

NEW ZEALAND ASSOCIATION FOR RESEARCH IN EDUCATION
TE HUNGA RANGAHAU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

Sutton-Smith Doctoral Award 2015

Rae Si'ilata ***University of Auckland***

Rae Si'ilata (University of Auckland) is the 2015 recipient of the Sutton Smith Award for excellence in a doctoral thesis in education. Rae's thesis entitled "*Va'a Tele: Pasifika learners riding the success wave on linguistically and culturally responsive pedagogies*" is highly original and meticulous in both framing and approach. As noted by the examiners, the thesis is of the highest quality in every respect. It makes an important contribution to knowledge in the field of culturally responsive pedagogies in New Zealand and internationally. In addition, Rae's research has enhanced Pasifika peoples' understanding, appreciation and valuing of their knowledge.



From a strong and original theoretical basis, Rae has developed work of practical significance to one of the most pressing issues facing New Zealand education, that is addressing the low and persistent problem of Pasifika students' underachievement. The significance of Rae's research lies in the way it promotes a way of thinking about how to create and order an instructional experience that validates, affirms, illuminates, inspires and motivates Pasifika learners. Interventionist in nature, her work alongside teachers resulted in effective teacher learning which in turn led to raising Pasifika students' literacy achievement. In a number of cases, students' rates of progress were immense and arguably unparalleled.

The significance of Rae's research, along with her scholarly, innovative and culturally responsive approach to research has already been recognised nationally and internationally. She has been a recipient of a University of Auckland, Vice Chancellor's award for a top doctoral thesis. This year at AERA's annual meeting Rae was an invited panelist at the Indigenous People's of the Pacific Special Interest Group meeting.

The contribution that Rae has made to the bodies of knowledge pertaining to culturally responsive pedagogies, successful literacy learning and teacher learning and the impact her work has had on Pasifika students' levels of achievement speaks of its excellence. Rae is thus a very worthy recipient of the 2015 Sutton Smith Award. Significantly, she is also the first Pasifika researcher to receive the award.



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