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**Talanoa, Manulua and Founa Ako:**  
*frameworks for using enduring Tongan educational ideas  
for education in Aotearoa/New Zealand.*

**A thesis**  
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By

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## ABSTRACT

Educational achievement for Pacific students is a Government priority according to the Pacific Plan 2009- 2012 (Ministry of Education, 2009). For Tongan students though, Thaman (1988) highlights major differences in Pacific parents educational aims stating that for them, there is a focus on social and moral aspects of learning and the utilisation of learned capabilities for the common good, rather than a sole focus on individual advancement (pp. 236-237). Education for Tongan students then may need a different approach to recognise Thaman's finding. This thesis advocates for the inclusion of Tongan educational concepts and values in teaching and learning in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

This thesis also argues that in Aotearoa/New Zealand's schools, Tongan students should be exposed to their own language, moral, social and spiritual concepts, important elements of their culture. The central proposition of this thesis is that Tongan students will achieve better and more meaningful educational outcomes in the country's primary, secondary and tertiary institutions through improved self-esteem, stemming from an acknowledgement of their Tongan identity and the knowledge that their unique ways of learning are respected in Aotearoa/New Zealand's education system.

To provide a context for my argument, I begin with the journey that I undertook with the support of my fonua, which eventually led me to write this thesis. My approach to addressing the research question involved both an extensive review of the literature as well as numerous talanoa with groups and individuals in several countries. In order to gather the information I required, it was necessary to develop a method that respected the polity and culture of the Tongan people with whom I worked. The appropriate Tongan approach was one that employed the metaphor of the kakala (Thaman, 1993a, 1997a) as an integrating framework for what I term as Talanoa Research Methodology.

The information gained and knowledge co-constructed from application of this methodology form the substance of the thesis. From using the Talanoa Research Methodology, information gathered and co-created from numerous talanoa, were used to create an ideal sense of being for a Tongan which is one who is a balanced spiritual social being who is at harmony with self, family, the environment and his/her God/s. This ideal context incorporates an ongoing fusion, negotiation and balancing of supernatural beliefs with the demands of contemporary living. This state is symbolically represented by the ancient motif of manulua. It is proposed that fostering this ideal cultural state in the classroom should be a central aim in education for Tongans.

An integrated learning approach that can be used by both teachers and students, one that employs the Tongan educational concepts of 'ofa, 'ilo, poto, fatongia and fonua, is suggested to guide teaching and learning that could prepare them to a balanced and harmonious life where they culturally function fully in their own community. I call this integrated learning framework or pedagogy, Founa Ako. Founa Ako framework, along with Talanoa Research Methodology and Manulua gifted from ancestors, kaunga fau and kau nga fa'u represent the three completed kalala I am preparing to luva from this thesis. These are indicative of my 'ofa and gratitude to my former teachers, family members, inspirational Pacific and other leaders who have nurtured me. The learnings for Tongan students will then be more holistic and aligned to their cultural ways and the aspirations of their communities.

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Finally, I dedicate this doctorate to my ta'okete, tuakana, Sione Latu, and my Tanga'eiki Tevita Ta'ufo'ou. Ko moua homau maka falala'anga, folau a kuo mo'ui e laumlie 'o e fonua ho'omo fakamafola e folofola mo muimui he hala ne fakatoka mei mu'a. Mo malolo a he kou tu'u ho'omo maka 'i Nuku'alofa, Makaunga, 'Ohonua, Neiafu, Ha'apai Hahake mo Lulunga, 'Okalani (NZ) kae 'umaa a Kalefonia (USA). Kou lava ho'omo fatongia, ma'u ho'omo palee koe mo'ui fiemalie ta'engata.

Some of the Tongan concepts are spelt with j instead of s and some are with b instead of p. This will signify that such words were part of quotes from literature that was older than 1945. The Tongan alphabet was changed in 1945 and j was replaced by s and b was replaced with p.

My computer does not have the symbols or the means to represent the way some Tongan words are pronounced so they are not used in this thesis. Such symbols, like toloi, which is a short horizontal dash is positioned on top of a letter to be stressed or just on the top right hand side drawn at 45 degrees, away from the letter, depending on the position of the word that contains the stressed letter in a sentence. I have refrained from doing what others have done in doubling the same letters to represent those stresses as this corrupts the language further.

I regret to say that I have had to follow the same approach for various Maori concepts and words used in this thesis. I have consulted members of my kaunga fa'u on this area. Because of assumed shared epistemologies with Maori, I have found Maori concepts and words particularly useful for scaffolding the reader to a better and richer understanding of the Tongan words, ideas and concepts.

Pacific or Pacific peoples/Pacific Nations Peoples are the terms used for peoples of the Pacific in this research. These terminologies were agreed to by the leaders of the Pacific communities around the country in the 1980's. This was in response to the Honourable Don Mackinnon's request to the Pacific groups to define how they are to be collectively referred to. Don Mackinnon was the Minister of Pacific Island Affairs as well as the Deputy Prime Minister at the time.

Finally, in reference to the literature, an important note is that I have deliberately addressed all works by Professor Konai Helu-Thaman under Thaman so as not to confuse talanoa and work by authors of similar name like Professor Futa Helu. Given her numerous writings it seems a more sensible pathway.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| Abstract.....  | 13      |
| Acknowledgements.....  | 15      |
| Spelling and Conventions .....   | 17      |
| Table of Contents.....   | 18      |
| List of Tables .....   | 20      |
| List of photographs .....  | 21      |
| List of figures.....   | 22      |
| <br>CHAPTER ONE: Framing the journey .....   | <br>23  |
| 1. 1. Dreams, Aspirations and Aims .....   | 23      |
| 1. 2. Rationale .....  | 28      |
| 1. 3. Scope, Constraints.....  | 31      |
| 1. 4. Chapter Outline .....  | 36      |
| <br>CHAPTER TWO: A point of departure.....   | <br>40  |
| 2. 1. A Challenge.....   | 39      |
| 2. 2. A Beginning .....  | 43      |
| 2. 3. My parents.....  | 46      |
| 2. 4. Early Years in Tonga .....   | 51      |
| 2. 5. Aotearoa/New Zealand.....  | 55      |
| 2. 6. The challenge of spirituality.....   | 60      |
| 2. 7. A New Path and Start.....  | 63      |
| <br>CHAPTER THREE: Review of literature and key concepts.....                        | <br>69  |
| 3. 1. Overview of literature on Pacific learning .....                               | 67      |
| 3. 2. Theoretical perspectives on Pacific education experiences and outcomes .....   | 81      |
| 3. 3. Theorising the importance of culture in education .....                        | 87      |
| 3. 4. A successful cultural approach to pedagogy in Maori and Pacific education..... | 94      |
| 3. 6. Conclusion.....  | 112     |
| <br>CHAPTER FOUR: Methodology .....  | <br>114 |
| 4. 1. The concept of talanoa and its cultural context.....                           | 115     |
| 4. 2. Talanoa and kakala as a possible research methodology .....                    | 122     |
| 4. 3. Talanoa research methodology: an overview.....                                 | 124     |
| 4. 4. The practise of talanoa and its place in Pacific worlds .....                  | 130     |
| 4. 5. Talanoa and other research methods .....                                       | 133     |
| 4. 6. Challenges to talanoa and its authenticity .....                               | 140     |
| 4. 6. Ethical Considerations .....   | 141     |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| CHAPTER FIVE: The process and implementation of talanoa .....                      | 146 |
| 5. 1. Defining talanoa: an approach and a caution .....                            | 146 |
| 5. 2. Talanoa in practice: some examples .....                                     | 148 |
| 5. 3. Talanoa with the holders and carriers of traditional knowledge .....         | 155 |
| 5. 4. Talanoa with community educators from various parts of the Pacific.....      | 160 |
| 5. 5. Talanoa: a personal reflection .....   | 165 |
| CHAPTER SIX: Learnings from talanoa for a pedagogical framework .....              | 167 |
| 6. 1. Interlinking the fonua, culture and people of Tonga and Oceania.....         | 168 |
| 6. 2. Values for learning & teaching Pacific students in Aotearoa/New Zealand..... | 175 |
| 6. 3. Conclusion.....  | 192 |
| CHAPTER SEVEN: Manulua: symbolism for the essence of being Tongan .....            | 193 |
| 7. 1. Development of harmonious person; the ultimate aim of education .....        | 194 |
| 7. 2. Symbolism for comprehensive and integrated holistic wellbeing .....          | 210 |
| 7. 3. Manulua – symbolism for holism, metaphor for ideal state of being .....      | 216 |
| 7. 4. Conclusion.....  | 219 |
| CHAPTER EIGHT: Founa ako: towards a framework for tongan learning.....             | 221 |
| 8. 1. Founa Ako and its links with Diversity Pedagogy Theory .....                 | 221 |
| 8. 2. Situating the kalala: towards a synthesis.....                               | 229 |
| 8. 3. A message to New Zealand’s education institutions and providers.....         | 231 |
| 8. 4. Conclusion.....  | 234 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY .....   | 237 |
| APPENDICES .....   | 255 |

|                |
|----------------|
| LIST OF TABLES |
|----------------|

|            |   |           |
|------------|---|-----------|
| Table 3. 1 | Number of students by ethnicity, July 2002-2006                   | 75        |
| Table 3. 2 | Maori potential approach in education                             | 85        |
| Table 3. 3 | Sheets' pedagogical dimension: definition of dimensional elements | 91 - 92   |
| Table 8. 1 | Founga Ako Framework  | 224 - 226 |



|                     |
|---------------------|
| LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS |
|---------------------|

|                  |   |     |
|------------------|---|-----|
| Photograph 7. 1. | Manulua motif on ngatu and club                       | 214 |
| Photograph 7. 2. | Very old ngatu showing manulua and rare a kofe design | 214 |
| Photograph 7. 3. | Ngatu from Niue showing the manulua                   | 215 |
| Photograph 7. 4. | A mat from Futuna showing the manulua                 | 215 |

|                 |
|-----------------|
| LIST OF FIGURES |
|-----------------|

### CHAPTER 3

|              |  |     |
|--------------|--|-----|
| Figure 3. 1. | The Compass for Pacific success          | 87  |
| Figure 3. 2. | Remittances as a percentage of GDP, 2005 | 109 |

### CHAPTER 6

|              |  |     |
|--------------|--|-----|
| Figure 6. 1. | A Samoan fale – essential elements of a teaching framework | 169 |
|--------------|--|-----|

### CHAPTER 7

|               |  |              |
|---------------|--|--------------|
| Figure 7. 1.  | Tapa tolu, my graphical interpretation of Koloto's tangata kakato concept  | 198          |
| Figure 7. 2.  | Tapa tolu and fatongia – the operationalisation of tauhi va to maintain Tongan wellbeing   | 198          |
| Figure 7. 3.  | The two aspects of tapa tolu a symbolism for Tonganess   | 200          |
| Figure 7. 4.  | Fonua  | 202          |
| Figure 7. 5.  | Sino/tinana/physical body  | 203          |
| Figure 7. 6.  | Kainga   | 205          |
| Figure 7. 7.  | Atamai/loto/finangalo/hingangaro   | 206          |
| Figure 7. 8.  | My schematic representation of Durie's Whare Tapa Wha framework  | 210          |
| Figure 7. 9.  | Clustering of the 4 dimensions (kakala) of fonua, kainga, sino and atamai ready for tui  | 211          |
| Figure 7. 10. | Manulua - adaptation for education and human development analysis – kakala metaphorically tui from fonua, kainga, sino and atamai  | 212          |
| Figure 7. 11. | Manulua - symbolism for Tongan state of harmony and contentment - showing integral role of vaa, laumalie and others in fusion of dimensions in a state of harmony, contentment, complete and balanced state of being - guide for the pedagogical kakala of Founa Ako | 216 -<br>217 |

## CHAPTER ONE: FRAMING THE JOURNEY

*Ko e faka'ilo'anga 'o e tangata, ko 'ene ngaue (fatongia) The mark of a person is in the success (or style) of carrying out his/her obligation.*

Luke Latu Vaiioleti (talanoa, January, 1990)

Security in one's identity is enhanced by positive acknowledgement of one's culture and is vital for self-development. Education is one form of self-development. This thesis advocates for the inclusion of Tongan educational concepts and values in teaching and learning in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The proposition that underpins my argument is that Tongan students will achieve better educational outcomes in the country's primary, secondary and tertiary institutions through improved self-esteem stemming from an acknowledgement of their Tongan identity and the knowledge that their unique ways of learning and current knowing are respected in the education system of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Support for this proposition comes from the significant achievements in recent years in Maori educational performance – achievements which were built on a proactive approach to acknowledging the role of Maori ways of knowing and learning in a teaching environment.

In this introduction I share with you my aspirations, aims and rationale for this thesis. I outline my approach to the research, the scope of my inquiry and the parameters that bound the topic I am researching. I then outline the content of the chapters that follow.

### **1. 1. Dreams, Aspirations and Aims**

It is my dream for Tongan people to be able to live their lives as Tongans in Aotearoa/New Zealand and where ever else they choose to live. But who is a Tongan? What is a Tongan? Who am I? What is my purpose (fatongia)? What am I? These are significant philosophical questions that most people ask of themselves at some stage of their lives. As a Tongan man I know that I am from an old country; I have internal values that guide my actions even in an environment very different to those of my ancestors. I am aware of my heritage, some of which I am proud and of

others, I wish my ancestors had done differently. My father and mother are of Tongaleleka and Ha'afeva, a history that stretches back some 3000 years (Burley, 1994). The international trade made by my people to Vanuatu and back between 1200AD and 1400AD (Luder, 1996) and with other nations upon European discovery in the 1600s (Kirch, 1988b) enriches my strong sense of history and belonging to the region of the Pacific.

The Tongan culture, polity and social structures owe their longevity to service, restraining behaviour, loyalty and respect for ancestors, nature and their gods ('Epeli Hau'ofa, talanoa, May, 2004; Sateki 'Ulukalala, talanoa, January, 2000; Sione Vaioleti, talanoa, January, 2000, May, 2008). In these I see 'ofa, poto, 'ilo and fatongia as part of the old religion being practiced in different forms. I have been privileged with the language of Tonga and lived a deep and meaningful knowledge of culture, which enriches me with the security of reaffirming who I am. However this privilege has also tasked me with the obligation of preserving this ancient culture for the future of other Tongans wherever they may be. I see this thesis as one of my fatongia, which as Luke stated in the opening quotation, is the identifier of who I am.

At my mature stage of life, I recall memories of my childhood and in particular, poetic rhymes, which reverberate in my heart even now. They are the rhymes known to most Tongan children who grew up in any part of Tonga. It was an in-country shared humour where we laughed at our lack of material wealth when compared to other nations. But within this, this particular rhyme spoke of the richness of a heritage and a culture that based its existence on a holistic relationship in serving others, acknowledging ancestors and serving higher orders.

'Amelike moe tola,  
Nu'u Sila moe peni kapa,  
Fisi ee moe peni ava,  
Tonga ee moe hala 'ata.  
Talu e tupu a Tonga,  
koe fonua masiva,  
hala he me'a kotoa,  
ka koe Lotu pee.

America had the dollar,  
New Zealand had the tin penny,  
Fiji had the hollow penny,  
Tonga (on the other hand) has absolutely nothing.  
Since the beginning (of Time) Tonga,  
It had nothing at all (of consequence),  
but only Lotu.

Lotu is the term now given to organize Christian and informal activities. However, as related to me by Sateki 'Ulukalala (talanoa, January, 2000); 'Eveli Hau'ofa, (talanoa, May, 2004) lotu was part of the old religion from which originated fatongia, 'ofa, poto and 'ilo being concepts of service which pleased the old god/s. I also recall other talanoa that have guided me, empowered me and defined my role as Tongan. My mother, as an example, would often say to us as children "*Koe 'ofa ko ia 'oku lahi taha*" (*love/compassion is the most important of all*) and that should be the basis of thoughts and action. From my ta'okete (tuakana, elder brother), Luke, and his quote which leads this chapter: "Ko e faka'ilo'anga 'o e tangata, ko 'ene ngaue (fatongia)" The mark of a person is in the success of carrying out his/her obligation (Luke Latu Vaioleti, talanoa, January, 1990)

I recall also a challenge posed by Thaman (2004, p. 6) when she made the following statement about Pacific nations' education systems at a keynote address on the notion of citizenship from the Pacific. She stated that:

...In my view, the educational crisis that we are witnessing may be due to the fact that for too long our schools have been teaching about individual rights and self promotion at the expense of collective rights and social responsibility, more characteristic of Pacific cultures and communities. As a result of this new learning, we are now witnessing the type of behaviour that a friend once described as 'systematised selfishness' not only in our region but also in many other parts of the world...

However, I realise that a dream is incumbent upon a widespread knowledge, understanding and acceptance of the essential concepts and inherent cultural values that underpin what it is to be Tongan. To advance this understanding and acceptance of ancient Tongan concepts for contemporary life as Tongans in a country like Aotearoa/New Zealand requires the development of approaches to pedagogy that will be appropriate for learning situations in the classroom. This thesis addresses both of these issues – the fundamental concepts that underpin Tongan ways of knowing and

learning, and the ways these concepts can be brought into meaningful learning contexts in the Aotearoa/New Zealand classroom.

### Aspiration

Achieving an aspiration to have widespread understanding of and respect for the values that underpin a minority culture in a society that is dominated by an essentially monolingual population with quite a different cultural heritage is a significant challenge.

The challenge is made more complex by the responsibilities of a professional career, the demanding cultural roles associated with kinfolk and extended family leadership, and the expectations of a small island nation (and its people) that bestows fatongia (roles) on each citizen especially those in whom family have invested to allow privileged schooling, and in my case, an overseas education. There are also responsibilities to a church organisation that my ancestor co-founded and complex demands that constantly intervene in my daily life, including this research work. While these demands are part of my familial and community duty and obligations (fatongia), they also afford me privileged opportunities to work with some of the most highly regarded senior people of my community, whose knowledge is essential for this research. These fatongia continue to nourish me physically and emotionally and are cultural identity markers for me as a Tongan man.

A major part of my academic work as a teacher and educator in Aotearoa/New Zealand has been, and remains to be, research into Pacific knowledge and, within that, the traditional Tongan concepts that underpin our ways of knowing and learning. I have been particularly concerned to explore how these concepts can be used in the Aotearoa/New Zealand classroom to inform the education of Tongan learners. This has stimulated my interest in appropriate pedagogies that are inclusive of and serve to enhance and strengthen the integrity of Tongan knowledge and values in learning situations. I have a strong commitment to the education of teachers who will assist in ultimately producing well-rounded Tongan people who can both contribute to building the communities in which they are living anywhere in the world, while at the same time ensuring the survival of Tongan ways, values and other beneficial cultural traits.

In approaching the task of achieving this aspiration, I have to contemplate a different worldview from that which informs most pedagogy in the Aotearoa/New Zealand classroom. I need to present this worldview in a form that will encourage and empower teachers in learning institutions in Aotearoa/New Zealand to bring some fundamental Tongan concepts into their teaching practice and the content of their classes – concepts that I consider will make the educational experiences of all students, and especially Tongans, richer and more relevant for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The outcome will be an education that is more relevant for Tongans especially, as well as for other children in contemporary Aotearoa/New Zealand.

### Aim

The primary aim of this thesis is to provide a more secure foundation for teaching that reflects students' histories, ways of being and traditions, as proposed by the New Zealand school curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 9). To achieve this aim I use the traditional method for acquiring knowledge in Tongan society – the *talanoa* – to explore several fundamental concepts and values that define what it is to be Tongan. These are the concepts and values of *poto*, *'ilo*, *ako*, *'ofa*, *fatongia*, *fonua* and associated notions. While the *talanoa* provided most of the information required to develop my argument, I also draw heavily on the earlier work of these concepts by Tongan educational specialists, Fusitu'a (1992); Fusitu'a and Coxon (1998); Helu (1999); Taufe'ulungaki (2004); Thaman (1988, 1995b, 1999, 2002a, 2002b, 2004), as well as my own earlier research, Morrison and Vaioleti (2008); Vaioleti (2001); Vaioleti (2006); Vaioleti and Vaioleti (2003) and Vaioleti, Morrison and Rees (2003).

There has been quite extensive discussion of the concepts that define what it is to be Tongan, and this earlier literature plays an important role in informing my analysis. In essence, my thesis attempts to weave together elements of essential Tongan concepts in order to create a foundation for developing ways of learning and pedagogy that will enrich the education experience of Tongans and other students in the New Zealand classroom. My approach to the synthesis follows the three metaphoric stages of *tolu*, *tui* and *luva* for weaving garlands flowers – the *kalala* – that Thaman (1997) has described.

## 1. 2. Rationale

According to the ethnic group returns of the Ministry of Education in July 2009, Pacific students are the third largest in Aotearoa/New Zealand, third only to the Pakeha/European and Maori (Ministry of Education, 2009). Like Maori, Pacific have a predominantly youthful population. In 2003, one in ten learners were identified as Pacific, and this could increase to one in five pupils by 2051 (Ministry of Education, 2006a). For various reasons there is an increasing need for research into Pacific education now. There is political will to lift Pacific education, such as the new curriculum introduced in 2007 that recognises the learning needs of a more diverse 21<sup>st</sup> Century population. Statements relating to this curriculum are included in the Ministry of Education's Pacific Education Plan 2008/2012 and legislative requirements of the National Administrative Guidelines (NAG). Pacific academics are advocating for a more culturally appropriate education for the Pacific, and as well Pacific peoples themselves value and want to assert their Pacific identity.

For Pacific students, acknowledging a Pacific identity and knowing about their Pacific cultural ways are very important for their health and wellbeing (Adolescent Health Research Group, 2008). In their report *Youth '07: The Health and Wellbeing of Secondary School Students in New Zealand*, it is noted that: "Most Tongan students (89%) are very proud of being Tongan. Almost 92% indicated that it was very important, important or somewhat important to be recognised as a Tongan" (Adolescent Health Research Group, 2008, p.12). In the case of Samoan students, almost 93% indicated that it was very important, important or somewhat important to be recognised as a Samoan while for the Niuean secondary students the proportion was somewhat lower (84%) (Adolescent Health Research Group, 2008). Amongst the Niuean students, only 48% of those students are satisfied with their knowledge of things Niuean. For other Pacific students including Tokelaun, Fijian and others: "almost 88% indicated that it was somewhat important, important, and very important to be recognised as a person from their own culture". (Adolescent Health Research Group, 2008, p. 13)

Given the fast growing population of Pacific students, and the desire by the great majority of these students to maintain their identities, it seems logical that politicians,



education advisors, curriculum planners, educational commentators, Board of Trustees, Principals, Deputy Principals, Deans and teachers have some understanding of the important concepts, values and practices that influence the day to day lives and learning of their Pacific students. In this context, Tongan students should be exposed to their own learning concepts and important elements of their culture and values at schools in New Zealand. It can be argued that this will have a positive impact on their cultural, emotional and academic development, especially through creating confidence within themselves through stronger self-identity. In addition to the benefits that will accrue for Tongan students in the classroom, I posit that non-Pacific students will benefit from exposure to Pacific knowledges which will contribute to their wider appreciation of contemporary New Zealand society. This can only create a better understanding between Pacific students and others and contribute to greater social cohesion in society as a whole.

#### A reformed national curriculum

In November 2007, a substantially revised New Zealand Curriculum was launched. One of its visions is to ensure that our young people, in their school years, will continue to develop values, knowledge, and competencies that will enable them to live full and satisfying lives, and be confident in their own identity. Under its principles, it states that “the curriculum reflects New Zealand’s cultural diversity and values the histories and traditions of all its people” (Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 8). Further, in its section on “values” it states that through their learning experiences, students will learn about:

- their own values and those of others;
- different kind of values, such as moral, social, cultural, aesthetics, and economic values;
- the values on which New Zealand’s cultural and institutional traditions are based;
- the values of other groups and cultures

and through their learning experiences, students will develop their ability to:

- express their own values;
- explore with empathy, the values of others;
- critically analyse values and actions based on them;
- discuss disagreements that arise from differences in values and negotiate solutions;
- make ethical decisions and act on them. (Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 9)

Based on these commitments, I propose that Tongans, along with other Pacific students, have the right to learn about their own cultural values in New Zealand's schools. This would provide opportunities to live a full life guided by these values along with others such as contextual and strategic individualism and competitiveness that are part of a general education in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The reformed curriculum is only part of the solution to delivering an education for Tongan students that is informed by their cultural values. There needs to be a content (curriculum) commitment from schools and pedagogical commitments from teachers to use knowledge and ways of relating and teaching that acknowledge the culture of being Tongan for students in the New Zealand classroom. In short, there needs to be personal, professional as well as institutional commitments from those involved in educating and preparing Tongan students for their futures in Aotearoa/New Zealand as well as elsewhere.

#### A shortage of personnel and resources

Having a critical mass of academically and culturally strong Tongan teachers in the classroom will, I believe, make this task easier as they are likely to demonstrate the intrinsic behaviours and values that are advocated in this thesis. Coxon, Anae, Mara, Wendt-Samu & Finau (2002), who reviewed a wide range of literature on Pacific educational issues, suggested that while many authors argue that more Pacific teachers are needed in schools, there is also a critical shortage of resources that allow Pacific perspectives, knowledge, and pedagogies to be introduced.

This thesis contains information on Pacific perspectives, knowledge and pedagogies that will inform Boards of Trustees, policy makers, principals, and those who are involved in curriculum development and teaching to assist planning and designing approaches, to improve the outcome of teaching and learning for Tongan students in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

### 1. 3. Scope, Constraints

There are several factors that have influenced the approach taken in developing and presenting the arguments contained in this thesis. Five of these are reviewed below briefly in order to help frame the discussion which follows. These are:

1. Theoretical constructs;
2. Limitations of language;
3. Sources of information;
4. Tangata whenua; and
5. Blessings.

#### Theoretical constructs

New Zealand is part of the Anglo-American world and until 1980 the dominant theory influencing mathematics education, if not our education system as a whole, was behaviourist (Begg, 2000). More moderate influences were the progressive education of Dewey (1916, 1944) and the humanist education of Rogers (1969, 1980) and others. The developmental learning theory of Piaget, and who was influenced by Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, developed in the 1940s and 1950s is also acknowledged as being influential.

While I acknowledge the relevance of these traditions in educational theory, my primary source of inspiration in Western literature is Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism. According to Begg (2000, p.1), within most forms of constructivism there has been an acceptance of social constructivism as:

- a relativist view of knowledge,
- the importance of prior knowledge and culture, especially language to learning,
- learning not being 'transmitted', but being constructed by the learner, and
- the notion that each person's construction is unique and represents their view of reality.

My primary interest is with a series of Tongan concepts, which are fluid and highly contextual to environment, time, space, and community. As Crocombe (1976) has pointed out, these Pacific concepts share much of the constructive nature (fa'u) that is

articulated in the social constructivism that underpins the work of Vygotsky (1978). I return to social constructivism at several places in the thesis, especially in Chapter Three, Review of Literature and Key Concepts.

### Limitations of language

It is a requirement of my assessing academic institution that this thesis is written in English and not Tongan that is the language of the majority of the literature outlining the essential concepts and values under discussion in the thesis. This requirement imposes several important constraints. Churchward (1953, p. vii), a linguist who has written widely on Pacific languages including Tongan in the 1950s, asserted that Tongan is “so different to English that largely new or revised terminology is needed in order to explain [key concepts in English]”. In the same vein, Gegeo (2001) expressed his concerns about being required to use English to communicate and explain Pacific native knowledge when developing Pacific epistemologies. He stated that:

There is the tension between the need to use English in order to get published and read by an international audience, and the desire to write in our own, ... native language...Yet writing in English undermines our ability to represent our native, indigenous, or developing meanings and epistemologies (as has been well demonstrated in the applied linguistics research literatures on language and authenticity and language policy). (Gegeo, 2001, p. 178)

It is one of my dreams that the diversity we so often talk about when discussing issues of equity will be achieved so that research such as this, can be delivered in Tongan, the language in which the concepts and knowledge that form the core content were formed. Until then, the depth, fullness and potential of the concepts, and their subsequent analysis and evaluation cannot be realised. Bourdieu (1997, p. 648) referred to “language as an instrument of power. One seeks not only to be understood but also to be believed, obeyed, respected, distinguished”. One of the things that has motivated me to write this thesis is that there will come a time that Tongan language and knowledge are normal parts of our diverse everyday life in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

### Sources of information

I have drawn on a very wide range of sources when undertaking the research for this thesis. These have included the literature on New Zealand education as it relates to Pacific peoples and Tongans in particular. These sources have been found in libraries in New Zealand, the Pacific and the United States of America (USA) where a substantial number of Pacific peoples reside. Other institutional sources of information have been the New Zealand Ministry of Education's numerous publications and research on Pacific Education, the academic material that has been generated as a result of the Te Kotahitanga projects and other Maori initiatives, the University of Auckland's Pacific Education Research Unit, the University of Canterbury's Macmillan Centre for Pacific Studies, and the University of the South Pacific. In addition, I have made use of material produced in schools that run bilingual Tongan classes, and others that have a reputation for producing good programmes for Tongan students.

More important than the published literature and the institutional libraries have been a large number of talanoa, a Tongan form of discussion that has been the most important method I have used to assist me to understand the concepts and values that are the subject of the thesis. The talanoa method is reviewed at length in Chapter Four. I visited Tongan churches in Tonga, the USA and New Zealand, both for spiritual reasons as well as to hold talanoa with their leaders. In addition, I consulted education and cultural experts and students who were members of these churches. A wide range of people from other Pacific cultural backgrounds; professionals, academics, leaders, politicians and members of organisations that have a vested interest in cultural continuity and in improving general welfare for Pacific peoples and students were consulted. These included Pacific homework centres, and schools that were running holistic learning and Pacific related programmes.

I spent several months at the University of the South Pacific where I worked to assist students' research, and held seminars on my research, observed and participated for many hours in talanoa with some of Tonga's most prominent academics, artists, poets and linguists. In my day-to-day activities, I was hosted by Dr 'Ana Taupe'ulungaki, Director of the Institute of Education. I was privileged to have general exchanges with Professor Kona'iholeva Helu-Thaman as well as spending much time with the

late Professor 'Epeli Hau'ofa both in deep talanoa of an academic and research nature as well as on more social and informal levels.

I also had several hours of talanoa with the eminent late Professor Futa Helu about education in general and the work of the great western philosophers, Tongan culture and thought and educational concepts in particular, both in Hamilton as well as in Tonga at his home. Futa Helu founded Atenisi Institute, the oldest private university in the South Pacific. His ideals and insights were instrumental in shaping the philosophical bases for the influential Tongan Democratic party according to Epeli Hau'ofa (talanoa, May, 2004).

### Tangata whenua

It was important to have talanoa with Maori firstly to pay respect to them as tangata whenua and secondly to gain an understanding of the spiritual and philosophical approaches as well as educational strategies used to retain their students' culture and identity. Considerations for tikanga Maori that embed established educational concepts and language, whenua, spirituality and political matters serve as an important backdrop and at times scaffolding to the Tongan concepts which are interrogated in this thesis. This is one of the reasons I have senior Maori people as part of my kaunga fa'u (support group and co-constructors). Continuing the talanoa with tangata whenua became a moral obligation as well as serving to satisfy accountability and legitimation needs (Bishop, 1996a, 1996b); Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Irwin, 1994). It also helped to give my research a comparative reference base. To achieve this I look to Maori and others who are competent in nga tikanga to guide and ensure the respectfulness and accountability of this work (Bishop, 1996a; Irwin, 1994).

### Blessings and reflections

It was appropriate to seek blessing for this research because it is about acknowledging spiritual matters that are intimately linked to land (fonua<sup>1</sup>). Experts on spirituality were engaged to assist if and when circumstances demanded. Bearing in mind Hau'ofa's view that people of a land are an extension of that land (talanoa, May,

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<sup>1</sup> Fonua includes land, island, country, people as well as placenta and can also mean tomb.

2004), talanoa with Maori included spiritual considerations about our endeavour and the wish that our values and ways are acknowledged and taught formally in their whenua, Aotearoa. Spiritual guidance has also been sought throughout the duration of the research programme from ministers, elders and other members of my kainga (kinship group).

Many talanoa referred to in this thesis were held in different parts of the Pacific. This is because the indigenous knowledge within Pacific cultures is strongest and clearest to see in communities that have retained strong ties to their own land and to their seas. Those practising their subsistence lives are more likely to be upholding their ancient knowledge and values in their purest forms (Vaiotele, 2006; Vaiotele & Vaiotele, 2003). In some ways the research represents a further development of what ‘Epeli Hau’ofa (1993, pp.11-12) termed “the heavens and the underworld”, at least as these exist in our hearts and minds, and influence our identities.

An important objective I have had when writing this thesis is the affirmation that the heavens and the underworld are still included in our world. I want students to feel that they are a part of a bigger connectedness, the fonua, culture and knowledge systems, legacies from which they have benefitted and have fatongia towards. In my view, we need new ways of looking, seeing and interpreting our world and of realising our dreams. This can only happen if we are prepared to be daring, courageous and innovative. Certainly our past is full of that legacy and there is no reason why our future cannot be the same (Mara, 1997, 1999; Mitaera, 1999; ‘Epeli Hau’ofa, talanoa, May, 2004). However, I posit that this requires deliberate plans in cultural and academic preparation of our young people. Therein lies the challenge for us all.

In thinking about and writing this thesis, I have frequently engaged in a Tongan process of *talanoa mo hoku loto* (a sharing, a critical reflection, a conversation with my heart or soul (loto)). As a result, I have come to the realisation that the process of research and writing must also be underpinned by the values that I consider important in being Tongan. Allowing my talanoa mo hoku loto to be written opens a window to the reader to feel my doubts and to be aware of my insights and reflections as we walk this journey.

I endeavour to maintain my integrity as a Tongan and the cultural meaning of my talanoa while at the same time negotiating successfully the institutional demands of a PhD thesis preparation. I write both as part of the experience and as well as from the perspective of a critical onlooker using ‘we’ and ‘they’ as appropriate. Given that talanoa is an emerging methodology, and that talanoa with an individual or groups can occur several times a day or over several weeks or months, I reference talanoa according to the person, month and year in order to privilege the sharing of that person or the group. I want to treat this knowledge as being as valid as the literature. I will address more of my personal style in the methodology section, but I wish to signal these nuances here as intentional and part of my expression as a Tongan.

#### **1. 4. Chapter Outline**

Chapter One sets the general direction for the thesis and introduces the origins of the central concepts on which it is based. It outlines the aspirations, aims and rationale of this study, as well as the scope and some identified limitations.

Chapter Two locates me as a person in my fonua and describes the journey that I undertook that led to me to write this thesis. It outlines my childhood experiences that shaped my views and thinking and those that motivated my actions even after being away from Tonga for nearly four decades. I also reflect on some of the situations in which I found myself after moving to New Zealand in the early 1960’s. I outline my early introduction to what I now understand to be epistemological, societal and institutional injustice that led me to wanting to do something to improve the lives of Pacific peoples in New Zealand and in particular, Tongan people.

Chapter Three contains a more detailed outline of the problem statement, the research questions and the relevant teaching and learning theories. It discusses relationships with tangata whenua and the ongoing political and cultural tensions for both Maori and Pacific peoples. Maori educational concepts that underpin Te Kotahitanga (Bishop, 2008), Ka Hikitia (Te Puni Kokiri, 2007), Whare Tapa Wha (Durie, 1994, 1999) are introduced in order to inform subsequent analysis and synthesis in Chapters Six and Seven.



The social and educational situations for Tongan people in New Zealand in the context of prevailing political ideologies and other mainstream values and thinking add further debate to this chapter. As well, trends like the Aotearoa/New Zealand changing population, strengths and weaknesses of the system in providing for the cultural and holistic needs of Tongan and other Pacific students are raised. It also examines the response of the New Zealand Ministry of Education in ways of policies, curriculum, pedagogical developments and other educational discourses to the educational needs of the Pacific community. In this chapter, I examine also the works of learning theorists and particularly that of Sheets (2005) on diversity and learning to inform my own response to educational issues for Tongan students in my synthesis of findings and tui of my kakala in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Four discusses the methodology underpinning the research. It argues that traditional research methods are not adequate to capture the holistic knowledge of Tongan people. The chapter develops talanoa as a base for an appropriate Tongan research approach. As well it introduces the kakala (Thaman, 1993a, 1997a) as an integral part of the developing idea of a talanoa research methodology. This chapter refers to elements of critical theory and acknowledges the early influence of feminist theories in formation of my consciousness about the assumed authority of the traditional research theories and how I, as a Tongan researcher, can attempt to claim a space for the Tongan worldview and its interpretation as well. The chapter also touches on common views that the talanoa method shares with narrative research approaches and its shared heritage as well as the differences it has with Kaupapa Maori Research to enrich the discussion of talanoa as a research methodology.

In Chapter Five, I discuss how the talanoa was applied in different communities and individuals both inside and outside Aotearoa/New Zealand, as its application is highly contextual. In my talanoa with kau nga fa'u, we discussed poto, 'ilo, ako, 'ofa, fatongia, fonua and other related concepts important to the theorising in this thesis. I elaborate on how they see these concepts in relationship to New Zealand culture/s, their place in a developed country and their possible place in education. I also share observations of learning and everyday practices that may reflect these concepts in action.

Chapter Six reviews in greater depth the central Tongan cultural values and concepts that have relevance for Tongan education. Mainstream, Maori, other Pacific and other related educational literature and cultural concepts are examined, compared and contrasted allowing for a deeper and more enriching discussion. In this chapter the talanoa from groups and individuals are examined on their own or against other talanoa and literature to ascertain their worth and how they can be utilised as part of my final kakala in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Seven provides the synthesis (tui) of the thesis. This chapter has one kakala to offer. Firstly through the findings from talanoa and the literature, Tongan people value holistic development and see harmony within the community and with their god as the ideal state of being. From those findings, it develops different ideal stages in building towards a holistic representation for an ideal state of being for a Tongan person. It posits the ancient motif of Manulua to represent that stage. It then uses that ideal stage as the vision, purpose, aim or even a philosophy for Tongan education. Chapter Seven concludes with some reflections on what lies ahead.

Chapter Eight develops an integrated learning framework for both teachers and students that use ilo, poto fatongia to guide the teaching and the learning. Following this framework should ultimately lead young people to develop into balanced, holistic and harmonious stage of being or lives aspired to by the Tongan community and represented by the motif. I call this integrated learning framework or pedagogy, Founa Ako. The chapter locates the kakala within the education system and the classroom before the final stage of luva. This is the completion part of tui kakala of the research, the kakala itself and luva (the act of gifting it away). In the true spirit of luva, this gift also lays a challenge to the education community to use the findings of this thesis to progress the academic, social and moral development of Pacific students and in particular those who are Tongan.

## CHAPTER TWO: A POINT OF DEPARTURE

This chapter locates me in my fonua and outlines the journey that led to where I am now and, eventually, to the writing of this thesis. It speaks of childhood experiences that shaped my views and thinking, Tongan views and thinking that have continued to motivate my actions, even though I have been living in New Zealand for nearly four decades. I describe my early introduction to ancient Tongan values and cultural practices that remain at the heart of what I believe are the essence of success for Tongans in Aotearoa/New Zealand in 2010. I also describe my early introduction to what I now understand to be epistemological, societal and institutional injustices in Aotearoa/New Zealand that led me to want to do something to help make things better for Pacific peoples, especially Tongans, in New Zealand. This chapter is a very personal account of who I am and where I have come from. It is an essential beginning for my thesis because it will help the reader to understand my rationale for the research topic and the approach I am adopting. Malo ‘aupito.

### 2. 1. A Challenge

The words and thoughts of the Pacific generations of old people are etched in my memory. I must start by honouring their deeds, their memories and their legacies. I have chosen the words of the late Ratu Sir Kamasese Kapaiwai Tuimacilai Mara, a wise man in the ways of the Pacific, an educated man in the ways of the West, and the former Prime Minister and President of Fiji. Moreover, he was the paramount chief of the Lau Group of Fiji, a place with strong Tongan and Samoan connections. He was bequeathed the name ‘Kapaiwai’ by his people, an old Tongan word that means ‘unsinkable’ (Mara, 1997). The name was to serve as a reminder of his Tongan heritage, sea traditions and spirit for which they were revered. As an example of the wisdom of those past visionary leaders, I quote a challenge from Ratu Sir Kamasese Mara’s opening address of the 1999 Pacific Vision International Conference at the Aotea Centre in Auckland:

But my friends, brothers and sisters...we know who we are. We carry in our hearts the knowledge that we are the bearers of a proud legacy that surely marks us as people of strength,... courage, and will...We have survived the onslaught of the... fatal impact... (of)... the most wrenching era of change since men and women first walked the earth. And now you, here in New Zealand, and we in the islands, stand at the threshold of the third millennium. All we ask: how must we chart our course to ensure we keep faith with the generations of the past and those to come?

If ever there was inspiration to commit to a journey of academic rigour and toil, then this was the statement that stirred my conscience. As someone who is presently and advantageously positioned in academia but still appreciative of my history and learning from the small yet, courageous and enterprising Kingdom of Tonga, I felt the urge to rise to Sir Ratu Kamasese Mara challenge to ...‘keep faith with my generations of the past and those yet to come...’. It is then incumbent upon me to examine the very question asked by Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara to determine the best way that I, as a Pacific academic, a curriculum developer and a teacher educator can respond. Whatever resolutions, solutions, offerings that I may offer, my desire is for the findings of this thesis to be debated and questioned while at the same time challenging educators to include ancient values of Polynesia, particularly from Tonga, in their pedagogies and teaching curriculum. This is important to honour the cultural values and heritage of the students and through this to improve and enrich the outcomes of education for them. I note however that I am not blind to the difficulties such inclusion may be met with in the Western dominated systems of Aotearoa/New Zealand schools.

The universalisation and mainstreaming of Western knowledge and values occupy a centrality in most ways we think, see and work (Thaman, 1995b) and contributed to what Ratu Sir Kamesese Mara termed ‘the most wrenching era of change since men and women walked the earth’. These western notions must be strongly questioned and we must explore alternative ways of thinking, seeing and working. We owe it to those from our past and to those of the future.

In situating this research it is important, indeed essential, for me to acknowledge specifically those from whom I descend, from within the islands of Tonga. There can be no other way. My contribution, my writing, is not mine alone. My spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical beings are seeds of Tongaleleka and Ha’afeva and

their growth has been nourished from that particular land/fonua of my ancestors. It is the lands and oceans of my mother and father and it carries the living essence of my people. These fonua have been our home continuously for over 3,000 years (Burley, 1994).

As a result, my foundational thought process has been inspired by my own family culture, both its religious and secular dimensions, and the elders, some of whom I have lived with and have had the privilege to observe and learn from. These foundations have been complemented and enriched exponentially by my New Zealand education that exposed me to Western, Eastern, Maori and other cultures that have also influenced me.

Those around me instilled early a disciplined approach to tasks at hand. Continuing obligations to kainga moe fonua (family, community and country) have been an unavoidable honour, costly in many ways of time, intellect, advocacy and energy including meeting my commitments to academic study. My methodology is based on my own fakakaukau (thinking, theorising); having talanoa with my kau nga fa'u (participants); fakakaukau with my kaunga fa'u (research support whanau). I have ensured that I have collective accountability to and support from those in Tonga as well as New Zealand. In these small ways, I can hold faith with the words of Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara (1999) and to the generations of the past. I can be true to their learnings and cultural processes.

Being born into families who had cultural, spiritual and social leadership roles in a community steeped in history and defined structures, my childhood days were entrenched in the everyday practices of routines and knowing my role and my place within my own immediate family, my extended kinfolk and the rural communities of Tonga. Sometimes, I questioned things when seeking greater meaning and depth and to understand my role more intimately in contributing to the collective well being of the family and the community.

One such example is a memory I hold of when I left boarding school of my own volition one night upon hearing that my mother's brother had passed on. I wanted to assist my siblings in their activities associated with such an important family funeral.

As there were no buses at that time, I walked the four-hour track from country to town in the still of that cold night. My tuakana, upon seeing my unexpected arrival, asked why was I there. I replied that I wanted to help and be there to grieve. My tuakana replied, “our job is to bury uncle with all the cultural obligations that goes with it, your job as the student in the family is to go to school, do the best you can so that you can succeed at school and get a good education to help the family in the future – that is your obligation.” He then put me on his pushbike and gave me a ride back to school.

On the way, we talked about our uncle’s determination to carry out his obligations to us as the children of his sisters. This involved building a business of shops and a tricycle taxi fleet in order to help him meet his cultural and spiritual obligations to his maternal kinfolds as well as his immediate family. I was reaffirmed in the knowledge of my role within and to the collective. My subsequent move to New Zealand to improve my education was merely part of my duty to further assist family in the future. My role was pre-determined and simply that was what was to be.

This chapter outlines the beginnings of how and why I have chosen to chart this particular course at this particular time in my life to arrive and commit to this research. I share "who I am", "where I am from" and those factors which motivate me to undertake this work. I do this in a reflective fashion, naming the learning and challenges, insights and growth and because I like to tell stories. I talanoa and invite you the reader to join me. In the ensuing chapters, I share my way forward articulating where I am going and for what purpose. As we all stand poised in these infant years of the new millennium, I hope that those who may pick up this thesis and find it useful will, as Ratu Sir Kamasese Mara put it, join me in being the bearer of a continuing proud legacy that I carry in my heart.

Let us now embark on this journey together as I introduce to you a carefree child in the ancient village of Tu’anuku, the town of the ancient kings of the Vava’u group in Tonga. I will also share in this chapter, my experiences and changing fortunes in New Zealand that finally led me to this enquiry on whether some of the Tongan ancient concepts and values including spirituality have meaning in 2010 and beyond and can enhance a sense of connectedness and meaning for Tongan people. Further, I hope to show how spiritual and other qualities inherent in these concepts can be harnessed and

used to enhance learning (learning theory) and teaching approaches that will benefit Tongan students in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

## 2. 2. A Beginning

It was a warm, clear, still spring late Tokonaki (Saturday) afternoon. I could smell the combination of freshly turned and dug rich ground and virgin bush. As Muna<sup>3</sup> piled together the dry leaves she gathered, I watched a hundred playful little black pekepeka (sparrows) gather above in excited anticipation of the rising smoke and all the burnt leaves and twigs that the smoke and draft would bring up so that they could chase and dance with them. As the smoke rose lazily to the clear light blue sky, I watched the pekepeka zigzagging, making sudden turns left and right, dropping and rising suddenly, making hollow tunnels amongst the smoke as they darted through it. I dreamed of being one of them flying amongst siblings, happily chasing each other and dancing to the crackles of the burning breadfruit leaves, banana leaves and dry branches. Gazing into the heavens, I wondered what it would be like to pa (ki he) langi (touch the heavens), to touch the places of the Gods.

As I was lost in my heavenly dream, a magnificent shivering white fluffy line drawn slowly, deliberately and silently across the sky by an invisible hand, deep beyond the boisterous pekepeka awoke me. “Muna! ko e ha e?” (Muna! what is that?) pointing to the strange long line in the sky, I asked. Muna moved out of the smoke, looked up and replied “Koe seti” (It is a jet). Understanding it to be some man made object I asked “Oku ‘I ai ha tangata ‘I ai” (would there be any humans in it). ““Io, palangi<sup>4</sup>” (Yes, Europeans) she replied. “Hangee ‘oku pa ki he langi” (looks as if it is touching the heavens) I said. She said ““io” (yes) as she carried on piling the weeds on to the fire that Tevita<sup>5</sup> was clearing out from our plantation of yams. “O palangi he;

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<sup>3</sup> My mother. Muna was the eldest daughter of ‘Ilaise Lua and Luke Nonu from Ha’afeva, Tonga.

<sup>4</sup> In Tongan it literally means touching the sky but maybe is short for papalangi that can mean from a heavenly land or the sky. It is also the word that the Tongans give Caucasians. Although there is some debate about the term European as some would say they are American, Australian or New Zealanders, Tongan people tend to classify people by the place of their origin – for example, *fonua* (whenua) where people’s ancestors come from.

<sup>5</sup> My father. Tevita was one of 12 children and the eldest son of Saane Likiliki and Malakai Taufo’ou of Tongaleleka, Lifuka. Tonga

fakaoli” (palangi eh, that is funny). Is that why they call them palangi (touch heaven)? I chuckled to myself.

Many years later in Pikula, Nuku’alofa, the site of the main church of the Church of Tonga, I was helping, along with about two hundred others, to rebuild the new church. I was carrying out bricklaying instructions from my father who was assisting the architects, two of my uncles from Tongaleleka, Pita and Sami Pua. If one looked down from the top of one of the main wall beams, people looked somewhat smaller milling about their work like an army of ants. At this moment we were alerted to an official looking man, cycling up to the site. He looked out of place in the sense that his appearance was one with urgent state business rather than a volunteer joining in to assist for the day.

As this man drew near below us, my father made his usual motion for me to descend. I was full of apprehension as I was aware of some sadness in my father’s face. On reaching the ground, my father informed me that our visitor was from the Ministry of Education (Tonga) and he was there to tell us that the New Zealand Government had offered me a five-year apprenticeship scholarship to study in Dunedin, New Zealand. I must then go home and get ready, as I would have to take up the offer within days.

For the next few days there was much celebration, feasting and blessings from the most senior members of our church, including the President. My last night at home was spent with Muna, my mother. She took me to the place of God, our church, and we spent all night there. In the cultural teaching process of moheofi<sup>6</sup>, she gave me many messages. She reminded me of values that shaped me to be a member of the family to which I belong. She reminded me to be kind to all people, especially those less privileged, to always remember my fatongia<sup>7</sup> to parents and family but especially my sisters, and always to do my lotu<sup>8</sup> so the God/s will provide for me as I will be in a land so far from them. And as I have almost always done during moheofi, I drifted in

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<sup>6</sup> Literally means sleeping close by. As teaching of cultural matters, manners, genealogy, cultural obligations were often done as a family settled down to sleep after reflecting on the days work, successes, lessons to learn from the day’s activities, those who know themselves and perform their cultural role well are referred to as those who mohe ofi – they were around their parents and have learned from them proper social behaviour. It is a term given to those who are cultured.

<sup>7</sup> On the surface it is similar to obligations, duties but deeper and will be analysed more in subsequent chapters.

<sup>8</sup> Acknowledgement of God’s work and will, prayers for safety, blessing on family and loved ones.



and out of sleep. My mother spoke to me regardless. Lastly, she reminded me that I had been picked to go to New Zealand out of several hundred who applied for the scholarship. She instructed that I go and ako (learn) in seeking 'ilo<sup>9</sup> with the virtues that may help me to be of use to the people – that will please God, she said.

The next afternoon it was gloomy and overcast outside. Inside the airport, a different type of gloom, fuelled by blackness of the mourning outfits of my extended kin with heavy hearts, I said goodbye to my mother, father, two sisters, three brothers and an airport full of kainga (extended kin) to go to Fiji in a vakapuna (flying boat). In Fiji, I would have to get into one of those seti I saw while watching the dancing pekepeka all those years before in order to go to New Zealand. As we taxied off the runway, I saw the playful pekapeka for the last time dancing over an old man's fire, which he lit to ward off the mosquitoes while he was attending to his yam plantation in Fua'amotu<sup>10</sup>.

As my plane lifted off into the sky, I was excited but still realised that this was not a seti and the people inside the vakapuna were not palangi but from other Pacific countries. Besides, I could still see my land below and the heavens way above me. Pacific Airways (now Air Pacific) only had small propeller planes then. Surveying the vastness of the silvery blue seas below I marvelled at the vision, skills and determinations of our forefathers and mothers who made these seas their highways to trade and practice fatongia to relatives and friends that lived in the remote islands that we may only occasionally pass. In landing some hours later at Nausori, Fiji, I found that my connecting flight to Nadi was now not flying. That evening hungry, I tried to buy some tea with the paanga e ua (two Tongan dollars) that my father gave me at the airport earlier in Tonga. It was then that I realised that things are going to be very different from now on. The person behind the food counter gave my father's pa'anga e ua back and said, 'what is that?'

I was sitting outside the terminal hungry and thinking that at that particular time my family would be gathering in the main part of the house for the family prayer. They will be praying for me and hoping that some kind people were taking care of me.

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<sup>9</sup> Knowledge - 'ilo is elaborated on in subsequent chapters.

<sup>10</sup> The name of the area where Tonga's international airport stands. Fua'amotu is also the name of the airport.

Lost in this thought I heard a harsh voice saying ‘Boy who is your fadar?’ Not wanting to answer, though it was obvious the question was intended for me, as apart from my bags, I was the only one around. The question rang in the air again ‘Hey boy who is your fadar?’ As I looked up it came from a middle-aged Indo-Fijian taxi driver. I understood later that he wanted to know whose son I was; yet it felt like my father was being accused for being negligent of me. I explained that I was Tongan and my plane was not flying to Nadi. This gentleman took me to his village some distance from the airport, shared a meal with me and his family, gave me a bed in his tin house then took me to the airport the next day. I offered my fathers pa’anga e ua to him, but he said to keep it.

That deep sense of isolation from my kainga, my language, my culture and my sense of self was imposing. I sat quietly back onto my seat in the fast flying seti, surrounded by palangi. I wondered if another young boy was lying on the ground of my fonua looking up at this moment to see my seti palangi painting a shivering magnificent creeping white fluffy line across the langi, just like me those many years ago. If so, then I wondered if his mother was burning the weeds from his father’s labour in the yam plantations so that the pekepeka danced amongst the smoky haze of the flying burnt twigs and leaves. These are my memories and my pa’anga e ua remains in my wallet today.

### **2. 3. My parents**

I was born in a little place called Tu’anuku, one of the villages of ‘Ulukalala, a paramount chief who ruled the Vava’u and Ha’apai groups for centuries. His son was one of my kau nga fa’u (co-constructionist/participant) in this thesis. ‘Ulukalala is a part of the Kanokupolu dynasty to which the current Tongan royal family belongs. Captain Cook wrote much about one of the previous ‘Ulukalala during his long stay in Tonga and his hospitality helped encourage Cook to name Tonga the Friendly Islands, the name which Tonga is still known by some, today. Tu’anuku is a place of mystery, with raking high peaks that hide amongst the clouds most of the time. And

there are terraced mountains with their tops seemingly truncated by some mysterious godly laser systems and deep near black lakes.

For Tu'anuku, Tu'a means outer, beyond, behind, unseen, unknown, not belonging and in some cases, it means the lower class or commoners, which is part of the social hierarchy of Tonga. Nuku means the place of, or home of. Nuku'alofa, which is the capital of Tonga, means the home or place of love, 'alofa being 'ofa or love. Tu'anuku then can be a reference to a home of those who do not belong, others, outsiders or foreigners. The word for spirits, energies of past ancestors or even Gods is faha'ikehe (the outsider, one of the other dimensions). Perhaps Tu'anuku was the home for other dimension/s spirit, ancestors or even Gods. It is interesting to know that the word 'papatuanuku' used by the younger Polynesian nations including Aotearoa/New Zealand is made up of Papa and Tuanuku. Papa is a reference to where one stands, our place (the living). Papatuanuku then it would seem, is the home or place, which nurtures both living and non-living beings. Acknowledgement of many such examples of sharing physical and spiritual relationships and co-existence with the tangata whenua of Aotearoa/New Zealand is integral to my research.

### *My Father*

My parents were both from the Vava'u and the Ha'apai groups. My father was from the 'toutai' (from tautahi meaning sea fighters, sea warriors or navigators) class of Hihifo in Tongaleleka. From this class came the royal mariners, fishers who fished for the ancient Kings, those that formed the tautahi (Tonga's ancient standing navy), crew for the trading ships in the Pacific which helped to maintain the maritime interest of Tonga in the vast Pacific. My father, who was a great seaman and fisherman, had captained many sea journeys and on occasions had been ship-wrecked. He was referred to along with his kin as a kaivai (those who eat water/rain/sea, an affront to what nature may bring about). In the journal *Pacific Perspectives*, the late Professor Ron Crocombe (1976, p. 37), in a paper entitled 'Culture and Development in the South Pacific', wrote under the heading 'occupational continuities':

I am always amazed at the extent of occupational continuity in the Pacific. I do not know the reason for it. The Kingdom of Tonga is the country most involved in shipping in the Pacific today. That goes back to Tongan tradition. Tongans long before the contact with the Europeans or industrialization were the greatest seafarers in the Pacific. They still are, which is very interesting as there is no particular reason why they should today. Nauru owns more shipping than Tonga...but they employ many Tongan officers and crew. Surplus manpower alone does not explain who is employed in this work. Samoans need the jobs as much as the Tongans, but don't take them. Samoans have no ocean-going tradition. Most Tongans are from Tongatapu, but practically all Tongan Captains come from Ha'apai. Why from Ha'apai? Any Tongan will tell you that's where they've always come from for the last 500 years (at least). Those captains not only come from Ha'apai but from a very selected groups of families who always produce most of the captains and still do.

My father's kainga from Tongaleleka are the families referred to above by Crocombe.

Tongaleleka is a name and area etched in the memory of many Tongans. Tongaleleka is the site where struggles for political power had their most lasting impact on Tonga's political, cultural and spiritual direction. The struggle was between the ancient ceremonial sacred kings' dynasty (Tu'i Tonga) who had ruled Tonga for at least a thousand years and the secular kings' dynasty (Tu'i Kanokupolu). The civil wars became part of struggles that lasted for more than half a century. Tongaleleka is said to be where King Taufa'ahau Tupou I the father of modern Tonga, was born. The actual spot that he was born is the site for the current Niu'ui hospital, a place where most Ha'apai children are born. The current monarch of Tonga, King Siaosi Tupou V, is the great, great, great grandson of Taufa'ahau Tupou I.

However there is another reason that my village of Tongaleleka stands out. My father's people always insisted that they have been in Tongaleleka since time immemorial. When my old people talk about ancestry they would count many generations which one can readily add up to many hundreds of years. The story of my ancestors about the longevity of their existence in Tongaleleka has been supported by science.

Burley (1994, p. 388), while searching for the Lapita pottery remains in Ha'apai, stated that the "accelerator mass spectrometry radio-carbon dating of marine turtle bone from the lower levels of the Tongaleleka site have yielded ages of 3660  $\pm$ 190 B.p., 2960  $\pm$ 60 B.p. and 2960  $\pm$ 120 B.p. Burley went on to indicate that some of the

sites in Ha'apai were up to two meters deep and "within each site plainware and aceramic occupations are positioned stratigraphically above the Lapita, indicating long term continuity in settlement locale. This continuity, in fact, extends to the present, for each site occurs within a contemporary village...with the present day village having 3,000 years of continuous occupation....". Tongaleleka then is the oldest area of the Ha'apai group and has been occupied continuously for at least 3,000 years.

### *My Mother*

My mother was from a tohunga class called kau faito'o (literally means those who perform the act of removing). She was regarded as a healer of sickness and injury. Sickness and injuries were often seen as a result of transgressing tapu and healing comes from lifting, removing or neutralizing that tapu. Muna descended from Siniua, a young daughter of a Samoan group leader from the village of Fasitutai in Upolu. She visited Tonga with a cultural group. When the group anchored at Pangai, the capital of Ha'apai she fell in love with the harbour officer, my mother's grandfather, Viliami Lua. Siniua defiantly left the group and ran away to the island of Ha'afeva with him and as punishment she was banished from the country of Samoa itself. She lived in Ha'afeva and never saw her home or any of her family for the remainder of her life.

The family of my maternal grandfather would travel to Melanesia regularly and would also host Melanesians in their homes. Their indigenous knowledge of healing was higher than other local healers because of this association with the Melanesian healers. My mother would say, and the local people also confirmed, that faito'o (medicine) was buried in our family homes in Ha'afeva and consequently there is a sense of reverence that can still be felt in the homestead today.

The mala'e (urupa, final resting place) of my maternal kainga of Muihala (means place where the journey or road ends) is the most spiritually active place of the islands of Ha'afeva. My ancestors' spirits are known for joining people for evening activities, appearing to visitors as well as people of the area in time of difficulties, to guide them through difficult sea passages or adverse weather. Sometimes though, they

just want to perform mischief. Muihala is also known for performing light shows that could be seen by ships miles out to the sea.

My mother was the last one of my family to be accused of being involved in the world of the fa'ahikehe<sup>13</sup>. My siblings and I endeavoured many times to learn, even to trick her into passing on the ancestral knowledge of a faito'o<sup>14</sup> to us for safekeeping. We inherited these utilitarian tendencies from contact with our western education and experiences. Several palangi researchers who endeavoured to interview our kainga with a view to assess its scientific value also sought her knowledge. However, she stayed true to the instructions of her parents and that was that she would be the last one to know the family taonga of faito'o. As the faito'o has benefited many, it had also harmed some including our kainga. Both my mother's older brothers, who were taught the art, died mysteriously at young ages leaving young families behind. In 1995, my mother took the faito'o back to the ancestors.

When the Christian missionaries arrived in the 1820s, they targeted and converted many chiefs and leading families, especially those who were the keepers and repositories of indigenous religions and traditions. My parents' people and many of the Ha'apai groups were among those converted. Following conversion, there were many internal tensions that saw many Tongans banished to Fiji and other foreign countries. My mother's people co-founded the Church of Tonga that is also known as the Chiefs' or the Royal Church of Tonga. From that beginning, my great grandparents were high-ranking clergy people, a tradition, which was continued by my parents, my uncles, and my brother who was the head of the Church of Tonga in Aotearoa/New Zealand, as well as in the United States of America.

When my parents were at their religious mission at Tu'anuku, they had a visitor. He was an esteemed head of their Church in the Vava'u group, a man of great mana<sup>15</sup>, and one who had performed many amazing feats in the Ha'apai group. Some claimed he had performed lotu (prayers) to bring someone back from the dead. When it was time for him to return, he asked my parents that when their next child who will be a

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<sup>13</sup> Other dimensions, those who have passed, spirits.

<sup>14</sup> Herbal and other medicine or those that one performs to remove illness or disease.

<sup>15</sup> In this case mana expresses a reputation for performing miracles.

boy arrives, that the baby be called by his own name. Just over a year later, I was born. I bear his name.

#### **2. 4. Early Years in Tonga**

Tu'anuku was one of the principal villages of the Vava'u region. The Government's regional officer in this part of the country at the time of my birth was Tonga-mata-moana, a tall large-framed man whose thundering voice would easily signal hosts of his impending arrival. A generous, warm and respected man, Tonga-mata-moana was a former sportsman of note, head of the national boxing body and a travelled man who lived abroad for many years and spoke several foreign languages. The village people referred to him as Tonga Ha'amoana (Tonga the Samoan) as he spent many years of his youth in Samoa with family members. As well, he would often break into rapid firing Samoan phrases when he was not happy with other elders, town officers and other officials. He had a full crown of white hair, which always reminded me of a sea urchin with long needles each pointed threateningly to the four winds and which I now think was a fitting warning to others that he was not a person of whom to make an enemy. He was also the region's elected representative of the Government and under him there were town officers elected by different villages to carry out administrative matters as well as being his point of communication within those villages.

Tonga-mata-moana and his wife 'Ilaise were very close to my family and raised me. In those formative times of my life, I grew up in a socially above average home and in an environment where I learnt matters of governance, culture, relationships, including dealings with different peoples (local people as well as foreigners). Because Tu'anuku was in Vava'u and was close to Fiji and Samoa, our home was home to many Pacific peoples not only those of Tongan origin. Tonga-mata-moana had lived in Fiji and spoke Fijian fluently as well. Our home was a place where old Tongan, Fijian and Samoan languages were used as part of a normal day. It was a village point where old people and others of esteem gathered over kava bowls and banter, competed, laughed, shared knowledge from their areas of expertise as well as talking

about more serious administrative matters. I was, maybe by default, part of daily cultural and religious activities of much depth.

It pays to mention here that the name Tonga-mata-moana was a hereditary one synonymous with Tongan legends and stories that are still being handed down from generation to generation today. The Tonga-mata-moana of old, was the maker of fishhooks for pulling up lands. In a version of ancient stories, it was Tonga-mata-moana's grandson (referred to by some as Maui) who fished up the main island of Tonga with an old fishhook borrowed from him. According to many stories and records (Gifford, 1929), the name of the country, Tonga, was short for Tonga-mata-moana the name given by Maui to the fish that he caught with the old hook he borrowed from Tonga-mata-moana as a way of honouring him. The late Queen Salote Tupou III, the ultimate expert on genealogy of her time, was asked about the title of Tonga-mata-moana in the 1950s. She was unsure as it was a very old title, suspecting though that Tonga-mata-moana was from the second dynasty of Tu'i Ha'atakalaua<sup>16</sup> of old, and it was a governor sent from Tonga itself to the Vava'u group.

### Start of my school journey

When I was of an age that I should be preparing for a life of formal education, like it was for my brother who was pusiaki'i (raised) by my maternal grandparents, I was returned to my natural parents (who were now in a mission in Pangai) so that I could be taken to a reputable government junior school (GPS; government primary schools) in Pangai. This put me in a strong position to sit and pass the national entry examination designed to screen boys academically to see if they could be offered a place at the Kolisi Tonga. Kolisi Tonga, which was always referred to since its formation as the Government school, was founded by the late King George Tupou I in 1882 to prepare students for the future administration of the country.

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<sup>16</sup> The original ruling dynasty of Tonga and the consequent Tongan Empire was the sacred Tu'i Tonga line that descended from the sky God Tangaloa. They were eventually overtaken by the Tu'i Ha'atakalaua, which branched out from a younger sibling of the Tu'i Tonga. The current monarchy of Tonga, Siaosi Tupou V is from the 3<sup>rd</sup> dynasty that also branched off from younger siblings of a member of the Tu'i Ha'atakalaua line. However such demarcation no longer is clear as there has been intermarriage between the dynasties and the present monarch Tupou V is a product of such through his father Tupou IV.



The Kolisi Tonga was a privileged boarding school that was given generous land lots, state resources and its staff were the best educators the country could afford. My grandparents, my father, uncles on both my fathers and mother's sides and my older siblings attended this school. As my parents moved from mission to mission as their church hierarchy directed them, I attended GPS Pangai, GPS Nuku'alofa and then GPS Navutoka when it was time for me to sit the national entry examination for the Kolisi Tonga. I was successful. My family was one of four proud families from our town whose sons were accepted to the Kolisi Tonga. In hindsight, almost all my teachers had been like family to us; they constantly encouraged us and were always flexible and responsive. They invested time, even personal resources, in their students but expected reciprocity in the form of hard work and respect, and they took great personal pride in every successful milestone. During boarding school holidays, and being the only child of Tonga-mata-moana and 'Ilaise, I returned to their home to assist with the production of copra to sell for my school expenses. I maintained contact with them until they both passed on.

My natural parents' household was a place of many kainga, cultural, church and faito'o activities and was a place where harmony reigned. This was achieved by empathy and compromises driven by 'ofa for each other. I witnessed and learnt, observed and experienced cultural roles. My mother was matriarch of her kainga and, according to Tongan custom, we as her children culturally outranked all her kainga. This allowed us to enjoy a good range of cultural privileges. However incumbent upon us, and in line with fatongia, we must behave in culturally appropriate ways as well as undertake tauhi vaa<sup>16</sup> to the kainga of our mother. Tevita, on our father's side, was the eldest of his eleven siblings so he had both secular and spiritual leadership roles to fulfil and through this, we his children, all had secular and spiritual leadership roles to his kainga too. My approach to this research is informed by these lived experiences and knowledge.

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<sup>16</sup> Translated as maintaining the space. It is a highly developed 'duty of care' concept seen in the activities performed in order to maintain good relationships between people. It includes the Tongan and Samoan covenant between sisters and brothers. This relationship demands, respect, service, affection, closeness but maintains cultural distance and space as well. A celestial example is the constant interfacing that balances the earth's gravitational pull against the moon's centrifugal force keeping them perpetually tied but at safe distances from each other. The moon and earth influence each other greatly but each maintains its own identity, qualities and integrity without the stronger one claiming the other.

While Tevita headed his kainga, he and all the families of his thirteen siblings, including his own children, were culturally inferior to his father's sisters and their children. This obligated us as his children to a duty of care (tauhi vaa), a culturally and perhaps religiously subservient relationship to those female relatives and their families. For example, these aunties are called meihikitanga, which can be translated as 'almost total removal'. This is a reference to cultural access or their right to possession and properties that belonged to their brothers' or their mother's brothers' families. Further, because of their position of cultural superiority over our father and in turn his children (us), we were expected to honour them which could include being obliged to fulfil any request made by them.

Tevita, as mentioned above, was a high-ranking clergyman and with that came cultural and religious roles that he had to perform as daily duties. We, as his children, also did our duty in supporting him to meet his fatongia (obligations/duty). This put my siblings and me 'in context learning situations' where we had a master and apprentice learning relationship with both our parents in their endeavours to perform their roles to the highest possible level. Like many Pacific peoples, this is how we acquired the knowledge and skills to perform each of our roles as individual members of the family and eventually the community. This is where I acquired the base from which to build my values and sense of duty to kainga. It is where I fitted in, within my world and where I found my place, my roles and obligations to the collective to which I belong.

So, as I moved into a different space and a different time, into the bigger islands of Aotearoa/New Zealand, my deeply embedded cultural learnings from Tonga faced their first challenges. While they stood me in good stead to help make personal as well as professional decisions, I sensed much difference. Such difference presented itself in a myriad of ways and whether I was aware of the difference or not, my sense of faith, trust and confidence in those I represent carried me no matter what the circumstance. If you as the reader, sense difference in the writing style, then that is indicative of the changing world in which I enter, the world where western values pervade and where I am poised at the interface between them and my embedded Tongan values. My experiences are locked in a history of encounters. I value this history nevertheless and had it not been part of shaping and creating my life story, I

would be a different person today and the rest of my story and this thesis will be in a very different form.

## **2. 5. Aotearoa/New Zealand**

In Dunedin, New Zealand, where I was sent by my Government to study, my training and education was a good experience. It opened up my world to so much technical, commercial and other knowledge to a depth and in an “in-context” way that was not possible to achieve in Tonga. There were, of course, challenging times for me as well but they must be seen in the context of that time. These challenges were cultural, emotional and educational as well as spiritual. I had four tutors or teachers who had a marked impact on my studies during my first experiences of New Zealand educational institutions. They were all Pakeha and male and I learnt from them in different ways.

Out of the four regular tutors, I spent most of my time with Jim, a tall, former national Scottish soccer representative who was in his early forties. I am sure everything he said (even when shouting) was for my own good although I did not understand him most of the time. Jim was someone you would climb a mountain with, because you knew he would not desert you, or allow harm to come to you. Then there was Albert, a softly spoken and empathetic Irishman who reminded me of my father in his quiet strength and humorous personality. I often wondered where he got so many funny things to say about anyone and anything. Naturally, I gravitated to Albert and learned many New Zealand qualities as well as learning academically.

The other two people in my educational life for the next four years were Les, who was an English gentleman and the head of the school, and Wayne, a Southlander, who was a little man with a wind burned lined outdoor type face. Les for me was difficult to work out. He seemed to know that he was the boss; he was loud, a bit distanced and seemed to have his favourites. I was not one of those and consequently that relationship became something of a barrier to my learning. Wayne on the other hand was approachable and always had a ready smile. This was important for me. As a person, I constantly seek out signals be they verbal, emotional or body language from people with whom I associate. I would rely on these signals to ensure my response

was appropriate in order to maintain, intensify or discontinue a task at hand or a relationship. These needs were especially acute in the early stages of being in a new country when I was not certain of people in general.

I learnt a lot from these four men in terms of expectations and behaviours in New Zealand, although I sometimes struggled to make sense of their way of thinking and whether it was typical of all New Zealanders. I was in a state of constant high excitement from so much new learning and new methods about their ways of seeing the world. Later, I identified these to be ideological learnings. Most marked for me was noting how brutally open the discussions were about what people thought of each other and what was newsworthy. They even had open discussions about their female relatives and with whom they were dating, and worse still the dating habits of their own sisters, a discussion that I found to be crude or even tapu.

Further, I was surprised by how direct and open students were with their teachers asking questions of them on any topic. They seemed to lack respect for teachers and saw them as a resource to be exploited even carelessly discarding their advice and knowledge at times. Although this approach often upset me because I regarded teachers as elders, parents or those bestowed with mana, I benefited from that same openness, as my classmates were generous with any discussion and answered questions of an academic nature that I may have had for them.

The other significant feature of my life at that time was joining a local rugby club. I did this partly because my scholarship officer's (a relative of my father) last piece of advice before we left Tonga was to get involved in whatever is on offer in order to socialise and learn about the local people. Again the difference in values surfaced. I had an expectation that the club would buy my boots, the club jersey, socks and shorts by way of returning my favour of playing for them. This was not the case. To add to those surprises, on Saturdays I was to find my own way to some remote Otago township, where I would play rugby for this club's prestige and because games were held during winter, I would sustain cuts all over my body because of the overnight ice on the fields.

To make these experiences more odd, during some of these games, the stinging pain from dry icy air anaesthetizing my tropical lungs was augmented by the middle aged Palangi men in the opposition team purposely raking me with their rugby boots. It seemed this was for the entertainment of a group of enthusiastic well-dressed people who yelled regularly 'get that coconut!', an expression I had no understanding of at the time. To top off these strange activities, this prestigious rugby club asked me to pay them a handsome club fee.

I looked for a collective ritual to celebrate and mark the start and end of the playing seasons. A cultural acknowledgement or a thanks-giving session would have sufficed, or an acknowledgement of the mana of past members, their genealogy and their spirits which I felt regularly even though I was culturally different. These markers seemed to me to be important in feeling that I was a part of something bigger like a whanau (a kainga) and more, perhaps a hierarchical order of things (cosmos). This was not the case. The parameters of the relationship were like the rugby field; limited, defined and predictable.

However, I enjoyed the success I had as my rugby mates did. I would quietly celebrate by myself and congratulate myself on my achievements while thinking that I deserved nice things since I had worked so hard for it. This was unlike those who did not try as hard as I did in the world of education and employment. I began to accumulate a sense of superiority and self-belief. Like the others around me, I sensed that it was my own effort and sacrifice that got me to be a better person than others, especially my fellow country people. My tertiary qualification, car ownership, an album of me and New Zealand friends doing palangi things and a slight New Zealand accent attested to those senses. I even started to believe the thinking of those who were around me that Pacific people are not as good as 'us'. My return to Tonga in the late 1970s reminded me of how far I had moved from my collective roots, my value systems and my wise old learnings.

Thankfully for me, my parents and kainga in Tonga reminded me of the importance of interdependence, connections, responsibility and benefits from belonging to a bigger collective. As opposed to my experience in New Zealand, where individual acquisition and self belief had been made possible then reinforced through

institutions, they reminded me about having a person, a God/s as that source of inspiration or object of affection, humility, connectedness, and the importance of holistic existence. My personal absence from Tonga was only possible because my collective kainga carried my own fatongia to the kainga and fonua, worked and prayed to support my wellbeing and success in my endeavours in another fonua that was thousands of kilometres away. This teaching was done with the same familiar inclusiveness and patience and their reminders humbled me.

Like my schooling experience in Dunedin, the learning in the rugby club relationship did actually have some educational benefit later in my life. I became aware of and attuned to fundamental differences in worldviews, and this stimulated the beginnings of my enquiries and interrogation into individualism, self-reliance, dependence, internal locus of control, self-actualisation and other aspects of New Zealand society. The attention to the self, which is a common thread among the values above, must have impacted profoundly on institutions such as schools, their curriculum and pedagogies. I thought that these values surely would come to fruition in the world of adulthood and work and impact on future thinking and relationships for all those people who have made Aotearoa/New Zealand their home.

#### Difference and the world of work

After working for the government of Tonga for a time, I returned to New Zealand where I managed an engineering division for a government agency. I was exposed to daily demonstrations of the dominant culture. It was so intrinsic that many of the people with whom I worked manifested them in everyday behaviours and assumptions. We would have company representatives visiting us to sell their products, seeking our technical services or contracts with us. Many of those company or business representatives would come to the office but often when they saw me in that office, they would walk out again without saying anything.

Fortunately for me, my esteem was quite robust. I had managed the division for several years and had secured several world patents that were worth a substantial amount for the Crown at the time. My heightened awareness made me realise how day-to-day language and activities could be degrading for some, but it was often unintentional. I started resisting similar happenings realising that these individual

overt biases really were a reflection of national attitudes to things about race, especially Maori and Pacific.

In the national newspapers, on the television and over the radio I would hear negative views about Maori and Pacific peoples often with reference to crime, health cost to the rest of the country, educational failure or living off social welfare benefits. I do not remember hearing what other people the news media were talking about. However, as a Pacific person, I had reservations about those stories, as I knew that there must be other sides to what we read and heard. I found that the deep embarrassment I felt about Pacific peoples hiding from immigration officials and the police during the dawn raids was starting to soften as I realised that there might be some moral issues in these discussions and not just legal ones.

At the same time, stories of Maori protest and occupation were to the fore such as the reclaiming of Bastion Point by Ngati Whatua. Amongst these issues, there was the silent voice inside me that said that this land of Aotearoa/New Zealand was Maori fonua (whenua), their tupu'anga (where one grew or sprung from) so it was more than just a legal issue. There were spiritual and genealogical issues to be considered too. How could the general public not know that? How could the Minister of Police not know that? How could a Government elected by the people to protect their interest (especially the Tangata Whenua with their inherent rights) not know that? Besides, if there was an agreement for the land to be used for a certain purpose and for a certain time and if that purpose and time had lapsed, then one could not keep the land, let alone sell it, particularly when it was not yours. People surely cannot preserve the spirit of the land if it is not rightfully theirs, I thought. Why do these leaders of a supposedly enlightened country not know this? I asked myself these questions often.

And then there was the Springbok rugby tour of 1981. The debates raged about the view asserted by many that it was their right to watch a game of rugby between the All Blacks and the Springboks and they expected the Government and the police to protect that democratic right. Other views were that 'sports and politics do not mix' or 'watching rugby is not harming anyone here or in South Africa'. Some of the country's population argued strongly against these points insisting that supporting such a tour actually gives mandate to the racially oppressive regime of South Africa.

What these years of turmoil proved was that there are strong elements of New Zealanders who care for people who are oppressed unjustly and then there are others who have very little connection with these issues. However, because our New Zealand way of thinking is heavily influenced by liberalism, individualism and competition, if people are left to pursue their own interests unchecked and with few morals to set boundaries, time has shown that most will do so with little regard to the effect on others or the environment.

Albert Wendt's (1973) book *Sons for the Return Home*, documenting a deep struggle with racism in New Zealand, had a profound impact on me. It contained very engaging accounts of Pacific peoples struggling to survive and cope in a culture that was often hostile. Generally the author and his family were treated differently, possibly because he was Samoan and not palangi. At school, the curriculums and pedagogies were based on Western models, and his friends' Shakespearian citations in English classes were laughed at with impunity. His and his family's triumph over the odds against them engendered a sense of pride within me. The book also had accounts of Pacific peoples' relationships with each other, with palangi, with Maori, as well as views of relationships between Maori and palangi. What was pleasing about the book was that it engendered a sense of pride in Pacific cultures that was not common at the time. It talked of racism, which was played out at various levels in New Zealand society. While I felt powerless to do anything about issues of racism at that time, my experiences served to be an empowering tool for me in the future.

## **2. 6. The challenge of spirituality**

Spirituality is a word or concept that I use freely but it often seems to stop conversations. Spirit from which spirituality comes is like what is termed laumalie in Tongan. Laumalie is similar to soul, true essence, life force within beings or things, one that is essential, and the activating principle of a person. Laumalie is often a state reached when a connection is made to a common meaning, to a higher knowledge system or being/s, or oneness with such.



My mother would maintain that people who behave and act in exploitive ways for their own interests, do so because they lack spiritual qualities such as ‘ofa, ‘ilo and potu. In this way ‘ofa, ‘ilo and potu connect and maintain relationships through service by knowing what to do and doing well for the benefit of all through reciprocity. She would also say that God had provided enough ‘ofa, ‘ilo and potu for everyone to have in order to stay a member (maintain membership) of the bigger and dignified system. To her, people will benefit from knowing fakatatau (equity in service according to ability and entitlements according to need) as well as in the way they relate to each other, to the fonua, the waters and nature so that laumalie ensures we are connected in balanced and sustainable ways.

She would maintain that ‘ilo is what is needed to direct activity and service to maintain laumalie. Ako is about seeking ‘ilo which is relevant to living in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century but must include the best of the past which is necessary for us to live a meaningful life together with dignity. Using ‘ilo in a way that will benefit everyone and our surroundings is potu. Potu then will be the ultimate proof of good ako. Potu, ‘ilo, ako and ‘ofa have holistic values that attempt to balance the fragmentation tendencies of a scientific approach to learning and teaching. It encourages the service, respect and care that maintain connections between those involved in teaching and learning in authentic and meaningful relationships.

This learning was put to the test a few years later. In this test I embarked on a journey, which like this doctorate, would require my dedicated and focussed attention as well as the faithful tautoko (support) of my management support whanau. This journey started in 1984 when my brother, who lived in Auckland at the time, rang to say that the President of the Church of Tonga was in hospital and he had asked to see me. This was unusual because, as many readers will know, a President of a Tongan denomination is a representative of God on this earth who has access to thousands of people to attend to any possible request. When my brother took me in to meet the President, and made the presentation according to protocol, the President enacted tutulu (in Tongan, it is shedding of tears by a chief or a highly ranked people). The following is my recollection of the President’s lament-like talanoa with my brother and I.

*Pehee ange 'oku kei moui ho'o tamai,  
 Tevita fua kavenga, kataki, talangofua.  
 E Masima, ko e me'a 'oku ou tokanga ki ai,  
 'oku 'iai 'a e faingata'a 'o e Siasi,  
 'oku fie langa e Siasi 'i Nu'u sila ka 'oku ikai ha pa'aga,  
 'Oku masiva 'a e Siasi, ko e Siasi vaivai pea  
 'oku ikai ha fakamanatu e ngaahi fatongia ho'o tamai.  
 'Oku ikai ko ha 'amo fanongo talanoa ka koe sio tonu,  
 ko 'emau kole tokoni, keke tokoni mai ki he ki'I siasi masiva ni .*

How I wish that your father was still alive,  
 Tevita who carried many burdens, tolerant, accommodating/obedient.  
 Masima<sup>3</sup>, there is much burden in my heart/mind,  
 the church also has the burden hanging over it,  
 we want the Church to be established in New Zealand but we are resource poor.  
 The church is poor so much; the church is weak (in knowledge and resources),  
 there is no need to lament the many roles and success of your father.  
 It is not as if these are stories you heard from others, you witnessed the triumphs,  
 it is our plea that you help this humble insignificant church<sup>4</sup>.

### Building a church complex in Aotearoa/New Zealand

With the help of my brother who was second in-charge and managing the finances, I took on this major project from designing the Church in the mid-1980s to its opening at the end of the 1980s. I was responsible for the liaison with neighbours, negotiating with the local government and professional bodies, the ongoing design and negotiations to construct the church complex, ordering supplies, tendering, engagement of contracts and supervising hundreds of untrained church labourers. We could not afford building companies or contractors. We built the complex on Friday evenings, Saturdays and holidays when I would travel from Rotorua. The project was completed with just the collection of the church members and assistance from the Church of Tonga abroad plus the donation of my time, my professional friends and the generosity of understanding and love of my older children; Andreas, Elise and Lora. The church complex licenced for 500 people was completed with no physical injury to anyone or any money borrowed at all for it.

It was this experience that caused me to come face to face with barriers created by New Zealand's laws, the Council's by-laws and general social attitudes towards things Pacific. The neighbours opposed the project vehemently stating that there

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<sup>3</sup> Masima is the name by which the old people, my kainga and the generation of my parents know me.

<sup>4</sup> I understood this line as ask for me to lead the development of the church complex - establish the church in New Zealand

would be singing, the smell of cooked hangi and the noise of children playing. Even the family of the prominent Prime Minister of the time objected to the building of the church complex. Included in the suggestions by this Prime Minister's family was that the church build a two-meter high fence right around the several acres of Church complexes. The Council insisted that the Church install automatic sump pumps around the property, to protect the neighbouring properties.

We met the reasonable requests, tried to negotiate the unreasonable ones but fought the ones that we thought were too ignorant or unrealistic to negotiate in the end. The learning, however, was about how some of the mainstream community were obviously not comfortable with people who were different and did all they could to discourage activities that they did not understand. By the time the project was finished, I had learned much more about Tongan cultural ways and in particular how they helped people to maintain their *laumalie* with dignity in the face of injustice, an institutional sense of superiority over them and cultural belittlement. The standards of local government administration at the time, no matter how inappropriate, were blindly followed without any sense of doubt or questioning. These needed to be challenged. The church peoples' calmness and unshakeable faith in a higher power helped them, even when bureaucrats were set on carrying out regulations to the letter, instead of using common sense which would have yielded better results for all.

The success of the venture in the end, and my learning from the Church building project, gave me the courage to raise social and political issues in the future. To whom and how I would address these was still unclear, but I certainly had the determination to ensure that the people of Aotearoa/New Zealand as a whole would be better people, fairer and more informed about the place of the Pacific in our everyday lives.

## **2. 7. A New Path and Start**

After talking with various people I trusted, I decided my long-term contribution was to be a commitment to the future generations of Tongans in Aotearoa/New Zealand. I felt that giving energy to people who have an ingrained negative attitude towards our

increasingly diverse society may be a wasted effort given that there are a few number of Pacific people with experience who can address the unfairness of institutions (such as schools) for Pacific peoples. I decided to go teaching as through this small way, I could contribute to building a community based on values from our ancestors and which are underpinned by tauhi vaa to each other, respect for the environment and those that we value spiritually. This would then enhance good relationships that should lead to a more humane, caring, harmonious and sustainable existence. Despite enjoying a professional career and work environment that resulted in myself and colleagues securing several world patents for my employer (Government of Aotearoa/New Zealand), I took leave from a management position at the Forest Research Institute (in Rotorua) to undertake my teacher training with the University of Waikato. Thus I started my journey in teaching and education.

Now having studied, having managed professional and voluntary projects, having taught at primary, secondary, tertiary education levels, I have grown into a middle aged seemingly educated man, familiar with the many levels, shapes and values, which New Zealand society boasts. One may be forgiven for thinking that I have adapted well in my new land. The markers are visible. I have performed well in the education system; I have secured several world engineering and scientific patents, enjoy a good job, have been elected to public offices and enjoy international standing in some quarters. I live in a comfortable home and support my children academically and financially through their multiple endeavours. I could be termed as being successful, a modern Tongan perhaps (Mara, 1997). Yet whatever success I may have is not mine alone. This success has been achieved because others have carried out their fatongia for me. My collective kainga prayed for my spiritual and emotional safety and worked to support my physical wellbeing and academic endeavours while I was studying in New Zealand, another fonua. Ratu Sir Kamesese Mara (1997, p.13) one of the first Pacific medical students at the University of Otago and the earliest Pacific student at the London school of Economics said that:

I like to think of myself as a complete modern Fijian. But when I say modern, I do not mean abandoning all that I have learned and came to value in my youth. These things are part of me and will remain with me always. I am what I am because of them.

As many will know, Ratu Sir Kamasese Mara returned as a highly educated Fijian and dedicated his life to his fatongia to his Fijian people (his fonua) as a leader at the highest political, religious, educational and economic levels. Similarly, at a much more modest level, I have duties which are forms of accountability. My cultural obligations are numerous and the greater the success, the greater the obligation. There is the fatongia (Fusitu'a, 1992; Fusitu'a & Coxon, 1998) to maintain, the fonua to sustain and the 'ilo to be sought. Because of the family to which I was born, there are certain rituals that require my contribution, my presence or my siblings' presence. These cannot be ignored. I embarked on the research that has produced this thesis as part of my fatongia to my past and to my present, as a response to the challenge in Ratu Sir Kamesese Mara's words I cited at the beginning of this chapter. My ta'okete, Luke Vaoleti (talanoa, January, 1990) would say that the mark of a person is in the success of carrying out his/her obligation. As I noted in Chapter One, my primary aim in this research is to produce something that will be of value for the education of young Tongans in Aotearoa/New Zealand and anyone else that may wish to benefit from Tongan values and learning.

In concluding this account of my journey, I remind myself of my father's people's role as the toutai or tautahi, gatherers of food, sea fighters and warriors, upon which their people, kainga, were dependent for safety and survival. I have been inspired by Ratu Sir Kamasese Mara's challenge and his second name Kapaiwai 'unsinkable', and I too, say: here I stand, a carrier of a proud history and legacy that marks us as people of strength and will. This thesis is my fatongia to my Tongan kainga of the past and of the future, the young people, so help me God.

### CHAPTER THREE: REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND KEY CONCEPTS

International assessments, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), show achievement rates in Aotearoa/New Zealand are at a world class standard. However, such assessments continue to demonstrate a major gap between those who are doing well and those who are not (Ministry of Education, 2006a, 2006b). Alton-Lee (2003) stated that in these tests “Maori and Pacific students feature prominently amongst the students that perform poorly” (p. 8). A question for future research that was asked by Ferguson, Gorinski, Wendt-Samu & Mara (2008, p. 49) was: “...what are the schools’ responses to Pacific students and what are the processes that keep them underachieving?”. This is a searching question given that underachievement and associated wastage has persisted for many decades amongst Maori and Pacific students. These students are from the two ethnic groups who will represent 50 percent of the working age population in 2040 (Statistics New Zealand, 2006a). As McMahon (2002, p. 1) has observed “The expectation that schools will actively and deliberately seek to improve Maori and Pacific education outcomes is not a liberal nicety but an urgent necessity.”

One of the main reasons offered as justifications for these poor performance statistics for Maori and Pacific students is that the curricula, and the way it is taught (pedagogy), are from outside the experiences of Maori and Pacific students (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Thaman, 1988, 1998; Vaioleti, 2001; Vaioleti, Morrison, & Rees, 2003; Wendt, 1985). It is primarily for this reason that I maintain that the knowledges and cultures of the Pacific peoples must be part of the material taught and assessed in schools. The way this material is taught and learned should be informed by Pacific ways as well as other cultures of academia. Thaman (1995a, 1995b) recognised that Western scientific education is vital for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pacific people. However in the increasingly diverse societies of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century it is also important that Western scientific education occurs in learning environments that are supportive of different cultures, their values and ways of knowing.

This chapter commences with a brief review of the literature on Pacific learning and pedagogies as well as some of the evidence of the experiences of Pacific students in

New Zealand schools. The reasons for the poor performance of Pacific students, by comparison with those in the majority pakeha culture, are explored drawing on the work of Alton-Lee (2003) and Ferguson, Gorinski, Wendt-Samu & Mara (2008). Also reviewed in this chapter are some approaches to explaining diversity in educational outcomes, and in this context I draw extensively on the writing of the Russian theorist Lev Vygotsky who has investigated how child development is influenced by culture and modes of interpersonal communication.

Following a review of some relevant theoretical perspectives that have informed research on disparities in education outcomes, I outline some key Tongan educational concepts that I wish to see incorporated in learning approaches adopted in the New Zealand classroom. As an exemplar, I refer to successful pedagogical initiatives by tangata whenua such as models developed by Mason Durie (1994, 1999), the Ministry of Education's Ka Hikitia programme, and in particular the Te Kotahitanga project with its underscoring educational concepts. Underpinning my thesis is an argument that a learning approach based on Tongan educational concepts will greatly improve the relevancy, the cultural appropriateness and increase the social currency of the educational experiences of Tongan students and those who may find it beneficial in New Zealand.

### **3. 1. Overview of literature on Pacific learning**

There is a lack of substantive writing on Pacific pedagogies and teaching and learning approaches as well as Tongan educational concepts. Dr Tubeni Baba (2002, p. x), a senior Fijian academic, noted that:

The notion of the Pacific pedagogy is being promoted as an alternative by some Pacific educators as a means of dealing with the unique learning needs of Pacific students. However, literature pertaining to the subject is practically non-existent. Likewise when questions are raised as to what Pacific pedagogies are, there are no clear explanations.

My search of the current Aotearoa/New Zealand literature revealed very little work on Tongan and other Pacific educational concepts other than the writings of Thaman (1988, 1992b, 1997b, 1998, 1999a). Thaman's (1988) foundational research on Tongan teachers and their attitudes to teaching provided a rich base of knowledge on the concepts of *poto*, *'ilo*, *'ofa* and *ako* which are discussed later in the chapter.

Manu'atu (2000, 2002) has also suggested pedagogical possibilities of the Tongan concept of malie for Tongan students in New Zealand secondary schooling and I discuss this further elsewhere in the chapter.

There have been two literature reviews that explored Pacific issues in education. These are the *Pacific Education Issues: Final Report* (Coxon, Anae, Mara, Wendt-Samu & Finau, 2002) and *Literature Review on the Effective Engagement of Pacific Parents and Communities in Education* (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006). The focus of the reviews was to inform educational policy and community issues. A literature review on values in the New Zealand curriculum by Keown, Parker & Tiakiwai (2005) discussed Pacific values and drew heavily on the works of Mitaera, Thaman-Helu, Taufe'ulungaki and my earlier research. Generally, however, there is a lack of literature addressing specific culturally based pedagogies or approaches to teaching and learning in mainstream schools that include Tongan values and educational concepts.

There is also respected work on pedagogy that can be applied in principle to assist the learning of Aotearoa/New Zealand's Pacific students. Included here are Alton-Lee's (2003) *Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling: Best Evidence Synthesis* and Rosa Sheets' (2005) *Diversity Pedagogy Theory* that examines possible cultural ways that may assist the learning of American students in classrooms characterized by considerable cultural diversity. More recently, Ferguson, Gorinski, Wendt-Samu & Mara (2008), were contracted by the Ministry of Education to review the experiences of Pacific students in the classroom. They examined elements of Alton-Lee's, and Sheets' discussions and made recommendations for possible adaptation to improve the quality of teaching for a diverse student group including Pacific students.

Ferguson et. al. (2008) identified two gaps in the literature. The first was the silence about Pacific boys being amongst the least successful groups in education in the country (Ministry of Education, 2010). The second was "the gap on self-theorising by Pacific academics" or others (Ferguson, Gorinski, Wendt-Samu & Mara, 2008, pp. 45-46). They acknowledged the contributions made by Efi (2005), Koloto (2003), Manu'atu (2002), Tupuola (2004) and Thaman (2005), in suggesting theoretical models that may influence Pacific peoples' learning. Ferguson, Gorinski, Wendt-



Samu & Mara (2008) also spoke highly of the works of Sheets (2005) in *Diversity Pedagogy* which I will use as a pattern to shape my own findings.

Sheets (2005, p. 21) expressed well the challenge faced by teachers who are working in classrooms characterised by considerable cultural diversity when she observed:

Teaching is a profession not a job and therefore requires tenacity, courage and heart to... develop the confidence to teach students equitably... view teaching as a lifelong, honourable profession... Identify areas of pedagogical strengths and weaknesses... learn how to teach yourself cultural content knowledge of other groups' perspectives, to help you create and evaluate instructional resources and implement effective instructional strategies.

For teachers in mainstream schools who are not familiar with Tongan culture and hence thinking, there is going to be challenges in learning new concepts and pedagogies to make the education of Tongan students more relevant and an holistic learning experience. Ultimately, this will result in maintaining their culture and assisting others to greater appreciation of Tongan values and concepts. The end product of such teaching is a much richer and rewarding classroom experience for teachers and students that will be involved.

#### Taking Stock: Educational Experiences of Pacific Students

Many Pacific people, especially Samoans and Tongans, wanted to come to New Zealand to search for a better life for themselves and their children (Fusitu'a, 1998; Macpherson, Spoonley & Anae, 2003; Utumapu, 1992; Vaoleti, 2001; Vaoleti & Vaoleti, 2003; Wendt, 1985). They saw an education in New Zealand as a means to advance their dreams of gaining a better life (Koloto, 1998; Utumapu, 1992). However, in reality, while most worked two shifts and even often-double shifts to support their children's educational needs, they still found that their children performed well below their expectation. Albert Wendt (1985, p. 14) made the following observation about those early years:

...I was brought up ... to believe that the education system here (in New Zealand) allows all children – irrespective of their cultural differences – to develop their individual talents/abilities/ways. So why are our children suffering severe psychological and other disadvantages in schools? Why are they continuing to swell the ranks of the unskilled and semi-skilled...

It is poignant that Wendt, a former principal of a big high school in Samoa, identified the effect of failure at schools in Aotearoa/New Zealand for Pacific students as 'severe psychological and other disadvantages'.

In this way, Wendt humanized the result of the school failure for Pacific students. It seems therefore that these problems have emotional, cultural and spiritual dimensions and, if they are not attended to with care, they can lead to mental and emotional issues that will impact on the individuals concerned as well as their families and their aspirations for the future. School failure for Pacific students is not an impersonal political or educational entity to be fixed. In the same document, Wendt (1985, p. 14) went on to suggest a possible source of the psychological stress for Pacific students when he said:

...groups in New Zealand society without political and economic power – Maori and those from the Pacific nations – are trapped in a reality that is dictated by the dominant group... the Papalagi majority dictate that 'reality'.

Successive governments have been concerned about the misalignment of the mainstream curriculum and pedagogies used in the classroom and the learning needs of certain groups in society that led to waste of human resources for the country. A response in the 1980's was to reform the education system in order to make it more equitable for groups that included Pacific peoples. The New Zealand Curriculum Framework made the following claims:

The intention for the 1980s' education reviews were to seek a more equitable curriculum, particularly for those who were found disadvantaged by the existing system, such as girls, Maori students, Pacific Island students, and those with disabilities. (Ministry of Education, 1993b, p. 27)

The Ministry of Education (1993b, p. 7) produced a new Curriculum Framework built around nine principles. Principle six states that the Curriculum provides all students with equal education opportunities:

The school will recognise, respect, and respond to the educational needs, experience, interests, and values of the students: both female and male, students of all ethnic groups...and students of different social and religious backgrounds. All programmes will be gender inclusive, non-racist, and non-discriminatory to ensure that learning opportunities are not restricted.

Principle eight of the same document states that:

The New Zealand Curriculum reflects the multicultural nature of New Zealand society; the school curriculum will encourage students to understand and respect the different cultures which make up New Zealand society. It will ensure that the experience, cultural traditions, histories, and languages of all New Zealanders are recognised and valued. It will acknowledge the place of Pacific Island communities in New Zealand society, and New Zealand relationships with the peoples of Asia and the South Pacific. (Ministry of Education, 1993b, p.7)

In reality, the outcomes for Pacific student education have not reflected the policy intentions of those earlier stated educational objectives. In the 1996 Census, the highest attainment of 33 percent of Pacific peoples was a school qualification while only 2 percent attained university degrees. In 1997, of all Pacific students who started high school only 64 percent sat School Certificate, compared with the national figure of 93 percent (New Zealand Herald, 1998). Some decades later improvement in the secondary school outcome saw 63 percent achieve NCEA level 2 and 23 percent met the University level requirements but the Pacific tertiary enrolment remained at only just over 5 percent. (Ministry of Education, 2009)

While there might be a variety of reasons for this, including lack of financial resources, Pacific parents have had a marginalised record. In the mid 1990s, 70 percent of the Pacific population earned \$20,000 or less (Statistics New Zealand, 1996). Ten years later, the median income for Pacific peoples was only \$20,500 (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). This is more of a concern when the New Zealand's Pacific population is projected to reach 480,000 by 2026, an increase of 180,000 (2.4 percent a year) over the 2006 estimate of 300,000 (Ministry of Education, 2006). To interpret these figures in economic terms, which is necessary for fully exercising and enjoying citizenship in a democratic society, the influence and political power for Pacific people is probably very low.

In July 2003, 8 percent of school students identified as Pacific students. However in 2007, just over 9 percent of school students were Pacific (Ministry of Education, 2008). While these figures are low there are two very important factors to be

considered here. The first is that the Pacific student population is increasing at an accelerated rate, as already noted, and the second is that they are concentrated in a small number of cities and towns. In some parts of Auckland over 90 percent of the students in the school are Pacific students (Hill & Hawk, 1998). Due to the younger age structure of the Pacific population, 67 percent of Pacific students are enrolled in primary schools and only 29 percent in secondary schools. (Ministry of Education, 2006)

### Some impacts of economic restructuring

Many factors associated with the major restructuring of the New Zealand economy during the 1980's Lange government, and the flow-on effects on society and the education system, have had some negative impacts on the education of Pacific students. One of the impacts is the concentration of Pacific students in poorer resourced schools.

According to Snook et al. (1999, p.14) in the late 1990's, 80 percent of the rolls for Decile<sup>5</sup> 1 schools were made up of Maori and Pacific students. The same report states that 57 percent of all Decile 2 school rolls are Maori and Pacific students, while 40 percent of the country's Decile 3 schools are made up of the same students. A few years later in 2003, 68 percent of Pacific students were in the country's low decile (1, 2 or 3) schools compared to 26 percent of the total school population (Ministry of Education, 2006). Two decades since the introduction of an education review to seek a more equitable curriculum and access to quality education "... particularly for girls, Maori and Pacific ...(Ministry of Education, 1993b, p. 27), 61.4 percent of Pacific students are still in the decile 1, 2 and 3 schools". (Ministry of Education, 2009)

In a study by Liz Gordon (1994) of eleven Boards of Trustees in Christchurch, she found wide gaps between the intellectual, political, economic and management services provided by high decile school boards and those of the low decile schools. As early as the start of the economic restructuring, she concluded 'In the Period of Choice', that: "Overall, this small study has shown the development of alarming

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<sup>5</sup> Every state school is assigned a decile (10 grouping) for funding purposes. This measure is based on the degree of socio-economic disadvantage of the community from which students are drawn. Low decile schools (1-3) draw on students from communities with the highest degree of disadvantage while high decile schools (8-10) draw on students from communities with the lowest degree of socio-economic disadvantage. A school's decile ranking is calculated using six dimensions: equivalent household income; parental occupation; household crowding; parent's educational qualifications; income support payments received by parents; and the proportion of students of Māori or Pacific ethnicity.

inequalities between schools in the four years since the first Boards of Trustees were elected”. (p. 5)

Some decades later, Liz Gordon’s concerns remain valid. For school governance, the Ministry of Education (2009) had hoped that 100% of all Boards of Trustees would have adequate representations of Pacific in 2008 but only 29 percent had achieved this by the end of that year. This was a disappointing result since the new system was supposed to give parents, including those who were from disadvantaged groups, the opportunity to bring their perspectives to the schools and have more say in the running of the schools, thereby making them more relevant to their needs. In this sense one can say that opportunities normally offered by the operation of democracy have not benefitted Pacific peoples. Another way of including their ways is the inclusion of their values and knowledge in the curriculum and pedagogy. This is what is advocated in this thesis.

At the university level, ‘choice’ has not helped lower socio-economic students. Salmond (1999, p. 6) commented, “in the past 4 years, entry to the universities from Northland’s low decile schools had decreased by 49 percent. At the same time, entry to the universities from South Auckland’s low decile schools decreased by 43 percent. In fact in 1997, only 8 percent of those who entered the Universities were from low decile schools”. A decade later, school academic outcomes for Pacific students at levels 11, 12 and 13 had improved (Ministry of Education, 2008d) but, as discussed in other parts of this chapter, a large proportion of their populations are in the low decile schools (Ministry of Education, 2006c, 2009). Later figures from the Ministry of Education (2009) pointed to the fact that the higher the decile of a school the higher the likelihood that the students who attend it will gain university entrance level qualifications. For this the Ministry of Education (2009, p. 1) indicated that the students from Decile 9 and 10 schools are three times more likely to leave schools with a university entrance level qualification.

The impact of such low participation of low socio-economic Pacific/Polynesian students in university studies’ programmes, which may lead to influential positions, means that their inherent cultures, values, knowledge and world views are not likely to impact on policy makers and educational decision makers (Ferguson, Gorinski, Wendt-Samu & Mara, 2008; Manu’atu, 2002; Salmond, 1999; Snook et. al., 1999).

The voice and legitimated representation of such students at a level where policies, directions and curricula are formulated will continue to be missing and such valued knowledge will be excluded. This lack of means to rise to a level where one can exercise choice and access to decision-making levels ensures that the culture and interest of those in power is maintained in perpetuity. This in turn results in the continuing exclusion of non-dominant culture members from successes in education and consequential full enjoyment of citizenship.

With reference to the subject of 'choice' introduced by the Tomorrow's Schools projects, Eckermann (1994, p.10) observed:

Differences in life chances (and choices) are related to differences in environmental opportunities determined by membership of a specific social group, compounded by family and individual attitudes, beliefs and talents.

The ability to choose and the awareness of that ability are affected by an individual's perception and position in the social structure. Certainly, many Pacific parents with whom I have had personal contact feel inadequate, marginalised, powerless and stupid to insist on any rights, feeling that they are responsible for their children failing school and being poor. On this subject, Freire (1994, p. 45) made the following statement:

Self-depreciation is another characteristic of the oppressed, which derives from their internalisation of the opinion oppressors hold of them. So often they hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing, and are incapable of learning anything - that they are sick, lazy, unproductive - that in the end they become convinced of their own unfitness.

Self-depreciation is what I will refer to as internalised deficit theorising in reviewing the works of Bishop (2008); Bishop & Glynn (1999); Thaman (1996a); Utumapu (1992) and on deficit theory later in the chapter.

#### Recent changes in the student population

Pacific peoples have one of the highest rates of growth in New Zealand's population and as a consequence, Pacific students are a fast growing population within the school system. According to the Ministry of Education (2006a), the proportion of European/Pākehā students in the total domestic school population decreased slightly

(from 59.6 percent in July 2005 to 59.0 percent in July 2006). The proportion of Māori students has stayed steady at 21.6 percent, and Pacific students increased from 8.8 percent to 9.1 percent. Pacific students increased by 3.0 percent between July 2005 and July 2006 – larger than the percentage increase for Asians (2.3 percent) even though the Asian student population increased much more substantially over the five year period (25.5 percent compared with 12.8 percent for Pacific students) (Table 3.1).

**Table 3. 1. Number of students by ethnicity, July 2002-2006.**

| ETHNIC GROUP  | 2002           | 2003           | 2004           | 2005           | 2006           | % Change<br>2002-2006 |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| European/ Pākehā                                      | 459,699        | 455,868        | 453,473        | 448,218        | 443,361        | -3.6                  |
| Māori   | 152,556        | 157,270        | 160,732        | 162,534        | 162,385        | 6.4                   |
| Pacific   | 60,313         | 62,707         | 64,121         | 66,088         | 68,059         | 12.8                  |
| Asian   | 49,294         | 56,024         | 58,737         | 60,358         | 61,857         | 25.5                  |
| Other   | 10,782         | 12,312         | 13,048         | 14,223         | 15,382         | 42.7                  |
| Domestic Sub-total                                    | 732,644        | 744,181        | 750,111        | 751,421        | 751,044        | 2.5                   |
| NZAID Scholarship &<br>Foreign Fee-Paying<br>Students | 15,440         | 17,574         | 14,543         | 11,369         | 9,717          | -37.1                 |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>748,084</b> | <b>761,755</b> | <b>764,654</b> | <b>762,790</b> | <b>760,761</b> | <b>1.7</b>            |

**Source:** Education Statistics of New Zealand 2006 (MOE. 2006, p. 6)

The above statistics reflect a New Zealand student body that has undergone a significant change over the period 2002-2006. There was a 6.8 percent increase in the number of Maori students compared with a 12.8 percent increase in Pacific students and a decrease in the number of European students (-3.6 percent).

Data from the Statistic New Zealand Census (2006a, pp. 46-47) revealed that nearly 40 percent of Maori aged over 15 have no formal qualifications compared to 25 percent of the general population and just fewer than 29 percent have post-school qualifications compared to 40 percent of the total population. While the proportion of Maori and Pacific students with higher qualifications is increasing, improving educational outcomes for Maori and Pacific people continues to be a priority (Ministry of Education, 2009, 2010)

### Pacific perspectives on teachers

The ancient religious foundations of Tongan culture still play an important role in shaping Tongan learners, their views of teachers and their own roles and behaviour in

school. Tiatia (1998) reminded us that Polynesian societies are built on the assumption that everyone knows and carries out his/her role for the betterment of the whole. This is one of the strengths of Pacific people.

If this is the case, then Pacific people will perceive a teacher to be knowledgeable and trustworthy. This means that the teacher should know what the educational needs of Tongan students are and be able to provide them with the appropriate guidance and knowledge. If this is to have any meaning in New Zealand then teachers must have a sound understanding of the social, cultural, spiritual and economic values that underpin the lives of their students and their families. Such knowledge will be indicative of the value placed by schools and teachers on their students' knowledge and culture and, as Samu (1998) suggests, this will have a powerful affirming effect on minority students.

Students for their part, as prescribed by their cultural norms, are to listen to and observe teachers so that when it is time for them to apply the learned knowledge they will know what to do and how to apply it. This means that they trust teachers' views and see their knowledge as the truth. Asking questions of the teacher could be a sign that one is not being responsible and is not listening, or is being ungrateful for the enlightenment gifted by the teacher. This is quite the opposite from the discovery based learning practiced in many New Zealand classrooms. As Meleisea and Schoeffel (1996, p. 9) have noted:

Polynesian children are conditioned from early childhood to learn passively, primarily by careful observation and listening, reinforced by admonition so that they become sensitized to other people at an early age.

In contrast, socialization practices that contradict this traditional learning environment are those that encourage active participation, independence and critical thinking. Pacific students who come from collective communities would prefer to know what everyone is doing, would like to know what is expected of them, and how what they are doing fits into the bigger picture of things, that is, their need to belong. They need to know that the teacher, who represents the leader in the classroom, knows about them and likes them (Joanna Vaoleti, talanoa, December, 2001).



Pacific students place a great deal of importance on the affective domain of learning, particularly on teacher empathy and the relevance of learning to their lives (Ferguson, Gorinski, Wendt-Samu & Mara, 2008; Morrison & Vaioleti, 2008; Thaman, 1998; Vaioleti & Vaioleti, 2003). A teacher, as someone who has given you enlightenment, is afforded great respect and is held in similar status to a parent and at times held in sacred positions by the students (Helu, 1983). Maintaining respect, by not asking questions or not interrupting, is considered to be appropriate behaviour towards learned people, older people or people in authority. These are not necessarily bad qualities.

### **3. 2. Theoretical perspectives on Pacific education experiences and outcomes**

Colonialism interrupted the development of meaningful and recognisable educational systems in many societies in the Pacific region (Hau'ofa, 1987; Koloto, 1998; Taufe'ulungaki, 2003; Thaman, 1988). Pacific indigenous cultural values and institutions were devalued and regarded as hindrances in building the new ones (Thaman, 1995). Learning to 'know', learning to 'do', then using that knowledge and skill for the 'benefit of the whole' (community as in the notion of 'poto'), are ideas that are integral to Tongan and almost all indigenous Polynesian traditions of education (Hau'ofa, 2000; Thaman, 1988; Vaioleti, 2001).

However these inherent characteristics have not been allowed to shape and affect the development of modern formal education for the Pacific nations and the results have often been disastrous examination-driven curricula, inappropriate teaching and learning approaches, very high human 'wastage', failures and drop-outs, and disempowerment of traditional teachers/elders, to list a few of the negative impacts (Taufe'ulungaki, 2003; Thaman, 1998). For Pacific nations, modern education can hardly be said to have evolved from the cultural values of the people targeted by it. Many in the Pacific have suggested that their colonial and post-colonial education systems tried to prepare local people for a non-existent supply of white-collar occupations (Thaman, 2004; Teaero, 2003). This was basically a fundamental misalignment of education and the worlds of reality for young people in Pacific countries (Thaman, 2004; Nabobo, 2003; Taufe'ulungaki, 2003).

Pacific peoples in New Zealand also suffer from misalignment of curriculum and pedagogical endeavours at schools and their particular educational needs (Manu'atu, 2000, 2002). In this case, it is not so much the irrelevance of the education for life in an urban-industrial economy like the one New Zealand has, but rather a lack of appreciation of the cultural values, learning approaches and needs of the pupils (ibid). Cultural blindness, both by teachers and by the schools as institutions, may account for many of the learning and teaching problems faced by Pacific students today (Ferguson, Gorinski, Wendt-Samu & Mara, 2008; Manu'atu, 2002).

Thaman (1998, 1999, 2004) suggests that the Western conquest of indigenous societies still continues both materially and intellectually. The subordination of social, ecological and spiritual beliefs and imperatives continues in the Pacific under the guise of globalisation. Many Pacific people and Maori have supported these beliefs uncritically and have succumbed to their controlling influences (Thaman, 1992b, 1995, 1998, Manu'atu, 2002; Vaioleti, Morrison & Rees, 2003). The result has been that some young Pacific peoples have disassociated themselves from their cultures as these are seen as creating barriers to their endeavours to be Palangi like – to be up with the times, to be successful (Thaman, 1995; Morrison & Vaioleti, 2008; Tupuola, 1993; Wendt, 1985).

The problem with promulgating beliefs such as equal opportunity, choice and the level playing field is that, contrary to the implied assumptions, not everyone starts on an equal footing (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Fusitu'a & Coxon, 1998; Scheurich & Young, 1997; Sheets, 2005; Thaman, 1999a, 2002a; Wendt, 1985). Those who are already well off economically, and whose knowledge and values are aligned culturally to the mainstream curriculum, will be able to cope better with the school system, while those already culturally, socially and economically disadvantaged will be further marginalised.

Bishop & Glynn (1999), Fusitu'a & Coxon (1998), Thaman (1993b, 1995a), Ryan (1976), Sheets (2005) and Wendt's (1985) arguments signal the central importance of the anthropological concept of culture in understanding school failure performance. Culture, is used extensively in literature to explain the educational under-achievement of minority ethnic groups in 'Western' societies (Bishop, 2008; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Fusitu'a & Coxon, 1998; Sheets, 2005). While it is often acknowledged that

there is no single cause for such a complex problem, and therefore no simple remedy, explanations and suggested solutions tend to be overwhelmingly ‘culturalist’ in so far as they locate the causes of the gap between the culture of the school and the home cultures of the under-achieving students. (Bishop, 2008; Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003; Burtonwood, 1986; Fusitu’a & Coxon, 1998; Ryan, 1976; Thaman, 1996)

For education, there are major perspectives within the culturalist paradigm – cultural deficit (Bishop, 2008; Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003; Fusitu’a & Coxon, 1998), cultural discontinuity (Fusitu’a & Coxon, 1998) and cultural potential (Ministry of Education, 2008). These perspectives are reviewed briefly below.

#### *Cultural deficit theory*

Cultural deficit theory is often used as an explanation for the failure of indigenous and minority student groups in an education system that privileges the values and perspectives of a dominant cultural group. It tends to blame the students for their failure on cultural and socio-economic grounds (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Fusitu’a & Coxon, 1998; Jones, 1991).

Further to the works of Fusitu’a & Coxon (1998) on deficit theory, Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson (2003, p. 6) described two different types of deficit theories: genetic and cultural. Genetic deficit theory attempts to link academic achievement with innate genetic characteristics of students. Cultural deficit theory does the same thing for cultural characteristics. They further stated “these theories collectively can be labelled “deficit theories” in that they ... see the locus of the problem as either lack of inherent ability, lack of cultural appropriateness or limited resources ...” (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003, p. 6).

For Maori, this stance was further highlighted by Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson (2003) in the Te Kotahitanga programme that aims to improve the educational achievement of Maori students. One of the initial findings of this project was that the majority (about 80 percent) of mainstream teachers had a deficit view of

the Maori students. In later works by Bishop (2008), on a culturally responsive pedagogy of relations, he stated that in the above research they found that:

... teachers perceived deficit with the home, or problems that Maori students brought with them to the school from home, as having the major influence on Maori students' achievement ...overall..the teachers argued strongly about the perceived deficits of the child/home as having the most significant impact on Maori students' educational achievement. (p. 161)

In a case study on Samoan parents' involvement in their students' maths study, Nakhid (2003, p. 36, cited in Ferguson, Gorinski, Wendt-Samu & Mara, 2008) indicated teachers viewed that parents were disinterested in their childrens' learning. In this case study, one of the teachers stated that: "I find the majority of my parents don't care. So the only one that is influencing them is me".

The positions of teachers and their own deficit beliefs for minority students may be attributed to school failure, which is a political and economic issue for the government and schools. At a human level, it has a far more serious impact as it can lead to severe psychological problems for students and their families (Wendt, 1985, p.14). Current literature on Pacific and Maori education indicates that school culture, knowledge, and ways that teachers relate to students continues to contribute to failure of many minority students (Bishop, 2008; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Ferguson, Gorinski, Wendt-Samu & Mara, 2008; Thaman, 1996, 1998).

Aligned to this issue, and of great concern, is that the students and their families are blaming themselves for failure in schools (Manu'atu, 2002; Utumapu, 1992; Vaoleti, 2001). I see this as deficit theorising, albeit internalised, by both parents and students. It is more harmful and self-directed. Thaman (1996, p. 15), commented that:

There is no doubt in my mind that in the past twenty years, formal education has failed... Pacific students ... worse still, many of the children who don't make it at school blame themselves for what happens.

The view that Pacific students have not benefited as well as other students from their educational experience is recognised by many authors (Jones, 1991; Hawk & Hill, 1996; Ministry of Education, 1995; Pasikale, 1996; Wendt, 1985). An example of what I term internalised deficit theorising is also given by Utumapu (1992) in her study of Samoan students in Aotearoa/New Zealand. She found in that study that

parents blamed their children repeatedly for failing, for not paying attention, missing class or not studying hard enough. They did not question the school system or structure, or the knowledge being taught. Another implication of this failure, that is not often readily seen but is worth mentioning again, is its damaging effect on the students' spirits and esteem (Wendt, 1985). This is despite the fact that many Pacific students stay at school for lengthy periods in order to improve their school outcomes.

A school system that is built on a principle of self worth, reflective of all of its students' cultures and values, will produce positive and well-adjusted students (Ministry of Education, 2007a). Even in an atmosphere saturated and pressurized by Western discourses, it is mostly those Pacific students who are secure in their cultural identity and are active in their communities, who are more resilient to discriminatory actions of the education system while still producing good school outcomes (Thaman, 1995b, 1999a; Futa Helu, talanoa, January, 2000).

It is the argument of this thesis that as well as teaching Tongan students Western knowledge using Western and other pedagogies, Tongan educational concepts and knowledge should be included in the discourses of the classrooms to legitimate the pupils rather than perpetuating the dominance described in the above discussions. Bishop & Glynn (1999, p. 7) warned that:

If one lesson is clear from the history of our country it is that imposition of a model (of change) from outside of the experiences, understandings and aspirations of the community group is doomed to failure. Failure, that is if the objective is other than assimilation or the perpetuation of a situation of dominance and subjection.

Teaching the values and educational concepts of Tongans will give their students a sense of inclusiveness and wholeness in the classroom, which will enrich them with a self-belief to cope with most school activities.

There has been a lot of literature that warned about the negative impact of cultural deficit theorising (Bishop, 2008; Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Freire, 1994; Fusitu'a & Coxon, 1998; Helu, 1999; Jones, 1991; Pasikale, 1996; Ryan, 1976; Scheurich & Young, 1997; Taufe'ulungaki, 2002). I take the approach of emphasizing the potentiality of all students' cultural capital. Before exploring the ideas underpinning this approach, I outline the cultural discontinuity perspective.

### *Cultural discontinuity perspective*

The cultural discontinuity perspective, assumes that the school culture and minority group cultures are in conflict (Ferguson, Gorinski, Wendt-Samu & Mara, 2008; Morrison & Vaioleti, 2008; Thaman, 1996a, 1999b, 2000b; Wendt, 1985). Schools are seen to exist for the transmission of the dominant group's culture (Bourdieu, 1999; Thaman, 1992b). For that reason, they function to benefit the already privileged through most if not all the aspects of schools' curriculum, pedagogies, assessment and management. Within this perspective, rules, pedagogy and academic knowledge are assumed to be those of the dominant class (Bullivant, 1981; Buttonwood, 1986; Ferguson, Gorinski, Wendt-Samu & Mara, 2008; Fusitu'a & Coxon, 1998; Jones, 1991; Thaman, 1992b, 2002b). Not including Tongan values and concepts to be a part of the knowledge and pedagogies in the classrooms is an example of cultural discontinuity.

For Aotearoa/New Zealand this is problematic for students of diverse cultures. It is also problematic for Maori too because both the Government and the profession of teaching have Treaty of Waitangi and moral obligations to protect things that are important to Maori (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). Bishop & Glynn (1999, p.7) made the following claims about mainstream institutions:

In a recent analysis of attempts to address cultural diversity in New Zealand, we suggested that mainstream efforts have been singularly inadequate in meeting this challenge because of what Scheurich and Young (1997) term 'Epistemological racism' that is embedded in the fundamental principles of the dominant culture.

If epistemology is about knowledge systems, theories of knowledge and particularly how these are validated and legitimated, then it is the western knowledge that is assumed to be the standard. It is acknowledged that this is a worldwide issue as it was through commercial, military, economic, political and educational imperialism that western knowledge systems carried the power to depict their epistemologies as universal and authoritative (Bourdieu, 1999; Thaman, 1995b, 1998) while at the same time de-legitimizing others (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Morrison & Vaioleti, 2008; Scheurich & Young 1997; Sheets, 2005).

This ethnocentric knowledge has been transmitted through legal, government and academic channels to promote patriarchal, capitalist, and often ecologically

destructive policies and practices that have undermined epistemologies of indigenous cultures (Vaiolleti, Morrison & Vermeulen, 2002; Ritchie, 2006; Sheets, 2005; Thaman, 1995b, 1998). These political matters impact on schools too, and in the 1960's and early 1970's researchers in the United States found that the curricula in schools seemed to build almost exclusively on the knowledge of middle-class white students (Ferguson, Gorinski, Wendt-Samu & Mara, 2008). In Aotearoa/New Zealand, studies of Pacific and Maori learners in mainstream secondary classrooms support the claim that the dominant cultural knowledge and ways of learning are those that are valued to a level that can be detrimental to the knowledge and learning of Maori and Pacific students (Bishop, 2003; Hill & Hawk, 2000; Jones, 1991; Morrison & Vaiolleti, 2008; Vaiolleti, Morrison & Rees, 2003).

Such perceptions of certain peoples' worldview over others are seen by Scheurich & Young (1997) as racism. According to them, this racism impacts at many levels from the overarching epistemological level to the societal endeavours, which influence institutions such as schools and all the way down to the actions of individual teachers. For example, at the epistemological level, the implication is that scientific knowledge and knowing of the dominant culture are the 'official ways of knowing.' They will be the basis for assumptions about what is right, what is wrong, what is justice and what the truth is (Bourdieu 1999; Scheurich & Young, 1997). Values such as individualism, competition (Handy, 1998) and self-actualisation (Roger, 1969) will be presumed to be normal and accepted universally (Ferguson, Gorinski, Wendt-Samu & Mara, 2008; Thaman, 1998).

Thaman (1998) suggested that most of those who uncritically accept western type knowledge and perpetuate its values do not recognise the social and philosophical underpinning and mythology of the liberal western education. She continued on to say that such thinking is based on the misleading and unproven assumption that what is largely an academic education can and does occupy a kind of ideological high ground from which one can sit and make 'rational' decisions for the good of society, or the rest of the world for that matter. This is the reality in Aotearoa/New Zealand that Wendt (1985, p.14) stated "is dictated by the dominant group... the Papalagi majority and that Maori and those from the Pacific nations – are trapped in which was responsible for their severe psychological and other disadvantages at schools". Maori

in Aotearoa/New Zealand have attempted ways to have their knowledge and pedagogies included in school discourses with a view to improving the relevance of education and for maintenance of their language and culture (Bishop, 1996). I will discuss some of these approaches and their implications for Pacific and, in the case of this thesis, Tongan learning.

### *Cultural potential perspective*

The New Zealand classroom culture disadvantages many Maori, Pacific and other minority groups in terms of their learning (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, & Richardson, 2003; Jones, 1991; Manu'atu, 2000, 2002; Nuthall, 1999). In their report to the Ministry of Education on *Values in New Zealand Schools*, Keown, Parker & Tiakiwai (2005) stated that “the culture of and the value of Pacific and Maori can all too frequently be examined for its lack of fit with the dominant schooling culture” (pp. 39 - 40). To help counter this negative positioning in New Zealand education, Keown, Parker & Tiakiwai (2005) suggested that there be a special provision for more confident and competent administrators as well as teachers, knowledgeable of Pacific pedagogies. Following on from this insightful and informed advice Ferguson, Gorinski, Wendt, Samu & Mara (2008) suggested that there should be some accountability to Government and the Pacific community for a clear intention to achieve positive outcomes for Pacific students from educational institutions.

The cultural potential framework, Ka Hikitia (Ministry of Education, 2007), states that everyone on the Ministry of Education shares responsibility for Maori educational success and that the Ministry itself needs to step up its system performance for Maori. The priorities for action under Ka Hikitia are:

- Strong leadership
- More confident people working closely with Maori
- Increased accountability for outcomes
- Using and acting on evidence of what makes the greatest difference for Maori

The strategy focuses on establishing the foundations for successful learning, and provides a way for wider education strategies to be personalised to meet the needs, aspirations and expectations of Maori and the value they expect, want and deserve



from the system. A key underlying principle is realizing Maori potential approach to education as depicted in Table 3.2.

**Table 3. 2 - Maori potential approach in education**

| Less focus on ...         | More focus on ...                       |
|---------------------------|---|
| Remedying deficit         | Realising potential                     |
| Problems of dysfunction   | Identifying opportunity                 |
| Government intervention   | Investing in people and local solutions |
| Targeting deficit         | Tailoring education to the learner      |
| Māori as a minority       | Indigeneity and distinctiveness         |
| Instructing and informing | Collaborating and co-constructing       |

Source: Ministry of Education. (2008c, p. 19)

In a commentary on the characteristics of a mentally healthy Maori person, Durie (1989) described points of variation between an ensembled Maori self and a self-contained Western self. In particular, Durie noted that motivation for others, is viewed by Maori as more healthier than motivation for one's self (Ministry of Social Development, 2007). In addition, Maori valued interdependence over independence; humility and respect for and service to others were valued more than the self-assertion, independence or autonomy valued in Western environments. Durie (1989) saw a group-based identity, with self-indivisible from whanau, hapu and iwi, as strongly promoted in Maori contexts. The Maori philosophy towards health is based on a wellness or holistic health model. This model of Maori health that incorporates taha wairua is the Whare Tapa Wha model (Durie, 1994, 1999; Ministry of Social Development, 2007).

The Whare Tapa Wha model is based on a physical design of a wharenui (meeting house), with strong foundations and four-sides, it is a typical symbol of the wharenui. The Whare Tapa Wha model illustrates the four cornerstones (or sides) of Maori health and dimensions of wellbeing. These are:

- whanau (family health)
- tinana (physical health)
- hinengaro (mental health)
- wairua (spiritual health).

Should one of the four dimensions be missing or damaged, a person or a collective may become unbalanced or subsequently unwell (Durie, 1994, pp. 69–72). In a traditional Maori approach to health, the inclusion of the wairua, the role of the

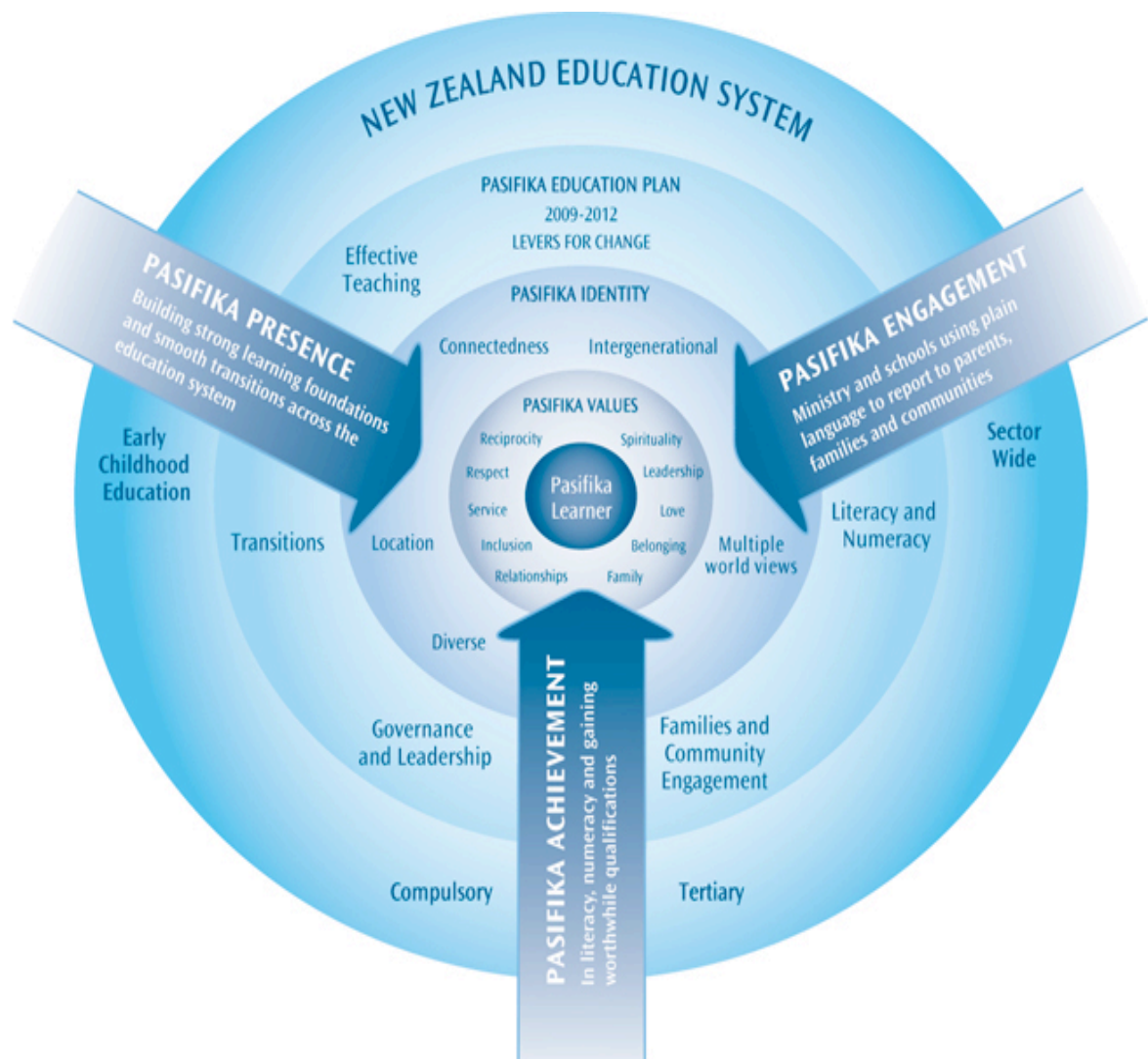
whanau, and the balance of the hinengaro and tinana are as important as the physical manifestations of illness according to the Ministry of Social Development (2006).

### *The Pacific Plan – 2009 - 2012*

In a combined effort between the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (MPIA), Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA), New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC), Education Review Office (ERO) and New Zealand Career Services (NZCS), the New Zealand Government launched the Pacific Plan 2009 - 2012. The Plan's intention is to step up presence, engagement and achievement in Pacific education. The Plan lays out a compass with key identifiers; security in identity; enterprising; resilience; connectedness and a strong sense of belonging. The Ministry of Education intends for the compass to draw on the connections and relationships fundamental in understanding Pacific, to provide a base where educators can build curriculums and methodologies that will step up the presence of Pacific in curriculum and pedagogies from early childhood to tertiary education (Ministry of Education, 2009). This will lead to engagement of Pacific at all levels that can only lead to achievement at all levels. The compass for Pacific success is reproduced in Figure 3. 1.

The compass acknowledges the multiple world views and diverse cultural identities of Pacific learners. The compass also reaffirms the contention of this thesis in that success in education requires harnessing Pacific cultural values such as spirituality (laumalie, connectedness), service (fatongai) family (kainga, fonua) and diversity within an enabling education system that works for young people, their families and communities (Ministry of Education, 2008). For the Pacific learner cultural identity and language must be drawn on to enhance the schooling experience and lead to successful achievement (ibid). The practise of 'ofa, fatongia, ako, ilo, poto and using Tongan as part of the classroom languages are the operationalisations of Tongan identity.

**Figure 3. 1 – The Compass for Pacific success**



Source: Adapted from Ministry of Education. (2009, p. 16)

### **3. 3. Theorising the importance of culture in education**

Maori educationists (Bishop & Glynn, 1999) have developed a response to the cultural deficit and cultural discontinuity perspectives, drawing on the work of Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky. According to Drewery and Bird (2008) “Vygotsky has been seen by some Maori researchers and educators as more relevant for Maori learning than other theories, partly because of the central place of language

and culture in his theory” (p. 23). For Tongan students I see that Vygotsky (1978) suggests a way forward in similar situations. Like warnings from the many works of Thaman (1988, 1995a, 1997b, 1999b) and Taufe’ulungaki (2003) on the education of Pacific peoples, I ask what knowledge and skills are actually worthwhile learning? What are the goals of education (Thaman, 1995a, 1999b)? For Tongan people, the purpose of learning (ako) is in search of knowledge (‘ilo) (Thaman, 1988) that will enable them to carry out their obligations (fatongia) in a beneficial way (poto) for their extended family, church and fonua (Futa Helu, talanoa, 2002; Koloto in Drewery and Bird, 2006), all supported by the MOE Pacific Plan (Ministry of Education, 2009).

### *Vygotsky and social constructionist perspectives*

To Vygotsky, a child is already part of a cultural universe and not a biological organism that later ‘learns’ culture (Drewery and Bird, 2008, p. 56). Vygotsky considered then that knowledge is social, and it is created through interaction (Barker, 2008, p. 31). Schools in Aotearoa/New Zealand are cultural universes but not necessarily that which the Tongan students were born into. Amongst the tenets of my central argument for this thesis is the creation of a cultural universe in Aotearoa/New Zealand classrooms/schools that include elements from the cultural universe of Tongan students.

For Tongan learners, interaction in the creation of ‘ilo can be by talanoa or po talanoa (Manu’atu, 2000; Morrison & Vaiioleti, 2008; Vaiioleti, 2006) which are guided by Tongan perspectives including the aim of ako, respect for age difference, gender, even a view of social class and different aspects of fatongia. These activities then will reflect what Vygotsky (1978, p. 88) stated that: “Human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them”. This intellectual life for Tongan students here in Aotearoa/New Zealand should include their educational ideas, values, epistemologies and way of being. In line with these arguments, he emphasizes the importance of cultural tools for learning. For cultural tools he argues strongly for the use of language and for Tongan students the ideal would be to offer learning in Tongan. Where this is not possible, pedagogies that are based on Tongan concepts and values would greatly assist with learning.

Vygotsky (1978) stresses the importance of looking at each child as an individual who learns distinctively. Consequently, the knowledge and skills that are worth learning varies with individuals, especially with reference to their (cultural) background. Such a concern for culture is reflected by the metaphors that guide the Culturally Responsive Pedagogy of Relationships that has been developed for Maori (Bishop, 2008; Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003). The success of the Culturally Responsive Pedagogy of Relationship for Maori as seen in the Te Kotahitanga project is an indication that a similar but more appropriate cultural approach to improving school outcomes for Pacific students can be fruitful. A culturally responsive pedagogy for Tongan students though would need to be relevant for the spiritual, political, emotional and socio-economic needs as well as intellectual learning needs of Tongans.

The overall goal of education according to Vygotsky (1978) is to generate and lead development that is the result of social learning through internalization of culture and social relationships. He stressed the importance of past experiences and prior knowledge in making sense of new situations or present experiences. Therefore, all new knowledge and newly introduced skills are greatly influenced by each student's culture, especially their family environment.

Vygotsky (1978, p. 88) stated “Human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which to grow into the intellectual life of those around them”. Schools and teachers then take into consideration the learning needs of everyone in the class and in the case of the Tongan student, must acknowledge and reinforce their very different cultural background. If this is the case, Aotearoa/New Zealand schools will help give Tongan students the means and the option to have lives full of meaning by practicing ‘ofa, fatongia and tauhi va in ways that benefit and strengthen their Tongan families, their Tongan communities which can only contribute to making Aotearoa/New Zealand a strong and truly diverse community. This is the state of poto and the aim of ako for most Tongan people.

#### *Sheets’ Diversity Pedagogy Theory*

Sheets (2005) like Vygotsky (1978), Dewey (1916) and Freire (1972, 1976, 1994), Taufe’ulungaki (2002, 2003, 2004) and Thaman (1995b, 1996a, 2003a) highlighted

the central role that culture plays in the learning of students. In recognizing the importance of culture in both social development and cognition development of students, Sheets (2005) stated that her Diversity Pedagogy Theory (DPT) "...links culture, cognition and schooling in a single unit" (p. 1). She went on to add that a robust knowledge of the linkages between culture, social development and cognition, is "key to incorporating multiple factors of diversity in the teaching learning process". (Sheets, 2005, p. 1)

Thaman (1988) highlighted the central role that Tongan teachers play in the learning of Tongan students. In Aotearoa/New Zealand, Pere (1982, 1994), Bishop and Glynn (1999) and Bishop (2008) discuss the important roles of teachers in the learning relationships but also make explicit the equally important role that students play in their interdependent ako relationship. Sheets' work on DPT, despite its USA origin, captures this important distinctive structure and the two-way interdependent relationship between teacher and learner assumed in ako, be it Tongan or Maori.

In Sheets' (2005) typology, there are eight dimensional elements. In each dimension, such as a lesson plan's sequence of planned activities, the positioning of the teacher depends on or is grouped with the positioning of the students. There are two parts to one dimension - Teacher Pedagogical Behaviours (TPB) and Student Cultural Displays (SCD). Teacher Pedagogical Behaviours are about "how teachers think and act" and SCD are about "the ways children show who they are and what they know". Examples or expressions of TPB (Sheets, 2005, p. 2) include being able to observe:

- how teachers choose to interact with students (this includes the quality of their interpersonal relationships with specific children);
- how the classroom is arranged physically and the emotional tone of the classroom; and
- the academic and social expectations that teachers have of learners.

Examples of SCD (Sheets, 2005, p. 2) include:

- children bringing their culturally mediated, historically developing cultural knowledge, practices, values and skills to school: and
- cultural displays emerging during social interactions, daily rituals and learning situations.

Observing such behaviours in learners provides “valuable insights to who they are, (and) how they act” in addition to “what they know”. (Sheets, 2005, p. 2)

With DPT, Sheets (2005) argues that: if teachers do what is listed on the left hand side (TPB) this teacher behaviour encourages students to develop and express what is on the right hand side. They go hand in hand. (Sheets, 2005, p. 3)

**Table 3. 3 - Sheets’ pedagogical dimension: definition of dimensional elements**

| Teachers pedagogical behaviours  | Student cultural displays  |
|--|--|
| <b>1 Diversity:</b> Diversity refers to dissimilarities in traits, qualities, characteristics, beliefs, values and mannerisms present in self and others. It is displayed through (a) predetermined factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, ability, national origin, and sexual orientation; and (b) changeable features such as citizenship, worldviews, language, schooling, religious beliefs, marital, parental and socioeconomic status and work experience. | <b>Consciousness of Difference:</b> Deliberate awareness and thoughtful exploration of diversity in people, ideas, objects, values, and attitudes on a continuum with multiple points of variance. This conceptualisation discourages dualistic thinking patterns, minimises development of prejudicial attitudes, and decreases the frequency of discriminatory actions towards individuals and groups that differ from self. |
| <b>2 Identity:</b> Identity refers to knowledge of who we are and to what groups we belong. A complex developmental process defines self as an individual and as a group member. The explanations and information used to acquire a sense of self and group membership is determined by the biological, cultural, ethnic, social, psychological and political factors in one’s socialisation process.  | <b>Ethnic Identity Development:</b> Ethnic identity is a dimension of self, as an individual and as a group member. It forms, develops, and emerges from membership in a particular ethnic group. It is a consequence of a distinctive socialization process and is influenced by the degree of personal significance individuals attach to membership in an ethnic group.   |
| <b>3 Social Interactions:</b> Public and shared contact or communication in dyad or group settings that provide participants opportunities to evaluate, exchange, and share resources.   | <b>Interpersonal Relationships:</b> familiar social associations among two or more individuals involving reciprocity and variable degrees of trust, support, companionship, duration and intimacy.   |
| <b>4 Culturally Safe Classroom Context:</b> A classroom environment where students feel emotionally secure; psychologically consistent; culturally, linguistically, academically, socially, and physically comfortable, both as individuals and members of the groups which they belong.   | <b>Self-Regulated Learning:</b> Demonstrations of the self-initiated, managed, directed, contained and restrained conduct required to meet self-determined personal and group goals, to adapt to established classroom standards and to maintain self-dignity.   |
| <b>5 Language:</b> Human language is a cultural tool used to share, convey, and disclose thoughts, ideas, values and feelings through words, signals and/or written symbols. It is also one of the most powerful means to preserve and sustain a cultural heritage and history.  | <b>Language Learning:</b> Linguistic growth evident in listening/speaking and literacy skills (reading, writing and viewing) acquired in informal home and community settings and/or in the formal language experiences and social interactions in school.   |
| <b>6 Culturally Inclusive Content:</b> The culturally influenced substance, meanings and perspectives present in the instructional resources used in the various fields of study such as literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, art, music and physical education.  | <b>Knowledge Acquisition:</b> The process of connecting prior cultural knowledge to new information in ways that promote new understandings and advance the development of knowledge and skills needed to reason, solve problems and construct new insights.   |
| <b>7 Instruction:</b> Teacher actions facilitating the construction of students’ new knowledge through teaching strategies connecting students’ prior cultural knowledge to new understandings, creation of a classroom content enabling student learning and selection of culturally inclusive content.   | <b>Reasoning Skills:</b> Ability to apply knowledge from personal cultural practices, language, and ethnic experiences to gain command of one’s thinking through acquisition and development of the thinking tools needed to gain new knowledge and take control of one’s learning.  |

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| <p><b>8 Assessment:</b> Organised, structured, ongoing, varied methods used to observe, document, record, evaluate and appraise the level and quality of individual and group student work and knowledge gained in a given activity or subject, to (a) improve student learning; (b) determine what students know and what they are able to do; and (c) evaluate how student performance matches teacher expectations and standards.</p> | <p><b>Self-Evaluation:</b> Self-appraisal through reflection, review of thoughts and analysis of personal and group behaviour to (a) monitor academic and social goals, assess progress, and identify competencies and weaknesses; (b) plan, assume ownership, and take responsibility for one's learning; and (c) evaluate the strategies used to maximise the acquisition, retention, and performance of new understandings.</p> |
|--|--|

Source: Sheets (2005, p.15) table 2.1.

Bearing in mind that the above framework was designed for a much wider diverse student group in a continent, this work will contextualise its approach and recommendation to suit the cultural disposition and cognition tendencies of Tongan learners in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In search for a framework for my kakala for teachers to use as a guide, and to inspire my model of a pedagogical kakala to enhance the work of teachers with Tongan learners in the classroom, I acknowledge the influence of the outputs of the Ministry of Education's Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) programme, and return to Alton-Lee's (2003) useful synthesis. In this synthesis, she posited the following ten characteristics of quality teaching of diverse learners:

- Quality teaching is focused on student achievement (including social outcomes) and facilitates high standards of student outcomes for heterogeneous groups of students
- Pedagogical practices enable classes and other learning groupings to work as caring, inclusive and cohesive learning communities
- Effective links are created between school and other cultural contexts in which students are socialised to facilitate learning
- Quality teaching is responsive to student learning processes
- Opportunity to learn is effective and sufficient
- Multiple task contexts support learning cycles, curriculum goals, resources including ICT usage, task design, teaching and school practices are effectively aligned
- Pedagogy scaffolds and provides appropriate feedback on students' task engagement
- Pedagogy promotes learning orientations, student self-regulation metacognitive strategies and thoughtful student discourse
- Teacher and students engage constructively in goal-orientated assessment

Another synthesis worthy of consideration relates to diversity pedagogy that underpins Banks' (1994) Multicultural Education Theoretical Framework. Banks' framework proposes the following five dimensions:

- Content integration
- The knowledge construction process
- Prejudice reduction



- Equity pedagogy
- Empowering school culture and social structure

Bank's framework is succinct and possesses some very powerful concepts. Ferguson, Gorinski, Wendt-Samu and Mara (2008, p. 12) considered the suitability of a Diversity Pedagogy Theory and the multicultural education theoretical framework that Banks (1994) proposed for a Pacific framework. Ferguson et. al (2008) cautioned against the uncritical and wholesale lifting of an approach to support the learning of a group who are significantly diverse. As an example, DVT and its relationship with the school population of the USA amid its multiple complexities will not function effectively or be appropriate in a much smaller and less diverse Aotearoa/New Zealand. This is one of the reasons I have aimed specifically to support the learning of Tongan students. However as stated in other parts of this work, it is available for any other group that may find this holistic approach to learning beneficial.

Ferguson et. al. (2008) review examined the experiences of Pacific learners in the classroom with a focus on the conceptual frameworks and literature of the pedagogical dimensions that impact on Pasifika learners' outcomes (Ferguson et. al., 2008) seemed to have similar goal as other Pacific projects. It was more inclined towards goals of the *Pasifika School Community Parent Liaison Project* (PSCPL); *Towards Making Achievement Cool: Achievement in Multicultural High School* (AIMHI) and to a certain extent, Te Kotahitanga which seek to improve the pass rates of Pacific and Maori students in schools. Their proposed goal seems to be to arrive at a best practice model for Maori and Pacific students to follow that enables them to pass examinations at all levels, thus improving the students and society in general.

However ignored is the fact that the personnel, school values, management systems and school curriculum are still dominated by Eurocentric knowledge and pedagogical frameworks. Further, many references are made to the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) results as indicators of success or lack of success for Maori and Pacific students in Aotearoa/New Zealand schools. This further reduces the opportunity for the Pacific student (and probably Maori students) to have culturally meaningful lives in and to reducing the gap between high passing non-Pacific and Pacific students.

The review by Ferguson et al (2008) assesses the students as raw material, and then explores ways that teachers can efficiently teach the formal and sanctioned curriculum (dominant knowledge) to Pacific students. They are silent on challenging the short and long-term inequities, the power dynamics and the decisions of the power holders, which contribute, to the failure at school for many Maori and Pacific students. In doing so, they indirectly ignore the history of what Mara (1991) referred to as the feats of Pacific ancestors and values that have sustained them as people of will and success for well over two millennium. This thesis intends to add these notions and values to be considered for curriculum and pedagogical approaches to the learning and teaching of Tongan students.

In the case of my kalala of a pedagogical framework, I turn to the work by Sheets (2005) and her Diversity Pedagogy Theory as a reference point. It has combined certain elements (flowers or clusters of flowers) from the above two frameworks as well as those I have integrated in my manulua kalala. It allows me to make my final kakala to luvu in the hope that it will contribute to the learning processes of Tongan students in the schools of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Ferguson et al (2008) also chose to model, compare and contrast their Pacific pedagogical adaptation framework on the work of Sheets (2005).

### **3. 4. A successful cultural approach to pedagogy in Maori and Pacific education**

Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism and Sheets' (2005) Diversity Pedagogy Theory, if applied to Tongan learners, suggest that they should learn by using their own pedagogical tools. Some of these pedagogical tools are discussions, interaction, talanoa and ako (Manu'atu, 2000). It follows then, that for sustainable 21<sup>st</sup> Century Tongan people, what is going to work for them, are curricula that include their own culture and knowledge systems and pedagogies that are underpinned by their own educational or philosophical concepts such as ako, 'ilo, poto and fatongia (Manu'atu, 2000; Thaman, 1995; Vaiioleti, 2001).

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, however, where an ako approach is practised in some kohanga reo and kura, there are other learning approaches available too. One of these is based on the whanaungatanga relationship metaphor used in the Cultural

Responsive Pedagogy of Relationships and it uses a tuakana/teina<sup>6</sup> approach to learning. Whakawhanaungatanga used in kohanga reo and kura is the act that promotes being a family or a collective as implied in the Cultural Responsive Pedagogy of Relationship. As it is for the concepts of ako, 'ilo, poto, 'ofa for Tongan education, the above educational concepts are drawn from the wisdom of ancestors and preserves the values of relationships, reciprocity, community and connectedness.

### Te Kotahitanga

Te Kotahitanga project is an attempt to address the wider crisis in Maori education, in particular disparities in achievement in mainstream education (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003). It focuses on raising the achievement of Maori students through changing teacher practice. Te Kotahitanga has been developed through three stages and the following comment from Gibson (2009, p.1) testifies to its success:

Research on 12 Te Kotahitanga schools shows NCEA Level 1 achievement rates increased from 49 per cent in 2005 to 60 per cent in 2006 and 62 per cent in 2007 for all learners in year 11 taught by Te Kotahitanga teachers for all their secondary schooling. This increase is significantly greater than the increase for similar (same decile) schools nationally. The research also shows fewer learners whose teachers were engaged in Te Kotahitanga had unexplained absences from school, more learners were engaged, and more said their relationships with teachers had improved.

The above success stories are an outcome of visionary, deliberate, dedicated and scholarly planning. Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson (2003) have described how for the Te Kotahitanga programme, it was the experiences of Maori students, their whanau, principals and teachers that guided them in 2001 to research and develop an Effective Teaching Profile (ETP) for teaching Maori students in mainstream schools. They went on to say that:

Fundamental to the ETP is teachers understanding the need to explicitly reject deficit theorising as a means of explaining Maori students' educational achievement levels, and their taking an agentic position in their theorising about their practice. That is, practitioners expressing their professional commitment and responsibility to bringing about change in Maori students'

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<sup>6</sup> Pere (1994) also stated that... Taukana / teina also works through the dual nature of ako. In the Maori world, it is acceptable to change role between learner and teacher. Tuakana (older sister or brother) takes on the responsibility for role as the teacher for teina are encourage from an early age. This is the essence of love and care for one another in the whanau. This reinforces the principle of whakawhanaungatanga.

educational achievement by accepting professional responsibility for the learning of their students. These two central understandings are then manifested in these teachers' classrooms where the teachers demonstrate on a daily basis:

- that they care for the students as culturally located individuals;
- they have high expectations of the learning for students;
- they are able to manage their classrooms so as to promote learning;
- they are able to engage in a range of discursive learning interactions with students or facilitate students to engage with others in these ways;
- they know a range of strategies that can facilitate learning interactions;
- they promote, monitor and reflect upon learning outcomes that in turn lead to improvements in Maori student achievement and they share this knowledge with the students. (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003, p.1)

The ETP was then implemented in the classrooms of participating teachers in 2004 and 2005 and new knowledge, teaching strategies and/or new assessment procedures were to be introduced to support the project on a “needs be” basis (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003, p. 1). A research programme was conducted to measure the impact of the professional development intervention.

From the research and evaluations of the Te Kotahitanga programme, it was found that when Maori students have good relationships with their teachers, they are able to thrive at school. Good relationships are based on teachers embracing all aspects of the ETP, including caring for them as culturally-located individuals as Maori, caring for their performance and using a wide range of classroom interactions, strategies and outcome indicators to inform their practice. Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson (2003, p.1) also found that the Te Kotahitanga teachers have undergone a philosophical shift in the way they think about teaching and learning. Anti-deficit thinking, agentic positioning, and the six demonstrable elements of the ETP are the essential threads in this new approach to teaching, which they termed a Culturally Responsive Pedagogy of Relationships that rests in:

- firstly, commitment by teachers to build caring and learning relationships and interactions with Maori students;
- secondly, for teachers to strongly believe Maori students can improve their achievement; and
- thirdly, students are able to take responsibility for their learning and performance.

In a later paper, Bishop (2008, pp. 155-157) expanded on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy of Relationships but I will focus on the concepts and metaphors that Bishop (2008) stated might constitute an appropriate pedagogy for Maori students in mainstream schools. The following is my paraphrasing of his discussion of the metaphors and cultural concepts:

*Rangatiratanga* (relative autonomy/self-determination)

While rangatiratanga is about chiefly control; in the classroom it can mean that the students participate in decision making about the curriculum content and pedagogy.

*Taonga tuku iho* (cultural aspirations)

While taonga tuku iho literally means treasures from ancestors, in a contemporary sense it is the aspirations that Maori people hold for their children including the messages that guide relationships and interactions such as manaakitanga (caring), kaitiakitanga (oversight), mana motuhake (respect for specialness). Above all, these messages position Maori language, knowledge, culture and values as normal, valid and legitimate in classroom interactions. The implication is that educators create contexts where it is normal to be Maori, where cultural identities are valued and legitimated. In other words, where Maori can be themselves.

*Ako* (reciprocal learning)

Literally meaning to teach and learn, ako means the teacher does not have to be the font of all knowledge and should co-create contexts for learning and take turns as in the metaphor of the conversation when storying and restorying their realities, either as individuals or within their groups.

*Kia piki ake i nga raruraru o te kainga* (mediation of socioeconomic and home difficulties)

Bishop (2008) stated that in kura kaupapa, Maori reach into Maori homes and bring parents and families into the activities of the school because where parents are incorporated into the education of their children on the terms they can understand and approve of, then the children do better at school. Studies show that the closer the classroom and home experiences are for students the more likely it is that students will participate in the educational experiences at the school.

### *Whanau* (extended family)

Whanau is a primary concept (a cultural preference) that contains both values (cultural aspiration) and social processes (cultural practises) that has cultural meanings for mainstream education. Whanau is a generic concept that subsumes other related concepts: whanaunga (relatives), whanaungatanga (relationships), whakawhanaungatanga (the process of establishing relationships) and whakapapa (literally the means of establishing relationships).

In a classroom where whanau-type relationships are established, commitment and connectedness would be paramount and responsibility for the learning of others would be fostered. Whanau processes may also be used to give substance to a culturally positioned and understood means of collectively constructing learning objectives and 'texts' to promote culturally positioned self-determination, agency and voice, as opposed to predetermined learning objectives and developing a commitment in learners and teachers to these objectives in a culturally conscious and connected manner.

### *Kaupapa* (collective vision, philosophy)

Just as Kura Kaupapa Maori have a collective vision, kaupapa provides a guideline for what constitutes excellence in Maori education that connects with Maori aspirations, politically, socially, economically and spiritually. Mainstream institutions need such a philosophy or agenda for the achieving excellence in both languages and cultures that make up the world of Maori children.

Bishop (2008, p. 157) went to say that, in short, where the culture counts, power is shared between self-determining individuals within non-dominating relations of interdependence; learning is interactive, dialogic and spirals to what constitutes educational excellence. The question is, however, how will the success of Te Kotahitanga and their inspirational usages of Maori cultural metaphors and concepts help make Tongan students' learning more respectful of them, their knowledge and the future of their communities?

*Te Kotahitanga: Improving the Educational Achievement of Maori Students in Mainstream Schools* (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003), is a kaupapa

Maori research/professional development project that aims to improve the educational achievement of Maori students by operationalising the cultural metaphors of Maori for self-determination within non-dominating relations of interdependence through developing classroom relations and interactions and in-school institutions for this purpose.

From this experience comes Bishop's (2008) *A Culturally Responsive Pedagogy of Relationships* that has been responsible for raising the achievements of Maori and shifting philosophically, for the better, the positioning of teachers. Is it possible then that a culturally responsive pedagogy that is focused on Tongan metaphors/concepts will improve the relationship between Tongan students and teachers? Will it allow them to be valued as culturally located individuals? Will it lead to raising their academic achievement?

Several lessons can be learned from Te Kotahitanga about how Tongan students' experience of school and learning outcomes can be improved. The first is that teachers and educators must oppose cultural deficit theorising. The other is that they must be determined to help improve school outcomes and to make a philosophical shift in their approach to helping Tongan students achieve. In Bishop's terminology they need to take an agentic stance. In this sense educators must take it upon themselves to learn about the culture and lives of Tongan students outside the classroom; learn about their cultural concepts that have relevance for learning; acquire at least some of their language; and constantly seek out information and material that has been produced by Pacific researchers to inform their educational practice.

In the literature review on the experiences of Pacific students in the classroom by Ferguson et al (2008), one of their major findings was:

...the seeming absence of awareness or application, by many non-Pasifika educators and academics, of the educational and cultural theorising being done by Pasifika scholars, and the dissemination of such research within the educational community. (p. 20)

The following question arises, then, in line with the Culturally Responsive Pedagogy of Relationships (Bishop, 2008; Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003):

What are the Tongan metaphors or the concepts that may be used to guide a culturally appropriate learning relationship with Tongan students? In the next section I examine the literature that discusses the educational concepts and values of Tongan education. These are metaphors and concepts that have been part of Tongan education and learning for a long time and need to be placed in their historical, political, cultural and spiritual contexts.

### 3. 5. Tongan educational concepts and metaphors

Pacific perceptions of education embrace many values that are all interlinked and interdependent. In Tonga there are three basic educational ideas, namely *ako*, *'ilo* and *poto* which are influential concepts in Tongan philosophy (Fusitu'a, 1992; Thaman, 1988; Vaiioleti, 2001; Vaiioleti & Vaiioleti, 2003). These concepts provide an appropriate basis for pedagogy for Tongan learners and I will examine each of them briefly with reference to Thaman's (1988) four simple tasks of:

- examining the word (concept) in which the idea is expressed;
- examining how the word is used in different contexts;
- determining whether the meaning was a value for education and
- determining what the meaning implies or presupposes.

#### *Ako*

'Ako' first appeared in English literature in Martin (1827) when Tokiukamea<sup>7</sup> referred to it as 'aco', a Tongan word for learning. In Polynesia *ako* means to learn behaviours, life skill or knowledge in a society where people are expected to behave in accordance with their various roles and status. Learning, before the introduction of schooling to Polynesia in the 1830s, was largely through observation, listening and imitating others, mainly adults, who already had the knowledge, skills and values necessary for living and surviving (Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1996; Thaman, 1988; Taufe'ulungaki, 2002; Vaiioleti, 2001). The purpose of *ako* was decided by the needs of the group as seen by both the learner and the teacher and consequently there was almost always shared understanding and vision (Thaman, 1988; Vaiioleti, 2001; Sateki 'Ulukalala, talanoa, December, 2001).

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<sup>7</sup> Tokiukamea was a young English sailor who survived after an English ship was attacked and sunk by Ulukalala (Sateki's direct ancestor) who was a king of Ha'apai and Vava'u group, Tonga around 1809. His English name was William Mariner and he was adopted by Ulukalala as his son.



Ako has many meanings but is mainly accepted as a term used to denote teaching and learning in a society where everyone was expected to perform certain roles in accordance with predetermined hierarchies which were expressed through a complicated network based largely on kinship relationships (Thaman, 1988). For Pere (1997) ako for Maori is a process that does not stand in isolation from everyday life. Ako occurs in the interaction of Maori cultural notions and is determined by wider cultural practices and contexts, being encompassed within specific whakapapa, whanau, hapu and iwi relationships.

Ako was governed by the knowledge collectively deemed necessary and was constructed within complex and multiple relationships that required the intersection of a range of Maori concepts and relationships to be in place in order for a holistic expression of Maori pedagogy. In common with Thaman's (1996a, 1998) views about the impact of western type education on Tongan educational concepts, Pere went on to suggest that with the advent of colonization and the introduction of formal schooling structures, the mechanisms through which ako (Maori) was transmitted was interrupted and fragmented.

Current usage of the term ako, provides some clues as to the evolution of the concept, as well as how social and cultural changes have affected and transformed its meaning. It can be variously used to mean a school, to learn, the learning process, instruction, training, to study, to practise, schooling, to receive instruction as well as the formal education system (Thaman, 1988; Vaioleti, Morrison & Rees, 2003; Vaioleti & Vaioleti, 2003).

Thaman (1995a, p. 727) provides several examples of the use of this word.

TO LEARN:

Na'a ke ako ke faka'uli 'i fe? (Where did you learn to drive?)

'Ofa keke ako mei a Mele ha anga 'oku sai (Hopefully you will learn some manners from Mele).

INSTRUCTION:

Fa' ahinga ako ki he toutai (fisheries)

Fa'ahinga ako ki he mo'ui (health education)

Fa'ahinga ako ki he sino (human physiology)

#### TRAINING:

‘Oku ako neesi ‘a Ana (Ana is training to be a nurse).

‘Oku ako faiako ‘a Seini (Seini is training to be a teacher).

‘Oku ako taipe ‘a Sione (Sione is training to be a typist).

#### TO STUDY:

Na'a ke ako malohi? (Did you study hard?)

‘Oku ‘ikai teu fie ako au (I don't want to study).

#### TO LEARN REPEATEDLY OR TO PRACTICE:

‘Oku nau ako hiva (They are having a singing practice).

Te ke ‘alu ki he ako pasiketipolo? (Are you going to basketball practice?).

Tau o ki he ako faiva? (Let's go to dancing practice?)

#### SCHOOL:

Na'a ke ‘i he ako ane afi? (Were you at school yesterday?).

‘Oku ou sai'ia be ako (I like school).

‘E fokotu'u e ako ‘apongipongi (School starts tomorrow).

#### THE FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEM:

‘Oku holo ‘a e ako (The education system is getting worse).

‘Oku lahi e liliu ‘a e ako’ he ngahi ‘aho ni (There are many changes in education these days).

‘Oku mahu'inga ‘a e ako (Education is important).

Ako had a very early formal social justice goal in Tonga. It was used by the missionaries after they arrived in Tonga in 1826 to refer to the advancement in social development of the commoner people. They provided ako to the masses to improve their living conditions as the ako that the aristocracy provided was kept solely within the aristocracy in order to maintain power (Epeli Hau'ofa, talanoa, May, 2004; Sione Vaiioleti, talanoa, 1999, 2000). This ako will be discussed further in later chapters, as it is a way in which Pacific culture and values can be preserved.

A derivative of ako is ako'i. Ako'i refers to the act of learning or teaching hence ako'i is a verb. In this case, saying that ‘Oku ako'i ‘e Sione ‘a e fika’ means ‘Sione is studying or learning mathematics’. Another derivative of ako is faiako (kaiako in

New Zealand). Faiako is a teacher and in Tongan it is the 'one doing the learning' or 'making learning happen' as opposed to the institutional notion of 'the one who learned and who is now transmitting their learning' (Thaman, 1988, 1995b). In a way the word faiako contains a built-in assumption that the teachers are expected to co-construct with students and therefore co-create the knowledge that is being sought and taught. This has great value for supervising the students as their education progresses.

Implied in this notion is the active role of a teacher in the learning process, an idea that underlies the belief that one learns through observing, listening to and imitating others with the guidance of the teacher. Included in the teacher's duty is to use his/her enlightened vision and wisdom with which to chart the pathway of the learning approach. In doing this, s/he also removes barriers that may be in the way of learning. A use of both the above concepts may go like this: 'Oku ako'i 'e he faiako 'a Siale 'i he anga faka'apa'apa' or 'the teachers are teaching/or showing Siale humility/how to pay respect'. When Tongan people are engaged in ako, they are often seeking 'ilo (Fusitu'a & Coxon, 1998; Thaman, 1988; Vaioleti, 2001).

### *Ilo*

According to Koskinen (1968), 'ilo was used widely among Polynesian peoples to denote what he called 'seeing'. Here 'ilo refers both to knowing and knowledge itself (Churchward, 1959; Fusitu'a and Coxon, 1998; Koskinen, 1968; Thaman, 1988, 1995a; Vaioleti, 2001; Vaioleti and Vaioleti, 2003). 'Ilo is used in a variety of ways. It is my understanding that as a verb, it can mean find. As well, it can mean to recognize, to discover, to know, to experience and to understand. As a noun it refers to information about something or someone, and to different types of knowledge and skills (Churchward, 1959).

'Ilo as knowledge came in many forms and Tongans often distinguish between different types of knowing and knowledge in order to identify, classify, multiply, restrict or whatever may be necessary to maintain the wellness of a collective or kainga. There was the knowledge that is passed on from adults to young people, which may be restrictive, spiritual knowledge for maintaining symbiotic relationships, including with the spirit world (Sami Veikoso, talanoa, January, 2002). There was technical knowledge such as that required to build houses, plant special foods, catch a

desirable type of fish or make and administer medicine (ibid). The knowledge of tongiaki construction, maintenance and navigation (ocean going double hulled canoes) was important because tongiaki were necessary for trade, communication and administrative purposes of the ancient Tongan chiefdom.

Koskinen (1968), who referred to 'ilo as both the process of knowing and knowledge itself, suggests that it may be obtained naturally or through active searching, studying or learning. Tongans distinguish between 'ilo which is public and passed on from adults to young people through observation and imitation and 'ilo which is more restrictive and personal. For someone to have 'ilo implies that s/he has gone through a prior stage of either searching, learning or studying, therefore 'ilo may be the end result of ako (Fusitu'a, 1997; Fusitu'a & Coxon, 1998; Thaman, 1988; Vaiioleti, 2001).

'Ilo refers to knowledge itself and may be used as an adverb meaning 'knowingly'. Thaman (1995a, p. 728) outlines uses of the word 'ilo in different contexts and ways.

TO FIND (AS A RESULT OF A SEARCH):

Na'a ke 'ilo a Mele 'i fe? (Where did you find Mele?)

Na'a ne sio ki a Mele 'i kolo (She saw Mele in town.)

TO RECOGNIZE SOMEONE OR SOMETHING:

Na'e 'ilo koe e Atu? (Did Atu recognize you?)

Na'e 'ikai keu mei 'ilo atu koe (I almost did not recognize you).

TO FIND OUT:

Na'a ke 'ilo 'a e ola e sivi? (Did you find out the results of the examination?).

Na'e 'ikai teu 'ilo kuo mate 'a Mosese (I did not find out about Mosese's death).

TO DISCOVER:

Ko Tasimani ko e papalangi na'a ne fuofua 'ilo 'a Tonga ni (Tasman was the first European to discover Tonga)

Na'e 'ilo 'e Sela ha koloa mahu'inga (Sela discovered a treasure).

TO KNOW:

'Oku 'ilo 'e Tevita 'a e ngaahi me'a lahi (Tevita knows a lot).

Na 'e 'ikai teu 'ilo pe ko e toko fiba na'e folau (I did not know how many people sailed).

TO BE WELL-INFORMED OR KNOWLEDGEABLE:

Ko e tokotaba 'ilo me'a 'a Paula. (Paula is a knowledgeable person.)

Ko e faiako 'ilo lahi 'a Seini (Seini is a well-informed teacher.)

KNOWLEDGE OR INFORMATION:

'Ilo fakatufunga (knowledge of carpentry)

'Ilo akotukufakaloolo (traditional knowledge)

'Ilo fakatohitapu (biblical knowledge)

### *Poto*

In pre-contact times 'poto' simply meant clever or skilful (Thaman, 1995, 2003; 'Epeli Hau'ofa, talanoa, May, 2004). Churchward (1959, p. 125) defined it as follows: "to be clever, skilful; to understand what to do and be able to do it", therefore implying both 'ako' and ''ilo' are necessary and integral elements necessary for achieving poto (Taufe'ulungaki, 2002). Today most people in Tonga consider poto to be the beneficial use of 'ilo or knowledge (Fusitu'a, 1992; Thaman, 1988). To be poto is to be able to use 'ilo in ways that are beneficial to one's extended family as well as the larger group with which one identifies (Fusitu'a & Coxon, 1998; Thaman, 1998).

These Tongan notions of education reflect cultural values and beliefs about personhood and roles and obligations (fatongia) to society (Fusitua & Coxon, 1998; Thaman, 1988). This is aligned with the claims by Tiatia (1998) and Mitaera (1999) that Samoan, Tongan, Cook Islands and Niuean societies are founded on the basic assumption that everyone knows and performs his/her role. People growing up in Tonga learn about who they are, and how they are related to others and the duties they need to perform in order to keep those relationships in good stead. Therefore to be poto not only implies achievement in formal education but also the ability to carry out cultural roles in the community. Poto may be seen then as the ultimate goal of learning in the Tongan sense, a type of learning that is integrated in its aims and is holistic in its achievements (Thaman, 1988, 1995b).

Learning to be poto may be said to refer to a continuous process of becoming, of knowing ('ilo) who you are in relation to other people, the environment, of knowing

what to do, and doing it well for the benefit of everyone (Thaman, 1988, 1995a, 2003b; Sami Veikoso, talanoa, January, 2002; Vaioleti, 2001). An advanced stage of poto brings respect and an esteemed position in Tongan society (Fusitu'a, 1998).

Similar notions of learning, knowledge and wisdom exist in other Pacific societies. Levi (1995 in Thaman, 1998) suggests that in Samoa, 'learning is said to take place when the learner or tagata aoga acquires something of value which would enable him or her to function outside his/her personal limits'. Samoans use the same term; 'poto' to refer to someone who uses iloa or knowledge in a useful and beneficial way (Vaioleti, Morrison & Vermulen, 2002). In Tuvalu, the purpose of akoga (ako) or learning is to know or iloa ('ilo) how to behave according to the expectations of Tuvalu society. A person is said to be poto if he or she is not only skilful and knowledgeable, but also commands the respect of the community (Ene, 1997 in Thaman, 1998).

For education, Thaman stated that: "poto is the fundamental concept of Tongan education" (1995b, p.729). Poto is the ultimate goal of education itself (Fusitu'a & Coxon, 1998; Thaman, 1988; Vaioleti, 2001; Vaioleti, Morrison & Rees, 2003; Vaioleti & Vaioleti, 2003). The linguist, Schneider (1977, p. 60) similarly suggested that poto could mean intelligent, knowledgeable, skilful, clever and wise. Given the centrality of this notion to education of Tongan people, it is also very helpful that Thaman (1995b, p. 279) has compiled various uses of the word poto to deepen our understanding and analysis of the concept:

TO HAVE ENOUGH SENSE OR INTELLIGENCE

Peheange mai 'e poto 'a Suli 'o fou mai heni. (Hopefully, Suli would have enough sense to come by here.)

TO LEARN A LESSON:

Pea 'ofa keke poto a heni 'o tuku 'a e lele lahi (Hopefully, you have learned a lesson and stop speeding.)

TO BE SKILFUL OR GOOD AT SOMETHING:

'Oku poto 'a Manu he lalanga. (Manu is good at weaving).

'Oku poto 'a Tina he faka'uli. (Tina is a good driver).

TO BE CLEVER AND SUCCESSFUL IN SCHOOL:

Ko e tamasi'i poto 'a Pita. (Pita is a clever boy).

It pays to know that poto is also used as a form of social control (Epeli Hau'ofa, talanoa, May, 2004; Sione Vaoleti, talanoa, December, 1999 and December, 2000). This form is a derivative of poto, which is 'fiepoto'. Fiepoto is a rather derogatory term that denotes pretending to be poto or imagining oneself to be clever and therefore being presumptuous or conceited (Thaman, 1995b). The term when used is a reminder to people that poto is a state that is not achieved easily and when and if that state is reached, it is the collective kainga that decides and this is signalled by achievements for the benefit of his or her kainga.

Underpinning ako, 'ilo and poto is 'ofa (aroha, love) which motivates learners to seek knowledge and skills ('ilo). 'Ofa is the carrying out of one's duty to kainga and is the sinew that binds the fanau (kainga). 'Ofa is a concept that is central to the thinking, motivation and the behaviour of Tongan people.

#### *'Ofa*

In both Tonga and New Zealand, most Tongans attribute their behaviour and the actions of others actions to the spiritual and supernatural properties of 'ofa (Kavaliku, 1977; Thaman, 1988). In everyday life, they aspire to virtues such as anga 'ofa (a loving nature), anga faka'apa'apa (respect for others, reverent disposition), fakama'uma'u (restraint), mamahi'i me'a (zealousness in a good cause to the point of pain), tauhi vaha'a (maintaining good relationship, being eager to mend relationships) and loto (to be humbly willing, deferential, but keenly committed) as they see that those are qualities of 'ofa (Kavaliku, 1977).

'Ofa then is often identified as signalling states of being that are associated with people who know what to do and whose actions are for the benefit of everyone in a group, a kainga, or community (Thaman, 1988; Vaoleti, Morrison & Rees, 2003; Sione Vaoleti and Sateki 'Ulukalala, talanoa, January, 1999). In this case 'ofa is the motivation to do positive things. However, 'ofa is also about compassion, kindness, sympathy, empathy and generosity.

With all the above qualities there is however a vital prerequisite. Knowing about the object of 'ofa and knowing what to do ('ilo), having the ability and knowledge to do it and do it well (poto) in order to effect these concepts on objects of 'ofa, can be seen

as proof of ‘ofa and qualities of poto and ‘ilo (Sami Veikoso, talanoa, January, 2002; Sione Vaioleti and Sateki ‘Ulukalala, talanoa, December, 1999)

Here lies the basis, the source, motivation and the justification for most if not all actions of most Tongan people including, ako, ‘ilo and poto. Kluckhohn (1951, pp. 409 – 410 in Kavaliku, 1977, p. 46) stated that:

Tongans explain their behaviour, their custom and ceremonies in terms of ‘ofa, it was always “‘ofa this” and “‘ofa that” And that the long-winded presentations of episodes and everyday life almost always end up with ‘ofa as the justification, the motives behind the feelings and the emotions expressed. It seemed to me that ‘ofa to Tongans, is the philosophy behind their way of life.

In contemporary terms, ‘ofa is still responsible for carrying out extraordinary generous and kind actions that still strengthen cultural and spiritual ties between Tongan people all over the world and the fonua of Tonga. The following is an acknowledgement of ‘ofa given by a Tongan leader in his sermon to mark the opening of the new church building in Pili, Nuku’alofa. The President of the Free Wesleyan Church, Rev. Dr. ‘Alifeleti Malakai Mone paid tribute to the love and generosity (‘ofa) of Tongan people abroad, without which many of the local community projects would not have been initiated.

He went on to say that:

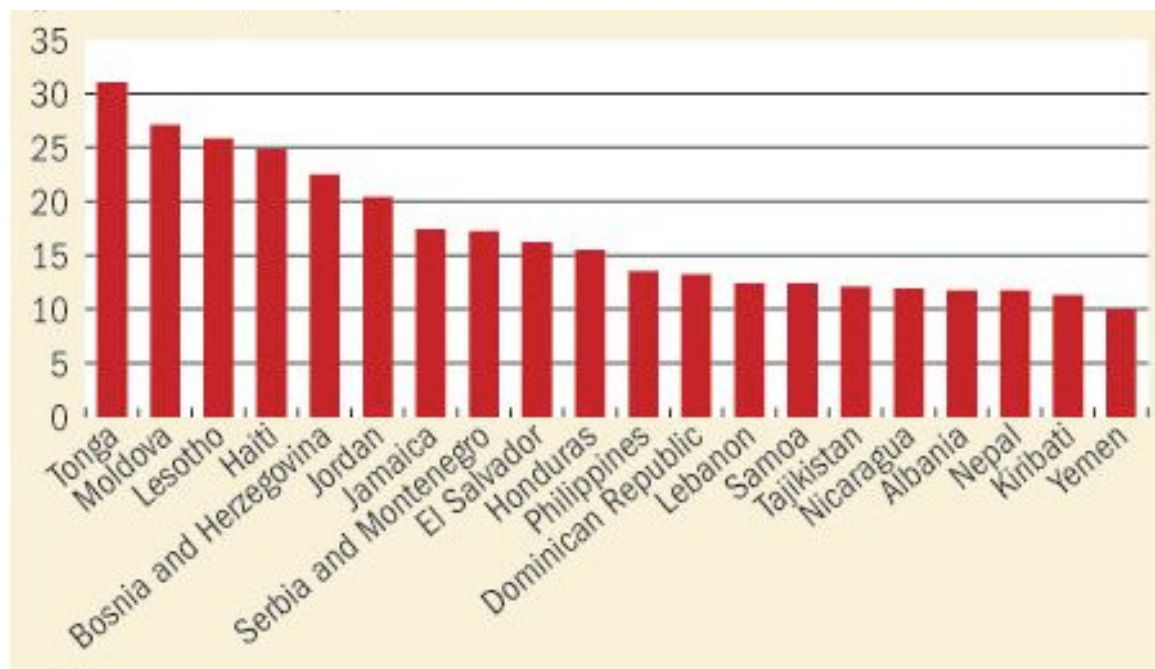
The just completed church in Pili is the latest example in a long series of the unbroken acts of giving and sacrifice that our people make on behalf of their villages and families, that help to build up the country and the economy. The ... Hon. Luani just last week presented a cheque for TOP\$220,000 to the Ministry of Health, as a donation from Tongans in Australia, to the needs of the hospital.

...the President is not alone in acknowledging the love and generosity of Tongans overseas towards their families in Tonga. According to the IMF, “...it is smaller countries, such as Tonga...that top the list when controlling for the size of the economy—for example, as a share of GDP (p. 1).

If remittances were a measure of ‘ofa, the care and concern of people towards one another, regardless of where they live, then Tonga emerges as the undisputed champion in this aspect. Tonga ranks first in the world for sending money back as a percentage of GDP according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), 2005 (Figure 3.2).



**Figure 3. 2 – Remittances as a percentage of GDP, 2005**



Source: IMF (2005)

The President of the Methodist Church Dr. Rev. Alifeleti Mone, in the speech referred to above, also stated that:

Tonga has always been a community of people caring and sharing whatever little that they possessed. Their access to wider opportunities elsewhere only allows this spirit to be expressed more richly, and in more generous ways. (p. 1)

At a personal level, I can note that although at times I may struggle to meet some of our economic outgoings, I consider that the financial, emotional, physical support which I give not only to my fanau in Tonga but in Aotearoa, USA and anywhere else as part of my fatongia, an operationalisation of ‘ofa.

In a classroom pedagogy and relationship, ‘ofa will be manifested through sincere empathy by the teacher with the learning situation of the students. Carl Rogers (1969, 1980) refers to an unconditional regard for students as being necessary for achieving a conducive atmosphere for learning. The late Hon. Langi Kavaliku, the first Tongan to receive a doctorate, a former Minister of Education, referred to ‘ofa as “conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, which

influences the selection between available modes, means and ends of action” (1977, p. 47). This means that action caused by ‘ofa can remain unseen but it can still have its positive impact and what is meant by ‘ofa is the Tongan peoples’ philosophy behind their way of life (Kluckhohn, 1951, in Kavaliku, 1977, p. 46). Other Pacific nations have similar notions. In Hawai’i, it is aloha, aroha in Aotearoa and the Cook Islands, arofa in Tikopia and alofa in Samoa.

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, according to Gray (2002), the term aroha is derived from the concept of:

“Aroaro o te ha o te Atua”, meaning “to be in the presence of the breath of the Creator”, in other words, being at one with the Creator source ... This myth expresses a link between humanity and the Divine, and it is from this context that we are able to discern aroha as an intrinsic value of the culture. (pp. 41–42)

Gray’s view of aroha denotes a spiritual quality that other Tongan values have. I discuss this more in Chapter Seven where I include them in a proposal for a more culturally appropriate pedagogy for Tongan students learning. For most Tongan people, though, ‘ofa, which has strong spiritual values and elements, is so pervasive in their psyche that it informs most educational concepts and influences knowledge and identity itself (Kavaliku 1997; Thaman, 1988). I now want to discuss the concept of malie claimed by Manu’atu (2000, 2002) as a suitable pedagogical approach to learning of Tongan people.

### *Malie and mafana*

Malie is a term that Tongan people use to acknowledge something that they find engaging and meaningful. Educationally, Manu’atu (2000) proposed the notion of malie as an aspect of a transformative pedagogy for most students to combat the clinical, stale and non-humanistic and non-holistic nature of some teaching methodologies in the New Zealand classrooms.

In her article she used the context of the annual Auckland Secondary Schools Maori and Pacific Cultural Festival as a regular site for achieving the state of malie between Tongan school performing groups and their audience. At this stage of malie, both performers and audience find meaning, form connections where culture, art,

movements and singing merge and uplift them both emotionally and spiritually to a stage she considers to be almost erotic.

Any (and usually) responding performance by the audience to the performers provides even more mafana to the performing groups who are as a result of malie charged and energised to move to another level of excellence. When malie is reached, she suggests that the performers and audience are one in mind, spirit and emotion. In the context of katoanga faiva, Manu'atu (2000) defined malie:

...to be a process that produces meaningful connections between ta'anga (the context in Tongan language and culture), hive (singing), haka (the bodily movements), the psyche and the spirit of both the performers and audience, all of which are energize and uplift people. (p.76)

However there are vital ingredients and contexts that must be realised and mentioned by her as context for malie. These are:

...the rapport between the audience and the performers is important. The response and involvement of the audience are needed throughout the performance. Malie (and mafana) is experienced through the interaction, mutual respect, appreciation and harmony between performers and audience. (p. 78)

It is important to know then that having a good relationship with students is a necessary condition that must be satisfied before malie can be achieved. Manu'atu (2000, p. 77) described mafana as processes. She likened mafana to a movement of warm currents that energises malie. A question that might be asked now is how does the transformational malie, and in the context of katonganga faiva inform educators about the thinking of Tongan students in an Aotearoa/New Zealand classroom? Manu'atu suggested that:

...it is energy that ue'i (stirs and actuates) the performers and audience. The performers are energised to do more, and better, perhaps to sing and act in a different way....In my view, the transformational aspects of malie (and mafana) brings forth the creativity within people...and if there is a purpose for creativity, then it is to be malie! (pp 77 - 78)

It is important to be mindful of the contexts that must be satisfied in order to allow the state of *malie* to occur. This will involve the presence of *‘ofa*, appropriate application of *‘ilo* in a *poto* way which will be discussed further in Chapter Six and Seven.

### **3. 6. Conclusion**

Some of the negative school outcomes for Maori and Pacific peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand are linked to factors that stem from the implementation and hegemony of colonial systems and ideology in New Zealand (Bishop, 2008; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Morrison & Vaioleti, 2008; Wendt, 1985). One argument to explain this has been a culturalist one of which there are two perspectives. The first is cultural deficit and the second is cultural discontinuity. However it is clear from the success of the Te Kotahitanga programme that these cultural explanations for failure do not account for poor performance in mainstream classrooms. There are important lessons from Te Kotahitanga for charting an approach to improve the learning experience of Pacific peoples and hence Tongan students in schools.

One is that teachers must not commence with a deficit perspective for Tongan students. Secondly educators must take responsibility for the success of the learning of students. Thirdly, the subsequent development of Te Kotahitanga based on a culturally responsive pedagogy using Maori cultural metaphors has given considerable impetus to the central argument of this thesis that using the ancient Tongan relational and educational concepts of *‘ofa*, *poto*, *‘ilo*, *ako*, *fatongia*, *malie* and *fatongia* in education of Tongan students is necessary and may have relevance for other students in the contemporary multicultural classroom.

Such an approach to learning creates or preserves (Tongan) culture (Vygotsky, 1978) and encourages a curriculum that reflects emotional, spiritual and other Tongan cultural realities. Like the Culturally Responsive Pedagogy of Relationship, it should contribute also to critiques of power dynamics and neo-colonialism with an ultimate aim of ensuring relevance of our schooling for the diverse cultural context of Aotearoa/New Zealand in 2010. This will nurture a sense of belonging in New

Zealand, as well as raising awareness of cultural issues in the conscience of the mainstream institutions.

In the next chapter I introduce the use of talanoa as a research method that allows for Pacific values and understandings, and Pacific worldviews, to be appropriately acknowledged and appreciated in the research process. I explain the various characteristics of talanoa and argue that use of talanoa as a research method facilitates the acquisition of ‘mo’oni’ (authentic) information when working with Tongan people.

## CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

For some time now, I have been exploring a research methodology that aligns more closely with Tongan values and customs. Pacific peoples' epistemologies and lived realities are based on real relationships with their ancestors, their god/s and their spiritual world. As a result their political structures, everyday thinking and interactions are constantly mediated by considerations of ancestors and their god/s. In this context, it is necessary to create an appropriate research model that has synergy with Tongan worldviews. With this in mind, and in consultation with colleagues, friends and in particular my late brother Sione Vaioleti<sup>8</sup>, I have studied, developed and written about a research approach based on the ancient Tongan notion of talanoa (Vaioleti, Morrison & Veramu, 2002; Vaioleti, Morrison & Vermeulen, 2002; Vaioleti, 2002, 2003, 2006). Integral to this methodology is the work of Thaman (1993a, 1997a) on Kakala. Using the talanoa method in combination with the Kakala as a metaphor for the stages of research with Tongan people, I have sought to make a distinctive contribution to theorising about the education of Pacific students in Aotearoa/New Zealand that is embedded in a mix of personal as well as more general Tongan experiences.

A significant aspect of talanoa is synthesis of the knowledge. This is a method that Thaman (1993a, 1997a) refers to as kakala. I argue that a cultural synthesis of the knowledge, information, stories, emotions, agreements and theorising made available by talanoa, using the metaphor of tui kakala, can provide authentic knowledge and solutions to Pacific issues. Tui kakala is a traditional process of weaving fragrant flowers and leaves and, as a metaphor, it can be used to symbolise the production of knowledge and possibilities that is more relevant for addressing Pacific issues under consideration.

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<sup>8</sup> The majority of my talanoa that lead to the development of Talanoa were with late Rev S L Vaioleti, Head of the Church of Tonga, USA, in Palo Alto, Oakland, San Francisco (1999 – 2003). Sione was formerly the Head of the Church of Tonga, NZ and Vava'u in Tonga itself as well.

#### 4. 1. The concept of talanoa and its cultural context.

Talanoa is a mode of communication that is integral to the way in which many Pacific peoples share information, learn and relate to each other (Morrison & Vaioleti, 2008; Vaioleti, Morrison & Veramu, 2002; Nabalarua, 2005; Otsuka, 2005; Vaioleti, Morrison & Vermeulen, 2002; Vaioleti, 2002, 2003, 2006). The word talanoa is a Tongan word, but similar terms exist in other Pacific languages for the same practice such as taleanoa in Samoa, and talanoa in Fiji. Talanoa are at the heart of the transmission of knowledge in Pacific societies, especially the passing on of instructions, narrating and the telling of stories (Vaioleti, Morrison & Vermeulen, 2002; Otsuka 2005; Tavola, 1991). Otsuka (2005) found that talanoa was “commonly practised by Pacific Islanders (sic), such as ethnic Fijians” and observed that talanoa “stems from their culture in which oratory and verbal negotiation have deep traditional roots” . (p.3)

Talanoa are used for obtaining information, including interviewing, and for finding out how people are feeling about certain things (Otsuka, 2005; Tovale, 1991). While the practise of talanoa may seem on the surface to be very flexible, open, and casual, when used formally as a means of communication, talanoa are structured by tapu, cultural expectations, and accountability. If the talanoa method is to be used effectively in a Tongan context, it is necessary to have an understanding of what it means to be Tongan.

A common saying in Tonga, which is the motto for Tupou College the oldest high school, is: “Tonga mo’unga ki he loto” meaning ‘inside (Tongan people hidden) the (real) mountain of Tonga’. While this saying can mean big heartedness, unsinkable, and signifies that the strength of Tongans is not overt, but rather displayed more in attitude and determination, it also has other meanings. One is that it is a metaphor for conservatism, defiance, secretiveness and a predisposition towards the flaunting of real strength. It clearly states that there is more to Tongan people than what is disclosed, seen or displayed. As loto can mean inner thoughts or soul, it is an apt expression at this time to articulate the oneness of our psyche, our soul, our respective cultures, and their symbolism with our people and our fonua. Knowledge then emerges from fonua (the people of the community) and in this sense it is well rooted.

When engaging in talanoa, one must remember several axioms and use them to guide respectful exchanges. The Tongan society is conservative. Roles are well delineated and no more so than the distinctive roles and responsibilities of males and females. Being a society where women are venerated, they customarily have the higher status than those of male relatives. This extends from sisters to the daughters of the sisters. Tapu is structured within the brother/sister (even cousins) covenant, which translates at its most conservative point into the use of respectful dialect when communicating within close proximity of sisters or daughters lest they be exposed to the banalities of life. Tapu however is not restricted to gender. Elders are respected. Overall, Tongan society is highly interdependent in that there is a high degree of reliance of people on each other with obligations woven within a web of historical and cultural connections. These will be discussed more under process and implementation of talanoa in Chapter Five.

#### Characteristics of talanoa

Churchward (1959, p. 379) stated that ‘tala’ means to command, tell, relate, inform and announce while describing ‘noa’ as common, of no value, without thought, without exertion as well as dumb (unable to speak). Talanoa, from Churchward’s definition, can be referred to as a conversation, a talk, an exchange of ideas or thinking, be it formal or informal. However, for me as a Tongan who is aware of the hierarchical assumptions, categories and other relational matters that exist generally in the Tongan culture, Churchward’s description does not go far enough in interrogating the deeper spiritual, emotional and cultural aspects that make up the many complex components of talanoa. Talanoa can allow rigorous co-analysis to achieve authentic consensus on issues ranging from the quite simple to the very complicated. Such talanoa can provide participants with valid information on which to base co-construction of solutions to issues or problems. Talanoa is frequently used for evaluating methods, projects or endeavours (Vaiioleti, Morrison & Vermeulen, 2002; Otsuka, 2005; Tavola, 1991). It is also for debating with the objective of reaching consensus on new knowledge, strategies or approaches to social, cultural or educational issues (Manu’atu, 2002).



A very frank exchange of ideas and knowledge in talanoa is unlikely to occur if the usual unspoken cultural boundaries/barriers are not acknowledged and neutralised (made 'noa') so that people of different backgrounds and status can converse in a less constrained manner. While talanoa can mean talking, discussing and interacting without a rigid framework, it is actually much more than this, at least in Tongan custom. It can mean an oral engagement where the framework is inclusive but at the same time exclusive depending on the purpose of the talanoa and those who are involved.

Tala is about the quality and quantity of information created or shared and noa creates and allows the tala to flow, dependent on the participants and the relationships between those involved in the talanoa. Tala informs the goal/s of the talanoa and therefore who should be involved. The creation of noa is determined by the goals of the talanoa, the gender, class, age and cultural ranks of the participants in order to achieve the ideal conditions for talanoa. Noa conditions can be achieved by paying appropriate mutual respect between those involved in the talanoa in a meaningful relationship, if one did not already exist. Noa and tala are interdependent prerequisites for initiating and sustaining the talanoa. It is the sum of noa and tala that produces the talanoa.

Talanoa's flexibility allows it to be used at each level in Bloom's (1956) taxonomy hierarchy. It can be used to draw out information that requires no more than recall as it may be in the case of 'talanoa vave' below. It can be used to prod for understanding of a given answer. It can be used to analyse issues at multiple levels as well as for synthesising information in order to make a recommendation or pass some important judgement. Talanoa then can involve highly interactive engagement in which those involved probe, question and challenge each other as they search for new meanings taking each other to higher and deeper levels of intellectual and emotional stimulation.

Talanoa should never be mistaken for merely talking or having a discussion. It can be complex, multi-layered and can range from free to critical discussion. The discussion is not bound by having to remain within the two way process of question and answer. Cultural interplays, silence, deep and reflective thought, eye and body

movements are all part of the talanoa dynamism. Talanoa as a concept covers several types, some of which I will highlight. Depending on the purpose of a research, one level of talanoa may be dominant although it is likely that most levels of talanoa will be employed.

#### *Talanoa vave*

Vave implies brief or quick. This a verbal exchanges between two or several people about common matters that concern them. It may be casual and last for only a few exchanges. Its purpose may be to inquire about certain matters, inform or pass on information with allowances for exchanges to clarify such details. It is usually held with minimal formality because of the good relationship and understanding between those involved. It is often held between family, friends and colleagues. The more senior person usually initiates it even if it is occurring within a family. Like other talanoa amongst Tongan people, it is not often carried out amongst people within different social strata unless the talanoa has been appropriately contextualised. At another level, and often when it used for interaction between people who do not have a close relationship, it may just be a more polite way of acknowledgement, a prolonged hello or greeting. In other words, it can be a somewhat superficial talanoa.

#### *Talanoa faikava*

Faikava is the process in which kava is prepared to drink at a gathering. Such gatherings are usually for those who are part of certain group, including ancestors from a particular region, people of common interest, those who belong to a church, share common beliefs and others. In sharing of the kava, people become relaxed, and because the kava sessions can go on for some hours, participants often invent stories with the purpose of testing the other participants mental agility and alertness. These stories are often constructions that aim to entertain, test or catch people out.

There are some implications for those who may want to use talanoa faikava as a research methodology. These talanoa faikava strategies can however extend to other areas of peoples' lives and those who are familiar with the different levels of talanoa will detect talanoa faikava and regard it as such, for entertaining purposes only. However, those who understand the dynamics of talanoa often play along or even contribute to the construction of the talanoa faikava, which will in turn intensify pleasure, or malie of the talanoa. In a research approach that uses talanoa as a

methodology, talanoa faikava may be a way that kau nga fa'u assess the cultural competence of a researcher. Bearing in mind that the behaviours of Tongan people are underpinned by a hierarchical mentality, this may be a form of assessing where the researcher fits into the order of things and then accommodating this. Such assessment is important for the kau nga fa'u and consequently, the researcher as these may determine how the kau nga fa'u will respond to attempts to involve them in further talanoa. In this sense, the kau nga fa'u are not passive participants to a research interaction but have much power in their relation with the researcher/s.

#### *Talanoa usu*

'Ana Mo'ungatonga (talanoa, Dec, 2010) stated that talanoa usu is '*...me'a fa'u pe...*' (just a construction), a make up story. She further suggests that '*...oku 'aonga ia ke fa'u ha founa ke fakatefito kiai hano fakamata'i ha 'uhinga 'oku faingata'a hono fakamatala'i...*' (it is used as a metaphor for scaffolding those involved in the talanoa to more important or key information that maybe difficult to explain without reference to its wider context). She went on to say '*...koe hiva usu koe hiva ia 'oku fa'u hake pee, tae tu'ungafasi pea 'oku fai ia ke fakamatala ha fo'i ngaue ma'ongo'onga pe ha talanoa 'oha feitu'u pe kolo...*' Hiva usu or usu songs are ones that are constructed informally and contextually (ie. without formal arrangements, pre-determined scales), to praise or explain an extraordinary deed or to describe the significance of an area or a town.

Experts in talanoa usu will capture appreciative participants as they are skilled in humour, in various contextual constructions to suit different topics and approaches that are appropriate to participants' background ages, gender and rank. Talanoa usu can keep participants engaged and lead them to clarity, mafana and malie.

#### *Talanoa tevolo.*

Talanoa tevolo engages the emotion, spirit and the mind in a way that most other talanoa cannot. It is a talanoa that is often about sharing of supernatural visitations, dreams or visions of people who have passed on (Ana Mounगतonga, talanoa, January, 2011). A researcher is very likely to come across it if the kau nga fa'u is comfortable and authentic about the topic of the talanoa and those taking part in the

talanoa. This type of talanoa is fundamental to understanding the Tongan personality, relationships, values and knowledges as it strikes at the heart of their epistemology.

As epistemology can include how knowledge is legitimated, most Tongan people may still consider dreams, visitations from ancestors and visions to be regarded as the source of legitimated knowledge or truth. This being the case, when researchers or teachers engage Tongan people, this cultural background must be included in their thinking despite the fact that they may have been grounded on epistemologies where knowledge is legitimated by science or positivism. This is an ethical and moral issue that researchers

(teachers or others for that matter) must consider, reflect deeply on as there is a phenomenological matter to be considered.

Talanoa of this type may have negative connotations attached to it though. This attitude is a legacy left by the Christian missionaries who saw any element of the old Tongan spirituality or religions as an impediment to the Christian zeal to convert the indigenous population from Heathenism ('Eveli Hau'ofa, talanoa, May, 2004). Anything to do with the old Tongan religion was labelled as the work of or belonging to the devil (spelt tevolo) hence this type of old but still pervasive talanoa is known as the talanoa tevolo.

#### *Talanoa faka'eke'eke*

'Eke implies act of asking a question. 'Eke'eke implies verbal searching which could manifest in the act of questioning and depending on the answer for that question, more probing questions are formed. The questions connect or build on the answers given by a respondent or participants in order to identify or uncover certain knowledge, understanding or point/s. In such an approach, the researcher or the seeker of knowledge is the one that determines the direction of the talanoa. It is economical and efficient. It can be an instrument to further quantitative research. Because this talanoa has a more objective aim, it is likely to be dominated by the researcher with less opportunity to truly interact at a more personal level with the *kau nga fa'u* in a relaxed manner conducive to enjoyment of the talanoa. The knowledge gained from this approach to talanoa is more likely to miss social context and other dimensions to the participants unless the researcher is skilled and aware of this

possibility. This approach is what most Tongan researchers use to collect data or information from more passive participants.

### *Po talanoa*

Po talanoa is talking in an everyday way about children, television, school, political matters, the lack of things to do. At one level it may be what we might readily identify as ‘conversation’ and can be held anytime. Po implies night or evening which points to this type of talanoa’s origin. In village life in Tonga from the ancient times to the 1970s and before the time of television, after the evening meal friends, relative and neighbours would visit each others house to chat for two to three hours, tell stories, discuss family knowledge and genealogy as well as more secular matters such as sharing the day’s occurrences, plans and hopes for the days ahead. Manu’atu (2002, p. 194) describe po talanoa as:

...cultural and political practise of Tongan people where they create space in time to connect to the contexts of their experiences through discussions and talking with others. Through po talanoa, the people come to know questions, find out, hear about, and become aware of and extend their experiences and knowledge about their world and their relationships to it. In my view a key to the practice of po talanoa is the capacity of people to connect with each other within a context of whether it is kinship, a work experience, common knowledge or faith or whatever.

As it is for talanoa vave, but in a more detailed and involved way, only those who are related or those in close relationships are involved in such casual but fuller and trusting conversation. Light food and drink are shared if they are available. In a contemporary Aotearoa/New Zealand situation, it is a relaxed engagement, which often aims to share personal stories, information, some of which are just for pleasure and perhaps just filling time before another engagement.

### *Talanoa’i*

Talanoa’i is a verb; it is active; purposeful has a particular aim, and a focal point, which may be an outcome. It implies that those involved in talanoa’i have complementary expertise in the area of the focus or topic and have similar status and other backgrounds. Talanoa’i then is like po talanoa mentioned previously, but it has a more rigorous process guided by its purpose. It may even take a form that resembles a robust debate but with the normal respect for age, gender and others

cultural conventions. It may follow the objectives of Bloom's Taxonomy involving deep analysis, debate, construction, layering, weaving and synthesis to produce solutions to a particular issue being considered.

Talanoa'i is a purposeful way of conducting phenomenological research. In this case the kau nga fa'u commonsense will be heard, their different views, values and ideas shared in guided multi-level discussion to identify answers being sought. Talanoa'i in a phenomenological perspective for Tongan kau nga fa'u must take into account the cultural and spiritual concepts that influence the views and actions of Tongan people.

In talanoa'i the researcher is not a distant observer but is active in the talanoa process and in defining and redefining process and meanings and is expected to encourage contributions from kau nga fa'u just as the kaunga fa'u, may demand of the researcher or even the other way around. This is normal for talanoa where kaunga fa'u (or researchers) can take leadership at different stages of the encounter in the active pursuit of the best possible knowledge, solution or a final consenses. As an outcome, talanoa based research must benefit Pacific peoples and their interests. It must be accountable back to the fonua and the ancestors.

#### **4. 2. Talanoa and kakala as a possible research methodology**

When used for research, talanoa can mean a conversation or discussion where the participants and the researcher/s have considerable power in deciding the desired process and protocol that is likely to lead to certain outcomes of the discussions. They can participate in this process, decide on its form and length, create its ambience, structure, and choose whenever to disengage if desired. In this form, talanoa is similar to a Maori self-determining framework that Bishop (1996) and Smith (1999) refer to as rangtiratanga, although rangtiratanga at other levels has far more cultural and political complexities. In researching Pacific issues (in some cases with Pacific peoples), talanoa allows for more 'mo'oni' (purer, real, authentic) information to be available.

##### The tui kakala

According to Thaman (1993a, 1997b), kakala is Tongan for fragrant flowers and

leaves woven together in special ways and according to the needs of the occasion. Kakala is worn either around the waist or around the neck. There is a special mythology and etiquette associated with kakala. The making of kakala (*tui kakala*) involves three different processes: *toli*, *tui*, and *luva*.

### *Toli*

The first stage involves the choice, the selection and then the picking of different flowers and leaves required for making the kakala. After picking the flowers, they are ranked and arranged depending on their cultural importance. The type of kakala made depends on the occasion and who is expected to wear it. In terms of a traditional research approach, *toli* equates with the stages where a problem is recognised, where a research plan is decided, what information (data) is desired and from where to source it. It also encompasses the process by which data are acquired and analysed. For researching Pacific issues, the selection of the information made available by *talanoa* determines the type of community that the research is to benefit and the knowledge or solution sought.

### *Tui*

The second stage is the process of making or weaving of the kakala. It involves sorting, grouping and arranging the flowers and leaves according to their cultural importance before the actual weaving stages. The time taken to make a kakala depends on its nature and complexity. In *tui kakala*, the meaning, the visual impact, beauty and the right bouquet are achieved by the skilful use of the right types, right amount, and right combinations of flowers, as well as how they are arranged in an hierarchical relationship to each other (determined by the purpose for which the kakala is made). Not everyone is adept at creating (*tui*) the most beautiful kakala.

*Tui* can be used as a metaphor for a vital stage of research. This is where some of the information gained through thinking, stories, spirits and emotions in deep *talanoa* encounters are arranged and further woven – the integration, synthesise and weaving of knowledge is made available by *talanoa*. The authenticity, the relevance and usefulness of the research are dependent on the type and how much information from the rich menu available is used, how they are arranged in relationship to each other,

and how they are presented as research findings. Cultural and technical skills are important at this stage as poor selection, and synthesis and presentation of the rich findings from talanoa can easily lead to invalid conclusions.

### *Luva*

The third and final stage involves the giving away of the kakala to the wearer, who may be a dancer, a special guest or someone leaving on a long trip. Luva is important in the context of Polynesian values of 'ofa (love, compassion), faka'apa'apa (respect) and fetokoni'aki (reciprocity and responsibility for each other). This is the stage in which the research is given for the benefit of the community, similar to the metaphor of koha in Kaupapa Maori Research (Bishop, 1997) and Bishop & Glynn, (1999). For the researcher and her/his institution, the kakala (the new knowledge, in the true sense of the metaphor) is expected to be passed on so that others can benefit from it as well. Luva symbolises the importance of Pacific 'ofa, faka'apa'apa and fetokoni'aki for the health and wellbeing of the Pacific community.

Tui kakala by skilled researchers, who have intrinsic understanding of Pacific issues, and who have co-created their knowledge and understandings with kau nga fa'u, will capture a mosaic of nuances, narratives, demonstrations, emotions generated by the talanoa that add more definition and clarity to the issues being explored. Talanoa creates the opportunity for theorising and for both researchers and kau nga fa'u to interface. The resultant knowledge is what tui kakala will integrate and weave to make authentic knowledge. I suggest that from this process valid solutions for Pacific issues can emerge. However in order to approach participants and their Pacific communities there must be due consideration of protocols that respect their ways as outlined further below.

### **4. 3. Talanoa research methodology: an overview**

It is natural to place a talanoa research methodology in the phenomenological family of qualitative approaches to research. Bishop & Glynn (1999, p. 105) stated that, "integral to this (phenomenological) movement has been the realisation of the importance of meaning and interpretation of people's lives within their cultural context". However, reaching this conclusion was initiated by influential qualitative methodologies.



Although the debate between qualitative and quantitative approaches is ongoing, it is important to acknowledge the considerable shift in research in recent times to include a far wider range of qualitative approaches (Bishop, 1997b; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Eisner, 1991; McNiff & Whitehead, 2006; Patton, 2002; Ramazanoglu, & Holland, 2002; Sprague, 2005; Taufe'ulungaki, 2000). Within these shifts, there has been a greater alignment to different cultural approaches, including Pacific ways of thinking, assessing and searching. Patton (2002, p. xxii) discussed the developments in qualitative inquiry during the last decade that have been driven by diversifying research agendas and scholarly dialogue. He observed:

...the classic qualitative–quantitative debate has been largely resolved with the recognition that a variety of methodological approaches are needed and credible, that mixed methods can be especially valuable and the challenge is to appropriately match methods to questions rather than adhering to some narrow methodological orthodoxy.

My first venture into the qualitative debate was my introduction to several papers on feminist thought and knowledge at the University of Waikato in the early 1990s. Based on common experiences of patriarchal systems imposing their worldviews on many societal structures, knowledge included, feminist theorists emphasised a more inclusive and participatory worldview and paved the way for the inclusion of research paradigms that targeted legitimate and valid spaces and voices for women (Nodding, 1994; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). Further to this, Maguire (1987, p.39) stated that: "Participatory research proposes returning to ordinary people the power to participate in knowledge creation, the power that results from such creation, and the power to utilize knowledge".

Along with critical theories (Bishop, 1999a; Boler, 1999; Freire, 1994; hooks, 1994; Repko, 2008; Smith, 1999), feminist thought, scholarship and research sat well with my Tongan perspectives. Of particular relevance here were the challenges feminist scholarships posed to modernism which sees the world as rational and therefore knowable, and thus the finding answers for human conditions is possible (Latham, Blaise, Dole, Faulkner, Lang & Malone, 2006, p.100; Repko, 2008, p.98) as well as its qualitative methods and approaches.

The qualitative approach debate, lead by feminist researchers, provided a caution against blind faith in scientific progress, without reference to the power dynamics of gender, domination and subjection, culture, religion and the goal of human emancipation. Any claim by quantitative approaches for universality of its positivistic models, without consideration of human conditions, is a denial of reality and can lead to perpetuation of domination and subjection (Pepko, 2008; Scheurich & Young, 1997). These arguments fuelled my curiosity about critical research methodologies, especially those that could be aligned with the struggle of Pacific peoples against marginalisation in Aotearoa/New Zealand and around the Pacific.

A critical theorist whose writing had a particularly significant impact on me was Freire (1994) who saw that the primary goal of philosophy is to understand and to help overcome the social structures through which people are dominated and oppressed. These debates on the inadequacy of a single approach to various culture, gender and contexts gave rise to a more discursive approach to research that allowed more critical and localised research approaches to suit local research situations. Bishop & Glynn (1999), Smith (1999) and Thaman (1995) took this a step further by stating that the study of communities (Maori and Pacific), without reference to their historical, cultural and political contexts, would result in distorted realities for them.

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, there was a ground swell movement for emancipation from the dominance of western ways of researching that generated Kaupapa Maori Research Methodology (KMRM). This is discussed later in the chapter in the context of different research methodologies. However, the strong impressions left on me of what my understanding of the feminist movement and Kaupapa Maori Research stood for, fired my imagination and sowed the seeds that led to the development of talanoa that asks about the place of being Pacific (and in my case Tongan) in research.

#### Application of talanoa to research methodology

Although talanoa is flexible, deep and meaningful, talanoa can only occur if there are good relationships between kau nga fa'u, including the researchers. As alluded to before in this chapter, one must be aware then of the subjectivity and often hierarchically minded genealogy of many collectivist Pacific peoples and think and

act accordingly. In many instances it is necessary to pre-empt actions and reactions to suit the situation. Deep and engaging talanoa depends on acceptance by others in the talanoa. Acceptances that can lead to effective talanoa are often a result of membership of kainga or whanau, cultural rank, class, age, gender as well as strong, established interpersonal relationships.

As in most Pacific encounters there are proper rituals to start and end the talanoa. The removal of the tapu to create the noa will be carried out by the person more senior culturally and spiritually and may be formal or informal depending on context and those present. Similarly, endings are signified by the same senior person who acknowledges the noa; allowing the tapu to be placed over the participants and the knowledge shared.

At another level, talanoa depends wholly on self-motivation, and the personal willingness and generosity of kau nga fa'u to engage. The purpose of talanoa must be clear. For setting the purpose and structure for talanoa, the following phrase is used, Ko 'eku ha'u ke tau talanoa ki he...(I have come so that we can discuss/talk about/converse about...) as the beginning of engagement for most talanoa. According to Tongan protocol, this seeks the permission or assurance from kau nga fa'u that they consent to talanoa. Further, this request is delivered using its own protocol. In a Tongan situation, it is given while sitting down looking in the direction of kau nga fa'u but not necessarily at their faces, followed by a pause to provide the noa for the kau nga fa'u to respond.

During the pause (noa, space), the researcher's head should be slightly bowed and looking towards the ground to communicate s/he is finished and now waiting for a decision. This too is part of providing the space for kau nga fa'u to think, including if they feel they have the authority to speak on the topic. On some occasions they may send the researcher to a more appropriate person according to their community role and protocol. Talanoa is best conducted in the language of the people being interviewed as this facilitates real understanding of both the content and the context of the dialogue and research.

Each person involved in the talanoa encounter must know and behave according to their role and how protocol dictates. This requires common understanding of protocols, of each person's background in order to accord appropriate behaviour to and an appropriate role for each person in the encounter. A highly structured approach is vital in order for kau nga fa'u to co-construct meaning from the encounter because talanoa employs an open technique where the precise nature of any question asked has not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the talanoa develops. In this sense, when talanoa loses its malie or starts to revisit areas covered already, it is probable that no more new points will be added to those that have been co-constructed, and therefore that part of the talanoa ends. It is a respectful reciprocating interaction. Talanoa is a good, deep meaningful conversation (Eisner, 1991), one listens intently to the other. When and what one says depends upon on what and how the other relates.

The reciprocity embedded in talanoa will raise the expectations and understandings that researchers and kau nga fa'u have of each other, promoting mutual accountability in a way that will add to the trustworthiness and quality of the interaction. The effect of reciprocity is such that when people give koloa (in this case, time and knowledge) they will expect that it be respected and honoured, with good utilisation. Kau nga fa'u will follow developments with interest. Quality will be added to the research because the researcher will not want to let down kau nga fa'u with whom they have developed a relationship.

Talanoa firmly places the power to define what the Pacific issues are at the centre of the encounter between the researchers and kau nga fa'u. This is where real and meaningful relationships are vital and have relevance for the research outcome. Kau nga fa'u will disclose information only when they feel the right time or the appropriate context is reached. If protocols are abused, the kau nga fa'u may end the talanoa or, worse, reciprocate (utu, totongi) the wrong in order to teach researchers a lesson and to remind them of their obligations in this symbiotic relationship (Vaiolleti, 2003, 2006).

While it may be useful to simply list a number of characteristics integral to a talanoa encounter, this seems a rather prescriptive and linear way of articulating an holistic way

of being and relating. Its complexity is part of its attraction. Talanoa should not be separated from ethics, spirituality, nature of being, existence, time and space, causality, ceremony, and social order. Talanoa is an encounter, individually or in a group, made possible only by a desire by all involved to engage verbally, intellectually, spiritually even emotionally about issues at hand. “Talanoa often only occurs with those whom one is connected to in a created cultural space where they may interact in their own realities, guided by their aspirations and rules and in their milieu” (Sione Vaoleti, talanoa, January, 2000). In agreeing to take part in talanoa kau nga fa’u place their mana and reputation on the line. It is the obligation of the researcher to kau nga fa’u, their relatives, their ancestors, their village, to process or advance talanoa authentically and develop the results respectfully and for the purpose for which knowledge is being co-created and given.

Finally, collective accountability ensures that kau nga fa’u will only engage in a research dialogue if s/he feels safe, for her/himself and her collective, and can do the work with credibility. If they are not the most senior or knowledgeable people in the field, it is likely that s/he will direct the researchers to the most appropriate people, those who can articulate the community’s situation most appropriately for the benefit of the collective (the community, the fonua).

### Knowledge in Pacific societies

According to Thaman (1998) there are two types of knowledge in Polynesia: one is communal knowledge necessary for day-to-day life, the other is highly specialist (often tapu) knowledge. Special knowledge was koloa (taonga, treasure) belonging to certain kainga (whanau, family kin) and kept fakamolumalu (sacred) by tufunga (tohunga/learned people). Tufunga were also the kaitiaki (guardians) of those koloa and their persons were often tapu. There was a need for strict adherence to cultural protocols (see ethics later in this chapter) to ensure respect for those with specialist knowledge when encountering them. Such was the importance of their knowledge for spiritual and economic security as well as the integrity of their fanau, it was also a paramount fatongia from the tufunga, to determine to whom the knowledge should be passed in order to safe keep the koloa of their fanau. Only those whom the tufunga see as mateuteu (ready), fa’a kataki (tolerant, have endurance, loyal), ‘ofa, fakatoo ki

lalo (possesses humility, respect for tradition) and who will use the knowledge for the benefit of the whole (poto) were normally given the special knowledge.

In the context of research, therefore, and in Pacific communities as in Maori communities, it is vital for researchers and their sponsors to fully appreciate the imperative cultural underpinnings in which special knowledge is gifted to them. That is, the knowledge is given under the age-old premise that it is to be used for the betterment of the fanau (whanau) and not only for personal gain such as for obtaining a degree, building intellectual capacity or commercial research projects without contributing to the ongoing betterment of family and the community (Taufe'ulungaki, 2000; Thaman, 1988; Vaioleti, 2001, 2003, 2006). It should be noted that obligations back to the community that provided the specialist knowledge is not a one-off thing; it could be never-ending depending on the knowledge transferred.

#### **4. 4. The practise of talanoa and its place in Pacific worlds**

The relationship-based, non-linear and responsive approach qualities should allow a talanoa research methodology to have appeal to indigenous communities with oral traditions and those who are interested in using specific qualitative and localised critical research approaches, such as Kaupapa Maori. The concept of talanoa for Tongans is the same as it is for Samoans, Fijians and other Pacific nations, although some may have local variations (Morrison, Vaioleti & Vermeulen, 2002; Morrison, Vaioleti & Veramu, 2002; Nabalarua, 2005). It is a customary method for creating and transferring knowledge in most Pacific societies.

Crocombe (1975 as cited in Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 14) mentioned the following common dimensions to Pacific modes of knowledge creation and sharing that he sees as being part of the talanoa process:

- talking things over rather than taking rigid stands
- being prepared to negotiate, being flexible
- adaptation and compromise
- oratory and verbal negotiation have deep traditional roots in Pacific cultures

Therefore the following apply:

- the Pacific Way is spoken rather than written
- universal Pacific notions of generosity with time, labour and property
- Pacific perceptions of ‘time’, leisure, dress, food, dancing
- the inseparable dynamics of church and culture, and indigenisation of Christianity.

In 2002 a colleague and I were working in Samoa with an environmental NGO, Matuaileo’o Environmental Trust Initiative (METI), facilitating a ‘training for trainers’ programme. Our larger project team was multidisciplinary including scientists from New Zealand and Holland and local Pacific people. Talanoa was a method that I used instinctively in our work to align the project aims with our training programme.

My understanding of talanoa from the local people was that it referred to the ancient multi-level and multi-layered critical discussions and free conversations. This is also a way that community, business and agency leaders receive information from the community which they use to make decisions about civil, church and national matters. For the purposes of our training for trainers programme it suited very well and captured not only the aims of the larger project but also encouraged those non-Pacific members of our team to be prepared to work differently in Pacific communities.

Similarly, when working on the same project in Fiji, we found that talanoa was appropriate to engage with communities in social and economic discussion and for disseminating information by government departments, NGOs, village representatives, businesses and local agencies. Talanoa was also recommended for collecting information from villagers, leaders and different government agencies with the aim of using findings to formulate policy proposals (Vaioleti, Morrison & Veramu, 2002). Further, in New Zealand, Eci Nabalarua (2005), in a speech titled ‘Applying Cultural Research Frameworks (Fijian)’, described veitalanoa as a ‘process of dialogue governed by age, class, gender’. As in the Samoan case outlined above, we were able to successfully complete our project in Fiji while implementing and validating our own researching and teaching methodologies.

New Zealand examples of talanoa are fairly common. Peta Mo'ungatonga<sup>9</sup> is a teacher and has been involved in major research projects with Pacific families. In our talanoa I recall below what she said about interviewing as a Tongan in New Zealand:

We have our own way to do research. I use talanoa for most of my interviews for the long term Pacific Island family research I am involved in, which follows the development of over a thousand young Pacific peoples in Auckland over several years. I find talanoa friendly, it allows relationships between me and my participants which helps my work greatly. At the beginning of my interviews, I would ask the mothers how their days had been while helping them with their chores, things that were totally irrelevant to my topic. They will talk about several things, and I, about my work and myself until they feel at ease. Once they accepted and trusted me as a person, out came their stories including the information I was wanting to know about. The stories around the information I was looking for were what made me know that the information was authentic. I only rarely need to ask specific questions. In some occasions, I would ask questions in order to probe and to maintain the malie of the talanoa (talanoa, June, 2003).

Peta's approach allowed power sharing to be an integral part of her methodology. Smith (1992, p. 53) stated "when doing research either across cultures or within a minority culture, it is critical that researchers recognise the power dynamic which is embedded within the relationship with their subjects".

In Carol Gilligan's (1982, p. 2) book *In a Different Voice*, she referred to how three long term studies she carried out reflected her general assumption that "the way people talk about their lives is of significance, that the language they use and the connection they make, reveal the world they see and in which they act." Skilful application of talanoa in Pacific research will help to ensure authentic information is collected. The prospect of talanoa is what drives Pacific people, young and old, in Aotearoa/New Zealand to kava parties, to social gatherings, to official engagements seven days a week as they do in their home countries. Talanoa validates the experiences and ways of Pacific peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand. However, for talanoa to be used as a research method there are protocols for carrying it out and the kau nga fa'u have a central role to play in allowing authentic talanoa to happen.

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<sup>9</sup> Peta Mo'ungatonga, is a schoolteacher at a South Auckland primary school, and teaches a Tongan bilingual programme. She is also involved in a longitudinal Pacific research in New Zealand.



#### **4. 5. Talanoa and other research methods**

Along with grounded theory, naturalist inquiry and some ethnography i.e. approaches, talanoa is aligned to the phenomenological approach to research. Phenomenological approaches focus on what the meaning of the lived experience of the phenomenon has for persons being studied (Patton, 1991; Bishop & Glynn, 1999). However, as it is with many concepts from Pacific worldviews, talanoa does not fit totally with a phenomenological perspective. The advantages of a phenomenological approach are that peoples' commonsense gets to be heard, different views, values and ideas are shared and out of multi-level discussion and sharing, then understanding can be clarified. This too can happen in talanoa. However if talanoa is used in a Tongan situation there are cultural considerations specific to that situation that may not be appropriate to another Tongan situation over and above considerations for Tongan worldviews and relationships.

In talanoa the researcher is not a distant observer but is active in the talanoa process and in defining and redefining meanings and is expected to encourage and draw out discussion and contributions from participants. This is normal for talanoa where kau nga fa'u and researchers can take leadership at different stages of the talanoa encounter in order to benefit and reach the collective goal/s. It is important to appreciate that an outcome of talanoa based research must benefit Pacific peoples and their interests with accountability back to the fonua and the ancestors. I will now compare and contrast talanoa with other research approaches in order to deepen our understanding of this method.

##### Narrative methods and talanoa

Talanoa shares similarities with a narrative approach to research, especially with reference to the process used to obtain information. In talanoa however, culture is a central and significant factor. "Narrative is a western methodology based on peoples' own stories. "Narrative inquiry is stories lived and told" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p 20). Narrative research involves "learning to live, tell, relive, and retell stories of relational knowing as narrative inquirers, that is stories in which our ideas are not owned but shared, reshaped, recomposed and reknown through relationship and conversation" (Clandinin et. al., 2006, p. 24).

Telling one's own story implies that culture is embodied in the process by both contextualising the narrative and recognising significant cultural factors in the narrative dynamic. Culturally significant factors emerge as a result of the narrative. Talanoa, through its protocols, can provide the conditions and then provide the methods that allow what Clandinin & Huber (2002, p.161) described as "narrative understandings of knowledge and context are linked to identity and values, providing stories to live by, lived and shaped in places and through relationships" in the context (culture) it is used in.

In talanoa, culture is understood and taken into consideration before the research engagement and continues to be dominant throughout the process of talanoa. Because talanoa used in a Tongan situation derives from Polynesian epistemologies ('Epeli Hau'ofa, talanoa, May, 2004), which are still heavily influenced by old religions, it requires protocols that acknowledge hierarchies such as age, gender, social rank, and genealogy. These protocols all require constant attention and acknowledgment in order to maintain the relationship and the noa of the talanoa. These areas will be discussed further under the protocols or talanoa at the end of this chapter as well in the next chapter when I review how talanoa has been applied in this research to some cultural underpinnings of Tongan education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Clearly the application of talanoa in other Pacific situations or to other issues will vary according to a range of contextual factors. This is in marked contrast to the more universalist approach that is associated with what is termed the 'narrative method'.

The success of talanoa is dependent on and affirming of cultural ways. Talanoa is more than a narrative enquiry. Knowledge is an inherent part of a culture (Akhila Sharma, talanoa, May, 2004) whose stories have been passed down through successive generations by performances, symbolism, oratory and visual means (Sateki 'Ulukalala, talanoa, January, 2000; Sione Vaioleti, talanoa, January, 2000; 'Epeli Hau'ofa, talanoa, May, 2004). As stated earlier, talanoa often only occurs with those with whom one is connected in age, social level, and in gender in a created cultural space. In this space the participants interact with reference to their own realities, guided by their aspirations and rules and in their familiar cultural milieu (Sione Vaioleti, talanoa, January, 2000; Sami Veikoso, talanoa, January, 2002).

## Kaupapa Maori research and talanoa

*Engari ko tenei toa te toa takitini  
Power does not belong to the individuals alone.  
Rather, it resides within the whole community.*

Kaupapa Maori research is a term given by Maori researchers to research that is centred on Maori culture and paradigms, is used for the benefit of Maori, with emancipation of their knowledge as its aim. Kaupapa Maori research challenges the dominance of traditional, individualistic research methodologies that primarily benefit the researcher. It provides strategies that empower Maori to have control over their knowledge creation, life and cultural wellbeing (tino rangatiratanga) and operationalises self-determination (Bishop, 1991a; Smith, 1992, 1997). Its philosophical base is collective and it acknowledges Maori aspirations for research. It advocates for control over the decision-making processes, governance over the ways in which the research is to be carried out, while developing and implementing a Maori theoretical and methodological base for research (Bishop, 1996; Bishop & Glynn, 1999). Bishop & Glynn (1999, p. 105) stated that, “integral to this movement has been the realisation of the importance of meaning and interpretation of peoples’ lives within their cultural context”.

Kaupapa Maori Research provides a strong reference for a new way to guide Pacific research. As Professor Russell Bishop (Bishop, 1994, 1996a; Bishop & Glynn, 1999) argues with regard to power issues for Maori in research, a new Pacific research approach such as talanoa should ensure control of Pacific knowledge creation by Pacific peoples or those whom they empower through endorsement. It is important to note, however, that before the naming of Kaupapa Maori research as a methodology, the dominant western paradigm was being challenged many years earlier by others such as the late Dame Evelyn Stokes (1985) and Ngahuia Te Awakotuku (1991). Both Stokes (1985) and Te Awakotuku (1991) raised issues about appropriate ethical conduct when researching in Maori communities.

What Bishop (1996a) has suggested Kaupapa Maori research offers for Maori, I suggest talanoa does for Pacific peoples in acknowledging Pacific research aspirations. It is also part of a larger project to develop and implement a Pacific

theoretical philosophical base that is collective and is orientated towards privileging Pacific preferences for research.

#### Feminist perspectives

In much the same way that kaupapa Māori methodology is acknowledged as an emergent critical theory in Aotearoa/New Zealand, feminist knowledge, theories and research methodologies need to be acknowledged as critical for pushing boundaries globally around the power relations that affect knowledge, our understandings and actions (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). Both theories at their local and international levels suggest that the study of humans in any community that is not situated in their historical, cultural and political contexts will distort realities for those in power, those marginalised as well as men and women. In this sense it is likely that both feminist research and Kaupapa Maori Research can be said to belong in the phenomenological research family (Bishop & Glynn, 1999).

However, based on women's experience of marginalization in many societal structures, feminism has successfully challenged dominant patriarchal systems and paved the way towards emancipation of a voice for women and inclusion of different worldviews and participatory approaches into research paradigms (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). Despite its multi-dimensional and inclusive perspectives, the feminist theories even laid challenge to the phenomenological approach by taking the inquiry to another level. It asked how does gender and the power relations surrounding gender, shape and affect women's knowledge, understandings and actions (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002; Sprague, 2005).

The challenge from feminist research to the overarching discursive approach of phenomenology, in order to assert its difference within its whanau of research approaches on behalf of women, was a defining point for me. Maguire (1987, p. 76) added to these dialogues by saying that "Feminism allowed me to see the male bias common to both dominant and alternative (qualitative) paradigms". Some criticised Freire's respected work on praxis, emancipation and critical literacy, mainly for its silence on gender analysis and constant use of the generic masculine pronoun (Boler, 1999, p. 49). It must be acknowledged that even within the feminist movements there are ongoing issues and debates about power. For example, what is feminist

knowledge and a feminist approach, what are women's issues and who decides what is feminism has been critiqued and labelled as predominantly western middle class perspectives (Boler, 1999; hooks, 1994; Maleponi Taunaholo, talanoa, December, 2008).

Nevertheless, the challenge in the 1960s and 1970s by critical theories (led by feminism) to modernism, and its belief in objective, empirically based, rationally analyzed truth that is knowable (Repko, 2008, p. 98), together with its associated positivist research models, occurred at a time when protests were felt throughout the western world on a number of issues. These included the Vietnam War, civil rights, indigenous rights and the rights of women (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002; Smith, 1999; Sprague, 2005; Taufe'ulungaki, 2000). Such upheaval in society also led to an upheaval in knowledge and knowledge creation in the context of the culture in academia. This led to the research process being challenged.

The increasing consciousness about oppressed and marginalised groups, as well as the inadequacies of the power of the State and its institutions to identify their issues and needs, led to challenges by marginalised groups for the inclusion of their way of thinking and seeing in research (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Morrison & Vaioleti, 2008; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002; Smith, 1999; Taufe'ulungaki, 2000; Vaioleti, Morrison & Rees, 2003). This led to a new way of phenomenological thinking and research as part of this changing global dynamic and this is seen in the way diverse cultural, economic and socio-political issues are being researched in Aotearoa/New Zealand today. It is the theoretical framework of Kaupapa Maori Research and the groundswell support for a culturally appropriate research framework for New Zealand and the clarity and courage that drive feminism to question dominant patriarchal and established assumptions, that fired my imagination and gave me the courage to imagine the possibility for a Pacific (and in my case Tongan) Research method.

## Pacific perspectives

*Why hound me with a question when you don't care for an answer,  
why play for a pair when there is only one dancer ....*<sup>10</sup>

Lora Marie Muna Vaioleti

Epistemology deals with the origins of knowledge, the nature of knowing and the construction of knowledge (Maykut & Morehouse, 1995). But can we say that all Western, Eastern and Pacific knowledge have the same origins and construction so that we can interchange instruments for collecting, analysing and constructing new knowledge? Would researchers whose knowing is derived from Western origins have values, and lived realities that allow understanding of issues pertaining to knowledge and ways of being that originated from nga wairua (spirits) and whenua of Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Tuvalu or the other Pacific nations? More directly, can research methodologies that were designed to identify dominant cultural issues and then provide solutions for them, be used to find solutions for Pacific peoples whose knowledge and ways of being as well as lived realities are very different here in Aotearoa/New Zealand? I suggest this not a valid approach.

Pacific peoples have endured years of disempowering research with little social or economic improvement in health and education. The majority of Pacific students are over represented at the bottom end of health and education statistics, which was also the case some 20 years ago (Coxon, Marshall, Massey, 1994; Fusitu'a & Coxon 1998; Vaioleti, 2001, 2006). It would seem then that despite research carried out over the years to improve the lives of Pacific peoples, even with the inclusion of Pacific peoples as research participants, the research has been largely ngaue tae 'aonga (wasted effort) (Taufe'ulungaki, 2000; Vaioleti, 2003; Vaioleti & Vaioleti, 2003).

Peta Mo'ungatonga (talanoa, June, 2003) confirmed that Pacific peoples seem tired of surveys. If they do take part in research, it is often with reluctance. One of the indicators she used to support this claim is the often initial unenthusiastic question of, 'how long will this take' that greets her on her research visits. Mo'ungatonga went on to say that *"the fact they do not understand research talk, find the questions and ticking boxes dry and boring and the lack of usefulness of some past research does*

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<sup>10</sup> Vaioleti, L.M.M. (1999). Great Kiwi Schools Poetry Challenge. Retrieved 12 Sept 03 from <http://www.poetry.co.nz/view.asp?surn..>

*not help*". She indicated that because she is Pacific, she knows how culturally invasive some New Zealand research approaches can be for Pacific peoples.

For Pacific people, the historical pattern of data collection, knowledge creation and theorising has been one characterised by outside researchers gathering Pacific peoples' stories. They then try to make sense of the stories, and retell them, as they understand the narrative, theorising from their own sense making stances. Just as Maori, Bishop & Glynn (1999) suggested that the researchers will become the teller of the researched stories, the narrator, and the persons who decide what constitutes the narrative. In these cases, Smith (1992, p. 53) warned that:

They (researchers) may interpret it within an overt theoretical framework but also in terms of a covert ideological framework. They have the power to distort, make invisible, to overlook, to exaggerate and to draw conclusions based, not on factual data, but on assumptions, hidden value judgments and often-downright misunderstandings. They have the potential to extend knowledge or perpetrate ignorance.

Even Pacific researchers, endeavouring to create Pacific knowledge with their own people, are often required by their supervisors and research institutions/employers to strictly adhere to methods foreign to them. The impact of such action sanitises out elements such as unseen loyalty to kin systems, actions associated with recognition of spiritual or cultural order, church obligations and deep cultural concepts that affect Pacific peoples' realities in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This leads to linear research trajectories and results that may conform to traditional thought processes and institutional conventions but have outcomes that are of little use in addressing Pacific peoples' realities.

Research for many Pacific peoples may be seen as work that will contribute to enhancing their ability to meet their cultural roles and obligations. This is reflected in a question I am often asked about research, and that is 'who is this work going to be useful for?' Because much research is driven by commercial, political or personal needs (for example, for personal qualifications) this raises a teleological issue, about the purpose of research (Maykut & Morehouse, 1995).

#### **4. 6. Challenges to talanoa and its authenticity**

In Chapter one, I stated that talanoa allows for mo'oni (purer, real, authentic) information to be available from which to weave (kakala) more relevant knowledge and possibilities for addressing Pacific issues. When Pacific peoples learn or share, much information is communicated through the senses. Because le'o (reo in Maori but the closest in English is voice) comes from the soul it is therefore considered an authentic communication (Sione Vaoleti, talanoa, May, 2008). It is vital then that researchers understand the laumalie (essence, spirit, wairua) of concepts, notions, emotions or expressions in the talanoa encounter.

Talanoa is a product of Pacific oral traditions. Talanoa is often spontaneous and learning from talanoa is memorable to participants for long durations because talanoa are usually socially meaningful and culturally relevant events, associated with emotions. Its parts are interconnected to make up a meaningful whole and the participants actively co-construct knowledge in the talanoa. In an authentic and engaging talanoa, learnings are rarely noted during the intensity of analysis; constructions and exchanges and notetaking or recording may show disrespect or disrupt the flow and spontaneity of such talanoa. Participating in talanoa trains one's memory. I remember my mother, father and other relatives had unfailing memories of what was both said and implied in different talanoa over several months.

This ability to remember is inherent amongst those who have oral traditions for communicating and storing their knowledge over the centuries. Further, as is the case for action research, knowledge that is gained from talanoa is often used to inform other talanoa that may eventually contribute to the final results of the research project. When talanoa is used as a research method, lack of overt notes and data maybe an issue for those looking for scientific records of an observation, and this may raise questions about the authenticity of the information presented as research findings.

For a Tongan person though, the authenticity of a talanoa approach rests within the cultural paradigms of connectedness and its collective systems of loyalty through accountability. In a spiritual sense this may be viewed as returning to the ancestors and in some cases, the Gods, favours done for the participants and their knowledge



and understanding. Therefore, talanoa will be carried out with all due respect for this cultural and spiritual context. Further to this, knowledge gained through co-construction during the talanoa will be used with integrity for the benefit of the kau nga fa'u and those that help construct it.

Of considerable importance to talanoa is identification of who the researcher is and who the kaunga fa'u (expert participants, support and co-constructors) and the kau nga fa'u (supporters, participants) are. When kau nga fa'u and kaunga fa'u agree to take part in talanoa, they have put their mana (reputation, integrity) on the line. In fact they are the fonua ('Epeli Hau'ofa, talanoa, May, 2004) and all that fonua implies. It is the obligation of the researcher to kau nga fa'u, their relatives, their ancestors, their village, to process or advance talanoa authentically and develop the results of it respectfully and for the purpose knowledge is being given in ways that will unnecessary harm the kaunga fa'u or the kau nga fa'u. This is where obligation to the old Tongan religion and knowledge that honours the metaphoric fonua (usually relatives, one's culture, ancestors and gods) is important. This is a very different form of accountability from those required of methodologies based on scientific or positivist epistemologies.

Kau nga fa'u will only be the most suitable and knowledgeable for that particular time. If they are not, it is likely that they will direct the researchers to the most appropriate people as dictated by the cultural order of things in the Pacific. This, for talanoa, as for other phenomenological types of research, is both its strength and its weakness (Lecompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 332).

#### **4. 6. Ethical Considerations**

*It seemed to me that 'ofa to Tongans, is the philosophy behind their way of life.*

(Kluckhohn, 1951, p. 40 in Kavaliku, 1977)

Talanoa cannot be separated from ethics, spirituality, existence, time and space (Vaiolleti, 2003, 2006). However, this does not mean that ethics belonging to other systems are excluded. Rather, they are adapted to be more culturally aligned so that purposes and aims of talanoa are met. Furthermore, and in line with Kaupapa Maori

Research values, the rights and welfare of the participants are paramount and will be protected before, during and after the research project has been completed. Therefore, the following research ethics guidelines for Maori, outlined by Smith (1997), also serve a similar purpose for the Tongan experience:

- Aroha ki te Tangata (respect for people)
- Kanohi kitea (the seen face; present yourself to people face to face)
- Titiro, whakarongo.....korero (look, listen.....speak)
- Manaaki ki te Tangata (share and host people, be generous)
- Kia taupato (be cautious)
- Kaua e takahia te mana o te Tangata (do not trample over the mana of people)
- Kaua e mahaki (don't flaunt your knowledge)

These ethical guidelines must be strictly adhered to in order to protect the interests, mana and tapu of the participants as well as those of their taonga (knowledge) shared. This will be particularly important if participants are tangata whenua. However for Tongan participants the respect paid during the talanoa relationships will be guided by the customs of respect paid to other Pacific participants and influenced by their own unique way of doing things.

Researchers have a responsibility both to their institutions and to their participants whom they rely on in their search for knowledge. They must take into account the possible effect they may have on the participants and act in such ways that preserve their dignity as human beings (Cohen, Lawrence & Morrison, 2001). Cavan (1977) cited in Cohen, Lawrence & Morrison (2001, p. 56) stated, "...ethics is a matter of principles, (and) sensitivity to the right of others. Being ethical limits the choices we can make in the pursuit of the truth. Ethics says that while truth is good, respect for human dignity is better ..."

If researching ethically is about respecting human dignity, then it is critical that it is conducted in ways that are culturally appropriate for the participants. It is imperative that Pacific research ethics (protocols) emerge from Pacific worldviews in order to keep synergy with the methodology and protect the integrity of participants as Pacific cultural beings. In this case, the protocols must be based in 'anga faka-Tonga (Tongan processes). The followings concepts, which are Pacific with Tongan terminologies, are proposed to secure the appropriate protocols.

*Faka'apa'apa* (respect, humility, being considerate)

Researchers are encouraged to be cautious, respectful – to see (not just look), hear (not just listen) and to observe and understand the culture and context they are engaged in, then behave accordingly. This could include not dominating space and conversations. A researcher's first contact with *kau nga fa'u*, should be face to face while ensuring the appropriate communication is used at all times. A researcher should also ensure that his/her dress code is always appropriate and that his/her body language is relevant, including to sit (position in the room – close to the door?), stand or look. He/she must watch out for older people, brothers and sisters that maybe present, as each situation demands a different set of behaviours. *Faka'apa'apa* along with *'ofa*, are the basis for relationships that will enable credible exchanges. *Faka'apa'apa* and *tauhi vaa*, are fundamental to each other. Under the heading of *faka'apa'apa* is *'Oua 'e fiepoto* (do not flaunt your knowledge, don't be smart).

*Anga lelei* (tolerance, generosity, kind, helpful, calmness, dignified)

There may be activities that a researcher will not understand in the world of Pacific peoples so he/she must stay observant so that he/she learns and acts appropriately. A researcher must have understanding of the situation of the *kau nga fa'u*. If there is work that a researcher can help with, then he/she can help do it while talking. It will be an opportunity to observe behaviour that will enrich the *talanoa*. Further, the *kau nga fa'u* must feel that their contributions are worthwhile and helpful; otherwise, they may not contribute freely. A little gift of light food may be appropriate but the researcher needs to be careful not to offend or create a sense of dependency. *Mata'ofa* (directly translated as a loving face or a face that radiates love) encourages the researcher to be inclusive, generous, positive, warm and perceptive.

*Mateuteu* (well prepared, hardworking, professional and responsive)

Pacific peoples are made up of many different communities, each with their own cultures, language and values. A researcher must do his/her homework before involving participants, including, knowing both his/her *whakapapa* (family background) and those of the *kau nga fa'u* (*fakahohoko*, exploring possible ancestral connections). This is a prelude to most initial *talanoa*. Knowing the *kau nga fa'u* social standings is also advisable so that researchers can act, relate and behave

appropriately. Many Pacific families have fatongia (family, church and other societal duties) that can disrupt and intervene during any talanoa so it is advisable to be prepared for possible disruptions.

All research materials should be prepared ahead of time. The researcher should be knowledgeable about the subject under investigation before engaging participants. It is important not to waste kau nga fa'u time. Faka'aonga (make worthwhile), ngaue 'aonga (useful work), talanoa 'aonga (useful talk) along with other 'aonga lead to meaningful engagement. Therefore, all work involving kau nga fa'u must be meaningful. A researcher must honour the kindness and willingness of kau nga fa'u to be involved in the research.

*Poto he anga* (know what to do and do them well, be cultured, etc)

Each stage of any research project has its potential ethical challenges. Poto helps us to recognise that we are part of a natural order, the natural way of being. 'Poto he anga' must be exercised from the conception of the research all through to the end and requires consultation and being accountable. It may include inviting participants to contribute to the design of the research. They may decline but inclusiveness and humility have been shown. This includes using respectful ways when dealing with the participants, keeping confidentiality and ensuring that the writing and publishing do not embarrass.

Pacific peoples possess the ability to maintain enthusiasm as any hint of displeasure may affect relationships and therefore the research processes and results. Skilled application of these concepts comes with years of lived experience. It is recommended that suitable people supervise Pacific projects. In talanoa, speaking turns may be led by the kau nga fa'u. But it is also important not to flaunt your knowledge or be smart ('oua 'e fiepoto).

Integral to Poto he anga is tauhi vaa. As already noted, this refers to what researchers do to maintain good relationships between themselves, the kau nga fa'u and other stakeholders. It requires researchers and their institution to engage in proactive activities, some of which may be strategies. This includes co-identifying the need for research and protecting kau nga fa'u interests, their language, culture, welfare,

reputation before, during and well after the project is completed. In giving over knowledge to the researchers the researcher and his/her institution is implicated by reciprocity to honour this gifting by continuing support and tauhi vaa commitments to the participants' community. Accountability in Kaupapa Māori Research is similar to the symbolic undertaking by researchers to commit to an ongoing relationship with Maori after accepting the koha (gifting) of Maori knowledge from the community (Bishop, 1996; Bishop & Glynn, 1999).

*‘Ofa fe’unga* (appropriate compassion, empathy, aroha, love, for the context)

‘Ofa is seen as the justification for behaviours be it through not having enough, or having a lot of (Kavaliku, 1977; Futa Helu, talanoa, January, 2002). For ‘ofa, an esteemed person is one who satisfies (perceived) needs by being generous to the point that none is left to give away. Fe’unga limits ‘ofa (compassion or generosity) to what is appropriate only for a given situation. Poto in ‘ofa fe’unga is about the capacity to work with others for their benefit in trying circumstances (Futa Helu, talanoa, January 2002) without causing dependency or interfering with the integrity of the research or the stakeholders. A person displaying awareness of poto or wisdom has ‘ofa. In the research ethics context it is about not affecting the world of the participants in a negative or superficial way. ‘Ofa fe’unga is fundamental in maintaining integrity by placing it at the centre of all research activities.

In the Pacific, good relationships with god/s, the land, nature and each other are the basis of all ethical behaviour (tauhi va) (Vaioliti, Morrison & Vermeulen, 2002; Helu, 1991; Taufe’ulungaki, 2000). Faka’apa’apa, anga lelei, mateuteu, poto and ‘ofa fe’unga should secure good relationships and contribute to the success of the research. The talanoa, kakala and the above protocols together should ensure effective talanoa. The talanoa research method ensures that the social, political intellectual and cultural legitimacy of Pacific peoples are taken-for-granted, and Pacific cultures, knowledge and values are accepted in their own right.

In this chapter, I discuss my approach in undertaking talanoa with informants (kau nga fa'u) and my own mentors and personal support group (kaunga fa'u) in the course of my search for deeper meaning of the key Tongan concepts examined in the thesis. I am mindful of the danger of reifying the process of talanoa and making it sounds like a simple consistent "Pacific way" of collecting information. One of my kaunga fa'u considers that the subtleties of talanoa are a window to the minds and hearts of Tongan people and students, and these specific subtleties are what makes it uniquely Pacific and in this case Tongan (Timoti Harris, talanoa, July, 2008).

### **5. 1. Defining talanoa: an approach and a caution**

I am regularly asked to define talanoa simply and I find this difficult. I have no simple formula nor do I have pre-determined steps for learning about and conducting talanoa. Talanoa can be circular in its questioning, inter-connected to many contexts and situations and is embedded in historical understandings. It takes into consideration the kau nga fa'u, their roles and status, the locality where it is held and these characteristics can have different weightings at different times. Occasionally we may indeed proceed in a way that seems straightforward.

As an emergent research method, my understanding of talanoa and its challenges grow stronger the more I engage with it. In its application I am constantly aware of my own position both as a researcher and also as a Tongan male. Ritchie (2002) points out that researchers carry with them into their research studies, their cultural and personal value systems which have been shaped by previous education experiences and the intersecting issues of culture, gender, power, class, family status and responsibilities. These dynamics play out in the talanoa depending on my relationships to my kau nga fa'u.

Talanoa as a method of research is clearly not alone in consideration of contextual factors. In narrative research, one can carry out a study from data collected from life stories, literary works, field notes, observations as a narrative, conversation, diaries, interviews and even personal notes or letters (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilbar, 1998, p. 2). Talanoa allows for all the above as well as for researchers to co-construct new knowledge with the *kau nga fa'u* and *kaunga fa'u* in the process of the exchange of ideas during the talanoa (Vaiotei, 2003a, 2003b). It is not just a way of collecting information; it is a process of knowledge construction in its own right.

For those used to the structures and disciplines of traditional research methods, and who rely on written definitions for clarification of concepts, it will initially be difficult to grasp the essence of talanoa. To understand talanoa it is best to learn through experience of the process in several different contexts in terms of the relationships between those involved in the exchanges of ideas. Talanoa is learned through doing. In any event, it is essential to appreciate that any particular talanoa can only be understood in terms of specific social contexts, realities, protocols, and cultures that are relevant before, during and after the specific meeting.

The following sections show how I used talanoa to further my work with communities, groups and individuals in the course of research before and for this thesis. Through sharing these examples I hope to enable the reader to gain a better understanding of talanoa as a research method. This approach follows what Clandinin & Connelly (2000, p. 20) suggested as a method for defining narrative inquiry by saying: "Our intention is to come to the 'definition' of narrative inquiry slowly ...by 'showing' rather than 'telling' what narrative inquirers do..."

My intention for talanoa is to arrive at the definition slowly and by illustrating examples throughout the thesis. In this context, the following well-known Tongan proverb is instructive: '*Ikai tunu pe paka, pea kula*'. This literally means that 'the crab will not be red (indication that it is evenly cooked for nutrition, taste etc) as soon as you put it in the fire'. *Paka* is a highly desired delicacy and only available to a few. When prepared properly it requires skill and total attention. Slow equitable heating must be applied to different masses of the body at different times and durations in order for the totality of the crab to come to the desirable eating state (it is juicy when

the thin parts are not over-cooked or darker while the body is still grey or uncooked). That is the whole body is consistently kula or light red all over.

Caution is central to Tongan teaching, learning and educational discourses which are underpinned by respect for multi-level, spiritual, culturally intricate relationships that exist, known and unknown, seen and unseen. It is a warning against rushing to achieve quick results or a definition without consideration to all the parts that make up the interconnectedness and totality of a deep cultural process that involves all intuitive senses and overt knowledge in a kind of three dimensional approach.

In explaining the talanoa method, I also employ throughout the thesis the process of talanoa. Quite simply I talk, I dialogue, I query, I wonder, I reflect, I open up my world and take a step back to marvel at my ancestors for their creative and courageous initiatives which can be theorised into emerging frameworks. A talanoa method thus underpins the thesis. And as the process of talanoa continues, the argument unfolds and is marked by examples on the journey towards the conclusions.

## **5. 2. Talanoa in practice: some examples**

I have undertaken talanoa with Tongans and other Pacific peoples in many places throughout the world including the USA, Australia, New Zealand and the small nation states of Fiji, Samoa and, of course, Tonga. Many of the Tongans living overseas moved for employment or family reasons and, on the whole, were living successful lives making strong contributions, economically and culturally to their new homelands. Despite being amidst value systems quite different to those of their country of origin, they managed to maintain strong cultural traditions.

In order to discuss talanoa it is necessary to identify two key groups of participants: my kaunga fa'u and the kau nga fa'u. My kaunga fa'u are a group of family members and close academic colleagues who have assisted me throughout the research journey to stay focused on the topic while offering critical feedback on my numerous drafts. Kaunga actually indicates active participation and fa'u means construction, therefore they are co-constructors in the development of this thesis. The kaunga fa'u activities



involved identification of the sources of knowledge, collection and as indicated above, construction of ideas and knowledge as the thesis developed. With the kaunga fa'u we held talanoa almost on a daily basis and at different levels. Those in the kaunga fa'u cluster my ta'okete or tuakana, the late Rev Sione Vaioloti, Church of Tonga, my sisters Maleponi and 'Ana; and my uncle and aunt, Saia and 'Ana. This group also afforded me access to their own networks of friends, academics, relatives and colleagues without whom I would not have been able to access the knowledge and understanding of the Tongan cultural concepts that are at the core of this thesis.

The kau nga fa'u are the people I interacted with in the course of collecting the information for this thesis. Kau means in this context 'the' and nga indicates various or many. Fa'u, as indicated above, means construction and in this context it means the other co-constructors at a more casual level, and not at the integral level of kaunga fa'u. Many of my relationships with kau nga fa'u existed before my thesis research began. I know that the usual practice in research reporting is not to identify informants by name but talanoa does not have this tradition. Rather, the naming of participants is a marker of the quality of the information that invokes trustworthiness and this extends to the fact that kau nga fa'u actually expect to see their name in print. If kau nga fa'u asked to be anonymous then their request was certainly granted.

I have clustered the kau nga fa'u into a series of groups in order to discuss dimensions of the talanoa. This approach is similar to that used when creating the kakala (Thaman, 1993a, 1997a) that was explained in Chapter Four. Kakala flowers are sorted according to their kind and often their place in a hierarchy of cultural importance. In putting kau nga fa'u into different clusters on the basis of their age, gender, educational and cultural background, locality and other factors, explanations are made easier of the talanoa implementation process. My talanoa approach differed according to the individuals and the group while acknowledging that kau nga fa'u may belong to more than one group/cluster.

In the next four sections I outline briefly Maori, women, educators in New Zealand, and Pacific academics in university settings as kau nga fa'u. This is followed by two more lengthy sections addressing specific talanoa with elders and leaders, as well as with community groups in Samoa and Fiji.

### Maori

I have already stated my acknowledgement to tangata whenua. There is much to talanoa about and to learn from Maori educational concepts and the Maori struggle for cultural and language continuity. Maori experiences with te kohanga reo, kura kaupapa Maori, wharekura and te whare wānanga, as well as the recent Te Kotahitanga project; all have relevance for the successful development of Pacific as well as Maori education.

My talanoa with Maori occurred in offices, homes, over shared meals and in planned and unplanned ways. I am aware of the notion of rangatiratanga and I would like to think that I consistently upheld the mana and rangatiratanga of the tangata whenua in our talanoa while still being participatory and challenging in our co-theorising. Many Maori adhere to kaupapa Māori as a research methodology and so when discussing my talanoa approach we were able to engage in robust, critical and academic discussions on culture, on theory, on politics and on past whakapapa. Given the collective nature of both our cultures, we understood each other to a certain extent anyway. I was also afforded many opportunities to engage with family and friends in their wider circles and in their whanau, hapu and iwi.

### Women.

I list this cluster separately because within my culture, a different approach to women is often a necessity. Tongan and to a lesser degree Samoan culture and other Polynesian cultures have strong matriarchal elements and have a strong brother/sister covenant in existence ('Ana Moungatonga, talanoa, January, 2011). In Tongan circles it is known, that one's rank (often an indicator of political and economic power) comes from one's mother. In the past, for powerful chiefs, this includes military power as well. This cultural reality is aptly supported by the Tongan proverb 'tama tu'u he fa'ee' which means 'one's reputation, be it to perform extraordinary feats or be excused of certain behaviour, is because of his mother or maternal lineage.

Rank for Tongan people then occupies their thinking which impacts on their daily attitudes, communications and behavior. Integral to rank is gender and age. Older

and senior people and women are venerated<sup>11</sup> especially matriarchs. As shared in other parts of this thesis, matriarchs for kinfolk groups are likened to Hikule'o, priestess and guardian of the gate to the spiritual world ('Epeli Hau'ofa, talanoa, 2004). Therefore they are seen as having spiritual powers that can be harmful and are tapu to their male relatives and their offspring. The rank and power of these women are sanctioned by God/s, the spirit world (ibid). They are appropriately referred to as the eiki maama (living lord, worldly lord or lord on earth). Contact with them including for research purposes are undertaken with caution. The respectful protocols suggested in Chapter Four should be followed to protect their integrity and those of the researcher.

Certain behaviours are prohibited for men in presence of certain women depending on your relationships to them. This includes female family members, sisters, female first, third even fourth consins who are your senior. When in the company of senior Tongan women academics such as Dr 'Ana Maui Taufe'ulungaki, I was always aware that culturally some of them, like 'Ana, were my superiors as they have blood ties to my father. Therefore, specific cultural contexts need to be acknowledged. Custom requires me to respect and serve them as they are closer to the old Tongan Gods and through this service I will find favour with the old gods ('Epeli Hau'ofa, talanoa, May, 2004).

The protocols and language of my talanoa with 'Ana then had to be formal with the appropriate respectful and chiefly dialect. I was mindful of wearing clothing that completely covered my body and I always endeavoured to pay any expenses that may have occurred in our outings or during our talanoa. This was not always necessary as she was a very generous host but I was mindful of the cultural fatongia as a person that descended from a male line to anyone that descended from a female line if there was any blood relationship.

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<sup>11</sup> This is still practised today. A sad example of this was in the recent sinking of the Princess Ashika in Tonga at the end of 2009 where no women survived. As it is with tradition this night, men and hard cargo were out on deck often exposed to the sea and weather leaving women more comfortable in cabins within the hull of the Ashika. When it overturned and sunk rapidly, men were thrown off the deck to the dark sea with the cargo but all most if not all the women were trapped. Some men died diving into the cabins to rescue the women. Eleven of my relatives including men perished in this event.

At another level, to ensure that no tapu was transgressed which might harm me or my children, all talanoa with ‘Ana were held in an open office, restaurant or other public places. These well understood and shared cultural meanings helped to create the noa which then allowed for the tala to take place. The context had to be right and this included the appropriate dress and language, as well as me simply knowing my place and role that is the legacy of my descent.

#### Educators and learners in New Zealand of all backgrounds.

In talanoa with this cluster I was able to focus my thinking on issues that may impact on the application of ancient Tongan concepts and values in the contemporary education system and school classroom. The current experience of teachers is invaluable given that they have daily contact with the students and the education system at the level of disseminating knowledge and ways of knowing.

Talanoa with this cluster was not as complex from a cultural standpoint as those with ‘Ana. While the talanoa with Tongan and other Pacific kau nga fa’u required attention to cultural norms, we had all largely been shaped by living in New Zealand and in many ways this shared experience reduced the intensity of the cultural expectations. My main considerations involved recognition of their time, employment and generosity in the sharing of experiences. These talanoa were conducted as peers and as educators, joined by a common kaupapa and shared vision in terms of improving educational outcomes for Pacific/Tongan students. In that way we were equal partners rather than the researcher and the participant. However, despite the fact I had lived in New Zealand for many years, I was still aware of my cultural positioning (Scheurich & Young, 1997). Talanoa allowed me to give input, offer explanation into some of their experiences and to challenge them through reciprocating in the sharing of knowledge.

#### Pacific academics located in the Pacific.

In 2004, I spent several months at the University of the South Pacific as a visiting fellow. The University of the South Pacific (USP) is partly owned by Tonga and, as a result, Fiji is home to many Tongan people. It is like a second home partly because of the Tongan desire for education in a university that is accessible, and partly because

of a lengthy history of engagement between Tonga and Fiji that goes back centuries, especially along the common border of the eastern islands of Fiji – the Lau group.

I was hosted by the Director of the Institute of Education, Dr ‘Ana Maui Taufe’ulungaki (see section above on women kau nga fa’u). I was fortunate to spend considerable time with prominent poets, story tellers, artists and critical thinkers on Pacific and Tongan education and culture such as the late Professor ‘Epeli Hau’ofa, a very prominent author, poet and artist who was the director of the USP School of Oceanic Art and Culture. ‘Epeli and ‘Ana both have distinguished reputations as Tongan and Pacific academics, are experts in Tongan culture and are my seniors. They gave me their time to talanoa, to join them in their academic, professional and community activities and these experiences were deeply moving and enriching.

Dr ‘Ana Taufe’ulungaki was actually one of my old school teachers, so I already had a relationship with her. My family had continual contact with her because my siblings also attended Tonga College where she held the post of first female teacher and later the first female principal. I have had intermittent contact with her over the years. However, I met her again in Auckland when she was invited to open a conference to launch the Health Research Guidelines for Pacific research in 2003. I spoke at the conference on talanoa as a research method. It was then that I asked if I might spend time learning and engaging in talanoa with her as well as other highly respected Tongan and Pacific academics and cultural experts at the University of the South Pacific. She warmed to the idea and suggested that I return and work with her Pacific students at the USP.

After securing study leave from the University of Waikato, I travelled to USP where I carried out my talanoa with these respected knowledgeable people, held talks with Pacific students, assisted Masters students with their research writing as well as making presentations to both staff and students as a contribution and in the spirit of cultural reciprocity. As ‘Ana was aware of my research topic and my educational interest, she arranged for her Masters students to have talanoa with me for mutually beneficial reasons. Because the research by students was mainly about cultural and indigenous knowledge of their various Melanesian, Micronesian and Polynesian homelands, these talanoa experiences were very helpful.

I also had privileged access to some other senior academics through my relationship with ‘Ana. ‘Ana made arrangements for me to have talanoa with Dr Sitiveni Halapua of the East-West Centre, University of Hawai’i who is known for his use of talanoa to negotiate solutions for the political parties of the Fijian Parliament after several coup d’etat and for bringing to an end the five week public service strike in Tonga. Another fortunate introduction, also arranged by ‘Ana, was to prominent author, artist and poet, the late ‘Epeli Hau’ofa, with whom I spent a lot of time. We held talanoa in all sorts of places: during his classes; in his office, in restaurants, and at the generously stocked USP staff and students’ cafeteria.

One especially memorable meal with ‘Epeli and his hospitable wife, at their home afforded me with an opportunity to inspect his young nonu<sup>12</sup> plantations as well as his students’ plantation. The latter belonged to the Pacific students at USP, i.e. from Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. During our travels to look for fresh fish, yams and other supplies for our meal, I asked ‘Epeli what he meant when he said ‘they are not here’ as we went past several vegetable stands on the way to his farm. He replied that the students would normally be selling vegetables and other crops from their plantation on his farm on the roadside to Suva at that busy time of the day. As far as I can recall this is what he said:

*Many of the students and their parents do not have money for fees and their studies. Sometimes they spent money on unforeseen expenses once they get here - to the university. I pay their fees for them... I know how difficult things are for them at home,,, I give them part of the land I bought so that they can plant vegetables and other crops, harvest them to feed themselves as well as sell some of it so they can pay me back when they can. It does not always workout for me though... (‘Epeli Hau’ofa, talanoa, June, 2004),*

This conversation demonstrated that teaching in the Pacific does not start and end in the classroom. It continues outside the classroom and involves supporting learners financially as well as with regard to their physical and emotional wellbeing. Talanoa with ‘Epeli gave me memories and stories for a lifetime. One of his most popular

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<sup>12</sup> Nonu is a plant that most people in the Pacific use as parts of medicine. The fruit are often turned into health drink that attracts good prices in New Zealand, Australia and other western countries. It is known by the people of the Cook Islands and other part of the Pacific as noni.

works, *Our Sea of Islands*, is about “the seas that connect”. I was witness to him living and walking these connections in the fullest sense.

There are two other important groups of kau nga fa’u – elders and leaders, and community educators in the Pacific. The next two sections deal with my talanoa with these groups in some detail because they involve a number of different contexts for talanoa that have relevance for education as well as for learning about the Tongan concepts that are critical for the thesis.

### **5. 3. Talanoa with the holders and carriers of traditional knowledge**

Talanoa with elders, religious leaders and senior statesmen occurred primarily because of shared history, genealogical links, cultural understandings, and through family contacts. Those kau nga fa’u who were connected to me by blood, saw me as a representation of those who have gone before. In many cases they knew of my ties not only to the fonua but also to them in a wider collective sense. We, as representatives of the present generation, were simply doing what our ancestors had done, perpetuating and maintaining familial and generational ties. Because of the relational history, the talanoa would very often quickly reach a deep level of analysis and engagement. That is because trust, obligation and fatongia ensured there were shared understandings and shared meanings. There was no need to negotiate starting or ending points.

Needless to say, talanoa with this cluster was my privilege. The seniority of the kau nga fa’u demanded certain behaviours and I was constantly aware of my position and my need to address certain cultural protocols. This was not difficult given the milieu I had grown up in, and I would like to think that I am respectful and considerate in giving such matters due regard. This will become more apparent in the brief reviews below of my talanoa with some of the senior statesmen.

#### **Sateki ‘Ulukalala**

An important talanoa was with Sateki ‘Ulukalala, one of only two children of the last ‘eiki lahi (paramount chief) of the Vava’u group. Sateki was a direct descendant of

the kings who had ruled the Ha'apai and the Vava'u groups for centuries. It is their ancestor Finau 'Ulukalala that befriended and hosted Captain Cook during his three visits in the 1770s in Ha'apai with such style and generosity that Cook was moved to naming Tonga the Friendly Islands (Martin, 1991). Sateki knew much about the chiefly knowledge that only a sector of the Tongan community could access. He was one of the few early students of Tonga College founded by King Tupou 1.

During our many talanoa, we were never alone. There were always men and women within the reach of his voice whether he was in a room, walking or travelling. People that were present did not speak often to him or to anyone for that matter unless they were in a communication with him. If this occurred it was almost always initiated by Sateki. My ta'okete (tuakana), Sione Vaioleti, was the exception.

Sateki seemed to enjoy deep talanoa with Sione about spiritual matters, religion, the meaning of life, international and local politics, history and culture and the state of affairs for Tongan people in both Tonga and elsewhere in the world. My talanoa with him was arranged through my tuakana because of his special relationship with Sateki and culturally it was more appropriate for my tuakana to make the request. When Sateki asked further about the purpose of the talanoa with me, my brother spoke of my thesis topic and my wish to provide teachers and other educators with insights they can use to reflect the values and culture of young Tongan people while teaching them. I suggested that such an approach to learning by Tongan students would provide them with a sense of belonging as well as preserving the knowledge of their ancestors. I also explained that if teachers use approaches that are culturally meaningful the students would like school more and would be more successful in their education in a different physical and cultural environment.

The first talanoa was in a sideroom where around 40 senior and junior church ministers were waiting to engage in a New Years feast, provided by the Church of Tonga in their Head Office in Oakland, California, USA. Sateki did most of the talking. No one stood, moved around or interrupted apart from my brother who asked for clarifications. People spoke the formal chiefly dialect to him and in his presence. During our talanoa, the group of ministers waited in the main dining hall until our talanoa was over so that the feast could start. During the feast, which was attended by



about 300 people, my ta'okete as Head of the Church stood to thank everyone for the work performed during the week and for the feast. He also informed the gathering of my work and my talanoa with Sateki. He apologised for our lateness to the feast as a result of my talanoa with the Church's chief and thanked those who were involved stating that the talanoa was conducted in the spirit of reciprocity given the voluntary work I had done for the Church in New Zealand and Tonga.

I doubt very much that I would have had the privilege of his talanoa solely on the basis of my status as a researcher, let alone the opportunity for further discussions with Sateki over several years if he had not trusted and respected my tuakana. Talanoa with Sateki were very meaningful because he was so steeped in cultural and ancestral knowledge. His matapule (talking chief) often took up exchanges for him. On some occasions, the matapule of my tuakana would engage with the matapule for Sateki on our behalf questioning, challenging and seeking clarity. However, when my tuakana spoke with Sateki there were no interventions, not even from the talking chiefs. Fortunately talanoa directly with Sateki was afforded to me too.

Sione was always with me during talanoa with Sateki, and I am sure this was done for cultural and religious reasons – his fatongia to me and my work. For me though, in my role as a researcher, I wore my ta'ovala and used the Tongan formal dialect in order to speak appropriately as a sign of respect in such august company. The time given to me for talanoa was very generous and I fully appreciated this. Sateki was of truly ancient chiefly blood, photographing him or recording his voice would be like holding possible sacred essence therefore potentially harmful to me, or my children. My parents would have advised against such measures and therefore I did not capture his talanoa other than in my heart and in my mind and in written note taking subsequent to the talanoa.

Midway through 2004, as I made preparations to visit Sateki again, I received news that he had passed on. The opportunity to talanoa with Sateki, and to learn from such a knowledgeable custodian of Tongan tradition is one that I will always treasure. Completion of this thesis became more urgent with his passing and the realisation that many of the older generation with such knowledge of old Tonga would soon be gone.

Rev. Sami Fehoko Veikoso

*'oku ou ongo 'I 'e au oku ikai teu ilo fe'unga au ki he ngaahi me'a teke fiema 'u ki ho'o fekumi. 'oku 'ikai ke taau ke ta talanoa taua ki ha me'a 'o e ako he koe mea 'ia oku fai'aki pe faafaa 'aki e ngaue koe ki'I 'ilo pe he fai e ngaue 'o e lotu. 'ikai ha 'ausia ia 'o e ngaahi mala'e 'oku ke 'I ai (talanoa, April, 2002).*

*I feel that I am not the one that you should consult or who could help with those that you are seeking. It is not fitting for me to advise you on education as what has guided my stumbling around in carrying out my duties and role had been from the learning from serving of people and god. I have never got anywhere near the level of education that you have.*

These were humble comments from someone who had had bestowed upon him the title “tufunga moe toutai” by the late Queen Salote (Sitani Tu’ihalangie, talanoa, December, 2008<sup>13</sup>). “Toutai” is a navigator, sea fighter or the one that fights the anger of the oceans or seas, even master of the seas. “Tufunga” on the other hand is a Tongan term that includes architect, builder of objects, community or fonua as well as the repository of knowledge and a healer. Sami is descended from the male line of my mother’s family who, as I referred to earlier, were traditional healers. They were among the principal warriors and political supporters of Taufa’ahau, King of Ha’apai in his military and political campaigns to wrestle political rule of the nation from his other Kanokupolu dynasty relatives who resided in Tongatapu.

I had known Sami since I was a child as he was a familiar figure in my household. As well he was a known figure in Tonga. As a result of our close blood ties, I have led long-term projects for the Church of Tonga on a voluntary basis because it was my fatongia to support his spiritual and professional endeavours. My talanoa with him was clearly easy because quite apart from the above reasons he was my ‘fa’ee tangata’. The closest translation of ‘fa’ee tangata’ in English is male mother. ‘Fa’ee’ in Tongan is similar to ‘whaea’ in Aotearoa but in Tongan, ‘fa’ee’ is both a mother and a father. Rank in Tongan society is gained through one’s mother (‘Epeli Hau’ofa, talanoa, 2004; ‘Ana Taufe’ulungaki, talanoa, 2004).

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<sup>13</sup> This was a talanoa with Rev. Sitani Tu’ihalangie in Reno, Nevada, US. He is 79, a retired minister of the Church of Tonga from Kolomotu’a. His genealogy goes back to Aleamotu’a the King of Tonga from the Kanokupolu dynasty immediately before Tupou I. He was married to my late aunt – Seini (Nonu) therefore he is my uncle.

At the end of my talanoa with Sami, I said;

*'I he osi eku tohitohi 'a etau talanoa, teu toe ha'u keke fakatonutonu 'eku me'a na'e hiki.*

*When I finish writing up our talanoa, I will come back so you can correct things that I may have not gotten right.*

His response was;

*... 'ikai, 'alu pe ko e he koe me'a pe 'ena kuo lava. 'Oku 'ikai ke taau keke ha'u koe keu fakatonutonu ho'o ngaue. Fai 'e koe e me'a kotoa 'oku taau he koho mala'e ia pea ko ho taukei ia. Ka 'oku 'I ai ha tafa'aki 'oku 'ikai ngali lelei ai 'a e leaa, pe fakahokohoko peake fakalele'i. Ko e lelei ho'o ngaue, ko 'etau lelei ia. Nau fa'elei koe pea ko koe ko au, ko au ko koe ia. Fai ia 'oku lelei (kia kitautolu).*

*No, you go and carry on now as that is all I can help with. It is not fitting that you come back to me so I can correct or check your work. You do everything that is fitting as it is your field and you are more experienced in it. If there is a part that does not look good, confusing (my choice of words) or the order which they came out are not good or clear, you improve it or make it good. When your work is good, we are all good (as our mana is maintained). I gave birth to you, you are me, I am you. Do what is best (for all of us).*

Because of his fatongia to my family, Sami gave me his permission to amend his words as long as it enhanced our collective work towards a good outcome for Pacific learners. This may be challenging to some given the traditions of other research methods. But, as is the case in narrative research, talanoa is interpretive, and an interpretation is always personal, partial, and dynamic. Talanoa, like narrative research (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilbar, 1998), is suitable for those scholars and researchers who, to a certain degree, are comfortable with ambiguity. It is therefore not inappropriate to amend the findings from talanoa and, when necessary, to hold more talanoa to clarify situations.

### Professor Futa Helu

Professor Futa Helu, who passed on in 2010, was a prominent Tongan scholar, philosopher and the founder of the oldest South Pacific University, Atenisi. He was a popular and critical author and university lecturer. A well travelled and worldly man, he has hosted many media programmes of an academic nature and was constantly on television in Tonga where his opinion on a variety of matters was highly regarded. As

a child, I recall my mother telling me to take my cue and emulate Futa as he had given so much to the people of Tonga. I met him several years ago in New Zealand where one of my kaunga fa'u and I hosted him with the Tongan community during his visit to Hamilton. We held a fund raising night for him and collected a modest amount of funds towards his continued commitment to education in Tonga. Our talanoa occurred in New Zealand as well as in his home on visits back to Tonga. He offered himself as a supervisor to my thesis, a gesture that honoured me. My mother would have been delighted.

At another talanoa held at his home, I asked if he minded if we taped our talanoa and he agreed. However, I realised that he had not been well physically and as we started I felt I should not persist with the request, so I discontinued the recording and made this particular talanoa very short. Although his family were going about with their busy personal and professional duties they still afforded me the time, space and generous refreshment in their full house.

#### **5. 4. Talanoa with community educators from various parts of the Pacific**

Kau nga fa'u in this cluster were working amongst their own people, assisting with the building of skills and capabilities in terms of sustaining communities. Several were successful village or community educators and leaders with little or no secondary education. Their cultural practices are ingrained and they understand, know and sometimes challenge their own practices in their communities. This group was always enthusiastic about attending the talanoa, including those travelling long distances to take part in the meetings.

##### Talanoa in Samoa

Through a common interest in Pacific knowledge, culture and environment, I met Matatumua Vermeulen and her Belgian husband, Walter. This relationship was initiated when we met during an international workshop organised by the Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) in Apia in April 1999 and before my thesis research commenced formally. Both Matatumua and Walter were in their late 60s - early 70s at the time. Matatumua is a New Zealand trained nurse, a matai title

holder and a former Member of Parliament. Walter is a medical doctor who chose the island nation of Samoa sometime ago in which to undertake his internship. According to Matatumua, he was enchanted by the land and its people so much that he married, made a family and settled there. We maintained contact and later came the request to co-facilitate a “training for trainers” project as part of a European Commission funded programme hosted by Walter and Matatumua and their environmental non-governmental organisation (NGO), called Matuaileo’o Environmental Trust (METI).

The training for trainers’ workshop was a talanoa in itself. We were fortunate to work with a group of village leaders, ministers, government agencies, local university staff, church members, local high school and tertiary students from New Zealand as well as young people from local NGOs. The participants were mainly Samoans, Tongans and a few palangi. At the workshop a member of my kaunga fa’u, our host and I had a series of talanoa with the group about local Pacific theories of teaching and learning. These talanoa focussed on their cultural knowledge especially in relation to their environment and how this can be used to teach others about how to meet their fatongia, which was generally taken to mean looking after each other and their environment.

Most of the participants were village leaders who had little exposure to Western education. We had to be careful of our assumed and ascribed power as western educated lecturers and people that represented authority. The talanoa became our leveller. After the formal introduction to the talanoa in ways that satisfied the cultural requirements of a diverse group, the co-facilitators and my kaunga fa’u explained the purpose and process of the talanoa. This included appealing to the goodwill of senior government representatives and several village matai who normally assume power and speaking rights, to give their blessing to the process of an open and respectful discussion during our two weeks of talanoa. These were necessary requests for a public talanoa in Samoa, to allow for the creation of noa for the tala part to occur without major impediment (Vaiotele, Morrison & Vermeulen, 2002).

Once this part of the talanoa was negotiated, the participants engaged in discussion. We endeavoured to engage as equitably as we could with most senior participants being impressed by the new ideas from younger participants. We were fortunate to be

working under the mantle of Matatumua and Walter both of whom were able to teach some of the modules. Our noa, which we had worked hard to build and maintain over two weeks, was transgressed one day. A New Zealand educated academic from the local National University of Samoa, (attended for that one day only), challenged us on process and our use of the theories of Paulo Freire (a foreigner) to examine Samoan political decision making structures of the village administration when Polynesia had their own age old political tools for analysing their own local issues.

Matatumua, who was her senior, dealt with this challenge by acknowledging the importance of her challenge yet encouraging us all to be mindful of the rich learning possible from the struggles of people from around the world. She identified herself as of the same political perspective as the challenger and stated their common genealogy as well. Matatumua's re-creation of noa was carried out in a culturally dignified yet direct way, which allowed the tala to return and we continued the talanoa for the rest of the day with everyone's mana intact.

There was an occasion when we realised that the noa created was not sufficient for certain participants and that differences in rank, gender and age were still overwhelming for some participants. The younger participants were requested to carry out a presentation to an assembly of about ten matai (some of whom were of very high rank) who had been invited to our workshops to talanoa. The aim was for the groups to tala their plan to improve their village environments, the education of their young and other village development projects they had worked on.

A group of young mostly New Zealand tertiary education students on practicum in Samoa prepared thoroughly for their presentations. However when it came to their turn to present their two-week project to the matai group, they froze as soon as the matai looked at them expectantly. They broke down in tears and, later in their explanations, said that they felt inadequate and insecure about their own Samoan language, their own culture and in speaking of their findings before their elders who were far more knowledgeable than they were. To present their findings to such a distinguished group seemed disrespectful. While talanoa can create an environment conducive to knowledge exchange and co-creation, one must always be mindful of

cultural considerations and seek to ensure that no parties are exposed unnecessarily to undue stress or loss of mana.

We learned two lessons from this. Firstly, we could see that the noa we create is always contextual and as such, there can be no universal approach to talanoa that will provide the environment for learning and talking freely in every situation. Talanoa, like many learning and research approaches, must be contextually aligned because it has its limitations as well as its strengths. Secondly it was clear that a lack of cultural and language knowledge and confidence contributed greatly to the students' sudden attack of self doubt and lack of security about themselves as Samoan people. Their shame at having to face and talanoa with their own chiefs was clearly apparent in this case.

If I extrapolate from this experience, and relate it to a New Zealand classroom containing Pacific students then there are several factors that need consideration. Being successful in a New Zealand educational system does not equate with success in a Pacific cultural setting. These Samoan students were successful in their New Zealand classrooms, but struggled in the cultural settings of their home country. A question arises then about the role the school should play in the cultural preparation of its students. This issue was discussed in Chapter Three when reviewing the literature, and is the subject of further consideration later in the thesis. However, there is another warning here for teachers of Pacific students in the Aotearoa/New Zealand classrooms. The respect that students have for elders and knowledgeable people (and maybe their own teachers) may impact negatively on their abilities to sit tests or deliver presentations.

### Talanoa in Fiji

Walter and Matatumua recommended our talanoa approach for community development to their Fiji colleagues, Eco-Consultants. Eco-consultants were headed by Wilco Liebrecht originally from Holland but worked extensively in Tonga. By the time we arrived in Fiji he and his Tongan family were well established in Suva. He owned Eco-Consultancy and employed a multi-ethnic Pacific and European workforce. To be true to the approaches of talanoa in terms of making learning respectful no matter where it happens, a local facilitator, Joseph Veramu, joined our

team from the University of the South Pacific (USP) (Morrison, Vaioleti & Veramu, 2002). We were sensitive about the technical equipment we used as we realized that the new laptops, camera, and data projectors we produced in our preparatory meetings with our local co-facilitator seemed to produce apprehensiveness and an awareness of insensitivity on our part coming from a much better resourced tertiary environment in New Zealand.

The talanoa was attended by representatives from Eco-Consultants, Fiji; Department of Land Resources Planning & Development (LRMRD) of Fiji; Ministry of Agriculture Sugar & Land Resettlement and members of the communities (e.g. landowners, tenant farmers, schoolteachers). Stakeholders who assisted with facilitations were also from the Ministries of Agriculture, Sugar and Land Resettlement (MASLR); Health, Environment, Regional Development, Forestry, Fijian Affairs Board and the statutory body, Native Lands Trust Board.

As was the case with the talanoa and developmental work in Samoa, it was important to open these talanoa in Fiji in culturally appropriate ways by acknowledging the fonua, asking for blessing from the God/s and acknowledging the people present. Government ministers, chiefs, representatives of the European community that funded this project as well as Ministers opened these talanoa. There were around 40 people, both male and female, aged between 18 and 65 years. Altogether, the talanoa went on for seven days and some evenings in workshop style. They included formal discussions, trips to other parts of Suva and other project sites. Our meals and kava sessions initiated many more talanoa.

The participants were indigenous Melanesians (Fijians), indigenous Polynesians (Rotumans, Tongan, Samoan and Maori), as well as local palangi Fiji citizens, palangi contract workers, Indo - Fijians and other Pacific peoples who work and live in Fiji. Because of the pan- Pacific groupings however, the talanoa could not be implemented through direct blood relationships. Rather we made connections through indirect blood relationships and an overwhelming sense of being unified as Pacific peoples with a love for our ocean and fonua.



The talanoa environment encouraged us to talk about our shared histories stories and dreams for our lands, languages, culture and we were inclusive of my Maori co-facilitator through shared ancestry as well. This part of talanoa was vital because the participants consisted of different ethnicities, organisations, opposing businesses and groups. For example, we had native land representatives whose primary concern was to rescue some land that had been over farmed. We also had farmers who paid rent for a certain time span for land and who were extracting crops from it within the shortest turn around time possible so that they could maximise the profits. Such opposing groups rarely work together.

We were able to create noa so the majority of these people felt safe enough to share their perspectives freely as a result of feeling accepted and as our learning unfolded and grew. From my point of view as well, even the non-Pacific peoples had a place as Pacific people naturally and generously embraced those of non-Pacific cultures (Dutch, Chinese etc) after engaging with them genuinely about their own situations and issues.

### **5. 5. Talanoa: a personal reflection**

My approach to talanoa is guided by my own cultural knowledge of Tongan ontology. Whether I was working alone or with a co-facilitator and *kau nga fa'u*, it was important to be respectful of culture and to be mindful of whose *fonua* we were on. There was also a need to be aware of who was going to be in the talanoa, the number of people present, who would speak, how many were supporters, the meeting place (private room, public place, private home, church hall, *marae*, classroom), the time of the day, the day of the week and the duration of the talanoa.

There is no standard way of undertaking talanoa and there are no set rules for using electronic instruments to record talanoa. However, in general, electronic recorders are not used as it is not culturally appropriate to record exchanges with elders and leaders in a talanoa context. Tongans, like other Pacific peoples, have cultures that respect oracy, memory, and the fact that some highly valued knowledge is held by only a privileged few. Most of the talanoa where responses were taped were with

educators, and individuals who were students or university educated and who understood the ethical considerations relating to recording their conversations. If I detected any sign of nervousness during talanoa with such educators, I discontinued the recording.

When there were large groups engaged in the talanoa, recording was rarely made. No note making was done during such talanoa as all our attention was given to the discussions in hand while ensuring protocols were strictly observed, especially if the talanoa involved a large group of people of different age groups, genders and rank. These included talanoa with Tongan church groups, Tongan church leaders as well as mixed Pacific groups in Tonga, Samoa, Fiji, other parts of the Pacific and USA.

It is difficult to actually define a process for engaging in talanoa and I run the risk of providing a prescriptive process that actually belies what talanoa aims to do. I have given several examples of talanoa in this Chapter in the hope that they provide some insights into how to conduct talanoa and how to respond. In formal talanoa, one would start with the words “malo ‘etau lava, pea tapu mo...” (Thank God) that we are well and I acknowledge the (title etc), but in less formal talanoa, the kau nga fa’u would be aware of one’s intent to talanoa and give signals, verbal and non verbal, to indicate appropriate engagement. The talanoa process then responds to what is said as well as what is not said, who is saying it, and how things are said and not said. There can be no one approach, nor one type of talanoa. Rather its contextual nature means that it is responsive, dynamic, highly focussed and often quite ritualistic.

## CHAPTER SIX: LEARNINGS FROM TALANOA FOR A PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK

In the previous chapter, I examined the application of talanoa and highlighted characteristics that provided the environment for knowledge to be constructed. In this chapter, I draw on many of the talanoa that comprise the primary data collection strategy for my research to demonstrate that ancient Pacific educational concepts remain embedded in the realities of the lives and learnings of Pacific peoples today. I argue that these concepts are not archaic, and their current translation in a modern age shows them to be just as powerful as their historical foundations. For Tongan students everywhere ‘ilo, potu, ako, fonua, ‘ofa and fatongia are still integral to their 21<sup>st</sup> Century lives and can be applied in classroom pedagogy.

In this chapter I situate these concepts in their cultural context also drawing attention to the concepts of fonua, malie, and mafana. It is important to know the foundation of these concepts, how they are applied in various levels of the communities of Tonga as this ensures their authenticity and flexibility of use. In this way I provide a deeper understanding of the foundations of these concepts that is necessary for articulating their use in the teaching and learning process, which is the subject of Chapter Seven.

This chapter is organised into two parts. The first shows that the fonua of Tonga, where ako, potu, ‘ilo, ‘ofa, fatongia evolved, had enterprising, sophisticated, organised, structured and visionary approaches to the challenges they faced. The educational concepts interrogated in this thesis evolved within this fonua context.

Secondly, through talanoa I draw on learning about these concepts with my kau nga fa’u in Tonga, New Zealand/Aotearoa, other Pacific countries and the United States. Many of the elderly people with knowledge relevant to these discussions have moved overseas with their children in order to seek better lifestyles and opportunities. They are members of the Tongan diaspora within which there are communities experiencing diverse realities. However, a common feature of all these communities is that their adult members remain committed to instilling Tongan values into their children and grandchildren’s psyche. It is this commitment to retaining Tongan

identities and values, irrespective of country of residence that inspired me to make the underpinning values of Tongans meaningful for classroom implementation.

## **6. 1. Interlinking the fonua, culture and people of Tonga and Oceania**

Thaman (1995b, p. 1) stated, “Polynesians... generally have cultural identities and world-views which emphasize place and their links to the vanua/fonua (inadequately translated into English as 'land'), as well as networks of exchange and/or reciprocal relationships.” This is true for many Tongan people whose identity and esteem are firmly secured in a relationship with the fonua. By fonua, I refer to the physical fonua of the land, the seas, and the heavens. It has many dimensions. ‘Eveli Hau’ofa (talanoa, May, 2004) extends the definition of physical characteristics to embrace people as an extension of fonua itself. This is in line with the ancient Greek term ‘autochthonous’ given to indigenous people, meaning literally ‘sprung from the earth’. Fonua may also include worldview/s, ways of being, language and culture developed in order to live with the fonua or the people of the fonua. Expanding this further, there are anga fakafonua or rites of culture which include knowledge (‘ilo fakafonua), values (mahu’inga fakafonua), language (lea fakafonua) and ways (founga fakafonua). These are components of fonua.

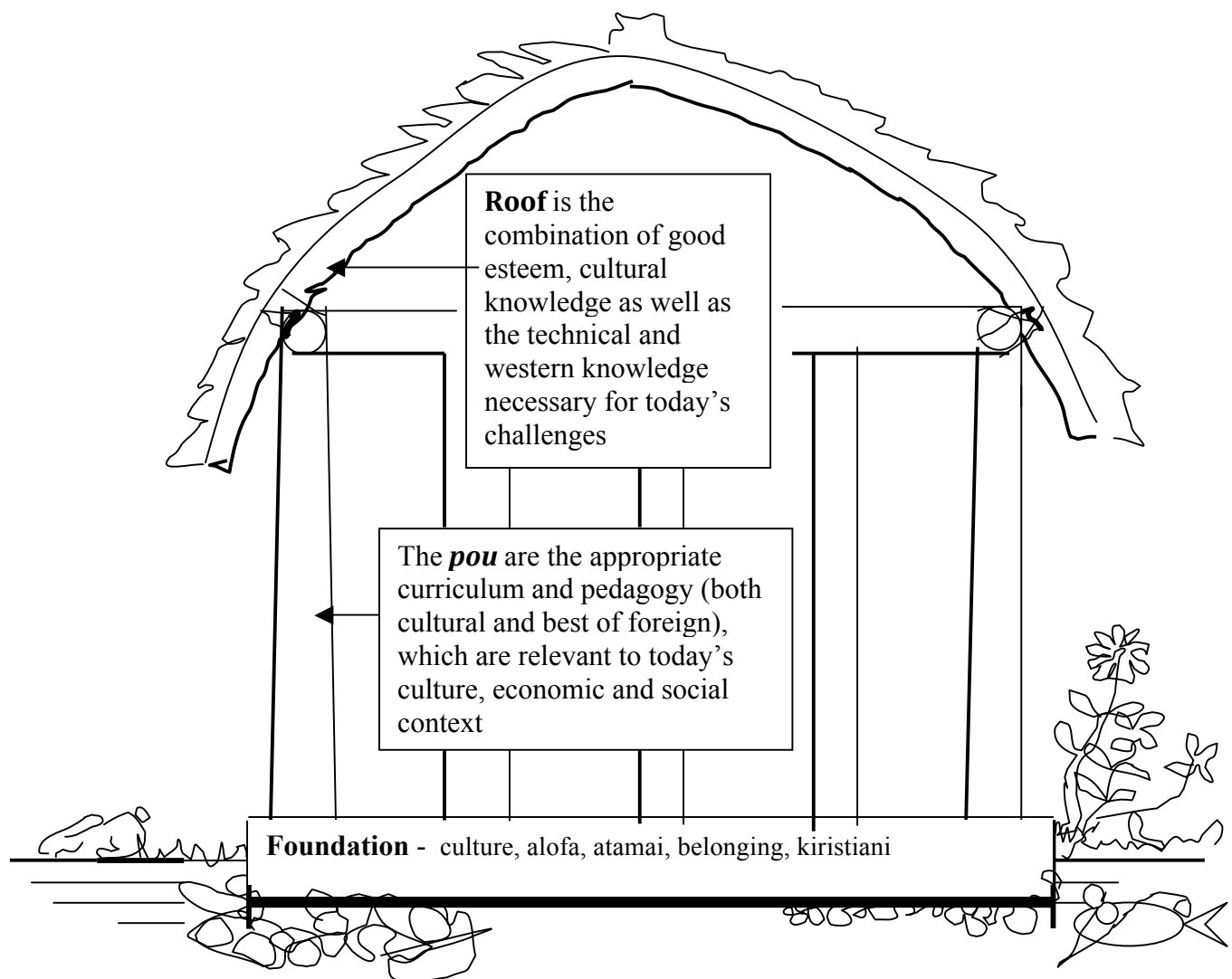
### Fonua, spirituality a cultural meaning

In most of the cultural and educational values discussed in this thesis, important commonalities consistently surfaced. I found from the frameworks presented in talanoa in Samoa and Fiji in 2002 that Pacific people everywhere saw themselves as belonging to or being a part of a bigger interlinked system that included fanau, village, fonua and a God or Gods.

During a talanoa we conducted in Apia, Samoa in 2002, a group of middle to older aged men and women presented the following learning framework. The group was lead by a young mother called Urima and all members of the group had little or no formal education beyond early secondary school. They used the Samoan fale (house) as the metaphor for their Samoan learning framework (Figure 6.1). Important to the

building of any house is a solid foundation. Equally important in any teaching or learning situation is a solid foundation shown below. Students must feel accepted, have a sense of belonging, be secure in their identity as well as have economic, spiritual and physical security.

**Figure 6. 1. A Samoan fale – essential elements of a teaching framework**



Source: Vaioleti, Morrison & Vermeulen (2002, p. 93).

The group went on to say that the pou (posts, uprights) that make up the walls should be strong, straight (able to transfer the load of the roof pressures straight to the solid foundation) and made of the appropriate material (wood) so it will not rot. They saw the pou as a metaphor for the formal school curriculum, lessons and other framing

disciplines. In this case the knowledge must be relevant and aligned to their circumstances, culture and context. It is important to note that foreign/western knowledge was viewed by talanoa participants as being important for modern living but its addition must be laid upon secure Pacific cultural foundations and identity. The roof then represented the new combined ability of traditional and introduced elements to deal with the rain, storm, hot sun - a metaphor for protection from powerlessness, poverty, isolation, gender issues, power issues, bad health and other challenges in contemporary life.

In this framework, the kau nga fa'u emphasized the importance of culture, identity atamai (wisdom), alofa ('ofa, love) and Christianity (spirituality) as the basis for worthwhile knowledge, learning and teaching. Spirituality is a major factor in the thinking of Tongan and most Pacific peoples and must be considered in the planning, content and pedagogies employed in the classroom.

While it is not my intention to analyse in any detail the very powerful influence of Christianity in the modern lives of Pacific people, I do want to discuss briefly the old spirituality that has shaped the culture of Tongan peoples. This includes cultural concepts which are remnants of their old religions and which impact on their daily behaviour, educational thoughts and worldviews ('Epeli Hau'ofa, talanoa, May, 2004).

In Tongan society, as explained in earlier chapters, everyone had a role to play in the operation and maintenance of the society (Koloto, 2006; Mitaera, 1999; Tiatia, 1998). In these societies God/s was/were at the apex of the societal hierarchies (Sami Veikoso, talanoa, January, 2002; Epeli Hau'ofa, talanoa, May, 2004). For Tonga, right up to the establishment of Christianity, the Tu'i (king) Tonga was the representative of the God/s and the mediator between the people of the fonua (people of Tonga) and the God/s. S/he was considered to be closest to the God/s along with priests, chiefs, older folks and women, than anyone else ('Epeli Hau'ofa, talanoa, May, 2004). Serving and showing humility to those who were closer to the old religion God/s, by applying 'ofa, showing humility and performing of fatongia to them, were seen as seeking favours from the God/s. If the land harvest and food were plentiful, national and regional endeavours were rewarded; if peace had reigned over

the land then prayers, and other works in serving those closer to the God/s, have been rewarded.

Although the old God/s have been largely replaced by the Christian God, fatongia to those honoured as part of the old religions are still part of Tongan people's culture ('Epeli Hau'ofa, talanoa, May, 2004; Sateki 'Ulukalala, talanoa, January, 2000). In contemporary times and in the cash economy, most of those fatongia are economic in nature. To meet such fatongia one must obtain 'ilo (Fusitu'a & Coxon, 1998; Thaman, 1988) from learning institutions or other sources. Poto then is the beneficial application of the 'ilo. The common spiritual element of these relationships is the application of poto which will be a result of serving and supporting families, Kings, the chiefs, the church, and the fonua - fatongia which will both acknowledge and maintain connectedness between, god/s, and other levels of one's relational system. It will be recalled from Chapter Three that ako is the act of seeking poto and 'ilo in order to serve others or one's group or community and fonua, parts of an interconnected larger system headed by a ruling God or Gods.

#### Tongan ancient education concepts

'Epeli Hau'ofa (talanoa, May, 2004) indicated that for Tongans, their political, trade, and spiritual connections and influence with other Oceanic nations were in place for centuries, and were only reduced to the level they are at now under the pressure of the colonial powers in the Pacific. He reinforced this argument by referring to feats of Tongan ancestors as referred to in one of his iconic poems (Hau'ofa, 1980, p. 255):

...and we sent money and missions abroad.  
our fathers bent the winds and strode the waves  
to bring the Kula and the mothers of Kings from Upolu.  
fine mats from Manu'a and the royal studs of Lakemba  
for the forbidden daughters.  
And did not Maui Kisikisi pierce the horizon with his javelin?  
Or the suppressor –of-waves speed slabs from Uvea  
for the terraced tombs of the God-Kings?....

The above poem refers to the Tongan community's awareness of the need to maintain connection between leading families in the region of the Pacific. This sometimes occurred through marriage between leading families who were necessary for

maintaining trade, securing peace as a result of fe'ofa'ofani and for maintaining relationships (Sateki Ulukalala, talanoa, January, 2000). Leaders with poto who were committed to the greater good and wellbeing of the collective made these decisions.

In a series of Talanoa with Epeli Hau'ofa (May, 2004) I recall the following observations:

*...Tonga was a wealthy nation not just in terms of material wealth, but in terms of intellectual and cultural wealth. They sent missionaries to... Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia... sharing of resources is a marker for 'ofa.... They were enterprising spirits, understanding of regional cultures and politics ('ilo) and their schrewdness in using these aptitudes to achieve collective aims were indicators of poto... they used their advanced political structures, technically advanced knowledge of astronomy, sailing and ships technology to enable them to negotiate, or trade for materials unobtainable in Tonga.*

This included shipping tons of stone slabs to build the giant stepped tombs to honour kings mentioned in the poem above and by many explorers (Martin, 1827) in the Mu'a district of Tongatapu.

Patrick Kirch<sup>14</sup> (1988a, p. 9), who has led archaeological expeditions to Tonga, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, and several Micronesian islands, made the following remarks about the Tongan political and cultural influence. He stated that:

At the time of the European entry to the Pacific, no other Polynesian society rivalled that of Tonga either in geographic extent or in political complexity. As Guiart puts it, L'ensemble tongien pourrait etre decrit comme un empire isulaire. A maritime chiefdom – even 'an archaic state' by certain definition - the Tongan domain extended from the political centre at Tongatapu in the south... to Vava'u 300 km away and yet further, to incorporate ...Niuatoputapu, Tafahi, Niuafu'ou and 'Uvea (and Rotuma by some account). But more, this political armature extended even beyond the cultural boundaries of Tonga to penetrate Fiji to the west and Samoa to the northeast. These foreign states were linked to Tonga even long distance by prestige – goods exchange networks monopolised and organised by the Tongan elite.

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<sup>14</sup> Patrick Kirch has also written books on Pacific nations' pre-histories and ecology including ethno archaeological studies of western Polynesian settlement and subsistence systems in Futuna, 'Uvea, Vava'u, Niuatoputapu, Niuafu'ou and Tafahi. He is a Professor of Anthropology at the University of California at Berkeley and a former director of the Burke Museum in Seattle.



Kirch paints the picture of thriving oceanic societies, secure in their own knowledge, relational and political systems, obviously driven by a constant supply of bright thinkers and skilled implementers of those ancient educational and political systems. This points to an existing international community that were co-existing, trading, and negotiating in a time when the Western powers were newcomers to this area in seeking to advance themselves and trade. The main point of difference however for Pacific nations was that both the resources and the burdens were shared for mutual benefit. Examples of tributes for maintenance of relationships, even at national level, were carried out right up to the present memory of those who are still living today. 'Ana Taufe'ulungaki (talanoa, May, 2004) indicated that there were tributes still made to Tonga from surrounding Pacific nations that were under the political influence of Tonga right up to the last century.

Interestingly tributes still occur, but in very different forms. This trans-national or cross-border giving is two-way, the cultural practise of reciprocity. The reciprocity inherent within the relationships is known as fetongiaki in Tonga. Fetongi can mean exchange. Fetongiaki is the act of exchange be it material, emotional support or in spiritual form. A similar concept amongst Maori in Aotearoa/New Zealand is utu. Activities that give effect to fetongiaki were practised between individuals, families, groups, villages and even nations or islands set apart by long distances.

Many activities are underpinned by fatongia and tongiaki including education (ako). Tongan people therefore tend to see issues and approaches from a different perspective to those with individual perspectives. In the past, Tonga was accused of meddling in other Pacific nations' political matters (Martin, 1827; 'Epli Hau'ofa, talanoa, May, 2004). When stronger nations within a collective of nations were asked to assist with neighbouring countries' issues they were given support as they were regarded as issues to be solved collectively. Giving assistance is part of fatongia that often incurs heavy cost but is given with the knowledge that helping others in a community helps everyone else, especially in stabilising the region.

The continuing application of visionary, wise and holistic qualities of these cultural concepts from 'ilo fakafonua and angafakafonua have sustained Tonga's integrity as a nation and community and maintained its identity and independence through

challenges from Pacific rivals as well as the western colonisers of the 1800s (Mara, 1997). Mara, Foliaki & Coxon (1994, p. 190) noted that “in the last decade of the nineteenth century, increased trade and frequent disputes...resulted in Britain, France, Germany and the USA looking seriously at incorporating the islands of the Pacific into their colonial empires”.

Tonga was the only Pacific nation that was not colonised. My recollection of Sione Vaiioleti's (talanoa, July, 2008) perspective on this was “The visionary quality of ‘ilo, wisdom of poto and dedication ‘ofa he (of) fatongia by people like Misipeka<sup>15</sup> protected Tonga and with that our ‘ilo fakafonua that include ako, ‘ilo, poto, ‘ofa and fatongia.”

Further, the old leaders of Tonga seized the advantages of Western thinking (Thaman, 1988; Sateki ‘Ulukalala, talanoa, January, 2000). Through the vision of ‘ilo, they realised that Western education had much to offer. In this case, they wanted the best of both worlds and sought to secure the best education possible (‘Epeli, Hau’ofa. Talanoa, May, 2004). Tonga invested in Western education early by establishing some of the earliest educational institutions in the Pacific including Tonga College, the high school I attended, which was founded by Tupou 1<sup>st</sup> in 1882 (Mara, Foliaki & Coxon, 1994).

The lesson here is that just as Tongan ‘ilo saw the benefit of including Western education in their education system in order to widen and enrich their ako experience as well as understanding a changing world, then Aotearoa/New Zealand needs to incorporate Pacific educational concepts for the same reason. Further, Pacific students are likely to consider that their culture is as equally valued as mainstream education. Ako at a much lower level in an Aotearoa/New Zealand classroom is a small part of a bigger whole that involves ‘ilo, poto and ‘ofa. Only through appreciating fatongia may we come to understand where ako (in the sense of school and the classroom) fits into the cultural and historical psyche of Tongan learners. ‘Ilo fakafonua and anga

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<sup>15</sup> Misipeka is the Tongan name for Mr Baker who many say loved Tonga and Tongans. Mr Baker was a missionary who resigned from his post and became an advisor to Tupou 1<sup>st</sup>. He was responsible for many political dealings including the writing of the Tongan constitutions. He was also despised by many, including some representatives of colonial powers. Many attempts were made on his life.

fakafonua for Tongan people are the spiritual and cultural sources of ako, potu, 'ilo, 'ofa and fatongia.

I would argue that even in the very stressful lifestyle of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, 'ilo, potu gained from ako, 'ofa, fatongia and fonua all maintain their meaning and integrity for Tongans. My argument is that these historically practised concepts, have high educational and holistic value, providing cultural clarity and spiritual resilience in most if not all situations for Tongan students.

## **6. 2. Values for learning and teaching Pacific students in Aotearoa/New Zealand**

In this section I develop further the collection of flowers (information) from several sources which I tui (weave) as my kalala (garland) in Chapter Seven. One of the more influential sources is the research by Sheets (2005) on Diversity Pedagogy Theory (DPT). One of her conclusions was that DPT “links culture, cognition and schooling in a single unit” (p. 1). A more useful statement to me though is her claim that classroom practice (teachers) must be informed by “deep understandings” of the role of culture not only for the social development of children, but also for their cognitive development (Sheets, 2005, p. 1).

Ferguson, Gorinski, Wendt-Samu & Mara (2008), found Sheets' work on DPT more appropriate for Aotearoa/New Zealand Pacific learners than others they examined, and commented that “an appreciation and in-depth knowledge of the linkages between culture and cognition relationship is “key to incorporating multiple factors of diversity in the teaching learning process” (Sheets, 2005, p. 1). These points reinforce why the concepts of 'ofa, 'ilo, potu, ako, fonua and fatongia are essential for Tongan students' learning. Appropriate inclusion of aspects of Tongan culture into Aotearoa/New Zealand classroom learning, especially where Tongan students are present, must assist with cognitive and social development resulting in more advanced' emotional, spiritual, physical and academic progress.

Some may say that inclusion of Pacific values surely should be a concern of Pacific nations in their own countries. However, as Thaman (2004, p. 3) has stated: “For many Pacific island people, the notion of ‘country’ has to do with people and place rather than legal entities, and to be a citizen of a particular...nation may not be as important as belonging to a particular group of people, who may happen to live in more than one country.”

As long as there are Pacific peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand then their fonua is also here as ‘Epeli Hau’ofa (talanoa, May, 2004) made clear in his notion of fonua which includes land as well as people of that land or country. This suggests that their educational values and concepts should be part of the education system discourses and dialogue. An appreciation of the variations and similarities of the views of non-Tongan students on the concepts will enrich, deepen and strengthen the discussions. For example, ‘ofa in Tongan is similar to aroha in Maori which is similar to alofa in Samoan and aloha in Hawaiian.

Throughout my talanoa with various kau nga fa’u, there was support for the inclusion of Pacific values in curriculum content and teaching approaches. My talanoa with Sione Vaiioleti (July, 2008) generated the understanding that:

*...the values and other elements of your culture must be taught... It must be taught so that you know who you are. If you know who you are then you know who you belong to. If others know who you are then they will know that you are part of them too.*

At a later stage in the same talanoa Sione Vaiioleti observed:

*...it is like our usual talk. Search for who you are first and when that is secure, then reach out to other knowledge to enrich it with them. Get your foundation right, who you are then enrich it (with) everything else you see beneficial. That fits in with Tongan ‘ilo e me’a ke fai (knowing what (the right thing) to do).... for example, in this Tongan church, when the basis of our commonality... our cultural values are established we then use our individual talents and skills to compliment those with the other knowledge and ways available here in New Zealand etc. While the individuals will... benefit from those endeavours, our collective church at a bigger level, the community and eventually the whole country will benefit.*

Culture is vital then not only for identity and confidence in the self; it is also vital for the humanist and socio-constructivist learning approaches (Rogers, 1969; Sheets,

2005; Vygotsky, 1978). For Tongan students, the concepts argued for in this thesis form part of the Tongan culture, and Tongan culture includes its educational discourses (Thaman, 1995b).

### Tongan values that underpin educational thinking and learning

In Chapter Three, I reviewed briefly the academic literature on the Tongan educational concepts and values of 'ofa, 'ilo, potu and ako. Here I draw on some of the talanoa with my kau nga fa'u, community, church and other leaders and other academics to assess their situated use in Tonga as well as other Pacific educational communities. The aim here is to strengthen the authenticity of my proposal for an appropriate pedagogy for classroom use for Tongans and other interested students.

#### *'Ofa*

Sunufea (talanoa, June, 2007) a successful high school teacher described 'ofa as: “a genuine sense of respect and appreciation of human beings and things irrespective of differences in terms of physical appearance achievement marital status, social & political status, wealth nationality belief (religious) education usage etc.” Sunufea uses appearance, status and class to reinforce the strength of 'ofa because Tongan ways are strongly collectivist and hierarchical. Peoples' attitudes and opinions of others are highly influential. The attitude of teachers to students has an important bearing on the environment which, is integral to the learning and teaching of Tongan students. She suggested that 'ofa is important because: “Ofa can create a sense of belonging, a socially and friendly classroom environment in which interactions can be positively beneficial to all levels of education and understanding”.

Sunufea also suggested that for social cohesion: “Ofa is not only active but is also a socially committed generator. It makes people feel important and included in the group. People feel obliged to participate actively in the interests and activities of the group to achieve its set aims... to sustain its cohesion” (talanoa, June, 2007).

Sami Veikoso (talanoa, January, 2002) suggested 'ofa may also be interpreted as a kind of hope, a reconnection with bigger system, God/s, cosmos or similar – a stage that will be conducive to creating a good classroom learning environment. 'Ofa, like the other key Tongan concepts of ako, 'ilo and potu, is socially located in and reliant

on relationships for its emergence. I cite Sami Veikoso's (talanoa, January, 2002) important observations in his original Tongan words as well as my translation of these into English:

*... 'oku te lea mo ngaue 'aki e ofa 'i ha 'ate talotalo... 'oku te pehee, kapau ko ha'ato loto ke fili hato hoa lelei... pea 'okute pehee leva 'ofa pee ke hoko lelei 'ete talotalo. Hangee ha'ate kole tokoni ki he ta'e haa mai ke tononi mai ki ha me'a oku mahu'inga ki a kita. 'ote pehee kapau he ikai tene tali mai 'eku tohi kuo mahino 'oku ikai ko ha fefine ia oku taaui mo au mo hoku fatongia moe ngaahi me'a pehe...*

*...one uses 'ofa in hope (for a sign or similar)... if it is seeking a good partner...one will hope and in that deep hope, anticipation and using 'ofa pee....that what was desired will come to one. It is like asking or praying to the unseen (God/s) for blessing on a wish made for clarity about something paramount to one. The talotalo may be 'if she does not reply to my letter then it will be clear that she is not a suitable partner for me given my obligation, roles and duties (to family, village or country)'*

For schools, there is a caution though. While 'ofa may be seen as the cure for a lot of ills, that is not the case according to Futa Helu (talanoa, January, 2000). 'Ofa which is often the measure of Tonganess (Kavaliku, 1977, 'Epeli Hau'ofa, May, 2004; Sateki 'Ulukalala, talanoa, January, 2000; Sione Vaoleti, talanoa, 2000, July, 2008) can cause harm if 'ilo is not involved. Futa Helu stated that 'ofa fe'unga (fe'unga means appropriate, enough for a purpose) is more useful in helping people. 'Ofa fe'unga (discussed in Chapter Four) is 'ofa that is guided by a higher awareness which only allows enough or appropriate 'ofa to positively affect different situations, occasions, times, places and individuals. It is given in ways and amounts that both the recipient/s and the giver feel positive about it and maintain their integrities.

For Tongan people, 'ofa rates highly in determining how one is to be regarded. When I was at school, it was the teachers that have 'ofa that we considered, most prepared, most human, most respected and students wanted to be in their classes. As mentioned in other parts of this thesis, Thaman (1988) found in her research that 'ofa is the most important quality of a teacher.

Spiritual 'ofa is in the realm of the unseen and we will revisit this area in Chapter Seven and Eight but suffice to say that 'ofa is hard to see and even harder to measure. Giving away goods, own time, money are often seen as overt signs of 'ofa (Tiatia, 1998). Because 'ofa in its many forms preoccupy the thinking, lives and behaviour of Tongan people (Fusitu'a & Coxon, 1998; Helu, 1983; Kavaliku, 1977; Thaman, 1988, Thaman, 1995b, 1996a), appropriate ako to develop 'ofa in its many forms (which can be 'ilo in this context) are necessary to prepare Tongan students to partake fully in their community cultural lives. Learning, developing, giving and receiving 'ofa is an educational and developmental right of Tongan students. These are reiterated by the New Zealand Curriculum (MOE, 2007b) and Pacific Education Plan (MOE, 2009). Both documents support the development and preservation of Pacific cultures and spirituality as well as their academic and economic aspirations.

#### *Ako*

As already noted in Chapter Three, ako is often regarded as a dual approach to the teacher-student relationship, a pedagogical approach to teaching which suggests equality between students and teachers where both can learn from each other (Pere, 1982; 1994). Unfortunately this limits it to a pedagogical dimension. In Tonga, ako in education is about worthwhile learning (Thaman, 1995b). This should be the case too for other places where Tongan people are engaged in ako activities. At various levels, this concept is guided or framed by a philosophy, has a moral driver and implies that it has an expected moral and material benefit and accountability to a collective. Pedagogically, ako is contextual and holistic and learning can either be formal, informal, non-formal or a combination of these.

Pedagogically, Sione Vaiioleti (talanoa, December, 2001) noted that:

*...in the past when it came to teaching, the methods used contextual as most ako was real life based and relevant. Because the learning were problem initiated the goals were known to all including learners and educators. The way to get to the goals was left to the individuals or the group to decide and negotiated so there were always things to do according to the way individuals or groups saw them. They owned the problem; therefore they took responsibility for the results too. This also allowed independence in strategies that permitted students to work to their strengths and to the combined strength of their groups. Because they were not restrained by rigid lineal structures they were absorbed in their*

*storying, trial and errors, reflections, co-theorising and were motivated by ownership... with no time to be wasted or be bored.*

Futa Helu (talanoa, January, 2002) went further, noting:

*...ako is a process of delivery... delivery of thinking, thinking out of issues...it is a process of delivering of something to students – that something is thinking. That something could be literacy or whatever it always includes the process of thinking. How to live...education approaches now are not about the delivery of enlightenment but primary delivery of skills...intuitions and enlightenment often lead to questionings and hypotheses that follow a long process of trials for verifications...etc...ako should create understanding, connections... relationships between systems and things and how they work interactively, to understand relationships, forms...*

I recall the following observations with particular reference to teaching of children by both their parents and teachers from my talanoa with Sitiveni (May, 2003), a senior Fijian community educator in Vanuatu:

*There are two parts to bringing up children. One part of raising them is feeding, clothing and housing them etc, the physical and easier to see part. The other part of child-raising is teaching them manners, obligations and cultural matters to get on with relations and others. If we do the first part only, they will grow up not knowing their culture, who they are, have poor social skills and will be sad and poor inside. We must house and provide for their body in order to meet their physical needs but we must teach them to ensure their mental and spiritual health. Some parents just raise them and do not teach them. Maybe we do not know how, so relations should take charge of teaching the young ones. If they can't, teachers must. Schools must take up teaching young people to ensure both parts of raising the children to make them strong whole persons.*

Because ako is about the development of the whole person within his/her context and environment, ako is far more than just scientific learning and teaching. It implies spiritual, physical, emotional and cultural development as well. Morally, ako as worthwhile learning includes the need to learn about self, relationship to others including higher beings, and passing on culture to younger members of the community.



‘Ana Huni<sup>16</sup> (talanoa, June, 2007) a mother of five very successful students in terms of school academic success, made the following comments about ako (my English translation). For ako she stated that:

*...‘oku tau ako’I etau fanau ko e ‘uhi ke nau ‘ilo e me’a oku lelei ke fai. Ke nau ‘ilo’i e me’a ke fai pea fai ki ai. Ke ‘ilo e me’a oku kovi foki mei ai, pe tuku ‘aupito. koe ‘uhi ke malava ai ke nau ‘ilo honau mahu’inga ‘ihe famili, kolo, sosaieti moe fonua foki.*

*Our children are schooled so that they know what good things to do are. To discover (or identify) what is not good refrain from it or discontinue it altogether. So that they know what to do and do it well so that they realize their worth, for the benefit of the family, the community and the country as well. Ako is also needed so that the values, ways and the culture of the fonua are preserved.*

Her children have consistently secured the highest examination marks for their year level and were the representatives at the interschool TV quiz and other academic competitions. ‘Ana herself had moderate results academically but had ‘ofa highly anchored in her cultural tradition of service to her church, family, extended kinfolds and community. My talanoa (July, 2007) with Luke Huni, a Year 12 Tongan student, generated the following observation about ako: “Ako is like training one’s brain, body and soul... In school you learn to be kind, responsive, develop good character, and know what to do in different situations, at the same time know what to do in different contexts (poto he kakaa)”.

It is interesting that Luke highlighted something that is a little different about the Tongan thinking and in turn, the concept of ako. What Luke identified is kakaa, a dimension of poto. While it has no direct English translation, kakaa can mean cunning or shrewdness. It implies being alert, aware, wary and with those qualities you can be circumspect, resourceful, critical, even manipulative. However in this sense, kakaa as an element of poto implies ability to analyze, reflect, understand one’s environment or situation and apply innovative actions to translate all that into a highly beneficial situation.

This is more aligned to Futa Helu’s (talanoa, January, 2002) thinking on poto which is more to do with actions that may save lives or lift a community out of a risky

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<sup>16</sup> ‘Ana is deputy CEO for Tonga Timber, the State Owned Enterprise for Forestry, including research, manufacturing and trade.

situation. This is very interesting because the usual description of poto in the literature tends not to acknowledge this very important dimension. Kakaa was captured in the writing of Martin (1827) when he recorded Marina ('Ulukalala's adopted son) explaining the important concept of boto (poto) as cunning, expert, well practiced (Luke Huni, talanoa, July, 2007).

The New Zealand curriculum (NZC), as envisioned for young people of Aotearoa/New Zealand, speaks to those who are ready to take advantage of new technologies, motivated, resourceful, resilient and have entrepreneurial tendencies (Ministry of Education, 2008a). This side of poto fits well with preparation of young people for a competitive 21<sup>st</sup> Century environment advocated by the NZC. However poto, in this sense is responsible and enterprising. It is not what Goldsmith (1992) and Handy (1998) alluded to as the unbridled exploitation we see in contemporary business and other development endeavours. It is more about being in context and the real application of weighing things and exercising judgment depending on that context. This type of poto has more to do with self-preservation, being streetwise for the protection of those for or to whom one is responsible or has fatongia (Futa Helu, talanoa, January, 2002). Ako then should include a search for the type of 'ilo so one will know what to do and how to use poto to apply 'ofa and respect to others, God/s and the environment.

Sunufea (talanoa, June, 2007) talked about 'ofa as motivation for ako, the actions that bring order, respect for things and people, and the role within a group which is the essence of a moral existence. She revealed the place of 'ofa in ako. This is more to do with the spiritual motivation that drives parents' responses for the safety and welfare of their children. In the same talanoa, Sunufea used the expression that her parents had time for them, that the parents attended to the needs of the children in a genuine, nurturing and loving way. She also shared that when Dad arrived home, he wanted to know that everyone was home. This is a Tongan way of ensuring that every member of the family is well and safe, which is measured by them being present. As I recall Sunufea's comments at the talanoa (June, 2007):

*'Ofa is practiced in the family, in villages, in the (Catholic) church and generally in the country...In my family my parents had enough time with us (8 children). We children enjoyed staying at home because we were taught by our parents to do so. Basically, mum stayed home and did domestic works: Cleaning, cooking while dad went and worked in the plantation returned around 5pm. He makes sure that everyone was at home. We were also taught to love one another, appreciate our home and our possessions. We must ask permission before going somewhere or taking some of our things to someone else or taking it away for a short while. We were taught well to obey and be helpful to teachers and to be committed at school. Respect for people and having good manners were top on the list of values to live by.*

Sunufea also emphasised relationships with others, the showing of respect to each other, possessions and courteous communication which allow people to know and be more a part of each other's experience, be it within the family or in the classroom. This quality of 'ofa in ako (as in classroom teaching) encourages a sense of belonging and instilling relational values including consideration for each other's learning, genuine caring and unconditional regard.

#### *'Ilo*

Normally Tongan people would say that 'ilo is knowledge and some will even claim that attending schools is for seeking 'ilo (Thaman, 1995b). In a talanoa with Sateki Ulukalala (January, 2000) and Sione Vaioleti (December, 2001), we echoed the many concerns about the impact that Western knowledge and education have had on indigenous knowledge (Bishop and Glynn, 1999; Goldsmith, 1992; Thaman, 1995b, 2004; Wendt, 1985) and, in the case of this thesis, 'ilo. My recollection of that discussion is as follows (my translation):

*'Oku maumau'I 'e he 'ilo muli e 'ilo fakafouna. 'Oku hoko 'a e ako 'o e 'aho ni 'one maumau'I e 'ilo tukufakaholo 'o e fonua 'a ee ne fe'unga moe anga 'o e kakai, 'a ee ne fe'unga moe fonua. 'Oku ou 'ilo 'oku 'i ai 'a e fepaki.... he oku hu mai e 'ilo kehe ia pea pehee 'e he tokolahi 'oku sai ange ia 'I he 'ilo tukufakaholo na'e pusiaki'i 'e he **'ilo fakafonua** – hangee ko e fe'ofo'ofani moe fe'ofa'aki*

*The foreign knowledge is breaking down the knowledge of the fonua. Today's education destroys the geneological knowledge, passed down through many generations, that was suitable to the way of the fonua (Tongan people) and more fitting with the land (culture, worldviews). I know that there is a clash...as many see the outside knowledge as being more desirable than the 'ilo of ancestors that nurtured harmonious living and caring for each others.*

We identified ancient Tongan ‘ilo as that which grew out of the fonua (‘ilo fakafonua), that has been passed on from generation to generation. ‘Ilo is discussed throughout this thesis and fakafonua refers to something that is indigenous, grew out of the land or that is distinctive and shared by a fonua (certain people that belong to a fonua, community). Interestingly from the above talanoa, fe’ofa’ofani is given as an example of ‘ilo fakafonua. Fe’ofa’ofani is the multiple way, reciprocating operationalisation of ‘ofa (gifting, service, regards, respect and consideration). These reciprocating activities therefore can be practical, mental and spiritual in ways that built and maintained relationship and harmony amongst people, their environment and with their God/s. This shows the complex interlinkage between Pacific values (MOE, 2009) and knowledge (‘ilo) that are necessary for individuals to function authentically in their Aotearoa/New Zealand communities. I interpret these to be part of the knowledge that the Pacific communities, students and the above MOE documents charge our schools with developing and teaching.

In a talanoa with the late Sami Veikoso (January, 2002), an elder and spiritual leader knowledgeable in Tongan culture and protocols, I was alerted to a different understanding and application of ‘ilo. Unlike well-used references on ‘ilo (Fusitu’a, 1992; Fusitu’a & Coxon, 1998; Thaman, 1988, 2004) Sami Veikoso (talanoa, January, 2002), saw ‘ilo as more spiritual and more aligned with the view of the talanoa of Sateki ‘Ulukalala (January, 2000) and Sione Vaiioleti (December, 2001). My talanoa with Sami Veikoso (January, 2002) clarified for me the following meaning of ‘ilo:

*Koe ‘ilo ‘oku kehe ia meihe poto, he ‘oku fakalaumalie ia, koe me’a faka’otua ia. Ko e foaki ia ‘a e ‘otua. Koe kole a Solomone ki he ‘Otua, na’a ne kole fakatouloua ‘a e poto mo e ‘ilo, na’e ‘ikai kene kole pe ‘a e poto. Oku hange e poto ia koe me’a oku ako’i. ko e ‘ilo leva ‘oku ne fakaha e me’a ke fai. ‘ko maolunga ange e ‘ilo he koe me’a faka’otua ia. Ko e me’a ia ‘o e laumalie. Ko ia ‘oku ne tataki e tautolu ke fai e me’a oku tonu ke fai. Koe ‘ilo ‘oku mahu’inga kete ‘ilo hoto fatongia, ki he famili, fangatuofafine mo e anga etau nofo. ‘I he mau e poto koe ‘ilo leva ‘oku tonu kene taki e fai e ngaue ‘aki e poto koia.*

*‘Ilo is different from poto as it is of the spirit and it is more godly. It is given from God. Solomon asked god for both poto (knowledge, technical, scientific etc) and ‘ilo (in this case more spiritual knowing), he did not just ask for poto. Poto is like knowledge gained through education (and training). ‘Ilo then guides people to do what is right. ‘Ilo is higher knowing as it is godly. It is spiritual. it is what guides us to do what is right. ‘Ilo is important as it guides us to the right obligations and*

*duty to family, those who rank higher than us (female relatives), our ways of living. When poto is secured, it is 'ilo that should rightly guide us to do things and use ako appropriately (culturally, morally and ethically).*

In a way, Sami Veikoso's (talanoa, January, 2002) view of 'ilo is close to that shared by Futa Helu (talanoa, January, 2002) who saw ako as a process of delivering, thinking, creating understandings and connections. This 'ilo is philosophical, directional, value based and has a moral purpose. Futa Helu saw ako as a process with many strands thus allowing for many kinds of pedagogy for creating or delivering 'ilo.

These discussions caused me to re-examine the roles 'ilo plays in the social, economic and spiritual lives of Tongan people. Some 'ilo seemed to belong to women exclusively. They were the respected experts on the 'ilo of genealogy and regarded as being informed by the gods ('Epeli Hau'ofa, talanoa, May, 2004). Because of this, senior matriarchs were powerful and influential in deciding who were the rightful owners of titles and other senior ranks, therefore also of the lands and other physical wealth of society. For a highly structured society who is preoccupied with rank for its political, relational, economic and spiritual activities, matriarchs occupy powerful positions. The late Queen Salote was a great exemplar of that type of 'ilo as well as a poet, composer and historian.

Among the valued system of women's knowledge in Tongan culture was that used for the creation of fine mats. Preparation for the weaving process takes time, reading and working with seasons of the year, sea, fire, the sun and other elements of nature. Similar to knowledge and knowing required for making of kakala (Thaman, 1993a, 1997a), the making of fine mats requires the knowledge of the occasion and the genealogy of the person for whom the mat is made. As it is for kakala, cultural and spiritual 'ilo determines the combination, clusters of colours, the design, the degree of fineness as well as the size of the mat. The material used for making mats fits into a hierarchy as for flowers and leaves for making kakala. In the case of kakala the heilala (*Garcinia sessilis*) flower ranks highest and it is said to have been brought over from the spiritual world (Thaman, 2003). This is an example of ilo which is about understanding systems and their connections that was mentioned by Futa Helu (talanoa, January, 2002). Fine mats seem almost to possess spiritual mana and

therefore have emotional as well as economic value. Maleponi Taunaholo (talanoa, May, 2005) pointed out that:

*... ‘ilo for making fala (fine mats), were and are held by women...They (fala) have more... values when given in return of a favour, asking for forgiveness at, weddings, funeral or performing social or spiritual obligations. Fala have other spiritual and emotional value which cash does not. Understanding these are other types of ‘ilo... cultural and economic ‘ilo...and both important to the Tongan total wellbeing.*

‘Ana Huni (talanoa, June, 2007) noted that fine mats are manifestations of skilful hard work driven by an almost obsessive dedication and patience, guided by seemingly spiritual and innate ‘ilo. An example of the importance of ‘ilo for women is reflected in the comment by Keppler (2003) when referring to the fine mats (kie) worn by Princess Lupe Pau’u Tuita in her 2003 royal wedding. She stated that “the most valuable objects in Tonga...are fine mats...imbued with the mana of their maker, owners and users”

. (p. 20)

Where this discussion on Tongan women’s knowledge may be relevant to the classroom is that there should be provision to allow women to undertake their important cultural and spiritual roles such as in the rituals of funeral (referred to as fahu) and birth, which only women can perform. This provision should include the roles to create fine mats. The lack of a female approach to ‘ilo (theory or philosophy) contributes to selective teaching of a culture, an approach fought against by feminists over the years (Bolar, 1999; hooks, 1994; Maquire, 1987, Pepko, 2008).

### *Fatongia*

Fatongia is the dynamic behind village life and ceremonial obligations to the family (for example the brother and sister covenant and their associated code of ethics in Samoa and Tonga), chiefs, king and God/s (Matatumua Vermeulen, talanoa, January, 2010). Fatongia activities assist in helping Pacific communities support each other spiritually, emotionally and physically. This aligns with Tiatia’s (1998) claims that the Tongan, Samoan and Niuean societies are built on the assumption that everyone knows and performs their role. Mitaera (1999) suggests a similar position for her Cook Island communities. ‘Ana Taufe’ulungaki (talanoa, May, 2004) noted that:

*...fatongia can be seen by Westerners and their Western education system as a source of oppression for women and inequality for others and as such, barriers to the goals of education. This shows lack of cultural understanding of the values of the communities... fatongia which contributes to tauhi vaa, is the very foundation our communities were built on."*

Without fatongia, the collective, the kainga, fanau or other organisational structure which Pacific people build their relational support system around may collapse. Security in inter-dependence is evident in other areas of Pacific lives too. The wantok system in the Solomon Islands is what held their communities together over the very difficult time of civil unrest, according to Rose Wale (talanoa, September, 2004).

In New Zealand, although the majority of Pacific parents want their children to get a good Western education (Koloto, 1998; Utumapu, 1992; Vaioleti, 2001), most parents certainly want their children to maintain their Tongan language, value and culture and not lose it in the dominant New Zealand western education system. At a hui at Palmerston North Aotearoa/New Zealand, on Pacific Peoples and Adult and Community Education, an elder made the following comment: "...education for us is about helping our children get through school ensuring that they go to church and that they still are active members who serve their families. We are in New Zealand to give our children the best chance of education and that is our role as parents. How can adult education help us to do that?" (Vaioleti, Morrison & Rees, 2003, p. 12).

This comment reflects the aim of education for many Pacific peoples; it is a fatongia to help their kainga and involves learning more about how to live purposefully in Western democracy while still maintaining Pacific or specific roles in their families and their community. Western education then is not to be traded off against Tongan culture but should be seen as an addition so that Tongan people are able to carry out their fatongia well and appropriately in contemporary times.

If fatongia is done well and efficiently in a sustainable way that least offends and benefits the collective, then fatongia may be said to have been done in a poto way (doing things right). 'Ilo then will ensure that the right fatongia was done. Poto from ako, which is often equated to technical knowledge and skills, experience and

competence, will ensure that the fatongia is carried out in a way that is beneficial to everyone. This is where the warning given under the heading of 'ofa above from Futa Helu (talanoa, January, 2000) about unlimited giving of 'ofa as this may cause harm to the giver as well as the receiver of 'ofa. Fatongia should be carried out in a way that makes a positive effect to situations and still maintains the integrity of those that carryout the fatongia as well as those who are supposed to benefit from it.

For the classrooms, according to Clarence Edward Beeby, the inspirational New Zealand Director of Education, and UNESCO assistant Director for Education in the 1940s, the state of a nation's education is dependent on how good teachers are and how seriously they take their responsibility (fatongia). He made the following comments on responsibility and teaching: "I am convinced that the difference between a good and bad education system is the differences between a set of good teachers and a bad set of teachers. Whenever you have teachers with aspiring standards and a feeling for their responsibilities you have an education with hope" (cited in Alcorn, 1999, p. 195).

For teachers then ako is integral to fatongia. It is a type of fiduciary obligation to the student and families. If parents want their children to learn all that is necessary to function as a citizen of the world, but not at the expense of losing their culture and values (Vaioleti, Morrison & Rees, 2003), then as Sheets (2005) indicated, teachers' fatongia for Tongan students is about cognitive as well as social development. If these are important then students' cultures must be of interest to teachers, to understand them and use them as vehicles or as tools for their educational development. Vygotsky (1978) affirms the value of culture to educational development.

#### *Mafana and malie*

In order to provide a contextual fit for the concepts that I have interrogated, some understanding of mafana and malie are necessary. For the application of ako, 'ilo and poto to be successful they occur against a background which is nurturing, positive and uplifting to students and this is mahana or mafana.



In talanoa with Sione Vaioleti's talanoa (December, 2001) we drew the following distinctions between malie and mafana:

*Malie is felt and experienced as we are moved by high ideals and meanings when we hear the great possibilities for human relations made meaningful by the oratory skills of Martin Luther King or understand why Mandela would not do harm to those that had wrongly imprisoned him for many years. Malie is experienced when connection is made...it is more mental. Malie can throw new light on a subject and can have a long term effect. We could be motivated by such to join a movement, try to be a better person etc. Malie seems to affect the heart and, the mind leaving one with a sense of optimism and in a positive frame of mind*

*Mafana seems to have a far more holistic effect as it totally affects us in heart, spirit and physically. It affects the self, the cultural totality. It is like a state reached. It moves people physically to do thing, positive things beyond their normal capabilities. Their actions, movements, communication or speech converge into almost spiritual or supernatural oneness with those around. People are elevated by mafana, respond mentally and in turn may be caught up in dancing and other happy actions. Overt showings of mafana may be physical and intense, but not as long lasting as the effects of meaning made by malie.*

Malie engages the intellect or mind through making meaning and then engages heart and emotion releasing the positive transformative energy of mafana that drives people to perform beyond their normal capacities. Malie as transformative energy (Manu'atu, 2000) is necessary to reaching the stage of mafana. Manu'atu (2000, p. 77) stated that "mafana and malie are inseparable". She explains the importance of rapport between the performers and the audience in katoanga faiva in reaching and maintaining malie. Sione Vaioleti (talanoa, July, 2008) suggested that the more a speaker knows about their audience, or teachers know about their learners, their values, class, culture and language, the easier it is to secure malie. For this reason Nakhid (2003b) suggested that she worked successfully with Pacific students in Auckland because she had created a special relationship with them. She understood and exchanged Pacific expressions spontaneously and therefore meanings (which I see as malie) were reached readily. Sione (talanoa, December, 2001) went on to observe:

*Mafana is easier to reach in a talanoa, learning, performance or teaching and learning situation if there is a special connection like friendship, trust, admiration even toto (blood connection) amongst those involved. This is like being present at a great sermon or an address in a gathering by Sami (his uncle). That is why we can't contain ourselves but to shout out.. 'malie!'. 'malie! (true, well done etc).*

In my talanoa with Sione Vaioleti (December, 2001) our discussions went some way to make the connection between malie and mafana and how this may look in a classroom situation. My recollection of that talanoa was that:

*In school situations, malie is achieved when learning makes good sense, when connections are seen and understood. For example, when connections between a subject and the reality or the meaning of an audience are made (with perhaps the help of a speaker, teacher) then malie is achieved. Malie seems to lead to mafana. If those connections are deeply meaningful and are powerfully delivered emotionally, intellectually and spiritually (in a malie way) then that can create mafana for the audience as well as for the performer.*

*Mafana is like a plateau where inhibitions are no longer present, freeing the performer or the audience to be one with the experience of the occasion. Malie is actually made of three parts; **ma – li – e**. **ma** can mean shyness or inhibitions and **li** can mean to throw away or rid of and **e** means, there, or there it is. Malie in a word effectively states, that inhibitions had been removed and oneness with the meaning or spirit of the subject, topic, aim is reached.*

In school Sione Vaioleti as a student almost always had the highest aggregated marks at the end of the year prize givings (talanoa, December, 2001). He enjoyed studying in his school years. His sharing went on to describe the opposite of malie in the classroom. He continued:

*The concept of “boring” is a difficult one to explain to a Tongan. Being bored is so foreign that we Tongan people do not have a word for it. Because we allowed different approaches to learning (in the classroom), there were always things to do and learn from each other. Our traditional learning units were like the extended family. They were non-formal even informal. When we learned together, we look to see what others do then imitate them, even built on each other’s ideas, eat together, played together and we looked out for each other.*

*Enjoyable learning process, where you will achieve malie, are likely to be furnished by the security that those that taught you and fellow learners care for you. Therefore you can try to be creative and innovative in all endeavours that will create malie.*

Sione Vaioleti went on to explain something that may inform teachers about some reasons why students are disengaged during classes. My recollection of this talanoa is:

*When one cannot find something to do, one then talanoa (strike up a conversation) with a neighbour or a friend and in many cases a total stranger.*

*Perhaps this is some explanation for inability to be doing is something they are not able to. See while talanoa could be any old chitchat, in reality talanoa is the site or time that new ideas are hatched, friendships are initiated, relationship and spiritual connections are made – source of malie for some. When people don't make sense we Tongans can drift off, even planning,... reflecting.... It may not take you to mafana but at least it will prevent you from being bored. For some the lack of understanding of subjects from teachers who do not make connections could lead them to seek activities that brings malie perhaps talanoa, teasing or even defiance of teachers. (December, 2001)*

It seems that talanoa in the above context is an endeavour to make meaning or connection, to create malie or provide activities to stop participants from getting bored. In ako teachers have an integral part in making ako malie. As it is in faiako, the teacher is the tuakana; s/he has a fatongia as ultimately, s/he is the one that is culturally responsible for making the ako happen (Thaman, 1988) and for the benefit of the learner as well as the community (poto). S/he must 'ilo (know) and accept that fatongia. If s/he does accept this (agency) and works hard to deliver the fatongia in a way that culturally reflects the need of Tongan students, s/he is unlikely to achieve malie and consequently as Sione Vaoleti related above, the students disengage. The teacher then has not performed her/his fatongia in a poto way, and has not made ako happen in this case.

What is important in this talanoa about malie is that it is a spiritual, emotional or mental energy. It comes about as a result of reactions triggered and sustained by well aligned connections and overlaying of common or shared understandings and meanings. Manu'atu (2000) suggested that malie in terms of katonga faiva is a process that produces meaningful connections between ta'anga (the context in Tongan language and culture), hiva (singing), haka (the bodily movements), the psyche and the spirit of both the performers and audience, all of which energize and uplift people. Achievement of malie through cultural meaning and relevance to their situation in teaching and learning of Tongan students are vital.

### 6. 3. Conclusion

The interrogation of ako, 'ilo and poto in this chapter has been made against their historical context as well as through the currency and authenticity of the talanoa process with my kau nga fa'u and kaunga fa'u. The talanoa process has definitely taken my previous understandings of these ancient Tongan concepts to a deeper level of appreciation with which to inform my argument on the worth of their inclusion in the New Zealand education system. I have shared some evidence to show that these concepts comprise a core of cultural knowledge for those from the fonua of Tonga. One could say that these discussions have left me with heightened mafana, excited by my reflections on historical meanings. Their application today is just as dynamic as it was in bygone times.

I am encouraged by their classic constructions and I am in awe of their contemporary constructions. As an integral part of a culture, I am particularly encouraged by the assurances I get from writing by Sheet's (2005) and Ferguson, Gorinski, Wendt-Samu & Mara (2008) that these concepts are vital for both social and cognitive development of Tongan children. My contribution to the future constructions of these parts of the Tongan culture are learning frameworks that allow them to be aligned to an education system. This will go some way towards achieving the Ministry of Education's Pacific Plan and satisfy the desire of the parents (the fonua) for a culturally relevant education for their children in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: MANULUA: SYMBOLISM FOR THE ESSENCE OF BEING TONGAN

My research journey has now reached the stage where I am able to undertake the ‘tui’ of my ‘kakala’, where I bring together the findings from literature, interactions, co-theorising and stories from the talanoa encounters. The process of tui or weaving allows for their arrangement, integration and synthesis. The resultant kakala will be a body of knowledge that can be used to enrich the learning of Tongan students. Given that my kakala is made from the knowledge of many people, both living and no longer living, it is my wish that it is given as a luva to a worthwhile cause.

Thaman (1988) highlights major differences in Pacific parents educational aims stating that there is a focus on social and moral aspects of learning and the utilisation of learned capabilities for the common good, rather than a sole focus on individual advancement (pp. 236-237). The classroom learnings where Pacific parents have entrusted their children to in Aotearoa/New Zealand however, focus on the latter. To counter this, the major objective of this thesis then, is to articulate include ako, potu, ‘ilo, ‘ofa, fatongia and their discourses in Aotearoa/New Zealand classrooms activities for the benefit of Tongan students. These are types of social and moral aspects of learning for the common good that Thaman (1988) spoke of above.

My intention then is to tui a kakala that will be used to help steer Tongan students’ classroom learning in ways that honour their culture, their being, their history, their community aspirations and what they see as the aim of education. I wish my kakala to represent and reflect a type of educational philosophy with an aim of developing completeness of person. This will be what the kakala in the next chapter aims to provide pedagogical paths to realising the ideal Tongan state of being, discussed in the previous Chapter, Chapter Seven.

## 7. 1. Development of the harmonious person; the ultimate aim of education for Tongan people

In a talanoa with Neti Cook (May, 2004), a long established community leader in the Waikato and Auckland regions, on the meaning of education for Tongan people, he emphasized that the ultimate aim was to achieve melino meaning harmony, completeness and peace with God: "...our desired outcome for education is not so much financial return but harmony with each other, our community and our God". Wendy Cowling (in Campbell and Coxon, 2005, p. 142) reinforced this approach when she stated that: "In every Pacific society, an ideal view of behaviour and relationships is maintained. There is an emphasis on harmonious living which requires conformity and restraint". She continued on to say that Tongans achieve fe'ofa'ofani (balance and harmony between people) through respect and fatongia, and observed:

...most Tongans strive to maintain what they consider to be customary behaviour, including the practice of what are seen as traditional modes of social interaction. People should feel at peace (melino, fiemalie) with themselves and with others. They should aim to maintain harmonious relationship with others at all times and be willing to express love to others through helpfulness (fe'ofa'ofani) and sharing. A state of equilibrium and therefore happiness is achieved. (pp. 142 – 143)

At a combined Asia and Pacific Regional<sup>17</sup> meeting in Samoa in 1999, attended by educators from around the Pacific, I noted the three underlying principles for education named by the meeting as:

- i) *we believe in the harmony and unity of family*  
*In Samoan, it is fealofani*  
*In Tonga, it is fe'ofa'ofani (loving, respecting one another)*  
*In Maori, it is whanau*
- ii) *we believe in respect ie. the respect for proper roles and relationships (fatongia)*  
*In Samoan, it fa'aaloalo*  
*In Tongan, it is faka'apa'apa*

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<sup>17</sup> ASPBAE and the International + Forum for Capacity building conference report, Apia, Samoa. 19<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1999

*In Fijian, it is vakarokoroko*

iii) *we believe in the rendering of service*

*In Samoan, it is tuatua*

*In Tongan, it is fatongia*

Service and the associated respect for proper roles are concepts that both Tiatia (1998) and Mitaera (1999) suggested are the building foundations for Polynesian societies in Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands and Niue. Concepts such as ako, 'ilo and poto underscore Tongan education processes and ensure that the roles played and quality of service (fatongia) that is given by individuals in their communities all result in achieving collective harmony. Tauhi vaa has the ultimate goal of vaa lelei (good relationships) that leads to harmony, peace with self, peace with others and peace with the God/s.

The late Crown Prince Taufa'ahau<sup>18</sup>, made the following comments in 1935 about the purpose of education:

Education is searching for the secret treasure, the one which some call poto, and perhaps they are correct. However, they ought to call it Truth. But then what is Truth? The answer lies in the Bible. It is God's spirit, so that is one's search for the Truth, this is, one's education is a search for the basket within the basket. (Koe Tohi Fanongonongo, May 1935, p. 1; Translation by Konai Helu in Helu-Thaman, 1988, p, 161)

The notion of the basket within the basket is an abstract notion. In Tongan, 'truth' in ordinary day-to-day talanoa can mean mo'oni. It can also mean essence. However in more formal and respectful exchanges, laumalie is the word for spirit. Truth and essence are interpretations of mo'oni in a Tongan interaction. Mo'oni can only take people to a state of malie, but it seems that laumalie is capable of raising people to a state of anga faka'otua (God's ways/godliness) (Sione Vaioleti, talanoa, July, 2008). Anga faka'otua is the term or description given to a community, group or individual that shows purpose, seemingly tireless in giving love, service and respecting others, showing compassion for the weak and unfortunate amongst others. The ultimate aim

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<sup>18</sup> A former Minister of Education, Prime Minister, the first Tongan to gain a university degree and a champion for education in Tonga, who later became King Taufa'ahau Tupou the IV

of ako is the achievement of treasures within or, as it is suggested, the basket within the basket which I would suggest as laumalie, truth, sustainable peace and harmony.

If this is mo'oni, then love should motivate service and respect for God/s and others that will bring a state of completeness, harmony and peace as the ultimate aim of ako. To further discuss the cultural aim of education for a Tongan person, I needed a symbolism for that ultimate aim or philosophy. Such symbolism should be steeped in culture, history of fonua, unique to Pacific, and especially Tongans, yet current to contemporary 21<sup>st</sup> century living in mind to guide the tui of my pedagogical kakala.

### Symbolism for ultimate aim of education (ako) for a Tongan person

In the many talanoa mo hoku loto as well as those talanoa with my kaunga fa'u about fonua, identity, ako, tauhi vaa, the evolving role that education, religions and New Zealand and home nations politics play in the perspective and lives of Tongan people (fonua), a particular symbolism which is reflected by the shape of a triangle (tapa tolu) and the number three, frequently come to mind. These tapa tolu represent a mountain, a symbol for 'Tonga mouna ki he loto'. The tapa tolu reminds me of great wise leaders who were well rounded and balanced in physical strength, in spirit and in intellect such as Taufa'aha Tupou 1<sup>st</sup> in Tonga's history. The number three and the triangle have metaphoric significance for the fonua too. From the beginning, Tonga's cosmological worlds were three, consisting of the heavens where God/s lived, the fonua where the living reside and the fonua where the spirits reside – the underworld ('Eveli Hau'ofa, talanoa, May, 2004). Also, there are three groups of islands that make up the fonua of Tonga, Tongatapu, Ha'apai and Vava'u, which are represented by the three stars in the Tongan national crest.

For as far back as history and memory can take us, Tonga has been ruled by three dynasties who descended from the Sky God Tangaroa and who have dominated the social and political order from ancient times to today. These three dynasties are represented in the Tongan crest by three swords whose handles are rooted firmly in the fonua at the base but bound close to their tips signifying common ancestry and forming a shape that resembles a triangular pyramid pointing to the to the heavens – the place of origin.



At another scale, the triangle can be viewed as a representation of the modern geographic area of Polynesia. The triangle can be a representation of a wave, which stands for the moana, an area over which Tonga showed mastery and where Tongans were accorded respect ('Epeli Hau'ofa, talanoa, May, 2004; Kirch, 1988b; Luder, 1996). The wave represents the sea which is personally significant for me as well because, as Crocombe (1976, p. 76) pointed out in Chapter Two, my father's people were the toutai class (seafaring experts) of Ha'apai. My mother's people of Ha'afeva were the part of the toutai class too as well as members of the Ha'apai group tau tahi (literally means fighters or army from the sea).

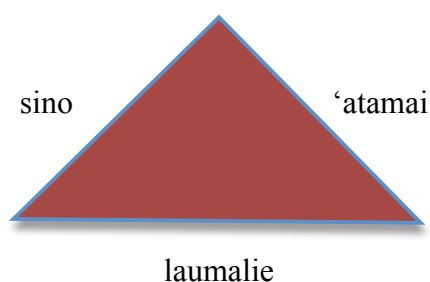
Three is also a feature of Tongan human development vital for planning and administering curriculum and pedagogies for Tongan learners. 'Ana Koloto (in Drewery and Bird, 2006), in her perspective on development, stated that:

Tongans view life as a holistic process, the main purpose of which is the development of the tangata kakato (total person). There are three main aspects of development emphasised in the concept of tangata kakato: mo'ui fakasino (body or physical well being) mo'ui faka'atamai (mind or intellectual well being), Mo'ui fakalaumalie (soul or spiritual well being). Inherent in this thinking about development is the belief that the individual is born to perform certain fatongia (responsibility, duties or obligation) and to become 'aonga (useful) to their famili (family), siasi (church), and fonua (country). (p. 62)

For the individual, Koloto refers to tangata kakato as an ideal state of wellbeing or, to borrow Maslow's (1987) words, to be a self-actualised person. However, firstly I will use laumalie as short for mo'ui fakalaumalie, sino as short for mo'ui fakasino, 'atamai for mo'ui fakaatamai in these discussions. From Koloto's perspective, for a Tongan individual to reach such a stage, s/he must be well physically (sino), intellectually (atamai) and spiritually (laumalie). These three factors allow for balance within the individual.

To further develop these discussions, I want to represent tangata kakato schematically. The most appropriate shape used to show laumalie, sino and atamai together in a balanced way, is the tapa tolu, for reasons discussed earlier in this chapter.

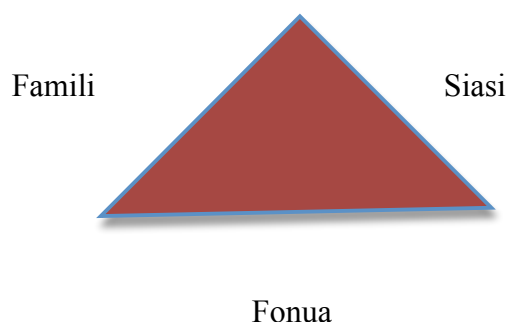
Figure 7. 1. Tapa tolu, my graphical interpretation of Koloto's tangata kakato concept



Moving from the self as an individual to the self as a member of a larger collective, we can again draw inspiration from Koloto's words. If the individual is born "to perform certain fatongia and to become 'aonga (useful) to their famili, siasi and fonua" then classroom ako must generate and guide 'ilo to know one's role within this relationship. For Tongan students then, the 'ilo gained from ako even here in Aotearoa/New Zealand should equip them with knowledge and skill of how to conduct their fatongia (tauhi vaa) to kainga (referred to as famili), to God/s, and other higher order and other relevant spiritual matters (referred to as Siasi).

In addition, fatongia to one's culture, one's country, environment, the community even the world community (referred to as fonua) are vital for developing and maintaining a healthy collective complete community. Fatongia is integral to each dimension as seen in Figure 7. 1 and necessary to maintaining the integrity of the relationship between the three. Again, in Figure 7. 2 and schematically, this is how I use tapa tolu to show the relationships between the dimensions that signify Tongan health and wellbeing.

**Figure 7. 2. Tapa tolu and fatongia – the operationalisation of tauhi vaa to maintain Tongan wellbeing**



In this representation, the central role of fatongia by Tongan students to the larger Tongan community, is highlighted. In most Aotearoa/New Zealand classrooms, there is little opportunity to learn and prepare for these roles in the current curriculum, a gap which this thesis seeks to narrow through the understanding and appropriate application of the concepts of 'ofa, potu, 'ilo, fonua and fatongia.

#### A revised way of representing Tongan dimensions of wholeness

The one-dimensional concepts of sino, atamai and laumalie as well as Fonua, Siasi, Famili put forward by Koloto (2006) are problematic if they are treated in isolation within discussions of the lives of Tongans who are holistic in general. But more importantly, others including academics ('Epeli Hau'ofa, talanoa, May, 2004; Helu, 1999; Kavaliku, 1977; Thaman, 1988) described Tongan people as religious, spiritual and with many aspects of their lives influenced by the supernatural. On their own, they do not seem to capture the dominance of belief in service to those culturally superior and the sacrifice and respect given to higher authority on which most relationships are based and idealised. For the Tongan people in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the 2006 Census indicated that 90% of its population are affiliated to at least one religious denomination, the highest proportion declaring a religion amongst the Pacific populations (Statistics New Zealand, 2006).

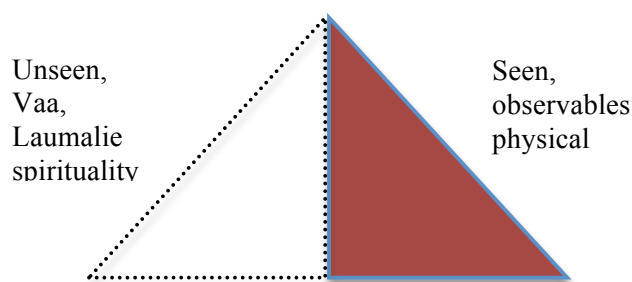
In the classrooms curricula where particulars of a community's culture is captured and preserved, spirituality is not for Tongan students. This takes me back to the very credible arguments by Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) in Chapter Four, when they argued for the inclusion of female perspectives in both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, a discipline dominated by male perspectives. They argued that any study of humans in any community, devoid of their historical, cultural and political (and I argue in this case of this topic, spiritual and cultural) contexts, was to distort realities for those in power, those marginalised as well as men and women. Those marginalised in the argument of Ramazanoglu and Holland, will include the Tongan students and their community as well.

I posit then that for educational purposes, it will be more accurate to represent the Tongan dimensions discussed by Koloto in ways that acknowledge their spiritual,

unseen and godly constitutions as well as their material existence. The inclusion of these spiritual dimensions legitimates the ancestors' knowledge, and for the Tongan students, their holistic being, which is a more realistic picture of their community and personal lives as well as their culture and ancestors knowledge.

This is how it might work. Imagine if a tapa tolu stands for the dimension of fonua and that tapa tolu was halved vertically turning the original isosceles triangle into two equal opposite right angle triangles. Imagine further if one right angle triangle was seen and the other mirror image is unseen. The following is schematic representation of the idea above:

**Figure 7. 3. The two aspects of tapa tolu a symbolism for Tonganess**



For me, the unseen half of the original isosceles triangle signifies laumalie (or wairua) acknowledgement of the life-force in Tongan concepts including fonua, people, atamai, sino, talanoa, ako, poto and 'ilo integral to providing balance. It gives effect to the state of noa, a fundamental ideal which is prominent in Tongan thought and technology. For land architecture, noa is a necessary stage of rest when and where equal and opposite force of building members are balanced for strength, ambience and harmony. Selected stage of noa between opposing forces in marine architecture leads to symmetry, balance and speed. The unseen or laumalie is a representation that provides a base for linking the concept into a bigger/higher system of connectedness (see the description of the spirit, laumalie by Sione Vaiioleti in Chapter Six).

This unseen mirror image of the tapa tolu can represent the past, ancestors, church matters, old religious obligations, unrecorded knowledge, other relatives both in the home country and elsewhere as well as possibly their future. These considerations may have very real meaning for Tongans, including students, but are invisible to

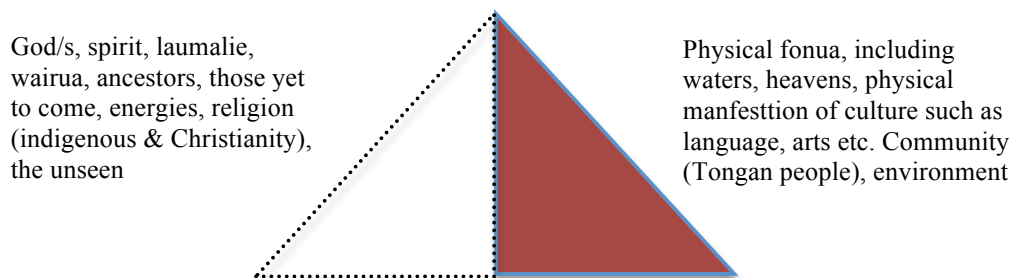
empirical observations and scientific study and therefore often ignored in places such as the classroom. Following the above discussions on fatongia, spirituality, the different aspects need to be considered for individual and collective wellbeing of a Tongan individual and their community. I now develop the tapa tolu concepts further to arrive at a more comprehensive symbolism that integrates the individual and the community developmental dimensions, in a way that is identifiably Tongan and more generally Pacific.

In the form of the original tapa tolu symbolism for Tonganess, the side that represents the physical, the observable aspects of concepts and beings (be it fonua, emotion, sino) is viewed on the right hand side (Figure 7. 3). The elements of such concepts and beings that are unseen, but still present, are on the left hand side. The latter influence the seen persona, behaviour and for the classroom situation, moods and the stage of readiness to learn as if it is a mirror image of and counterbalance to the seen part of the original (isosceles) triangle. The two sides make up the whole. We are still focussing on single sets of relationships each represented by one tapa tolu but for a representation of a more complete and balanced wellbeing, I will now build on the above discussions and Koloto's work, by exploring four key dimensions simultaneously.

#### Elements of a revised tangata kakato

From my talanoa mo hoku loto and with others ('Ana Huni; Maleponi Taunaholo; Sione Vaioleti; Sami Veikoso; Sateki 'Ulukalala), I propose a new revised representation of tangata kakato an ideal stage of being that Tongan people aspire to. For this, I suggest four tapa tolu of fonua, sino, kainga, atamai/loto. It is my contention that the classroom learning has an obligation to arm and prepare Tongan children with tools and understanding to progress towards these cultural ideals. I will address each briefly.

**Figure 7. 4. Fonua.**

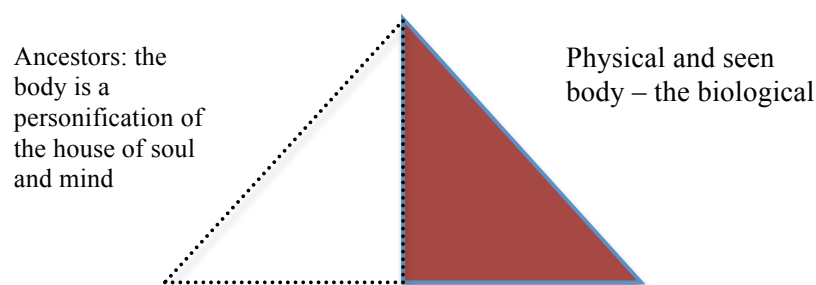


It will be recalled from the literature review that fonua is the base for many Pacific cultures, including the knowledge that is part of those cultures. Fonua gives identity to knowledge and peoples - the living and non-living, in fact, most things. Nabobo (cited in Thaman, 2003b, p. 87) stated that “the vanua (fonua) is seen to be the source of nearly everything in a Fijian life; it belongs collectively to everyone in a matagali (clan) not only the living, but also those who have passed on”.

As a Pacific term, fonua can be regarded as nature, the common denominator for people, animals, plants and all that surround us. We all contribute to the wellness of this collective through fatongia (Koloto, 2006; Mitaera, 1999; Tiatia, 1998), which if not performed well, compromises the health and balance of the collective. Our Polynesian worldview tells us that our integrity as a people depends on cooperation of communities that think and work together for co-survival according to what social context and environment allows, rather than a competitive and individualistic psyche that seeks to guide our present lives in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Morrison and Vaiioleti, 2008). Within the traditions of Tonga, conceptions of self are intrinsically linked to the fonua (‘Epeli Hau’ofa, talanoa, May, 2004). At the micro level, it is using respectful language in communications and other practice such as modes of social interaction as well as willingness to express ‘ofa to others (personification of the fonua). At a macro level it can be assisting neighbours including other Pacific nations, friends and relatives in events. Activities of tauhi vaa are often seen as fatongia and the benefits, both for individuals and the wider community, derived from contributing to the common good.

Some suggestions for educators seeking to assist in maintaining the health of fonua are to include the culture and knowledge of Tongan students in the classroom discourses. Tongan students are cultural beings who learn better when their language is used, when appropriate, to complement the teaching instructions and other communication. Also educators should learn to know and use cultural concepts that could be used to scaffold learning onto concepts of one's subject. Others can be the inclusion of students' stories and other knowledge in the discourses of the day-to-day lives of those in the classroom. As Koloto (2006) has pointed out and as New Zealand Census results demonstrate, religion plays a major role in the lives of Pacific peoples. Respect shown to spiritual activities is advised. Practical application of this to a classroom may be the inclusion of rituals at the beginning and end of lessons, such as karakia, and an expression of thanks and farewell.

**Figure 7. 5. Sino/tinana/physical body**



Sino is associated with the biological, the well-being of the body and other physical aspects of the person. It is the physical representation of ancestors who hold the most venerated positions in a Tongan society. Sino is often referred to as hoko (physical continuance) of parents or ancestors. The mata (face), which is part of this aspect, is regarded as the most tapu part of the sino (ma meaning pure or true and ta meaning to reflect). Sino is integral to spirituality. It is the physical kato (basket) that houses the smaller basket within which are held the treasures of our ancestors, the laumalie and fonua, to which Taufā'ahau made reference. The unseen part of the sino triangle stands for what is not seen or not known about the individual's physical abilities.

The concept of sino is problematic, as it seems to be a very isolationist perspective within discussions of a holistic nature. In education, it is difficult to isolate the body from emotion (see atamai) and cognition as it is the sino that facilitates a sense upon which cognition is reliant (Begg, 2000; Varela, 1992). For an educator to be informed about the learning needs of a student, s/he must try to learn about what influences their sino in order to inform the teaching, environment and the learning ambience appropriately.

As noted in Chapter Six, Tongan students are not familiar with boredom. They have many physical ways of achieving malie (Manu'atu, 2002; Silipa, 1999). Meaningful, play-based games may assist them to remain attentive and engaged in the classroom. This points to the suggestions by Barker (2008), Bishop (2008), Dewey (1916) and Rogers (1969) who encouraged more negotiation and co-implicated activity within the classroom. Such situated physical learning accords with emphasis on play in the educational works of Dewey (1916, 1944) and Piaget (1972, 1980).

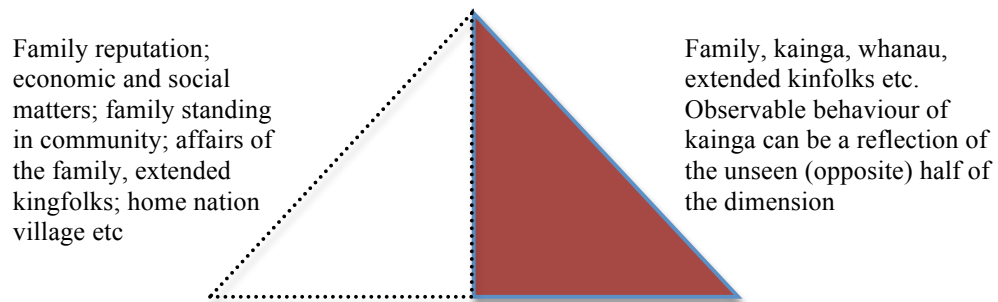
Suggestions that will help teachers understand Tongan students' reactions in the classroom include a clear understanding that Tongans are likely to be particular about their personal space, sino or physical vaa. They will either welcome people into that space or protect themselves within it whether it be their home, classroom or a space in the school itself. A teacher or an educator must be cognisant of this, as breaching this space can lead to serious relational barriers to learning and management matters. Everyone has a different vaa, often related to the social standing of one's kainga.

Strategies that may help teachers minimise harm to the laumalie of the sino include being aware of management techniques if in close proximity to the student and engaged in teaching over peoples' heads or walking in close proximity in front of their face or close behind especially if they are sitting. In the community, one will observe people saying 'tulou' and stooping to lower themselves slightly as they pass people. These are respectful ways of acknowledging someone's presence and recognising that you may be crossing into someone else's vaa. The teacher can introduce such forms of respectful acknowledgement in the classroom and encourage students to practise them. While failure to show such respect may not cause harm, showing respect in such a novel and calm way lower levels of anxiety and introduce a



new but well tried cultural trait, that has real meaning for Tongans (and other Pacific peoples). This is simply a little step to add to a more concerted effort that will bring a sense of oneness, of sino, to the classroom.

**Figure 7. 6. Kainga**



Kainga is about the collective and is often a metaphor for one's own immediate family extending to distance kingfolks. A good state of mind and health for Tongan people is strongly associated with the notion of healthy and happy kainga. Kainga is always linked with the land and environment that they come from. To use an example from Aotearoa/New Zealand, activities by tangata whenua in the rural community and on marae will impact on the health and educational outcomes of their own kainga who live elsewhere. What happens in the fonua of Tonga has a real impact on the lives of Tongan people living in Aotearoa/New Zealand, including their learning at schools.

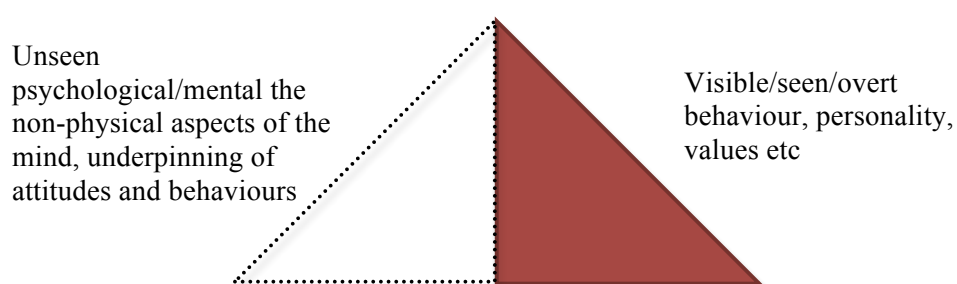
This strong cultural value is harnessed by the Ministry of Education (1996) in a book on Pacific peoples' education, *Koe Ako 'a e Kakai Pasifika: Pacific Islands Peoples' Education in Aotearoa, New Zealand Towards the Twenty-First Century*, a book in which, it is recognised that family and community are fundamental to the success in education.

Suggestions for teachers and other educators with regard to kainga include recognition that activities in the kainga impact on students to a much larger degree than most non-Pacific educators realize because of the highly holistic lives Pacific families lead. There is a need to be aware of and respond to what is happening in the community and churches with caution and sympathy. Where possible, educators should learn some of the basic language of the students so their realities are

understood first hand. They should also make time to study their students' background and culture and take part in community, cultural and church activities. Case studies from those experiences can be used as examples in future lessons. It is important to attempt to understand the students' humour, knowledge, language and as able, incorporate Tongan words during teaching ensuring to observe appropriate context as context is essential to the understanding of culture. Vaa (relationships) are important and misuse of familiar terms in inappropriate contexts or even poor pronunciation of Tongan words may be offensive to students or parents (kainga).

The failure of the individual is also felt by the rest of the kainga, village or even the rest of the wider ethnic group. It is wise to exercise caution and seek advice when dealing with failure or poor performance. In the eyes of many Tongans, public shaming of one kainga member is often public shamng of the rest of the kainga, just as kindness to a member of the kainga is felt by those who belong to that kainga. There is an advantage however, to a teacher, as the praise for one of the kainga will have a positive ripple effect on most other kainga members in class, house group even on the whole school. Therefore, this sensitive area of failure, and perhaps more pressing an issue the fear of failure, may be offset by the teacher. This could be done through active encouragement of trial and error within the classroom, and not only praise (and therefore the achievement of malie for the student) for answers deemed to be correct, but also praising the student for the attempt.

**Figure 7. 7. Atamai/loto/finangalo/hingangaro**



Atamai or loto is associated with thinking and feeling (Sione Vaioleti, talanoa, July, 2008; Koloto, 2006). In the Tongan language finangalo is the respectful way of referring to feelings, mind or thought. Finangalo is similar to what Mason Durie (1989) identified as hinengaro in his Whare Tapa Wha model. Tongans are often said

to think with their loto (Linita Manu'atu, talanoa, May, 2009). Loto, simply means inside; it is a reference to feelings, inner feelings or thoughts. The usual way of asking for one's thought is, "koe ha ho loto?" What is your heartfelt or unseen feeling? Manu'atu (talanoa, May, 2009) goes further by saying that the atamai may also signify the mind or head, collecting information, considering arguments for or against issues, but it is the loto that makes judgements or the final decisions.

Begg (2000) raised several concerns about a lack of attention given by our mainstream learning approaches to the intuitive, emotional knowing and unconscious thoughts. Davis (1996; 2003) refers to this type of knowledge as unformulated knowledge and suggests that much of what we do is unformulated as we are not conscious of it in our actions. This may include 'ilo or spiritual or Godly knowledge, atamai, loto and fingangalo. Using the metaphor of the right angle triangle, the seen part is conscious thought and formulated knowledge, while the mirror image unseen triangle is the unformulated knowledge. These two sides of knowledge are not a dichotomy or binary but complementary and inseparable. In a similar fashion loto (heart) and 'atamai (mind, brain), action and thought, poto and 'ilo are complementary and inseparable. In this structure lies real opportunity for successful and meaningful teaching and learning for Tongan and other Pacific students.

In several of my talanoa with Sione Vaoleti in 2006 and 2008, he suggested that teachers should work on the unseen parts of young people as well as teaching them vocational and other knowledge. In other words, Sione was suggesting some moral or spiritual education in some way. This reflected the moral aim of education that Dewey (1916, 1944) desired and my colleague Nesta Devine (talanoa, July, 2006) insisted was basic for making things better- a better daughter, a better son, a better citizen. Working on the unseen for moral reasons also will contribute to confronting what Thaman (2004, p. 6) described at the beginning of this thesis as "...an education system that encourages individual rights and self-promotion at the expense of collective rights and social responsibility, more characteristics of Pacific cultures...". It was the view of Sione Vaoleti that education of the loto (unseen) should be, as Davis (1996) suggested, complementary and inseparable with maths, science, Maori language and any other mainstream subject. The complementary nature of action and thought, tangible and intangible, sino and 'atamai or and laumalie will complement

each other providing a more holistic learning and meaningful education experience for Tongan and other Pacific students.

Suggestions for teachers with regard to 'atamai are that students need to be physically healthy (sino) as well as emotionally robust (finangalo). With this understanding teachers can encourage, amongst other things, plenty of rest, physical exercise and good eating habits. This is a non-confrontational way of encouraging students to take care of themselves better, thus maximising their potential for creative use of formulated as well as unformulated knowledge. 'Atamai is more often associated with the brain, and finagalo and lotu with the heart. In the Tongan sense it is the 'atamai that engages in academic work, searching and gathering information, but it is the lotu/finangalo that make the important judgements and decisions (Linita Manu'atu, June, 2009).

Another suggestion for teachers is that it is important to teach Tongan related subjects that can engage both the lotu and 'atamai. An example might relate to teaching art designs on pottery. Rather than just teaching a senior classical art unit on Greek vase design, design a unit that compares and contrasts the development and spread of the Greek vase designs in the ancient West and the development and spread of the Lapita pottery in the Pacific. The engagement of both the lotu and 'atamai in this example is as follows; The students will learn about early European art, history, transportation, geography, library research, Blooms taxonomy's analysis, synthesis and evaluation. They will also learn their own history and geography, and in the process gain the ability to use Tongan research methodologies with their own family and community. The bonus will be that their parents are very likely to be involved as co-constructors, and co-researchers with their children. Likely outcomes for both parents and students, are that their lotu will be filled with pride as they will learn more about the amazing feats of their ancestors and their families will be drawn closer to the school, and the teacher as well.

#### Laumalie/wairua/spirit/unseen

Laumalie represents the unseen mirror reflection of all the aspects that must be considered when working or teaching a Tongan person. Laumalie does not have an

English translation. It is used to mean either spirit or truth. It can be used to convey the essence or soul of something. Davis (1996) suggests that it is through the interplay between what we think about and say (formulated) and what we do without conscious thought (unformulated), we find space for effective teaching and learning that will boost the cultural knowledge such as 'ofa, 'ilo, potu and fatongia that will ensure more balanced and complete graduates emerge from our schools. Sione Vaoleti (talanoa, July, 2006) suggested that our actions are manifestations of the unseen. He implied in most of our talanoa that positive actions that we benefit from are works of or in the unseen (area), which he referred to as that of the laumalie or lotu (spirit) (talanoa, January, 2000; December, 2001; July, 2006; May, 2008).

Laumalie is described as positive or Godly energy that can move or lift people to perform extraordinary feats (Sione Vaoleti, talanoa, May, 2008). In day-to-day use, laumalie is the word that is used to represent an ideal state of internal or spiritual completeness, perfection or balance. Malo e laumalie 'a e eiki means 'we give thanks (to the God/s) that all is well (complete, perfect, balance) with you chief' is a greeting to a high ranking person in the Tongan custom. Marsden (2003) commented that:

... spiritual values are always beyond the grasp of mortal men. They are always ultimate and absolute in nature and yet always beckoning men onwards. The closer one approximates to the ideal the more the satisfaction. There is always a gap between the ideal and practice; between becoming and being; but towards excellence all things strive. The Maori expression is 'kia eke ki tona taumata' - that it may attain to the excellence of its being; or, to the authentic existence. This doesn't apply to humans only but to all created things. Now the goal of human endeavour is to achieve 'atuatanga' - divinity, this is the meaning and purpose of life. (p. 44)

Many of the things we engage in, including our education, are part of the journey to "atuatanga" - securing the quality of Godliness (laumalie) in what I interpret as oneness with the spirit (God). From another perspective, and that of completeness, this maybe is what Roger (1969, 1980) terms as a fully actualized being. Laumalie is about connectedness, and connectedness to or a part of a bigger, higher being or collective. For the classroom, modelling care, compassion, forgiveness, fatongia that is done well and other behaviour identified as of the laumalie (Godly) quality, will motivate the Tongan students to reflect these qualities back to both other students, as well as the teacher.

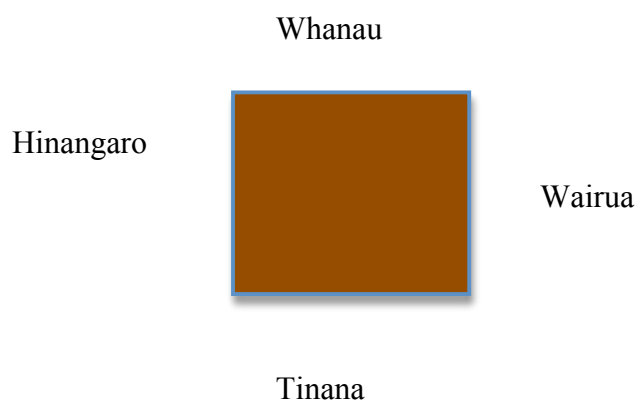
## 7. 2. Symbolism for comprehensive and integrated holistic wellbeing

I now want to tui e kakala to symbolise that ideal stage of being from the four kakala clusters of fonua, kainga, sino and atamai in a way that represents a more balanced comprehensive holistic wellbeing. In this I will look to the writings of Tangata Whenua for inspiration.

Durie (1994, 1999) offered Whare Tapa Wha as a model based on the need to maintain the physical, mental, whanau and wairua needs to maintain the health of Maori. To help understand the Whare Tapa Wha model, Durie (1994) used the metaphor of the physical design of a wharenuī (meeting house), with strong foundations and four sides. The Whare Tapa Wha model (Durie, 1994, p. 69) illustrates the four cornerstones (or sides) of Maori health and dimensions of wellbeing, which are whanau (family health), tinana (physical health), hinengaro (mental health) and wairua (spiritual health).

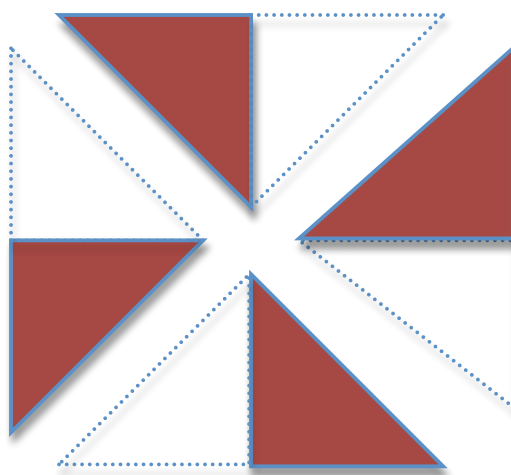
Should one of the four dimensions be missing or damaged, a person or a collective may become unbalanced or subsequently unwell. In a traditional Maori approach to health, the inclusion of the wairua, the role of the whanau, and the balance of the hinengaro and tinana are as important as the physical manifestations of illness (Durie, 1994). The schematic drawing below represents the relationships between the four dimensions of the Whare Tapa Wha (Durie 1994, p. 69)

**Figure 7. 8. My schematic representation of Durie's Whare Tapa Wha framework**



If the wharenui is a metaphor for the key dimension of Durie's holistic model for Maori, then a related metaphor for my kakala of a holistic framework for Tongan education is the tapa tolu. The tapa tolu must have something to represent connectedness, spirituality, the fonua, pote, 'ilo, ako and 'ofa interrogated in this thesis. It should reflect Tongan history, durability, noa, vaa as well as be a more authentic representation of spirituality in education, and the general life of a Tongan person. It also has to communicate the ultimate aim of ako – laumalie, mo'oni and harmony that is sustainable. Each triangle representing Fonua, Kainga, Atamai and Sino has an apex. For a Tongan, an apex can represent an ancestor, paramount chief, spiritual entity or even God/s. In my symbolism, all the four tapa tolu kakala clusters is tui in a way that draws the triangles and apexes into each other at 90 degrees as demonstrated below.

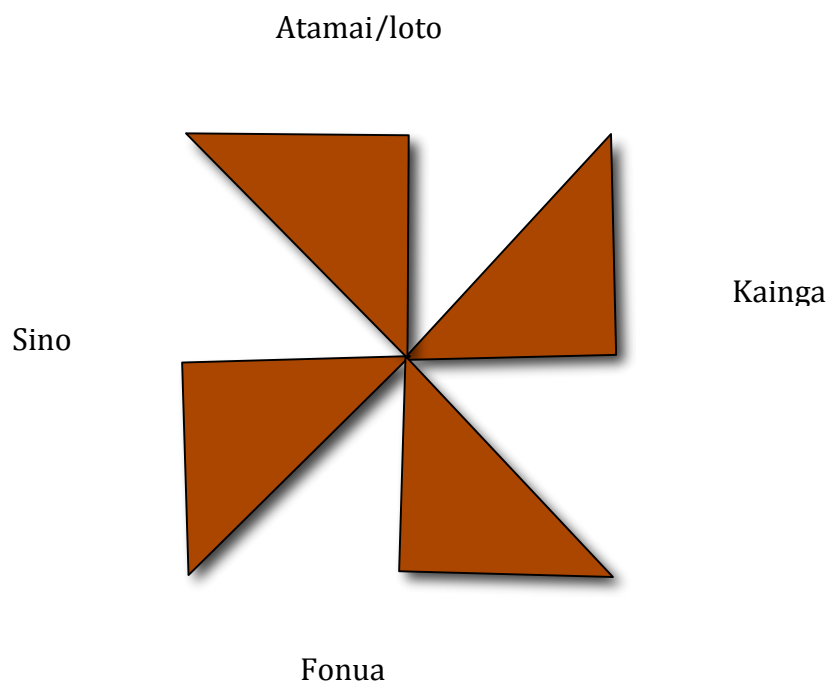
**Figure 7. 9. Clustering of the dimensions (kakala) of fonua, kainga, sino and atamai ready for tui**



As one can imagine, four dimensions draw slowly and equally into each other, there is a point that they merge at a center and along their sides. The point where and when the four dimensions fused into one, like an image emerging from a mist of starts, Manulua slowly manifested. It formed over a long, long time. However the very minute the synergy and connectedness of the four tapa tolu became clear as a feel not just a thought, it set off a chain reaction of mafana energy that as Manu'atu (2000) stated lifted on to another level of elightenment. This lifted my kaunga fa'u and kainga too a mafana level which lingered on for years.

The four tapa tolu merged early in the morning, when I was in a deep reflection and talanoa mo hoku loto while marvelling at the bright Ha'amonga a Maui (constellation of Orion<sup>19</sup>) sparkling as if it was having a talanoa with me. The mafana in realising the significance of the toli and tui from my talanoa mo hoku loto and Ha'amonga 'a Maui<sup>20</sup> (which could be classified as talanoa tevolo) stirred a deep pride in the life achievements of ancestors and the quality of the kakala I had with me to luva. Manulua is an ancient figure used by both women and men to signify, beauty, strength, identity, belonging which was communicated through koloa (taonga, important possessions) such as mats, ngatu and tools (Maleponi Taunaholo, talanoa, December, 2008). To me, manulua shows history, duality, enlightenment, balance, simplicity, endurance, harmony as well as connecteness to a higher order or bigger collective. The following is my re-creation of Manulua in the context of ako.

**Figure 7. 10. Manulua – adaptation for education and human development analysis**



<sup>19</sup> For the Tongans the 3 stars of the Orion is Maui; his head in the middle and the outer stars represent his shoulders. The burdens he is carrying are the stars of Rigel and Betegeuse in front and behind him balanced over his shoulder by a carrying board. Ha'amonga a Maui was a significant constellation for Tongan as a reminder of the purpose of their maritime fatongia and a pathway marker in precontact navigations given its maritime history.

<sup>20</sup> My talanoa was with Ha'amonga 'a Maui the constallation however in this earth, Ha'amonga a Maui is the historical archway shaped Trilithon on the eastern tip of Tongatapu. It is made up of two stone uprights slotted at the top to carry a lintel across them. The stones are between 20 to 30 tons each and rumoured to have been shipped from 'Uvea (French Polynesia) in pre-contact time. Ha'amonga 'a Maui refers to the heavy fatongia (burden) carried by Maui in creation of many fonua in the Pacific, slowing down the sun, bringing the fire from the spiritworld all fatongia to mankind. These fatongia were carried out with 'ilo in a potu way a sign of 'ofa to Tongan (Pacific) people. This site was used for ancient worshipping.



As mentioned in other parts of this thesis the unseen half of each isosceles triangular representations fonua, sino, atamai/loto and kainga are the wairua and cultural spaces which keep the integrity of the clusters of flowers. One may notice that unlike Whare Tapa Wha, spirituality is not overtly marked or separated out to an isolated side of the whare model. In manulua, wairua, laumalie or spirituality is fittingly symbolised as unseen; and integral part of each and all dimensions (sino, atamai/loto, kainga, fonua) of a holistic person. Laumalie is a commonality to all. Laumalie is represented by what looks like space between the triangles. In this form it fuses the dimensions to a connected collective. Laumalie provides balance and integrity to each dimension of the collective that constitutes a person.

I also see the space between the dimensions as also the physical representation for vaa. Vaa is space but in the context of this discussion it means relationship which, needs to be maintained (tauhi) and as discussed in the earlier chapters, fatongia are tauhi vaa activities (to maintain harmonious relationships). As mentioned above, vaa both binds and separates people (or dimensions) in order for each to maintain their integrity yet they belong to or enjoy sustainable membership of a collective.

To maintain consistency with Sione Vaoleti's many talanoa, the unseen parts of the triangles are where ako, potu, 'ilo, 'ofa and fatongia occur. In the context of pedagogy, the seen parts of the triangles represent the relevant teaching and learning behaviours that will deliver the balance and integrity in education that teachers and pupils both seek in the classroom. The unseen parts of each triangle can represent the unseen service occurs through fatongia in order to ensure classroom and technical learning is successful, while maintaining relationships and harmony between students, teachers and the curriculum. This in turn influences the overall health of learning in the classroom.

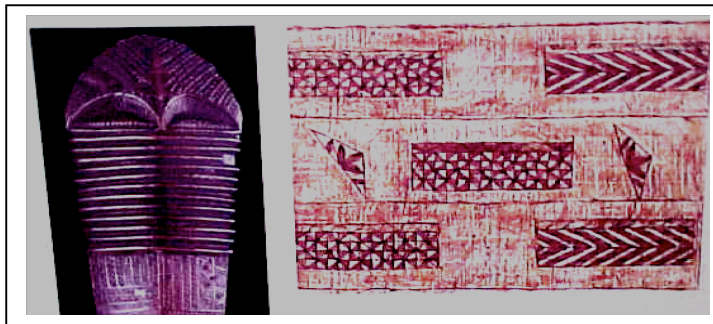
#### Manulua as a cultural icon and as ngatu (tapa) design

Manulua, an ancient kupesi design, is seen in old ngatu (tapa), in carvings as well as in many other artistic taonga of Tonga (Maleponi Taunaholo, talanoa, 2008). This

motif is common throughout Polynesia and is preserved in tattoo, ngatu, weaving and other koloa of our women. It also satisfies my need for a framework which is simple but meaningful and allows me to represent both duality and continuity through the cycle of life and death, male and female, day and night, seen and unseen, ancestors and living, symmetry, boldness and integrity.

The following photo of ngatu is from the Tongan Royal museum in Havelu, Tongatapu. The manulua are seen in the ngatu on the right side as well as in the fine carving of the club on the left hand side of the picture.

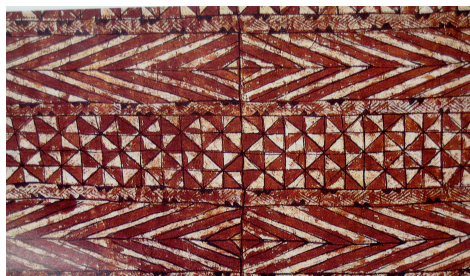
Photo 7. 1. Manulua motif on ngatu and club



Source: Royal Tongan Museum, Havelu, Tongatapu

The ngatu below with the manulua design is from Tonga, but is held in the Auckland Museum. It is a photo taken from Neich and Pendergrast (1997, p. 12) that clearly shows the manulua grouped in the middle, possibly to represent a community.

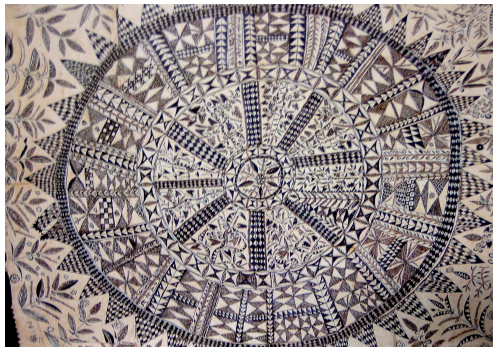
Photograph 7. 2. Very old ngatu showing manulua and rare kofe design



Source: Neich and Pendergast (2001, p. 13)

As noted above, ngatu with the manulua design are common in Polynesia, and two other examples from Niue and Futuna are shown below. Both are held at the Auckland Museum and the photos come from Neich and Pendergrast. (1997, pp. 13-14)

Photograph 7. 3. Ngatu from Niue showing the manulua



Source: Neich and Pendergrast. (1997, p. 14)

The above piece of ngatu is from Niue. The manulua and the other design were hand drawn. It is also held at the Auckland Museum.

Photograph 7. 4. A mat from Futuna showing the manulua



Source: Neich and Pendergrast. (1997, p. 13)

The above piece of mat (taonga) with the manulua design is from Futuna. It is also held at the Musuem of Auckland.

For the sake of clarity, my discussions and analysis of manulua has been on elements of an isolated individual manulua. There is one very fundamental message

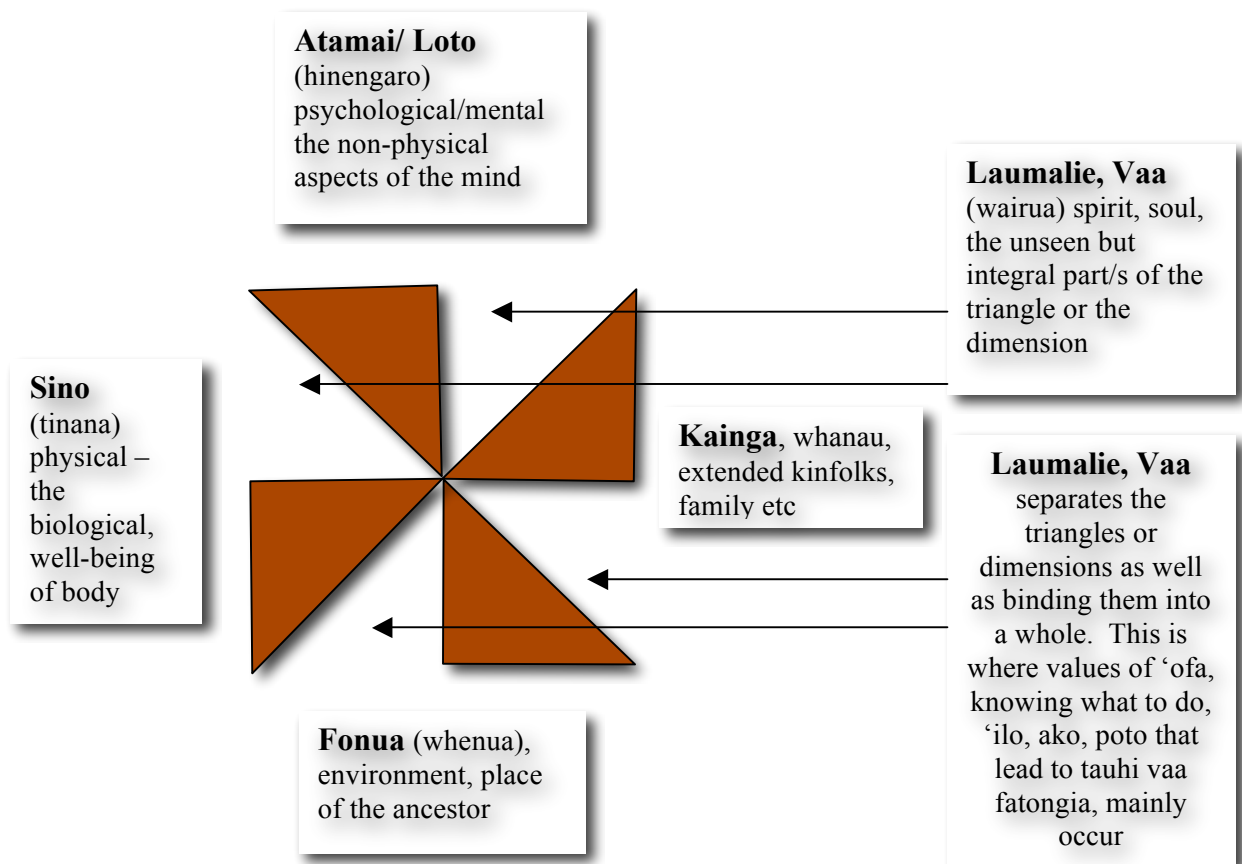
communicated to the observer throughout the old and new depictions of Manulua in the above pictures. The Manulua is always a member of a group, similar to an individual within a fanau, kainga or fonua. The background space or the white background, to the manulua cohorts, is the vaa or Laumalie to which I refer throughout this thesis. Laumalie provides the connectedness, vaa is the spaces that separated the individuals or elements as well as where fatongia is informed by 'ilo to hold each individual together in kotahitanga with the rest of the fanau.

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, the central message discussed above relates to the concept of whanau. In Chapter Three, I noted that Durie suggested that for Maori, an individual's motivation for others, is viewed as more healthier than motivation for one's self (Ministry of Social Development, 2007). Further, they value interdependence over independence; humility and respect for and service to others. For Tongan people, these are qualities that will lead to fe'ofa'ofani (Sateki 'Ulukalala, talanoa, 2000), sustainable balanced and harmonious existence that is the ideal aim of ako. For Maori, Durie (1989) saw a group-based identity with the self, indivisible from whanau, hapu and iwi, as strongly promoted in Maori contexts. This may be a lesson for education planners, policy developers, curriculum developers, education institutions and teachers who can use Maori education concepts as scaffolds to assist Tongan students in teaching Tongan values for contextual cognitive and social development.

#### **7. 11. Manulua – Dimensions of Atamai, Sino, Kainga, Fonua and Laumalie and their elements - symbolism for holism, metaphor for ideal state of being**

In the diagram below is my second kakala where I have tui the four dimensions discussed above to represent an ideal for a Tongan state of being.

**Figure 7. 11. Manulua** – showing integral role of laumalie (spirituality), vaa and others in separating out and fusion into a whole the four dimensions for harmony, contentment, complete & balanced state of sustainable wellbeing



The term manulua brings together two words - manu for bird or metaphorically for a person or a leader or ancestor that represents a people, and lua which is an old Tongan and Samoan word for two. Manulua thus is a metaphor for two birds seemingly in fully fledged four-winged flight sharing one body. It can be seen to represent unity in purpose (Kotahitanga in Aotearoa/New Zealand), mutual sharing of both costs as well as benefits of joint endeavours. Further, connectedness, partnership, marriage and a collective approach to living can be represented by the manulua. All these ideals are underpinned by what Sateki ‘Ulukalala (talanoa, January, 2000) stated as ancestral ‘ilo such as fe’ofa’ofani (harmonious living) and fe’ofa’aki (unconditional regards for each other).

The way manulua is represented in this context has the apexes or the peak of all the four triangles, touching or connected at the centre as if the individual triangles are being energised from one point or source. It is from here that the laumalie seamlessly

joins yet separates into the fonua, kainga, sino and atamai thus enabling them to maintain their individuality and integrity while at the same time being one. This notion seems to fit with Marsden's (in Royal, 2003) concept of 'hauora' - the centre that furnishes mauri to all. Marsden (2003) speaks of mauri as a "force or energy mediated by hauora – the breath of the spirit of life" and "mauri-ora was the life-force (mauri) transformed into life-principle by the infusion of life itself" (p. 44). Sione Vaoleti (talanoa, September, 2008) reinforced this by saying that he sees the laumalie as the source, the life force from which all things come into being.

In a classroom, if the state of wellbeing of tangata kakato described by Koloto is to improve the learning of Tongan students, then as Bishop (2008), Taufe'ulungaki (2004) and Vygotsky (1978) suggested, the learning tools used to assist learning must be that of the learners'. In this case, classroom learning strategies need to be developed to maintain the wellbeing of mo'ui fakasino, mo'ui fakalaumalie and mo'ui faka'atamai. They must include Tongan learning tools, concepts, values and content that recognise the spirituality that Sami Veikoso, Sione Vaoleti and Sateki 'Ulukalala mentioned. If attempts by the teacher are culturally appropriate and balanced, the Tongan students may reach malie and therefore be more likely to engage actively and more meaningfully in classroom learning.

At this stage of tangata kakato, a Tongan person will be in a strong physical, mental and spiritual position to achieve goals that s/he sets out to secure. For a Tongan student s/he is more likely to benefit from classroom ako. With the guide of cultural and spiritual 'ilo s/he will use the benefit of ako to provide the means for carrying out fatongia to fonua, to kainga and to God/s. Fulfilling those fatongia will be the realisation of what Taufua'ahau Tupou IV referred to as the basket within the basket (the truth), Cowling referred to as fiemalie (peace and contentment) and Neti Cook referred to as harmony within community and their God. All these give a sense of holism, connectedness and balance.

I feel then that it is important for mainstream institutions to have a philosophy or agenda for achieving excellence in cultural matters such as language, spiritual, fatongia, fonua, all of which are only some of the values that create the world of Tongan children. Bishop (2008) has shared how the collective vision, kaupapa and

philosophy for Kura Kaupapa Maori provides a guideline for what constitutes excellence in Maori education. This philosophy connects with Maori aspirations politically, socially, economically and spiritually and I posit that mainstream schools would benefit from a similar framework for their Tongan students. I propose that the Manulua concept is a fitting metaphor, kaupapa or philosophy for an education outcome for Tongan students as its constitution has synergy with their cultural aspirations.

The motif of Manulua is a fitting expression of a balanced holistic state of being Tongan. The manulua represents a kakala of several triangles that for me, holds many symbolic meanings, all in geographical, political, historical, physical and spiritual forms. Manulua is at a state of equilibrium, the ideal state that I see ako as seeking ways and means to achieve it. The pedagogies developed and tui in this chapter are strategies that will contribute to ultimately achieving the state of being that manulua symbolises. Through this process the resultant kalala provides appropriate guidance for teachers and others seeking education outcomes for Pacific students that are meaningful and respectful of who the students are, inclusive of their cultures.

#### **7. 4. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I examined cultural beliefs in the ideals for Tongan personhood in order to suggest to teachers ways of seeing and thinking that will align their work more to culturally and spiritually positioned Tongan students. As a result of much talanoa, reflection and talanoa mo hoku loto, manulua has now been articulated as a symbolic expression of ideal Tongan personhood. For teaching, manulua is a framework that has relevance for the education of Tongans and other Pacific peoples in the wider context of experiencing a fulfilling and balanced life. Manulua then stands as the ultimate aim ako (education) for Tongan learners. I now need a founga (path, strategy, a set of scaffolds) a pedagogical framework rooted in the ancient and enduring Tongan educational concepts interrogated in earlier chapters to assist in a culturally appropriate journey towards achieving the state represented by manulua.

In the final chapter, I will turn to ‘ofa, ‘ilo, pote, fatongia and fonua and other kakala from the rest of the thesis to toli and tui of my third kalala - a pedagogical framework (founga) to assist the learning of Tongan students in the classrooms of Aotearoa/New Zealand. This framework will assist both teachers and learners in identifying their fatongia in the classroom, to each other, their parents, tangata whenua and their fonua in order to prepare themselves for their untimate journey to achieving that state of balance, peace with their community, their environment and their own God/s (manulua).



## CHAPTER EIGHT: FOUNGA AKO: TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK FOR TONGAN LEARNING

Having woven my findings about Tongan educational concepts into a kalala that is represented metaphorically and visually by and in the ancient art of manulua, I can now tui a third kalala that provides a pedagogical framework for teachers and students that will assist with the classroom teaching of Tongan students in Aotearoa/New Zealand. I call this pedagogical framework Founga Ako. It is offered as my luvu towards the contribution that education can make to the state of wholeness and harmony with one, with the community, with the fonua and with the God/s that most Tongans live and work towards.

Founga, literally means the common paths, so it can mean way/s ways of ancestors. This framework, which draws inspiration from Sheets' (2005) work on Diversity Pedagogy Theory that was outlined in Chapter Three, crystallises my thinking about how the findings of this research can be translated into action in the classrooms of Aotearoa/New Zealand. The final section of the chapter links the discussions of manulua and Founga Ako back to the Ministry of Education's Pacific Plan (2009 - 2012), the New Zealand Curriculum Document (Ministry of Education, 2007), Te Kotahitanga research/professional development (Bishop, 2008; Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003, p. 1) and the wider literature on learning.

### **8. 1. Founga Ako and its links with Diversity Pedagogy Theory**

Founga Ako aligns with Sheets' (2005) Diversity Pedagogy Theory (DPT) in that it "links culture, cognition and schooling in a single unit" (p. 1). For the Ako framework an underlying assumption is that discourses in the classroom, and hence practice, must be informed by 'deep understandings' of the role of culture and, in the context of the social and cognitive development of Tongan children, the concepts ako, 'ilo, poto, 'ofa, fatongia and fonua.

An appreciation of and some substantive knowledge about this relationship is “key to incorporating multiple factors of diversity in the teaching learning process” (Sheets, 2005, p. 1) that respects and preserves cultural knowledge. As it is for faiako/kaiako (Pere, 1982, 1991, 1994; Thaman, 1988) the Founa Ako, acknowledges the integral role that teachers play in making the ako happen. The Student Cultural Displays (SCD) in the Founa Ako also makes explicit the important relational roles and fatongia for students in classroom learning, an expected integral part of ako.

Ako (as a pedagogy) is a process that prepares then enables the fusion of Tongan students experience, culture and knowledge, with introduced Western knowledge. A more effective approach is an approach where all cognitive, affective and kinesthetic domains are involved (often in reciprocity with faiako or another source). When the Tongan language, concepts, and cultural explanations are used, then spirituality is unavoidably included as an integral part of activity within the classroom. Students allowed physical space to move and express themselves, and given options for assessment, then develop a deeper meaning and malie is achieved. Spontaneous, intuitive (laumalie) learning and a stronger sense of identity will take the student’s learning and skill enhancement to a level often unobtainable with orthodox teaching methods.

The planned pedagogical process that can lead to achieving malie can include observation of teacher demonstration, encouragement of trial and error by the students, guided by feedback and feed forward (Bishop, 2008) from the teacher. This creates a continuous flow and fusion of teaching, learning, reflection, deconstruction, unfreezing of prior knowledge, adjustments, reconstruction and refreezing that could lead Tongan students to achieve malie. These are all elements of the actualization of a journey towards the ideal state of being, finding the mo’oni, represented by the Manulua.

Such active pursuit in fa’u of knowledge using all cognitive, affective and practical approaches, reflects the action-based perspectives of Dewey on learning:

...knowledge does not exist statically or separate from action. Knowledge that is isolated from action and is acquired passively prevents the formation of new habits and the reconstruction of experience, thereby preventing growth and learning. The experimental method unites mental activity and experience, and allows for the creation of new knowledge. This presupposes that knowledge is not a body of universal truth waiting to be uncovered by rational, objective thought. Experimental science has shown that "there is no such thing as genuine knowledge and fruitful understanding except as the offspring of doing. (p. 321)

Founga Ako operationalises fatongia from the teacher to the fanau ako (students or learners and their kainga) as well as the fanau ako back to the teacher. I made this relational fatongia between a faiako and fanau ako clear in my sharing of my schooling experience with some good teachers under Chapter Two (p. 56) where I stated that:

...almost all my teachers had been like family to us; they constantly encouraged us and were always flexible and responsive. They invested time, even personal resources, on their students but expected reciprocity in the form of hard work and respect and they took great personal pride in every successful milestone.

The following Founga Ako Framework draws on Sheets' (2005) DPT and with it, I have endeavoured to make the fatongia of faiako to fanau ako and fanau ako to faiako integral. For classrooms in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the Founga Ako will also contribute to achieving what the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 8) envisioned for schools in creating students "who will work to create an Aotearoa/New Zealand in which Maori and Pakeha recognize each other as full Treaty partners, and in which all cultures are valued for the contribution they bring".

Staying with the vision of the New Zealand curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007), a classroom that encourages students to learn in their own cultural ways and knowledge such as that advocated by Founga Ako for fanau ako Tonga, will satisfy the vision of students "who in their school years, will continue to develop the values, knowledge and competencies that will enable them to live full and satisfying lives". (p. 8)

This particular vision of the New Zealand Curriculum document is what equates to and is represented by the Manulua, my second kakala. Living a full and satisfying

(Tongan) life and being in harmony with each other and their God/s is the ultimate outcome and vision of ako for many Tongan people (Neti Cook, talanoa, May, 2003; Sateki 'Ulukalala, talanoa, January, 2000; Sione Vaiioleti, talanoa, September, 2008). Founga Ako contributes to achieving this vision ultimately. In Founga Ako, I have used ako, 'ofa, 'ilo, poto, fatongia and fonua in conjunction with a framework adopted from Sheets (2005) to make this kakala.

In this framework, ako loosely guides the knowledge and pedagogy used in the classroom, 'ofa provides a sense of connectedness, spirituality and regard between students as well as between students and teacher. 'Ilo on the other hand provides some moral or theoretical guidance to teaching and learning relationships, poto guides the application of ilo into the day-to-day classroom activities and fatongia guides the relationships and obligations of students to students and students to teacher, school, professional bodies and community. Finally, it is assumed that normal classroom activities preserve the dominant culture therefore fonua guides both teachers and students behaviours to preserve the knowledge, values and language of the Pacific (including Maori) for continuity as well. With this in mind, the Teacher Pedagogical Behaviours (TPB) are about 'how teachers think and act' and the SCD are about 'the ways students show who they are and what they know'. This is my third kakala for guiding the pedagogy for teaching Tongan learners.

**Table 8.1. Founga Ako as adopted from Sheets (2005) DPT**

|                  | <b>Ako</b>  | <b>'Ofa</b>   | <b>'Ilo</b>  | <b>Poto</b>   | <b>Fatongia</b>  | <b>Fonua</b>   |
|------------------|---|---|--|---|--|--|
| <b>Diversity</b> | <b>TPB</b><br>Western knowledge & pedagogies as well as Tongan & others are normal part of the day to day classroom discourses.   | Show compassion for all - ages, gender, health, social, religion and their manifestations.                              | Show awareness of global and local issues. Ethical in professional and cultural practises.                                   | Use 'ilo of bigger picture to guide skilful application of cultural concepts in teaching.   | Provision of technically sound content and pedagogies that suit Tongan & minority learners.                                    | Include Tongan & other knowledge in content & pedagogy to preserve them for the future.                                    |
|                  | <b>SCD</b><br><i>Learn with a sense of belong, deeper meaning and clearer goals. Ownership of relevant pedagogy &amp; curriculum lead to enhanced esteem &amp; success.</i> | <i>Show compassion for other students, community, teachers &amp; others even those different – 'ofa for all things.</i> | <i>Aware &amp; learn about self &amp; others' identity, language, culture, politics, religions &amp; history, share own.</i> | <i>Use 'ilo to guide interactions, take part in social, spiritual activities respectfully. Add value to class learning and welfare.</i> | <i>Fulfil fatongia to teacher, school, parents and community. Support learning of peers &amp; contribute to class culture.</i> | <i>Practice own &amp; encourage others to use their own culture, language, supports church &amp; community endeavours.</i> |

|                                  |            |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|----------------------------------|------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Identity</b>                  | <b>TPD</b> | Teach inclusive knowledge holistically to reflect NZ diversity guided by 'ilo, potu, fatongia & fonua underpinned by 'ofa.   | Show 'ofa for students as cultural beings, understand cultural & educational issues.   | Know students' academic, class, socio economic, gender, sports, family/villages & spiritual background.  | Use background of students to inform content, pedagogy & to build class environment & relationships.   | Follow official documents <sup>21</sup> & moral obligation to use Tongan & other values in classroom exchanges.  | Practise activities that acknowledge Maori & Tongan. Provide continuity for various fonua.   |
|                                  | <b>SCD</b> | <i>Support school &amp; class patriotic endeavours, support cultural practises, Tongan culture and language whenever possible &amp; involve parents.</i>   | <i>Practices own cultural acts, reciprocates love, encourage others to practice their own cultural activities.</i>   | <i>Show strong sense of belong, positive disposition towards self, others &amp; life. Active class &amp; team member</i>                               | <i>Celebrate others' interest, school success, birthdays, village, religious occasions etc appropriately.</i>  | <i>Initiate &amp; maintain discussions on common matters &amp; celebrates difference and diversity respectfully.</i>   | <i>Engage in activities that preserve the uniqueness of Tongan languages &amp; cultures that support identity.</i>                                 |
| <b>Social interaction</b>        | <b>TPB</b> | Use English, Tongan, Maori & appropriate body language that respects students' social structures, family, religious and cultural being.  | Communicate 'ofa in exchanges to build & maintain good learning relationships.   | Considers social, political & spiritual world of student, then designs system of support for them.   | Use different communication authentically, set boundaries, promote reciprocity, trust, support & companionship   | Uses 'ilo to guide relations with students & parents i.e in communication, movements & maintenance of vaa etc.   | Using cultural concepts eg talanoa, fatongia, tauhi vaa to preserve cultural ways & mana of all.   |
|                                  | <b>SCD</b> | <i>Group and individual interactions are positive, respectful, learn and relate to others with a sense of purpose &amp; hope.</i>  | <i>Interactions underpinned by spirit of care for learning and 'ofa for one another, the whole person.</i>   | <i>In the classroom, all academic, social, moral, cultural &amp; spiritual matters are considered.</i>   | <i>Interactions are respectful &amp; appropriate, that allow humour, malie, deep learning &amp; trust in class.</i>  | <i>Communication and actions are authentic, Compassion &amp; care for each other &amp; their learning.</i>   | <i>Culturally interact with community. Acknowledge &amp; join rituals, lotu activities in the community.</i>                                       |
| <b>Culturally safe classroom</b> | <b>TPB</b> | Classroom is welcoming of students, teachers and community. It includes cultural items, community icons and work & those of the students.  | Classroom has warm & caring ambience to students, parents and teachers. Cultures, religions & views respected.   | Knowledge of cultures of community, political & spiritual concerns. Have key community contacts.   | Practice respect, generosity, clear tauhi vaa expectations & consequences. Create a sense of responsible fanau in class.                                       | Meet official & professional obligations for safety (footnote 21). Promote clarity & safe classroom ideals.  | Provide for Community to contribute to class setup & expectations Respect their systems & their own structures.                                    |
|                                  | <b>SCD</b> | <i>Involve authentically in academic &amp; social learning and exchanges. Encourage parents to attend school activities. Engage in Tongan (&amp; others) content &amp; pedagogies with confidence.</i> | <i>Confidence about self, share culture and personal matters easily. Support class &amp; individual endeavours. Classroom is where one feels accepted.</i> | <i>Seek to understand social, spiritual and academic matters for others readily. Treat classroom as a place to recharge, a home where friends are.</i> | <i>Work with a sense of fanau towards each other and to teachers. Show companionship, trust and support to each other. Show a sense of pride in belonging.</i> | <i>Thrive in a psychologically, socially &amp; spiritually safe classroom. Contribute to class unity. Gives &amp; accept appropriate support when needed or given.</i> | <i>Support different religious &amp; cultural events. Learn other cultures and practice their languages. Mark events with lotu if appropriate.</i> |

<sup>21</sup> These includes the Pacific Plan (MOE, 2009), New Zealand Curriculum (MOE, 2007), NZ Teacher Council Standards, National Administrative Guidelines (NAG) etc

| Language                     | TPD | Use English, Tonga, Maori & others as necessary –to enrich cognitive development and enhance employability.  | Use respectful Tongan dialect when can. Learn spiritual aspects of different languages.  | Keen to learn & use Tongan & other languages. Use them to enrich social and cognitive development.                                    | Use Tongan concepts and language in postive and effective way to complement learning.                                   | Preservation of language is vital for identity and is encourage by official documents (footnote 21).                        | Prioritise Tongan & Maori language as well as other Pacific one to preserve them as NZ taonga.   |
|------------------------------|-----|--|--|---|---|---|--|
|                              | SCD | <i>Use of English as well as Tongan, Maori and other languages in instructions exchanges &amp; assessment.</i>   | <i>Display a sense of empathy &amp; torarence. Malie is reached quickly. Very interactive classrooms.</i>                                  | <i>Pride in cognitive and social value of own language being respected. Concepts are grasped easily.</i>                              | <i>Own language/s encourage a sense of identity and belonging. Teacher is liked &amp; classroom is treated as home.</i> | <i>Tongan &amp; other languages become norms in exchanges. Richer understand developed.</i>                                 | <i>Greater desire to learn other languages. Pride in multilingualism, continuity assured.</i>  |
| Culturally inclusive content | TPB | Connect school knowledge and Tongan knowledge. Uses talanoa, kakala, manulua, founa ako, malie and other pedagogies to help cultural & cognitive learning.           | Acceptance of Tongan student as cultural and spiritual beings, prior knowledge are legitimate as well as those valued by the NZC.          | Knowledge of history, political and religious systems, how they impact on classroom relationship and learning are sound.              | Uses ‘ilo about Tongan knowledge and concepts such as ‘ofa, malie, laumalie to compliment classroom discourses.         | Builds a sense of worth for Tongan learners by including their goals, knowledge, history and perspectives in the curricula. | Includes politics, religious of community in classroom activities. Attend community activities.  |
|                              | SCD | Add to cognitive wealth of class. <i>Whanaungatanga engages students who feel legitimated. Involved in learning &amp; co-running of the classroom, self-assured.</i> | <i>Engage in ako meaningfully with warmth &amp; fun. Reciprocate kindness and respect to others. Humour &amp; malie reached.</i>           | <i>Development of lateral thinking, bigger picture view and connections. Work through difficulties, development of understanding.</i> | <i>Persevere with cultural ako content &amp; approaches, take risks, confidence, deeper learning is reached.</i>        | <i>More clarity about school role and fatongia to community. Pride, in ones culture and its place in NZ schools.</i>        | <i>Share histories, knowledge of ancestors and other culturally positive stories to preserve them for future generations.</i>          |
| Assessment                   | TPB | Assessment is valid & multi-cultural ie; talanoa, demonstration, presentation. It is diagnostic, summative but chiefly formative.                                    | ‘Ofa and other spiritual, social & moral qualities are valued & acknowledged & in assessment.  | Design for both mainstream & cultural assessments.use Blooms taxonomy innovatively & in varied ways.                                  | Uses ‘ilo of theories & others guide a combination of different assessments to assess & support learning                | Ensures that assessment is up to date, valid, reliable, manageable as well as culturally appropriate.                       | Using variety of assessment that recognises academic as well as socio and moral strengths of students.                                 |
|                              | SCD | <i>As part of the learning fanau, learners are involved in designing and carrying out assessment. Use feedback efficiently. <u>Malie reached.</u></i>                | <i>Show care for others learning. Assess to help appropriately. Give &amp; receive positive, empathetic &amp; effective academic help,</i> | <i>Testing out new fun but effective ideas, creating malie or more appropriate assessment out of established assessments.</i>         | <i>Using multiple &amp; more appropriate assessment methods to assess and support a wide variety of learning.</i>       | <i>Meet assessment responsibilities, taking on more self &amp; peer assessment. Give good feedback &amp; forward.</i>       | <i>Use community expertise to assess academic strengths as well as cultural. Uses more cultural assessments <u>eg. talanoa etc</u></i> |

The Founa Ako framework shares critical ideas and thinking about the Tongan concepts and cultural considerations that are relevant in the classroom context. Most

Tongan students are in mainstream education, so some guidance on how Founa Ako is implemented in the mainstream classroom or how it can be used for professional development of teachers may be beneficial. For this, I will draw on the Culturally Responsive Pedagogy of Relationships approach (Bishop, 2008) and particularly the Effective Teaching Profile (ETP) (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003) for professional development of teachers of Maori students in mainstream education to further guide a professional development framework for teachers in working with Tongan students.

As it is for Effective Teaching Profile (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003, p. 1) for Maori students, fundamental to Founa Ako is teachers understanding the need to firstly explicitly reject deficit theorising as a means of explaining any Tongan students' low educational achievement level, and secondly teachers or educators taking an agentic position in their theorising about their practice. That is, practitioners expressing their professional commitment (to colleagues and Tongan students and their communities) and responsibility to bringing about improvement in the Tongan students' educational achievement by accepting professional responsibility for their learning. These two central understandings are then manifested in these teachers' classrooms where the teachers demonstrate on a daily basis:

- 'ofa for the students as culturally located individuals of a bigger kainga by using the critical ideas from the Founa Ako framework;
- they have high expectations of the learning for students which they communicate regularly to them and their families;
- they are able to manage their classrooms to promote respectful learning that acknowledges vaa, fatongia and family or community issues;
- they are able to engage in a range of discursive learning interactions such as talanoa or facilitate students to engage with others in these ways;
- they use a range of strategies that can facilitate learning interactions, promote malie, pride in being Tongan and a sense of belonging;
- they promote, monitor and reflect upon learning outcomes that in turn lead to improvements in Tongan students achievement and they share this knowledge with the students and family/community.

Finally as Bishop (2008) encourages teachers to use Maori concepts and metaphors as often as possible verbally and in action, for Tongan students, teachers are encouraged to use the terms of 'ofa, 'ilo, poto, ako, fatongia, fonua and other Tongan concepts as

much as possible. As manaakitanga (caring), kaitiakitanga (oversight), mana motuhake (respect for specialness) are taonga tuku iho (literally means treasures from ancestors), in a contemporary sense it is the aspirations Maori hold for their children. For Tongan people, their taonga tuku iho are ako, poto, 'ilo' 'ofa, fatongia and fonua, concepts and messages that guide relationships and interactions. It is in 'ilo (knowing what to do) and poto that allows one to do fatongia well for the good of all (fonua). This allows one to be respectful and restrained when appropriate, and assertive when necessary. These taonga tuku iho for Tongan students should be part of their formal ako. These messages, as Hunkin (1996) advocate for Pacific language and cultures, position Tongan language, knowledge, and values as normal, valid and legitimate in classroom interactions. The implication is that educators create contexts where it is normal to be Tongan, where cultural identities are valued and legitimated. In other words, where Tongan people can be themselves.

#### Recalling the wider context

Because Pacific families have made many sacrifices including: loss of language, loss of culture, isolation, loss of mana, just to move to Aotearoa for their children's education (Koloto, 1998; Utumapu, 1992, 1997; Vaoleti, 2001), then the students feel that their learning must help make things better for them, their fanau, kainga, their church and perhaps fonua (connectedness and tauhi vaa). For most Pacific students in our 21<sup>st</sup> century schools, gaining knowledge to perform or gain resources to meet one's fatongia in the family and community is seen as the reason why they ako. 'Ana Taunaholo, (talanoa, May, 2004) and Luke Huni (talanoa, July, 2007), along with the majority of Pacific students I have spoken with both in and out of New Zealand, informed me that education was important so they could get a good job to help their (poor) families. Knowing these motivations should impact on teachers' own purpose for teaching.

There is a serious implication here for teachers and other educators. As Koloto (in Drewery and Bird, 2006, p. 62) suggested, "inherent in this thinking about development is the belief that the individual is born to perform certain fatongia and to become 'aonga (useful) to their famili (family), siasi (church), and fonua." If these are not met as a result of failure at school and one is not able to perform his/her tauhi vaa fatongia, the impact on the atamai of Tongans is likely to be significant. While



meaningless and poor schooling can be tolerated by some, culturally for most Tongan students, there is no option but success in meaningful education.

Failure in schools which are fatongia for them as students brings shame to themselves, their kainga and their villages that can lead to health and mental challenges. Authentic understanding of students' culture and what is responsible for their actions or non-actions in a classroom are vital for meeting the intellectual, emotional, spiritual and cultural needs of students. For Pacific communities as well as the teaching profession, the desired outcome is students who have been educated in a way that acknowledges and enriches their cultures. Families, fonua, ancestors and the God/s, who have done their fatongia, have entrusted educators with the most precious of all possessions – their children. How can we, as teachers, ensure we honour this trust? It is in this wider context that Founa Ako is offered as a pedagogical framework to those responsible for the education of Tongan and other Pacific students in Aotearoa's mainstream educational system.

## **8. 2. Situating the kalala: towards a synthesis**

The Ministry of Education's (2009) Pacific Education Plan 2009-2012 states that:

Pacific peoples want the best for their children and for young people to contribute as full citizens of Aotearoa New Zealand...but this quest is not made in isolation, it draws on internal (within family and communities such as church) and external (outside the families and communities such as schools) factors that influence education. These factors include:

- knowledge of family (extended), roles, sense of position, and the importance of value and strong network relationship;
- Understanding of social structures such as communities and churches...;
- High educational expectations, aspirations....building on Pacific strengths;
- Strong identities, multiple worlds, language, cultures and epistemologies ...etc. (p. 6)

It has been shown in this thesis and elsewhere that Pacific peoples have rich knowledge bases and a relational background. They are the cultural tools (Vygotsky, 1978) or capital that Pacific people as well as the Ministry of Education should draw from and use to facilitate classroom learning. From a Tongan perspective, all these

factors are preparation for or the outcome of fatongia (roles) that contribute to the operationalization of tauhi vaa, all leading ultimately to harmony with family, kainga, fonua and God/s. The processes to make this operationalisation possible are by ako to achieve the state of poto guided by 'ilo (Morrison and Vaioleti, 2008; Vaioleti, Morrison and Rees, 2003; Vaioleti and Vaioleti, 2003). This is incumbent upon teachers to include the cultural concepts in their day-to-day classroom learning activities.

As mentioned previously, Vygotsky (1986) suggests that we use tools and symbols that help us to create culture; we are not only produced by culture, but culture-producing too. This means that Pacific people's cultures, like many other cultures, have shaped their cognitive patterns over many years and consequently they must have their own tools for learning (Ferguson, Gorinski, Wendt-Samu and Mara, 2008; Sheets, 2005; Vaioleti, 2006). However as Vygotsky has suggested, we have the opportunity to create new ways here in Aotearoa/New Zealand that will suit our 21<sup>st</sup> century needs.

At the base of our daily educational discourses is respect for Maori as tangata whenua and their educational aspirations, including cultural concepts that underpin the Whare Tapa Wha framework, and the Te Kotahitanga and Ka Hikitia projects discussed in Chapter Three. Other cultural learning tools of diverse school populations in Aotearoa/New Zealand must be examined and included in the classroom discourses as well. In this chapter and in Chapter Seven I have outlined two kakala which draw on Tongan cultural tools and learnings and will assist achieve the goals of the Ministry of Education's Pacific Plan. In the development of these kalala I have drawn on my learnings from Tangata whenua, other Pacific kakala from Ferguson, Gorinski, Mahina, Manu'atu, Mara, Taufe'ulungaki, Thaman, and Wendt-Samu as well as international frameworks developed by Freire, Roger, Sheets, Vygotsky and others.

#### Reconnecting with the wider literature

Humanism (Rogers 1969, 1980), the critical theory of Freire (1972, 1976, 1994) and the democratic philosophy of Dewey's (1916, 1944) educational ideas all have elements that are contained within the Tongan educational concepts examined in this thesis. It is the theorising of Vygotsky on social constructivism that I consider closest

to the educational thinking of Tongan students, bearing in mind the criticism about his silence on spirituality, intuitive and other unformulated knowledge (including spiritual and intuitive ‘ilo) (Begg, 2000). I included the concepts of ‘ofa, fatognia, fonua and other spiritual discussions in the Founa Ako framework to cater for the gaps that Begg (2000) pointed out.

McInverney and McInverney (1998) however suggested that Vygotsky has a view that education should be holistic, meaningful, emphasizing big concepts rather than silo parts, and learning must be situated in explicit social contexts. According to McInverney and McInverney (1998) “Teachers, students and their peers then must interact, share ideas and experiences, solve problems and be interdependent when learning” (p. 102). These actions are similar to those expected of ako, but ako is not an end unto itself in the Tongan sense, but a part of holistic interlocking cultural concepts (‘ofa, ‘ilo, potu, fatongia) that collectively add to a philosophy that underpins the respect that motivates tribute or service to higher orders (God/s, ancestors, loved ones) through service to others that represent them in the community and the environment. These higher orders may be represented by the unseen part of the manulua tapa tolu.

It follows then, that for Pacific peoples, what will work for them, if we are to follow Vygotsky’s view, is that the curriculum, teaching and learning are to be situated within their own knowledge and value systems. If Vygotsky’s (1978) social constructivism theory is applied to Tongan students’ learning, their own tools of discussion (talanoa), interaction, ako as well as other cultural learning ways should be amongst the mainstream teachings as suggested in the Founa Ako framework. In this case, Tongan student’s own knowledge and cultural learning ways, as well as those of Tangata Whenua and the mainstream curricula, must all be integral parts of their schooling given the social context of Aotearoa/New Zealand of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **8. 3. A message to New Zealand’s education institutions and providers**

The Ministry of Education’s (2009a) Pacific Education Plan states that: “Success in Education for Pacific students harnesses Pacific diversity with an enabling education

system that works for young people, their families and communities. This requires the education system, leadership, and curricula to start with the Pacific learner at the centre, drawing on strong culture, identities and languages” (p. 1). It is vital then that Pacific knowledge and ways of thinking are included in the pre-service and in-service programmes of teacher providers. This will also recognise the importance of identity to Pacific students as highlighted by the Report on Health and Wellbeing of Secondary School Students in New Zealand (Adolescent Health Research Group, 2008) that was discussed in Chapter One. This report also identified that over 90% of Pacific students feel that it is important to be recognised as being Tongan, Samoan, Fijian for example. Further, the report also noted that for some Pacific ethnicities a high percentage of their student populations are not happy with what they know about their own cultures.

In Chapter Three I quoted Sheets (2005, p. 1) who stated that “classroom practice (through teachers) must be informed by ‘deep understandings’ of the role of culture, not only for the social development of children, but also for their cognitive development.” There are two important points arising from this statement. Firstly, teachers need to have a good understanding of the cultures of Pacific students. Only then can they fully understand and identify knowledge that is appropriate for the cognitive and social development of their students. Secondly, teachers need to learn something about the key cultural concepts that underpin ‘being Tongan’.

Schools of Education, Teachers Colleges and other institutions that provide pre-service programmes for teachers must design and deliver ‘deep understandings’ of cultures of the Pacific if teachers in Aotearoa/New Zealand are to have a real impact on the cognitive and social development of Tongan (and Pacific) students. The New Zealand Teachers Council may have an initiating role to play here. The three kakala that has been luva in this thesis, along with other Pacific research on Tongan culture and education, provide a foundation on which to structure programmes for re-service courses for teachers that will enable them to gain understandings of Pacific ways of being, relational matters and knowledge systems. These efforts will also help rectify the imbalance identified by Thaman (2004) when she referred to the “epistemological silencing...of...Pacific knowledge systems in the Academy and other... institutions that continue to privilege Western epistemology” (p. 12).

The challenge I have issued here to institutions to consider and include the findings of this thesis in their teacher pre-service programmes, can be extended also to the New Zealand Ministry of Education. The Ministry has a responsibility for providing appropriate in-service training and support for practicing teachers. Included here should be professional development for practicing teachers, education planners and curriculum developers, as well as for contractors who are funded to design and deliver appropriate programmes on Pacific cultures and their implications to enhance Pacific achievement. This will signal to the schools, the Boards of Trustees and the Pacific community, as well as the community at large, that the Ministry of Education has taken the initiative in enacting the Pacific Plan (2009-2012) and operationalising the Government priority statement on Pacific Education.

To those educators in the schools themselves, principals and Boards of Trustees, who are responsible for the alignment of the curriculum with the need of their communities, Talanoa, Founa Ako and Manulua have much to offer in understanding the Tongan community of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Tongan students have a very different culture to those assumed to be 'the norm' by most pre-service institutions. As the findings of this thesis have revealed, there exist layers and levels of old and new religious and supernatural beliefs, values and visions which are deep in the consciousness and understandings of many Tongan people and hence their children. Providing in-service programmes for teachers, that draw on the findings of this research, will bring changes to educators which, will bring about positive cultural and academic change for the Tongan student as well as enhancing the perspectives, personal, holistic and professional growth of teachers. There will also be benefits to other Pacific students and their families as well.

To the professional bodies such as those of the Early Childhood sector, New Zealand Education Institute, Post Primary Teachers Association as well as the Tertiary sector Unions, the Pacific students' population is only third to that of Pakeha and Maori (Ministry of Education, 2009b) and is growing at a faster rate than most, due to the youthful nature of the Pacific community and the highest fertility rate in the country. Including the findings of this thesis in pre-service and in-service programme for teachers will contribute to cultural and cognitive emancipation (Bishop and Glynn,

1999), help bring about rangatiratanga (Bishop, 2008) and cognitive and cultural democracy for Tongan students (Thaman, 2004).

However, for the individual educators, one does not have to wait for an institutional response in order to develop one's critical cultural knowledge and competence. Reading the Pacific education literature, working with Pacific students and their communities to trial ones reading and learning can be a good source of education. The potential benefit of both personal development balanced with institutional professional ones should be as seen in the improvement of all academic achievement, raised self-esteem and reduction of absenteeism for Tongan students. As stated in Chapter One, support for this proposition comes from the significant achievement in recent years in Maori educational performance – achievement which was built on a proactive approach to acknowledging the role of Maori ways of knowing and learning in a teaching environment (Bishop, 2008; Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003).

Educational achievement for Pacific is a Government priority according to the Pacific Plan 2009- 2012 (Ministry of Education, 2009). For the Tongan students, Thaman (1988) highlights major differences in Pacific parents educational aims stating that there is a focus on social and moral aspects of learning and the utilisation of learned capabilities for the common good, rather than a sole focus on individual advancement (pp. 236-237). I present Talanoa, Manulua and Founa Ako as sound, appropriate and holistic ako that will contribute to the Tongan students' social, spiritual, moral and economic advancement. This is a fatongia for all (Thaman, 2004) educators in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

#### **8. 4. Conclusion**

The last two chapters of this thesis brought together the discussions and findings from the previous six chapters. In Chapter seven, I wove Manulua, the state of wholeness and harmony with one, the community, fonua and with God/s. I see Manulua as the metaphor for what education ultimately prepares a young Tongan to work towards achieving in her/his lifetime. It was incumbent on me then as a Tongan educator to

assist other educators from policy makers, curriculum developers, school administrators and teachers by proposing a founa (pathway) for them to assist their Tongan students to work their way towards achieving a more sustainable, balanced and complete life symbolised by manulua. In this eighth chapter, I have clustered findings and then tui my third and final kakala, Founa ako to assist educators and Tongan students.

Founa Ako underpinned by ‘ofa, potu, ‘ilo, fatongia and fonua, can improve relationships and learning between teachers and students through understanding, relevancy and more culturally aligned processes. Using cultural pedagogies to teach culturally appropriate curriculum is fundamental to Pacific peoples’ social, economic and spiritual development, and ultimately their sense of wholeness. For this to happen, there needs to be sound understandings of Pacific philosophies by educators and an equally sound appreciation of Pacific educational aspirations. Understanding these at all levels from Government policies through to the teachers will inform all of their tauhi vaa duties to students and their communities. Schools’ and teachers’ more enlightened tauhi vaa fatongia will then improve students’ understanding of their own cultures, fatongia to each other, their families, those around them and the fonua. This will ensure better success in a school system to which the Tongan community and we as society have entrusted their future – and in fact, all of our futures.

Now at the end of this part of my journey, the number three that has been significant throughout this thesis comes to the fore again. I have three kakala in total. After much reflection and talanoa with many in earlier parts of this research, I wove talanoa and tui kakala (Thaman, 1993a, 1997a) into a research method as my first kakala. That kakala itself was used to toli (gather) and tui special clusters of flowers (of knowledge). Out of those clusters, as well as flowers from the literature, I have tui two other, the Manulua and Founa Ako. These three kakala contained in this thesis are expressions of my ‘ofa, humility, gratitude and fatongia to those who have passed on, kau nga fa’u who have shared their own kakala with me; my kaunga fa’u who have been my constant co-creators and support who encouraged, defended and helped me along this challenging research journey.

My three kakala are also responses to the challenge laid by Ratu Sir Kamasese Mara (1999) to Pacific peoples at home and those here in Aotearoa/New Zealand at the beginning of this thesis when he asked: ...how must we chart our course to ensure we keep faith with the generation of the past and those to come..? This thesis is also a founa to any young boy or a girl observing her/his parents or people weeding their yam plantation in their own land at this time, while watching the langi with dreams of other fonua, of other people, besides those in heavens and the underworld.

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This three kakala are from the flowers and clusters toli and woven well before and during this research. Some of these kakala, which are from the underworld, have been carefully tui with 'ofa and humility over many years (ably framed by he 'ikai tunu pe paka, pea kula<sup>22</sup>) by the many kau nga fa'u and my own research kaunga fa'u. This is their and our me'a'ofa (gift, manifestation of love) to remind us of our connectedness in our life journeys in search of 'ilo and poto for sustainable harmony with each other, our families, with our environment, our fonua and our God/s.

Tu'a 'ofa atu.

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<sup>22</sup> see Chapter 5, pages 154-155



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix One: List of Talanoa

|   |           |      |
|---|-----------|------|
| ‘Ana Huni                               | June      | 2007 |
| ‘Ana Huni                               | July      | 2007 |
| ‘Ana Mo’ungatonga                       | January   | 2011 |
| Dr. ‘Ana Taufe’ulungaki                 | May       | 2004 |
| Dr. ‘Ana Taufe’ulungaki                 | June      | 2004 |
| Dr. Akihila Sharma                      | May       | 2004 |
| Prof. ‘Epeli Hau’ofa                    | May       | 2004 |
| Prof. Futa Helu                         | January   | 2002 |
| Joanna Vaioleti                         | December  | 2001 |
| Dr. Linita Manu’atu                     | June      | 2009 |
| Luke Huni                               | July      | 2007 |
| Luke Vaioleti                           | January   | 1990 |
| Maleponi Taunaholo                      | May       | 2005 |
| Maleponi Taunaholo                      | December  | 2008 |
| Matatumua Vermeulen                     | April     | 1999 |
| Matatumua Vermeulen                     | January   | 2010 |
| Dr. Nesta Devine                        | May       | 2006 |
| Neti Cook                               | May       | 2003 |
| Peta Mo’ungatonga                       | June      | 2003 |
| Rose Wale                               | September | 2004 |
| Rev. Sami Veikoso                       | February  | 2000 |
| Rev. Sami Veikoso                       | January   | 2002 |
| Rev. Sami Veikoso                       | April     | 2004 |
| Sateki ‘Ulukalala                       | January   | 2000 |
| Rev. Selu Mafi                          | September | 1984 |
| Rev. Sione Vaioleti                     | September | 1984 |
| Rev. Sione Vaioleti                     | December  | 1999 |
| Rev. Sione Vaioleti                     | January   | 2000 |
| Rev. Sione Vaioleti                     | December  | 2001 |
| Rev. Sione Vaioleti                     | July      | 2006 |
| Rev. Sione Vaioleti                     | May       | 2008 |
| Rev. Sione Vaioleti                     | July      | 2008 |
| Rev. Sione Vaioleti                     | August    | 2008 |
| Rev. Sione Vaioleti                     | September | 2008 |
| Rev. Sione Vaioleti & Sateki ‘Ulukalala | December  | 1999 |
| Sisi’uno Helu                           | August    | 2008 |
| Rev. Sitani Tu’ihalangingia             | December  | 2008 |
| Sitiveni Halapua                        | May       | 2003 |
| Sunufea                                 | June      | 2007 |
| Sunufea                                 | July      | 2007 |
| Timoti Harris                           | July      | 2008 |
| Dr. Walter Vermeulen                    | April     | 1999 |

Note: Because of the nature of talanoa as explained in chapters four and five, some talanoa with people mentioned above occurred several times in the course of the month mentioned.