were contextualised within a cultural framework.

Table 1. Motivations for Student Attendance

Factors that motivated participant's to achieve 100% attendance			
Intrinsic/internalized motivation		Extrinsic motivation	
Theme or sub theme	No. of Participants	Theme or sub theme	No. of Participants
Self-Responsibility for Academic Success:	9	Tutor: Importance of tutor influence	4
Responsibility for attendance and course outcomes	9	Support and encouragement	4
Determined to succeed	9	Respect for tutor	4
Positive attitude to study	9	Teaching style/ interesting	3
Motivated/Had drive	9	Relationship with tutor important	2
Ownership of learning	9	Feedback from tutor important	2
Commitment to course	9	Peers: Relationships	3
Personal values and philosophy	9	Letting down classmates	2
Personal choice	9	Classroom Environment:	5
Self-awareness of academic abilities and capabilities	9	Comfortable, safe and warm	5
Part of personal habits	7		
Planned for success prior to course	7		
Organised themselves for success on course	7		
Role modeling	5		
Didn't want to waste money	5		
Fear of failure	2		
Personal Goals:	9		
Had deep, meaningful goals	9		
Self-efficacy:	6		
Felt confident and believed they could do it	6		
Developed strategies for Success:	9		
Time management	9		
Routine	8		
Self-talk	6		

Each main theme will be discussed in turn beginning with intrinsic motivation after a brief explanation of how KMT and self-determination theory (SDT) were utilised as the framework for data analysis.

(KMT) enabled the data analysis to locate the participants in their cultural contexts and view their stories from that perspective. For the Maori students, their experiences were very much a part of the culture they were brought up in where whanau influences were an important aspect. Cultural obligations, such as tangi, were also understood and so the decisions made around these occasions were significant for Maori participants.

Considerations were given to the language participants used in the interviews and as part of affirming them and hearing their voices, their quotations are presented verbatim, even if they were not grammatically correct. This was applied to the international student's comments as well as some of the other participants who did not have a good command of English in their speech. KMT provided the space for an authentic representation of the participants which was important in the analysis phase of this study.

In SDT according to Deci and Ryan (2000) the need for autonomy, competence and relatedness underpins people's motivations.

Intrinsic /Internal Motivation

Intrinsic/internal motivation relates to an internal drive and locus of causation that provides energy and enables persistence in an activity, and in this case, attending classes 100% (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The four main themes that emerged from the data and categorised under intrinsic motivation will now be elaborated on. They are self-responsibility for academic success; personal goals; personal values and standards; not wasting money; perseverance;

role-modelling; self-awareness; self-efficacy; developed strategies; self-talk and time management and routine.

Self-Responsibility for Academic Success

Self-responsibility was cited by all nine participants as a major factor in sustaining full attendance on their course. This need for autonomy was evident in the data. As adults and of their own volition, each participant said that they had consciously decided to take personal responsibility and control of their thoughts, choices and actions and had assumed full responsibility for achieving their personal academic goals. They were intrinsically motivated and consequently reiterated time and time again that this choice was a huge factor that contributed to the achievement of 100% course attendance for them. During the interviews, they stated several reasons for why each of them had committed themselves to fully attending their course.

For one student, Anna, this choice had its roots in her family's role modelling and expectations. She came from a very educated family where the norm was to achieve high educational qualifications. She had very strong family influences that predicated her choice early in her life to attend school and consequently this has become second nature for her to fully attend her course at the Polytechnic . It was inconceivable to her that any student would contemplate not attending their course every day if they wanted to achieve their qualification.

It was important for me to grab everything that the lectures delivered. So I attended each and every day. And also 100% attendance is not new for me. During my school period also I used to go to school every day and got prizes in prize-giving for the attendance.

Additionally, being an international student, she was fully cognisant of the barriers she faced, particularly language and the consequences of not attending:

As I think being an international student, I have to take maximum value of the course. If I didn't attend one day to classes I think I'm struggle with the next date

Another student, James, also resolved to take self-responsibility for his actions at a young age. His motivation to do this stemmed from a personal traumatic event that compelled him to become independent early in his life and make his own choices about his values and behaviour.

No I never had to have anyone say anything to me. I somehow I make it up myself.

His own personal philosophy showed the strength of his convictions when he said:

Cause I figured that nothing that is worth doing is ever easy. And:

....tough times never last, tough people do

He considered himself totally responsible for his successes or failures and didn't expect others, not even his mum, to motivate him or assist him in achieving his goals and therefore, to get him to go to course. He shared a quote while speaking to his mum:

I'm a big boy now. I need to handle it for myself

Life challenges had made James 'toughen up' and take responsibility for the choices he made in life including attending his course 100%.

Adam, the oldest of all the participants, came from what he called the 'old school' tradition and embraced a high sense of responsibility which was underpinned by high personal standards. He had succeeded in life, despite his lack of formal qualifications, through being

committed to his goals and sheer hard work. In regards to achieving 100% attendance of his course, he applied himself in the same way as if it was a job. Fiercely independent, Adam also had an acute awareness of his competence levels and did not want to rely on others to get him through.

Attendance thereby became an imperative if he was to succeed at achieving his diploma:

I felt if I didn't come then I would miss something and then I wouldn't be able to do it.

And then I'd have to ask somebody else how to do it. And I'd rather be able to do it on

my own...I stayed till 5, Monday to Friday..... I'm experienced at that, having done jobs. I

just treat it as a job. And I was the slowest one there, without a doubt and I think I was

the first or second to finish, just because I purely just plodded on...I thought if I did not

attend, I might not pass. It was fear of failure I think is a real motivation for me.

For the rest of the participants, self-responsibility came after all else had failed and they had had enough of their current circumstances. Having realised that they had missed opportunities earlier in life, these participants made life changing decisions and took sole charge of their lives and were determined to achieve something better for themselves. They made decisions to attend a course and by the time they got to polytechnic to do their course they were already in that mind-set of self-responsibility and determination and were on a trajectory towards completing their qualification to improve their life chances. It became obvious as they shared their stories that 100% course attendance became the means to that end.

Evan stressed that he ensured that he attended his course every day because of his strong desire to achieve his goal:

It was all down to getting an apprenticeship...I wanted to get everything as well as I could...No one really did any goal setting with me apart from myself...It's always up to me whether I go [To course].

It was evident that when some participants had taken self-responsibility for their actions, they also became very aware of the consequences of not keeping to their commitments and had to take a long hard look at themselves. For another mature student, Tina, taking responsibility also meant making changes to ingrained habits and negative perceptions of herself that had created a lifestyle of substance and financial dependence. She shared that she was dissatisfied with her past situation and made it very clear in her interview that she needed to take responsibility for her actions, and change particular habits especially those that had held her back in life.

Tina said

I had to stop being the mama

This referred to helping her peers in class and getting behind in her assessments) and put her studies first as she realised:

Nobody else can do it for you...Nobody's going to help you...No use expecting somebody else to do it for you because it's not going to work

But it was evident that this was all new for Tina and her whanau when she chuckled:

Whanau got a shock .

But in a more serious vein she said;

I wasn't going to let anybody stop me. Not even my whanau, they weren't going to stop me

Tina added that she came to this turning point in her life when:

I had to do some soul searching...[a]s I was sick of being on the benefit...I don't know what it was but it gave me a big wake-up call

And evidence of this turn was unmistakable when Tina made comments like:

*That was me – didn't have to motivate me...And, I had it all myself [motivation]
I was never late, I was early...worked through my lunch time*

When asked about a reward for doing 100% attendance, Tina reiterated:

Honest, I didn't think about it. I only thought that I'm going to do this for me and nobody else. I've always done a lot of things for everybody else and not me

Self-responsibility for George was also linked to personal reasons and believing in himself. He expounds:

Because I'm doing it for myself, and I'm the only one who's going to be able to do it because it's about if I believe it. It's true. If I'm going to do something I have to believe it myself to do it. I can't expect people to say go and do it.

And his determination came through in this comment:

I just don't want to be beaten. I'm not going to let this world beat me.

Don summed up his motivation to take responsibility and make decisions for himself this way:

Main motivation was to show that I can and make it better for myself cause I done a lot of other courses and didn't finish them and I thought nah I'm going to finish this one. I'm going to go every day and see if I could do it – that I could go every day....Yeah, it was mainly me, myself, not wanting to get on the benefit, to make something of myself, you know.

Personal Goals

All students had personal goals that they wanted to achieve. This was an external motivation that had been internalised (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Getting a job was the most common personal one. Seven of the nine participants were aiming to get a job, either a higher paying one or in the area of their interest, after successfully finishing their course and attaining their qualification. For Kiri, it was in the trucking industry, preferably in Australia, as she has dreams of driving over there and making big money to assist her with buying her own home in New Zealand. James wanted to get into the carpentry industry as he “liked working with his hands”, while Adam had the goal of designing and building his own home after completing his Diploma in Architectural Technology.

Don had already made several attempts to get a job in warehousing and knew that the lack of qualifications and experience in this industry had been a barrier to achieving his goal.

Yeah, looking at getting into warehousing in general. I wanted to do forklift driving cause I would be outside

He also wanted to develop positive traits and be able to demonstrate to future employers that he had initiative, reliability and good work ethics by treating the course like a 'job' and applying those traits on the course.

Well, I got that reliability, you know, cause employers look at that a lot, that reliability and all that. It was good too cause they had things in place at the course to help you

Don also had a further personal incentive of wanting to provide for his wife and baby, the things that had been lacking in their lives.

George had missed opportunities to achieve his dream goal of going into the army and navy because of his inability to read or write at the level required for the defence forces. He did the Distribution and Warehousing course to gain some qualifications that hopefully will lead to a job and fund his ideal goals of travelling and meeting new people and possibly finding a lifelong partner. George stated that one of his main goals for achieving 100% course attendance was to:

Refresh and improve my reading and writing skills

This has been a personal pursuit to prove to himself that his disability does not need to be a barrier to his learning. In the end, when George reflected on his success in not only achieving 100% course attendance but also passing the course, he saw that it was due to being focused and thinking:

...if I keep sight of what I am aiming to all through the course... and I achieved it

For Anna, it was a natural continuation of her normal practice of 100% course attendance established in her family and schooling years. She was determined to achieve her personal goal

of gaining higher qualifications to enable her to return to her home country and get a higher position in her field and get paid a higher salary.

The most important goal for Evan was specifically to get an engineering apprenticeship. When he came to do the engineering course he was told that his chances of getting an engineering apprenticeship would be greatly improved with 100% course attendance. Being a competitive type of person, he also wanted to be top of the class. He mentioned that early feedback from his engineering tutor gave him the assurance that he was on track to achieve his goal. This spurred him on and proved to be very helpful in assisting him to stay focussed and attend class every day.

Rawiri's personal goals were linked to his self-efficacy and his desire to,

Prove to myself I can do it

Rawiri also had lots of other reasons when he revealed his motivations through comments like:

No, it wasn't just a course. It was something to go to every day, something to get me out of the house, something I could be active in and use my mind... And:

Actually, I wanted to see if I could do it. If I could do another 100% in this course...Also:

Cause I think I can do better

Concluding with:

[i]said to them I wanted to drive one of those Fonterra trucks

When asked about how he felt about seeing 100% on his certificates, Rawiri responded:

I just like passing the lot and my licences

Rawiri had been out of work for three years due to health reasons and he wanted to verify for himself that he could still manage a full time job. He was desperate to get back in to employment and was not sure if his physical health could handle the daily grind of getting to work and managing the workload. The course was a proving ground to see if he could handle the physical demands on his body as well as the intellectual ones. Having left school without any formal qualifications, Rawiri also wanted to explore his intellectual and academic capabilities to see if “he had it up there” and therefore may be able to pursue a less physically demanding career option if need be.

Tina was very clear that she had had enough of being on the benefit and lacking the financial means to meet the needs of her children:

Yep, I was determined to get off the benefit...The benefit, been on there for 28/29 years and I've only had one job prior to this

And she wanted to enjoy a sense of pride of having:

my own pay packet

In one part of the interview Tina poignantly reminisced that:

I did it for my daughter

And then on several other occasions she was adamant

I'm going to do this for me and nobody else

Tina was also determined to get her driver's licence,

Part of my goal was to get my licence

Tina described how she felt when she finished the course and passed in this way:

I feel tired/over the moon/happy in myself and I'm proud of myself...

It still hasn't kicked in.

While participants attended their courses every day for several reasons it wasn't until they were reflecting and telling their stories that it became evident that 100% course attendance wasn't the objective. It became the means to an end of achieving their personal goals rather than a goal in itself. Everyone made comments that showed they were aware that the successful attainment of these goals were inextricably linked to their successful course completion and directly dependent on full course attendance. These personal goals became a driving force within them and a beacon that kept them on track and motivated them to keep going when their resolve ran low.

Personal values and standards

Values are things that are important to people and standards are what people set as personal measures for themselves. These assist people in making choices for their lives and how they behave (Allport, 1961; HJelle & Ziegler, 1976). Mostly these have been part of their upbringing or had been internalised during their life's journey and played a significant role in the participant's achievement of 100% course attendance. Although not the definitive list, respect, integrity, reliability and not wasting money were some values that were articulated by participants as important to them. Adam particularly made several comments about how his values regarding integrity impacted on his 100% course attendance.

Personal standards...If you don't put effort in why should you get the success... Yes out of honesty to yourself, if you say you are going to then you get in and do it

Similarly George said:

If you say you are going to do it – be there...That's why I was there every time

Not wasting money

Most of the participants were clear that making the most of the money spent on the course was very important, they didn't want to waste their money. Wasting money was not an option and this urged them to attend their courses to get the maximum benefit out of their expenditure.

Comments included from Adam:

If tuition is there, you've paid for it. You don't buy a television and then not watch it...Yeah, so why would you pay for something and then not use it? And I always want to get my money's worth

[Wouldn't consider wasting money?]

No, absolutely not.

For Tina it was about:

Spent a lot of money for course-don't want to waste it

And Rawiri:

It's just I spent too much money to not get anything out of it cause if you're not there every day you won't learn as much eh?

Perseverance

Perseverance was recognised by some of the participants as a means of getting them through their course to the end. For Adam, he had this to say:

I'm not one for starting something and not finishing it. I like to see a job complete and then I can move on to the next one...It's got to be finished, yes, because I think my dad had the opposite. He's start loads of things and never finish any of them. Actually I think maybe that might have influenced me...Well I knew I was going to do it you know attend course every day....This is it, this is the way I work

James was clear:

Tough times never last, tough people do...Cos I figured, nothing that is worth doing is ever easy

James was also very philosophical about life and its challenges in this way:

I had my days when I don't feel like getting up but I don't go by my feelings too much because I'm part of being a Christian sort of person. You take every day as it comes and you ask God for a little help, Lord, I need help today" and I just go anyway and do my best in it...Yes, there's somewhere in the Bible that says if there's challenges in your life you need to stick to it as well. If you work hard you will reap a harvest – if you don't give up

He determined:

I'm going to do this...I'm going to get there

Tina was more resolute:

I went for it and I grabbed it and I don't care how many fingers or hands. I went for gold and I got my gold

Role Modelling

Five out of the nine participants were motivated to attend every day as they wanted to be a role model to their children, family and other students. Some examples of them were:

Adam, as he was cognisant of his children watching his actions:

The reason I thought I should do this, really finish it was because I thought if my kids see me pull out of a course...I wanted to be a good role model indeed. And my daughters are now thinking of going off to university and I don't want her to think "Oh, I'll only do a year because Dad pulled out" you know

James wanted to help his little brother:

I always do things for my brother because he looks up to me. I wanna try and show a good example for him

Don felt he had something to pass on to other students:

I went back to course after I finished. I walked into his [past tutor] class, his students were there and he introduced me...[Tutor says] "He [Don] got 100% on this course...was there every day....Like I really didn't want to say anything. I think it gave them that thing of "Oh well if he can do it I can do it"

Tina wanted to be a role model to her daughter.

I did it for my daughter...Didn't think I would get to graduation

Self-awareness

All participants were cognisant of their abilities and capabilities to achieve success by meeting the academic criteria for passing their course. For the majority of them, participants' past educational experience and lack of qualifications were clear indicators to them that attendance was going to be critical for attaining the learning and being able to achieve a pass. Many stated that they knew they had to attend classes to gain the knowledge but for others it was their independent nature that compelled them to attend every day. They didn't want to rely on anyone else's notes such as Rawiri:

I did not want to miss anything out and I didn't want to borrow off another student so when it comes to the time, I didn't want to copy off this one or that one – that's why. I wanted my own

For Anna, as an international student:

As I think being an international student, I have to take the maximum value of the course. If I didn't attend one day to the classes, I think I'm struggle with the next date. Normally it happens for everyone. I don't want to struggle with the lessons

James reflected:

But you have a choice when bad things happen. If you gonna let that destroy you or say it isn't going to destroy you – you gonna keep trying

And he commented (regarding the carpentry course):

It's something I wanted to try and see if I was actually good at it – just one of those things I wanted to try out. That's why I did a Level 2 course and didn't stretch right through to a Level 3 one

Evan explained:

I like to be early and prepared and after I got that report that I had 100% attendance for hours and that sort of stuck in the back of my mind and what I could get out of this course as well while knowing that the top 5 had a very good, highest chance of getting an apprenticeship

He added:

Everything you do in this course goes towards it, so I just did my best

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy consists of the beliefs that people hold as true about their capabilities to achieve something. It is important because believing in their abilities enables them to firstly attempt things and secondly back it up with the confidence that they can achieve what they set out to do (Bandura, 1986).

Self-efficacy played a major part in assisting the participants in this study to achieve 100% attendance. In satisfying their need for competence, participants had the belief that they could not only attend the course 100% but also successfully complete their course if they attended classes every day. This thinking was reinforced particularly as time went by and they could see that it was manageable and their beliefs became motivational. For example, Don stated his reason was to prove something to himself:

Knowing in my mind if I can do it on a course, I can do it in a job

And Kiri believed:

I thought "I'm going to do this. I'm gonna get there – I just had that ...we can do this

With Rawiri it was:

I wanted to see if I could do it...Once I got through the first units, I thought I must be doing alright

George comments show his delight:

When I learnt to read and write, I was surprised at what I could do...Massive pressure learning to read and write – can do anything – gone from dumb to doing anything

And Tina was clear:

Just do it...That's the attitude. If you can't study, don't do it. If you are going to give it a crack, give it a crack...I've done it from day one until the last day of the course.

Although the participants came from very diverse backgrounds and cultures, their beliefs were very similar when it came to providing reasons for why they attended their course 100%. It was evident from their comments that confidence and self-efficacy contributed to their enablement in accomplishing full course attendance.

Strategies

Any course is not without its challenges. All participants experienced challenges of some form or another on their course, such as barriers of self-doubt, fear of failure, feeling like not going, being bored, and giving up. However all students had an arsenal of strategies to overcome these barriers, particularly when it came to motivating themselves to continue to attend their

course every day. There was a high level of self-awareness amongst the participants that enabled them to strategise before-hand, in order to deal with barriers that arose to potentially sway them away from attending their course. Some needed this more than others but the strategies were there in place nevertheless. These strategies took the form of self-talk, defaulting to their personal values and beliefs, standing on their principles and high standards, time management and routine.

Self- talk

Don was constantly using self- talk to get himself to course such as:

Go to myself, get out of bed, go to course, not going to see mates if you don't go That was me, bang, I'm there

And he continued:

Kept telling myself, get out of bed, gotta be learning something you want to know, don't slack off, get there- and I did

Furthermore:

I just thought to get on with it...Just gotta get through this [Self talk]... Once I get over this little hump, that's it...Just work some more over this little bit, that's it, it's a breeze

Self-awareness helped Rawiri to sustain his 100% course attendance as he was fully cognisant of his fears and weaknesses and had the strategy of positive self- talk to keep him going. For example, he knew that he did not like phoning in to make excuses for his absence at course so to avoid that he went to course every day. He knew that if he gave into not going on any particular day, he could quite easily form the habit of not going at all and give up the course. He used rational thinking and self-talk extensively to motivate himself to attend course when

he didn't feel like it. So clear and self-aware was he about his propensity to give up that he attended course even when he was sick. Rawiri has a collapsed lung and suffers from asthma and at one point in the course he admits that he was "pretty bad" but he went to course anyway and as soon as he was finished at course for the day he caught a cab and went to the doctor. Then he was back the next day.

He told me that he utilised self-talk continually to get him to course saying:

Cause in my head, it's only up the hill. It's only up the hill and I will be alright if I went there and I can have a rest

He meant that if he can just make it up the hill he can make it all the way to course.

Another thing, as a person, Rawiri was consistent in his habits and valued routine. He also had this fear of easily starting another habit by one change of action that could lead to another established routine, even if the habit was valid, such as illness. He constantly thought and spoke words of encouragement to himself to maintain his daily routine of getting to course.

Time management and routine

Routine helped the majority of participants to be on time and maintain integrity. Keeping their word of attending every day made it necessary for some participants to use routine as a strategy to help them continue attending classes 100%. Over 50% of the participants valued routine and utilised a set process every day to get to course at the same time and on time.

They admitted to being organised and some were quite pedantic such as Evan who professed:

I am the sort of guy that gets up and does everything the same in the morning unless it is the weekend

And Adam admitted:

I drew up lists of jobs every day – go through it.. If I don't feel I've achieved it, feel like I've wasted it. If I miss something it ruins my day. So I'm a very disciplined person really

Extrinsic motivation

Three main themes emerged from the data relating to extrinsic or external motivation on Deci and Ryan's (2000) motivation continuum. They were influences from the tutor, peers and a favourable learning environment. It was noted that although these factors were identified as factors that motivated them to attend classes every day, when the participants were questioned about the extent of these influences, they were clear that these factors enhanced their motivation to attend but they did not form the core of what made them really want to achieve 100% attendance. It was noticeable that there was not a strong need for relatedness for most of the participants, including two of the three Maori participants. This is a diversion from the usual case where relationships are particularly important for Maori and other students. Perhaps, as Leach and Zepke (2010) have found, these participants were similar to the percentage of students, particularly non-traditional ones who do not "seek social and cultural capital offered by tertiary study" (p. 13). However, there was the sense that these influences were definite considerations inasmuch as they added to their intrinsic motivations to attend.

Tutors

Four of the nine participants cited that they had respect and appreciation for their tutors regarding their teaching style, encouragement and ability to facilitate learning. Tutor feedback for one participant was invaluable and added an incentive to attend as he realised that he was on target to achieve his goal of an apprenticeship.

On several occasions during the interview, Don verbalised his thoughts about his tutor and his teaching style as follows:

Teaching done in a way where we could learn...It was just the way Bruce [tutor] taught too...he always said to us" Don't be afraid to ask questions"...made us find out answers for ourselves- research...Lots of information, discussion, questions to think about content and learning to add to understanding

In regards to his relationship with the tutor:

Coming early, had time to have coffee, chat to tutors. They would acknowledge [me] out of course time, down the street. It's good to have that environment, where they remember you – goes out into real life

Kiri acknowledged she was well supported by her tutor when she said:

I just had the encouragement, had all the support there, knowing that I had to do it. And there was a lot of – you're going to do it if you put your mind to it. You will get it from Norman [tutor], cos there'd be a few things where "I just can't do this" just get into my head and he was like..."You can", you just gotta get that can't out of your head and then I was like, I definitely gotta do this

Approachability and friendship with the tutor also made attending more rewarding, particularly for those students who went to course early every day such as Don and Rawiri. These early morning encounters were enjoyable for them and have formed a lasting relationship with the tutor. Don says he gets a "buzz" when his past tutor sees him in the street and acknowledges him with a wave or shout "how you doing".

Adam articulated the respect and gratitude he felt was due to the tutor as follows:

There's a certain degree of respect you attend because you do not want to let him[tutor] down. I'm a big one for respecting people but I'm sort of "old school"...They've been great...They've been really helpful...They're fantastic.

Don again was appreciative of one of his tutor's qualities:

His teaching that really motivated me to go every day cause he was always happy and always smiling and bubbly as it was cool. Got this happy tutor.

Peers

For some participants, friendships formed on the course encouraged them to attend every day so they can see them and socialise. Friendly rivalry and competition for achieving 100% attendance became a motivator to attend and also they received encouragement and praise from their peers as they continued to achieve 100% attendance.

Loyalty and allegiance to their class mates can be an external motivating factor particularly when there were projects that needed to be completed in carpentry in teams as this statement shows from James:

I knew if I didn't go I would be letting some of my team mates down

Don enjoyed the course fraternity:

Go to see my course mates, catch up with them

Along with Adam who appreciated:

I liked the mentoring system which has been in my case absolutely brilliant and I'm sitting next to probably one of the best students and he was incredibly helpful to me

While not everyone attended class to be with their classmates, there was one instance where a participant had to set some boundaries regarding her peers' demand on her course time.

Tina shared how she had to focus on her studies and not let others cause her to fall behind even though that was not in her nature. She made this clear with this statement:

Yeah, instead of helping everybody else. I think that's where I made the mistake. When I first started the course, it's that we were helping a fellow student and that held me back a bit...but when he left I caught up even though I failed in my Class 2 theory twice. My attitude was think about myself and nobody else after that. So that was pretty hard

Classroom Environment

Most of the participants were second chance learners who had not achieved any qualifications during their first time in the education system. A more conducive teaching style and the collaborative learning environment where their knowledge and experiences were encouraged to be shared proved to be an external motivator to attend classes 100%. For less than half of the participants, the way the classroom was physically arranged, the pace of learning and the way that learning was integrated into real life experiences appealed to them. They also liked the way classes were relevant to the achievement of their future goals.

Kiri liked the way the class functioned and how they worked together:

Awesome, even though we had our ups and downs but we got along. Yeah, we knew who was who – what we could be around, everyone got along, helped each other and we fitted into a big group

Don appreciated his learning environment as stated:

The learning atmosphere...having the resources and being able to use them all the time...opportunity to do it in your own time

For Anna it was:

Nice learning environment. Good facilities and stress free learning and supportive class mates, small classrooms and group work

Summary

The findings from this study highlighted the impact that strong intrinsic motivation had on the nine participants' desire to achieve 100% course attendance. It was evident that participants held some deep personal reasons why they were doing the course and that attendance was essential as a means to achieving those aims. Hence, the decision to attend 100% was inextricably linked to their personal goals.

It was notable that these participants had internalised their responsibilities, developed their goals and possessed strong values and beliefs that strengthened their resolve to attend 100% through their own personal volition. They empowered themselves to sustain their full course attendance by formulating personal strategies such as self-talk and organising a daily routine which some participants were very pedantic about. These internal motivations became the strong basis on which 100% attendance was attained.

External motivators were tutors, peers and classroom environment but did not form the core reasons for participants achieving 100% course attendance.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion of findings

Whāia te iti kahurangi ki te tūohu koe me he maunga teitei

Aim for the highest cloud so that if you miss it, you will hit a lofty mountain

(Woodward Ltda, 2014)

This chapter will synthesise and discuss the key findings of this study which was aimed at identifying factors that motivated students to achieve 100% course attendance. These findings will be compared and contrasted with the literature reviewed. In doing so the discussion will answer the following research questions:

1. Why do students decide to achieve high levels of or full attendance in their course?
2. What factors contribute to student's decision to always attend classes?
3. When do students decide to achieve high levels or full attendance in their course?
4. How do student's problem-solve and overcome barriers on a daily basis to ensure they keep on track and maintain full course attendance?
5. How much do tutors influence students to attend every day?
6. What other factors contribute to motivating students to attend classes 100%?
7. Who achieves 100% course attendance?

The key findings from this study suggest that students who achieve 100% course attendance had high levels of intrinsic motivation. The primary reasons underpinning their motivation to attend classes every day were linked to some deep and personal desires.

It was revealed that through full course attendance, participants wanted to:

- Achieve academic success as a means of accomplishing their personal goals
- Prove to themselves they can pass the course and achieve other successes
- Maintain personal standards for themselves and to benefit their whanau/families

Other reasons were related to:

- Positive relationships with and influences from tutor and peers
- Enjoyment of their learning and the pleasure derived from the classroom environment

Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors contributed to 100% course attendance and will be the focus of these discussions.

Intrinsic Motivational Factors

In answer to the questions, “Why do students decide to achieve high levels of or full attendance in their course?” And, “What factors contribute to student’s decision to always attend classes?” The responses from participants revealed the significance of intrinsic motivation in relation to their determination to change their future life chances and accomplish some deeply rooted dreams. The desire for autonomy by way of future employment and financial independence was significant for all participants. Intrinsic motivational factors were reiterated many times by the participants as being fundamental and critical to their commitment to 100% attendance. This determination to succeed academically and in life was clear from George who said:

Because I’m doing it for myself, and I’m the only one who’s going to be able to do it because it’s about if I believe it

And for Evan, his goal was clear:

It was all down to getting an apprenticeship...I wanted everything as well as I could

For Kiri it was:

It's bread and butter, pay my bills. It's gonna get me a house one day and that's what I want

Participants' decision to take personal responsibility for their academic success was very significant.

Academic success and self-responsibility

Taking responsibility for academic success was an important factor that contributed to motivating participants to attend classes 100%. In education self/person responsibility means that students accept that the onus is on them to behave and act in ways that assures them of successful outcomes for their studies and life and career goals. Students need to be actively involved and take control of their learning goals. Personal responsibility is essential for academic success according to Forbus et al (2011). All participants in this study claimed that they took responsibility for their academic success and passing their course and viewed 100% attendance as being critical to achieving that objective.

A constellation of behaviours that supported and sustained their determination included being organised; having a positive attitude to study; planning for success; and developing and/or maintaining habits that were conducive to producing successful outcomes. This was endorsed by participant's assertions that primarily they did not expect or require external coercion or influences from tutors or whanau/family to achieve their goal.

However, although Kaupapa Maori research supports the notion of whanau influences as a strong contributor to educational success (Bosman-Watene, 2009), this was not so for Tina who was clear who her success depended upon:

Nobody else can do it for you. That was me-didn't have to motivate me. I had it all myself [motivation].

Furthermore, diverging from her cultural norms, Tina declared:

I wasn't going to let anybody stop me. Not even my whanau, they weren't going to stop me

She stated this because, in the past, she had given herself to meeting the needs of her whanau at the expense of attaining her own dreams and now she had decided to focus all her energy on getting what she wanted in life. In this instance, whanau was a demotivator or amotivation on the motivation continuum, however she did say, at one point, that she did this for her daughter (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

For Anna, it was about following her familial traditions and she wanted to pass:

It was important for me to grab everything that lectures delivered. So I attended each and every day

As the majority of the participants were mature second chance learners and, therefore, were cognisant of their unfruitful past educational experiences, they had some awareness of the academic challenges they would be facing in their studies. This had some influence on their determination to be personally responsible for achieving success in their studies and partially provides some explanation for why students decide to commit to 100% course attendance.

Their lack of academic study skills helped them realise that their academic success was contingent upon full course attendance.

Moreover, the participant's characteristics had some interesting correlations to Bye, Pushkar and Conway (2007) study on non-traditional and traditional students where they found that interest and age emerged as significant predictors of intrinsic motivation to learn for all students. Furthermore, both interest and intrinsic motivation significantly predicted positive outcomes. Their findings were congruent with this study where the majority of participant's were non-traditional students and had high levels of intrinsic motivation for learning, interest and positive effect.

However, age was not found to be an exclusive factor, in this study, when it came to the decision being made to take personal responsibility for academic success. The youngest participant was 18 years old and he insisted that achieving his goal of completing his course successfully as a prerequisite for an apprenticeship was entirely his responsibility as Evan's comment demonstrates:

[n]o one really did any goal setting with me apart from myself...It's always up to me whether I go[to course].

Research that links personal responsibility to the achievement of one's goals was undertaken by Nelson, Low, Stottlemeyer and Martinez in 2004. Their objective for this study was to measure behaviours that related to high achievement and involved students ranging from high school to tertiary level. This research utilised an assessment instrument called the Personal Responsibility Map and Nelson et al found that personal responsibility, amongst a number of other behaviours tested, had a high correlation to high achievement. Personal commitment in

their research was defined as the ‘level of commitment to completing established personal goals - even when they are difficult’ (2004, p. 9).

More than half of the participant’s fear of failure meant attending every day was essential for achieving academic success. Being present in the classroom ensured that they would be able to manage the learning required for assessments and get deeper content knowledge and understanding from the tutor and peers in the class. Adam stated:

I felt if I didn’t come then I would miss something and then I wouldn’t be able to do it...I thought if I didn’t attend, I might not pass. It was a fear of failure think was a real motivation for me

Contrary to Dolnicar’s (2004) pragmatic students who had a minimalist attitude to study and attended their course to get enough to pass, the participants in this study did not indicate that they had the same attitude. Their disposition was one of determination to get the most out of the course to ensure they achieved success and their goals. They were focussed on getting all they needed to pass for different reasons. The fact that age and maturity may differ between the studies being compared here may account for some of the discrepancy.

Finally, these participants demonstrated that they possessed the will and drive to focus and achieve their academic goals through 100% course attendance. They took personal responsibility for managing their time, their learning needs and prioritising their course and behaviours. They were reflective, possessed skills for making decisions and were committed. They took responsibility not only for their actions that were conducive to academic success but also the consequences of not performing in relation to academic attainment. They were fully aware that attending class every day to learn, to get the information they needed, and

complete assessments at course was critical to academic success. Some examples of this from participants were:

Anna, an international student who was also challenged by language barriers explained:

If I didn't attend one day to classes I think I'm struggle with the next date.

And Tina, who was mature and also determined but struggled with literacy skills, maintained:

I was never late, I was early. Worked through my lunch time

Although it is acknowledged that the review of literature in this study is not complete, it was noted that there was no mention of students taking responsibility for achieving academic success as being a contributing factor for why students attend or not attend their courses. Motivation was briefly mentioned but not as a major reason for attending classes (Chou & Kuo, 2012; Fernando & Mellalieu, 2011).

Attendance and achieving personal goals

One of the primary intrinsic motivations for attending classes 100% was to achieve personal goals.

“Personal goals reflect consciously articulated and personally meaningful objectives that guide perception, emotion, thought and action” (Morisano, Hirsh, Peterson, Phil & Shore, 2010, p.256). These authors found in their study that tested the links between students setting goals and academic performance that there were positive outcomes academically because students set goals, and were then able to monitor their progress towards their goals, with the results providing more incentive to continue to strive towards achieving their goals. In another study by Williams and Williams (2011) having personal goals was cited as an important factor that

contributed to students achieving 100% attendance. Their study revealed that students need to see the point of all their efforts and what they will personally get out of their educational endeavours. In addition, Coolbear & Huntington (2014, p.7) suggest that students need to engage purposefully with their learning and plan study pathways that “relate qualifications and programmes to their particular career and education goals” because “generic outcomes are of limited value”. In other words there needs to be specific goals for students to aim for to maintain motivation for success and make consistent effort towards attendance worthwhile.

Evident from the participant’s narratives in this study was the concept of interdependence between self-responsibility and personal goals and how they were intertwined in their contribution to achieving academic success. Deep and personal goals appeared to play a significant part in regards to participants deciding and committing to 100% attendance and together with their determination to achieve academic success. It was noted that without these goals their motivation would have been less robust, short sighted and possibly short lived. The fact that they had very personal goals fed into and sustained their decision and determination to stay and complete their course. Time and time again participants reiterated that the decision to do their course was based on the belief that 100% attendance and completion of their course was the means of achieving their personal goals.

Like George:

I went in there to learn how to read and write. So I keep sight of what I am aiming for all through the course...If I throw in the towel and say I can't be bothered going to this course...then the world's beat me...but sometimes it was just too much...I'm not going to let this world beat me

And Adam:

I want to build my own house. I was the first one to enrol for the next year...I was the slowest one there without a doubt and I think I was the first or second to finish just because I purely just plodded on...because I couldn't possibly have done it and passed without attending

In regards to the research question, "When do students decide to attend their course 100%?" participants remarked that they were the initiators of their own goals, which they set before the course. To secure the accomplishment of their goals, decisions were also made then, of their own volition, to attend their course every day. These goals were specifically related to their own dreams and what they personally wanted out of life and were worth committing to.

According to Morisano et al (2010), being able and free to set their own goals impacts on the amount of effort exerted and time spent because what students are striving for and wanting to do must be the same. For all participants in this study, goal-setting was important. It became a motivational factor to keep them attending when they wanted to give up or tend to other personal matters that would have resulted in short term absenteeism or possible withdrawal from the course. Revisiting their goals and visualising the attainment of their goals helped participants to keep attending every day.

Many participants were driven by their goals to continue attending their course as it became more evident that external factors could get in the way and deter them from achieving course completion. Participants admitted that during the course they faced situations that could potentially detract from successful completion and had to decide whether to continue the pursuit of their goal or give up. On reflection, they could see that by keeping their goals in mind, they were able to sustain the behaviour required to achieve their goals and maintain

their decision to attend their course 100%. This situation was particularly relevant for two participants, Tina and Rawiri. For Tina she knew she had to put aside whanau demand on her time and prioritise her course while Rawiri knew that once he stayed home that could snowball into being absent long term and concomitant withdrawal.

Motivation theories support the notion that when a student is future orientated they exhibit higher achievement motivation and that a sense of responsibility is positively related to goal pursuit (Tabahnick, Miller, Relyea, 2008). This cognitive process is explained by Bandura (1999) in terms of what happens when people are faced with a task or goal, they will purposely reflect and work out what action or behaviour is required to achieve the results they want. He further expounds in his social cognitive theory that when a person is committed to their goal they actively seek to achieve their goals which in turn becomes an incentive to further enhance their motivation to put in future effort. Coates (2006, p.36) sums it up when he said "Students must want to succeed and basically it requires time and energy to do so". Participants in this study had made a commitment to both.

For example, Tina:

Yep, I was determined to get off the benefit...the benefit been on there for 28/29 years and I've only done one job prior to this...I knew that this course/study/driving I had to give it all my mind/thinking...I knew it the day the [administrator] rang that I was going to put my entire 100% into this course and to be honest I thought I did over 100%...I was organised/prepared to do it

And George:

It's realistic. I went in there to learn to read and write. That's what I set it up to be and be aware about it. If I went in there and thought I want to read and write and then I fail at getting a job, well I've lost sight of what I went in there in the first place. So I keep sight of what I am aiming to all through the course and I achieved what it was. It's realistic because doing exactly that it's not about the job. I do want a job but I did achieve what wanted out of it

Having these personally meaningful goals and the strength of them became the mainstay through which they were able to stay committed and true to themselves and achieve the changes they wanted in their lives.

In comparison to the literature on student attendance and reasons for attending or absenteeism reviewed in this study, reference was not found in regards to students having personal goals or lack of them as contributing factors for attendance. However, whanau are important to Maori success (Bosman-Watene, 2009; Cumming- Ruwhiu, 2012) and both Maori and European participants wanted to succeed for the betterment of their families. Adam wanted to be a role model to his daughters. Similarly James was conscious of wanting to be a role model for his younger brother. Don wanted to pass his course to get a job so he could better provide for his wife and baby. Tina admitted she went to course every day and wanted to do it for her daughter.

Motivation is mentioned in general but not specifically in the literature. Neither was it found that personal goals were a motivator for course attendance. However, in this study it was revealed that having personal goals was a major factor that contributed to students' decisions

to attend classes 100%. This factor was not evident in the literature reviewed on student attendance.

Self-efficacy Beliefs

Students who achieve 100% course attendance want to prove to themselves that they can pass the course and apply that success to other areas of their lives. All participants believed in themselves and their ability to achieve academic success. Some because of previous experience like Anna and Don, which Schunk and Pajares (2009) propose affects self-efficacy. For the rest, because they were determined to, failure was out of the question, and they felt capable of attaining their goals. Some research have found that self-determination and self-efficacy are linked together (Sugarman & Sokol, 2012).

Research shows that students who have a high level of self-efficacy are inclined to have higher engagement with academic work and persist towards achieving their goals despite challenges and setbacks (Cannata, Haynes & Smith, 2013). This means that students are prepared to challenge themselves and undertake the necessary tasks to achieve their goals.

Motivating participants to attend their classes 100% was an underlying belief that they could achieve their goals and successfully complete their course. Personal values and beliefs contributed to this notion and for three of the participants this was backed up by previous experience.

For Anna, achieving 100% attendance was normal and she had past experience of this.

And also 100% attendance is not new for me. During my school period also I used to go to school every day and I got prizes in prize-giving for attendance

Don wanted to repeat a prior 100% course achievement that he had attained at a military course:

Well, knowing one that I had achieved it for starters, second was that I had achieved 100% and had completed the whole course and just having that in my mind that if I can do it in a course, I can do it in a job

For other students their maturity and confidence enabled them to believe in their capabilities for achieving successful outcomes.

George reflected:

Because I'm doing it for myself and I'm the only one who's going to be able to do it because it's about if I believe it. It's true, if I'm going to do something, I have to believe myself to do it.

Kiri was adamant:

I'm going to do it yup. I'm going to do that challenge...I thought on this course after the first couple of weeks, nah I don't think I can do this but in getting into it I got more motivated, I'm gonna do it...that's it, can't is not a word

Bandura (1995) supports this finding when he explained that mastery of experiences in the past provide proof that they can achieve and impacts on their self-efficacy beliefs. Participants in this study overcame their fear of failure and persevered through self-efficacy behaviours as they continued to believe they could succeed in their course despite its challenges confirmed by Newton, Khanna & Thompson, (2008).

While self-efficacy beliefs have been found to be significant factors for motivating students to attend their courses in this study, there were no references found in regards to self-efficacy as being a factor that contributed to motivating students to attend their classes, in previous studies in the literature reviewed. Notwithstanding numerous studies abound that show the positive correlation between self-efficacy and achieving academic success.

Self-awareness and Self-Regulated Strategies

Self-awareness and self-regulation which includes having strategies to maintain motivation were found to be important factors that contributed to 100% course attendance. One of the research questions in this study was in relation to problem solving and how students overcome barriers on a daily basis to ensure they maintain full course attendance.

In order to accomplish their personal goals and achieve academic success, three main strategies were identified by participants that contributed to 100% course attendance. They were time management, routine and self-talk. Because of their previous experiences in the education sector, be they positive or negative, participants were self-aware and exhibited the foresight to develop and plan some strategies for full attendance to aid successful course achievement. Time management was a skill they developed as part of having a job mind-set on the course. Possessing the knowledge and awareness of how they function best compelled some to set up a routine to ensure they were at course 100%. For these participants being at class everyday was maintained by a very strict regime of planning the day from getting out of bed at the same time every day, performing the same time-framed morning rituals, catching the same bus and arriving at course half an hour early every day.

Some said they liked routine and this routine helped them to maintain course attendance such as Rawiri:

When I first started the course I had to get up early and be up the road by 7am to catch the bus to go maybe 100 metres down the road...But I didn't know the times they were going to open up...I walked. I had breakfast up the road at half past six. Straight up Cameron Road and go down Maleme cause if I walked around the other way it would have meant me walking up the hill...After I got good at it – gee, it would take me 20 to 30 minutes

And George:

I do the same thing every day. I had it all scheduled out. Get up in the morning, have my breakfast, have my shower and bits and pieces, make my lunch and then out the door"...Yep, I was 10 minutes before the bus arrives at the bus stop like I always do because sometimes they come early and if they're late then it's their problem. I got off the bus up Maleme Street and then walked down and I knew I had x amount of minutes to walk, between 15-20 minutes from the bus stop to the course. So when I get up in the morning, I have to have half an hour breakfast/shower/stuff, 10 minutes before the bus and 20 minutes to get to course, so I always added it up

Evan was aware of how he likes to be regulated:

Yeah, cause then I know I am going to be able to leave at that and get there this time...I am the sort of guy that gets up and does everything the same way in the morning unless it's the weekend

Self-talk was another strategy that some participants developed to maintain their motivation to attend classes every day. When they felt like staying home or couldn't be bothered they had scripts they would say to themselves and take steps to attend class.

For Don it was simple sentences like:

Get out of bed now, time to go [and] you're going to miss out on your learning

And the self-talk that kept Rawiri going was reminding himself that:

It's only up the hill

Self-talk worked for participants who had previously been sporadic in their attendance at other courses. However, again, in researching the literature about student attendance, there was no evidence found of whether students had strategies to help them maintain interest in their studies and/or urge them to attend their courses. In fact the opposite might be said where students desired to attend their course as little as possible, just to pass and no more (Dolnicar, 2004). Effort is only required when the goal is either very desirable or challenging. When students don't have clear goals or are not committed they may not see a reason to strategise to attend (Cannata et al, 2013).

Extrinsic Motivational Factors

It was noted from this study that extrinsic motivational factors played a secondary role in influencing participants to achieve 100% course attendance. Some participants conveyed the view that external factors enhanced the means to achieving their intrinsic goals but for others it was not an essential condition for attending their course every day. Three participants were very strong in their admissions that they did not require external inducements to achieve their

academic goals for success and better career prospects but enjoyed the teaching style and the learning nevertheless.

Like Tina:

I didn't need the motivation from [tutor] because I had my own motivation

Rawiri, a mature student, was old school and didn't need his tutor to keep on his case:

No, that's just me. That's how I felt. I felt I wanted to learn something...Ah no nothing [in response to did you need tutor to motivate you?]

James was another independent student:

No, I never had to have anyone say anything to me...cos, I figured that nothing that is worth doing is ever easy

Extrinsic factors that helped some students achieve 100% attendance were: tutor influence; peers and classroom environment.

Tutor Influence

This study examined the question, how much do tutors influence students to attend every day? In Self Determination Theory, Deci & Ryan (2000) have asserted that people are motivated by the need for relatedness. They will seek out relationships to fill that need. Additionally, according to Covington (1992), all efforts by the tutor to assist students in feeling a sense of worth and self-respect can positively impact on student attendance, academic performance and successful course achievements. The research shows that teaching staff can play an important role in engaging students in tertiary education in terms of their relationships

with students and the establishment of a positive classroom environment to encourage student attendance

However, how much tutors influence students to attend classes every day is debatable. This ambivalence may be partially explained by the politics of blame discourse. Thrupp (2010) explains that this discourse refers to the way that schools and teachers are blamed for student underperformance or failure in the education system. He points out that research findings by Hattie (2003) has revealed that only 30% of success rates can be attributed to tutor/teaching and students' personal reasons are accountable for 50% of the factors that impact student learning and consequently attendance. Montalvo (1998) found that students are more motivated by teachers they like rather than teachers they don't like and therefore this impacts on their choices to attend or not attend classes. Moreover, the findings from this study suggest that when students take responsibility for their learning and academic success, they are less dependent on the tutor/teacher as a factor to motivate them to attend classes.

In this study it was found that tutor influence was a factor that contributed to student attendance but had limited application. Mixed responses resulted in a split between those participants who valued tutor teaching and interactions which in turn motivated them to attend classes and those who insisted that tutors had no impact on their commitment to 100% course attendance. Adam commented that his reason for attending was because of his values and he wanted to show respect to his tutors by attending and engaging in the learning.

Albeit, participants who looked forward to engaging with their tutor did comment that tutor influence was also linked to their goal to achieve academic success. In particular, Evan, who was aiming to get an apprenticeship, remarked that he appreciated the positive feedback from his tutor on his academic progress and achievements and that motivated him more to attend

his course. Brewer (2005) found that feedback about course success had considerable influence on student's motivation to attend classes.

Not all participants interviewed in this study were influenced by the tutor to attend classes consistently. This is a contrast to previous research results which have identified tutor qualities and teaching as a major factor for why students attend classes. These studies have found that tutor influence, in the form of quality teaching and/or personality traits, is considered to be a major reason that students identified as contributing to course attendance (Fernando & Mellalieu, 2011; Massingham & Herrington, 2006; Brewer, 2005; Friedman, Rodriguez & McComb, 2001; Devadoss & Foltz, 1996). Research by Bryson and Hand, (2007) found that tutors have tremendous influence with students and matters enormously for making a difference. In fact Brewer (2005) claimed in his study that teacher personal qualities ranked the highest reasons why students attended class. Friedmann, Rodriguez and McComb (2001) assert that students will attend classes when they are interesting and the teaching staff notices they are there and show they care.

The importance of attendance is clear and summed up by Thomas & Higbee (2003:231):

The best teacher, no matter how intellectually stimulating, no matter how clear in providing explanations and examples, may not be able to reach the high risk freshman who has no real interest in learning...and will certainly not be successful with the student who fails to show up for class.

As mentioned above, some participants showed up for class because of their tutor while others did so because they needed to attend class to achieve their personal goals and gain the learning they required for academic success. It is important to note though, for two

participants, their tutor contributed considerably to their desire to attend class every day. So tutors do make a substantial difference for some students' motivation to attend.

However, for the majority of the participants in this study, when it came to tutor influence, they were not going to course to meet social needs (Leach & Zepke, 2010). Interestingly, they were the opposite of Hattie's (2003) study in that participants stayed and attended course 100% for personal reasons not to drop out.

Peers

Research Question 7: Other factors that contribute to motivating students to attend classes 100% found in this study included peers and classroom and environment. For some participants, new friends were made and that contributed to them wanting to attend course every day. Don spoke of the support he got from his peers academically and the social interactions which he valued and enjoyed and this contributed his motivation to achieve 100% course attendance.

As Don said:

Yeah, I think it was more too – got to course to see my course mates. It was more of going and catching up with my course mates

For Anna, she appreciated the help she got in class from her class mate:

I got a friend here [in class], he helped me a lot in the first few months. Now also if I want help I just call him and please come and help me

James didn't want to let his class mates down so attended every day:

I knew if I didn't go I would be letting my team mates down

By virtue of their engagement with their peers in the classroom and socially, participants looked forward to going to course and at times of discouragement the relationships formed with their peers helped in motivating participants to attend. However, there was not the same sense of significance given to this factor as was attributed to self-responsibility and the attainment of their personal goals. This may be due to participants' focus being given to academic success and not prioritising the making of friends as a reason for course attendance. Very much like Dolnicar's (2005) pragmatic students, participants in this study, in the main, were attending to get what they needed to achieve their future goals and not for long term friendships and institutional engagement. However, the support and interactive learning opportunities with their peers clearly provided some incentive to attend course every day.

Classroom Environment

Classroom environment was a factor that contributed to 100% course attendance. However, during the interviews, the learning environment was mentioned by most participants as a minor factor that contributed to course attendance. Most participants indicated that it contributed to the pleasure of attending but not as a main reason for attending. Some participants commented that the classroom environment helped maintain course attendance when they felt the urge to stay home.

Like Don:

Yeah, I think that was a big thing that lead me to getting my 100% was because I know that if I was at school [course] and I wasn't sure of something, I could ask and I'd always have that answer there or that person to help me and or else they would tell me how to get that, which was good cause having those things in place to help you makes you want to go and the atmosphere makes you want to go

They enjoyed the learning interactions and discussions and the warm and safe atmosphere that was engendered by both tutor and students. Classroom dynamics assisted in managing their learning needs and meet academic outputs. With the classroom being conducive to their learning style and meeting their learning needs, it became an important factor to assisting participants to go to class every day.

Adam enjoyed a positive mentoring environment:

And I like the mentoring system that they encourage too. Some chap or girl is very good they try and sit next to somebody who's particularly good. Which has been in my case absolutely brilliant and I'm sitting next to probably one of the best students and he was incredibly helpful to me.

While Chou and Kuo's, (2012) study cited class size as having an impact on course attendance this was were not mentioned as a reason that motivated students to attend their classes.

Albeit, the seminal study by Romer (1993) found that absenteeism was lower in smaller class sizes, however, it was studies by Dolnicar, Kaiser, Matus and Vaille (2009); Gump (2004); and Friedman, Rodriguez and McComb (2001) who found that students attended classes because of their small size which enabled students to interact better with the tutor and participate in class.

Who achieves 100% course attendance?

Out of the thousands of students who attend polytechnic courses every year, the findings of this study have identified elements that students possess that enable them to achieve 100% course attendance. They are not demographic characteristics but motivations and attributes that students assume to achieve their personal goals. Despite past educational experiences, be they positive or negative, age, ethnicity or academic ability, students who achieve 100% course attendance found in this study have the following characteristics:

- Self-determination and take personal responsibility for their academic success. Being self-aware of their academic skills and ability compels them to plan, be organised, have a positive attitude to learning, and attend their classes to ensure they pass their course.
- Deep personal goals. They have freely chosen objectives and dreams that they are aiming towards and are committed to and are determined to achieve. They know that academic success is inextricably linked to the accomplishment of their personal goals.
- Self-efficacy, belief they can achieve their goals, are capable and have the ability required. They want to prove to themselves that they can do it and apply this success to attaining a job. They also monitor their progress which in turn builds their self-efficacy.
- Foresight and strategies already developed for dealing with distractions or challenges that might deter them from their goal.
- High personal standards. As part of maintain personal standards, they attend classes to show respect to their tutor and peers. The relationships they form with them are meaningful and they enjoy the learning and classroom environment. However for some students this is not essential to get them to attend classes every day.

Summary

In summary, this chapter has addressed the research questions in this study and found that intrinsic motivational factors are the most significant in motivating students to attend their course 100%. These factors were clustered around the self-determination to succeed at their course in order to accomplish some deep and personal goals. They believed in themselves that they could do it and this had implications for other areas of their lives. Personal strategies helped them get there in the end. These intrinsic motivational factors were internalised and viewed as fundamental to what keeps students attending class every day for the duration of their course.

Extrinsic motivational factors, on the other hand, such as tutor influence, peers and classroom environment were seen as part of students' motivations to attend course 100% but they would not be sufficient, on their own, to sustain and maintain attendance.

Against all the odds, the participants in this study had all the above and achieved 100% course attendance and academic success, which enabled them to move a step closer to attaining their life goals and dreams.

He mihinui ki a koutou katoa.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion, recommendations and future research

Ki te kahore he whakakitenga ka ngaro te iwi

Without foresight or vision the people will be lost

(Woodward Ltda, 2014)

Students attend courses and stay to successfully complete a tertiary qualification for a multitude of reasons. This study was aimed at finding the reasons why tertiary students were motivated to achieve 100% course attendance.

Kaupapa Maori and narrative inquiry research methods were utilised to gather data and explore answers to this phenomenon. To establish a basis for this study, literature on motivation, student attendance and absenteeism were reviewed. The findings of this study were corroborated with the previous literature to find some specific conclusions to the main research question of: What factors motivate tertiary students to achieve 100% course attendance? Self Determination Theory was found to be useful in providing a framework for data analysis and reporting to understand what underpinned participants' motivations for achieving 100% course attendance.

This chapter recommends an intervention that could be incorporated into the orientation phase of the students' course. It also outlines some limitations and weaknesses of this study and suggests some possible future research.

The preliminary review of the literature on student attendance identified motivation as a part of the milieu of reasons why students attend their classes regularly. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation were cited as contributing to students' course attendance, however, extrinsic factors featured as the major reasons for why students attend classes in the literature.

In contrast, findings from the interviews of participants in this study revealed that intrinsic motivational factors made a major contribution towards their accomplishment of full course attendance and academic success. Whilst respondents referred to the extrinsic factors found in preliminary literature reviewed, such as tutor and peer influence and classroom environment, the literature did not highlight intrinsic factors encompassing personal drive and goals. Participants in this study were fully aware that they needed to be in class to pass.

Overall, reasons identified by participants in this study compared to those of the students in the literature reviewed differed in their motivation types and commitment levels. Participants in this study revealed that they viewed their course as a stepping stone to a better life, to a bigger goal, to the attainment of a dream. Attendance was critical to achieving the first step but they always had more in mind than just the completion of the course.

Participants' past memories and experiences in education influenced their decisions to prepare for their course and proactively pre-plan an arsenal of robust strategies to manage the expected and unexpected pitfalls. Consequently, participants made decisions to attend class attendance every day to successfully achieve their goals. In order to attain a better life for themselves and their whanau, they knew that full course attendance was what it would take and they never wavered.

Another aim of this study was to inform tertiary institutional policies and practices regarding student attendance, student engagement, retention and successful course completions. The course orientation phase has been identified as a window of opportunity for educational staff to set students up for academic success. A rationale for the recommendation is presented now.

Proposed Intervention

Much attention is given to academic, social and cultural integration as part of addressing attendance and student retention strategies in higher education (Leach & Zepke, 2010; Tinto, 1997). The focus has mainly been on teaching performance, establishing culturally reflective and engaging environments and self-discipline (Jensen, 2011; Tinto, 1975). In view of the importance of personal goals and other intrinsic motivational factors identified in this study, a proposition is made that institutions and teaching staff will do well to consider incorporating a space in the orientation stage of their student engagement activities to deliberately look at and allow students to articulate and connect with their personal goals for doing the course. Morisano et al (2010, p. 8) in their study on personal goals and academic performance suggest that "personal goal-setting deserves greater attention as an effective technique for improving academic success". This study supports that view.

It is acknowledged that institutions have been responsive and proactive in adopting effective external engagement activities, in terms of facilitating student social engagement with the institution and peers along with relationship building with their tutors and course content (Radloff, 2011). However, this study shows that higher levels of commitment to attendance and its resultant academic success may be gained in the early stages of starting a course by providing a meaningful space to explore and identify the intrinsic reasons why students have chosen to engage or re-engage with tertiary study. This intervention is deemed as very

important, particularly for first time or second chance learners, who are mature and may have had negative past encounters with the education system and are already at risk of absenteeism and non-completion.

Though the sample for this study is small, these students clearly articulated what motivated them to achieve 100% attendance and academic success. How they did it is worthy of consideration for future applications in student engagement practices. These participants exemplify students who have been fully engaged with their academic studies through 100% course attendance and have beaten all the odds.

Recommendations

This study has identified that intrinsic motivation has a strong influence on course attendance and academic success. While student engagement and completions remain critical for tertiary institutions, this author proposes that practices to encourage and raise attendance rates should be included in the orientation and student engagement phase of courses of study. The intervention could include some or all of the following strategies:

- 1 Interview every student within the first two weeks of their course to ascertain:
 - Why they want to do the course?
 - How motivated are they? (Likert scale)
 - How much are they committed to this course? (Likert scale)
 - How prepared are they, academically, mentally, physically, spiritually, support? (Likert scale)
 - What are their personal goals beyond the course?
 - Do they believe they can achieve their goals? Why?

- What academic skills do they already have to assist them to successfully complete their qualification?
 - What strategies have they got to motivate them to keep on track when distractions occur?
 - How much are they committed to course attendance? (Likert scale)
 - Why do they think course attendance is going to be good for them?
- 2 Set up an agreement for students to make a commitment to attendance and learning expectations
 - 3 Review goals and contract with students using attendance and academic data every six weeks.
 - 4 Use all the above, as and when necessary, as educators see students' motivation slipping or they are missing classes.

In view of the impact and implications that student attendance is having on students' futures, institutions, educational staff and the social and economic wellbeing of New Zealand, the above measures are viewed as an intervention that has the potential to contribute to an increase in course attendance, student engagement, retention and completion rates.

Rising absenteeism and attrition rates are of major concern in higher education with current trends being untenable. Lack of successful academic outcomes comes at a high cost for all concerned; including individuals, families and communities, besides educational institutions, nationally and internationally, and nobody wants that.

Limitations and Weaknesses

This study was conducted with a small sample of nine participants within the Applied Technology School in a New Zealand polytechnic. The site of this study already presents a limitation as to how applicable the results are to a wider range of disciplines and settings.

Another limitation could be that qualitative research is very much subjective and therefore another researcher could conduct the interviews with the same participants and draw out other responses culminating in a different perspective on the findings. However, this does not affect the validity of this research as people are prone to either focusing or articulating different aspects of their lives and experiences depending on time, place, feelings and characters involved. It is believed that this study has the potential to make a valuable contribution to educational discourse and landscape in regards to identifying factors that motivate students to achieve 100% attendance.

In addition, this study was undertaken in a polytechnic and may not be directly transferrable to other tertiary settings. For example, classes at polytechnic are smaller and more interactive as opposed to lectures and student numbers at university. Tutors are more readily available in vocational courses whereas lecturers may not have the time or be as approachable. However there will be some similarities that may be helpful. Academic study involves similar cognitive and behavioural processes and motivation is a common determinant of student's commitment and desire to attend classes.

Future Research

This study, while providing some insight into factors that impact on student attendance also raised some other questions for future research. It was identified that intrinsic factors, which were primary motivations that influenced participants to achieve full course attendance in this

study, were held by the participant before the course had started. However, a topic for further research would be to see how would a tutor or institution could develop or strengthen intrinsic motivations in a student who started a course without them. The proposal here is for an intervention which examines their intrinsic motivations. A research that follows up on this intervention would be helpful.

An intervention based on goal-setting as a result of this research is being trialled with vocational students in a New Zealand Polytechnic and the outcomes would be another topic worth researching.

GLOSSARY

Aroha	Love, affection
Kai	Food
Karakia	Prayer
Kare	Dear, endearment
Kaupapa	Topic, subject
Kaupapa Maori	Maori ideology, Maori principles
Koha	Gift, offering, contribution, reciprocity
Korero	Speak, communicate
Mana	Intrinsic worth, prestige, status
Manaakitanga	Hospitality, reciprocity
Maori	Indigenous or belonging to New Zealand, native, natural
Matauranga Maori	Maori knowledge
Mauri	Life principle
Mokopuna	Grandchild
Noa	Common
Tapu	Sacred
Tikanga	Customs, rituals, rules, norms
Tikanga Maori	Maori customs
Tinorangatiratanga	Self-determination, autonomy
Utu	Money, reciprocity, avenging
Wairua	Spirit
Whakapapa	Ancestry, genealogy, lineage
Whanau	Family, extended family, family-like relationships
Whanaungatanga	Relationships, kinship

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Appendix 1

HUMAN ETHICS APPROVAL



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

3 September 2013

Maraea van Gent
PO Box 150
ROTORUA 3040

Dear Maraea

**Re: HEC: Southern B Application – 13/55
Switched on – What factors motivate tertiary students to achieve 100% course attendance?**

Thank you for your letter dated 2 September 2013.

On behalf of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B I am pleased to advise you that the ethics of your application are now approved. Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Dr Nathan Matthews, Chair
Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B

cc A/Prof Nick Zepke
Institute of Education
PN500

A/Prof Sally Hansen, Director
Institute of Education
PN500

Mrs Roseanne MacGillivray
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Accredited by the Health Research Council

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Appendix 2

INFORMATION SHEET



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
TE KURA O TE MĀTAURANGA

INFORMATION SHEET

Introduction

Kia ora, my name is Maraea Van Gent and I am doing a research project entitled:

Switched on – What factors motivate tertiary students to achieve 100% course attendance?

This research is part of the requirements for a Masters of Philosophy in Education at Massey University, Palmerston North. It will run from February 2013 and be completed in November 2014. Your part will be completed in November 2013. I would like to firstly congratulate you on your achievement and invite you to participate in the research where you will be interviewed and asked questions about what made you want to achieve 100% course attendance. The research aims to:

- Acknowledge your achievement and tell your story so that teaching staff and tertiary institutions might understand why students may want to fully attend course classes.
- Provide information to tertiary institutions to help with developing staff training policies and strategies to improve student course attendance.

I hope that the information I gather will help tertiary institutions understand what motivates students to attend their courses to help students, teaching staff and tertiary institutions in the future.

Participant Selection Process

I am seeking your cooperation to take part in this research project as a student who has achieved 100% course attendance in the School of Applied Technology at the Bay of Plenty Polytechnic in 2013. The Course Administrator will have sent you this information sheet and you are welcome to ask any questions by contacting the Course Administrator or you are most welcome to contact the researcher so that you understand what the project is about.

You are being invited to take part in an interview which will last no longer than one hour. This interview will be recorded and transcribed by the researcher, however, you may ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview. The interview will take place at the polytechnic in a classroom at a time that is convenient for you. Be assured that there is no requirement for you to participate in this research project – this is totally your choice. A Consent Form is attached for you to complete if you wish to participate in this research. The maximum number of participants desired for this research is 12. The first 12 students who return their completed consent forms to either the Course Administrator or the researcher will be accepted for the research. Again you are welcome to ask any questions at any time so that you fully understand what the project is about by contacting the researcher. Because you will be sharing some personal information in the interviews, a counselor or cultural advisor is available during or after the interview, if you need support or someone to talk to.

Please note that if you decide to participate:

- You have the right to decline to answer any particular question.
- You are able to withdraw from this research project at any time without penalty.
- Your identity will remain anonymous, unless you give permission to use your name to the researcher.
- You can ask questions about the research project at any time during the project.
- The information you share will be securely stored and used only for the purposes of this research project.
- You will be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- Supervisors for this research will have access to your information.
- Outcomes of this project will be shared with educational staff and your story of success may be published in educational journals or be part of conference presentations.
- All raw information will be destroyed at the completion of the research project.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact:

Researcher: Maraea Van Gent, Maraea.vangent@boppoly.ac.nz

Supervisors: Nick Zepke, N.Zepke@massey.ac.nz

Krystal Te Rina Warren, K.T.Warren@massey.ac.nz

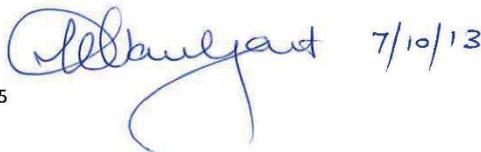
Committee Approval Statement

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, Application 13/55. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Brian Finch, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, telephone 06 350 5799 x 84459, email humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz.

Thank you for your valuable assistance. I appreciate your time.

Nga mihi,

Maraea Van Gent
Mobile: 021 1214495



Appendix 3

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
TE KURA O TE MÁTAURANGA

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM – PARTICIPANTS COPY

Research project: Switched on. What factors motivate tertiary students to achieve 100% course attendance?
Name of researcher: Maraea Van Gent
Researcher contact details: Maraea.vangent@boppoly.ac.nz

I have read the Information Sheet and understand the details of this research project. I have had a chance to ask any questions and discuss my participation with other people. Any questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree to participate in this research project under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet and I understand that I may withdraw from it at any time without penalty. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the Researcher.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Participants Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix 4

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1 Tell me a bit about yourself, where you are from and what was school like for you?
- 2 This year you have completed a course in, how has this year been for you?
- 3 When and how did you decide to do the course?
- 4 When you were thinking about doing this course, what were some of the things you needed to do to prepare for the course?
- 5 What kinds of goals did you set for yourself? What were some of the benefits for you in doing this course?
- 6 What did you like about your course? Was it what you thought it was going to be?
- 7 When did you decide you were going to attend every class? Why did you decide that?
- 8 Why was it important to you to achieve 100% course attendance? Have you been as committed to something else like that in the past?
- 9 What were some of the things that made you want to attend your course, no matter what?
- 10 How did you organise yourself every day to get to course? What would you think about if you woke up and something unexpected happened? How did you deal with that?
- 11 How do you feel about achieving such an incredible achievement? How will this achievement affect other things you might do in the future?
- 12 What's was in it for you to achieve 100%? What was your reward?

Appendix 5

TRANSCRIPT CONSENT FORM

Maraea Van Gent
Bay of Plenty Polytechnic
Tauranga

Kia ora

Thank you for sharing your story with me. I felt honoured and privileged to hear your experiences and wisdom.

I am enclosing a transcript of the interview we had together. Could you please check that this transcript is a true and correct record of our conversations in the interview and sign below:

Signed.....
.....

If there are any changes you would like to make to the transcript or if I have recorded something incorrectly, please include these changes under the existing data and sign below:

Signed.....

If you have any further comments, please include these below.

Please post the signed transcript back to me in the envelope provided as soon as possible. Thank you again for participating in my research which I hope, when it is finished, will become a positive exemplar of motivated and inspirational students for future generations in tertiary education.

Nga mihi nui ki a koutou katoa

Maraea