



# **SOSO'O LE FAU I LE FAU**



*Exploring what factors contribute to Samoan children's  
cultural and language security from the Aoga Amata  
to Samoan primary bilingual classrooms in  
Aotearoa/New Zealand*

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## Dedication

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This is dedicated to my tautai; my mother, the late Iolesina Faigame Tagoilelagi whose insights, cultural knowledge and love of children, provided guidance but more importantly my balance, to stay grounded. I am glad you read and edited my thesis before you took your last breath. Your attempts to stay healthy for us, and all our celebrations including this work, is proof of your love and more for us. However, the Lord called you at the near end of this journey, and your input I will treasure to the end. I love and miss you so much my rock. To my children Mesina Sinauagaia, Voula Taitaifonokomitiautoeaina, Ailaomaletagata Juliand and my husband Leota Talavou Leota, your lives platformed my existence as a daughter, mother and a wife and know that you have sacrificed a lot for this work of which I appreciate dearly.

This is for you.

The study explored how culture is understood and practiced in Aoga Amata by teachers, parents and children, and achieved this by following the journeys and experiences of seven children (aged 4.11 years) from three Auckland based Aoga Amata and into their first three months transitioning experience into a Samoan bilingual unit. In this study, I used the term ‘fau’ to stand for culture and the Samoan proverb *soso’o le fau i le fau*, to signal the transfer of culture between the two education sites. Notably, while reports indicate the fau has been at the heart of Aoga Amata since its inception in the 1980s, there has been no research on how this has been conceptualised or practiced. For this qualitative research, I carried out talanoa with seven Aoga Amata children, their seven parents and six teachers from both the Aoga Amata and the five Samoan bilingual units. Three of the children had a non-Samoan parent.

Data was collected by talanoa, centre and classroom observations and by reviews of children’s learning portfolios. The views of all of the parents and teachers was that the fau comprised aganuu and gagana, overarched by spirituality. Aoga amata teachers said they acknowledged and welcomed the fau children brought from their homes, and used this as the foundation for their teaching and as the basis for further learning. Language was important as an identity marker especially for non-Samoan speaking parents. However, for all participants, being able to speak Samoan was not sufficient without an understanding of the aganuu. While the bilingual teachers shared these views, they also had a duty to ensure children achieved national language standards. In effect, bilingual teachers experienced a ‘double-programming’ workload wherein the fau had little formal recognition or resource support because New Zealand does not have a bilingual language policy. The lack of assessment of the fau led me to pilot an Aoga Amata assessment tool, the Faafulu, which gives prominence to the children’s voice. While this research has highlighted the robustness of the fau today and its transition between the two educational settings, areas of vulnerability and suggestions for addressing this are noted.

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All non-English words will be italicised in their initial mention, and then will be integrated into the study using the normal font.

### **Samoan words**

The English meanings and translations of these Samoan words are taken from a number of sources such as dictionaries by Milner and Pratt, Tui Atua (2009), online Samoan dictionaries and conversations with the Samoan elders and community.

<i>afa</i>	sinnet
<i>afatasi/afakasi</i>	Usually to someone who is half Samoan and half of another ethnicity.
<i>aga</i>	nature of things
<i>agaga</i>	soul or spirit
<i>aganuu</i>	Samoan culture
<i>agatausili</i>	cultural values
<i>atamai i le aganuu</i>	cultural knowledge
<i>aiga</i>	family
<i>aiga potopoto</i>	family (immediate and extended)
<i>alagaoa</i>	resources
<i>alofa</i>	love
<i>anapogi</i>	to fast
<i>anofale teuloto</i>	goodness from within
<i>a'oa'o</i>	to teach, to learn
<i>a'oa'oga faaleaganuu</i>	cultural learning.

<i>Aoga Amata</i>	Samoa early childhood education
<i>Aoga Faataitai</i>	term initially used to refer to Samoan ECE centres
<i>Aoga Faifeau</i>	Pastor's School
<i>faaloalo</i>	respect
<i>faafetai</i>	thank you
<i>faafulu</i>	to feather a fine mat (ietoga)
<i>faafuluina o tamaiti</i>	to highlight children's cultural knowledge (metaphor for feathering a fine mat)
<i>faa-Kerisiano</i>	Christianity
<i>faaleagaga</i>	Spirituality
<i>faalelegāpepe</i>	traditional ceremony to display new woven ietoga (fine mats)
<i>faalogo</i>	to listen
<i>faalupega</i>	village salutations or pedigree
<i>faamatai</i>	Samoa chiefly system
<i>faamolemole</i>	please
<i>faanōnōmanū</i>	reliance on divine blessings for successful living (in any events, projects and so forth)
<i>faasamoa</i>	refers to being fluent in the Samoa language and things that are connected to the Samoans eg) cooking
<i>faa-strategy</i>	strategise
<i>fanua</i>	land
<i>faiva</i>	the catch as in fishing
<i>faitau</i>	reading (literally and visually)

<i>fau</i>	coastal hibiscus tree
<i>feagaiga</i>	sister-brother relationship
<i>fesootaiga</i>	communication
<i>fili</i>	to select, to plait
<i>filifogāvaa</i>	fishing canoes assembling at sea to select or make decisions. Filifogāvaa is actively executed in all parts of the fishing process.
<i>foga</i>	respect word for face, hair
<i>fono</i>	meeting
<i>fue</i>	traditional whisk used by orators (chiefs)
<i>gafa</i>	genealogy
<i>gagana</i>	Samoan language
<i>gagana tautala</i>	language of speaking
<i>gagana tusitusi</i>	language of writing
<i>gagana vaaia</i>	language of visual
<i>Gagana T</i>	when the letter t is used or formal Samoan
<i>Gagana K</i>	when the letter K is used, common in traditional ceremonies
<i>ietoga</i>	fine mat
<i>igoa</i>	a name
<i>iite</i>	prediction
<i>ili</i>	Samoan fan
<i>itumalo</i>	district
<i>laititi</i>	small
<i>loto</i>	soul, heart

<i>loto gatasi</i>	unity of souls
<i>loto nuu</i>	whole-heartedly devoted to village, nation.
<i>lotu</i>	morning or evening devotion or Sunday service/s
<i>ma'ale'ale</i>	vulnerable
<i>maliu</i>	respect word for died, dead or funeral
<i>malo</i>	nation, government
<i>manaia</i>	high-ranking male
<i>mata</i>	eye/s
<i>matālālāga</i>	expertise of patterning in weaving
<i>mātua</i>	elders, parents
<i>measina</i>	Samoa cultural treasures, artefacts
<i>moe manatunatu</i>	ancestral dialogue during sleep
<i>nifo 'oti</i>	special knife used for ceremonial performances and dance
<i>nuu</i>	village
<i>ola</i>	life, fishing basket
<i>ola faaleagaga</i>	spiritual life
<i>ola faa-Kerisiano</i>	Christian life
<i>olaga</i>	life, living
<i>oti</i>	died, dead
<i>palagi</i>	European
<i>pale fuiono</i>	traditional head band worn in ceremonial celebrations
<i>Pi Tautau</i>	Samoa alphabet chart



<i>poto i le gagana</i>	language knowledge
<i>saili malo</i>	collective pursuit of triumph
<i>siapo</i>	tapa
<i>siosiomaga</i>	environment
<i>soālaupule</i>	collective consensus in decision making
<i>soātautai</i>	co-fisherman/men
<i>suli</i>	descendant, heir, blood relatives
<i>tagata matua</i>	elderly people
<i>tai</i>	tide
<i>tai taeao</i>	morning tide
<i>talanoa</i>	talk, speak
<i>talo</i>	taro
<i>talofa/kalofa</i>	hello
<i>talū ai</i>	because of
<i>tamā</i>	father
<i>tanoa</i>	kava bowl
<i>tausala</i>	high-ranking female
<i>tinā</i>	mother
<i>titi fulumoa</i>	traditional waist-wear of feathers
<i>tapuagia</i>	collective blessings
<i>tapu</i>	sacred, taboo
<i>tatalo</i>	prayer
<i>tau</i>	to combat/fight

<i>taulaga a tautai</i>	chant of tautai during fishing to acknowledge presence of a shark (in particular)
<i>tauloto</i>	to memorise or a memory verse
<i>tautai</i>	fisherman/men/navigator
<i>tautai a'e</i>	Congratulatory comment when fishermen return safely
<i>tautala</i>	to speak
<i>tautua</i>	to serve others
<i>telē</i>	big
<i>tofi</i>	cultural right
<i>tootoo</i>	traditional cane/stick use by orators
<i>tuafafine</i>	sister
<i>tuagane</i>	brother
<i>tuiga</i>	traditional head gear worn at cultural ceremonies or events
<i>tulou</i>	to pardon
<i>tu ma aga</i>	cultural protocols
<i>Tusi Paia</i>	Holy Bible
<i>tusitusi</i>	writing
<i>ui'i</i>	youngest
<i>ula lopa</i>	lei of lopa seeds
<i>ula pule</i>	lei of pule shells
<i>ulumatua</i>	eldest
<i>usita'i</i>	to obey

<i>uso</i>	sisters' relationship, brothers' relationship
<i>vaa</i>	mouth, boat
<i>vaai</i>	to see, watch, observe
<i>vaai toto 'a</i>	observe with meaning
<i>vā fealoai</i>	relationships

## **Samoan proverbs**

These proverbs are used widely by Samoan scholars, Samoan linguists and academics. Most are recorded in Tofaeono-Tanuvasa's (2009) *Tōfāmanusina* book.

*A'oa'o le tama e tusa ma ona ala, a matua e lē toe te'a ese ai:* Teach children while they are young, as these teaching will remain with them as they grow.

*E fafaga tama a manu i fuga o laau, ae fafaga tama a tagata i upu ma tala:* the offspring of birds are fed with flowerbuds, while human offspring are fed with words and stories.

*E lē o fale, ao le anofale:* The withness of the house is more important than the house

*E sui le faiga, ae tumau le faavae:* Ways of doing may change, but the foundation remains.

*Gagau le lālā manū o mata:* Break an offshoot from a tree while it is tender.

*Ia filifogāvaa se tautai atamai – o taeao faapenei e tatau ai ona fili i le tai se agavaa:* Collective selection of great fisherman, must be done at sea.

*O le tautai o le faamatua o faiva:* The tautai must exude an entirety of knowledge and skills in fishing.

*O le aiga, o le taupega'afa o feoi poo sulii:* Family is a web of ancestors and descendants.

*Ua alu faataalolo le i'a a le tautai:* The fish defers to the will of his master.

*Matimati le fanau ae 'aua le tuufauina:* Do not neglect the children, but nurture them

*Soso'o le fau i le fau:* Joining *fau* (stripped bark from the *fau* tree) with another *fau*. Used commonly in leadership context where a leader is replaced by someone of equal caliber (like the *fau*).

## Maori words

The translations for the Maori words below are sourced from Te Aka Māori – English, English – Maori dictionary<sup>1</sup>.

<i>Te reo Maori</i>	Maori language
<i>tikanga Maori</i>	Maori customs, values and practices
<i>wairua</i>	spirit, soul
<i>whanau</i>	(extended) family group
<i>whakapapa</i>	genealogy

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<sup>1</sup> Online version: <http://maoridictionary.co.nz/>

## Acronyms

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AUTEC	Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee
BES	Best Evidence Synthesis
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ERO	Education Review Office
FAGASA	Fa’alapotopotoga mo le A’oa’oina o le Gagana Samoa i Aotearoa
GTS	Graduating Teacher Standards
HRC	Human Rights Commission
IELTS	International English Language Test System
ITP	Independent Third Party
JAM	Junior Assessment of Maths
MOE	Ministry of Education
MPIA	Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs
NCEA	National Certificate of Educational Achievement
NZTC	Aotearoa New Zealand Teachers’ Council; now renamed EduCanz
PEP	Pasifika Education Plan
PIECCA	Pacific Islands Early Childhood Council of Aotearoa
POB	Place of Birth

PLD	Professional Learning and Development
PTA	Parents' Teachers' Association
SAASIA	Sosaiete Aoga Amata Samoa i Aotearoa
SPECE	Strengthening Pasifika Early Childhood Education
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund; now United Nations Children's Fund
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

## **Attestation of authorship**

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I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed.....

Date .....

## Acknowledgements

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*Lo'u Alii ma lo'u Atua. Ua ou tagi atu ua taotaomia lo'u olaga. Ua mamafa la'u avega i le faaiuga o la'u aoga. Ua ou mativa i le iloa ma le mafaufau lelei. Ua ou mativa foi i le gagana e faaupu ai o'u lagona. Ma ua tauau ina afaina ai lo'u aiga. Le Atua e, faasusulu mai lou malamalama i lo'u pouliuli. Ua ou fia malu i le paolo o ou apaau. Ua ou fia mauoa i le tumu o lau Afio. Ia ou maua ai le onosai, alofa, faamagalo, lotomauualalo. O le tamāoaiga moni lena ua ou moomia. Po ua ou taumamao ea ma oe lo'u Faaola. O oe lava o lo'u Maluāpapa, ma lē na te togiolaina a'u. Liuliualo maia ou fofoga i la'u tagi atu.*

(Many times in this journey when I felt like giving up, I would read and re-read this prayer my mother wrote in support of my studies)

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# Chapter 1: Tai Taeao – Introduction

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## 1.1 Background

*I use the term tai taeao to introduce my study because these words refer to the importance of timing in fishing protocols and of adhering to a consideration for time if a fishing venture is to meet with success. Tai taeao refers to the morning tide which is pertinent for a great ‘catch’. In a similar way, the essence of time is crucial for a researcher to ensure quality and relevant data is obtained.*

Aoga Amata were established in Aotearoa New Zealand in the early 1980s (Tagoilelagi, 2013; Ete, 1999; Morgan, 1995; Taouma, 1992). The first Aoga Amata to be established and licensed<sup>2</sup> in the mid-1980s were the Aoga Faasamoa Incorporated in Ponsonby, Auckland (1984) and, the EFKS Newtown Aoga Amata in Wellington in 1986 (Taouma, 1992). In the following years, Aoga Amata began to mushroom around the country (Leavasa-Tautolo, 2013; Leavasa, 1990) as the Samoan community supported its philosophical beliefs and goals, to ensure children learned Samoan culture, language and Christian principles. At the time of this study, there were over 80 Aoga Amata across the country, at least half of which were located in Auckland, and many in South Auckland which matches Auckland’s high population of Samoan residents.

Ete (2013) has described Aoga Amata as “o le fatu na totō mai Samoa” (a seed planted from Samoa) as the way to continue the teachings embedded in Samoa’s Aoga Faifeau and Aoga Faataitai in New Zealand (p.37). Pioneer Iolesina Tagoilelagi noted at a Lopdell Center Conference on developing ECE in 1988:

*We are not trying to confine our children to the faasamoa. We are trying to bridge the gap so our children ... learn to live happily in their new environment at the same time hold on to our cultural values especially our language.*

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<sup>2</sup> Licensed in accordance with the Education Act 1989. See also Education Regulations (ECE services) 2008.

While the Aoga Amata movement grew out of the Aoga Faifeau (Ete, 1993; 2013) and the Aoga Faataitai (McDonald, n.d.; Tagoilelagi, 2013), it also drew on the strengths of the Kohanga Reo Language nests and, was fuelled by the Pacific playgroups established under the Anau Ako Pacific strategy in the 1970s. The first Pacific playgroup was a Cook Island ECE centre (Leaupepe & Sauni, 2014), established by project leader Poko Morgan in Tokoroa. The Anau Ako Pacific was funded by the Bernard Van Leer Foundation and supported by P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A Incorporated<sup>3</sup> in partnership with the Department of Education (Leavasa-Tautolo, 2004; Mara, 1986). In later years, Morgan noted:

*When does the interest in early childhood education begin? For me, it is the returning to the heart of the development of one's total being, the very beginning of one's life (Morgan, 1993, p. 25).*

While the main pioneers of Aoga Amata in New Zealand were largely church ministers and their wives and early childhood educators from Samoa who had settled in New Zealand (Ete, 1993), the Aoga Amata quickly captured and came to signal the collective aspirations of Samoan families and communities to immerse their children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and 'those to come' in the Samoan language and culture (Ete, 1993; Mara & Burgess, 2007; Mara, 1999; Podmore, Tapusoa, & Taouma, 2006; Utumapu, 1998). The justification and driving force for their establishment was the desire to create learning spaces where Samoan language and culture were valued, affirmed and passed on; in sum, to bring faasamoa cultural learnings from the periphery to the centre of the childhood learning experiences (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2015). McNaughton (2002) refers to this aim as the incorporation of children's realities into their learning. Without a doubt, the success and growth of the Aoga Amata movement in the early days especially depended heavily on the backing of resources, finances, time and

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<sup>3</sup> Pacific Allied (Women's) Council Inspires Faith in Ideals Concerning All Inc.

knowledge by the Samoan community as well as a solid army of volunteers (Ete, 2013; Tagoilelagi, 2013).

Notably, the foundation work for the development of Aoga Amata in New Zealand was voluntary. Aoga Amata were envisaged as a necessary linking and consolidation of children's knowledge, values and beliefs of the faasamoa - from the home and into the primary school. Additional aims were that as 'carriers of culture' children would transition from Aoga Amata to become change agents within their respective schools and communities and, contribute to building the cultural diversity of New Zealand as a nation (Phillips, McNaughton, & MacDonald. 2002). Aoga Amata aims and principles were built on the belief that children's secure feelings of cultural identity (Purkey, 1967) were the foundation for future educational, social and economic endeavours.

Today, the Aoga Amata sit and are classified with the Education and Care<sup>4</sup> sector of ECE in New Zealand.

### **1.1.1 My standpoint**

I strongly believe that a firm knowledge and understanding of faasamoa cultural beliefs and practises are integral to Samoan children's feelings of identity security and to their learning – be this Samoan knowledge and/ or the knowledge and skills they need to operate with confidence in New Zealand's rapidly changing and globalised society. Furthermore, that the early childhood years are the pivotal learning years where these foundation for later life experiences are set, as seen in this Samoan proverb – "*A'oa'i le tama e tusa ma ona ala, a mātua e lē toe te'a ese ai*" (discipline the child with the right

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<sup>4</sup> Early childhood centres used regularly for the education or care of three or more children (See Education Act 1989).

ways, as these will not leave them when they become adults). Hence, my life time dedication to early childhood education and to the Aoga Amata movement. Our three children attended Aoga Amata and I have worked in ECE for over 22 years as an early childhood education lecturer, programme leader for Pacific education programmes at Auckland University of Technology, and as president of the Sosaiete Aoga Amata Samoa i Aotearoa Incorporated (SAASIA Inc) – the National Association of Aoga Amata in New Zealand. In this role, I have coordinated many professional learning development for Pacific ECE teachers.

I have had the privilege of visiting many Pacific ECE centres and Aoga Amata and, in recent years especially I have become increasingly concerned to witness subtle changes in the ways Aoga Amata have come to be organised, as they have moved from a largely volunteer run and community-based organization, to one governed by and accountable to national Ministry of Education (MOE) curriculum and funding requirements. Changes include, for example, the requirement for Aoga Amata teachers to have a teaching degree. While I support the upgrading of teaching qualifications, my review of the pre-service programmes devised for this purpose revealed that less prominence is being given to cultural diversity in these courses or the values of diverse populations such as the Pacific or Samoan communities. I have also pondered whether the introduction of English language tests (IELTS – International English Language Tests) for Pacific students might have dampened Samoan teachers’ pursuit of *saili malo* (the collective pursuit of triumph) which had marked the spirit of service exemplified in Aoga Amata teaching in earlier days. Furthermore, I wondered whether this English competency requirement was linked in any way to the increased use of English language as a medium of instruction that I had seen creeping into the Aoga Amata programme.



These and other questions reinforced to me the importance of exploring the philosophy and role of the Aoga Amata today and how this was being practiced. More particularly, the perceptions and conceptualisation of ‘culture’ which underpin the Aoga Amata philosophy and, specifically how culture was being learnt and experienced in the Aoga Amata today.

### **1.1.2 What is meant by ‘culture’?**

A search of earlier literature outlining the Aoga Amata vision, goals and processes revealed a liberal use of terms such as *faasamoa* (in various spellings) and culture (*aganuu*) but little discussion, or elaboration of what these terms meant or how they might be applied. Instead there seemed to be an assumption that ‘everyone knows’ what culture is. In some cases also, it was clear that *aganuu* was treated as being synonymous with *gagana* (being able to speak Samoan language). This raised questions such as “what do teachers mean when they use the term culture / *aganuu* and how were teachers ‘teaching’ for this? And, did they see being able to speak the Samoan language as equating with ‘culture’? I then thought about the Aoga Amata parents. Why were they enrolling their children in Aoga Amata and what did they expect from this experience? Anecdotal reports indicated that many parents were employed today given the increasing economic pressures of New Zealand life. So, were parents seeing the Aoga Amata more as a ‘child minding’ rather than as a culturally affirming learning space? Also, ‘who’ were the Aoga Amata parents? Were they New Zealand born Samoans or those of mixed marriages who wanted and appreciated the cultural enhancing programmes?

I saw that the lack of questioning of the meaning and practice of culture in ECE had ongoing implications not only for Aoga Amata but also for ECE policy and practices. Questions included for example:

- How is the faasamoa represented in the development and implementation of the Te Whāriki ECE as a bicultural curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996b) which guides Aoga Amata practice today? And, while the intent of the Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996b) is to be inclusive of all cultures, had its standardisation as a national curriculum been at the cost of the faasamoa?
- Did New Zealand research on early childhood education apply a cultural lens? And if so, how was this captured in outcomes data? For example, did the learning stories strategy (Carr, 2001) widely used by Aoga Amata recognise or capture Samoan children's cultural knowledge or, their use of the Samoan language? I was aware of reports from the Education Review Office<sup>5</sup> (ERO), which suggested an uncertainty in Aoga Amata about how Samoan *aganuu* (culture) was being incorporated including what experiences might promote *aganuu*.
- Had the formalisation of the Aoga Amata within the 'basket' of ECE provision in New Zealand since the early 1980s (Mara, 1999; Taouma, 1992) impacted Aoga Amata principles and practice?
- Moreover, what had been the impact of the positive steps encapsulated in a raft of Government measures such as the Pacific Education Plan (PEP), (Ministry of Education, 2006b, 2012, 2013a), the Le Taiala mo le Gagana Samoa Language guidelines<sup>6</sup> (Ministry of Education, 1996a, 2009a) on the Aoga Amata?

Whilst my focus was on the Aoga Amata, this train of thought led me to consider the next stage of the educational pipeline: if Aoga Amata were setting robust culturally grounded learning foundations for children, how were these knowledge, skills and attitudes flowing

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<sup>5</sup> ERO Reports – written by ERO reviewers after site visits. See also review process at: <http://www.ero.govt.nz/how-ero-reviews/how-ero-reviews-early-childhood-services-and-schools/>

<sup>6</sup> The 2009 version is only available in English, with examples in Samoan. The 1996 edition was published in both Samoan and English.

on into the next step in the educational pipeline – the primary school? For example, if Aoga Amata were ‘getting it right’ (i.e. ensuring secure cultural links between home and the Aoga Amata experience) what happened next? Was there a continuity in promoting and transitioning Samoan cultural values, expectations and language from the Aoga Amata into primary schooling?

Other studies have focused on the educational achievement of Aoga Amata pupils in mainstream primary classrooms. However, none have focused on the transition of Aoga Amata pupils into Samoan bilingual units. For example, findings from my earlier study were that children’s literacy results in English soared within one month of being in the mainstream classroom after leaving Aoga Amata (Tagoilelagi-Leota, McNaughton, MacDonald & Farry, 2004). In this case, children’s Samoan language competency contributed to the acquisition of English. However, whether or not this was at the cost of losing their Samoan was not part of that study.

At this point, I decided to not only focus on how culture was taken account of in the Aoga Amata, but also how these learnings are transitioned into a bilingual unit. Currently, the bilingual Samoan units are the only formalised provision for Samoan language and culture in the primary school.

## **1.2 Research gap**

Although Aoga Amata have been operating for almost 30 years in New Zealand, there has not been a review of whether and how these learning centres, have stayed true to their original goals of cultural maintenance and enhancement. Samoan educators working in the ECE sector have been tremendously proud of the diversity in philosophical underpinnings, signaled by the opening of the Aoga Amata. Since their inspirational

beginnings as a community driven learning site for Samoan language and culture, Aoga Amata have proved resilient in adapting to changes including their formalisation within the national ECE programme and curriculum, and also global ideals of what ECE should be today (Podmore., Tapusoa., & Taouma. 2006; Utumapu, 1998).

Simply put, and in line with the concept of tai taeao, the time was right for this study.

### **1.3 Research questions**

My study asks how are Aoga Amata using and building on the cultural knowledge and understandings and attitudes children are bringing from the home, to the Aoga Amata and then into formal primary schooling. To explore this importance of continuity, I will follow the experiences of a group of children who are transitioning from an Aoga Amata into a Samoan bilingual programme, their parents and their teachers.

Given the diverse definitions of ‘culture’, I will use the term *fau* to stand as a proxy term for culture. So this study explores teachers, parents and children’s understanding of the *fau*, how this is practised in the Aoga Amata and whether and how this is transitioned into Samoan bilingual schooling. I use the Samoan proverb “*soso’o le fau i le fau*” to capture the ideal of continuity in learning - from the home to the Aoga Amata and Samoan bilingual primary classrooms. This proverb is discussed further below. Research questions are:

1. What is the *fau* and how is it practised in the Aoga Amata?
2. How is the *fau* continued to Samoan Bilingual primary schools? (e.g. Soso’o le

fau i le fau)

3. What are the factors impacting on the *fau*?

During the course of the study when it became clear that that there was no specific cultural assessment tool in Aoga Amata, a fourth question was added, which is:

4. How can the *fau* be assessed in Aoga Amata?

Much of the research on ECE focuses on the views of teachers and of parents. For this study, I saw it as paramount to listen to and share the voices of Aoga Amata students as well: what they saw to be of importance and value in the Aoga Amata experience, and as shared in conversations, learning stories and observations for example.

More specifically, my study asks what is the *fau* that children bring from their homes, how is this nourished and reinforced in the Aoga Amata and then into a Samoan bilingual units.

A Samoan proverb and a Samoan term mark my research approach and each is presented here. These are a) Soso'o le fau i le fau, and b) the tautai.

## **1.4 Soso'o le fau i le fau**

*Soso'o* means to join. In this study I used this term to signify the building on and consolidation of learnings between the home, Aoga Amata, the bilingual classes, and to ensure that these learnings are robust and of great quality. This proverb is commonly used when a leader is replaced by another whom, it is anticipated, will demonstrate similar leadership qualities and knowledge as their predecessors. This proverb emphasises the importance of continuity of leadership and learnings that is consistent and collective, as will be discussed further in chapter 2.



*Figure 1.1: The fau*

The act of joining or combining to create something stronger is paramount in *soso'o*. Joining comprises and is dependent on emotional, physical, social, economic, political and especially spiritual factors each of which is equally important to this process. In this study, my focus is on the cultural and language aspects or strands of the *fau*, which I believe are significant in determining a successful transition. Those involved in *soso'o* seek peace and security so that the two or many parts of the *fau*, come together with mutual understanding and agreement. *Soso'o* is also a collective process: the harmony of the parts is anticipated and achieved as those responsible work together in a spirit of “self-reflection and re-assessment within the contexts of today, yesterday and tomorrow” through *anapogi* (fasting) and *moe manatunatu* (dream dialogue with ancestors) (Tui Atua, 2009, p. 147).

For this study, *soso'o* builds on however *fau* is conceptualised and learnt in Aoga Amata into the Samoan primary bilingual school experiences. Literally, the strength of the *fau* lies in its many layers which make it unbreakable and unshakeable and, which together

ensure coherence, robustness, resilience, perseverance and other qualities that make it secure and future-proof (Tofaeono-Tanuvasa, 2009).

Parental and family and community involvement are important in the *soso'o*. Sauvao's (1999) study on transition confirmed that parental involvement in Aoga Amata is instrumental in children's later success in a mainstream school. Mitchell and Mara (2010) also confirm the valuable contribution by Pacific family to supporting the successful operation of Pacific ECE centres and also in supporting children's transition to primary schooling.

As noted, bilingual Samoan units are the only formalised provision for Samoan language and culture in the primary school, although Samoan is recognised as an NCEA (secondary school) and as a university subject. The bilingual units exist solely at the discretion of principals and as a response to community advocacy. While there has been advocacy, there has been no enthusiasm for a national bilingual education policy (Tuafuti & McCaffery, 2005). This is despite the extensive international literature on the value of bilingual education (Cummins, 2014; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1997), its contribution to secure identity (Baker & Prys Jones, 1998) and literacy development (Baker, 2001), as an alternative route to student academic achievement (Aukuso, 2002; Esera, 2001; Tuafuti, 2016), and New Zealand's pride in being a bicultural nation. In sum, New Zealand does not have a bilingual education policy, even with respect to Te Reo Maori.

## **1.5 Research approach – the tautai**

For this study, I am positioning myself as a researcher, as a *tautai*. *Tautai* is a combination of two Samoan words *tau* and *tai*. *Tau* means to combat or fight while *tai* means the tide. Thus, *tautai* literally means a warrior of tides or to fight the tides. While associated with

fishing, tautai as a process illustrates an infinite way of researching from a Samoan perspective. The vigilance and determination of the tautai within the process of traditional fishing, signifies how a researcher must behave to ensure quality data is achieved. I have chosen the tautai process because fishing was one of the joys of my childhood.

*When I was young, fishing was my favourite past time because our village was by the sea. I remember watching the fishermen going out to sea and they were rarely on their own. We children would wait for their arrival back as they would give anyone near the shore some fish to eat for free. Again it was rare for a tautai to return without any fish. While male fishermen often fished beyond the reef, women would remain behind the reef or shallow water fishing for safety. I regularly joined the shallow fishing (alo a'au) group as a five year old. Tautai followed the protocols pertaining to tapu in fishing. The tautai's relationships with nature, people and the divine God was the platform were the same values and beliefs that Samoa as a nation is grounded on. Such fundamentals grounded my priorities as a researcher. Tautai fish for the love of family, serve others and by giving back for the sustenance of the whole is a demonstration of respect. That the catch was and is for the benefit of the collective. When we arrived in New Zealand, my father and I used to go fishing in his boat, an experience quite daunting but my love for the sea remained. My fascination in tautai grew as we settled in New Zealand whereby elements of reciprocity within the tautai practice, began to be influenced by societal economic demands.*

These beliefs and values are the magnets, which influenced my decision to use tautai as my research approach. The tautai encapsulated elements of community and community good. The spiritual connections tautai establish with the cosmos and people embodies a holistic perspective of what Samoans believe is important in life and how this is understood and achieved. Spirituality draws together the concepts of tautai and soso'o le *fau* i le *fau*, both of which are central to good educational practice. In brief, to connect *fau* with *fau* requires the wisdom of the tautai who must carefully prepare and sift through the stories shared. The weaving and plaiting of ideas resonates with the conceptualising of *filifogāvaa* which is presented in chapter three.



As the tautai, my aims are to draw on the voices of parents, teachers and children to address the research questions, and this will be achieved through individual interviews and observations. Second, I will explore the concept of *soso'o le fau i le fau*, as I follow the stories of a group of children as they transition from Aoga Amata to the bilingual primary school.

In doing so, I seek to address the absence of research about the place and value of Samoan culture in the Aoga Amata. Much of the available ECE research has been visioned from a Western view, and there has been less focus on the role and place of culture in the Aoga Amata curriculum and how this is reinforced in the primary school settings. My research intention is to unpack existing understandings, knowledge and practices of the *fau* in the Aoga Amata, and how these are supportive of Samoan children's cultural security and identity.

### **1.5.1 Significance of the study**

This research will have multiple benefits for parents, teachers and children, for Aoga Amata and the ECE education sector and for educators.

The research has benefits for the Samoan community in New Zealand and for other diaspora populations. The findings will demonstrate how Samoan culture and language is being visioned and promoted in Aoga Amata in New Zealand today, and perceptions of how this can contribute to Samoan children's development. The findings will also valuably inform the Samoan community members of their role in ECE, including the ways they can contribute to enriching and sustaining the *faasamoa* in the home, the Aoga Amata, the bilingual units and in mainstream classrooms. The findings will also challenge the Samoan community as to whether they wish for the *faasamoa* to be integrated and

applied in education curriculum today and how this can be done in a context marked by changing times, places and aspirations.

This study of the Aoga Amata model has significance for other Pacific early childhood services and for the provision of ECE for migrant and ethnic minority groups nationally and globally. The findings will inform national ECE policy making and practices especially with respect to the increasingly diverse nature of New Zealand's population. While the focus is on early childhood and primary education sectors, findings resonate with other challenges relating to how culture is visioned, demonstrated and practised in formal education settings. Finally, the focus on listening and encouraging children's voice in research also has high significance for Samoan families, communities and for educational research generally. Indeed a collective approach in supporting children's teaching and learning to be successful citizens of New Zealand, is located in the robust relationships between teachers, parents and communities.

### **1.5.2 Risks**

My involvement in the Aoga Amata in New Zealand has been mostly in a volunteer capacity in the spirit of tautua (service). However, my role as current president of the SAASIA Inc (Samoan National ECE Organisation) and as programme leader of a Pacific-focused early childhood qualification in a tertiary institution, do place risks in conducting this research. To address this, there was a requirement for an Independent Third Party (ITP) as advised by the AUTEK (AUT Ethics Committee) who was selected to alleviate possible risks.

## 1.6 Outline of chapters

Chapter One (*Tai Taeao*) introduced the study aims and rationale and my research approach as the *tautai*. I state also my decision to use the term ‘*fau*’ as a proxy concept for culture.

Chapter Two is the Literature Review (*Tapu*) in which I focus on six fields of literature or seas of thought relating to my research.

In Chapter Three, I present the study design and method and introduce the four steps of my data collection method *filifogāvaa* –the weaving together of knowledge. This chapter concludes with reflections on my research journey.

Research findings are presented in chapters four, five and six. Chapter Four (*Faiva in Aoga Amata*) presents findings from Aoga Amata, and Chapter Five (*Faiva in bilingual units*) findings from the Samoan bilingual units. Chapter Six, presents a short pilot of a cultural assessment tool prepared as part of this study – the *Faafulu*.

Chapter Seven – I use the process of *filifogāvaa* to discuss the research findings.

My thesis conclusions are presented in Chapter Eight (*Tautai A’e*). This marks the celebration of the *tautai* returning from the sea, ready to surrender the *faiva* (the catch) for the sustenance of the people.

## 1.7 Definitions of terms used in this thesis

A number of terms are used in this study, which require defining for clarity of the discussions. Some terms are generically normal in the Education discipline and even more aligned with the early childhood education sector in New Zealand.

In this thesis, all non-English words will be italicised when initially introduced, then incorporated as normal text with the rest of the English words, except for the word *fau*, which will be italicised in the whole thesis. The glossary contains meanings of all these words for reference.

### *Aoga Amata*

Aoga Amata is derived from what the EFKS Sunday School class for pre-schoolers was called; Vasega Amata (literally means Beginning Class). Tanielu (2004) further supports this shift from Vasega Amata to Aoga Amata, due to the influence of Pastor's Schools in the <sup>7</sup>LMS churches. Taouma et al (2005) describes Aoga Amata as “beginning school or preschool” (p.50). Aoga Amata stands as an idea as well as a practice, at which ‘formal learning’ for Samoan children in the ECE (early childhood education) sector, is grounded upon. Vasega denotes an element of specificity where a class or vasega is ring-fenced for a particular age; in this case, young children. Aoga on the other hand, embraces learning from a holistic perspective, where the children’s past, present and future is representative of their life-long learning. From the word Aoga, form words such as aoga (learning), faiaoga (teacher), aogā (useful/worthwhile), ogaoga (depth, impact or influence), ‘oga (infectious) and ōgā (intoxicated); all connotative to how beginning of learning for Samoan children has been an internalised process, transmitted by Samoan ancestors and transformed for the Samoan children of the 21st Century and beyond. Therefore, Aoga Amata is used to refer to Samoan early childhood centres, settings or services, whilst SAASIA is the overall Aoga Amata organisation in New Zealand.

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<sup>7</sup> London Missionary Society

### ***Aotearoa New Zealand and New Zealand***

The usage of Aotearoa New Zealand reflects the bicultural commitment of the ECE sector to the Te Whāriki as a bicultural curriculum. This study will use the term Aotearoa New Zealand once to highlight its support of the bicultural commitment of the ECE sector curriculum, and then continue with 'New Zealand' to avoid confusion.

### ***Culture***

For this study, faasamoa is used to refer to Samoan culture, however defined by Samoan scholars.

### ***Early Childhood Centres***

These relate to early childhood education and care settings with learners and teachers. For example; Aoga Amata, Kindergarten, Childcare centres, Kidicorp and so forth.

### ***Ka Hikitia; Accelerating Maori Success 2013-2017***

A strategy to improve how the education system can support Maori learners. It has five main areas of focus, which are 1: Māori language in education, 2: Early learning, 3: Primary and secondary education, 4: Tertiary education and 5: Organisational success

### ***Le Taiala mo le Gagana Samoa; Samoan Language Guidelines***

Le Taiala was the first Pacific language document to be published in 1996 both in Samoan and English languages. The document proposed four strands at guidelines for usage of Samoan language. Now the 2009 version of Le Taiala comprise of three strands named; Poto i le Gagana (Language Knowledge), Fesootaiga (Communication) and Atamai i le Aganu'u (Cultural Knowledge).

### ***Learning Stories***

Developed by Margaret Carr (2001) to fully utilise children's observations to extend their learning dispositions. As an assessment tool, it fully embraces a credit-base model where children's interests are pursued to strengthen and further consolidate the principles and strands of Tē Whāriki.

### ***Pacific/Pasifika***

The term Pacific is used in this study. However, the term Pasifika is only used when referring to Pacific in various New Zealand government documents if required, particularly the New Zealand Ministry of Education documents.

### ***Samoan bilingual units***

Classes using Samoan and English as the medium of instruction for children's teaching and learning. These classes follow the additive bilingual education model whereby children's L1 (Samoan language) supports their acquisition of L2 (English).

### ***Te Whāriki. He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa; Early Childhood Curriculum***

Te Whāriki was published and launched in 1996 after a sector-wide consultation process. As New Zealand ECE sector is diverse, it was important for the curriculum to adhere to the country's bicultural nature but also embrace cultures that children represent.

Te Whāriki comprise four guiding principles; Family and Community (Whānau Tangata), Relationships (Ngā Hononga), Holistic Development (Kotahitanga) and Empowerment (Whakamana) and five strands which are Well-being (Mana Atua), Belonging (Mana Whenua), Contribution (Mana Tangata), Communication (Mana Reo) and Exploration (Mana Aotūroa).

Te Whāriki is the MOE's early childhood curriculum policy statement. It is a framework for providing tamariki (children's) early learning and development within a sociocultural context. It emphasises the learning partnership between kaiako (teachers), parents, and whānau/families”.

### ***Pasfika Education Plan***

The Pacific Education Plan (PEP) evolved from the initial Ko e Ako 'a e Kakai Pasifika, a Ministry of Education plan that was launched in 1996, aimed at raising the quality of education for Pacific Islands peoples in New Zealand (Tongati’o, 1998). Goals for early childhood then as identified by Ko e Ako 'a e Kakai Pasifika are reflected in the current Pacific Education Plan; which are increasing participation in ECE, improve quality of ECE centres and engagement with communities. The PEP is a cross sector document, which is indicative of the MOE’s commitment in student achievement of Pacific learners. Thus, it has also gained support from other government agencies whereby policies have been devolved nationally to obtain a collective backing of the PEP.

### ***Te Whatu Pōkeka***

Te Whatu Pōkeka: Kaupapa Assessment for Learning Māori: Early Childhood Exemplars a resource developed based on a kaupapa Māori perspective and context.

## Chapter 2: Tapu – Literature review

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### 2.1 Introduction

I have selected six areas of literature as important for this study of whether and how culture and cultural identity (the *fau*) is visioned, promoted and exemplified in the Aoga Amata and in the primary Samoan bilingual units. As a tautai/researcher, I have adhered to the *tapu* of each literature because “we need to tread carefully when engaging in *tapu* knowledge” (Tui Atua, 2009a, p. 118). The six seas of knowledge, in which I have *fished* in order to answer and explore the research questions are: i) What counts as culture; ii) The place and value of the child in the faasamoa; iii) ECE in New Zealand; iv) The development of Aoga Amata; v) Bilingual education; and vi) the transition process from Aoga Amata to bilingual primary as in the thesis title “soso’o le fau i le fau”. My standpoint is that there must be commitment to ensuring cultural security in education. First, because Pacific knowledge is valid and has its own ontological base, epistemology, pedagogy and validation processes. Second, and related, because there is a positive relationship between secure self-concept and school achievement (Purkey, Cage, & Graves, 1973)

### 2.2 Culture

This study is concerned with how ‘culture’ (the *fau*) is defined, practiced and shared by teachers, parents and children in the Aoga Amata and then into the bilingual primary school experience.

Culture is polysemous (Jahoda, 2012), and has been defined in many ways by different disciplines and across ethnic groups. Many people associate ‘culture’ with songs and dances and artworks. However, culture is far more than this. For example, while



describing culture as creativity, Voi (2000) also drew attention to the intellectual activity and abstract thinking underpinning and embedded in creativity. Building on Voi, a review of UNESCO's Convention on Cultural Diversity noted the importance of language and ideas to culture – that culture comprised language, ideas, customs, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, rituals and ceremonies (De Beukelaer, Pyykkonen, & Singh, 2015). In this vein, Swidler's, (1986, p.274) classification of culture as both “material and ideal interests” has been captured in the UNESCO use of the terms tangible and intangible heritage to describe culture (Voi, 2000)

Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) drew attention to the fact that culture was a learned behaviour, consisting of patterns that represents symbols, behaviour and ideas. Additionally, they considered that culture was learnt through social interaction, through observing, sharing and participating as in ceremonial events, stories and other traditional practices (Swidler, 1986). Others such as Geertz, (2008) highlighted the importance of values and beliefs, symbols, people as well as context and action.

Anthropologist Keesing (1974) was one of the first to highlight the relationship between culture and identity which is a central point in this study. In Keesing's words, culture was “the heritage people in a particular society share” (p. 73). The centrality of cultural beliefs to identity was again reinforced by Sahlins (1999) that “culture was the local customary idiom by means of which the social system was expressed and maintained” (p. 400), while Kozymka, (2014) highlighted the place of the spiritual in culture. Finally, and again of importance to this study, is the view that culture is not static – culture is a dynamic process receptive to changing times and places (Bourdieu, 1989; Nash, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978) and as in Bronfenbrenner's, (1979) ecological model. The transient nature of culture is captured in Samoan academic Tupuola's words (2007) that for Samoans, the present is a

temporary point of existence, which continuously evolves. This belief is also captured in the Samoan saying of ‘*e sui le faiga, ae tumau le faavae*’ as in ‘the form changes but underlying principles remain’.

For this study, I use the UNESCO’s definition of culture due to its inclusion of spirituality:

*Culture comprises the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or a social group. It includes not only the arts and letters but also modes of life, fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs.* (Voi, 2000, p. 217)

## **2.2.1 The place of culture**

### **2.2.1.1 Culture as identity**

Views of culture as a learned and shared heritage and as fundamental to people’s sense of place and identity, align with the Pacific world view: Pacific people have always emphasised the importance of culture as giving meaning to life (Vaai, 2006), as answering questions of ‘who am I’ and upholding and binding the family structures and communal organisation (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1991), and as a process of legitimising Pacific knowledge from the past to the present and to the future (Gegeo & Gegeo, 2001). Helu-Thaman (1993, 2008) writes that culture connects people to heritage, integrity and belief systems, while Bishop and Glynn (1999) note that cultural identity is located in the collective or the people. In sum, culture is integral and embedded in ones feelings of identity and identity security. That a shared culture is fundamental to national solidarity as seen in the example of the Welsh struggle for nationhood (Davidson & Piette, 2000), Canadian (Freynet & Clement, 2015), the Cherokee experience in Oklahoma (Peter, 2003, 2007) and that of the Jewish community (Dashefsky & Lebson, 2002; London & Frank, 1987). The call by the New Zealand Māori to reclaim and revalue their indigenous knowledge, also clearly relates to shared identity as a people as well as the recognition

that Māori values, beliefs, knowledge and practices are the pathway to self-determination (Smith, 1999). Maintaining a shared identity through the sustaining of language and culture is also the flagship for self-determination strategies by minority Pacific populations in Hawaii (Lesa, 2009; Valdez, Dowrick, & Maynard, 2007) and for Pacific communities in New Zealand (Dickie & McDonald, 2011; Fairbairn-Dunlop & Makisi, 2003; Pitt & Macpherson, 1974; Siteine, 2010) and America (Alofaituli, 2011; Tagaloa, 2010).

### **2.2.1.2 Cultural identity and learning**

While cultural identity has importance in itself, there is also a relationship between cultural identity and educational success (Gluckman, 2011; Purkey, 1967). Purkey proposes that self-concept is a holistic or all-embracing state impacting every aspect of life – the cognitive, emotional, physical, spiritual and cultural notes, that when “children feel good about themselves and their abilities; they are most likely to succeed” (1967, p.15). In this vein, Rosi (2008) signals out language and culture as the solid platform for academic achievement for minority groups in a mainstream schooling system. In sum, when children have a sense of cultural identity and have confidence in who they are, this forms the platform for developing further skills and knowledge bases for the 21<sup>st</sup> century (UNESCO, 2003).

The continued advocacy in global and local research for cultural security as a major avenue to successful learning is not new. However, the relationship between cultural security and learning is not so well understood, even today. For example in earlier times, migrant and ethnic minority children were expected and required to leave their cultural knowledge, values and ways of doing things ‘at the school door’, be this new entrant classes, primary and secondary or tertiary education (Smith 1999; Fairbairn-Dunlop,

1981). Even in Samoa, the homeland's students were punished for speaking their mother tongue in the school grounds (Tanielu, 1997). Not surprisingly, many Samoan and Pacific parents supported the view that the main aim of schooling was to learn English and the *palagi* (European) ways (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1981). More recent has been the understanding that the schools must build on the knowledge people bring to the learning experience and create safe and trusted learning spaces for people to share and grow their knowledge (Bishop & Glynn, 1999) and 'where I can be me' (Fairbairn-Dunlop & Coxon, 2014). As defined, a Pacific culturally secure learning place is one characterised by the "interplay of head, heart and spirit in learning and social engagement in the creation of meaning" (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2013, p.5). In this life-long learning scenario, the Aoga Amata plays a vital role as the first learning experience outside the family.

### **2.2.1.3 Culture as a Right**

The importance of culture and language as a human right has been the focus of many international conventions. These include:

- UNESCO *Culture for Development Indicator Suite* (UNESCO, 2011), which is pioneering research in developing a set of indicators which will pinpoint how culture impacts on development;
- UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage*, countries have committed to the preservation of their cultures and languages (UNESCO, 2003) and intangible cultural heritage;
- The *UNCRC Rights of the Child* acknowledges the child as a 'human being' and is protective of children's right to their language and culture. (UNCRC, 1989)

A belief in culture as a right raises questions of how that right is understood and actioned. For example, is this the responsibility of formal schooling or family and community?

Much of the drive and advocacy in New Zealand by the Samoan and other communities today has been directed at integrating language and culture into the formal school system because this is a right. This can be contrasted with stories shared in Fairbairn-Dunlop (1981) where most Samoan parents had the rule ‘Samoan in the home – English at school and leave your English at the door’. These and others shared narratives by early Samoan migrants, signal the delicate intricacies of how Samoan families have maintained the *faasamoa* cultural practices and language, as they have accommodated to their new lives in New Zealand. By way of contrast, Wu’s New Zealand study (2009) found Chinese parents said they sent their children to mainstream ECE services to “gain access to the dominant social and cultural capital” (p. 223). However, these parents made sure their children learnt Chinese cultural values at home and, through the Mandarin medium.

#### **2.2.1.4 Culture and the faasamoa**

For Samoa, the two words most used to reference culture are the *faasamoa*, the “Samoan way of life” (Vaai, 2006, p. 113) and *aganuu* (Aiono, 1996; Simanu, 2002). Aiono (1996) relates *aganuu* to *aga* or to the nature of things, (as in *aga o le aso* nature of the day), and *nuu* “as the assembly of matai, the faamatai or cultural heritage of the Samoans” (p. 146). Literally, *aganuu* means the nature of culture or nurturer of nature, which Aiono describes further as the ‘essence’ of culture. While defined in different ways, for this study the term *faasamoa* is defined as “literally in the manner of Samoans or Samoan custom” (Meleisea, 1987, p.17).

The *faasamoa* has its genesis in the Samoan worldview – the Creator God, who created people and the land and sea resources by to be used to fulfil peoples basic needs. As is well reported, a main focus in the Samoan worldview is to maintain a balance and harmony between these elements of spiritual, human and the physical and decisions are

made according to this aim. Fairbairn-Dunlop, Nanai, and Ahio (2014) noted that “every Pacific community behaviours and expectations aimed at ensuring a balance and harmony between these dimensions” (p. 83).

The faamatai chiefly systems of organisation are at the heart of the faasamoa. For me, the faamatai is the benchmark of Samoan ideals, behaviour, values and beliefs. The faamatai defines and grounds all aspects of Samoan life as will be discussed further in section two of this chapter.

### **2.3 How culture is learned and transferred?**

How children learn culture features strongly in educational, human lifespan and human development theories which stress the uniqueness of each child, and their learning context. Gaskins and Paradise (2010) have proposed that observation is a universal learning tool for cultural learning during the early years and beyond, and that in many societies, observation is both intentional and non-intentional. Lancy (2008) coined the concept of ‘chore curriculum’ (p.235) arguing that children learn by watching how adults carry out chores such as cooking, weaving and hunting, so supporting Bandura’s (1986) view that culture is learnt through role modelling. Tomasello (1999) notes that in their social group of accumulated wisdom, and using material and symbolic artefacts, children are constantly learning cultural values, beliefs and attitudes through “joint attention and imitative learning” (p.513).

In sum, the transfer of cultural learning occurs in every daily life event. Children are socialised for their place through play and other meaningful learning activities. In these social interactions, parents, teachers, families and communities are “models for imitative

learning and provide structure to and connections between these experiences” (Berryman, 1991. p.3).

## 2.4 The place/value of a child in Samoan culture

*O tamaiti, e taulia tele i le aganuu, auā o le lumanai manuia lea o se aiga* (Simanu, 2002, p.66)

Samoans value children, as they are the future of a family

Two points mark this discussion of the role and place of children in the faasamoa. First, and in line with the Samoan world view, children are a *tofi* – a heritage and gift from God (Tima, 2013, p.2). Second and related are children’s roles as a *suli* (descendants or heirs). Children’s place as *tofi* and *suli* are seated in children’s *gafa* (genealogy) and the *faalupega* (the village genealogy and family ranking systems). As enshrined in family oral traditions and shared through songs and proverbs, children are “the lifeblood of future generations” (Du Plessis & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2009, p.111).

Liuaana describes children as a *tofi mai le Atua*, (heritage from God), “passed down from previous generations for the benefit of a nation and the next generation” (Liuaana, 2013, p. 2). Liuaana highlighted the spiritual dimension of *tofi* to highlight the uniqueness of Samoan children’s place. Pisi (2014) proposes *tofi* to be a cultural responsibility; that through *tofi*, one’s existence is justified. It is also said that children are ‘engraved’ with a *tofi* and this cannot be removed or renounced. For example, when a young woman wanted to give up her *taupou* (ceremonial virgin) title, she was told by her father “you have the title until you die” (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1998, p. 54). Notably, *tofi* is not gendered.

### 2.4.1 Suli

As a *suli*, descendant or heir (Schultz, 1911; Turner, 1984;), Samoan children have ancestral or family rights to titles, land, name, history, genealogy and everything that

encompasses their aiga (family), nuu (village), an itumalo (district) and into a malo (nation). For example, it is within the sulī (or family place) that one is entitled to a matai or chief title. In addition, it is in the sulī that Samoan children enter the journey as carriers of their generation’s rights.

### 2.4.1.1 Children’s place in the family systems

Children’s place is set within the faamatai chiefly system of government (see Figure 2.1). The main aim of the faamatai was and is to ensure the family good – now and to the future – and all family members are expected to contribute to this goal. As seen in Figure 2.1, children’s roles were mainly family related tasks: children were continually on call (and present) for fetching water, sand or rocks, fofō (massaging) elders, weeding and picking up rubbish or dried leaves and twigs to ensure the family compounds were clean and attractive. As they were doing these tasks, children learnt first-hand the family genealogical knowledge and their place within the faasamoa chiefly systems, together with the knowledge and skills they would need in their future.

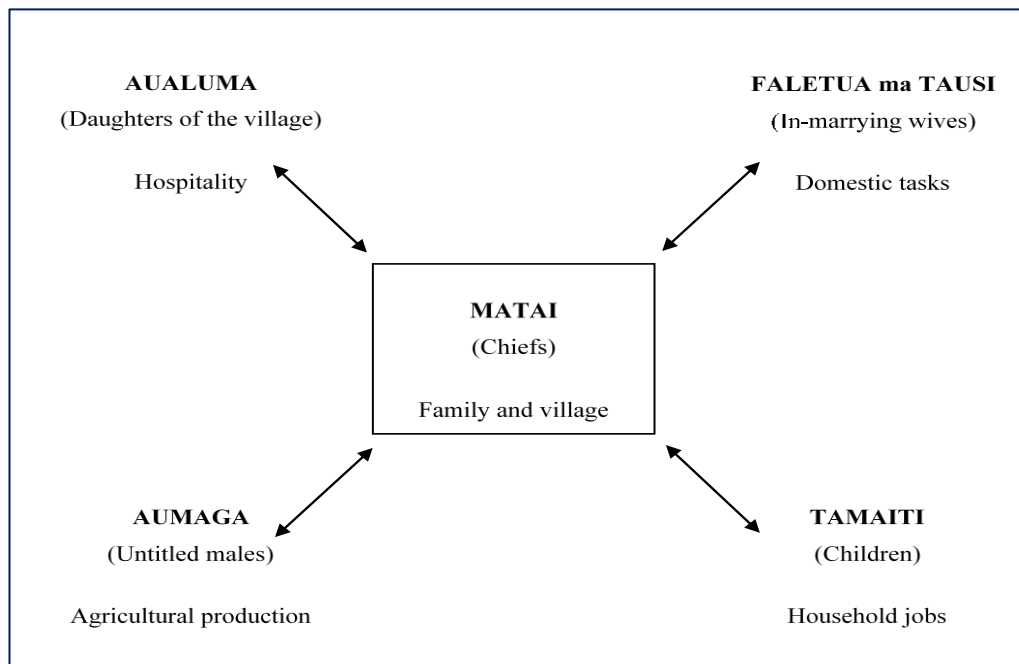


Figure 2.1: *The faamatai* (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1991), adapted from Aiono (1986, p. 104).



Children also learn the *agatausili* – the Samoan cultural values of *alofa* (love), *tautua* (service) and *faaloalo* or respect. As Tima (2013) says, “the essence of tautua relies heavily on obedience, loyalty and mutual respect, but foremost in alofa or love” (p. 51). They also learn the ideals underlining the *feagaiga* – relationship between a sister and brother (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1998; Schoeffel, 1995; Tui Atua, 2009b; Va’a, 1988), whereby the brother protects his sister and, how this relationship is marked by the ideal of sisters as the holders and transmitters of sacred power, and brothers as the holders of secular power and authority (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1991, p. 72). In the faasamoa, both elements are needed for the rightness of an occasion.

Children gained knowledge through watching, listening and practicing. They were exposed to many learning opportunities in the village, both organised and spontaneous. Observation was and is a key skill for children’s learning (Morgan, 1993) and children’s behaviour were a public indicator of how well their parents and families had raised and taught them (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1991). Through their observations of daily events, children learnt to demonstrate respect, love and service. In Samoa’s highly oral society, children also learn through talking – to their peers, parents and families. For example, children were talked at, talked to and talked with, with the view to *aoa’i* (to discipline) and *faatonu* (to advise) and *a’oa’o* (to learn) as in the proverb – *Gagau le lālā manū o mata* (break an offshoot from a tree while its tender) bespeaks the benefits of nurturing children at a young age. Samoan children learn from the collective *faafailele* (nurturing) process that is reflective of the faamatai. As Tofaeono (2000) succinctly puts it, “[i]t is the art of storytelling that orients us [Samoans] about our life, ways and oracy” (p. 160). Samoan oral traditions plays a vital role in children’s learning process, for example - as reflected in the proverb: *E fafaga tama a manu i fuga o laau, ae fafaga tama a tagata i*

*upu ma tala*. (offspring of birds are fed with flower buds but offspring of humans are fed with words and stories).

A famous saying '*Matimati le fanau ae 'aia le tuufauina*' (nurture the children, do not neglect them), (Tofaeono-Tanuvasa, 2009, p.4) affirms how the parents' role was to a'oa'o, faatonu and aoa'i as part of nurturing. *Faafetai* (to thank) *faamolemole* (please) and *tulou* (excuse me) are the three primary words that signified successful outcomes. Hill (2015) refers to oral traditions as her worldview and epistemology.

These and oral traditions form some of the cultural manifestations which UNESCO (2003; 2009) notes, must be protected as cultural assets of indigenous knowledge (Recht, 2009).

Findings from a New Zealand study I was engaged in reinforced the power of observation as a learning tool for Samoan children and the way this led to the development of great memory through continuous repetition. While Samoan four year olds in Samoa and in New Zealand acquired emergent literacy skills in various ways, the performance routine was predominantly the way children learnt, which is learning by repetition (Clay, 1993). I coined this the *tauloto routine* (Tagoilelagi, 1995). In a later study, Tagaloa (2010) proposed that a child born into a Samoan aiga, "gained access to knowledge of the Samoan community through the mode of presentational immediacy; what they see, hear, touch, taste and smell (sensory perception)" (p.130). That study confirmed my view that Samoan children learn very early in their lives to operate and function as emergent transmitters of Samoan language and culture.

## **2.5 Does culture have a place in the ECE in New Zealand?**

The history of ECE in New Zealand has been widely documented (Dalli, 1990; Meade, 1988; Smith et al., 2000; Walker & Rodríguez de France, 2007) as has the importance of quality provision and a responsiveness to changing times (Meade, 1996). Accounts show very compellingly how ECE evolved from women's activism (May, 1997; 2001) and moved from a focus on service or care provision to consolidate its own place within the New Zealand educational landscape (Duhn, 2006). More recent attention has focused on the place of culture within the ECE philosophical stance and practice, as will be discussed.

The kindergarten established in Dunedin in 1889 is recorded as the first service for ECE (Dalli, 1990; McLachlan, 2011). Dalli (1990) notes that since that time the ideals and practice of early childhood learning have survived many political hurdles brought about by changing times and governments and, against global questions such as the need for ECE, the provision of and curriculum aims and quality issues. A range of early childhood learning services has emerged during these years, each with their own aims and priorities; (e.g. the Playcentre Movement refer Stover, 2011) and Early Childhood Education and Care services in the form of full-day or half-day sessions and provisions by private, community-based, trust-affiliated and Christian-based services and home-based initiatives (Bushouse, 2008). As noted, the Aoga Amata sit within the Education and Care services category today.

Three major steps to the inclusion of culture in ECE were the Kohanga Reo movement, the launching of the Te Whāriki; the first bilingual and bicultural policy document in the world and the Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki (ECE 10-year strategic plan). Each is discussed below.

### 2.5.1 Kohanga Reo

The introduction of the *Kohanga Reo* (Māori language nests) was a major step in the inclusion of culture in ECE provision in New Zealand and has been well researched and reported (Hohepa, Smith, & McNaughton, 1992; McClutchie, 2007;). At the time of its launch, there had been a weakening in the use of Māori language as evident in the census data. This had led to a view that the language would likely be lost within a few generations.

The Kohanga Reo effectively challenged this assumption and have since been pivotal in reversing this situation. The Kohanga Reo language nests emphasised the importance of Māori language to Māori nationhood, and that the revival of the Māori language and culture was dependent on and must start with the new generations of children. Not surprisingly, the Kohanga Reo movement and process set the platform for Pacific calls for Pacific specific ECE education (Leavasa, 1990; Morgan, 1993) and the Aoga Amata movement. The Kohanga Reo was not only driven by Māori determination to maintain te reo Māori, it was strongly supported by New Zealand educators calling for urgency in reviving the Māori language. In the years following the opening of the first Kohanga Reo, the numbers of Kohanga Reo grew exponentially and these were supported by strong research-based evidence, largely but not only carried out by Māori academics and communities (see Durie, 2005; Hohepa, Smith, & McNaughton, 1992; Smith, 2012). Additionally, Māori commentators and advocates met with great success in pushing against established national boundaries, by lobbying for the inclusion of Māori knowledge and practice in all aspects of learning and education such as the Ka Hikitia; Accelerating Māori Success 2013-2017 (Ministry of Education, 2013) and Te Whatu Pōkeka (Ministry of Education, 2009b) in the public world of business and enterprise and

communication and media (as for example TV channels). Advocates have based their arguments on language as both a right and as an enrichment to the New Zealand knowledge base. Māori researcher McClutchie (2007) described the Te Kohanga Reo as “the best known international example of indigenous early childhood language and culture revitalisation” (p. 101).

Historically, the influence of Kohanga Reo in the naming of Pacific language centres as *nests* continued for almost two decades. Morgan’s branding of language nest was not a form of segregation or “separatism” (Morgan, 1993, p.27) but a deliberate form of cultural identity. ‘Language nest’ she said was inclusive of all Pacific. In 1998, the name language nests was replaced by the words *Pacific Islands Early Childhood Centres* which, in the view of many, captured more clearly their purpose and rationale and was in line with New Zealand definitions (Mara, 1998).

### **2.5.2 The Te Whāriki ECE curriculum**

The Te Whāriki aims were to be culturally inclusive within a bicultural platform. Prominent researchers described the Te Whāriki as presenting ‘new territories’ in programmes and provisions for Pacific families and children and as promoting quality in diversity (Podmore, May, & Mara, 1998).

The launching of the Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa Early Childhood Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996b) silenced some of the debate about whether or not the New Zealand ECE sector was culturally inclusive. The Te Whāriki gained global recognition as the first bilingual and bicultural policy document in the world (Forsyth & Leaf, 2010; Ritchie, 2003). It embedded the rightful place of *tikanga Maori* (Maori customs, values and practice and *Te reo Māori* (Maori language) as central

in the early learning years programme. In terms of leadership and drive for this bicultural strategy, findings from Jenkin's (2009) exploration of practitioners' views were that active partnerships with Māori local communities was a priority in any culturally focused ECE endeavours. Ritchie's view (2003), was that Māori must lead and nurture this partnership so as to be true to whakawhanaugatanga (a relationship through shared experiences and working together which provides people with a sense of belonging).

While Pacific educators strongly applauded the Te Whāriki as applying a cultural lens to ECE goals and processes, and participated in the extensive round of consultations which took place, there is evidence of some misgivings. For example, the draft version of the Te Whāriki contained up to five pages of Pacific ECE content relating to ECE. It was intended for Pacific "to keep their different cultures and languages flourishing in their communities in New Zealand". However, in the final version of Te Whāriki, Pacific content was narrowed to one paragraph (Ministry of Education, 1996b, p. 12).

Clearly, to Pacific ECE advocates, the Pacific voice was not seen to be of importance. Second, and related, there have been discussions of whether Te Whāriki's championing of a bicultural agenda implied a lesser valuing of Pacific and Pacific ECE philosophies. On this point, Morgan (1993) noted:

*We look in anticipation to the Curriculum guidelines, which we hope will encompass the strength of Pacific Island Language Nests. There are universals in ECE, but there is so much from within the particular culture of a child which will shape their lives in the future (p. 27).*

Morgan's point also alludes to a third factor about the Te Whāriki. That while culture was stressed, there was less focus on the application of culture, for example what culture might look like, what learning processes would achieve this and, how it would be measured. Views were that the absence of a clear definition of culture and how this could be assessed would result in a reliance on individual teacher's interpretation of it and be influenced by

their own knowledge, understandings and bias. To address this, the Te Whatu Pōkeka (Ministry of Education, 2009b) commissioned the preparation of assessment tools to ensure prominence was given to Māori language and culture in the learning and teaching of Māori children (Rameka, 2012). In addition, the Tātaiako – Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners were designed (Ministry of Education, 2011b). These sought to address this knowledge gap to ensure that all teachers of Māori learners were attuned to tikanga Maori and Te reo Māori.

As noted, the aims of my research are to explore and search for such a Tātaiako for Pacific ECE learners and teachers. This is necessary given the absence of Pacific conceptualization and documentation of culture. It will also be useful given the increasing number of non-Pacific teachers teaching in Pacific ECE centres today. Such a Tātaiako for Pacific learners and teachers would increase understanding and appreciation and provide a firmer validation of Pacific knowledge both in pre-service training programmes and in teaching, and in research.

### **2.5.3 Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki (ECE 10-year strategic plan 2002-2012)**

This 10-year strategic plan was mandated by the New Zealand government. Three Pacific individuals were members of the working party selected by government to prepare this strategic plan. The plan had three specific goals aimed at lifting the status and quality of the ECE sector in New Zealand. I discuss each of these goals in turn and also highlight Pacific relevant data which meets these goals.

### **2.5.3.1 Goal 1: Increasing participation in ECE**

Increasing participation was seen as a goal to ‘improving educational achievement of all New Zealand children’. Increasing Pacific participation in ECE is a major goal of the MOE in the Pasifika Education Plan (Ministry of Education, 2012, 2013a).

Available research data on Pacific participation includes the following:

- An evaluation report to determine the effectiveness of the Promoting Participation Project (PPP) by Dixon, Widdowson, Airini and McMurchy-Pilkington (2007), did not report whether Pacific participation had increased as a result of the PPP. However, two comments of intent to the researchers were made: a) that a general lack of awareness in a child-centred approach to ECE was a barrier to Pacific participation and b) that cultural-oriented activities and family engagement were successful factors in Pacific participation.
- Mitchell, Meagher-Lundberg, Mara, Cubey, and Whitford (2009) found that while there had been an increase in Pacific participation in ECE from 13% in 2004 to 14% in 2009, Pacific participation in ECE was still low. Interestingly, participation by the Asian community was also static (9% in 2004, 2006 and 2009) and lower than Pacific enrolments.
- Mitchell and Mara (2010) noted that the common ECE starting age for Pacific children was three years. Further, that Pacific participation was closely related to the availability of a space in a Pacific ECE centre. In short, Pacific parents preferred that their children attend a Pacific ECE centre.
- Meade, Puhipuhi and Foster-Cohen (2003) found that Pacific participation in ECE was impacted by high waiting lists and a lack of access to transport.



- Mara, (2012) confirmed that more Pacific children attended childcare centres and kindergartens than other provisions, due to the high waiting lists in Pacific ECE centres and insufficient numbers of Pacific ECE to cater for the high demand.

Table 2.1 presents an overall summary of Pacific children’s participation in various ECE services in the Auckland region.

**Table 2.1: Pacific Participation in Auckland-based Education and Care, Kindergarten, Home-based and Playcentres from 2014 to 2015**

SECTOR	2014		2015	
	n:	%	n:	%
<b>Pacific in Education and Care</b>	7,472	79%	7,446	73.5%
<b>Pacific in Kindergarten</b>	1,272	13.4%	1,187	11.7%
<b>Pacific in Home-based</b>	562	6%	1,353	13.4%
<b>Pacific in Playcentre</b>	98	1%	76	0.8%
<b>Pacific in Kohanga Reo</b>	56	0.6%	64	0.6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9,460</b>		<b>10,126</b>	

At the time of this study, there were four main providers of ECE in Auckland and there had been a slight decrease in participation by Pacific in each of these services in the period 2014-2015. By service, Pacific participation in the Educations and Care services showed a decrease from 7,472 in 2014 to 7,446 children in 2015 and participation in Kindergarten recorded a drastic decline from 13.4% in 2014 to 11.7% in 2015. By way of contrast, there were significant increases in home-based<sup>8</sup> centres as noted from: 6% in 2014 to 13.4% in 2015 (Education Counts, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> Home-based ECE services provide education or care, to fewer than five children under the age of six. See Education Act (1989).

Table 2.2 presents an overall summary of Samoan children’s participation in various ECE services in the Auckland region.

**Table 2.2: Samoan participation in Auckland-based Education and Care, Kindergarten, Home-based and Playcentres from 2014 to 2015**

SECTOR	2014		2015	
	n:	%	n:	%
<b>Samoans in Education and Care</b>	4,529	75.3%	4,311	71.3%
<b>Samoans in Kindergarten</b>	984	16.4%	995	16.5%
<b>Samoans in Home-based</b>	400	6.7%	664	11%
<b>Samoans in Playcentre</b>	92	1.5%	69	1.1%
<b>Samoans in Correspondence School</b>	6	0.1%	5	0.1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,011</b>		<b>6,044</b>	

Samoan family participation showed a similar pattern in the Education and Care category where Aoga Amata are concentrated. Table 2.2 highlights that the 75.3% participation in 2014 had declined to 71.3% in 2015; a total decline of 4% in these two years (Education Counts, 2015). During the same period, there was an increase in home-based provisions from 6.7% to 11%. Overall, results showed an increase of participation by Samoan families from 6,011 in 2014 to 6,044 enrolments in Auckland Aoga Amata in 2015.

The Pacific preference for Pacific run and organised programmes warrants more in-depth study.

### **2.5.3.2 Goal 2: Quality ECE**

The second goal in the Pathways to the Future strategic plan targeted quality services. In the first place, questions of what is quality and how this is to be assessed are always subject to controversy and debate, and researchers and service providers may give

prominence to different aspects of quality. A wealth of international literature emphasises academic achievement measures as indications of quality. In many studies, the provision of quality is often associated with small group size, low teacher-student ratios, and robust teacher education programmes and qualification standards (Scarr, Eisenberg, & Deater-Deckard, 1994). Process indicators of quality include factors such as genuine teacher-child interactions and relationships, and the development of specialised materials, activities and curriculum that are developmentally appropriate (Phillips, Mekos, Scarr, McCartney, & Abbott-Shim, 2001).

In New Zealand, the 2008 Outcomes Literature Review commissioned by the MOE states:

*Good quality ECE is the key to achieving gains on all outcomes measured. Aspects of adult-child interaction and opportunities afforded by the environment are associated with greater gains for cognitive outcomes and learning dispositions, and with lower levels of antisocial/worried behaviour* (Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 5).

The Education Review Office (ERO) stipulates the importance of observing the Tē Tiriti o Waitangi, the UNCRC<sup>9</sup> and diversity principles as central to quality outcome measures (Education Review Office, 2015b). Closer to home, Biddulph's discussion paper on what constitutes quality ECE in the Manukau region (2008) hovered between a teacher's ability to provide stimulating and empowering learning environments and the quality of teachers' verbal interactions with children. Other commentators highlight there is a need to distinguish *care in ECE* from *education*. This group have resorted to the use of the term *educare* to encapsulate quality provision in ECE. The term *educare* fits Smith's (1996) words that "quality care is educational, and that quality education is caring" (p. 331).

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<sup>9</sup> The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

An ERO study in 2007, recorded quality indicators for Pacific ECE focused on the MOE guidelines. Findings from the study drew on a sample of 49 Pacific ECE centres across the country outlined a) the clear prominence of Pacific language, culture and traditions and b) the significance of Christian values in these programmes.

A national report by the ERO asked each participating centre to identify what they considered to be ‘good practice’ (Education Review Office, 2013b). The Aoga Amata included in this sample noted:

*O la matou Aoga Amata e faatauaina le gagana Samoa ma aganuu aemaise o le a’oa’oina o alo ma fanau i le olaga Kerisiano (p.9).*

Our Aoga value the Samoan language, culture, family and community and the Christian faith, which we practice every day within our programme and activities.

#### **2.5.3.2.1 Building quality and an understanding of quality**

Here, the focus of the MOE strategies to building quality ECE has been to increase the number of qualified and registered ECE teachers. As a result, the MOE granted additional scholarships for pre-service training for this purpose. Another MOE strategy has been to increase funding to research on issues of quality such as the Centre of Innovation (COI) project. In the COI project, ECE centres were encouraged to share examples of evidence-based practice with the ultimate aim of being published. Three Pacific ECE centres were involved in this initiative. Of these three, one paper was invited to publish.

The evaluation report of the Pathways to the Future (Mitchell et al., 2009) graded two of the Pacific ECE centres in the COI research as being at a ‘fair’ level of quality. Other Pacific ECE centres evaluated in this report lost their license to operate. Findings are that the main challenges faced by Pacific centres were related to the quality of financial reporting rather than programmes run.

Table 2.3 provides an overall summary of the quality levels in a sample of 32 ECE services, which included two Pacific centres.

**Table 2.3: Overall quality levels by service type in 2009 in 32 ECE centres**

SERVICE TYPE	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor
Kindergarten (n=8)	3	5		
Education and Care (n=12)	2	5	5	
Playcentre (n=8)	3	4	1	
Pacific (n=2)			2	
Home-based (n=2)		1	1	

Source: Mitchell et al. (2009)

While these quality ratings and allocations may be representative of other Pacific ECE centres, this data together with low participation of Pacific in the COI study represent opportunities for enriching and upscaling Pacific service provision and, while at the same time, increasing Pacific ECE understanding and application of quality and compliance targets. Without more research evidence, Samoan culture and language will remain a peripheral consideration in ECE planning, policy making and practice.

### 2.5.3.3 Goal 3: Collaborative relationships

Collaborative relationships which is the third goal of the Pathways to the Future Project is likely the area where Pacific families already excel. As noted, community relationships and partnerships have been and remain the strength of the Aoga Amata. Mara (1998) notes the success of the Pacific ECE in New Zealand with these words:

*Despite the reality of the low socioeconomic status of families, the very high cultural and educational aspirations of parents and families have for their children (p. 37).*

Parental involvement is also signaled in the Best Evidence Synthesis (Alton-Lee, 2003) as a major factor in children’s academic success generally and the success of the learning engagement processes. A key issue here is how Pacific parents are involved, for example as decision-makers, fundraisers, genuine partners and engaged in ensuring robust educational outcomes, or mainly when their children are in trouble.

## **2.6 Aoga Amata**

The Aoga Amata grew out of the *Aoga Faifeau* (Pastor’s schools) in Samoa and the *Aoga Faataitai* (the initial preschools) and then the Kindergarten movement of the 1970s. Aoga Faifeau are still a major programme in EFKS<sup>10</sup> churches in Samoa, New Zealand, Australia, Hawaii and America. The preparation of the Bible in the Samoan language was one of the first missionary endeavours in Samoa and heralded the shift from the spoken to the written word (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1986). The Aoga Faifeau, which were set up by the London Mission Society (LMS), focused on literacy and numeracy and drew heavily on the Bible and Bible teachings (Tanielu, 2004). Auva’a (2003) writes how the missionary syllabus “developed a highly literary style of spoken discourse upon which great value was placed” (as cited in Huebner, 2010, p. 398). In the Aoga Faifeau system, early learning for preschool children and Sunday school classes were named Vasega Amata (beginning class). The Aoga Faifeau teachers were held in high regard and in Tanielu’s (2004) view, they mirrored the Victorian roles of the transmission and dyadic approaches to teaching and passing on of knowledge. In sum, teachers were authoritative figures, and “instrumental in teaching children the Samoan language” (Huffer, 2006, p. 10) through a learning / teaching process which highlighted repetition, memorisation, and

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<sup>10</sup> Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano i Samoa, known as the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS). See <http://www.cccs.org.ws/>

recitation. It has been said that this style of teaching was due to the missionaries' limited level of fluency in Samoan and the Samoan teachers' limited knowledge of English at the time (Tanielu, 2004). The curriculum of the Vasega Amata class was similar to the Aoga Faifeau including the recital of the *Pi Tautau* alphabet (Tanielu, 2004) (See Figure 2.2).

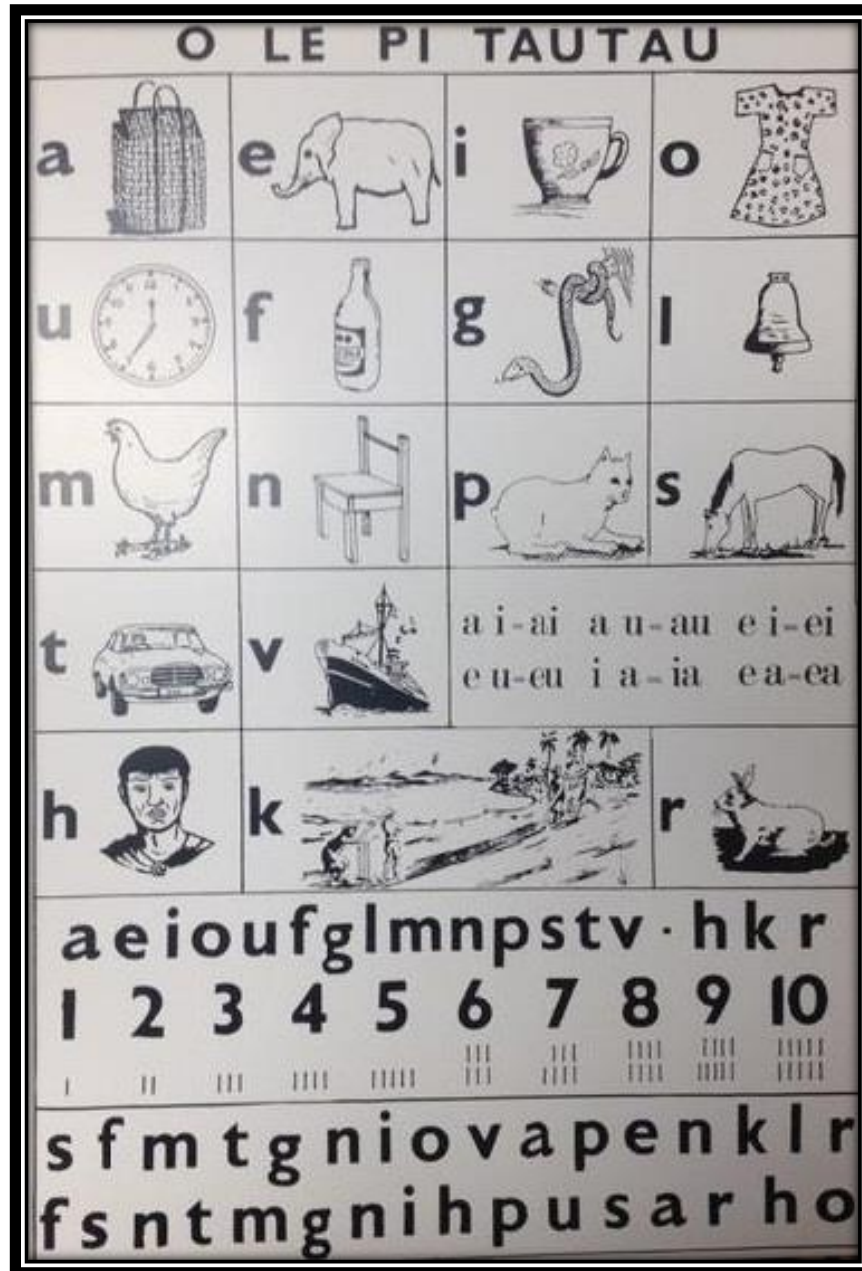


Figure 2.2: *Pi Tautau* chart

In her quest to develop a curriculum for Pacific ECE in Samoa and influenced by the theories of philosophers such as Frederick Froebel of the Kindergarten movement, Telesia McDonald a Samoan educator coined the term “*faataitai*” to describe learning in the early preschool years (McDonald, n.d., p. 7) highlighting that learning for Samoans was by observation and imitation. Thus, ECE and kindergartens in Samoa came to be called *faataitai* and Samoan educators and families readily adopted the new practices (Tagoilelagi, 2013).

### **2.6.1 Structural changes over time as the Aoga Amata moved from voluntary to formal agency**

Since 1987 a number of supporting systems for Pacific ECE have been established, which Aoga Amata have benefitted from. These include pre-service and post activities. In 1987, the first and only Aoga Amata training in New Zealand was established and in the same year, SAASIA was established by the Samoan communities in Wellington (Ete, 2013; Tagoilelagi, 2013).

#### **2.6.1.1 A national organisation**

The Pacific Islands Early Childhood Council Aotearoa (PIECCA) was established in Wellington in 1990, and was the first few to bring together Pacific ECE communities across the country (Tagoilelagi, 2013). As noted by Leaupepe and Sauni (2014), the high spirits of the PIECCA council members enabled the council to endure numerous hardships and struggles associated with the strengthening of the Pacific ECE movement during these years.



### **2.6.1.2 Teacher training**

The story of teacher training for Pacific ECE teachers has been an ongoing process and one marked by the continuing need to justify the value of Pacific languages and cultures in teaching and as a profession. The training of Aoga Amata teachers in Wellington and training programmes by PIECCA and New Zealand Childcare Association (NZCA) were offered across the country (Ete, 2013). NZCA has since been renamed Te Rito Maioha Childcare New Zealand. These are discussed below.

#### **2.6.1.2.1 Pacific Teacher Training – from certificate to diploma to degree**

Provision of teacher training has been a mix by NZQA, NZCA, PIECCA, and University of Auckland and Auckland University of Technology (AUT University) in the latter stages when this became a degree programme. The development of teacher training programmes was as follows:

- 1987: Aoga Amata Diploma Training in Wellington (NZQA registered)
- 1988: Pacific content in NZCA
- 1992: Pacific Certificate in ECE (NZCA)
- 1994: PIECCA Diploma (taught in Auckland, Christchurch and Dunedin Colleges of Education & Whitireia NZ (NZQA registered))
- 2002: PIECE Diploma at University of Auckland (drawing on the PIECCA Diploma)
- 2004: AUT National Diploma (NZQA registered)
- 2005: NZCA National Diploma (NZQA registered)
- 2006: Auckland University Bachelor of Education (Teaching) - ECE Pacific
- 2009: AUT Bachelor of Education in ECE/Primary (Pacific Specialty)
- 2013: AUT Bachelor of Pacific Education (ECE)

In brief:

- From 1994 to 2000, the PIECCA Diploma of 110 licensing were hosted and offered by the Colleges of Education in Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin and at Whitireia Polytechnic in Porirua, Wellington (120 points was the benchmark at the time for a Teaching Diploma).
- In 2003, following a nation-wide consultation, the MOE registered unit standards for a National Diploma in ECE Pacific within the NZQA framework. AUT University and the NZCA became approved providers to deliver these unit standards within a tailor-designed programme. Though programmes were a ‘diploma’, they were pitched at degree-level from Level 5 to Level 7.
- In 2013, the Bachelor of Pacific Education (ECE Teaching) was offered at AUT University. While the NZ Teachers’ Council<sup>11</sup> (NZTC) gave accreditation and approval in 2012 to this degree – terming it the degree with a ‘cutting edge’ – the degree was discontinued at the end of 2015 even before the first cohort had completed their final year.

My personal reflections on this journey are:

*The journey to establish parity captured the hearts and souls of the Pacific ECE communities. This programme was developed over five years through consultation by staff, students and community. The programme signaled and heralded the centrality of Pacific knowledge in Pacific ECE ideals and practice.*

*While I acknowledge the need for some kind of criteria for entry into teaching, the IELTS requirement effectively discriminates against potential Pacific ECE teachers whose cultural knowledge and mother tongue proficiency may not be matched by their fluency in English.*

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<sup>11</sup> NZTC has changed to Education Council New Zealand

Mara (2014) presents a different perspective, perhaps less diplomatic, how it is degrading for students who are New Zealand citizens to have to justify their access to tertiary studies by paying to sit these tests.

### **2.6.1.3 SAASIA**

After many community consultations across the country involving church ministers, community elders and others with an interest in Aoga Amata, the SAASIA was birthed in Wellington in 1989 (Ete, 2013; Leavasa-Tautolo, 2013; Tagoilelagi, 2013). Since that time, this umbrella organisation has provided much needed community support for Aoga Amata, voluntarily.

For the past 30 years, the SAASIA has provided advisory, advocacy, and professional development and resource production services to Aoga Amata teachers, parents and communities. SAASIA aims align with those of the Aoga Amata namely to sustain Samoan language and culture and Christian beliefs and values. The relevance of these aims was reinforced again at the SAASIA Conference 2007, where parents shared that they yearned for their children to be fluent in the Samoan language especially so they could communicate with grandparents and elders. At the same they understood the importance of children's first language (L1) (Samoan language) to academic achievement.

Services provided by SAASIA include conferences and training events such as the two conferences in Samoa (2002 and 2015). Other aims are to research and establish an Aoga Amata model as a demonstration centre and for a possible degree and postgraduate qualifications. Publications included a 2013 book titled *O pelega o fanau* (treasuring children), which recorded the history of the organisation prepared by its primary pioneers

with contributing chapters from local Samoan ECE academics and community (see Tagoilelagi-Leota & Utumapu-McBride, 2013). The section in this book on Samoan research models was a deliberate effort to challenge Aoga Amata teachers and community to become research active in their own work and practice. SAASIA executive members on the Advisory board are in fulltime employment and so their work has always been on a volunteer basis.

## **2.7 Bilingual education**

Bilingual education has been defined as school programmes that use more than one language to deliver the curriculum, and in particular for teaching academic subjects when the school language is not the home or community language of the learners (Bialystok, 2016). The cognitive, social and cultural benefits of bilingual education will not be extensively discussed here except to say that Freynet and Clement's Canadian study (2015) found a high correlation between bilingualism and identity. A finding from Reyes' (2006) American study on ways to develop literacy in Spanish and English four year olds from Mexican backgrounds, was that these children had already developed “theories and concepts about language and literacy” (p. 267). Other studies highlight the impact of a child’s L1 or heritage language in supporting improved academic and literacy development in their second language (L2) or English (Cummins, 2001; Krashen, 2001). As reported, building on the strengths of L1, the bilingual education goal is for students to achieve competency in both their L1 and L2 competency. In their study of four year old Samoan children in Australia, Hemsley, Holm, and Dodd (2013) further affirmed the interplay between languages where a ‘cross-linguistic influence’ occurred in children’s “phonological and conceptual distance between L1 and L2 word representations” (p. 817). While the main target of bilingual education is educational achievement, other

benefits include networking with people of different ethnicity, affirming cultural identity through a sense of belonging (Hamers & Blanc, 1982; Liebkind, 1995; Noels & Clement, 1996) and, building confidence in language (Clement, Gardner, & Smythe, 1977).

### **2.7.1 New Zealand**

New Zealand does not have a bilingual education policy despite numerous debates around the need for bilingual medium schooling (Aukuso, 2002; Chen, 2015; Esera, 2001; Harvey, 2016; May, 2005; May & Hill, 2005; McCaffery & Tuafuti, 1998; Tuafuti, 2010; Tuafuti, 2016; Tuafuti & McCaffery, 2005). In their paper outlining a Framework for a Pacific Strategic Plan Pacific Nations, McCaffery and McCaffery-McFall (2010) aimed to capture a commitment by the New Zealand government to Pacific languages and language maintenance. In addition, well-known political commentator Mai Chen has also challenged the New Zealand government to “develop and implement a national languages policy that should recognise how New Zealand is becoming linguistically diverse given that 160 languages are now spoken” (Chen, 2015, pp. 161-162).

Some of the benefits of bilingual learning have been demonstrated in New Zealand research carried out in Samoan communities. Findings indicated the benefits of bilingual education in establishing student confidence in both L1 (Samoan) and L2 (English) (Amituanai-Toloa, 2005; Aukuso, 2002; Esera, 2001). In a more recent study, Amituanai-Toloa’s (2005) findings were that Samoan L1 students in a bilingual setting excelled in literacy and numeracy levels and eventually surpassed peers in mainstream classrooms. Similarly, findings from Hampton (1992) were that reading by Samoan students in English was linked to their fluent reading in their L1 (Samoan) language. Drawing on these and other findings, Cummins argued the need for a closer alignment between

research findings and policies, noting that this crucial dialogue is absent in the New Zealand context (Cummins, 2014, 2015).

The first bilingual education programmes in New Zealand, evolved from the development of Māori-medium education in the late 1970s followed by the establishments of Kohanga Reo in 1982 (May, 2005). These programmes recognised Māori as the indigenous people of the land (*tangata whenua*) and were primarily aimed at cultural preservation. In similar vein, the Samoan bilingual units in primary schools in New Zealand grew out of the Aoga Amata and Pacific ECE ‘language nests’ and, as noted, were community driven.

The number of Pacific bilingual units in New Zealand today is not officially recorded. However, there are approximately 25 Samoan bilingual units in the country with 20 of these located in Auckland alone. These rely on support by the principals and community, especially in the way the bilingual units are organised. A few points set the context for the transition journey of Aoga Amata students to the bilingual unit which impact on this study. Firstly, though the classes are named Samoan bilingual classes, achievement in the English language is mandatory. Secondly, despite the existence of these Samoan bilingual units, Samoan language and culture are not visible as a subject in the MOE National Standards framework. As a result, there is certainly a huge risk that prominence will be given to English in the units’ assessments. According to the recent report ‘In Continuity for Learning: Transitions from Early Childhood Services to Schools’ (Education Review Office, 2015a), Pacific children’s language and cultural identity is not always supported in Samoan bilingual schools.

## **2.8 Transition from ECE to Primary School**

The transition experience between ECE and primary school has a critical role in children's' educational journeying from the home to ECE and on to the primary school. Dunlop and Fabian (2002) have defined transition as a "process of change that is experienced when children (and their families) move from one setting to another" (p. 3). Saracho and Spodek (2003) describe this as a process, which requires an ability in learning to adapt. For Hartley, Rogers, Smith, and Lovatt (2014), transition is defined as a phase in which one's responsibilities experience a change, while Cowan and Hetherington (1991, p. 5) refer to transition as a "qualitative shift from the inside looking out". This latter definition almost aligns with Taouma, Tapusoa and Podmore (2013); Sauvao, Podmore, Mapa and Tereora (2000) and Sauvao (1999) who describe transition as a physical change from a "kindy kid to being a school pupil" (p. 4).

### **2.8.1 New Zealand**

Research about the transition from ECE to primary schooling has been identified as a significant research gap in a MOE commissioned report and are requiring further study (Peters, 2010). In the Early Learning Curriculum and The Statement of Intent 2013-2018 (Ministry of Education, 2013b), a successful transition from ECE to primary school was seen as a causal factor in academic achievement.

While there has been increased research on the ECE transition process in recent years, there has been little acknowledgement of the place of culture in these transition journeys. This lack of attention is especially notable given research findings that ECE can strengthen culture and language (Hohepa, 1990; Prochner, 2004). The concept of

diversity, however, is acknowledged in the Best Evidence Synthesis' (BES) use of the term "heterogeneous children" (Farquhar, 2003, p.11).

Peters (2010) has argued very strongly that the perspectives of the multiple and diverse voices in the ECE sector are missing and "underrepresented in research findings" (p. 19). He argues not only in respect to the importance of the continuity of language and culture in the transition process, but with regard to the appropriateness of pedagogy for children from differing cultural backgrounds this may imply.

On the basis of the evidence currently available, transition can be described as successful if the primary sector staff have a clear understanding of the skills and talents children bring from ECE, and that their portfolios have been effective for this purpose. As reported children's work compiled in their portfolios have caused a 'wow' moment for teachers in schools which enabled them to "build on what the children brought to school" (Peters, Hartley, Rogers, Smith, & Carr, 2009, p. 9). Hartley et al. (2014) also support the significance of children's portfolios in a robust transition process. At the same time, there is a need for Aoga Amata children to be aware of the primary school context they are transitioning into.

Research on bridging the sectors (ECE and primary) has focused on literacy development (Hansell, McNaughton & Tagoilelagi-Leota, 2004; McNaughton, 2001). There has been little attention given to the transition of cultural values, beliefs and practices – as in the *fau*.

## **2.8.2 Transition for Pacific children**

A number of programmes focusing on the transition of Pacific children are outlined. The Early Childhood Primary Link (ECPL) via Literacy initiative was established by the MOE



with the view of bringing the curriculum of the two sectors closer (Phillips, McNaughton & MacDonald, 2002). Themes outlined in that initiative include learning environment, enrolment procedures and an awareness of neighbouring schools or early childhood centres. The ECPL initiative was offered under the Strengthening Education in Mangere and Otara (SEMO) arm of Schooling Improvement of the MOE.

### **2.8.2.1 Picking up the Pace programme**

This programme offered to teachers from both ECE and school sectors focused on literacy with a research measure (Phillips et al., 2002). The study followed children from four and a half years of age and in ECE settings until they were six years old. Pacific services were included in this study. Findings were that children who had had access to an early childhood experience, experienced accelerated literacy rates. Results showed that after the transition period (that is one month after moving to a primary class), children's literacy levels were high and, even higher after a year in school. Notably and of importance to this study, all literacy measures were in the English language.

The focus of the second phase of the ECPL initiative was on 35 Pacific ECE centres again in the same suburbs of Mangere and Otara. The research publication *Precious Threads*, (Tagoilelagi-Leota, McNaughton, MacDonald & and Farry, 2004, 2005) emphasised the value but also the vulnerability of the transition process for Pacific ECE children. The term 'precious threads' was used to highlight the fragility and weakness of Pacific children's pathway to mainstream classrooms. In sum, the Samoan children left Aoga Amata with high literacy knowledge in Samoan and with little but still a significant amount of English. A year after entering mainstream primary classes, their English literacy and comprehension soared. However, these children's Samoan proficiency either

stagnated or declined. It is clear that students' competence in English literacy increased at the cost of almost losing their Samoan proficiency.

Available evidence suggests that children who transition from ECE settings will most likely perform better academically than those without ECE experience. However, there is insufficient research on the transition of cultural knowledge between the two settings to draw any conclusions.

## **2.9 Chapter summary**

The literature has convincingly highlighted the importance of my study focus on a) what the *fau* comprises in the Aoga Amata and how this is taught and b) the transition of cultural learning and knowledge from the Aoga Amata and into the bilingual units. As noted, there has been no research on this aspect despite the significant amount of research which states the relationship between cultural security to identity and to learning.

## Chapter 3: Tautai – Research design and method

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### 3.1 Introduction

As outlined in chapter 1, my research aims are to explore understandings of the *fau* as expressed in people's views and practices. I will do this in two educational settings, the Aoga Amata and a bilingual unit and, examine for a transfer of cultural learning between these two settings as in *soso'o le fau i le fau*. I see the *fau* as embedded in, and including, relationships developed in the school setting, with parents and community, what is taught and how this is taught, the language of instruction used and, how the school learning environments are organised. To explore these questions my research approach is qualitative, and through a Samoan worldview which gives prominence and sees a relationship between the Creator God, people and nature, as discussed in chapter 2. As noted, increasing Samoan knowledge and understandings are at the heart of this study, and in the spirit of reciprocity the research 'catch' will be given back to the community.

This research also signifies a reclaiming of Pacific knowledge (Smith, 1999) and a recognition that Pacific people have their own ways of doing things and unique epistemologies (Du Plessis & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2009). In doing so, this research challenges dominant theoretical models – of being researched through imperial eyes (Smith, 1999) and, promotes Pacific ways of learning and research methodologies (Gegeo, 1998; Hau'ofa, 1994; Le Tagaloa, 1996; Sanga, 2004; Thaman, 1999). This research takes account of Pacific research guidelines such as Guidelines on Pacific Health Research (The Health Research Council of New Zealand, 2005; 2014), Pacific Research Guidelines (University of Otago, 2011) and the Education Research guidelines (Anae, Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu, & Finau, 2001).

This chapter is in three parts. First is the research design and approach followed by the data collection methods in part two. Part three contains some reflections on the research process.

## **3.2 Part one: Research design**

### **3.2.1 Constructionist, qualitative**

This research applies a constructionist paradigm the underlying premise being that people construct, reconstruct and deconstruct their realities and their knowledge building and sharing systems (Hosking & Pluut, 2010). My research design is qualitative which encourages versatility in processes (Zanutto, 2013), enables the possibility for multiple truths to be embraced (Newby, 2010) and amplifies participants' voices, opinions, values and beliefs (Van Gorp, 2007). Each of the three participant groups has their own unique experiences. The perspectives of parents, their children and educators in the two educational settings will assist in “capturing the essence of the experiences” (Grant & Giddings, 2002, p.17), patterns of behaviours and expectations (Creswell, 2007) and ensure richness to the materials collected.

### **3.2.2 Qualitative through the lens of a Pacific worldview**

As discussed, in the Pacific view of the world, peoples' ideals, behaviours and aspirations are impacted by the belief in a relationship between three interconnected and independent elements of: the creator (God), the social (people) and the physical (environment/land) (Helu-Thaman, 2000; Du Plessis & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2009; Tui Atua, 2008). A consideration for maintaining a harmony or *vā* (relational space/relationships) between these three elements, governs all behaviours. The Pacific worldview also acknowledges there are many sources of knowledge – ancestral, intergenerational, multi-disciplinary

and *tapu* (sacred) and non-sacred knowledge (Gegeo & Gegeo, 2001). In earlier days, knowledge and information was shared orally in the form of stories and in material culture such as carving and the performing arts, and the *vā* validated these ancestral transcripts (Anae, 2010). Finally, knowledge was communally constructed as people shared their ideas, experiences and aspirations through social engagement (Gegeo, 2001). In listening to these stories, one also hears the voices of past times or, as Tui Atua (2009) posits, the *moe manatunatu* (ancestral dialogue). The influence of past knowledge and experiences on people's attitudes, understandings and actions today, is not often recognised in commonly used academic research models. Nor is the importance of the spiritual in the lives of Pacific peoples. These knowledge sharing processes are central to the *filifogāvaa* model, I will use and the role of the researcher as a *tautai* which has been discussed.

### **3.2.3 Narrative enquiry and Talanoa**

Narrative inquiry or storying is the qualitative strategy used in this study. Storying invites people to share their ideas and experiences, to open their hearts and minds, and offers the “possibility of prompting new imaginings of the ideal and the possible” (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007, p. 9). Narratives are subjective (Scotland, 2012) and relational (Coulter, 2009). For example, participants are already inside their stories and researchers also have their own stories – sharing these multiple lenses and voices to create new knowledge is a delicate process (Samu, 2004). In the Pacific way, these stories are not owned “but shared, reshaped, recomposed and re-known through relationships and conversation” (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 24). Cortazzi (1993) emphasises that narratives stretch beyond the horizon giving prominence to “teachers’ autobiographies and histories” (p. 200) – the voices which are not often heard.

Talanoa, which is the Pacific way of storying (Vaiotei, 2006), places “culture as the central and significant factor” (Vaiotei, 2013, p. 195) and it aligns with the Samoan traditions of fono, of Talanoaga (Kolone-Collins, 2010) and Le Paepae (Tanielu, 2004). *Tala* literally means to inform, tell, relate, command, ask and apply. To *tala* is to create relationships through verbal exchanges while *noa* creates the space and conditions for the discourse takes place. Talanoa can be carried out at various levels in differing Pacific cultural, social and political events – both formal and informal (Vaiotei, 2006). Havea (2010) describes talanoa as a complex and interactive discourse overarched by a duty to speak from the heart in whichever forum one finds oneself. Meaning is also in the silences (Nabobo-Baba, 2004). The narrative inquiry methodology has a relational aspect (Coulter, 2009) of which inclusivity in talanoa emphasises (Otsuka, 2005).

### **3.2.4 Research approach and Filifogāva’a model**

As noted, I am embedding my role in this research in the concept and practice of the tautai. This grounds my epistemological position as one of spirituality, honesty and humility with participants and to the research process. The tautai, as noted is a “master net-maker, and weaver of eel traps, who combines skills in fishing, the ownership of a good bonito boat, and proficiency in the secondary industries dependent on fishing” (Mead, 1930, p. 68). Notably the term tautai is gender-neutral:

*I believe that as a tautai my role is to adhere to the tapu of the sea I am fishing in, and to explore the associated social, cultural and spiritual understandings implied. To navigate in search of knowledge, a tautai must first seek permission from the elements of cosmos, environment, people and God so as to ensure a great catch. Adherence to the tapu enshrined in these relationships ensures an abundant harvest.*

In sum, the tautai researcher must first establish a spiritual wholeness in their conduct towards the research including *moe manatunatu* (ancestral dialogue), *iite* (prediction),

(Tui Atua, 2009), the other factors such as *anofale teuloto* (goodness from within), *saili malo* (collective pursuit of triumph) and the Samoan cultural values of *alofa* (love), *faaaaloalo* (respect), and *tautua* (service). Tautai literally means to battle the tides. Maneuvering and steering the canoe in search of the catch, requires knowledge and immersion in the participants' world, to achieve "a pedagogy of deep engagement between participants" (Nabobo-Baba, 2006, p. 94).

### **3.2.4.1 Filifogāvaa**

The literal meaning of filifogāvaa is to plait (*fili*) the faces (*foga*) of talking (*vaa*/mouth). The concept of filifogāvaa encompasses and overarches my research process from preparation for the fishing venture, to the fishing, the sifting, plaiting and weaving of knowledge and information received and on – to the distribution of the catch. As a tautai, my role is to participate in the filifogāvaa at every step sometimes with the community and sometimes alone while at all times constantly seeking the permission, support and advice from the collective elements of people, the environment and God, thereby ensuring tapu is adhered to. In sum, the process or concept of filifogāvaa is comprehensive while creating and maintaining a "web of human relationships" (Tsoukas, 1996, p.14) which extends across and between generations and more importantly to me embraces also the views of children. I have set up the filifogāvaa in Figure 3.1

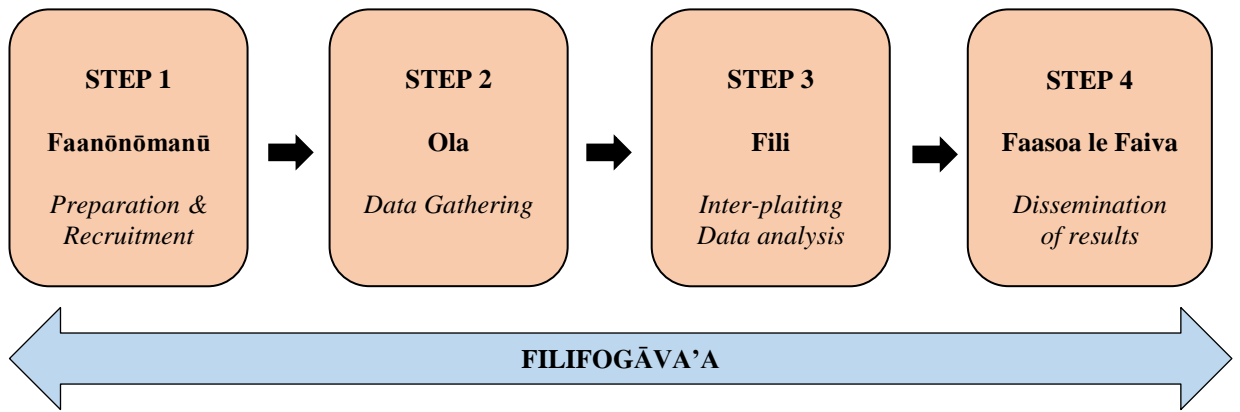


Figure 3.1 - The four steps in the Filifogāva'a

Each of these four steps of the filifogāva'a is briefly discussed – and will be followed in my study.

#### 3.2.4.1.1 Step 1: Faanōnōmanū – the preparation

In this preparation/recruitment stage, tautai seek guidance and blessings from God and the ancestors so ensuring the rightness of the filifogāva'a. In doing so, the filifogāva'a reinforces the practices of leadership, consensus or agreement to the activity and also the validity of the data which will be gathered in Step 2. As a prominent tautai in the village of Lepā says “o le tautai o le faamatua o faiva” (the tautai must exude an entirety of knowledge and skills in fishing) (P. I. Malielegaoi, personal communication, April 26, 2014). In sum, when agreement or consensus is gained and respect is reciprocated between the tautai and the participants, a successful process and outcome is assured.

#### 3.2.4.1.2 Step 2: Ola – the gathering of knowledge

The gathering of knowledge requires a careful consideration to ensure methods are appropriate to the context. Tapu must be present in the fishing methods selected if harmony with the environment is to be sustained. This point is seen in the chant *taulaga a le tautai* (literally, tautai’s offerings) which acknowledges and recognises the



relationship between people and place. In this case, the taulaga a le tautai are chanted by the tautai to officially declare the presence of and to formally welcome a shark, referred to as a *manaia* (high-ranking male) or *tausala* (high-ranking female) (Tui Atua, 2009, p. 109):

<i>Afio mai oe le manaia e</i>	Welcome to you the manaia
<i>Afio mai oe le tausala</i>	Welcome to you the tausala
<i>O loo talisoa lou nuu ma lou aiga</i>	Your village and family await you

As shared by Kose, tautai execute this chant when they sense fear from amongst their *soāalo* (co-fisherman) at the approach of a shark. It is believed, that on hearing this chant the shark will come willingly and place their heads in the noose, giving up their life for the sustenance of the village (L. Kose, personal communication, June 28, 2009). This process is supported by the saying: *Ua alu faataalolo le i'a a le tautai* (the fish defers to the will of his master) (Tui Atua, 2009, p. 109).

Gathering research data involves the same process as outlined in the taulaga o le tautai. The 'fish', as in knowledge, is gathered manually and stored in a single basket or *ola*, a woven basket (Tagoilelagi-Leota, 2013). This step signals a relationship between the catch and those who will be sustained by the catch. Inside the *ola* basket, materials or goods that are valued and meaningful for people's lives are stored there, such as a Bible. *Ola* also means to be alive or living, together with *olaga* (life). In sum, the collection of data relies on a gathering process that recognises the relationship between people and environment.

As a tautai, I saw the importance of recording my reflections after each discussion and observation – both digitally and hand written – so as to capture the momentum of each *talanoa* and, to assist interpreting the data.

### **3.2.4.1.3 Step 3: Fili – data interpretation**

The tautai engages in *fili*, which in this study will be to combine and interpret the views of parents, children and teachers. To fili comprises processes of selecting and plaiting. To fili requires care and vigilance in interpreting the meanings of knowledge shared. The plaiting requires careful review and selection of materials to be plaited. Plaiting includes for example *foga* (facial expressions), voices and thoughts. In doing so, the process of fili validates the ontological platform on which this research rests. The concept of plaiting takes account of the relationship between terms, practices and deeds (Tuagalu, 2008) and *tapu* (Tui Atua, 2009) and ensures the inclusion of diverse perspectives (Du Plessis and Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2009; Gegeo & Gegeo, 2001). A prominent saying is:

*Ia filifogāvaa se tautai atamai – o taeao faapenei e tatau ai ona fili i le tai se agavaa*

Collective selection of a wise fisherman must be done at sea (Tofaeono-Tanuvasa, 2009).

The act of fili, in filifogāvaa acknowledges the place, knowledge and skills of the tautai and is a reminder that knowledge is communally and collectively achieved. The sharing which marks the process of filifogāvaa matches the views of the ubiquitous nature of stories (Polkinghorne, 2007).

### **3.2.4.1.4 Step 4: Faasoa le faiva – acknowledgement and sharing of information**

The tautai remain loyal to their community by sharing the catch – a giving back of the research findings and reflections to the people for their consideration. This process is marked by love, respect and service to the community.

In this study, the catch (findings) featuring the voices of the participants, will increase understanding and inform policy making and practice about how *soso’o le fau i le fau* can be achieved.

### **3.3 Part two: Research methods**

What is the sea or context in which the tautai will search for knowledge in this study, and how will this be done? The main data collection methods for this study are individual talanoa with parents, teachers and with children, observations at the two settings (Aoga Amata and bilingual units) and, a review of Aoga Amata children's portfolios.

#### **3.3.1 Talanoa**

Individual talanoa were selected because these give prominence to participant voices (Broido & Manning, 2002; Pauly, 1995), and articulate their experiences and what they know (Pauly, 1995, p. 185). As noted, talanoa also draws the researcher and participants together so fostering an “understanding of people's experiences and the meaning of these experiences to them” (De Groot, 2002, p. 42). For Samoans, talanoa also enables the presence of face, as in the term *matālālāga* (expertise in weaving). Tagoilelagi-Leota, Kesi, Tagoilelagi, Penn and Autagavaia, (2013) highlight the importance of physical or face-to-face presence in teaching and learning, and in particularly the importance of eyes. In teaching pedagogy, the concept of *matālālāga* signals the understanding that eyes connect the past, present and to the future. Talanoa also ensure a localist perspective that knowledge shared is not lifted out of the context in which it is gathered “as objective data with no strings attached” (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 240).

#### **3.3.2 Observations**

As well documented, much of the cognitive, social, cultural and physical learning in early childhood education is through play (Dalli et al., 2011; Stover, 2011), and there is reliance on provision of quality play learning activities. In sum, children learn by listening,

watching and doing. Therefore, while interviews are an account of people's aspirations and expectations, observations also shed light on how these ideals are practised.

Observations are defined in educational and research literature as actions wherein 'eyes and ears' are paramount in providing insights into children's lives (Drummond, 1998, 2003). Aagaard and Matthiesen (2015) stress the need for an "ear for meaning and an eye for materiality" (p. 41) and how this ensures concept of 'presence'. In the Te Whatu Pōkeka (Ministry of Education, 2009b), observations are described as the "eyes and ears of the parents and the whanau" (p. 26). In sum, everyone in a child's learning environment has a responsibility to 'notice, recognise and respond' to children not only with respect to relationship building but also because observations serve as 'progressive filters' of learning (Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 6).

Observations may be of individuals or groups of children. Sociocultural theorists argue that group observations lead to a more realistic understanding of what has been shared, as both teachers and children together make meaning of their interactions (Carr, 2001). In addition, these shared activities enable teachers to engage and instantly reflect on the effectiveness of practices on children's learning. Podmore and Luff (2012) argue that sociocultural-based observations give added validity to the act of observing. Observations also ensure a balance of theory and practice, and teachers' involvement in these observations, contributes to achieving that balance.

Learning stories (Carr, 2001) are a common assessment tool in ECE, featuring a combination of observations, reflection and assessment regularly used in Aoga Amata. The Kei Tua o Te Pae assessment exemplars for learning in early childhood services (Ministry of Education, 2004) provide a guide for teacher observations. The Kei Tua o te Pae is aligns with the Te Whāriki ECE Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996b), and

the learning story assessment tool (Carr, 2001). Other commonly used observational tools such as anecdotes, running records, time sampling and events recording also rely on accurate documentation of what is heard, seen and produced by children.

As noted, there has been no tool to assess Samoan ECE children's cultural understanding and practice. As noted also, to address this gap, developing, piloting and testing one became question 4 for this study. I will develop and test an observation tool based on Carr's learning stories template that is capable to capture these "culturally scripted social relations" (Mageo, 2002, p. 5), and language use and behaviours.

### **3.3.2.1 The observer's role**

The expectations, knowledge and skills of the observer are highly important notably in – what they 'see' to be important, what they document, and the words they use to record these instances. In my ECE experience, my preference has never been one of using observation to 'police' a checklist but rather to treat observations as an interaction between children and staff – a dialogue which often takes place as teachers and others read children's portfolios. For this research, I see value in using children's portfolios as evidence of the *fau*, giving prominence to what they draw and what they say about their drawings (Nolan & Reynolds, 2008). I see the comments by teachers and parents as secondary.

Observations of whether and how Pacific/Samoan ideals or ways are portrayed and presented in the Aoga Amata and classroom environment, will add to my research knowledge base. The observation of tangible and intangible elements of the *fau* will include pictures, terms and greetings, how the learning environment is organised, curriculum, teaching strategies and teacher-child and child-child relationships.

### **3.3.3 Available data**

Data about the Aoga Amata and Samoan bilingual units in New Zealand is mainly found in the ERO reports and websites, which are another invaluable source of information. I took care in reviewing these reports because these are compiled according to quite specific template indicators, which as has been noted, do not include a valuing of cultural knowledge and understanding. In addition, while ERO staff have considerable general educational experience, they may have less understanding of the place and value of culture in learning, whether in Aoga Amata or bilingual settings.

### **3.3.4 Data collection instruments**

#### **3.3.4.1 Interview guidelines**

Drawing on informal discussions and the literature, draft interview guidelines and observation sheets were developed. The interview schedules for parents and teachers were piloted in Auckland with SAASIA members and subsequently some amendments were made. The interview guidelines for children were piloted with a group of four year olds who were attending Aoga Amata at the time of the study. Furthermore, guidelines are in Appendices 2, 3, 4 and 5. All of these were prepared in Samoan and English.

I kept a reflective journal documenting my impressions of each talanoa, my observations and points of further interest. In my reflective journal I also documented questions for further consideration and reflection.

#### **3.3.4.2 Participants**

Because the study aim was to explore ways the *fau* was conceptualised and shared within the Aoga Amata and the transition of these understandings into a bilingual unit, the

starting point for this study was the Aoga Amata. It was decided to follow a group of up to eight Aoga Amata children who on turning five (eg – aged 4 years 10 months) in the study period would be enrolling in a Samoan bilingual unit. These children must self-identify as Samoan, and a mix by gender was also an aim. Aims were that to identify a potential scope group, I discussed this research with Aoga Amata staff to see if there were children who met this criteria. If so, I would then present the study at an Aoga Amata parent-teacher evening and invite parents who were interested in participating to discuss this with their child and then contact me. The same process would be followed with the teachers and staff of the Samoan bilingual units. In sum, the study children and their parents were the overarching and continuing participants in this study. However, there would be two teacher groups – those from the Amata and those from the bilingual unit.

I was well aware that achieving this sample would require visits to several different Aoga Amata to identify a potential group of child participants who fit these criteria, and then to the bilingual schools these children would attend, to invite their participation in this research as well. While this proved correct, the rich materials gathered in this study made these endeavours worthwhile.

### **3.3.5 Ethics**

Due to my experience and involvement in ECE and the Aoga Amata, an AUTEK requirement<sup>12</sup> was that I use an independent third party (ITP) in the recruitment phase in Aoga Amata. This was to avoid bias and ensure participation in the study was voluntary. As noted also, I did not have any previous involvement with the Samoan bilingual units.

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<sup>12</sup> See Appendix 1 for the AUT Ethics approval letter.

### **3.3.5.1 The ITP or sui tu maoti**

Requirements for an ITP were that the ITP had no prior or present connections to the ECE sector or to Aoga Amata. Secondly, their role was that to visit and to obtain consent from the Aoga Amata to participate in this study. My role was to ensure the ITP understood the aims of my research, the research process and the intent as outlined in my research documents (information sheets and consent forms, including the children's assent sheet). The ITP was named on the consent forms and information sheets as the initial contact person for the research and was to be contacted if participants had any concerns. The ITP form also provided confidentiality for the ITP role.

Once I had identified a set of child participants who met the recruitment criteria, the ITP began the recruitment process. I was permitted to accompany the ITP to all parent-teacher meetings where the ITP explained the research and distributed the information sheets and consent forms. It was important that participants understood that the ITP was the channel of communication to be used if they wished to participate in the research or to withdraw.

### **3.3.6 Research steps – the Filifogāva'a**

#### **3.3.6.1 Step 1: Faanōnōmanū – preparation/recruitment**

Once potential children participants were identified, the ITP carried out the next visits, explaining the aims, consent forms and channels of communication. Next, I began setting up appointments by phone and in person, which was a lengthy process. In most cases, at least two to three visits to each Aoga Amata were made to discuss and explain the study. I began with the Aoga Amata, followed by the Samoan bilingual units.



### 3.3.6.1.1 *Aoga Amata*

A number of the Aoga Amata children, identified as meeting the research criteria, were transitioning to mainstream or to a faith-based primary school such as the Catholic or Seven Day Adventist schools. The schools were chosen mainly for their proximity, because as noted there are a few Samoan bilingual schools in South Auckland. However, there were a number of children who met the research criteria. These children were enrolled in three Aoga Amata: a church-based, a family trust/community-based and a primary school-based Aoga Amata. Table 3.1 comprise of the three Aoga Amata of which the children who fitted the selection criteria were attending. As seen in Table 3.1, each Aoga Amata had been operating between 20 to 35 years.

**Table 3.1: Aoga Amata research sites**

<b>Aoga Amata</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Year of establishment</b>
<b>Faeme</b>	Church community	1993
<b>Malie</b>	Family Trust	1994
<b>Laumei</b>	Primary-school based community	1984

The governance procedures of each Aoga Amata comprised a mix of parents, teachers' and community members.

While the aim had been to follow the educational journeys of up to eight Aoga Amata children, ten children fit the research criteria, so I decided to invite all ten to participate, so allowing for any withdrawals. Of the 10 children initially recruited, seven participated in the research. Each was in the 4.10 – 5.0 age group. As seen in Table 3.2, four of the children were born in Samoa and three in New Zealand. Samoan was reported as the first language and language of interview for six of the seven child participants.

Participants marked with an asterisk (\*) were children whose older siblings had attended an Aoga Amata and who had then transitioned to a bilingual unit. All meetings, discussions and observations with the children took place at these two educational settings.

**Table 3.2: Children’s profiles**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Place of birth</b>	<b>First language</b>	<b>Language of interview</b>
<b>Laloulu</b>	4.10-5.1	Male	Samoa	Samoaan	Samoaan
<b>Faigame*</b>	4.10-5.1	Male	Samoa	Samoaan	Samoaan
<b>Voula*</b>	4.10-5.1	Female	New Zealand	Samoaan	Samoaan
<b>Mesina</b>	4.10-5.1	Female	New Zealand	English	English
<b>Ailaomaletagata*</b>	4.10-5.1	Male	New Zealand	Samoaan	Samoaan
<b>Talavou*</b>	4.10-5.1	Male	Samoa	Samoaan	Samoaan
<b>Iolesina</b>	4.10-5.1	Female	Samoa	Samoaan	Samoaan

Table 3.3 sets out the profiles of the eight parents of the sample children. Five of the participating parents were female and two were male. Four were born in Samoa, two in New Zealand and one in Scotland. English was the first language for three. Their age range was between 30-55 years of age.

**Table 3.3: Parents’ profiles**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Place of birth</b>	<b>First language</b>	<b>Language of interview</b>
<b>PA</b>	33	Female	Samoa	Samoaan	Samoaan
<b>PB</b>	35	Female	Samoa	Samoaan	Samoaan
<b>PC</b>	53	Female	Samoa	Samoaan	Samoaan
<b>PD</b>	31	Female	Samoa	Samoaan	Samoaan
<b>PE*</b>	55	Male	Scotland	English	English
<b>PF*</b>	30	Male	New Zealand	English	English
<b>PG*</b>	31	Female	New Zealand	English	English

The three parents who were not of Samoan ethnicity are noted with an (\*), who said they wanted to participate in this study because they really valued their children’s Samoan heritage. Parents’ interviews were carried out at the Aoga Amata with the exception of two parents whose interviews were held at their home and at AUT University South campus. All parents were employed at the time of the study and so talanoa were timed according to their availability, which was most usually after work.

Six Aoga Amata teachers from the three Aoga Amata agreed to participate in this study: three of these teachers were in managerial positions, two held supervisory roles and one held responsibility for supporting Aoga Amata children transition to primary school. As seen in Table 3.4, four of the six were born in Samoa and two in New Zealand and, Samoan was the first language for five. They were a very experienced group of teachers and more than half had actually been involved in establishing the Aoga they now worked in. All interviews, meetings, discussions and observations with teachers took place at their Aoga Amata, and was usually after work. Interview times ranged from 40 minutes to two hours. While I had scheduled up to one hour for the talanoa with Aoga Amata teachers most of these continued for up to two hours because teachers wanted to share their views.

**Table 3.4: Aoga Amata Teachers<sup>13</sup>**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Years of teaching</b>	<b>Place of birth</b>	<b>First language</b>
<b>ATA</b>	Female	11	Samoa	Samoan
<b>ATB</b>	Female	10	New Zealand	Samoan
<b>ATC</b>	Female	25	New Zealand	English
<b>ATD</b>	Female	15	Samoa	Samoan
<b>ATE</b>	Female	6	Samoa	Samoan
<b>ATF</b>	Female	15	Samoa	Samoan

<sup>13</sup> Key: A – Aoga, T – Teachers, A-E – teacher’s specific code

### 3.3.6.1.2 *Bilingual units*

Before contacting the bilingual units, I viewed the school websites and read school ERO reports and other available data. These were very informative. I requested meetings with principals via telephone. I was invited to meet with three principals, one deputy principal and one syndicate teacher to discuss the research. Each introduced me to the new entrant teachers in the classes my sample children would join. At these meetings, research documents were shared and explained. I found that each wanted to know more about me, my educational background, and reasons for carrying out this study and how the findings would be used. The principals of the five schools gave consent for my research to be carried out in these schools. Similar to the process used in the Aoga Amata, new entrant teachers were invited to participate and four agreed to. Profiles for participants in bilingual units are in Table 3.5.

**Table 3.5: Teachers in Bilingual Units<sup>14</sup>**

<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Years of teaching (at time of study)</b>	<b>Place of birth</b>	<b>First language</b>
<b>BTA</b>	Female	1	New Zealand	Samoan
<b>BTB</b>	Female	39	Samoa	Samoan
<b>BTC</b>	Female	13	Samoa	Samoan
<b>BTD</b>	Female	21	Samoa	Samoan
<b>BTE</b>	Female	10	Samoa	Samoan

All five bilingual unit teachers were female and, all but one were fluent speakers of both Samoan and English. They were all registered teachers. Their experience in a bilingual

<sup>14</sup> Key: B – Bilingual, T – Teachers, A-E – teacher’s specific code

unit ranged from one year to approximately 21 years prior (see column 3). The teachers' actual teaching experience was from 39 years to one year. Two teachers were involved in setting up the bilingual unit and have remained in the school since then.

It is important to note that at three of these schools, the bilingual teacher had other roles. The five teachers in the bilingual units are coded as BTA to BTE.

The recruitment process for both Aoga Amata and bilingual units required a total of 140 hours over a period of two months. This was added to the data-collecting phase. While onerous in time, I have confidence that there was considerable awareness raising of ECE and the place of culture within ECE during this time.

All discussions and observations with the bilingual unit teachers took place in the schools.

### **3.3.6.2 Step 2: Ola – Data collection**

#### **3.3.6.2.1 *Aoga Amata***

Actual data collection in Aoga Amata was preceded by several visits, to ensure rapport with the children, teachers and parents was established. I had designated one day to spend with each of the seven children – beginning in the morning when each was very alert. I also participated in other Aoga Amata learning programmes, to create collegiality with staff and also to reinforce children's trust in my presence. I made sure my dress code was appropriate for children's comfort and to show respect for the Aoga philosophy. Children were observed individually and in groups and this was undertaken both intentionally and spontaneously and following the Faafulu model (chapter 6).

Talanoa with the children was fun and, also very informative as I followed their voices and interests. In fact, at times it felt like they were interviewing me! As most of our discussions were in Samoan, these demonstrated to me their knowledge, confidence and

understanding of the Samoan language. When answering questions, some children's responses would start with "talua ai ona..." (because of...). Our discussions of their portfolios reinforced the children's passion and high interest with their work. In fact, in most cases we could not complete going through the whole portfolio due to their extensive talanoa. These in-depth conversations were a rich source of information.

#### **3.3.6.2.2 *Bilingual units***

The talanoa in the five bilingual units took longer because these units were scattered across Auckland. I dedicated a whole semester to the bilingual unit interviews with children and teachers. As I was an outsider in the bilingual sector, I knew it would take time to build trust and confidence with teachers. There was some resistance by one bilingual teacher; her frustration was from being intensively 'researched' in the past. However, using the concept of filifogāvaa and skills of a tautai in calming the seas before fishing, we found a common interest and pursued our talanoa further.

#### **3.3.6.3 Step 3: Fili – data interpretation**

Data was interpreted by thematic analysis, a process of "identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or themes within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006. p.79). This approach set a systematic procedure by which to identify emerging patterns and themes (Alhojailan, 2012). Data analysis featured a careful reading and re-reading of transcripts (Rice & Ezzy, 1999) to ensure the nuances of meaning were captured, and also to locate these themes within my observations and experiences as set out in my reflective journal.

Because participants' responses were in Samoan and English, I made sure I read these through the eyes of both a Samoan world view and a Western lens. To capture the richness of the views shared, I knew it was imperative to use the Samoan citations in my

thesis as these were accurate representations of the participants' truths and realities. In my role as the tautai my study required a constant weaving and seeking for commonalities and differences in the views shared, using the process of Filifogāvaa.

Talanoa sessions were audio taped and transcribed. An attempt at NVivo<sup>15</sup> was unsuccessful due to the limited language access by the software. Simply put, NVivo did not capture the tone and the nuances of meanings embedded in the transcripts.

A transcriber was used with a contract of confidentiality to ensure confidentiality for both the participants and the transcriber.

The participants' voices (those of children, parents and teachers) were analysed separately to ensure each group's voice was distinct and honoured. I listened, checked and re-checked the transcripts for accuracy to ensure I had captured their meanings. At times, I was not able to make sense of some recordings, due to the noise level. However, in most cases, I was able to fill in the missing information drawing on my notes and reflections. Transcripts were reviewed individually and then by group – for commonalities and differences in shared perspectives and understandings. Common themes were highlighted for each group, and then together to gain a holistic and meaningful story. In this process, the layers of the *fau* gradually emerged as did the *soso'o le fau i le fau*.

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<sup>15</sup> NVivo is software that supports qualitative and mixed methods research. See <http://www.qsrinternational.com/what-is-nvivo>

## **3.4 Part three: Reflections**

### **3.4.1 Design**

The chosen methodologies of Narrative Inquiry and Talanoa using observations through a Pacific worldview yielded a rich variety of information from the children, the parents and the teachers on what was the *fau* and how this was practised and shared. Simply put, everyone wanted to talk and they shared their stories willingly, with excitement. I believe that adhering to the tapu of participants and their learning context created harmony in the research process. The teachers were quite emotional as they discussed their concerns and efforts to teach for cultural security in their classrooms. The *filifogāvaa* as an ongoing collective synthesis of meanings from the participants' voice resonates with the communal nature of knowledge building.

### **3.4.2 ITP – Sui tu maoti**

The requirement for the ITP in my study was to protect the participants, I understand that. At the same time, this request placed me as an outsider in my own research. As Razavi (1992) notes that “by virtue of being a researcher, one is rarely a complete insider anywhere” (p. 161).

### **3.4.3 The children's voice**

The decision to include children participants in the study was most precious and an ameliorating experience. Writing about their views and ideas as represented in our talanoa, does not capture their hearts and innocence. Nor can their written transcripts quantify the epitome of their existence. The level of these children's general confidence as shown in their responses both verbally through gestures and through silences was remarkable. My utmost admiration was for those who were not fluent in Samoan, but still



agreed to participate. I am most fortunate to have included the children’s voice in my study; this is an important aspect missing from most research of Samoan people, and in the Pacific literature.

### **3.4.4 Teachers and parents**

All parent and teacher participants became really engaged in the study. Clearly, they saw this as a study which could amplify their concerns and, also as an avenue to celebrate their aspirations, work and effort. The initial resistance of one teacher was due to her feelings of being overly researched in the past. However, her interest in the study was so high, she quickly joined the discussions.

### **3.4.5 Timing**

This study required a lot of time, as seen in the estimated time in Table 3.5. An enormous amount of time was absorbed in the recruitment and data collection stages, including an untimely observation schedule across the Christmas holidays. I am glad I took the necessary time to build relationships with all the participants to ensure a robust and successful study.

**Table 3.6: Hours of data collection**

<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>Aoga Amata</b>	<b>Bilingual units</b>
	186 in six months	416 in one year
<b>Total in both settings</b>	602	

## **3.5 Chapter summary**

Gaining the multiple voices of children, parents and teachers was the intention of this study. The chosen methodologies of tautai as the underlying approach and the filifogāvaa

were chosen to capture the knowledge, beliefs and values underlying in the research questions. The voices of Samoan children were especially included. In most early studies, children are referred or talked about from the adults' lens (Kramer & Verhaaren, 1994; Ochs, 1982; Turner, 1884). Thus, I wanted to ensure the children's voice in my research design.

I believe that the tautai and filifogāvaa had the potential to reach deep down into the souls of the participants to get in-depth data.

Aims were that the 'catch' from the multiple voices contributed to the nourishment of culture and cultural learning in the two educational settings.

## Chapter 4: Faiva – Findings in Aoga Amata

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### 4.1 Introduction

The research findings are presented in three chapters. This chapter presents findings from the Aoga Amata, chapter five is concerned with Samoan bilingual units, and in chapter six I share the voices of the children as gained in the piloting of the proposed ECE curriculum assessment tool. The voices of the children were gained when being observed during the review of their portfolios and via informal conversations in their Aoga Amata.

In this chapter, I present the responses of teachers and parents to what is the *fau*, how is this practised in the Aoga Amata, and what factors impact on this. This chapter is in two parts, part one presents teachers' responses to the research questions and, parents views are presented in part two.

A number of points overarch these findings in this chapter. First, these parents' responses relate to both the Aoga Amata and the bilingual unit and second, the teachers are the Aoga Amata teachers. The views of the Samoan bilingual teachers are in the following chapter. Brief profiles of the parents and the teachers are in chapter three and as noted, this group of Aoga Amata teachers were experienced: five had been teaching between 10 and 25 years and more than half had been involved in the establishment of the Aoga Amata they currently work in. Clearly, staff turnover in these participating Aoga Amata was low. Third and notably, all parents and teachers regarded the Aoga Amata to be the 'second' step in *soso'o le fau i le fau*. They considered the home and family to be the first step and, that the Aoga Amata would build on home and family values beliefs and knowledge children learnt in the home. The place of the Aoga Amata in children's lives was described as:

*Anofale o le Aoga, ia foliga Samoa, faiaoga ma a latou lavalava, ia alu ese le tagata ua ona iloa o le Aoga Samoa lea na sau i ai. (ATF)*

The ‘withness’ of the Aoga, must represent the face of Samoa, teachers and what they wear, so when a person leaves the Aoga, they know it was an Aoga Samoa they came to.

I took the use of the word ‘withness’ to signal everything that took place in the Aoga Amata and, the Aoga Amata relationship with families and communities. Furthermore, that ‘withness’ signaled multiple elements of the *fau*, such as the spoken words and silences, actions and behaviours, the ways rooms and schools were organised and set up and, art works and pictures.

## **4.2 Part One: Teachers’ perceptions**

### **4.2.1 The *fau***

The purpose of the question ‘what is the *fau*?’ was to explore teachers’ perceptions of the *fau* and the ideals, behaviours and practices implied. ‘Culture’ was the first response to this question in every talanoa, which validated my earlier decision to use the term *fau* as a proxy concept or measure for culture. When I asked ‘what exactly do you mean by culture?’, the first teacher responses were *gagana* and *aganuu* and, most stated that the two cant be separated. Next, these teachers emphasised that spirituality and Christianity were central elements in both *aganuu* and *gagana*. Notably, they did not distinguish between spirituality and Christianity but tended to use the terms interchangeably. For example, ATD described the spiritual elements underpinning the *fau* as demonstrated and nurtured through Christian acts of love, care, hope, honesty and ensuring positive relationships with children:

*Faa Kerisiano, o iina e sau uma ai le aganuu e pei o le faaaloalo le alofa, tautua ma mea uma e faavae i le faa Kerisiano. (ATD)*

Christianity, that is where culture derives from, for instance respect, love, service and all that is foundational to Christianity.

ATE associated spirituality with calmness, peace and giving priority to children's cultural necessities. She had identified spirituality as an element she wanted to study more for her professional development, not only for its significance on children's lives but also for her own professional conduct:

*Tatau ona mālu le leo o le faiaoga...you have to be gentle, you have to understand the child. Poo le mea o la e need attention, sau mai le fale, e na te lē o maua se mafutaga. You have to build that spirituality with the child, peace. (ATE)*

A teacher must have a calm voice. Whatever they may need attention on, come from home, did not get any quality attention. You have to build that spirituality with the child, peace.

ATF indicated that a spiritual dimension was central to everything teachers did:

*Faiaoga e alofa, o se tagata Kerisiano, alu i le lotu, ia lelei lana tautala i le gagana Samoa ma lelei lona malamalama i itu ma aga faasamoa, ia lelei foi lana gagana Peretania mo le galuega i le va i fafo. O le galuega leni e sau mai lou lotu, o lou valaauina ia ave'a oe ma faiaoga. O lou alofa, o lau fesootaiga i matua, saofaiga o tagata lautele, Komiti Faafoe ma le tou lava team work i totonu o le Aoga. Alofa, galue ma le faamaoni e sili atu nai lo le i ai o se tusi pasi ae leai se alofa. (ATF)*

Teacher who loves, a Christian, goes to church, must be good at speaking the Samoan language and understands Samoan culture, also need to be good at speaking English for work outside of the centre. This profession comes from your soul; you have been called to be a teacher. Your love, communication with the parents, community, Board and with your own teamwork within the Aoga. Love, work diligently and reliable is better than holding a qualification but no love.

ATF further outlined the importance of the Aoga daily devotion times (*lotu*) which were especially valuable for children whose families did not go to church:

*Lotu taeao, lotu o meaai, toatele tamaiti e lē o i se lotu...Christmas story e leiloa e nisi tamaiti ona e lē o i le lotu, o le aoga la lea e tapenaina lena itu o tamaiti faapenei. (ATF)*

Morning devotion, prayer to bless the food, many children don't go to church... some children don't know the Christmas story because they don't go to church, the Aoga is here to nurture that side of our children.

Not unexpectedly, the role of the church in reinforcing the Aoga Amata philosophy and vision was emphasised by all teachers. Looking back, ATA said that when she was at Sunday school, the elders and teachers had continually reminded everyone about the importance of family and the responsibility to nurture children's growth and learning. She

said ‘even the minister’s sermons’ had strong homilies directed at the spiritual well-being of children. ATA, who was a minister’s wife and managing one of the study Aoga Amata, said that in her view, faith and spiritual beliefs were the essential foundation for the teacher’s role:

*E i ai tinā matutua, o latou mataupu lava e masani ona talanoa i le Aoga Aso Sa i taeao ao lei fai le lotu, e faatāuaina lava totonu o aiga i le tuputupu ae o le tamaititi... human development, how to meet the children’s needs as they grow up... faapea foi faifeau, latou te momoli maia le feau tau le olaga faaleagaga. (ATA)*

Before church, during Sunday school, there are elderly women in our church who talk about the importance of children in the family, human development and how to meet the needs as they grow up... even the church ministers emphasise spiritual growth.

ATF stated she had not really thought about being an ECE teacher until the wife of their minister had sponsored her to a PIECCA Training course, which had opened her eyes to the importance and beauty of children’s learning. At the same time, she added that her beliefs and church role nurtured her Christian values in the Aoga Amata.

#### **4.2.2 How do you teach for the *fau*?**

Responses to the question of what was the *fau* spilled over into questions of ‘how do you teach the *fau*?’ On this point, these teachers did not separate content from process. In sum, the *fau* was ‘the whole’:

*Every time we talk... we are showing the aganuu. The aganuu is in our words... but also in the way we do things. (ATC)*

*Pe fiafia le tamaititi i le fauina o le fale, tuu atu i ai le gagana faasamoa e pei o pou o le fale ma tu ma aga e faaaogā i le fale. (ATE)*

If children are interested in building a fale (house), add Samoan language like poles and cultural practices used in the fale.

*O matou relievers e o mai le matou aulotu, auā e i ai le tomāi o le aganuu ma iloa faasamoa. (ATF)*

Our relievers come from our church as they have cultural knowledge and are fluent in Samoan.

In ATE's view, spirituality, aganuu and language were embedded in every learning experience. She used the example of house building as she attempted to justify this belief:

*Ioe e mafai a ona ave i ai le faasamoa, auā e alu taulai i le mea o loo fiafia i ai le tamaititi, e tuu i ai le faasamoa. Pe fiafia le tamaititi i le fauina o le fale, tuu atu i ai le gagana faasamoa, e pei o pou o le fale ma ituaiga fale e pei o le falesa. (ATE)*

Yes, we can give the child the faasamoa, because we follow what the children's interest, put in the faasamoa. If children like building houses, add the Samoan language for instance the poles of the house and types of houses like a church.

#### **4.2.2.1 Teachers, as fau**

It was clearly indicated (not unexpectedly) in these talanoa that many teachers regarded themselves or likened their role as the *fau*. They considered teachers as models, examples, and embodiment of the aganuu and gagana and spirituality. The way teachers acted, presented themselves and talked, and structured the learning process epitomised the *fau*.

They believed to be 'seen, learnt and followed' by the children:

*Teacher is the fau, like a shopkeeper... shopkeeper... looks after the shop and goods, makes sure it is clean so people would want to buy and visit. (ATA)*

ATD described the role and the responsibility of the teacher as '*fau*' with these words:

*O se tagata e initiate good things, tagata e look up i ai isi, role model, tagata e considerate, be fair, 'aua le fai kegi, auā le felaulauai kala, be professional ...because o ika lea, e sau lea kau mai lea, ma lea, ae 'aua le alu faimai lea e a, faimai lea e a...e tatau ona lava le faaukauka auā ga o le kauaimisa le mea e iloa... auā e i ai isi taimi whats happening in their homes need to be considered, sometimes e sau i le isi aso o fiafia...so as a leader it is hard. (ATD)*

A person that initiates good things, a person that others look up to, role model, a considerate person, be fair, not have gangs, don't gossip, be professional...because it is me that people come to, that so and so is, that this person said this... but there needs to be enough wisdom otherwise we will face disagreements... because there are times that what is happening in their homes needs to be considered, some days they come all happy... so as a leader it is hard.

Additionally, ATE's comments reinforced the view that teachers were a major resource of Samoan language and culture.

*O faiaoga lava latou o role models i so'o se mea, gagana, faaaloalo, gaoiiga uma lava. Poo le a le laititi o le tamaititi aoga, e tatau lava ona faaaloalo i ai, galulue faatasi, fesoasoani. (ATE)*

Teachers are the role models in anything, language, respect, whatever they do. Respect the child even if they are little, they must be respected, work together and help them.

#### **4.2.2.2 Relationships**

For these teachers the *fau* was embedded in and practised in relationships, respect, and working together to achieve the best goals. ATB captured the essence of the Aoga Amata experience with these words:

*Language and culture is what people are drawn to but when they come in they find it is more than culture and language, it is about family, celebrating success...how we walk hand in hand, walking together with culture and how to operate in the Western side. How do we operate in the two worlds? How do we strengthen what we have for the next 30, 50 years? (ATB)*

##### **4.2.2.2.1 Staff relationships**

Quality staff relationships were the essential foundation in ensuring an excellent Aoga Amata programme with teachers working together harmoniously:

*Taitai, lead by example, I find at times it is not an easy job being a leader i le mea tau relationships, you know their weaknesses and strengths o lau staff... a tele mai tala ua tau valea lo ta ulu...a faapea ma faasa'osa'o i isi taimi, but in saying that you need to be strong, stand up nai lo le nofonofo ai a. O i si taimi ta te faapea, shall I do this, shall I say this. (ATD)*

Leader, lead by example, I find at times that being a leader is not an easy job, especially relationships, you know your staff's weaknesses and strengths...almost go crazy with too much talk. Sometimes I correct it immediately, but in saying that, you need to be strong, stand up rather than sit on it all the time. Sometimes I wonder, shall I do this, shall I say this.

In ATCs view:

*Leadership, ways of understanding...co-sharing of ideas. Staff feel part of the family, they feel valued. Teachers have professional development, teacher training, encouraging their leadership to go out present in different areas and being part of the whole ECE community. (ATC)*

Good systems of accountability, transparency and compliance were part of leadership. Furthermore, with over 20 years of experience as a teacher, supervisor and manager, ATC saw 'good systems' as having a 'trickle-down effect' with benefits for everyone involved in Aoga Amata. She added:



*The main key is governance, strong governance and have good systems, good financial people that can guide the centre. (ATC)*

ATF said that since taking up a management position, she improved her own documentation and record-keeping strategies but at the same time, she emphasised that no manager works alone. Most of her decisions were made in collaboration with other staff members and that was how she tried to ensure transparency. She saw a connection between management and governance generally as the *fau* – which she said also required working together. ATB shared this view:

*It is who we are, it is the spiritual, emotional side... now its lifting governance and now we got that. (ATB)*

Most of the teachers were appreciative of the professional learning opportunities via the educational forums and conferences. They considered this to be crucial to their teaching.

ATD said:

*Management is top priority, o le loka ma le kakala e ala i le filosofia, everything must be aligned with what the philosophy says. (ATD)*

Management is top priority, it is the lock (decline) and the acceptance with regards to the philosophy, everything must be aligned with what the philosophy says.

#### **4.2.2.2 Parents and community relationships**

Firm and trusted relationships with parents and community members were also considered to be an essential quality of the Aoga Amata experience. This necessitated clear lines of communication with parents particularly in sharing and goals, aspirations and having a knowledge of expected educational outcomes for children. All teachers used phrases such as ‘we are all going the same way’ to explain their relationship and how teachers must work with parents:

*We always encourage our parents; the parents are all running it. We share all our financial statements, if we want to put up the fees we consult with the parents, all of our parents need to feel that they are part of it. We run like an aiga, its run like an aiga, its consensus. (ATC)*

*Teacher need to have a relationship with parents, seek their opinions e fau faatasi ai le plan, (plan together) ask them if they want anything special done for their child, need to know that what is going on at home is reinforced in Aoga Amata. (ATD)*

Teachers also shared the importance of the conversations they had with parents in the mornings when children were brought to school or during the afternoon pickups. Often, these were very brief discussions as parents were hurried. However, these teachers indicated that they tried to ensure contact with parents/caregivers at least once a day.

#### **4.2.2.3 Professional development**

While the teachers saw aganuu, gagana and spirituality as going hand in hand, they indicated little about language teaching. Instead, a predominant view was that if Aoga Amata was to achieve its goals, teachers must characterise ‘quality themselves’ in both Samoan knowledge and learning, teaching theories and practices. ATE said teachers must be avid enquirers:

*O le faiaoga Aoga Amata lava ia, ia ‘aua le nofoai, ia suesue pea...this is a tiring job, the whole day, ae need to talk to colleagues for support. Always look for ways to improve. (ATE)*

An Aoga Amata teacher does not rest but always searching...this is a tiring job... improve.

For ATB, teachers needed to have a robust and confident knowledge of Samoan culture and that many (including herself) needed to constantly improve their proficiency in the Samoan language. She also noted that even if teachers considered themselves already fluent in Samoan speaking, they should work diligently to understand the depth of meaning in the concepts and terminologies underpinning the language. ATB was conscious of the fact that too often she had resorted to talking English in the classrooms:

*Teachers need to strengthen fluency in Samoan, I tell them to speak but always fall back on English, it is about embracing their identity. (ATB)*

She recalled with some sadness the value in earlier days of having elders working in and around the Aoga Amata every day. They were the ones who had so much expertise, and

the children had learnt much knowledge and language from them. It was noted that this contribution was missing today. In addition, it was believed that unfortunately many teachers graduating from the new ECE training programmes lacked this expertise or knowledge.

Priority in respecting children and knowing how children learn (human development) was another important knowledge in teaching for the *fau*. ATD said:

*Faiaoga – iloa faamafanafana le ola o le tamaititi, ia iloa ana tamaiti, ia tulimatai mea e fiafia i ai tamaiti, auā every child is unique, they are not the same. Ia role model le faiaoga, galulue faatasi, fesoasoani i ai, o faiaoga lava latou o role models, gagana, faaaloalo, gaoiga uma lava. (ATD)*

Teacher – know how to secure the child’s life, know her/his children, follow children’s interests, as every child is unique, they are not the same. Teachers need to role model, work together, help them, teachers are role models of language, respect and every action they do.

In ATE’s view, teachers needed to ensure that they start learning activities with concepts and understandings that reflect children’s social realities. For example when cooking:

*Ia fai foi le kuka faasamoa ina ia mafai lava ona iloa e tamaititi. (ATE)*

Do Samoan cooking so that children know.

ATE explained that due to the absence of teaching resources in the Samoan language, Aoga Amata teachers were continually developing new resources and learning materials to build on, and amplify Samoan cultural beliefs and language:

*E mafai ai e le faiaoga ona fatu ni pese, fai ni tauloto fou ia ma gaosi ni alagaoa talafeagai...like these storybooks. We used children’s artwork and their stories to compile our storybooks. (ATE)*

A teacher can compose songs, make up new memory verses and develop appropriate resources for children. Like these storybooks. We used children’s artwork and their stories to compile our storybooks.

For these teachers, the act of setting up an attractive and inviting learning environment was another crucial contribution to demonstrating, learning and teaching aganuu. Using the analogy of a shopkeeper, ATA stated there was an urgency for teachers to be

consistent in meeting professional standards, not only to foster and ensure quality learning, but also to make Aoga Amata marketable and enticing for clients:

*Ia taunuu mai mātua ma tamaiti ua uma ona set up, ‘aua nei o mai mātua o nofonofo ma talatalanoa, ia mataalia auā e atili ai a ona faapea mātua o tatou o babysitters, e oo foi i fafo, tusa lava pe timu, ia set up pea lava. (ATA)*

Everything must be set up before the parents’ arrival, avoid sitting and talking to each other when parents arrive, otherwise it will further convince them that we are a babysitting service, even if it rains outside, still set it up.

### **4.2.3 What factors impact the *fau*?**

Two main factors were shared in responses to the question of what factors impacted their teaching of the *fau*. The first related specifically to teacher proficiency in gagana and aganuu. The second set focused more on the effort and time taken in preparing the teaching space and making learning resources to ensure a trusted environment for this to take place.

#### **4.2.3.1 Teacher proficiency in Samoan language**

With the exception of one, all the Aoga Amata teachers said they were fluent in Samoan. ATC described herself as understanding Samoan but having minimal fluency. However, it is important to note that all teachers expressed a desire to increase their knowledge and understanding of the Samoan language. For example:

*There is a need to strengthen teachers’ fluency in Samoan, we tell them to speak but some always fall back on English... all is about embracing our identity. (ATB)*

*E leai se portfolio e atoatoa ona faasamoa, e alu alu a palagane lea vaega. (ATA)*

No portfolio is completely in Samoan; it uses Samoan then some parts are in English.

Most teachers discussed how in the past they had enjoyed and appreciated the presence of older teachers and elders, who had provided advice and support to them:

*Elders presence and expertise is missing from the current teachers, children stick to them... when she tells her stories children are glued to her, teachers who pioneered came*

*with a fight... current teachers did not fight, how do we get that fight into our teachers.* (ATB)

*O le miti lea a le matou faifeau ma le faletua, o le fai o se matou Aoga. Na la faaigoaina foi le Aoga ma faamatala le uiga...ua misi le loloto o le aganuu a le toeaina.* (ATF)

It was our church minister and wife's dream to start an Aoga. They named it and explained the meaning to us... miss the old man's depth of cultural knowledge.

ATF commented that when an elder teacher in the Aoga Amata had retired it seemed like she had 'taken her wisdom and musical talents with her'. While others shared this view, ATC had a different view. She said:

*Parents wanted an old lady to help in the centre but it was more a hindrance than a helper as younger teachers saw how they couldn't go over the decisions of older ones as it is not faaloalo (respect) so it is a bit of this and that.* (ATC)

#### **4.2.3.2 Resources**

The lack of teaching resources to support the cultural enhancement and philosophy of the Aoga Amata was raised by most of the teachers. They outlined that while they loved making resources, this actually took time away from teaching. For example:

*Lē lava alagaoa faalenatura ao le mea na e faamuamua e faaogā, e lalaga ai ato, laupola, mailo mai le launiu, o ipupopo, fai le kuka faasamoa ina ia mafai lava ona iloa e tamaiti.* (ATD)

Lack of natural resources but that is first preference to use, to weave baskets, thatches, woven bowls from the coconut leaves, coconut shell, Samoan cooking so that children know.

ATD, who was responsible for the group in her Aoga Amata transitioning into bilingual schools, said that in their regular library visits, she and the children had noted that there were few books in the Samoan language. As a result, she and most other Aoga Amata teachers were 'making our own'. While this was time consuming, it also was positive because the storybooks teachers made were highly relevant because they drew on and reinforced children's own experiences.

#### **4.2.4 Summary**

These Aoga Amata teachers defined the *fau* as aganuu, Samoan language and spirituality and that these goals overarched everything that was said and done in the Aoga Amata. Each of these teachers was aware of their role in continuing building on and enriching the *fau*. The teachers recalled the role Samoan elders in past times, in ensuring a quality experience of the *fau*. If professional learning and development (PLD) was available, that was the knowledge and practice they wished for.

### **4.3 Part Two: Parents' perceptions**

The parents in the study were very eager to share their views expectations and experiences of why they had enrolled their children in the Aoga Amata and, then into a Samoan bilingual unit. As noted, older siblings of five of the seven study children had also transitioned from an Aoga Amata into the five bilingual units featuring in this study. Three of the seven parents are non-Samoan as noted also in the parent's profiles and coding in Table 3.3 of chapter three.

#### **4.3.2 The *fau***

Parents' views on the *fau* aligned strongly with those of the Aoga Amata teachers. They said that to them, the *fau* represented aganuu and *agaga* (soul or spirit) and that the spiritual overarched all. In addition, these parents considered that the *fau* comprised both curriculum content and process, as the Aoga Amata experience was the necessary link between home and school. In sum, Aoga Amata was a 'second' stage in *soso'o le fau i le fau*. The Aoga Amata was the place which continued their children's learning from home and to the primary school. In addition, this transition process was achieved through building knowledge and understanding of the Samoan language and culture as well as the

relationships. They acknowledged the importance of caring relationships for their children, their families, the Aoga Amata and the wider school community.

#### 4.3.2.1 Home to Aoga Amata

All parents noted with appreciation the way Aoga Amata teachers were reinforcing and also enriching the norms and values they as parents were teaching in their homes.

Comments included:

*We do a lot of home activities with her, they nurture over here and we nurture her at home. We don't rely on Aoga to teach her numbers, we teach her numbers, we teach her how to write and we taught her how to write her name, I feel that the work we do at home with her is continuing here. (PE\*)*

*E faaauau lava, auā a alu atu nei usu ana pese, ona pepese loa lea ma lona grandpa. E join in mai lona Grandfather, ma faaamalosi foi i le teineititi. E i ai la isi fuaiupu o le pese, masalo pe tasi pe lua fuaiupu e a'o ii, ona tago lea o lona tama matua, toe soso'o le pese. Ona pepese ai a lea. Atonu e alu atu...ua faalogo atu le latou faiaoga, ua ese le isi fuaiupu la ua i ai. (PC)*

It does continue, because when she comes and sings her songs, then her grandfather sings with her. Her grandfather joins in to encourage her. There are some verses to the song, perhaps one or two verses that she learns here at home, then her grandfather adds more to the song. They sing some more. Maybe when she goes...the teacher will hear a different verse been added.

The importance of family and family–Aoga Amata relationships was mentioned many times:

*There are a lot of things I like about Aoga, one of the main things is the family environment they create is really much like you drop your children off and you don't feel like you're dropping them off to a day-care, I'm dropping them off to family or dropping them off to something that I could very easily see in Samoa, that type of environment. I feel like the love they get there is that you get from a relative; like from any family member of a child's families...they love those kids as if they were theirs...and it is really really evident. And that is...you know, that is outstanding teaching. (PG\*)*

*My wife has a lot of family who have come here (Aoga), most of her family is here, their kids come here, you know in Samoa you don't grow up by yourself, so we thought if she (child in research) is going to miss out on that, at least we can nurture that here. (PE\*)*

*Teachers are like family, I've been blessed by the teachers, and ask a question and get an answer. (PF\*)*

*Teachers love those kids as if they are their own. (PE\*)*

The low turnover of Aoga Amata teachers was a factor in the caring relationships these parents associated with the Aoga Amata because it promoted a sense of trust and consistency in practice. Most parents described the Aoga Amata teachers as caring, nurturing and loving:

*I like the kids having one teacher, its good they can have one teacher to track and form close relationships. (PG\*)*

Reference was also made to the church-related learning practised in the Aoga Amata, which in turn, had supported children's participation in church activities and at home. These included *tauloto* (memory verse), and doing a *tatalo* (prayer) before eating. Appreciation of how the Aoga Amata reinforced children's spiritual development was noted by many. Typical comments included:

*I think it is the way they run the programme, they start with the loku, the structure they have there is great. (PG\*)*

*Manaia le faailoga e le Aoga, o aso faapitoa o loo latou iloa e faatino i le lotu, pei o tauloto lea e fesoasoani i ai matou i le a'oina i le fale, mo le Lotu Tamaiti. (PD)*

It is great that the Aoga celebrates church related events, as we do help our child learn memory verses at home for White Sunday.

PC recounted how her family had been really surprised when her son had added a little 'ending' in the Samoan language to her usual prayer and how 'shocked' her family had been when this had happened. This has shown to her the depth of his knowledge of the language:

*Ua alu atu foi si au tama i le fale, ua i ai faaopoopoga o le tatalo, ua matou tete'i ai. (PC)*

My child came home with additions to her prayer, we were shocked.

PA said she had cried when her son had sung in Samoan at a conference, which she said, was attended by over 100 people. She had not known beforehand that her son had a role in the drama and had been grateful to the Aoga for offering her son this experience:



*Sa ou tagi, auā foi ma te o oute leiloa e pese. Faatoa ou iloaina a le pese i o. E alu atu lava i le fale e fai lava lana tauloto. Faatoa ou faalogo ai lava na i le pese. Ou te iloa, ana le sau i le Aoga Amata, na te lē mafaia le pese. (PA)*

I cried because we went and I didn't know he was singing. I only knew about the song over there. He comes home and does his memory verse. I only heard the song over there. I know he wouldn't have been able to sing if he hadn't been to Aoga Amata.

#### **4.2.2 The importance of the *fau***

When asked why they had enrolled their children in the Aoga Amata, many responses indicated that there was a relationship between the *fau* and identity security. For example:

*Language and aganuu - that is why we have sent out children here. (PG\*)*

*Language of course. (PE\*)*

Secondly, the *fau* was the foundation for future knowledge building and learning. Each is discussed.

#### **4.3.2.2 Identity through aganuu and gagana**

These parents believed that *gagana Samoa* (Samoan language) as closely related to Samoan identity including the assurance that their children could converse and make links with their *aiga potopoto* (extended family). Responses included:

*O le gagana, e tutusa ai ma o'u matua. (PA)*

Samoan language, a goal I share with my parents.

*O le gagana Samoa, e mananao ai foi o'u tuagane i Samoa. (PD)*

It is the Samoan language as encouraged by my brothers in Samoa.

*Ua faamalosiā ai le tautala faasamoa a la'u tama. (PB)*

It has reinforced my child to speak gagana Samoa.

This point was especially important for parents who were not of Samoan ethnicity. PF\* explained how he and his wife really liked reading his children's portfolios and how this has made an impact on his life:

*Samoan language... the portfolios are in Samoan so I can't read but I ask my wife to explain to see what my child is learning...I'm learning Samoan from my wife and son.*  
(PF\*)

For PF\*, sending their children to Aoga Amata had been driven by the urge to give their children the chance to learn the gagana and aganuu, an opportunity he had missed:

*My wife wants our children to know (Samoan) as she didn't get it. I attended Samoan classes to communicate with my in-laws and my children in-depth rather than 'Talofa'.*  
(PF\*)

PG\* talked about the beauty and depth of the Samoan language:

*I believe that there is such a depth of understanding in your culture that you need to have the language to support that, it is important for my kids to know where they come from.*  
(PG\*)

Making sure that their children had the opportunity to experience the *fau*, even though they lived in New Zealand, was equally important. For example:

*Since we may live in NZ permanently, we thought if she's going to miss out on that, at least we can nurture that here.* (PE\*)

PE, a Scottish parent shared that his 'biggest regret was losing my language'. Another, shared very emotionally, how she was very aware that in the future her 'afakasi children would likely be tested' on their Samoanness. Though born in New Zealand, she wanted them to be equipped and prepared to 'defend their identity as Samoans'. She said she and her husband had given their children 'strong traditional names' to ensure continuity of family links, and they had also made sure their children knew 'where' those names originated from and what they meant. PG\* said:

*I want them to be able to stand up well to be proud of what they want to be. Even though they are born in NZ, it doesn't stop them from knowing their faasamoa.* (PG\*)

However, none of this group of parents could hide the pride they felt when they heard their children speaking the mother tongue. One said that this experience had nurtured her own feelings of identity, reinforcing who she was and how she had been raised. Similarly,

PA shared her pride that her son had become a ‘Samoa teacher’ for his family peers. She said:

*A ma o ma (child’s name) i aiga o lo’u tina, o fanau a o’u cousins, e leiloa e latou faasamoa. E a’o la e (child’s name) ia latou le faasamoa. (PA)*

When we go with (child’s name) to my mother’s family, my cousins’ children, they don’t know how to speak Samoan. So (child’s name) teaches them how to speak Samoan.

Parent PB added a different view – which may be increasingly prevalent today given the increased economic pressures in New Zealand today, whereby more parents are in full time employment. She said she sent her children to the Aoga Amata ‘to learn faasamoa as we don’t have time with them at home as we both work’. She said that she would not worry about her children not knowing how to live in Samoa, because the Aoga Amata was providing a ‘faasamoa environment’.

#### **4.3.2.3 The fau as the academic and social foundation for further learning**

A small number of parents associated identity security with academic achievement:

*O le tele o suesuega ia ua i ai, o le tamaititi e lelei ana gagana e lua, o le tamaititi lena e loloto foi lona malamalana ma lona iloa i mataupu o loo aoaoina ai i totonu o le aoga... ia mafai ona alu i le bilingual auā e faaauau ai iina le gagana Samoa. (PC)*

Much research confirms the advantage of knowing two languages, as that child will have in-depth understanding and knowledge of topics discussed for learning... that enables them to attend a bilingual classroom, which will continue the Samoan language.

PF\* explained how his older child who had attended Aoga Amata had excelled in the Samoan bilingual unit. PG\* acknowledged this view, adding that this was due to the cultural foundations set in the Aoga Amata and that this was why their younger child was following the same pathway:

*Yeah... right up Year 6. So looking at his scores on national surveys for Maths and English, I mean he’s still right up there. (PG\*)*

PC raised an important linguistic point with respect to how language is learnt and practised in Samoa and in New Zealand and indicated further attention was required:

*Auā o le mea lena ua ou iloa, o tamaiti ia e aumai, ua amata ona learn mai le Igilisi i le tautala, ae e lē pei o tatou, na iloa muamua mai le faasamoa, ona faatoa learn ai lea o le Igilisi. Ia ana muamua ona ou learn le Igilisi i le tusitusi ma le faitau, aua faatoa mulimuli learn i le communication. Ina ua sau iinei, ua faamalosia le communication i le Igilisi. Pei la o le mea lena e faaletonu tatou i le tautala, ae o le mafau fau ma le mea tau tusitusi i le Igilisi, o le manaia ia. A'o le communication, i le tautala, e pei e tau slow foi lea. (PC)*

I know that children who are brought here, have learnt English through speaking, unlike us, we learnt Samoan first then English. If I had learnt English through writing and reading, then through communication. When I came, English to communicate was encouraged. That is why I think we don't perform at speaking, but our thinking through our writing in English, is very good. But communication through speaking, it is a bit slow.

*Ona o la sa ta learn muamua le Igilisi i le tusitusi ma le faitau, ae ta te lei learn muamua i le tautala. E lē pei la o tamaiti ia e ola iinei, na learn muamua i le tautala, ae mulimuli ai tusitusi. E pei la o tatou i Samoa, na e learn lava le Igilisi i lou alu i le aoga, tusi tala, ae e le faapea, na e learn i se talanoaga. (PC)*

It is because we learnt English through writing and reading, but I didn't learn how to speak first. Unlike the children who grew up here, they learnt how to speak first then writing last. Whereas in Samoa, we learnt English by doing reading and writing, not by speaking.

### **4.2.3 Impacting factors**

Parents shared a number of factors that impacted on the teaching of the *fau*. These are discussed in the following sections.

#### **4.2.3.1 Parent – teacher relationships**

The parents said they had come to understand the importance of children's relations with teachers and with the schools. Many had appreciated the opportunities that parents had been given to participate in school discussions, and they enthusiastically supported the idea of such partnerships.

They believed they had learnt a lot about education generally and about being an Aoga Amata parent by participating in the discussions, and also being on the Aoga Amata management teams. PD, who had been secretary of the Aoga Amata Parents' Teachers' Association, said that taking this role had enabled her to learn more about how parents can support their children's learning. She said:

*E tele lava matou fono e fai, e i ai fono e tau leai ni matua, e i ai foi fono e toatele matua. Ae le faapea la e lē lagolago ai matua, auā o lenei Aoga, o le malosi ia o le lagolago a matua o matua, o loo ta'u mai ai iina le faatāua o faiaoga e matua. (PD)*

We have lots of meetings, some meetings not many parents come, and some meetings a lot of them attend. But it doesn't mean they don't support, because this Aoga, the grandparents are very supportive, that is an indicator of how important the teachers are to them.

Some parents were grateful because Aoga Amata had given them opportunities to attend professional development related activities – something that did not occur frequently:

*Manaia le fono a le SAASIA, pei ua toe a'oa'oina ai la ta faasamoa, auā e lē loloto tele lau faasamoa, ao le tuutuuga i le loloto, na a'oa'o mai nisi nai mea. (PD)*

Great SAASIA conference, where I re-learnt Samoan things, as I am not deep with my Samoan.

Although the parents had little to say about teachers' professional behaviour, PE\* noted that one of the reasons her child was at Aoga Amata was due to the teachers:

*Teachers, good they attend conferences for the development side, love how they bring that Samoan myth with them here, even when the parents are around they oke (tell off) the kids, it is a sense of trust... they create that trust, and they set boundaries. I like teachers making my child sit on her lap, gives me a sense of affinity based on ethnicity alone.... I feel teachers take the parents seriously. (PE\*)*

#### **4.2.3.2 Management**

Most parents believed Aoga Amata management processes were robust. PF\* expressed gratitude for the services the Aoga Amata provided for his children and stated his trust in the management of the Aoga Amata:

*I was thinking, man how can these guys improve? And I was thinking over the last 10 years of my kids coming throughout the school system. I cannot remember if they ever come from school with a complaint, I can see good progress and our trust development. I like how they keep the portfolio and give to you every six months to look through. (PF\*)*

PE\* could not think of any need for further improvement on the management front, but was eternally grateful that teachers responded to any questions he had:

*I cannot think of anything. And every time if I have a question, if I have an issue, it is dealt with it straight away. It is not passed on or it is not forgotten about, you know. As a parent, I feel they take you very seriously. (PE\*)*

On the less positive side, all parents believed that more clear and ongoing communication was crucial so that they are able to support the teachers:

*Parents need to be made aware of any change in policies. Teachers to communicate clearly to parents. (PG\*)*

#### **4.2.3.3 Samoan or English?**

Two parents felt strongly that teachers spoke too much English in their Aoga Amata. With high expectations in teachers' level of fluency, they said that speaking English is not appropriate or relevant in the Aoga Amata context. They said:

*O le isi mea o le gagana e faaaogā, o isi taimi e nanu mai le faiaoga ao isi taimi ua faasamoa mai. Ae e tatau lava ona faataua lelei e faiaoga le gagana Samoa. Auā o le igoa o le Aoga o le...ia malamalama lelei le tamaititi i le gagana Samoa. (PD)*

Sometimes the teacher speaks English and other times Samoan. Teachers need to prioritise the Samoan language. Because the name of the Aoga is... children need to understand the Samoan language.

*O le manaia ia o le Aoga, pei o le mea e manaomia, o le tagata e matua fluent lava i le gagana Samoa, e leai se felanulanua'i. Pei e te'i a ua oso mai le faapalagi i le i si taimi. (PC)*

The Aoga is great, but we must make sure our teachers are really fluent in the Samoan language, no mix. There are sudden usages of English at times.

#### **4.2.3.4 The location of the bilingual unit**

Space was another factor highlighted by PB and PG\*. This warrants further study:

*E tele mea na ou vaai i ai i le totonu o le Aoga e tatau ona faaleleia. E pei la, ua toatele tamaiti ae laititi le space. (PB)*

There were many things I saw needed to be improved. For instance, there are plenty children but little space.

*You know I want to see a better working environment to get them (teachers) a space, so that they completely come away from the kids during lunch break. (PG\*)*

The location of the bilingual units for Aoga Amata pupils to transition to was another constraint raised. Not only were there a small number of Samoan bilingual schools, units were widely dispersed throughout the Auckland area. Some parents said they were willing

to travel ‘any distance’ to enrol their children in an Aoga Amata because they wanted continuity in the Samoan bilingual classroom:

*Ou ke iloa, aga alu lau kama i se isi aoga, ua oki akoga le faasamoa lea ga fai ii. (PA)*

I know if my child went to another school (without a bilingual unit), the faasamoa done over here at Aoga Amata will be dead.

Distance was not an issue for PE\* and PG\* as both felt the school was worth the travel:

*I think they (Aoga) have equipped my child in an amazing way that I hadn't anticipated, you know? And I think a lot of her Samoan and everything is definitely, definitely a credit of Aoga. So I think that is one of the reasons because I feel she is ready and will be able to manage with that. Another thing is a lot of her friends from here are moving up there. (PE\*)*

*They always approach me, come sit in the classroom, come in. Sit down and look at what the children are doing, or sit down at the back and listen to the teachers, don't be afraid to come in. (PG\*)*

For others, this was not so easy hence these children would be enrolling in a mainstream school close to their homes.

#### **4.2.4 Views on the bilingual units**

Parents were asked why they enrolled their children in a bilingual unit. The four parents, whose older children had been schooled in a bilingual unit, were convinced of the value of that experience. Some talked about *relationships* with staff of the bilingual unit and familiarity with the organisation and routine of the units. All but one voiced the importance of continuing bilingual learning from primary right through to intermediate schooling. Parent PF\*, whose child has progressed into a bilingual unit and had an older child in his final year at the school, said:

*Yeah I think the transition is good and so strong. He is going to (named the intermediate school) which is again another bilingual unit. We gave him options on a few intermediates but he feels comfortable over there. He's had a strong sense of being Samoan. (PF\*)*

All of the parents said they had loved the opportunity to be involved in their children's learning. The joy of being part of the school processes and familiarity with the school

grounds, routines, teachers, and with other parents had contributed to establishing positive relationships.

In sum, these parents had carefully considered their options. They had been determined to enrol their children in Aoga Amata and then into a Samoan bilingual unit to ensure their children had access to their *aganuu* and *gagana*. The parents recognised how prayers and memory verses were encouraged at Aoga Amata and in the bilingual units.

### **4.3 Chapter summary**

Overall, all Aoga Amata teachers and parents showed a passion and commitment to childrens' learning in an Aoga Amata context. Their responses to the question about the nature of the *fau* were similar – the *fau* represented *aganuu*, *gagana* and the spiritual in everything. As noted, both parents and teachers deemed the role of the Aoga Amata to be a continuity or an enhancement of the *faasamoa* knowledge and attitudes children learnt in their homes. For both groups, a knowledge and understanding of the *fau* was central to identity security, and identity security in turn was the platform for further knowledge building – be this in the Samoan or English context. Another significant finding was that teachers identified themselves as a *fau* and, as a result, that they must be active inquirers in cultural knowledge building and enhancing. These teachers knew it was insufficient to simply be fluent in the language – they also needed a deeper understanding of *aganuu* to support the cultural practice and Samoan language. In relation to this, teachers indicated the importance of the *tagata matua* (elderly) in the Aoga to ensure a confidence and continuity of meaning and practice of the *fau*. It was believed that their absence in the classrooms provided unnecessary opportunities for teachers to speak too much English, as the elders are often the cultural guardians in Aoga Amata.



## **Chapter 5: Faiva – Findings in Samoan bilingual units**

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### **5.1 Introduction – Soso’o le fau i le fau**

In this research, the Samoan bilingual unit holds high importance as the next agency in transitioning the *fau* after the home and the Aoga Amata. This chapter presents the bilingual teachers’ responses to questions of the place of the spiritual, aganuu and gagana learnings the study children had experienced in the Aoga Amata, in the teaching and learning processes of the bilingual unit, so as to soso’o le fau i le fau. The bilingual teachers’ voices are the new voices in this dialogue. As discussed, the study parents had deliberately enrolled their children in a Samoan bilingual unit, because of their desire for a continuation of *fau*, values, beliefs and practices in their child’s education experience. Noted also, was that older siblings of four of the students in the study had attended a Samoan bilingual unit. Each of these parents and teachers were keenly aware of the structural differences between the Aoga Amata and the Samoan bilingual units and that this could influence the transition process. As noted, the goals of the Aoga Amata were cultural security and enrichment both as knowledge and identity, but also as the foundation for further learning. Therefore, teaching was in the Samoan language and the curriculum was culturally embedded and considerably flexible. By way of contrast, although Samoan might be the language of instruction in the bilingual units, there was also an expectation that students be proficient in English and this was tested using national English language assessment tools.

This chapter is in four parts. Firstly, given the very little documentation about Samoan bilingual units, the focus of part one is on the school context – how these units were organised and the school climate and context. In part two, teacher responses to the research questions are presented, namely their perceptions of the *fau* and, how they teach

for this in the bilingual context. Teacher views of factors influencing the transitioning of students between Aoga Amata and the Samoan bilingual units are presented in part three as strengths and challenges.

Due to time constraints, the bilingual fieldwork was carried out at the beginning of the school year when the study students turned five years, a time when they were settling into their new school environments. The bilingual fieldwork took place during the February to May period after the Christmas break, and discussions and observations with teachers, children and others yielded rich materials.

## **5.2 Part One – The Samoan bilingual schools and teachers**

The students in the study transitioned into five schools: four in south Auckland and one in central Auckland. Table 5.1 sets out school profiles and coding. One school (School C) had an Aoga Amata on site which was likely to influence the transition experience.

Observations showed that each of the schools were motivated supporters of their bilingual units. For example, the administration areas of all schools were warm and welcoming, with displays of Samoan and other Pacific art works (*siapo*/tapa cloth, *ietoga*/fine mat, *tanoa*/kava bowl, *ula*/lei or necklace) and Samoan greeting signs. In addition, these schools advertised their bilingual unit on the school websites and most websites presented a full description of their unit – name, vision and benefits of bilingual education for students. One also noted the Aoga Amata aims on the web site – ‘that the bilingual unit provided a smooth transition from Aoga Amata’. Another had established a bilingual blog, featuring a range of readings on bilingual education together with commonly used Samoan phrases, and pronunciation prompts.

As reported, parents had been involved in the naming of each unit and, not surprisingly (as in the Samoan way), these featured the use of metaphors which encouraged success, acknowledged a new dawn and the importance of language and culture to this. BTD said:

*O le igoa foi na ave i mātua e filifili mai...o matou documentation e tasi a le igoa e tusi ai, nao le igoa Samoa. (BTD)*

The name was given to parents to decide...all our documentations we use this name, the Samoan name.

These and other comments indicated that while schools each had their own history, rationale, and organisation, they regarded the bilingual unit as part of the school community. All of the schools celebrated Samoan Language week<sup>16</sup>, with events ranging from dancing, singing, cooking to the recital of poems and speeches. I attended School C's celebration and was amazed at the level of involvement by the school and community including the neighbouring Aoga Amata. The event was joyous and colourful and notably all students and staff – including management staff – were dressed in Samoan cultural attire. The day began with the singing of the Samoan national anthem followed by performances by the Aoga Amata, the Maori and French units and, finally the Samoan unit. Clearly, School C had prioritised the Samoan Language Week as one of full on participation by staff and community. This inclusivity was very important. The teachers noted this made them (the Samoan bilingual service and students) feel a part of the school - they were not simply an add on.

*I (Yes), and you see the kids, the French and Samoan kids, they are together, that is how it is supposed to be, there shouldn't be a separation. (BTC)*

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<sup>16</sup> The Vaiaso o le Gagana Sāmoa: Sāmoan Language Weeks run annually in New Zealand. Samoan language and culture are celebrated through events and celebrations right throughout New Zealand.

## 5.2.1 Organisation

As has been noted, there are no national regulations regarding how bilingual units should be organised. For example: there was no indication by class level, length of Samoan language immersion per week or teacher –student ratios. Variations in the ways the five bilingual programmes organised are profiled in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1: Organisation of the five bilingual units represented by each teacher**

<b>Teacher code by school</b>	<b>New entrant Curriculum</b>	<b>Role of teachers with other school-wide responsibilities</b>	<b>Bilingual units by level of teaching and number of teachers</b>
<b>BTA</b>	50% Samoan 50% English	None	Yr1 – Yr 6 3 teachers
<b>BTB</b>	80% Samoan 20% English	Leader in literacy	Yr1 – Yr 6 3 teachers
<b>BTC</b>	90% Samoan 10% English	Leader in literacy	Yr 1 – Yr6 3 teachers
<b>BTD</b>	Full immersion Samoan	Bilingual unit leader	Yr 1 – Yr 6 5 teachers
<b>BTE</b>	Full immersion Samoan	Bilingual unit leader	Yr 1 – Yr 8 5 teachers

As discovered, in four schools the bilingual unit comprised years 1-6 and in one, the unit teaching was extended from years 1 to year 8. There were also variations by Samoan language immersion time at new entrant level: two were full immersion units, one featured a balance of 50% Samoan and 50% English-speaking, and in two units the mix was 80% Samoan and 20% English-speaking (School B) and 90% Samoan and 10% English (School C). The number of teachers by total per unit ranged from three to five teachers and two of these held other school-wide posts in addition to their bilingual teaching role.

## 5.2.2 Location

The units in Schools B, C and D were located in areas not hidden from the wider school. School D's bilingual unit had recently been relocated to a new site with a 'village' type atmosphere being achieved – the former unit had consisted of a number of classrooms scattered through the school. The bilingual units in Schools A and E were located within the whole school structure in areas such as junior, middle and senior levels. BTD shared the benefits of a village set up unit:

*E aogā le structure o matou faleaoga fou, pei ai lea ua soso'o le fau i le fau...foi na le...e sosolo le information, le learning, le communication ia ma mea faapena. (BTD)*

The structure of our new classrooms, it is like joining the fau with a fau...i mean...ease spread of information, learning, communication and those things.

The classroom teaching spaces were similar in the schools and each had access to WiFi for teaching and learning purposes. The renowned Fa Fe Fi Fo Fu chart (Appendix 12) were displayed in all rooms and used in teaching. While classes were separated by level for teaching, in each unit there were scheduled times when students from all levels met together in a central space for family times such as worship as a group or other activities. These central spaces featured an abundance of Samoan charts including, for example, expectations of students' achievement and collective team planning notes. Each were prominently displayed for students and parents to read. Poems, songs and *tauloto* (memory verses) in the Samoan language were displayed alongside Samoan cultural artefacts – such as *siapo*, *tanoa* (kava bowl), *fue* (traditional whisk used by orators/chiefs), *tootoo* (traditional cane/stick use by orators), *afa* (sinnet), *ietoga*, *titi fulumoa* (traditional waist-wear of feathers), *pale fuiono* (traditional head band worn in ceremonial celebrations), *nifo oti* (special knife used for ceremonial performances and dance), *ula pule* (lei of pule shells), *ula lopa* (lei of lopa seeds). Schools B and D also had a Samoan *Tusi Paia* (Holy Bible) and *Tusi Pese* (hymn book) which students used during the lotu.

These central spaces resembled a human sieve of Samoan language and culture, created by students, teachers and the parents who enjoyed and were part of this space in the mornings and during the after school pickup times. The flow of communication taking place within these units contributed to the enrichment and consistency of the Samoan language and created a sense of belonging. The students were messengers within the unit.

### 5.2.3 Teachers

As noted earlier (Table 3.5) each of the five bilingual teachers were female and they varied in age, teaching qualification and teaching experience. Just over half had initially trained in Samoa, four had completed ESOL training, and most had completed a tertiary bilingual education paper of some kind. All but one (BTA) self-identified as fluent and confident speakers of the Samoan language. BTA said she felt so challenged by her duty as a bilingual teacher that she had enrolled in Samoan language classes so that she could teach better. When asked what was the most important aspect of teaching in a unit, she said:

*I would say is the language, I love to use the gagana, because when I see bilingual, it is English and Samoan. I have to be strong in the language (Samoan). (BTA)*

Drawing on my observations and their self-evaluations, all five teachers were passionate about their role as bilingual teachers. Four said that they had originally been teaching in mainstream classes but had asked to be transferred to a bilingual unit. Three had been involved in the development phase of the bilingual units where they were now were teaching. Asked about their motivation to become a teacher, four traced their stories back to several generations of teachers in their family:

*Ona o lo'u tinā sa faiaoga i Samoa, o lo'u tamā foi sa faiaoga...role model mātua pei la o le taimi lenei, lea foi oute push ina sa'u tama e agai ii ae oute musu i na te le mafaia ona faia le galuega, ae mafai lava ona alu e fai sana one year for teaching in secondary auā o la ua maua lana degree. (BTB)*

My mother was a teacher in Samoa, and my father also was a teacher...parents were role models like now how I'm pushing for my child but I don't want to do to force in case she can't do it, but she can go and do a one year teaching in secondary as she has a degree.

Others traced their teaching journeys back to their migration to New Zealand in pursuit of *saili malo* (triumph). BTC recited her passion in the gagana Samoa with these words:

*I think o la'u passion, I want to use my language. (BTC)*

I think it is my passion, I want to use my language

As these teachers shared their teaching journeys, it was evident that they did not see their efforts to be confined to bilingual classes but also a duty to the whole school community or as explained 'to the school family'. In their view, bilingual units were not a 'political bubble on the side' but must be integrated and embedded in school policies and processes. They highlighted the multiplicity of roles they played in their relationships with students, parents, each other, other teachers in their schools and, the wider school community. BTD described how her commitment to the unit extended into whole school and the wider community

*E lē gata le matou galuega i totonu o le faleaoga, in fact a tuua le aoga, we face the parents and communities ina ia faaauau le relationship...others go home. (BTD)*

Our work is not only in the classroom, in fact, after school we face the parents and communities to continue our relationship building...others go home.

They spoke of themselves as ambassadors for Samoan and Pacific students and for cultural diversity. They also identified themselves as *fau* in that it is their *tofi* (responsibility and sense of duty) to do so. The *tofi* to be a teacher was instilled early in their lives by their parents, which is the reason why they claimed themselves a resource to ensure the *fau* is continued. For example:

*O o'u mātua o faiaoga uma, o laua na unai a'u e fai ma faiaoga i Samoa, ou sauinei ou kiligi (cleaner)...ae fai atu lava e lē malie ai lou loto, lea la ua ou toe faiaoga, e malie lo ta loto i le tali mai o tamaiti. (BTE)*

Both my parents were teachers who pushed me to be a teacher in Samoa, I came here and got a cleaning job...but I wasn't satisfied with it so now teaching again, I'm satisfied when students respond.

## 5.3 Part Two – The *fau* and how this is practised

Responses to the question of what is the *fau* were almost identical to those expressed by the Aoga Amata teachers and the study parents, which suggested that the student transition journey from Aoga Amata to bilingual primary classroom was likely to be smooth.

For these bilingual teachers, the *fau* comprised of gagana and aganuu Samoa (these two elements were jointly composed), and that spirituality was integral both to the *fau* and to their practice. Aganuu was occasionally referred to as *tu ma aga* (cultural protocols).

### 5.3.1 Spirituality

BTD saw spirituality as implicit and embedded in the values and behaviours students learnt in their homes and Aoga Amata and brought to school:

*E o mai tamaiti o tele le tomai o le early literacy e oo foi le latou spirituality matou te faaauau i foliga vaaia. (BTD)*

Students bring early literacy skills, even their spirituality and we continue it using what we see (observations).

BTB regarded the church as a complementary site with schools and the home for Samoan language learning and maintenance. She said:

*O lo'u mafaufau o le gagana a tatou e maua i le fale, maua i le lotu, poo mea foi a tatou aiga e fai. (BTB)*

In my thinking, Samoan language can be found at home, at church or events our families do.

BTD added that spirituality was woven into every curriculum area and effectively reinforced the faasamoa just as the tikanga Maori knowledge reinforced the principles of

Te Tiriti o Waitangi:

*The way we choose our topics, e strategic lava ina ia incorporate le spirituality a le tamaititi la e sau ma ia. Tai pei la o le matou topic study, it is... le a ea. "Manakitanga" – it is about service to the community. It is service to the community, looking at how you*



*contribute. Ona aumai loa o le pese fo'i lea a tatou: "Ave lo'u ola ia aoga" Last topic, we used, "Ave lo'u tino ia aoga"... So, 'ave lo'u ola ia aoga' – o le matou fono, on the same day, na brainstorm ai – it was unpacking the title. Lei ma se tamaititi e le'i link i le lotu. So, I guess, we are always looking at ways e incorporate ai uma a le mea la e sau ma le tamaititi. Because, we know o mea na e o mai ma latou. (BTD)*

We choose our topics strategically, so that we incorporate the student's spirituality that they come with. For instance, our topic we are studying, it is... Manakitanga, it is about service to the community. Its service to the community, looking at how contribute. Then we bring that song of ours: "Ave lo'u ola ia aoga". Last topic, we used, "Ave lo'u tino ia aoga, so 'ave lo'u ola ia aoga" we brainstormed it on the same day, unpacking the title. No student didn't link it to lotu. So I guess, we are always looking at ways to incorporate what the student brings. Because we know that is what they bring with them.

These teachers further added that they reinforced and built on the spiritual elements of the *fau* through lotu, tatalo, and the singing of hymns and tauloto from the Holy Bible scriptures. In their view, spiritual growth was 'the norm' and must be acknowledged and enriched. Spiritual devotions were held every morning in each unit and these were sometimes led by the teachers, but mainly by students. Students were encouraged to bring a Bible to school and these were used in devotions and scripture verses were used as a reading language tool. BTA said:

*Even though kids come from different churches...there is support to the spiritual dimension. (BTA)*

### **5.3.2 Relationships**

The importance of ensuring trusted *vā-fealoai* (relationships) with students was seen to be a central and integral element in teaching and learning the *fau*, and especially in ensuring effective communication, mutual respect and team spirit. Teachers used words such as alofa, faaloalo, and tautua to describe their understanding of the relationships, which have a central place in the aganuu:

*I do it because ou te alofa i tamaiti. Ou te alofa foi i matua. (BTC)*

I do it because I love the students. I love the parents too.

*O a'u ou te mafaufau every day, am I doing enough for the kids? (BTA)*

I think every day, am I doing enough for the kids?

*Parents are really good supporters, so that is the thing I love, and I know that education is more important to them, that is a value itself. (BTB)*

Whichever teaching strategy was followed, these teachers said the starting point was students' knowledge and interests and 'we go from there' (BTB). Teachers saw cultural knowledge (learnt in the home) to be the primary tools for teacher and classroom pedagogy for Samoan students. At the same time, a few such as BTB, had some concerns about language proficiency generally. BTB said:

*O le mea lea i ai tatou tamaiti, e lē malamalama i le tatou gagana, e lē malamalama foi i le Igilisi. Pau a le gagana lea e i ai o le gagana tafao, e leai se academic language. (BTB)*

Currently, our students do not understand our language, do not understand English also. They only have slang language, there is no academic language.

### **5.3.3 Samoan language**

All teachers emphasised very strongly their love and service to teaching the Samoan language and aganuu; they believed this as measure of respect to students, elders and parents. BTC commented:

*I do it because ou te alofa i tamaiti, ou te alofa foi i mātua poo faapefea ona faaola gagana a tamaiti. I have expectations for them, I think o la'u passion, I want to use my language. (BTC)*

I do it because I love students, I love the parents and how they revive Samoan language with their children, I have expectations for them, I think it is my passion, I want to use my language.

BTE had taught in the bilingual unit since 2004. She said that her recent transfer to the new entrant class had made her aware that she needed to improve her Samoan language, so she could respond well to children's enquiries and interests but such a challenge had caused her physical fatigue from the stress of teaching in two languages. She noted:

*I lou vaiaso muamua, gao le kuua a ma ou alu sao i le fale... ua makua drain uma lo'u energy... ae sa ou fiafia i le lu'i. (BTE)*

I went straight home after my first week... as my energy was overly drained... but I was happy with the challenge.

In our talanoa, the teachers shared two major goals in respect to Samoan language learning and teaching. The first goal was to ensure the use of Samoan language and aganuu in all curriculum subjects. On this point, BTE shared how hard it was to translate English into Samoan and vice versa especially with respect to scientific and mathematical symbols and concepts. She said:

*Ua manaomia lava se vaega e faaliliuina upu palagi poo le faasamoa, aemaise a upu o le science ma le maths, pei o upu ia o patterns, shapes, parallel ma i si mau upu. (BTE)*

Need a group to translate palagi words or Samoan words, especially science and maths words, like patterns, shapes, parallel and many other words.

She demonstrated how she combined children's language knowledge of colours in her Maths teaching in this teaching episode I observed. Note: T stands for teacher voice and C for child:

T: *Lima faaopopo le fa faaopopo le tasi (5 plus 4 plus 1)*

C: *Sefulu (10)*

T: *Aisea ua e faimai ai e sefulu? (Why did you say 10?)*

C: *Lana ua 5 lanumeamata, 4 lanu mumu ma le 1 lanu uliuli*  
(Because it was 5 green, 4 red and 1 black)

A second main goal was to progress the gagana and aganuu from speaking Samoan to reading and writing in Samoan and from emergent literacy to conventional (Teale & Sulzby, 1986) or fluent literacy. Most of these bilingual teachers referred to their teaching style as *faa-strategy*. For example:

*So that is the expectation on my side... o le faamautu lava o le gagana. Matou te taumafai ia o, ae ua iloa e le tamaititi e aogā le faitau. A faitau, ua lelei ai lau tala, o le lelei o lau tala o le lelei o le faitau tusi, ona transfer lea. O le lelei o le faitau, e lelei ai le Maths, and it is all about literacy. (BTC)*

So that is the expectation on my side... to affirm the Samoan language. The aim is when they leave, they know about the importance of reading. Reading makes good stories, good stories leads to good reading, then transfer. Its good reading that results in good Maths, and it is all about literacy.

In my observations, I noted BTA's strategy to build students' vocabulary during mat discussion on whales. T represents the teacher voice and C is student responses.

T: *Oka se manaia o lo'u vaai atu i le talanoa o tamaiti i le mea lea na fai ananafi, lelei tele. O ai la e fia manao e fia faasoa sona manatu? Te fia talanoa?*

Wow it is very good to see kids talking about what we did yesterday, very good. Who wants to share their thoughts? Want to talk?

C: *O le gutu o le tafolā e lapo'a (the whale's mouth is big).*

T: *Oka lelei tele, manaia lou manatua o le tatou talanoaga lea sa fai, lelei tele.*

Wow very good, great you remembered our discussion, very good.

C: *O le manava o le tafolā e pei ose manava o le elefane.*

The whale's stomach is like an elephant's stomach.

T: *Manaia tele, o la e faaaogā le synonym, e pei ona tatou vaai i ai i le tatou tusigā tala i le vaiaso lea, lelei tele.*

Very nice, using the synonym as we did in our story writing last week, very good.

C: *O le tafolā e fiafia e ai mea laiti.*

Whales like eating small things.

T: *Lelei tele, mea ai laiti e tai pei o le a?*

Very good, small like?

C: *Ula vai.*

Prawns.

This episode demonstrates BTC's focus on vocabulary development and comprehension in both written and listening registers. BTD drew attention to fostering students' phonemic awareness and in her view, the Aoga Amata had contributed significantly here.

BTD said:

*A'o le taimi la lea o le writing, pei o le taimi a na o le tamaititi ia – e pei la o la'u teineititi lea o Voula. Na sau Voula ua amata ona i ai lana phonemic awareness, e lē toe amata i se mea; o le soso'o loa lea. Auā e eseese le matou tamaititi e sau ua i ai le mea na, 'ese le mea e amata ai le tamaititi e sau e leai se mea. (BTD)*

For writing time, it is the opportunity for a student, like Voula (student in the study). Voula came with early phonemic awareness skills, so we do not start but join then. As often our students are different, some come with those skills, and we have a different starting place with students who come without those skills.

In other observations, I saw teachers emphasising literacy and literacy extension in the Samoan language repeatedly. For example, during a collective story writing activity, BTD and the students (including the student in the study) formed a story on the white board. In these verbal exchanges and interactions involved in the creation of this story, BTD was particularly attentive to students' literacy development; students read the phrase written on the board (*Oka!, so'u fiafia, auā...* Oh I am so happy, because...) and then they extended the story:

Tamaiti aoga (Students):	<i>Oka!, so'u fiafia auā...</i> Oh!, I am happy because...
Faiaoga (Teacher):	<i>Lalo</i> Down (indicating the next line)
Tamaiti aoga:	<i>Oka! So'u faanoanoa auā...</i> Oh! I am sad because...
Faiaoga:	<i>O le a le mea e fai pe a ou leiloa fai le upu?</i> What do I do when I don't know how to pronounce a word?
Tamaiti aoga:	<i>E toso... fa - a - no - a - no - a</i> Drag it... then the students pronounced the word 'faanoanoa' by dragging it.

Interestingly, BTC said that while much of the story writing and reading at the new entrant level was done in Samoan, she used English 10% of the time because she wanted to expose her new entrants to wider and other literatures, vocabulary and language.

As I looked around the classroom walls, it was evident that many group stories had been compiled as storybooks and were much-loved (and well-thumbed) learning resources. In the teacher's view, these group stories were not only an educationally sound practice, but

also a basic need. They said ‘we have to... there are very few Samoan language resources’. These new entrant teachers were extremely proactive in making their own teaching resources. BTC said she had collaborated with the neighbouring Aoga Amata in compiling storybooks again drawing on students work and their interests. These storybooks are now well-used both in the Aoga Amata and in her new entrant class.

*Ona ou fai loa lea i le Aoga Amata, ae a mea e le faitau ai ni tatou tusi? Why don't we do reading? Ia, o la ua amata loa ona avatu tusi. So, we make books. That is why... makes books and these are our books and they are ours. The problem is the publisher. (BTC)*

Then I asked Aoga Amata, why don't we do reading? Now they are beginning to give them books... publisher.

In BTA's view, preparing language resources such as these, generally took considerable time and effort. This means that if more resources were available teachers could then concentrate in teaching, which was their primary goal:

*We translate our own books. Management knows and wish there are companies out there to provide Samoan books. (BTA)*

BTC had shown great initiative in creating her own website of Samoan learning resources most of which she had developed for her classes and her colleagues. It was her hope that other teachers and the community would benefit by accessing these Samoan language materials through the internet. Unfortunately, she said her website was rarely updated because she had a very busy teaching schedule.

*Maimau pe ana i ai se isi na te tofogia ta ita ae ta alu e fai lena mea, how you nurture and enhance the language through technology, through the community. (BTC)*

If only someone can pay me to do that, how you nurture and enhance the language through technology, through the community.

A point of concern confirmed in school visits was that these teachers sacrificed a significant amount of what could have been one-on-one teaching time to developing classroom resources.

### 5.3.4 Soso’o le fau i le fau

Each of these teachers stated quite adamantly that their priority and duty was to soso’o the *fau*. Furthermore, that doing so required a trusted relationship with the Aoga Amata and also with their students’ parents. At the same time, and tempering their endeavours ‘just a little’, these teachers said they had a duty to ensure students left their classes competent in both English and Samoan. In BTC’s words ‘*e faaaogā gagana e lua e pei lava o ta’ua*’ (they must be able to use two languages like us).

The teacher from School C, which had an Aoga Amata unit on site, was particularly vocal on this point. BTC said:

*E o mai tamaiti matou faaauauina i le mea o loo i ai, ma matou iloa le mea e ave i ai.*  
(BTC)

Students come, we continue where they are at and take them further.

For these teachers, teaching the *fau* did not just mean academic understanding only but also included correct behaviours such faaaloalo and relationships, for example.

BTD affirmed very clearly that the role of the bilingual unit was to identify and use the knowledge and skills students brought from Aoga Amata as the basis for future learning.

BTD said:

*E o mai tamaiti, manatua lea ua o mai ua tele a tomā tāua fo’i lele mo le early literacy o le tamaititi e o’o fo’i i le latou spirituality, o le latou culture, o mea uma na ua o mai ma tamaiti. So, I guess e lē gata ina faaauau i foliga vaaia, ae o le mea tāua loa lea ua amata i le soso’o lea – I guess it is an application o mea na i le learning, manatua lea ua amata ona assess, ua vailili loa le iloa tusitusi ma faaali ona mafaufauga. And I guess o matou la, it is about creating opportunities e faaaoga ai, ina ia iloa e le tamaititi faaaoga uma a mea ia na sau ma ia.* (BTD)

Remember, students come with lots of important skills for early literacy, even their spirituality, their culture, and everything they bring so we continue what they bring from our visual assessments. But remember we start assessing them, looking at their writing and their ability to think. I guess we are about creating opportunities to use those skills so that the students continue to use the skills they bring.

BTD talked about the learning of sounds and pronunciation, which she had witnessed in the Aoga Amata as important in her teaching today:

*E ala ona mafua ona iloa e le tamaititi le mea lea, ona ua mautu mai lalo i o. Ona soso'o lea o matou, o le faaauaua auā o la ua lelei mai le oral i o, ona sau loa lea i luga ii, introduce loa lea i ai le faitau tusi. (BTD)*

The reason why students know these things, is the work done from down there (Aoga Amata). Then we join, continue as their oral is good from there, then they come up here, we then introduce reading to them.

BTB gave some examples of how language as a *fau* was soso'o in the bilingual units:

*Ou te iloa le faaaogāina o le gagana, e manaia le ECE e a'o ai le gagana Amata. Na ou test ina (igoa o le tama aoga) i le alphabet, a tilotilo, fai mai S-solofanua, so I just tick ma le Five Year Net. Ae alualu a lana aoga iinei ona iloa lea le S. (BTB)*

I know how language is used, it is good that ECE teaches the basics of gagana. I have tested (study child's name) on the alphabet, he looks and said S-solofanua, so I just tick and the Five Year Net. It won't take long for him to recognise the letter S.

Teacher BTE said she tried to build on soso'o with Samoan language in her Maths class using examples children were familiar with, to teach for a comprehension of bigger (higher) numbers. She used the activity of identifying double or triple-digit numbers such as 143, 137 and so forth (as in Student maths books). For example, she would identify 143 as *tasi fasefulu tolu* (one forty-three). In this small way, a continuation (soso'o) of the number four was taking place by transferring number knowledge from Samoan to English using mathematical concepts.

Drawing on my observations and talanoa interviews with the teachers, the narrative below illustrates the soso'o in practical terms and as an extending from speaking to reading and writing:

*O le matou tusi ata lea like Fa, Fe, Fi, Fo, Fu – e sau loa Voula, amata loa i; e lē toe pei o le tamaititi lea e sau e leai a ma se mea, ese a le faiga o le phonics, e tele i mea o ata, o le matching. A'o Voula, na sau loa tusitusi, na sau loa, tusa la maybe that is one-way o le soso'o lea; 'aua ai nei maimaua le taimi o le tamaititi; ia identify lelei a matou polokalame e fa'atalitali ai le itu'aiga tamaititi lea. So, e lua la tamaiti lea ua o mai loa galulue i le Fa, Fe, Fi, Fo, Fu – lea ua amata le latou writing. (BTD)*

Our Fa, Fe, Fi, Fo, Fu chart – this is where Voula started when she came, unlike students who come without anything (as in ECE experience), our phonics are done differently with



many picture matching. But Voula, when she came we got her into writing, so that is another way we continue so that we don't waste the student's time, we carefully identify our programme as each student is unique. So there are two, students who come and work with the Fa, Fe, Fi, Fo, Fu chart as they begin their writing.

### **5.3.5 Through play**

Teachers incorporated cultural ways in discovery learning through play and this was evident in the classroom observations. The children were happy, engaged in the Samoan and Pacific related activities such as the special celebrated weeks of each Pasifika language, recital of the tauloto as preparation for White Sunday and worked collaboratively with their peers. They participated in the unit and class routines comfortably and I felt they fit in the new entrant pedagogy where they were supported by a 'buddy'. From observations, behavioural related disruptions to the teaching were minimal.

### **5.3.6 An ideal transition?**

When asked what would be an ideal transitional relationship between Aoga Amata and the bilingual units, five teachers responded that there should be regular visits between the two institutions by teachers and by students and an understanding of the Te Whāriki curriculum. That said, only two of these bilingual teachers (BTC and BTD) had visited an Aoga Amata and two only had heard about the Te Whāriki ECE curriculum. This finding indicates significance awareness raising and actions at this level are important and warrants further research.

BTE, who had experience with students coming from different Aoga Amata, noted:

*I don't want to blame anybody, auā e lē faapea ua atoatoa foi la'u galuega. Faataitaiga (says the student's name in my research) ua seāseā faasamoa, leiloa poo le fale. E i ai i si Aoga Amata e lelei atu i le gagana Samoa, auā e malosi ai a'u tamaiti e o mai i isi Aoga e le o i lau suesuega. (BTE)*

I don't want to blame anybody as my work is not totally good. For example (says the student's name) now hardly speaks Samoan, perhaps it is home. Some Aoga Amata are better in Samoan language usage, because some students are strong but come from Aoga that are not in your research.

## **5.4 Part Three: Factors impacting the transition of the *fau* from Aoga Amata**

A recognition and incorporation of the *fau* was deemed necessary for a secure transition of Samoan students from Aoga Amata into the bilingual primary school and/or into any mainstream school system, be this primary class, secondary school or university. Observations confirmed this in findings from the Aoga Amata that, to parents and teachers, the *fau* signalled identity security for students, was the knowledge they have and hold dear, and was also the pathway to future knowledge building.

The focus of part three is in three sections: firstly, the strengths of the *fau* bilingual teachers drew on in the transition and process and, secondly some of the constraints they experienced in transitioning the *fau* and then a brief 'where now' section.

### **5.4.1 Strengths in the transition process from Aoga Amata to Bilingual unit**

#### **5.4.1.1 Identity**

For these teachers, the first strength supporting the transition of these Aoga Amata students into the bilingual schools was students' feelings of identity as Samoan and their knowledge and understanding of the *faasamoa*. This knowledge set the platform for students' further engagement and knowledge building. In addition, regardless of whether further learning was in the Samoan language or English – these teachers believed the spirit of faith and relationships and associated *faaloalo* behaviours and expectations of the *faasamoa* overarched all learning.

### **5.4.1.2 Relationships and support**

Relationships were central to every activity bilingual teachers used to *soso'o le fau*.

### **5.4.1.3 Collegial**

Teacher BTB shared collegial support amongst the teachings and was proud of her small team:

*We share, we offer, my team is leading the school, e taitai Meiolandre i le Maths, ou te taitai i le Literacy, ae taitai Berasi i le syndicate. (BTB)*

We share, we offer, my team is leading the school, Meiolandre is a leader in Maths, I lead the Literacy, and Berasi leads the syndicate.

Next, relationships with their principals, management teach and other teachers in the school added significant strength to the bilingual programme. Teachers emphasised the importance of having a collective school vision and a shared understanding of the benefits of 'being bilingual'. Most believed they were supported by their principals, although in earlier days (and when there was a change of principal) this was sometimes challenging.

BTB described her school principal's support in this way:

*So, e tautala so'o ai lava le matou pule i staff meetings: when you meet the parents, make the focus a learning, to do with the kids' learning. (BTB)*

So, our principal always said to us at staff meetings: when you meet the parents, make the focus a learning, to do with the kids' learning.

Given her work pressures, BTA appreciated that she had been allocated a teacher aide:

*I am so fortunate to have one to help me out because I would not have survived. (BTA)*

### **5.4.1.4 Parents and community**

All teachers stressed that parental' involvement was crucial to their students' learning and, that parents should understand bilingual philosophy and work together to achieve *loto gatasi* (one purpose). BTE said:

*Ou ke iloa o le mea lega, aga leai le lagolago a makua ona o le makou galulue faakasi, ia ka leiloa pe faapefea oga fai le makou galuega. (BTE)*

I know that if it wasn't for parents' support due to our working together, I don't know how we are going to do our work.

BTC commented that parents' sustained participation with the bilingual unit was directly related to good performances by the teachers and by the students. She said '*ana faapea e lē lelei matou, ua leva ona o ese mātua*' (if we weren't good, parents would have left ages ago). On this point, BTD called their meetings with the parents as 'learning conversations' and as invaluable in building a community of learners by engaging in 'meaningful education focused conversations:

*Well, o le participation ma le commitment a matua, it's engagement. E encourage a la e le pule, come and participate or come and just be there i faiaoga and everybody. Because o le difference of meetings ia ma fono ia e get together ai ma matua – Ours is about learning, it is not administration stuff, it is to do with the kids learning. (BTD)*

Well the participation and commitment of the parents, it's engagement. The principal encourages it: "come and participate or come and just be there" to teachers and everybody. Because the difference of these meetings and our fono with the parents is – Ours is about learning, it is not administration stuff, it is to do with the kids learning.

For BTD, building a community of learners required encouraging parents to talk to their children and to listen was especially paramount. For example:

*Ae e te iloa foi tatou a ta manao e deliver le learning a le tamaititi, we go through the parents. A malamalama matua, e work foi ma lana tamaititi. Ae lē nao le send atu o mea i le tamaititi nao le saini ai o matua, so we look at ways of engaging ma matua. We do our little workshops. O le matou fono lea e fai nei i le vaiaso lea, I'm going to put up developing vocabulary which is the need for the school, e lē lava le vocabulary a le tamaititi. Auā o le focus o le writing, e expect le quality writing ae vaivai le fafagaina o le gagana, so, o le matou meeting la ma matua, and that is what I mean by learning conversations ma matua, e faaali ai graphs o le eseeseega o le learning talk ma le poverty talk. (BTD)*

You know if we want our students' learning to improve, we need to include the parents so that they can work with their children. Rather than sending letters home for parents to sign off, we invite them for workshops. Next week we are going to emphasize vocabulary development, as it is the school goal. Because students need more language content for quality writing and that is what I mean by learning conversations with parents, show them graphs of the difference between learning talk and poverty talk.

All five teachers shared examples of parental involvement in their children's education through support to homework, attending school meetings and to their support at cultural

events. Each noted that in the past few years especially, Samoan parents' engagement in PTA (Parent Teacher Association), had shifted from just 'being there' to participating in discussions about learning and more particularly their own children's learning. They said that through these and other collective discussions, parents were gaining a greater understanding of bilingual education. A few examples of parent support in establishment of the bilingual units were shared:

*Ona fai ai lea o le fono a matua, lagolago e matua, ia malilie loa ma open ai i le 2002. Na open la e (a church minister's name). (BTB)*

Did a parents meeting, got their support and agreement and then opened in 2002. It was opened by a (church minister's name suppressed).

Even in discussions about quality indicators for a successful bilingual unit operation, teachers reiterated the importance of relationships with parents.

*O le participation ma le commitment a matua... it's engagement. (BTD)*

It is the parents' participation and commitment... it's engagement.

*O le talosaga a matou matua, e mananao ia a'oa'o i tamaiti le gagana faasamoa. It is all about sustaining and maintaining the Samoan tradition and Samoan values. O le uiga lena na faatu ai le aoga lena. Ona o mai loa lea o matua ua mananao e faatu se aoga ii. (BTC)*

The parents proposed to have their students learn in the Samoan language. It is all about sustaining and maintaining the Samoan tradition and Samoan values. That is the reason why this aoga was set up (referring to the unit). Then the parents came wanting to set up an aoga over here.

*O tatou bilingual o le tele ia o le support a matua. O le mea foi lena e support ai e le auvaega lea tatou, pei la e sau (the principal's name) e tumu a matou fono all the time. (BTB)*

There is ample support of our bilingual unit from the parents. That is why those in management support us especially when (mentioned the principal's name) visits our meetings which are full all the time.

*We need support from Samoan parents in order for this to work, they are really good supporters so that is the thing I love...and I know that education is more important to them. (BTA)*

#### 5.4.1.5 Curriculum support - The Te Whāriki and Le Taiala mo le Gagana Samoa

Though Le Taiala mo le Gagana Samoa is not mandated or well recognised as a curriculum document, findings were that this had become the main ‘curriculum’ document for these bilingual teachers. That some referred to the Le Taiala as their curriculum document also signalled the absence of a bilingual education curriculum document. From my observations and interviews with the teachers, Le Taiala mo le Gagana Samoa was invaluable to these teachers and thriving in practice. Charts and various displays of the Le Taiala strands were visible in these classrooms alongside the New Zealand curriculum poster.

When I asked BTB if Te Whāriki was used, her response was:

*Leai, matou te faaaogāina lava le matou curriculum ma le curriculum lava a tatou a ia Samoa, Taiala. (BTB)*

No, we use our own curriculum and our own Samoan curriculum, Taiala.

Teacher BTE showed particular enthusiasm in the Te Whāriki as she says:

*E le'i i ai sou malamalama ae ou ke fia iloa ou ke open lava au, a maua so'u avagoa mo le Te Whāriki...ia ua mafai oga maua gisi auala e soso'o ai. (BTE)*

I don't have any understanding but I'm willing to know as I'm open (for learning), if I get an opportunity for the Te Whāriki...get other ways to soso'o.

Teachers drew attention to the lack of access to professional learning and development focusing on an alignment of the New Zealand Curriculum and the Te Whāriki. While the Te Whāriki covers the ages from birth to eight years old, they regarded the absence of a configuration between the two documents was not helpful to the *soso'o* process. BTB said:

*O a'u e lei leva ona uma la'u course Teaching Languages. Auā na fai lava i ai e mo'i o lea e fluent la'u gagana Samoa, ae oute leiloa auala e teach ai le gagana Samoa. Ona o a'u tamaiti, e tele ina tautatala mai tamaiti, o'u tago faasa'o. Ae o le teaching languages, let them talk ona faasa'o mulimuli lea i se isi taimi. (BTB)*

I have just completed my Teaching Languages course. Because I told them although I am fluent in Samoan but I don't know strategies to teach the Samoan language. My students, every time they talk, I correct them. But in teaching languages, let them talk then correct them later at another time.

## **5.4.2 Constraints to the transition process**

Many of the constraints to the transitioning process shared by these teachers, had their genesis in and were directly related to the absence of a national language policy. In their view, if there were a policy, bilingual teaching and teachers would be appropriately resourced and, this in turn would support and reinforce a quality transition.

### **5.4.2.1 National language policy**

All teachers were appreciative of the budgetary support provided by their schools to the bilingual unit:

*Talu ona faatu le matou aoga, o le tele ia o le support a le aoga aemaise a le budget, e aumai le pakeki e fai ai matou resources. (BTB)*

Ever since our school was established, the ample support especially the budget, we receive a resource.

At the same time, they were also keenly aware that the uncertain status of the bilingual units and their resourcing in New Zealand, was firmly related back to the absence of a national language policy. They said, that if there were a language policy, units would be properly resourced and their work to *soso'o le fau i le fau* would have been less arduous and time consuming, particularly with respect to assessment, curriculum and teaching resources. In BTB's view, having a language policy would also be a robust indicator of the importance of Samoan language to parents, the community and the nation. She was also concerned that some students were not gaining fluency in either English or Samoan, and that having a Samoan language policy and assessment process could help prevent this. She said that many of her students confirmed that Samoan was spoken at home, for others there was a mix of English and Samoan while others said 'just English'. In her

view, a policy statement favouring a total immersion environment of Samoan language would change this and reinforce to parents that the Samoan language was important and valued. Other teachers expressed similar concerns about whether and how the Samoan language was being used at home. Teacher BTC indicated that parents should read Samoan stories to their children, that this encouraged a love of reading at school as well. She asked:

*Ia e o atu i le fale, o le a le latou mea e fai? E faapefea ona faaola gagana a tamaiti?*  
(BTC)

When they go home, what do they do? How are students' Samoan language encouraged?

Her concerns were shared by BTB:

*Ana faapea o le a'oa'oaiga lava mai le fale, maimau pe ana o le a'oaiga foi lea mai le fale, e pei lava o lea e o mai uma e fafaga uma ai.* (BTB)

If only the learning (in Samoan) comes from home, if only its encouraged at home, so that when they come, they have been totally immersed.

#### **5.4.2.2 Samoan language advisory group – supporting, guiding and enriching role**

While most of these teachers were confident in their Samoan language fluency and their knowledge of the aganuu, they also believed there was a need to establish a recognised Samoan language advisory team, where they (and others) could test and refine their use of the language. This was especially necessary for example when teaching mathematical and scientific concepts, although each of these teachers had found implementing the New Zealand curriculum using the Samoan culture and language was a challenge. Some standardisation was essential. Furthermore, the expectation that school-parent consultations (written and face-to-face) be in the Samoan language while reports to the school and ERO were in English meant that teachers were constantly translating reports between the two languages. In many cases, they were developing their own words or terms, which were a transliteration of the English terms. Here are some examples shared:



Room	<i>Ruma</i>
Patterns	<i>Pateni</i>
Force	<i>Fosi</i>
Shape	<i>Siepi</i>

These teachers saw an urgency in PLD to support their roles as bilingual teachers. They yearned for depth in their cultural knowledge and their expertise in the Samoan language. Even with the support of Le Taiala mo le Gagana Samoa, translating the English words and concepts used in the differing curriculum areas into Samoan, was an ongoing challenge. BTE shared her worries in deciding what the ‘best’ Samoan terms were for many of the numerical and statistical concepts. She said:

*O la’u planning e faaaogā le faasamoa, o le kele o au faamaumauga e faasamoa, but seiloga ua analyse ona faapalagi lea e faigofie ai pe a o mai asiasiga, ae a leaga loa lou ulu ua faapalagi uma laga o le a kele ai la’u galuega, seiloga lava o le Maths e faapalagi laga e aumai le numeracy strategy koe laga ou ke stuck i upu faasamoa o le statistics... o la’u faikau kusi e faasamoa. (BTE)*

I use Samoan in my planning, most of my documentation use Samoan but only when I analyse then I use English as its easier when visitors come, but when I have a bad day I use English because it adds onto my workload (translating from Samoan to English), English is used in Maths because we are given the numeracy strategy and because I get stuck with translating English statistical words... my storybook reading is in Samoan.

These teachers were very conscious also of whether and how to gauge an appropriate level of aganuu knowledge and Samoan language for their bilingual students, a task made harder by the fact that reading levels in the Samoan language had not been developed or recognised. BTB said ‘ou te musu e aumai le aganuu i totonu leaga e loloto’ (I don’t want to include aganuu as it is deep).

All teachers strongly agreed that there was urgency in having a body they could seek advice from regarding Samoan translations. Such a group could help standardise Samoan language matters and in the New Zealand context for learning and teaching.

### 5.4.2.3 The professional challenges of bilingual teaching

These teachers referred to bilingual teaching as a whole new paradigm of teaching that was vastly different to teaching in the mainstream classes. While they were committed to using aganuu and Samoan language, these teachers acknowledge their professional loyalty to meet the New Zealand Curriculum language requirements and, they did not want to disadvantage their students. Their desire to make sure the *fau* was visible in both Samoan and English inevitably meant a double preparation time. Three said that they read the mainstream curriculum first and highlighted the points they must cover in their programme planning and then integrated the aganuu and Samoan language ‘into’ their planning - or vice versa.

Even efforts to collaborate with other teachers were often made difficult due to time constraints and especially as numbers of students in the bilingual units increased:

*We are over 100 kids now, but e taumafai lava because it is a bilingual approach, aua nei tele tamaiti, aua nei tele tamaiti a le vasega. We are looking at hiring another teacher. (BTC)*

We are over 100 kids now, but we are trying as it is a bilingual approach, don’t want too many kids, don’t want too many kids in a class. We are looking at hiring another teacher.

*Pau a le mea ou ke vaai i ai o le kaimi, sau le Pasifika Education Plan, sau lea mea, at the end of the day it is about them (students), o le mea e lelei mo kamaiki. (BTE)*

The only thing I look at is the time, the Pasifika Education Plan, and so forth, at the end of the day it is about them (students), it is what is good for the students.

At times, they felt unsupported in their teaching tasks:

*O le taimi leni o lea ou te leader ii, ou toe leader i le mainstream. Nao au le leader lea e lua au role. A’o le team la e valu faiaoga. (BTB)*

I am currently the leader here, and leader in the mainstream. I’m the only leader with two roles. However, that team has eight teachers.

*O le mea lea ua maua, so we all meet, we meet through evidence and enquires, looking at assessment and this is what our assessment needs to get through. We all went through, this is the assessment in Samoan, sa fai i le Year 3 and we put that together with the bilingual education group and I was part of it...o taitai uma lava o bilingual. (BTC)*

What happened is, so we all meet, we meet through evidence and enquires, looking at assessment and this is what our assessment needs to get through. We all went through, this is the assessment in Samoan, done for Year 3 and we put together with the bilingual education group and I was part of it...all leaders are from the bilingual unit.

BTA indicated written resources as a major constraint in teaching:

*We wish there are companies out there to provide Samoan books, at the moment we are fortunate to get books from (company's name) but it is only for the lower levels. (BTA)*

#### **5.4.2.4 Bilingual pedagogy**

Three of these teachers had completed studies in bilingual education. However, each of the five teachers said that PLD on the day-by-day organisation of a bilingual curriculum was urgently needed:

*Kailo, laga e lei faia sau pepa bilingual, ae ua e kakau oga i ai gi assessments talafeagai, e dominant a resources a palagi, e takeover lava e lakou. (BTE)*

I don't know as I haven't done a bilingual paper, but there should be relevant assessments, palagi resources are dominant, they take over.

*My training was for a teacher but not a bilingual teacher, that was the reason I didn't want to step in bilingual education. I thought my degree was only for teaching mainstream, that is how I saw it. (BTA)*

#### **5.4.2.5 Assessment of the fau**

The importance of establishing assessment agreed to for the Samoan language and aganuu teachings are discussed in the next chapter.

#### **5.4.2.6 The future?**

If the Samoan bilingual units were a strategy to transitioning the *fau* from Aoga Amata to primary school, what came next? These teachers advocated for the provision of core bilingual units in intermediate schools, a step that would reduce the distance parents had to travel and make the bilingual progresses more accessible. Although four teachers have established networks with their neighbouring intermediates or colleges, BTB said in frustration:

*Ana o se mea la o lea e faaauau i le intermediate, e lelei. Ae leaga e gata a ii, o'o atu loa i o, motu. (BTB)*

If only it was continued at intermediate, which will be good. But this is where it ends, it becomes disconnected when they get there.

## **5.5 Chapter summary**

From the responses from the teachers in the bilingual units, though mirrored in those from the Aoga Amata sector, what is fundamentally clear is the language of achievement and the curriculum at which the bilingual units adheres to. Efforts to ensure aganuu, gagana Samoa and spirituality are paramount to their operation, and teachers were highly aware that these come at a cost – a financial cost – but more importantly a cost to their health due to the demands of the workload (teaching in a bilingual unit).

The absence of a bilingual curriculum, an assessment tool and supporting teaching resources, are left to the discretion of teachers to develop into a workable status. Although the Le Taiala mo le Gagana Samoa became a guideline and at times perceived as the bilingual education curriculum (by the teachers), these demonstrate the teachers' desperate need of support in these identified areas. Without such support, the situation can lead to an overall uncertainty concerning the effective operation of the bilingual units in Aotearoa New Zealand. The next chapter is an attempt to mitigate the issue of an assessment that would capture the *fau*.

## Chapter 6: Fa’afulu – Evaluation of the *fau*

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### 6.1 Introduction

As discussed, schools organise their bilingual teaching in their own way; there are no regulations governing organisation. In four of these schools, the study students transitioned to bilingual units comprising of Years one to six. In one school, bilingual education was continued from year one through to year eight (see Table 5.1). Two of the units operated in full immersion medium (Samoan), one used a balance of 50% Samoan and 50% English and for two units one used a mix of 90% Samoan language and 10% English with the other using 80% Samoan and 20% English. In our talanoa, the bilingual teachers raised questions about how the *fau* was being evaluated in the Aoga Amata and other school settings. They were deeply interested on this point.

Aoga Amata teachers had shared this concern with me for many years both from the point of children’s language knowledge and progression but also to assume teachers that they were achieving goals set. As a result of these concerns, I decided to prepare and pilot a draft cultural assessment tool for Aoga Amata and include it in this study.

This chapter is in two parts. In the first, the bilingual teachers’ views on assessment are outlined. In part two, I outline the stages I followed in preparing and applying a draft Aoga Amata assessment tool, which I have named the Faafulu. Faafulu means to feather when feathering an ietoga or finemat.

It must be noted, that I did not carry out additional observations to apply the draft template (see stage four). This was done using materials already created in the Aoga Amata study.

## 6.2 Part one: Bilingual teachers' views on assessment practices

The bilingual teachers in this study were all in strong agreement that an assessment tool was needed to accurately capture the cultural knowledge and understandings (aganuu and gagana) children brought to school. BTB said that despite the fact that 'we are a bilingual unit, the National Standards testing is all carried out in English'. BTB voiced her frustrations with these words:

*O lea la e fai mai e a'oa'o tamaiti i le gagana Samoa, ae a assess, e assess i le gagana faa Peretania. E disadvantage la tatou tamaiti, leaga ou te alofa i a'u tamaiti, auā a test loa la, o lona uiga o le a struggle loa le mafaufau o le tamaititi. (BTB)*

It's a requirement to use the Samoan language when teaching the children, but when we assess, we assess in English. Our children are disadvantaged, I love (and feel sorry for) my children, because when they are tested (they are tested in English) and so their minds will be struggling.

BTE put the issue very succinctly that an assessment was necessary to assess the aganuu and gagana. In addition, that the current tests (in English) did not give a fair or accurate picture of Samoan students' actual knowledge. For example students most likely 'knew' the concepts underpinning the questions being asked, but could be challenged to answer these because these were presented and assessed in the English language. For BTE bilingual students would achieve higher if tests of pupils knowledge and understanding were carried out in the vernacular. BTE also described the prevailing assessment exercises as built on biased assumptions about Pacific children's ability:

*The PM testing on literacy... Colour Wheel, there is a preconceived belief that bilingual kids will always be behind the mainstream...faapea e lē tataua ona oo atu i le faaiuga o le tausaga ua 'at or above'... ae a faaaogā e a'u tamaiti le tomaiti faitau tusi i le gagana Samoa, e 'at or above', ae a latou lē mananao ai... ou te lē fia vaai foi i ni National Standards e faaaogā i a'u tamaiti... it's the same skill. (BTE)*

The PM testing on literacy... Colour Wheel (I believe) there is a preconceived belief that bilingual kids will always be behind the mainstream... like they should not get at or above by the end of the year) but if I use the same test to test children's reading in Samoan, they would be at or above, if they don't want it, then I don't want any National Standards used on my kids... it's the same skill.

There were questions not only about test content but also about the way tests were administered. Timing was one factor. BTE threw up her hands in horror when describing to me the JAM tool (Junior Assessment of Mathematics) which, she said, required students to identify a number (in English) after it had been shown for a split second. She and other teachers also stressed that pictures used in testing tools should be culturally sensitive and related to children's realities. For instance, when testing for the concept and vocabulary of triangles, could the picture of a triangular *ili* (fan) have been used? BTB also described how through the use of code-switching between Samoan and English she had tried to support and prepare children for being tested in English. This, she said was a really basic point.

All of these teachers stressed very emphatically the value of having some kind of standardisation of assessment processes, especially for language. Each had clearly been extremely proactive in trying to address this challenging task alone and, in discussions with other Samoan language teachers. BTB said:

*Nao na fai a o assessment tools a Samoa ae lei standard ina ma e lei approve i le tele o aoga. (BTB)*

We have some assessment tools designed but are not standardised and not approved by many schools.

Faa-strategy was the term they used to describe their collective efforts to devise their own tests aimed at capturing students' achievements in English and in Samoan. The bilingual units have attempted at developing own samples of Samoan language assessment tools but for their use only. However, their efforts and enthusiasm in preparing their own language assessment tools had at times led to further confusion and uncertainty. They wanted some form of standardisation or agreed-to assessment guidelines, not only to help them plan and add direction to their efforts. They also saw this opportunity as a signal of

‘official’ recognition of bilingual education as opposed to the present situation where this was dependent on the good-will of school communities. Comments included:

*They (assessment procedures) are created but not really standardised as a whole, how would you know a level one kid compare to my level one? We don’t know. (BTA)*

*O le mea lea e i ai tatou tamaiti, e le malamalama i le tatou gagana, e le malamalama foi i le Igilisi. Pau a le gagana lea e i ai o le gagana tafao, e leai se academic language. (BTB)*

Our children do not understand our Samoan language, don’t understand English even. The only language they have is the colloquial language, there is no academic language.

As noted in chapter 5, the absence of teaching materials, the bilingual teachers also developed their own Samoan language literacy and numeracy resources, often using the students’ own stories. The teachers then used these texts for assessment purposes:

*O tusi faasamoa ia na matou faaliliua, ae a lē lelei le tusi ona tago lea o le teineititi tusi le tala... you know they are getting to write persuasive or writing an argument or an inspiration. We do it in two languages, e teach in English ma toe faasamoa uma lava. (BTC)*

These are our own translated books in Samoan, when books are not useful then children write their own stories... we teach in English and then re-do it all in Samoan.

BTB described how children’s familiarisation with the *Pi Tautau* (Samoan alphabet; see Figure 2.2) from their Aoga Amata days was a significant help in literacy programmes in spelling, as in the following example of letter S as ‘S solofanua’ (S horse). She also used the Pi Tautau in assessment as well:

*Ou te tago lava a’u faasa’o. Ae ana test la e le palagi, e le faasa’oa, ae manatua o le prior knowledge lena a le tamaititi. (BTB)*

I see it as correct. But if a palagi tested him, it will be incorrect, but remember – that is the prior knowledge of the child.

All five bilingual units used this chart at new entrant level. In a whole class discussion, I observed BTB and her students developing a story using words they were given. Note the following interchange:

T: *Sei toe vaai tatou i le upu a Tavita. O le a le mea e fesoasoani ia oe e tusi ai lau upu?*



Let's look at Tavita's word. What do we use to help us spell a word?

C: *Fa, Fe, Fi, Fo Fu*

BTD who is a leader of one of the units explained how she had translated the English-graded reading tests into Samoan for use with new entrants from Aoga Amata who, she knew, were highly competent Samoan language speakers.

*O tusi uma ia e base ai reading levels a tamaiti, ua uma ona matou faaliliuina faasamoa...auā foi o le content e taua i le suesueina o le malamalama o le tamaititi.*  
(BTD)

The reading levels are based on these books, so we have translated them into Samoan...because the content is important to see children's comprehension.

### **6.3 Part two: Preparing an assessment tool**

The urgency expressed by the bilingual teachers, along with the concerns shared by Aoga Amata staff, provided the drive for me to prepare and pilot a Samoan cultural assessment tool. This is in four stages of i) review, ii) selection, iii) adaptation and iv) piloting and testing

#### **6.3.1 Step one – review of available evaluation tools**

A number of guidelines for Aoga Amata programmes were reviewed.

##### **6.3.1.1 Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa early childhood curriculum**

Te Whāriki is mandated as the New Zealand ECE curriculum. The Te Whāriki states:

*The Te Whāriki draws on Vygotsky's ecological model of cultural value and the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition. Briefly that everything is learned on two levels. First, through interaction with others (as in the home, family neighbourhood context) and then integrated into the individual's mental structure. Te Whāriki stipulates that "assessment of children should encompass all dimensions of children's learning and development and should see the child as a whole (Ministry of Education, 1996b. p. 30).*

The Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996b) was the driver for the preparation of the *Kei Tua o te Pae Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars* (Ministry of Education, 2004), which further highlighted that learning must build on children’s knowledge and interests. The Kei Tua o te Pae booklet of ECE assessment exemplars highlight three significant areas for those involved in children’s learning of noticing, recognising and responding. The exemplars are to support children’s learning by “fostering ongoing and diverse learning pathways” (Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 3). Kei Tua o te Pae literally means beyond the horizon, emphasising that teacher’s role is to capture children’s knowledge and to continually build and structure this to the uttermost possibilities.

### **6.3.1.2 Le Taiala mo le Gagana Samoa**

Le Taiala mo le Gagana Samoa: The Gagana Samoa Guidelines heralds a firm commitment to the vision expressed in the New Zealand curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2009a) that ‘education must enable all students to develop key competencies to become active lifelong learners’. These guidelines also strongly support the Learning Languages area of the New Zealand curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007).

The Le Taiala mo le Gagana Samoa does set the goals, activities and ‘assessment tools’ for Aoga Amata through to secondary schooling. The four strands are: *Gagana Tautala* or Speaking (*Faalogoa ma le Tautala*), *Gagana Tusitusi* or Writing (*Faitau ma le Tusitusi*), *Gagana Vaaia* or Visual and *A’oa’oga Faaleaganuu* or Cultural Learning.

Following lengthy consultation and views that these assessment guidelines were unclear, the Taiala mo le Gagana Samoa was revised in 2009 (Ministry of Education, 2009a), and extended to include tertiary level study. The four strands were reduced to three: *Poto i le*

*Gagana* (Language Knowledge), *Fesootaiga* (Communication) and *Atamai i le Aganuu* (Cultural Knowledge) in the 2009 version.

Le Taiala mo le Gagana Samoa (Ministry of Education, 2009a) sets out the ‘purposes of assessment’ and ‘suggested assessment approaches’ for the Aoga Amata. There is also a section dedicated to the ‘transitions’ into primary schooling (p. 42). It appeared that the assessment tools used at the time were viewed as adequate to capture aganuu, Samoan language and spirituality and to support programme planning and evaluation. In all cases however, actual assessments were at the discretion of the Aoga Amata staff who were to “consider how they will gather, analyse and use information so that it is effective in improving learning and teaching” (Ministry of Education, 2009a, p. 22). As with the Te Whāriki, there is a focus on show “assessment of children should encompass all dimensions of children’s learning and development and should see the child as a whole” (Ministry of Education, 1996b, p. 30).

### **6.3.1.3 Other MOE documents**

Other MOE documents reviewed to identify factors which brought impact on assessment included: The ECE Strategic Plan *Pathways to the Future*; *Ngā Huarahi Arataki*, *ECE Regulations 2008* and the past *Quality Journey* and the *Quality in Action* as outlined earlier in this research.

Finally, I reviewed legislative documents focusing on Pasifika student achievement including the Pasifika Education Plan (Ministry of Education, 2012, 2006b). The Pasifika Education Plan recognises language, culture, and identity as inherently linked, and central to its goals (Ministry of Education, 2009). Next, the ERO Pacific Strategy Plan 2013-2017 (Education Review Office, 2013a). While both these documents emphasised the importance of learners’ language and culture, there is little on how this is to be assessed.

### 6.3.2 Step two – Selection of a template

To design an assessment tool for Aoga Amata that takes account of the aganuu, gagana and spirituality, I began by reviewing the evaluation tools commonly used and decided to use the learning stories template (see table 6.1) introduced by Carr (2001). Learning stories are a narrative approach aimed to “reflect the learning better than the performance indicators” (Carr, 2001, p. 93).

**Table 6.1 Learning story template**

Child’s name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Observer: \_\_\_\_\_

Te Whāriki Strands:	Learning Dispositions:	Notes: Writing space
Well-being - Mana Atua	Being involved	
Belonging - Mana Whenua	Taking an interest	
Contribution - Mana Tangata	Taking responsibility	
Communication - Mana Reo	Expressing an idea or a feeling	
Exploration - Mana Aoturoa	Persisting with difficulty	
<b>Short-term review</b> What are the main points in this learning story? (What learning did I think went on here?)	<b>What next? Questions:</b> How might we encourage this interest, ability, strategy, disposition, story to:	

All Aoga Amata and ECE teachers used this learning template and so I would just be adapting a learning tool that they and their children and parents were already familiar

with. More importantly, oracy is a prominent feature of Samoan culture, and thus children's stories and narratives are meaningful representations of their realities.

The learning story template consists of basic information (such as child's name, date of observation and the name of the observant) with writing space for teachers to document the children's observations. Included are the Te Whāriki strands (available in English and Maori languages) with the learning dispositions with a 'what next' box for teachers' suggestions of extending children's learning.

The learning story approach follows the following steps.

- Teachers observe a particular child or children and record what takes place, if these may be child/children's/teacher/s' verbal exchanges or physical movements.
- These stories are entered into the template. Teachers then interpret these according to the learning dispositions or Te Whāriki strands (see column one). Aims are to highlight children's strengths.
- Teacher analysis is entered in the *short-term review* box (see bottom of template) and these are shared with parents. For example at PTA meetings or displayed in Aoga or filed in the childrens' learning portfolios.
- Finally, suggestions arising in these discussions are entered into the *where to next* box and then further pursued in Aoga Amata programmes.

Teacher observations are often accompanied by children's photos or pieces of their work as evidence or examples, and together the learning stories provide a repertoire of childhood preferences for example and memories. Documentation is done carefully so as to ensure parents' voices are a part of the child's learning story.

### 6.3.3 Step three: The Faafulu – adapted template

**Table 6.2: Faafulu and learning stories**

Igoa/Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Uiga o le igoa/Meaning of name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Suafa o Matua/Name of parents: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Alalafaga/Village: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Faalupega/Village salutations: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Faiaoga/Teacher as in teacher, parents, uncles: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Siosiomaga/Learning environment: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Aso/Day: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Te Whāriki Strands &amp; Learning Dispositions:</b>	<b>AGANUU- culture GAGANA- language FAALEAGAGA/FAA KERISIANO - spirituality</b>	<b>Notes – writing space</b>
<p>Well-being - Mana Atua Being involved</p> <p>Belonging – Mana Whenua Taking an interest</p> <p>Contribution – Mana Tangata Taking responsibility</p> <p>Communication – Mana Reo Expressing an idea or a feeling</p> <p>Exploration – Mana Aoturoa Persisting with difficulty</p>	<p><i>Aganuu</i> (Cultural values) alofa, faaaloalo, tautua Including feagaiga, vā fealoai, sulī, tofi, aiga... Alagaoa lagolago</p> <p><i>Gagana/ Samoan Language</i> <i>Taiala mo le Gagana Samoa:</i></p> <p>i) Poto i le Gagana (Language knowledge)</p> <p>ii) Feso’otaiga (Communication)</p> <p>iii) Atamai i le Aganu’u (Cultural knowledge)</p> <p><i>Faaleagaga/Faa Kerisiano</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tala/Pese/Tauloto mai le Tusi Paia. Aoga Faifeau, Aoga Aso Sa (Story/song/memory verse from the Bible, Pastor’s Sch, Sunday Sch)</li> <li>• A’oa’oga faaleagaga/faa Kerisiano: Eg honest, sharing, caring, turn taking... (Christian/Spiritual teachings)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Short term review</b>  <b>SOALAPULE</b> – Faaaoga leo o matua, tamaiti, faiaoga, ma le malu o le tamaititi. (Use a balance of all voices and the child’s cultural profile details)          What are the main points in this learning story?          What learning did I think went on here?</p>	<p><b>What next?</b>          Questions: How might we encourage this interest, ability, strategy, disposition, story to:</p>	

Table 6.2 presents the adaptations to the learning story. These are noted in blue. First, not only the child's name but also the meaning (or heritage) of their name, their village and village salutations may be entered. This knowledge is important knowledge to children's identity and their knowledge of the faasamoa. Second, in column two the attributes are presented in the Samoan language and cultural terms. The very listing of these qualities in the Samoan language not only supports relevant and accurate assessment, but acts as a prompt to teachers, parents and to the children. Note that as expressed by the teachers from both sectors if the terms *faaleagaga* and *faa Kerisiano* (or spirituality and Christianity) are taken to be inseparable.

#### **6.3.4 Step four – Testing**

As noted, these examples draw on data already collected as part of this study. This was not an add-on activity. In sum, I tested the Faafulu in two ways, firstly to see if it was able to capture children's knowledge of their family, and secondly to verify the effectiveness of Faafulu as a general cultural assessment tool.

The following are the three examples of Faafulu application in Aoga Amata.

##### **6.3.4.1 Example 1: Faigame sharing his work in his learning portfolio.**

**Table 6.3: Faafulu 1 Faigame (male) – Learning story - Lelei tele lau kuka (what a great cook)**

<b>Igoa</b>	Faigame (4.11 tausaga)	<b>Faalupega:</b>	-
<b>Uiga o le igoa</b>	“Igoa o lo’u papa” (my grandfather’s name)	<b>Faiaoga:</b>	Vaifafo
<b>Suafa o matua</b>	Tagoilelagi ma Sinaitaaga	<b>Siosiomaga:</b>	Tulimanu o Moemitiga (Fantasy Corner in Aoga Amata)
<b>Alalafaga:</b>	Vatia, American Samoa	<b>Aso</b>	-
<b>Te Whāriki Strands &amp; Learning Dispositions:</b>	<b>AGANUU, GAGANA, FAALEAGAGA/FAA KERISIANO</b>		<b>Narrative</b>
Well-being - Mana Atua-Being involved	<i>Aganuu</i> Kuka – sapisui & talo, e tau mai ai le fiafia e ‘ai i mea’ ai faa Samoa. Toe e tuu avanoa i ai lona tina/aiga e fai sona sao i le tapenaga o mea taumafa		This is our sharing on one of the pictures about his cooking. S represents my talking.
Belonging – Mana Whenua-Taking an interest	O Faigame le uii o le aiga, ae o ona uiga ma faamatalaga e ta’u mai ai lona silafia o le mafuaaga e kuka ai mea’ ai. E iloa le fesootaiga o le sapisui ma le talo.		<b>S:</b> O le a lena kuka e fai? ( <i>What are you cooking?</i> )
Contribution – Mana Tangata-Taking responsibility	Kuka – faaali ai le fiafia o Faigame e tautua e ala i le kuka. E usitai i faiaoga.		<b>F:</b> Lea e fai le sapisui ma se talo ( <i>Making chop-suey and a taro</i> )
Communication – Mana Reo-Expressing an idea or a feeling	<i>Gagana/ Samoan Language</i> O le faaaogāina o le ‘se’ ma le ‘le’ (se talo, le talo), ua ta’u mai ai lona tomai faa-le-taitai. Ua ia sui ina a’u upu, ae faaaogā le upu fou (le) e ta’u mai ai lona silafia o le eseeseaga o ia upu.		<b>S:</b> Hmm, fia ai a i se sapisui ma se talo ( <i>Hmm, want to eat chop-suey and a taro</i> )
Exploration – Mana Aoturoa-Persisting with difficulty	Na i ai taimi ou te nanu i ai, ae faa Samoa mai lava. E i ai foi ata ua leva ona i ai i lana tusi, ae na mana lava e faamatala mai. “Talu ai ona” – an advance sentence structure, showing knowledge of Samoan formal responses. Faigame has shown leadership through his use of Samoan language.		<b>F:</b> E lē fia ‘ai a’u i se talo tele, e fia ‘ai a’u i le talo laititi ( <i>I don’t want to eat a big taro, I want to eat the small taro</i> )
	<i>Faaleagaga/Faa Kerisiano</i> Wants to eat small taro to avoid getting bigger, stay healthy Good family relationships at home An obedient child.		<b>S:</b> Aisea? ( <i>Why?</i> ) <b>F:</b> Talu ai e leaga, e lapo’a ai lo’u manava. ( <i>Because it is bad, my stomach will be big.</i> )
<b>Short-term review</b>	What next? Questions: How might we encourage this interest, ability, strategy, disposition, story to:		
<b>SOALAUPULE</b> – Faaoga leo o matua, tamaiti, faiaoga, ma le malu o le tamaititi. (Use a balance of all voices and the child’s cultural profile details)	Ave ni luitau faale-gagana e le gata e fou i lana faalogo toe faaopopo ai upu o lana utuvagana. (Provide more learning opportunities that would challenge but add new Samoan words to his vocab)		
What are the main points in this learning story?	Faataitaiga – Tekonolosi ma le Faa-Saienisi. (For example – new words in technology and science)		
What learning did I think went on here)	Faatino le faiga o le umu. (Do a umu or hangi)		
Faigame o se taitai e ala i lana gagana (Faigame leads using gagana Samoa)			



#### **6.3.4.1.1 Interpretation of Faigame's Faafulu**

Faigame demonstrated a careful choice and use of Samoan words. For example, vocabulary and the ability to manipulate Samoan language structural features. For example, as he distinguished between *se talo* (any taro) and *le talo* (the taro) and *laititi* (small) and *telē* (big). So verbalising metalinguistic skills (Bialystok, 1999), several strengths at how Faigame used the Samoan language, which are:

- a) Faigame did not want *any* taro, but *the* taro, and small (laititi).
- b) Usage of *talū ai* is rare for children to use at this age however; it shows the depth of his Samoan language knowledge and use. This aligns with Laurent and Martinot's (2009) study of the emergence of metaphonological ability in English-French preschoolers.
- c) The switch from *se* to *le* is indicative of confidence and demonstrates his level of fluency. These strengths (or indicators) of language ability only become evident when analysed through the lens of Samoan language. It analysed in this way indicating how and where Faigame's teachers can provide challenging opportunities to build Samoan vocabulary and increase cognitive development. In this example, Faigame also showed knowledge of *aganuu*. For example, our *talanoa* showed how he knows his place at home (youngest).

#### **6.3.4.2 Example 2 – A talanoa with Voula at the library corner**

**Table 6.4: Faafulu 2 Voula (female) – Learning story: Language and cultural values**

<p><b>Igoa:</b>  <b>Uiga o le igoa:</b>  <b>Suafa o matua:</b>  <b>Alalafaga:</b>  <b>Faalupega:</b>  <b>Faiaoga:</b>  <b>Siosiomaga:</b>  <b>Aso:</b></p>	<p>Voula Taitaifonokomitiautoeaina  <i>“Igoa o matua ma tiute faa-ekalesia o matua o matua”</i> (grandparents)          Talavou ma Tilala          Magiagi &amp; Vaiala          -          Konelila          Tulimanu o Tusi (Library corner)</p>	
<p><b>Te Whāriki Strands &amp; Learning Dispositions:</b></p>	<p><b>AGANUU</b>  <b>GAGANA</b>  <b>FAALEAGAGA/FAA KERISIANO</b></p>	<p><b>Narrative</b></p>
<p>Well-being - Mana Atua          Being involved</p> <p>Belonging – Mana Whenua          Taking an interest</p> <p>Contribution – Mana Tangata          Taking responsibility</p> <p>Communication – Mana Reo          Expressing an idea or a feeling</p> <p>Exploration – Mana Aoturoa          Persisting with difficulty</p>	<p><i>Aganuu/Culture</i>          Respects her family members – used <u>ua maliu</u> to refer to her uncle’s death.          Loves her uncle as she repeatedly said ‘oki’ during our talanoa, indicating the impact of the death. A considerable amount of her art work she claimed is about her uncle.          Is aware of her younger brother in the Aoga with her, and looks out for him.</p> <p><i>Gagana/ Samoan Language</i>          Application of the words <u>maliu</u> and oki (oti). Very advanced.          When asked ‘why’ questions, response starts with ‘talui ai’ (because of)</p> <p><i>Faaleagaga/Faa Kerisiano</i>          Death is a sad topic for her to talk about, but she appeared to be very comfortable. Voula’s family have strong church connections, thus she is familiar with funerals and Biblical teachings to do with death. (these details I was provided by both the teachers and the parent)</p>	<p>Voula chooses each book by looking at the cover and inside. As we talanoa about her portfolio, she keeps choosing books and reads them (in Samoan) to me using the pictures. Says <i>faafetai</i> (thank you) and <i>faamolemole</i> during our talanoa when I read something to her. She was familiar with the books.</p> <p>Our talanoa about her work in her portfolio. I mentioned the words ‘aunty’ and ‘uncle’, then she started talking about her uncle and papa who have passed on. Voula kept using the word <i>oki</i> to describe dead, until I asked if she knew what the word <i>oki</i> meant. She quickly responded <i>ua maliu</i> (respectful word for dead, which is mainly used by adults in a formal context).</p> <p>Voula’s younger brother kept close to us but did not contribute to our talanoa, however an illustration of mixing the two age groups (toddlers and young children) together.</p>
<p><b>Short term review</b>  <b>SOALAUPULE</b> – Faaoga leo o matua, tamaiti, faiaoga, ma le malu o le tamaititi.          (Use a balance of all voices and the child’s cultural profile details)          What are the main points in this learning story?          A very confident young woman          Aware of formal and informal Samoan words          What learning did I think went on here)          Faigame o se taitai e ala i lana gagana. (Faigame leads using gagana Samoa)</p>	<p><b>What next?</b>          Questions: How might we encourage this interest, ability, strategy, disposition, story to:          E faapefea ona faaaauu: <b>Confidence in Samoan language use</b> – provide more ‘gagana faaaloalo’ (respect language).          Teacher: look at ways to introduce challenging Samoan words to Voula.          Eg – to bathe (taele, faamalu, penapena) - to eat (‘ai, taumafa, tausami...)</p>	

#### **6.3.4.2.1 Interpretation of Voula's Faafulu**

Library books in this small library room were in English. Voula spoke Samoan 100% of the time with me and, she selected Samoan language books. Her sense of duty was evident in her social behaviours; she placed all the books back on the shelf in the right places when she had finished browsing them. She also suggested we move to another quieter place to talk – so making room for others to use the library. Voula was also continually on the lookout for her brother who was at the Aoga Amata – and she always said *faafetai* (thank you) and *faamolemole* (please) to other children and to me.

In our discussions, Voula was a confident speaker. For example, her speech distinguished being the *tautala lelei* (using t and n) register of the Samoan language at all times and she used the word *maliu*, which is a more respectable term for dying than *oti* (died). Her knowledge of *maliu* suggests a closeness to her *aiga potopoto* (extended family) and also church events where she would probably have heard this term.

#### **6.3.4.3 Example 3 – Mesina sharing her work in her learning portfolio**

##### **6.3.4.3.1 Interpretation of Mesina's Faafulu**

Mesina's father is Scottish and she said that English is mostly spoken at home. Her use of Samoan was minimal, however her mannerisms and conduct reflected her knowledge of Samoan *aganuu*. Her interactions her teachers and other children also highlighted her understandings of knowledge and *aganuu*.



their use of Samoan language. The high-frequency words such as ‘*o la’u* \_\_\_\_\_’, and *o lo’u* \_\_\_\_\_ (the \_\_\_\_\_ is mine), AND ‘*o a’u ma* \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_ and I) highlights children’s pride in ownership of their work and their belongings. It is also highly evident of their autonomy in having control of their surroundings, but more significantly in not isolating themselves from their families. Nevertheless, such words are inevitably salient and vital in deconstructing the attention given to the notion of ‘self’ in the ECE sector. Reciprocity of Samoan cultural values (love, respect and service) are both explicit and implicit, which re-directs attention to the collective rather than to the individual. The promotion and significance of the *self* in documents such Self-Review Guidelines (Education Review Office, 2015b; Ministry of Education, 2006a) writings on the *child’s* interest and the *child’s* image are relevant in pursuant of quality teaching and learning. The children’s occasional responses using ‘*o la’u*’ and ‘*o lo’u*’ (possessive pronouns), referred to their belongings but mainly towards their families. Their charge in asserting human belonging to them as people, designates a certain level of comfort in feeling that these humans (in the form of dad, mum, aunty, uncle and so forth) own them and vice versa. Thus, Samoan children’s sense of communal is easily visible in their use of Samoan language.

Therefore, the children’s families are instrumental in their learning and how they behave in Aoga Amata. A Samoan proverb of ‘*o le aiga, o le taupega’afa o feoi poo sulii*<sup>17</sup>’ (Tofaeono-Tanuvasa, 2009, p. 10) elaborates on a robust continuum of generations within an aiga, which is evident with families in this study. Parents and teachers both valued aganuu, Samoan language and *ola faaleagaga* (spiritual life), which resulted in children

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<sup>17</sup> This proverb refers to the family as the synthesis of ancestors and descendants.

drawing on their families are paramount to their learning. Perhaps children's high preference of families as a *fau*, is a way of acknowledging their parents and teachers for continued family-oriented presence in Aoga Amata.

Secondly, children have a high regard of the Samoan language in their learning. This is obvious at how they cleverly employ Samoan language to lead a discussion. In particular code-switching between the t/n and k/g demonstrated how children have recognised the context at which these registers are used. The t and n are mainly used in formal contexts (for instance, talofa) and on the contrary the k and g (as in kalofa) are used in informal settings. Such a skill requires a high level of intelligence where children independently decide which code to use in response to what has been asked of them. More importantly is their overall awareness of juggling the two registers within the two learning contexts of Aoga Amata and in Samoan bilingual units. It is a demonstration of their autonomy and a higher level of thinking. The confidence to switch comfortably without hesitation requires qualities of leadership. Although they eventually revert back to the t/n, they make the decision themselves when to revert; which demonstrates their developing cognitive skills.

Due to the nature of Samoan language, it clearly highlighted the repertoire of leadership qualities children are able to embrace. Moreover, the teachers use the t/n intensively in the verbal interactions with the children. Though the questions were asked using the t and n, the children would initially respond in the same manner and then switch back using the k and g. This is the influence of the home environment where colloquial Samoan language is dominant in conversations amongst family members.

Linguistically, the use of the t/n allows for an increased repertoire of words, as some words using k/g are acceptable in the t/n register; for instance, *suka* for sugar (Lee Hang,

2015). Prominent Samoan linguist Aiono Dr Fanaafi Le Tagaloa believes in the strength of both registers (T/N and K/G) “as long as the vernacular is used for communication and education” (Le Tagaloa, 1996, p. 80). Thus, children in Aoga Amata and Samoan bilingual units have the potential to accumulate high numbers of words in their vocabulary through code-switching.

Lastly, but equally important, Faafulu has provided a prominent space and opportunity for children’s spiritual and Christian values. Though these values often overlap with the *aganuu* aspect of the *fau*, it confirms Meleisea’s (1987) argument of Christianity being Samoanised. As the programme for most Aoga Amata start with a *lotu* and include recital of biblical memory verses, singing hymns and also praying – spirituality as in *ola faaleagaga* and *ola faa-Kerisiano* (Christianity) is truly alive in Aoga Amata.

## **6.5 Chapter summary**

There are pluses, minuses, and interesting possibilities with the Faafulu. First, regarding their family genealogy and heritage, I found the children eager and proud to share their knowledge of this. They shared confidently about their families with joy while claiming ownership of family members and belonging to an *aiga*. That was a bonus.

I believed the Faafulu is a workable and an effective tool for the following reasons. Faafulu proposes an alternative way to identify knowledge and skills of *aganuu* and children’s articulate use of Samoan language as well as their spiritual presence. The importance of these examples as indicators and markers of what teachers should highlight and perhaps adhere to the philosophy of Aoga Amata. With familiarity of the learning stories, Faafulu will be easily understood and therefore successfully executed.

Children's cultural competencies are a shared responsibility. How true it is that responsibility is realised as a consistent effort of the collective. Faafulu calls for the human solidarity of Aoga Amata teachers, parents and aiga to pull from within their souls what is rightfully a true record of the child's learning from beyond the horizon. It is not enough to be a fluent speaker, but one needs to be a quality proficient speaker of gagana Samoa. All those involved in the child's learning must have depth in their Samoan cultural knowledge. For a dynamic and true adherence to the philosophy of Aoga Amata, collective and communal cultural commitment is required. Only then does Faafulu come closer to valuing aganuu, Samoan language and spirituality. Faafulu is an introduction of a pursuit in mainstreaming Samoan knowledge in early childhood education.

As Faafulu opens a new body of knowledge for assessment of Samoan children in early childhood settings, it is hoped that not only the children but everyone involved likewise experience the empowerment that the tool has been able to highlight. It is in its initial development phase, and thus there are opportunities for Aoga Amata practitioners, future scholars and community leaders to amend and/or improve faafulu to do justice to our children. Faafulu embraces learning stories and adds qualities that have been identified as the *fau*, and that as an emerging early childhood provider, Aoga Amata has potential to juxtapose the New Zealand milieu of assessment tools and the affirming value of the *fau* in early learning.



### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter is a discussion of the findings regarding teachers, parents and children's understanding of the *fau* (culture), its practice and factors impacting it. The major finding was that parents and teachers had a clear desire that the faasamoa be embedded in learning and teaching in the early years especially, especially the reason why they had enrolled their children in the Aoga Amata and then the Samoan bilingual unit. For some, the Aoga Amata learnings were a continuation of what parents were teaching at home, while for others, and in particular the *afatasi*<sup>18</sup> parents, enrolling their children in Aoga Amata was more to support and enrich home learnings. Despite being a minority population in New Zealand, all participants were strong in the belief that culture was of central importance to identity security and to further learning whether this be in the formal or informal setting, in English or in Samoan. This commitment by a minority population to educating their children in the aganuu, aligns with experiences of other migrant and diaspora groups such as the French in Canada (Freynet & Clement, 2015), Chinese in Auckland (Wu, 2009) and other Pacific populations such as the Samoans in the United States of America (Tagaloa, 2010).

### 7.2 What is the *fau*?

This question has great importance given that the term culture is defined, used and conceptualised in so many ways, as noted in chapter two. Hence my decision to use the term *fau* in this thesis, to signify culture. In many cases, there has been an assumption

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<sup>18</sup> A term in the Samoan language to describe a person of mixed racial heritage. Usually to someone who is half Samoan and half of another ethnicity.

that language is culture and speaking the language implies understanding of the values and beliefs (Aiono, 1986). This was not the case for the participants in the study. While they considered a relationship between *aganuu* and *gagana*, these parents and teachers also believed that there was a clear distinction between the two. Not only that, they emphasised the spiritual as a third overarching component and overarching all (i.e. the spiritual in everything). Participants' addition of spirituality as a third and key element in the *fau* was a major and significant research finding. For these participants, spirituality signified both the Almighty God as in *ola faa-Kerisiano* and also the *ola faaleagaga*: responses did not distinguish between the two. Children in the study also demonstrated a faith in the Creator God and Christian teachings in their conversations and in the pictures they drew and in their actions. These findings confirm the words of Gratton (1948), an early missionary to Samoa, who wrote almost 80 years ago that "no review of contemporary Samoan society, however cursory it may be, can be considered adequate if it does not include some discussion of church life and activities, since these constitute an interest that extends into every phase of Samoan life" (p. 126). These findings also confirm the central place of spirituality to *aganuu* in the daily life (Du Plessis & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2009) and the belief that Samoans need never feel alone or isolated because they are spiritually linked to and an integral part of the cosmos (Tui Atua, 2009b).

Teachers described their post as a calling from God, and that being responsible for the intellectual, social and spiritual welfare of children was a prestigious and honourable profession. Furthermore, this responsibility did not stop with the physical presence of the children, but reached deep into the soul, in line with Maori education expert Pere's (1988) words, to connect with one's *wairua* or spirit. In sum, these Samoan teachers believed that great teachers connected with their students through their being and this was communicated not only through the subjects taught and the pedagogical tools employed,

but through the heart – which holds all things together (Palmer, 2003).

This relationship between spirituality, aganuu and gagana aligns with Ieremia's (2012, p.2) argument that “*o le gagana na te faaupu tu ma aga o le atunuu*” (Samoan language serves the Samoan culture) and both Aiono (1996) and Fuatai (2011) who argue that Samoan language defines and illustrates the essence of Samoan culture. Tui Atua (2009) also posits that “a faasamoa that cannot speak to the heart and soul is a faasamoa that will die” (2009, p. 60). On this point, Aoga amata teachers shared their disquiet that while the ECE and MOE policies and practices gave priority to ‘being able to speak the language’, there was less recognition of the spiritual beliefs, understandings and practices which are embedded in language. These points warrant further research, especially in relation to Samoan language teaching and practices in the formal school setting.

These findings about the importance of the spiritual, reinforces the rightness of my decision to use Voi’s (2000) definition of culture as a starting point in this thesis, so as to take account of the holistic nature of culture. As noted:

*Culture comprises the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or a social group. It includes not only the arts and letters but modes of life, fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs (Voi, 2000, p. 217).*

This conceptualisation also fits the Samoan and the Pacific worldview of what is important in life (Du Plessis & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2009).

As noted, in the Pacific worldview, the Creator God, people and resources are the significant elements and maintaining a harmonious relationship between these elements is the key to the good life for family and community members (Du Plessis & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2009). While Samoan ideas and notions of culture surround behaviour, ideals, roles and responsibilities within the faamatai, the inseparableness of aganuu from Christianity is clearly defined (Meleisea, 1987).

## 7.2.1 Importance of culture

Despite parents' diverse backgrounds by education, employment, time in New Zealand, and proficiency in Samoan and/or English, all considered the *fau* as absolutely foundational to their children's learning and to their children's lives. For these participants, the *fau* signified *identity and belonging, was a platform for academic or schooling success, and was a right*. Each is discussed below.

### 7.2.1.1 Identity

Participants strongly believed that knowing one's heritage and having the opportunity to practise this were central elements to a Samoan sense of identity, esteem and belonging. This supports Wilson's (2010) New Zealand study of a positive relationship between Samoan language, culture and identity. These findings also resonate with global research on Welsh identity (Davidson & Piette, 2000) and with a study by Charles and Davies (1997) that language is a "significant marker of belonging to Welsh communities" (p. 416), as well as with research in migrant Jewish communities (Cohen & Wertheimer, 2006; Shevitz, 2005).

These participants' conceptualisation of identity security support the Te Whāriki curriculum guidelines that 'a sense of belonging' is significant for children's holistic development, and the goals of the Kohanga Reo programme as well (McClutchie, 2007; Spolsky, 1995; Tangaere & McNaughton, 2003). Identity security is also the platform for world-renowned indigenous programmes in early childhood education, such as the Punana Leo in Hawaii (Wilson, 1998) and the Arapaho preschools in Wyoming (Gross, 1951). In each of these latter two, the aims are to revive and reclaim cultural identity through sharing "an integral partnership with cultural instruction and indigenous language" (Stiles, 1997, p. 25). Tongan educator Helu-Thaman (1993; 2008), and Maori

researchers Bishop and Glynn (1999) also endorse the importance of connecting to culture as engendering and reinforcing a collective sense of belonging. Cultural identity is also the platform for the UNESCO Declaration on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore (UNESCO, 1989) and the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003). In addition, UNESCO (2007) with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, highlights children's cultural rights as significant to their existence, which is supported by Huffer (2006).

Of great interest and warranting further study is the findings that the New Zealand-born parents in this study did not consider place of birth (e.g the homelands) as a major defining factor in identity. In their view, a sense of *loto nuu* (belonging to Samoa) and *tautua* (service) were of more importance to identity security. At the same time, these parents voiced their concerns that their children develop confidence in defending their Samoan identity, and furthermore, that their children be able to communicate with their Samoan elders, as Wilson (2010) posits. This desire to acknowledge, establish and form links with their wider extended family, was evidenced also in parents giving their children highly significant and precious family names, with the hope that this would encourage their children to trace their genealogies into the future. These views of identity security and maintenance echo Altugan (2015) that people sustain their identity in social surroundings outside the immediate family networks.

#### **7.2.1.2 Academic success**

In addition to the *fau* as being a fundamental tool to identity security, these teachers and parents understood that the relationship between secure identity and academic success: that secure identity was a strong basis for future learning (see UNESCO, 2000; Gluckman, 2011; Purkey, 1967). As teacher ATC commented that 'when children have confidence

in themselves as Samoan children, they will achieve'. Two parents also shared that they viewed the primary school progress of their elder children as being due to their feelings of identity security and confidence in the Aoga Amata.

The view that a Pacific embedded ECE programme supports children's later learning fits findings from this ground-breaking tracking study of Pacific students who transitioned from 25 Pasifika ECEs into to mainstream primary classrooms (Tagoilelagi-Leota, McNaughton, MacDonald, & Farry, 2004; 2005). That study found that Samoan children showed a significant increase in English reading skills, comprehension and vocabulary in the primary school setting, one month after leaving Aoga Amata. Those findings also align with other New Zealand studies by Mitchell and Mara (2010), Mitchell, Meagher-Lundberg, Mara, Cubey, and Whitford (2009), Tanielu (2004), and also global studies. For example, Tabors and Snows' (2001) tracking of Latino children's progress in transitioning from Spanish speaking ECE settings to English medium classrooms found that these children's collective use of language and cultural practices was a contributing factor to their academic achievement in mainstream schools. A correlation between self-concept and academic achievement was also found in Slovenian and French immersion classes (Kobal & Musek, 2001) which again supports Purkey's notion of self-concept and school achievement (Purkey, 1967).

The focus of my study was on the transition process of the *fau*, rather than on any academic success this might engender at this early time. However, that aspect does warrant further study.

### **7.2.1.3 Rights**

This study drew attention to how Samoan perceptions of rights and cultural rights differ from the ways these are conceptualised in global conventions such as UNESCO (2003;

2007). As noted, the legal definitions of the rights of a child as enshrined in international reports were not prominent in views shared in this study. However, teachers and parents did have a strong view of cultural rights. They saw this as children's tofi – and viewed the teaching of the *fau* as a cultural responsibility. Parents and teachers referred to the *fau* as their tofi as a right and also a duty bestowed by the Creator God. As Mara (2000) says, “Samoa parents desired for their children to grow up knowing who they are in their aiga” (p. 18). The conceptualization of tofi also implies a connecting relationship with family (who have gone before and are to come) and the cosmos (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1998; Pisi, 2014; Tui Atua, 2009). More specifically however, tofi was seen as children's place, an entitlement and responsibility within the family and the community systems. From the spiritual perspective, tofi was and is a heritage and a gift from God (Liuaana, 2013; Tima, 2013; Tofaeono, 2000). Samoan theologians pay tribute to the Almighty God who gifted children as tofi.

Teachers described their decision to work in Aoga Amata and the Samoan bilingual units as a calling and tautua. As educators, their tofi was to ensure children access quality cultural teaching and learning. In chapter two, I argued that tofi signifies children's rights to their heritage. That tofi signified cultural responsibilities of *suli*, *gafa* (genealogy) and *faalupega* (village pedigree) and these cannot be renounced. In this vein, these teachers and parents saw tofi to be an innate cultural imprint, thus its permanency was not dictated by place of birth. The importance of the tofi supported my decision to record family details in the Faafulu Aoga Amata assessment template presented in chapter six. Given that most of Aoga Amata children today are likely born in New Zealand, the acknowledgement and recording of this knowledge as part of their stories acts as a cultural learning strategy and reinforcement in itself.

As noted, few parents or teachers referred to culture and cultural learning as an individual or human right as understood in global western definitions or the need for cultural rights to be protected (Huffer, 2006b). In fact, there was little awareness of discussions about language or cultural rights at all, despite the fact that the New Zealand Human Rights Commission has stated that “language is central to culture, identity and heritage” (Human Rights Commission, n.d.). Nor were participants knowledgeable about statements outlined in the Te Whāriki (1996b) that children:

*...grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body, and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society (p. 9).*

Teacher and parents’ knowledge and understanding of rights discourse generally and of children’s rights warrant further research.

### **7.3 How is the *fau* taught?**

The differing governance structures of the Aoga Amata and the Samoan bilingual units influenced the overall operation, policies and management of both agencies as well as how the *fau* was taught and shown. As a recognised educational provider of Samoan culture and language, the Aoga Amata sat within its own clearly defined set of government policies and practices and was in a strong position to promote a cultural programme. Guided by the Te Whāriki guidelines (Ministry of Education, 1996b), Aoga Amata enjoyed government support and all the benefits this implied. The Samoan bilingual units did not have formalised recognition by the MOE or government and in addition, Samoan bilingual teachers had the responsibility of meeting both Samoan and English curriculum goals. Also while Aoga Amata teachers enjoyed pre-service training in tertiary institutions and had opportunities for professional learning development support (PLD) this was not the case for the Samoan bilingual teachers. As commented by



one, she had been placed in a unit ‘because she was Samoan’.

These and other constraints experienced by the Samoan bilingual teachers add support to the lengthy long debate on the urgency for a formalised policy and/or recognition of the Samoan bilingual units in New Zealand (Chen, 2015; May, 2005; McCaffery & McCaffery-McFall, 2010; McCaffery & Tuafuti., 1998; McCaffery, Tuafuti, Maihi, Aukuso, Elia, & Ioapo, 2003; Tuafuti, 2016; Tuafuti & McCaffery, 2005). New Zealand’s lack of a national policy or statement on bilingual education is a contrast, for example, with Wales (Lewis, 2009), Canada (Bialystok, 2016) and Finland (Hult & Pietikainen, 2014), where bilingual education is supported in national educational policy and practice guidelines and is appropriately resourced.

This finding also highlights quite compellingly that, despite the New Zealand Government goals of equity and justice and aspirations as a culturally diverse nation (Ministry of Education, 2005), government funding to culturally affirmative initiatives for migrant groups is problematic. The dominance of western pedagogies in framing teaching curricula for minority groups and the absence of a minority perspective was labelled by Grande (2010) as a “choke-hold theory” (p. 3); leading to the proposing of a ‘red pedagogy’ for indigenous Indians in America. Teaching and learning processes in New Zealand deserve similar attention; to consider and take account of Samoan learning styles of observing and listening (Moli, 1993; Tanielu, 2004) and the meaning of silence for Pacific pupils and their families (Tuafuti, 2010).

All of the teachers in this study were professional, creative and determined in their efforts to ensure a quality and culturally appropriate programme for their students. They saw this as a service to their students, to their communities and to maintaining the reputation of their schools. While this was an onerous task, all teachers took great pride in preparing

curriculum and making teaching resources. This also met with other Samoan teachers across Auckland to ensure a quality control of their programmes so as to fulfil their tofi and calling. The Aoga Amata especially was acknowledged as the pathway for Samoan language in New Zealand and the support base for other national Samoan language celebrations such as Samoa Language Week, secondary school festivals and university Samoan language debates for example.

Teachers and parents understood the ‘holistic’ nature of culture as incorporating both tangible and intangible elements (Du Plessis & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2009; Hau’ofa, 1994b; UNESCO, 2009). However, using the UNESCO terminology of tangible or visible signs and intangibles, the *fau* was shown and practised in a range of ways in the two educational settings. Very visible and powerful ‘tangibles’ included the physical layout of the buildings, the greetings used, the displays, websites, the naming of the buildings and the physical layout of the teaching spaces and playgrounds. Even the teachers’ cultural attires aligned and reinforced the *fau*. ATF says:

*Anofale o le Aoga, ia foliga Samoa, faiaoga ma a latou lavalava, ia alu ese le tagata ua ona iloa o le Aoga Samoa lea na sau i ai. (ATF)*

The ‘withiness’ of the Aoga, must represent the face of Samoa, teachers and what they wear, so when a person leaves the Aoga, they know it was an Aoga Samoa they came to.

The *fau* was likely more deeply seen and experienced in the intangibles – such as teacher behaviours and teaching processes and those of the school community. For example, while teaching spaces in the Samoan bilingual unit might be separated from the mainstream, Samoan students were very well integrated and welcomed into the larger school activities, where a family-like atmosphere prevailed. Similarly in the Aoga Amata, although there was a separation of children by age at some points during the day (e.g two years and over two years) the family concept and the intergenerational sharing of knowledge overarched all. Comments were made that having specially designed village

type buildings for the Aoga Amata would be a huge advantage to building a sense of community by children, parents and teachers. However, Aiono's (1996) proverb has importance here – she stated: '*E lē o le fale, a'o le anofale*' (It's not the house but what is inside the house). When teachers are true to their calling they achieve or practise anofale teuloto.

The essence of the spiritual was paramount in everything that took place in both sectors: hymns and prayers were integrated smoothly and naturally into teaching curriculum through stories (Ete, 1993; 2013), the use of Biblical memory verses (Tanielu, 2004) the use of the Pi Tautau and, the special celebrations of church events such as White Sunday, Easter Sunday and also Samoan Independence Day were other markers. In terms of language, teachers used a mix of the formal Samoan dialect which Lee Hang (2015) refers to as GT<sup>19</sup> (Gagana T). Teachers encouraged code-switching and hence reinforcing the understanding of the relationship between context and language use. As noted in observations, children and teachers might talk to their peers using the GK<sup>20</sup> (Gagana K) but used the GT when speaking to elders. Code-switching (between GT and GK) was another factor underpinning relationships such as the *vā fealoai* or relationship within the aganuu. For example, respect was demonstrated by the use of GT. When children observed and then practised these patterns of language use, they were demonstrating the value of role modelling (Bandura, 1967; 1971)

In considering what further support they needed, the three areas which emerged again fit the literature. These are:

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<sup>19</sup> GT – when the T is used as in talofa for formal events.

<sup>20</sup> GK – when the K is used as in kalofa when talking informally.

- A need for support and advice to grow and enhance their own cultural knowledge base and so add to the robustness of their programmes – such as a Samoan Language Advisory Committee
- Professional training in Samoan bilingual teaching
- Assessment procedures that recognise the *fau* in Aoga Amata (as in chapter six) and in the Samoan bilingual educational units.

What is required is that these teachers were confident in their efforts, they would appreciate some kind of externally generated assessment by which to affirm their efforts and endeavours and ‘push us even higher’. In the absence of a recognised assessment tool on culture or a plan to achieve these, how could they know? Of importance also was that without these kinds of evaluative tools, how could the cultural learnings of the Aoga Amata be promoted and continued through to the Samoan bilingual schooling? This is discussed in the next section.

## **7.4 How is the *fau* continued in Samoan bilingual units?**

### **7.4.1 Soso’o le fau i le fau – Transition**

A main research question was to ascertain whether and how the *fau* was being passed on from the Aoga Amata to the Samoan bilingual classrooms – soso’o le fau i le fau.

The MOE has devoted considerable research and attention to the transitioning of children from ECE to primary school (e.g. Dunlop & Hilary., 2007; Sauvao, Podmore, Mapa, & Tereora, 2000; McKenzie, 2013; Paki & Peters, 2015; Podmore, Sauvao, & Mapa, 2001; 2003; Tagoilelagi-Leota, McNaughton, MacDonald & Farry, 2005). Despite this MOE focus, a number of findings about the transition journeys of Aoga Amata students warrant further study. First, most of these studies have not given prominence to questions of the

transition of culture, for Samoan or children of other ethnicities or in policy recommendations. While Aoga Amata and other Pasifika ECE centres may have been included in the transition studies outlined, their place has been peripheral and the focus was not on transitioning of culture. Rather, the focus of earlier studies has been more on international and local factors relating to physical safety, curriculum compatibility between the two educational sites and factors such as emergent literacy skills (Phillips et al., 2002) and (Tagoilelagi-Leota, MacDonald, Farry, & McNaughton, 2004). More research on transition of culture are required.

Second, despite the huge MOE investment in transition research, the teachers and parents in this study (from both sectors) knew little about this literature. Nor had they participated in training on this matter. Perhaps it is not surprising then that two only of the Samoan bilingual teachers had been into an Aoga Amata and most knew little about the Te Whāriki.

In sum, it could be noted that the *soso'o le fau i le fau* or the cultural transition from Aoga Amata to Samoan Bilingual unit was taking place because of the *anofale teuloto* and *saili mālō*, rooted in their desires for their children's security of cultural identity. It was the parents and teachers' commitment, *tautua*, which endured the continuity of the *fau* between the two sectors.

The low turnover of staff evident in the majority of the Aoga Amata is an indication of these teachers' commitment. In addition, most parents in this study travelled long distances because they wanted their children to be schooled in a culturally safe environment. Travel and distance was not an issue, as commented on by parent PE:

*Though it will be far to drive I feel the sacrifice meets the rewards. I want her to have confidence in her Samoan identity...don't want her to struggle later on. (PE)*

These parents' did not note a distinction or separation between the responsibilities and role of school and home, which is a contrast to the experience of the Samoan parents and communities in a Hawaiian study (Valdez, Dowrick, & Maynard, 2007b). This study found that parental involvement and partnerships in education were critical to learning generally and to achieving cultural security. The ideals used in the faamatai set the foundation for parents' involvement in their children's learning. Joseph (2010), Mara and Burgess (2007), Munford, Sanders, Maden and Maden (2007), and Utumapu (1998) are a few of the plethora of researchers who continually highlight the significance of parents' quality involvement in their children's education.

There is compelling evidence that community support was the other vital ingredient in ensuring a robust and warm transitioning between the Aoga Amata and the Samoan bilingual units. The very existence of Aoga Amata (Ete, 2007; 2013; Leavasa-Tautolo, 2013; Tagoilelagi, 1988; 2013) and these bilingual units (McCaffery & Tuafuti, 1998) signalled and reinforced repeatedly the long years of advocacy by Samoan community members; this voluntary commitment of time and resources was instrumental to achieving this. Resilient, reliable and committed NGO support was also highly evident. These include the SAASIA (Ete, 2013; Leavasa-Tautolo, 2013; Tagoilelagi-Leota & Utumapu-McBride, 2013; Tagoilelagi, 2013), the Ulimasao Incorporated (Association for Samoan bilingual education) and the FAGASA annual conference providing significant intellectual support and background to these community strategising efforts. Effectively, the SAASIA and FAGASA were reciprocal partners in ensuring the inclusion of faasamoa or aganuu and gagana in these mainstream educational curricula. In turn, this factor highlighted again the vital importance of the Aoga Amata and Samoan bilingual units continually ensuring they were connected to community so as to sustain and grow the use of Samoan language. The Samoan bilingual experience in particular highlights some of

the structural and attitudinal concerns minority communities face as they strive to build culturally secure spaces for Pacific students in the formal school systems (Benseman, Coxon, Anderson, & Anae, 2006; Helu-Thaman, 2010).

Without a doubt the Aoga Amata was in a stronger position to teach and pass on the *fau* than the Samoan bilingual units. This finding in itself highlights the care and emphasis which must be put in to maintaining and strengthening the Aoga Amata by the MOE, to ensure a culturally secured and identity secured future for Samoan citizens of New Zealand. In my view, the community has never left this early childhood education space nor have the hearts and souls of parents and teachers in this study.

The importance of places where Pacific culture is celebrated, learned and transmitted, is particularly vital, given the increase of the Pasifika population in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). Projections are that by 2039, Pasifika will form 10.9% of New Zealand's population, compared with 7.8% in 2013<sup>21</sup>. Programmes which support identity security and set a solid culturally secure programme for academic learning are important to the education journeys of the Pacific and other minority groups in New Zealand today. National agencies such as the New Zealand Human Rights Commission (2010), Royal Society of New Zealand (2013), and the Chinese cultural diversity advocate Mai Chen (2015), amplify the need for the New Zealand education systems to be responsive to an emerging population growth of Pasifika peoples and the ethnic minority groups.

## **7.5 Sustaining the *fau* – the challenge**

Realistically, what were the challenges to sustainability of the *fau* identified in this study? Was the *fau* future-proof, given that there were elements of vulnerability emerging in the

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<sup>21</sup> See Statistics New Zealand (2013).

transition processes? Is the endurance of the *fau* a government or a community responsibility?

The integration of an understanding of culture and cultural difference into education curriculum is a fine and complex branch of learning, as is building a cadre of teachers and professional staff who understand the process in ensuring quality culturally base learning in the Aoga Amata and Samoan bilingual teaching programmes. It can be argued that the concerns and values of Aoga Amata are an aging sector and with IELTS being used as a marker of English language competence, the upcoming generation of Aoga Amata teachers will likely need great PLD support to enhance their cultural knowledge.

Most of Pasifika focused ECE qualifications/specialisations have been recently terminated in New Zealand tertiary institutions. As noted, culture and/or expressions of cultural competence are peripheral (if present at all all) in current teacher education programmes (Leaupepe & Sauni, 2014). There is also an absence of culture in the Graduating Teacher Standards, and so teachers are focusing on mainstream or generic practices. It is also noted that IELTS English proficiency is now an entry requirement into ECE training. Concerns are that while there may be a welcome wave of young teachers now entering Aoga Amata, it is likely that some may have less sure knowledge of Samoan language and aganuu. Second and related is the absence of a Samoan bilingual curriculum and training – although these are present in ESOL and other programmes sometimes as electives.

In sum, teacher training in New Zealand today provides minimal opportunity for learning about Samoan (or Pacific) worldview and pedagogy, all of which are central in understanding and teaching of the *fau*. At the same time, there is an absence of elders (*matua*) and teachers with expertise and lived experience of the *fau*. While the presence



of mature teachers was perhaps a safety net for the *fau*, there is a critical need for an ongoing supply of young teachers who are confident in their cultural knowledge and how to apply these.

As noted, ensuring the inclusion of culture in the classroom is no easy task. The teachers in this study were actually teaching at great costs to themselves in terms of time and labour. It is also likely that their professional development, growth and promotion was impacted by remaining in these posts for long years. An important question to ask is, will future teachers of Aoga Amata and Samoan bilingual education be willing to make these sacrifices?

Nevertheless, these teachers were considerably ‘flexible’ in their learning and teaching of the *fau*. They strongly agreed they would have liked the guidance and support of an advisory committee in ensuring them that their efforts were culturally and linguistically appropriate and meaningful strategies to support the documentation and interpretations of Samoan words in the curriculum warrants further consideration.

## **7.6 The study method**

### **7.6.1 Tautai**

The tautai approach of casting the research net widely seeking the best, brought a rich catch of knowledge and influence in this study.

Particularly important to me was the decision to include the children’s voices. Mostly they are portrayed as passive and silent with their voices well represented by parents or adults. The study proved that children do have a voice and are valuable in sharing their views and knowledge when given the opportunity. In addition, their faasamoa knowledge was demonstrated in their names, gafa, faalupega, tofi and suli and their learning stories.

The filifogāvaa or the careful plaiting of ideas that signaled the way the *fau* was carried between the two educational sites resonates with the collective nature of the *soso'o le fau i le fau* process in Samoan society. As an ongoing and reaffirming process in the research design, filifogāvaa reflects the collaborative approach underpinning the ECE sector, which ECE takes pride in. It is timely for government agencies to fili their support in Aoga Amata and Samoan bilingual units development. The findings have clearly supported the value and beliefs of the *fau*, and how these are fundamental priorities of the teachers, parents, children and communities of Aoga Amata and Samoan bilingual units.

Many of the teachers and parents in this study assured they have embedded the values of living as a Samoan, where *aganuu*, *gagana* and *faaleagaga* were practised in every daily lives in their homes and community. The *fau* is and can be an intangible and enduring knowledge base for Samoan community living in New Zealand and the diaspora also. Filifogāvaa is the transfer process mechanism.

## Chapter 8: Tautai a'e – Conclusions

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### 8.1 Introduction

This study has highlighted a clear and firm passion and commitment to sustaining the *fau* by teachers, parents and children, as integral to learning and teaching and particularly in the early years. Participants have defined the *fau* as carrying spirituality, culture and language. Despite being a minority population in New Zealand, these participants were strong in the belief that culture was of central importance in learning and in formal education and that the ECE and primary schools should build on the values, beliefs and knowledge children bring from their homes.

### 8.2 Conclusions

#### 8.2.1 Absence of *fau* in the Te Whāriki and New Zealand curriculum

These teachers and parents also had very firm ideas what culture meant in the ECE settings, and that these values and beliefs were not entirely captured in the Te Whāriki or the New Zealand curriculum. To me, this indicated that over changing times and places, the Aoga Amata has stayed true to its goals and philosophy established in earlier days, even more so spirituality was at the heart.

#### 8.2.2 Spirituality and Christianity are the same

As noted, the spiritual referred to both *faaleagaga* (soul and heart) and *faa-Kerisiano*, there was no distinction between the two. Highlighted also was that the *fau* did not mean language only or being able to talk Samoan. The teaching of language for children must

feature and imply the learning of values, beliefs and practices underpinning the language as well. They co-exist.

### **8.2.3 Cultural transition is vulnerable**

A third finding relates directly to the study title of *soso'o le fau i le fau*. Indications are that even if the Aoga Amata is setting a firm foundation for the transition of cultural values, beliefs and practices to the primary school setting – in this case the bilingual units in New Zealand's prevailing hard education system – there is no guarantee that the '*fau*' will be acknowledged or carried on into the primary school curriculum. Nor that teachers have understood the value of and are committed to *soso'o le fau i le fau* will be trained or will have the opportunity to progress or be promoted through the educational systems.

This study has shown the multiple layers of vulnerability of the *fau* in both educational settings. The ambiguous nature of government documents in showing commitment to the *fau*, directly impact on policy, practice and resourcing issues. In addition, there is an absence of matua with expertise in the *aganuu* and *gagana* to support and grow the sector today. This is concerning.

The ensuring of all teachers have an understanding and knowledge of cultural diversity generally and (for Samoa) of the *fau*. This should include appropriate set and recognised cultural assessed procedures.

Today, the ongoing quality operation of both Aoga Amata and Samoan bilingual units is highly dependent on community champions. Community has been the backbone of the *fau*. There is an urgent need for resource people, and a standards-setting body to provide guidelines for implementing the *fau*.

While this is a Samoan-focused study, the question of the loss of cultural capital in schooling is alarming. The absence of cultural knowledge with values and beliefs, which ground identity security and academic success, remains a concern given international attention to these areas. Gluckman (2011) and Purkey (1967) have affirmed cultural identity as a significant contributor to children's academic achievement. Wu (2009) also argued the importance of Chinese children's access to their cultural knowledge for secured identity. Planning for *aganuu* should be intentional in the primary schools. Cultural lenses should be the core of programme planning. Samoan cultural values being paramount in Samoan cultural learning activities is the standard practice for any Samoan bilingual teacher.

Thus, the need for resources that contribute to children's language development, and more importantly expose them to Samoan cultural knowledge, is mandatory. Aoga Amata and Samoan bilingual units are in dire need of resources that clearly support and promote children's knowledge of *aganuu* and *gagana*. The clutter of different Samoan terms used in teaching is indicative of the need for a Samoan national advisory body. A uniformed use of Samoan terms and meanings as a starting base is very important. For instance, a dictionary of high-frequency Samoan terms in Aoga Amata and bilingual units would be a beneficial start.

However, there is a need for research. For both educational settings to be effective, a national curriculum should be adhered to, they should be able to develop their own supporting resources and assessments and effectively engage with community to sustain quality relationships. Efforts teachers and parents have made to ensure that the *fau* is central to children's early learning and bilingual education contribute to academic achievement.

### 8.3 Limitations of the study

A number of limitations influenced this study:

- *Recruitment of participants*

Given the selection criteria, it was challenging to achieve a research sample. For example the child participants were to be four and half years old and transitioning into a bilingual unit so that soso'o le fau i le fau could be tracked. The limited availability of Samoan bilingual units in Auckland made it difficult to identify children transitioning to these services. As noted also in my study, many of the children who met the age criteria were transitioning into mainstream school or faith-based schools such as Catholic or Seventh-Day Adventist.

- *Timing of the transition process*

Children's birthdates impacted on the timing of the period where cultural transition from Aoga Amata to bilingual units would take place. As a result the transition period between the Aoga Amata and Samoan bilingual units fell in the Christmas period, which may have influenced the depth of the fau that was transferred.

- *The organisation of the bilingual units*

The bilingual units were organised in different ways and this presented a study limitation on children's access to the fau. For instance, two schools provided full immersion in the Samoan language while the remaining three schools operated a mixture of 20/80 and 10/90 percentages of English and Samoan language use.

## **8.4 Recommendations**

Rather than attempting to preserve the *fau* in all its forms, the recommendations focus on creating new strategies to enable populations such as Samoans in New Zealand to manage cultural shifts more effectively. Every living tradition is subject to change whereby the *fau* is about innovation, creativity and receptiveness to new influences. It is in that spirit that the recommendations for this study are based.

### **8.4.1 Assessment**

The Faafulu tool is in its preliminary development phase and could be enhanced to further assess and recognise children's wealth of Samoan aganuu, gagana and spirituality. Support to provide professional learning and development for Aoga Amata to collectively critique such a tool is recommended. In similar vein, bilingual units have also developed similar tools. These should also be critiqued and piloted for their use as an assessment tool.

### **8.4.2 Teacher training**

The Quality Teaching: Early Foundations Best Evidence Synthesis (Farquhar, 2003) stipulates the need for teachers to cater for "heterogeneous children" such as those of Pacific ethnicity with "population projections indicating an increasing proportion in the future". (p. 11). The study reinforces an urgency for teacher training programme that understand and prioritise the *fau* as fundamental in the teaching and learning of young Samoan children in Aotearoa New Zealand. The training would be a 'unique' qualification, as it would differ in its fundamental ethos from that of a generic ECE degree. Based on educational theory and practice derived from complex Samoan knowledges, the training could also incorporate other Pacific languages, cultures,

knowledges, values and beliefs to create a qualification that is more than just culturally appropriate, but also culturally driven. Training of this nature would also support teachers' intercultural competence and understanding of their ways of being and knowing.

With a view to further academising Pacific knowledge, the training would prepare graduates for postgraduate study and research so, contributing to the philosophical base and practice of culturally affirmative teachers. Such studies will contribute to securing Aoga Amata philosophy as an international cultural model.

### **8.4.3 Continuity of the *fau* across the education continuum**

While cultural transition may be developed between Aoga Amata and the Samoan bilingual units, what remains to be realised is how far the *fau* can journey through other compulsory sectors such as intermediate and high school. Though academic success is stemmed from cultural security (Purkey, 1967; 1970; Gluckman, 2011), there has been no detailed investigation of how the *fau* contributes to the overall success of Samoan students at tertiary level. This study warrants further research on the continuity of the *fau* in other compulsory sectors of the New Zealand education system.

## **8.5 Concluding comments**

Using *soso'o le fau i le fau* as an attempt to address the issues on what quality constitutes and outlined my ontological beliefs as framed by the research questions. Such a process of *soso'o le fau i le fau* also contains a multiplicity of responsibilities in defining, applying and joining the *fau*. Successful realisation and practice of *soso'o le fau i le fau* has been a result of passion, commitment, community support and stronger positioning in Aoga Amata as discussed. Otherwise *soso'o le fau i le fau* remains vulnerable.



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## Appendix 1: AUTECH Ethics Approval letter



A U T E C  
S E C R E T A R I A T

11 June 2013  
Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop  
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Peggy

Re Ethics Application: **13/72 Sosso'o le fau I le fau (join fau with a fau). Exploring what factors contribute to Samoan children's cultural and language security from the Aoga Amata to bilingual primary classrooms in Aotearoa New Zealand.**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the AUT University Ethics Committee (AUTECH).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 10 June 2016.

As part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTECH:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 10 June 2016;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 10 June 2016 or on completion of the project.

It is a condition of approval that AUTECH is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTECH approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

AUTECH grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this. If your research is undertaken within a jurisdiction outside New Zealand, you will need to make the arrangements necessary to meet the legal and ethical requirements that apply there.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz).

All the very best with your research,

Madeline Banda  
Acting Executive Secretary

**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**

Cc: Fa'asaulala Tagoilelagi-Leota (Sala) [faasaulala.tagoilelagileota@aut.ac.nz](mailto:faasaulala.tagoilelagileota@aut.ac.nz)

## Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet - English

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### Participant Information Sheet: English version

*Project Title: Soso’o le fau i le fau; (join fau with a fau). Exploring what factors contribute to Samoan children’s cultural and language security from the Aoga Amata to Samoan primary bilingual classrooms in Aotearoa New Zealand.*



### Date Information Sheet Produced:

30 April 2013

### Project Title

Soso’o le fau i le fau; (join fau with a fau). Exploring what factors contribute to Samoan children’s cultural and language security from the Aoga Amata to Samoan primary bilingual classrooms in Aotearoa New Zealand.

### An Invitation

Talofa lava. I am Salā Faasaulala Tagoilelagi-Leota; and I am inviting you to be a participant in my research. This research is a component of my doctor of philosophy (PhD) qualification. The findings will be published in a thesis and may be used in a publication or presentation within an academic context. My supervisor is Professor Tagaloatele Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop. Participating in this research is voluntary. If you agree to participate, the interview will be up to an hour long. However, you are free to withdraw at any time without any obligations.

### What is the purpose of this research?

As documented the aims of the Aoga Amata are to immerse children in Samoan language and culture with Christian values. My research will explore how the Aoga Amata is fulfilling or achieving those goals (which I am labelling the fau) and then, how the learning foundations set in the Aoga Amata (the fau) are being carried over and built on in the first year of schooling in a Samoan primary bilingual classroom. Thus, the proverb “e soso’o le fau i le fau” represent elements of Samoan language and culture. Soso’o means to join, which summarizes the proverb as joining a fau with a fau. In this saying, the fau is portrayed as a robust and sturdy rope (Tofaeono-Tanuvasa, 2009). The proverbial saying soso’o le fau i le fau, as the thesis title, highlights the importance of continuity of cultural security in education practices, in this case from Aoga Amata to Samoan bilingual primary classrooms.

For my study I will look at a three-way perspective - the views of teachers, parents and children.

### How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been identified by the supervisor of the Aoga Amata as the parent of a child who is at Aoga Amata now and will continue to a Samoan bilingual primary in the next six months.

### What will happen in this research?

In my research I am following the progress of a group of 8 children (4 boys, 4 girls) within the age of 4+ years old, who have attended an Aoga Amata and, will have attend a Samoan primary bilingual classroom. Aims are to interview the parents of these children (in Aoga Amata and when

they get to primary classrooms). The interviews should not take more than one hour, and will take place at the AUT Manukau campus.

**What are the discomforts and risks?**

No risks and discomforts are anticipated. As in the practice of va fealoai (relationship) which is paramount to the faasamoa, your participation will be treated with utmost respect.

**How will these discomforts and risks alleviated?**

During the interview, you can decline to answer the question, stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time. All information shared will be confidential. You will not be named in the transcripts - Pseudonyms will be used.

**What are the benefits?**

These individual interviews provide the opportunity for you to present your views about the teaching and learning of the fau in Aoga Amata & in the Samoan primary bilingual classrooms. Your input will contribute in validating our Samoan knowledge as paramount in the lives of young Samoan children in New Zealand

Research aims are to identify elements of the fau through better understanding of what the fau signifies and how this is being reinforced in the Aoga Amata and bilingual classrooms. Thus, will also strengthen relationships between parents and teachers in both sectors, encourage on-going clear communication and expectations between the two sectors.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

Your privacy is of utmost priority thus the interviews will be conducted individually at a space in the AUT Manukau campus. Your name will not be mentioned in any public discussions, publications or meetings regarding this research.

I will be transcribing the information thus I will not reveal your identity or the identity of your centre in the thesis, conference presentation or any written journal articles related to this research.

I will not engage in any casual conversations in relation to interviews or interview materials and take care to ensure that the interviews are not overhead in any way, shape or form.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

There are no financial costs. However, your participation using your valuable time is significant in this research.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

I will arrange a time and date that is suitable for you, to see if you would like to participate or not. However, you may contact me if you have reached a decision before our arranged date.

Initial contact with you is anticipated in late May 2013, at which we discuss the research and set up the interview times at your discretion.

**How do I agree to participate in this research?**

A formal written acceptance of your participation will need to be gained before any data collection takes place. Please note that you do not have to feel obligated to take part and that you are welcome to contact me at any time for clarification. You will be asked complete a written Consent Form; an agreement of your participation in my research. This will be provided for you by an ITP (Independent Third Party).



**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

Yes. After our interview is completed I will send you a copy of the transcript so that you can check for accuracy and add any other comments should you wish to do so. A summary report of the end result will be shared with you and with other participants in the research once the research report is completed and approved. A copy of the final thesis will also be made available in the AUT library.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Professor Tagaloatele Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop, [peggy.fairbairn-dunlop@aut.ac.nz](mailto:peggy.fairbairn-dunlop@aut.ac.nz). Her contact telephone number is (09) 9219999 extension 6203

You may also contact the 'independent third party' alternatively for your concerns at 0274797279 or [J.faiva@robertsonroad.school.nz](mailto:J.faiva@robertsonroad.school.nz)

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Manager, AUTEK, Rosemary Godbold, [rgodbold@aut.ac.nz](mailto:rgodbold@aut.ac.nz). Her contact telephone number is (09) 921 9999 ext 7772.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?****Researcher Contact Details:**

Salā Faasaulala Tagoilelagi-Leota, School of Education, AUT University, [ftagoile@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ftagoile@aut.ac.nz) (09) 9219383, (mob) 021651609

**Project Supervisor Contact Details:**

Professor Tagaloatele Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop, AUT University, [peggy.fairbairn-dunlop@aut.ac.nz](mailto:peggy.fairbairn-dunlop@aut.ac.nz), (09) 921 9999 extension 6203

Thank you for considering my research request.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on type the date final ethics approval was granted, AUTEK Reference number 1372.

## Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet – Samoan

### Participant Information Sheet: Samoan version

*Ulutala o le suesuega: Soso'o le fau i le fau. Suesueina o ni auala e maua'a ai ma saogalemu tu ma aga faa-Samoa ao aoaoina fanau laiti i Aoga Amata seia oo atu i vasega o loo faaaogāina ai gagana e lua i totonu o Aoga Tulaga Lua.*



### Alalafaga/nu'u (fa'atalanoaga ta'ito'atasi)

**Aso:**

**Tamaitai Suesue:** Faasaulala Tagoilelagi-Leota (Salā)

Institute of Public Policy

Iunivesite o Tekonolosi i Aukilani (AUT)

### Talosaga

Talofa lava, o lou igoa o Faasaulala Tagoilelagi-Leota (Salā) ma ua ou valaau faaaloalo atu i lau susuga ina ia avea oe ma sui auai i lau suesuega. O lenei suesuega o se vaega o la'u tikeri o le Phd (Fomai o le Faatufugaga) o loo faia nei i le Iunivesite o Tekonolosi i Aukilani (AUT) Niu Sila. O lenei suesuega o le a lolomiina i se tusi ma e mafai ona faasoa i se koneferenisi mo aoaoga. O lo'u faiaoga mo lenei suesuega o le tamaitai Polofesa Afioga ia Tagaloatele Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop ma Dr Diane Mara.

Afai e te malie e auai i lenei suesuega, o nei talanoaga e tai itula le umi ma e mafai ona fai i soo se taimi ma nofoaga e talafeagai ma oe. O lou auai i lenei suesuega e le faatauanaeina ae fai i lou finagalo malie. E i ai foi le avanoa e te faamaamulu ai mai i lenei suesuega e aunoa ma ni mafuaaga.

### O le a le uiga o lenei suesuega?

Ua i ai ni faamaumauga o loo faatau ai le tofamanino o Aoga Amata i le faafaileleina o fanau laiti i le aganuu ma le gagana Samoa, aemaiase ai agatausili faa-le-Kerisiano. E fia suesueina poo tamau ai Aoga Amata i le tofamanino (ua ou faaigoaina o le 'fau') pe o faaauau ia aoaoga i totonu o vasega o loo faaaogāina ai gagana e lua i se Aoga Tulaga Lua. O le faaaogāina o le alagaupu 'soso'o le fau i le fau', e faamatalaina ai le taua o aoaoga e ala i le saogalemu o le soso'o ina o le Aoga Amata ma le Aoga Tulaga Lua. O le fia malamalama atili poo maua'a ma saogalemu tu ma aga faa-Samoa i le aoaoina o alo ma fanau i totonu o Aoga Amata. Ona toe sailiili lea poo faaauau nei vaega pe a oo atu nei alo ma fanau i totonu o vasega faaleogalua i totonu o Tulaga Lua.

Mo la'u suesuega, e tolu ni vaega o loo fia saili o latou finagalo: faiaoga, matua ma fanau laiti.

### Pe faapefea ona filifilia ma valaauina au ou te auai i lenei suesuega?

O le susuga i le faiaoga ulu o le Aoga Amata a lou alo, na filifilia oe, o se sui tatau mo lenei suesuega, ona o lou alo o le a faaauau ana aoga i se vasega e faaaogā gagana e lua, i totonu o Tulaga Lua i le 6 masina o i lumanai.

### **O a ni mea e ono tutupu i lenei suesuega?**

Mo lenei suesuega, o le a ou faatalanoa ai: (a) tamaiti se toa 8 o loo 4+ tausaga (4 tama, 4 teine), o loo aoga i Aoga Amata, ma o le faamoemoe e faaauau a latou aoga i totonu o vasega e faaaogāina gagana e lua, i totonu o Aoga Tulaga Lua. O nei faatalanoaga e le ova atu ma se itula, ma o le a faatinoina i se potu ma le taimi e talafeagai mo lau susuga (b) faiaoga ma matua o tamaiti ua filifiliina i totonu o Aoga Amata ma le Tulaga Lua (c) o le a vaai mata'ituina alo ma o latou faiaoga i totonu lava o nei aoga (d) O le a ou vaai foi ia latou faila o a latou galuega/portfolios.

O le a vaavaai foi i le faatulagaina o polokalame i totonu o aoga Amata ma aoga tulaga lua, i le faaaogāina o le tatou gagana ma le aganuu Samoa.

### **E i ai se mea e ono faapopoleina ai au i lenei suesuega?**

E leai se mea e ono fa'apopoleina ai lau susuga ona o lenei suesuega. O le a tausisia pea le va fealoai, o se vaega taua o le aganuu faa Samoa. E taua tele lou sao i lenei suesuega ma e le afaina pe afai e i ai ni mataupu i lenei suesuega e te le fia talanoa iai. E mafai lava ona faamuta lenei talanoaga i so o se taimi pe afai foi e le logo lelei ia te oe ni mataupu o le talanoaga.

### **E faapefea ona alofia nei popolega?**

Afai e te malie e auai i lenei suesuega, o nei talanoaga e tai itula le umi ma e mafai ona fai i soo se taimi ma nofoaga e talafeagai ma oe. O lou auai i lenei suesuega e le faatauina ae fai i lou finagalo malie. I taimi o le faatalanoaga, e mafai ona e le taliina ni fesili, taofi le faatalanoaga pe faamaamulu mai le suesuega i soo se taimi. O lou sao e le faailoaina pe faasoa i se isi tagata. E le faaaogāina foi lou suafa i faamaumauga. E i ai foi se Sui Tumaoti (Independent Third Party), ua filifilia faapitoa mo lou saogalemu. O lenei tagata, e avanoa mo ni ou popolega i le suesuega, faapea lo'u nei tagata.

### **O a aogā o lenei suesuega?**

O se avanoa lenei e faasoa ai ni ou manatu ma lagona e uiga i le autu o le suesuega. O lou sao o le a atili ai ona maua nisi mau e faamausali ai le taua o agatausili faasamoa i le ola aaoaina o alo ma fanau i Niu Sila.

E aoga lenei suesuega i le auiliiliina o matatia o le Aoga Amata poo talafeagai aemaise ai poo faaauau ma soso'o le fau i totonu o vaega e faaaogāina gagana e lua i le Aoga Tulaga Lua.

### **E faapefea ona puipuia lou tagata mai le silafia o le lautele?**

O soo se faamaumauga e patino tonu i lau susuga faapea foi o ou manatu faaalua, e na o lenei suesuega o le a faaaogāina ai. Afai e te le finagalo e faaaogā lou suafa, o le a natia. Afai e te fia auai i lenei suesuega, o loo i ai se pepa 'Feagaiga o Maliliega' e faapena ona e sainia, ae lei amatalia le suesuega.

Ua fautuaina a'u e se sui mai le Komiti o Tulafono (Ethics Committee member), e faaaogāina se isi tagata e fesoasoani i lau suesuega, ina ia fo'ia ai ni ou popolega. O lenei tagata ua taua o le "Sui Tumaoti"/Independent Third Party e fai ma lavea'i mo lau susuga pe a e popole i se mea e uiga i lenei faatalanoaga. O le faamoemoe maua i ta'ua ia ta'ua le va fealoai, e puipuia ai lau susuga ma lou sao i lenei suesuega. O le matafaioi a le Sui Tu Maoti, e faaleoina sou finagalo i le taitai o suesuega ia ma o le a tu maoti o ia e lagolago ma puipui lou sao i lenei faamoemoe.

### **E i ai se tau o le auai i lenei suesuega?**

E leai se tau. Ae peitai, e faatauaina lou taimi ua faaavanoaina mai mo lenei suesuega.

E i ai se avanoa e tu'u mai ou te mafaufau ai i lenei valaulia?

Afai e te malie e auai i lenei suesuega, e talosagaina le faaavanoaina o se itula o lou taimi e fai ai se talatalanoaga. O le ta uluai feiloaiga ua fuafua mo [Aokuso 2013](#), e faatalatalanoaina ai lenei suesuega ma faamautu ai ni ou taimi avanoa mo le ta talanoaga.

### **E faapefea ona ou auai i lenei suesuega?**

O loo faapipii atu se pepa o le "Feagaiga o maliliega" mo lou silafia. A e finagalo malie o le a e auai, faamolemole, saina lenei pepa ae lei amatalia le faatalanoaga. O le a faailoa atu uma e le Sui Tu Maoti nisi faamatalaga ae lei faatumuina nisi pepa.

### **E maua mai ni tala i le faaiuga o lenei suesuega?**

Ioe. A mae'a a tattoo faatalanoaga, o le a lafo atu faamaumauga (e lei siakiina), e te siakiina poo sao poo i ai foi ni vaega ua pa'u. O ni tusitusiga e afua mai lenei suesuega o le a faapena foi ona tufaina i e na auai i le suesuega. A maea le suesuega, o le a faaavanoaina e le Iunivesite o Tekonolosi i Aukilani. le tusitusiga atoa i luga o le upega tafailagi.

Se a se mea e ao ona ou faia pe afai e i ai ni mea e tulai mai ou te popole ai?

Afai e i ai se mea e faapopoleina ai oe i lenei suesuega, fesootai muamua le faiaoga mo lenei suesuega, le tamaitai Polofesa, Afioga ia Tagaloatele Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop, Imeli: [peggy.fairbairn-dunlop@aut.ac.nz](mailto:peggy.fairbairn-dunlop@aut.ac.nz), Telefoni: +64 921 9999 ext 6203.

O loo i ai foi le Sui Tumaoti, e mafai ona e faafesootai mo ou popolega i le 0274797279 poo le imeli, [J.faiiva@robertsonroad.school.nz](mailto:J.faiiva@robertsonroad.school.nz)

E mafai foi ona faafesootai le failautusi - Komiti o Tulafono (Ethics) a le Iunivesite o Tekonolosi i Aukilani, Dr. Rosemary Goldbold, imeli: [rosemary.godbold@aut.ac.nz](mailto:rosemary.godbold@aut.ac.nz), telefoni: +64 921 9999 ext 6902.

### **Mo nisi faamatalaga, faafesootai:**

*Tama'tai Suesue:*

Salā Faasaulala Tagoilelagi-Leota

Imeli: [ftagoile@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ftagoile@aut.ac.nz)

Telefoni: +64 921 9383 poo le 021651609

## Appendix 4: Consent Form - English

<b>Consent Form: English version</b>	 <p><b>AUT</b> UNIVERSITY TE WĀNANGA ARĀNUI O TAMAKI MAKAU RAU</p>
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**Date:** July 2013

**Project title:** *Soso’o le fau i le fau; (join fau with a fau). Exploring Samoan children’s cultural and language security from the Aoga Amata to Samoan primary bilingual classrooms in Aotearoa New Zealand*

**Researcher:** *Faasaulala Tagoilelagi-Leota (Salā)*  
Institute of Public Policy

Auckland University of Technology (AUT)

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated dd mmmm yyyy.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio- taped and transcribed.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes   
No

Participant’s signature: .....


Participant’s name: .....

Participant’s Contact Details (if appropriate):  
.....

Date:

*Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee in June 2013. AUTEK Reference number 1372. Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.*

## Appendix 5: Consent Form – Samoan

<i>Feagaiga o Maliliega</i>	 AUT UNIVERSITY <small>TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TAMAKI MAKĀU RAU</small>
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*Aso:* July 2013

*Ulutala o le suesuega:* Soso’o le fau i le fau. Suesueina o ni auala e maua’ a ai ma saogalemu tu ma aga faa-Samoa ao aoaoina fanau laiti i Aoga Amata seia oo atu i vasega o loo faaaogāina ai gagana e lua i totonu o Aoga Tulaga Lua.

*Tamaitai Suesue:* Faasaulala Tagoilelagi-Leota (Salā) Institute of Public Policy Iunivesite o Tekonolosi i Aukilani (AUT)

- Ua ou faitauina ma ua ou malamalama i faamalamalama uma o lenei suesuega ua tuuina mai ia te au i le pepa o “Faamatalaga mo le silafia o i latou o le a auai i lenei suesuega” i le aso dd/mm/yyyy
- Ua maea ona tuu mai ia te au le avanoa e mafai ai ona ou fesiligia lenei suesuega faapea foi ona taliaina fesili ma lou malie atoa i ai
- Ou te malamalama o le a faamaumau ma pu’eina nei talanoaga i se laau pueleo
- Ou te malamalama e ia te au le loto faitalia e mafai ai ona ou faamaamulu mai i lenei suesuega i soo se taimi ae lei maea le suesuega
- Afai ou te faamaamulu mai lenei suesuega, o faamaumauga uma o lenei suesuega o le a faaleaogaina (susunu)
- Ou te manao ma malie atoa e auai i lenei suesuega
- Ou te manao ina ia tuuina ma ia te a’u se kopi o le tauaofaiga o lenei suesuega pe a maea. Ioe  Leai

Sainia lou suafa: .....

Tusi lolomi lou suafa: .....

Tuatusi (pe a talafeagai): .....

.....


Aso:


*Taliaina e le Komiti o Tulafono (Ethics) a le Iunivesite o Tekonolosi i Aukilani ia Iuni 2013. AUTEK Reference number 1372. Tautuana: ina ia taofia e le o lo o auai i lenei suesuega se kopi o lenei pepa ‘faatagaina’ o lona loto malie e auai.*


# Appendix 6: Children's Assent form (Samoan & English)

Faamolemole faasino i le ata lea pe a e fia auai i la'u suesuega.  
(Please point to this picture if you are happy to participate in my research)

Fiafia (happy) 

Faanoanoa (sad) 


Popole (worried) 



Faamolemole faasino i le ata lea pe a e lē fia auai i la'u suesuega. (Please point to this picture if you do not want to participate in my research)



O lo'u ata lea. (This is my photo)



Talosa ia mafai ona ta galulue faatasi. Ou te fiafia ta te feiloai ma e te iloa foi a'u ona o lo'u ata. O le a faapipi foi se pine i lo'u ofu e tusi ai lo'u igoa: SALĀ, I taimi ou te i ai i lau aoga. (I hope we can do this together. It will be great to meet you and you will know who I am because of my photo. I will wear a badge with my name SALĀ on, when I am at your Aoga Amata.)

Faafetai mo le faatumuina o lenei pepa. Pe mafai ona e fai i lou tina/tama e saina le avanoa lea e i lalo, pe a faapea ua e malamalama i la'u galuega/suesuega. A uma ona saina, faamolemole ave i le faiaoga o le aoga i le aso e sosoo ai (taeao). (Thank you for completing this form – will you ask your parent/caregiver to sign here if they feel that you understand what the project is about. Please give this form back to your teacher at Aoga Amata tomorrow)

\_\_\_\_\_ (saini)

\_\_\_\_\_ (aso)

Tamaitai Suesue: Faasaulala Tagoilelagi-Leota (Salā)

**E I AI NI OU POPOLEGA? (WHAT DO I DO IF I HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT THIS RESEARCH?)**

A i ai ni ou popolega i lenei suesuega, e mafai ona e logoina le o loo vaaia lenei faamoemoe, o le afoaga i le Polofesa Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop, [pfairbai@aut.ac.nz](mailto:pfairbai@aut.ac.nz) (09) 9219999 ext 6203, poo le Sui Tu Maoti ia Julie Faiva, [julie@hotmail.com](mailto:julie@hotmail.com) 027 479 7279

O nisi popolega e agai i le faagaioiga (conduct) o lenei suesuega, ia logo le Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Dr Rosemary Godbold, [rosemary.godbold@aut.ac.nz](mailto:rosemary.godbold@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 ext 6902.

Taliaina e le Komiti o Tulafono a le Univesite o Tekonolosi i Aukilani ia Iuni 2013. AUTEK Reference number 1372

**AUT**  
UNIVERSITY  
TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TAMAKI MAKĀU RAU

**SOSO'O LE FAU I LE FAU (JOIN FAU WITH A FAU).  
EXPLORING WHAT FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO  
SAMOAN CHILDREN'S CULTURAL AND LANGUAGE  
SECURITY FORM THE AOGA AMATA TO SAMOAN  
PRIMARY BILINGUAL CLASSROOMS IN AOTEAROA  
NEW ZEALAND**

**FAAMATALAGA MO LE SILAFIA O I LATOU O LE A  
AUAI I LENEI SUESUEGA & FEAGAIGA O MALILEGA  
MO FANAU LAITI (INFORMATION SHEET AND  
ASSENT FORM FOR CHILDREN)**

*(faamolemole matua, faitau i lou alo)*

*E 6 tausaga e taofi ai nei faamaumauga (This form will be kept for a period of 6 years)*

Talofa, o lo'u igoa o Salā. E i ai taimi o le a ou sau ai i lau aoga e talanoa ma au faiaoga ma ta taa'alo ma talanoa. E mafai ona ta talanoa pe a e manao i ai. E mafai foi ona fesili mai poo a a'u galuega ia e fai i totonu o lau aoga. E i ai taimi ou te faaogaina ai se mea pueata, masini pu'eleo ia poo se masini pueata. A e le o mautinoa pe i ai ni ou popolega, sau ta talanoa, pe e te talanoa foi i se faiaoga poo ou matua. Ou te fia alu atu i lau aoga pe faatolu aso o le vaiaso, i ni masina se lua.

O le a sou lagona i la'u galuega lea e fia fai? Tusi lou lima i ata ia e faaali mai ai ou lagona. (Let me know how you feel about this by pointing to one of these pictures)

## Appendix 7: Children's Interview Schedule

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### Indicative Questions: Fanau/Children



**Project Title:** *Soso'o le fau i le fau; (join fau with a fau). Exploring what factors contribute to Samoan children's cultural and language security from the Aoga Amata to Samoan primary bilingual classrooms in Aotearoa New Zealand.*

### Themes or questions to guide the discussion

1. *O ai lou igoa? E te iloa le uiga o lou igoa?*

What is your name, do you know the meaning of your name?

2. *E te fiafia i lau aoga? Ioe/Leai – Aisea?*

Do you like your centre? Yes/No – Why?

3. *O a ni vaega e te fiafia lava e te taalo ai ma aisea?*

What is your favourite play activities and why?

*(this question aims at capturing how these favourite activities contribute to building the child's relationships with own peers and also how the activities enhance or develop children's cultural knowledge)*

4. *E te faasamoa i totonu o lau aoga amata? Ioe/Leai – Aisea?*

Do you speak Samoan to in Aoga Amata? Yes/No – Why?

*(Note whether the child uses formal (t/n) or informal (k/g) Samoan)*

5. *O ai e te faasamoa i ai? Aisea?*

Who do you speak Samoan to and why?

*(This question targets reasons why children speak Samoan to particular people. The formal Samoan language demands a more organised conversation while the informal is suggested to bring people together due to its relaxed nature.*

6. *O a ni vaega o lau aganuu e te fiafia i ai o loo faatino i totonu o lau aoga amata?*

What aspects of your culture you like that is practiced in your aoga amata?

For example – faasoa (act of sharing; of food and play equipments..etc turn taking), tatalo (prayer in the morning and before eating), faaaloalo (showing respect by saying tulou when walking in front of people or children, not standing and walking while eating..etc). Demonstrating tautua (acts of service eg – helping younger children or teachers in cleaning or other tasks, welcoming malo in the aoga amata..etc)



7. *Ta'u mai ni vaega/galuega e te fiafia e te fai e iloa ai o oe o le Samoa?*

(Tell me what makes you proud about yourself and your culture?)

8. *E 5 loa ou tausaga e alu i le Aoga tulaga lua, Tau mai ni galuega o loo e iloa e te faia i le tulaga lua?*

When you turn 5 (or 6) you will go to primary school. Tell me anything you think you will do at primary school?

## Appendix 8: Parents' interview schedule

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### Indicative Questions

**Project Title:** *Soso'o le fau i le fau; (join fau with a fau). Exploring what factors contribute to Samoan children's cultural and language security from the Aoga Amata to Samoan primary bilingual classrooms in Aotearoa New Zealand.*

**Project Supervisor:** *Professor Tagaloatele Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop & Dr Diane Mara*

**Researcher:** *Salā Faasaulala Tagoilelagi-Leota*

### Parents/Mātua

Date:

Type of session: Faiva o mātua (parents)

Venue: TBC

Time: TBC

### Main research question:

How can the traditional metaphor *soso'o le fau i le fau* be productively used in the analysis of cultural security between two settings; aoga amata and schools in the education of Samoan children?


1. To explore whether and how (or which) strands of the fau are present and reinforced in Aoga Amata (ECE) and discussions around these practises
2. To explore whether and how these strands are reinforced in the first year programme of a Samoan bilingual classroom.

### Themes or questions to guide the discussion for faiva

1. *Tau mai lou silafia i Aoga Amata?*  
Tell me about your knowledge of early childhood education
2. *Oa ni mafua'aga na ave ai lau tama i le Aoga Amata?*  
What are the reasons why you enrolled your child at Aoga Amata?
3. *le a sou lagona i le polokalame, faiaoga ma le pulega o Aoga Amata i Niu Sila?*  
How do you feel about the programme, teachers and governance of aoga amata?
4. *O a ni vaega o le Aoga Amata e te fiafia i ai, ma ni vaega e manaomia le toe faaleleia?*  
What areas do you like about Aoga Amata, and areas you think needs improvement?
5. *O le a sou manatu i le alagaupu 'soso'o le fau i le fau' i le suesueina o le sao o aoga (aoga amata/aoga faaleogalua i tulaga lua) i le saogalemu o le faasinomaga o le tamaititi?*  
What are your thoughts about the metaphor *soso'o le fau i le fau* as the key focus in researching children's cultural security in Aoga Amata/bilingual classroom/s?

6. *E faatauaina lou sao i le atinaeina o le ola aoaoina o lou alo i le Aoga Amata & vasega faaleogalua? Aisea?*  
Is your contribution to your child's learning valued at Aoga Amata and in bilingual classroom? Why?
7. *Aisea ua e manao ai e aoga lou alo i le aoga tulaga lua e i ai le vasega faaleogalua?*  
Why have you chosen to enrol your child at a Samoan bilingual class?
8. *O a ni vaega taua o loo e faamoemoeina e fai e le vasega faaleogalua mo lou alo?*  
What do you expect your child to learn from the Samoan bilingual class?

## Appendix 9: Teachers Interview Schedule – Aoga Amata & Bilingual units


<p>Teachers' interview schedule</p> <p>Teacher: Aoga Amata/School: Date/time: Present:</p>	
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These questions are to support the main title of the study: *Project Title: Soso'o le fau i le fau; (join fau with a fau). Exploring what factors contribute to Samoan children's cultural and language security from the Aoga Amata to Samoan primary bilingual classrooms in Aotearoa New Zealand.*

<b>What is the fau in NZ today?</b>	<b>How is the fau being practiced/maintained/shared in aoga amata?</b>	<b>Whether and how these practices are carried over in samoan bilingual classes.</b>
<p>1. Aisea ua fia avea ai oe ma faiaoga? <i>Tell me why you decided to be a teacher?</i></p> <p>2. Aisea ua e fia galue ai i totonu o Aoga Amata/Bilingual unit? <i>Why did you decide to teach in an Aoga Amata/Bilingual unit?</i></p> <p>3. Na aoga lou a'otauina e fai ai oe ma faiaoga mo ECE/Bilingual? Ioe/Leai, Aisea? <i>Has the training you have received prepared you to become an ECE/bilingual teacher?</i> <i>Give reasons for your answer.</i></p> <p>5. E i ai nisi 'training' na e fia manaomia? <i>What other training would you have liked?</i></p>	<p>9. I sou lagona, o a ni vaega taua se tolu, e maua ai se Aoga Amata taualoa? <i>In your view what are the 3 key things that make a good AA? (e.g. language, class set up, teacher behaviours, parent involvement, language protocols, rules, gender, behaviours...)</i></p> <p>10. E faapefea ona faagaioi nei vaega taua? <i>How are you trying to do this (practices, constraints and enablers, what are you doing really well/ not so well ...</i></p> <p>11. E i ai ni vaega e faamausali/faaleleia, pe sui foi? <i>Is there anything that could be further enhanced or change?</i></p>	<p>12. O le a sou manatu i le alagaupu 'soso'o le fau i le fau'? <i>What are your thoughts about the metaphor soso'o le fau i le fau?</i></p> <p>13. Faamata ua lava tapenaga a le Aoga Amata i le lagolagoina o le faigamalaga atu lea mo aoga tulaga lua? <i>Do you think Aoga Amata &amp; Samoan bilingual have given sufficient attention to ensuring a smooth journey/shift from Aoga Amata to Samoan bilingual classrooms? OR</i> <i>Do you think Aoga Amata &amp; Samoan bilingual have worked collaboratively in ensuring a smooth journey between the 2 sectors? Yes/No, Why?</i></p> <p>14. O ni vaega e te lagona o loo manaomia le faaleleia? <i>What do you think is needed to enhance OR smooth transition?</i></p>

<p>6. E i ai sau matafaioi faapitoa i le tou vaega o faiaoga? Aisea?</p> <p><i>Do you have a specific role in your teaching team? What is this role and why?</i></p> <p>7. O a ni agatausili o se faiaoga o Aoga Amata/Bilingual? Aisea?</p> <p><i>What are the values of good AA/bilingual teacher? Why?</i></p> <p>8. I sou manatu, o a ni vaega taua o le fau?</p> <p><i>In your view, what are the key components? /qualities of the Samoan world view? (the fau)</i></p> <p><i>(or, samoan values and beliefs and practices, does the spiritual have a place?</i></p>		<p>15. I sou lagona, o ai e tatau ona fesoasoani i le 'soso'oina' o le fau i le fau?</p> <p><i>In your view, who can help in joining the fau with a fau?</i></p> <p>16. E i ai nisi ou lagona faaopopo i ou manatu ua uma ona faaalua?</p> <p><i>Is there anything else you wish to add to your earlier view of soso'o le fau i le fau?</i></p>
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## Appendix 10: Observation checklist in Aoga Amata

<p>Observation Checklist</p> <p>Aoga Amata/School:</p> <p>Date/time:</p> <p>Present:</p>	 <p><b>AUT</b> UNIVERSITY <small>TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TAMAKI MAKAU RAU</small></p>
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<b>AREAS</b>	<b>THINGS TO LOOK FOR</b>
<b>Cultural presence</b>	<p><b>Use of Gagana Samoa:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Faamaumauga (portfolios)</li> <li>2. Displayed charts/writings,</li> <li>3. Gagana a le faiaoga/s – usage of t/k, gagana faaaloalo</li> <li>4. Gagana a matua (if present)</li> <li>5. Gagana a tamaiti</li> <li>6. Learning activities – cultural knowledge</li> <li>7. Alagaoa/resources</li> <li>8. Samoan cultural corner</li> <li>9. Use of respect lang – faafetai, faamolemole, upu faafeiloai</li> <li>10. Laei/dress code</li> <li>11. Behaviour – va fealoai, sharing</li> <li>12. Programme planning (Tē Whāriki )</li> </ol>
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>When and why the Aoga/bilingual service was set up. What has been developed thus far since its inception?</p>
	<b>THINGS TO LOOK FOR</b>
	<p><b>Spirituality</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tusi Paia/Hymn book visual in learning environment</li> <li>2. Activities/Behaviour</li> <li>3. Relationships</li> </ol>
	<p><b>Centre/School Environment</b> Friendly, Inviting, Welcoming, Sense of belonging</p>
	<p><b>Learning Environment</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Indoor/Outdoor</li> <li>2. Under/Over 2</li> <li>3. Staff Area</li> </ol>
	<p><b>Programme/Assessment tools used</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Samoan cultural knowledge used for curriculum aims/objectives/learning outcomes</li> <li>2. Aspects of Samoan cultural knowledge in implementation</li> <li>3. Collectivity in planning (soalaupule)</li> <li>4. Children’s entry test results at primary (if available)</li> </ol>

## Appendix 11: Lau tusi mo le fanau/Observation Sheet for children

### LAU TUSI MO LE FANAU – Observation Sheet for children

Suafa: \_\_\_\_\_ Aso/Taimi: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Siosiomaga/Learning Environment: \_\_\_\_\_ Alagaoa/Resources: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mataupu/activity: \_\_\_\_\_ Faiaoga: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Gagana faaaoga: \_\_\_\_\_

AGATAUSILI – verbal, physical, spiritual, emotional, social..	FAATINOGA (practice).. Curriculum areas	FAAMAUMAUGA (documentation) PORTFOLIOS, RECORDS OF DAILY OPERATION	SAMOAN ARTEFACTS/RESOURCES Laufala, popo, salu, mea'ai, pate, fulumoa, ili, figota, ietoga, siapo, tanoa, ava, tauaga, afa etc	FAIAOGA/teacher -Samoan lang/cult -Christianity -ECE -Teaching strategies	SIOSIOMAGA/Learning Environ
<b>Alofa</b>  Eg – taaalo tausaaafia, tuu avanoa mo isi tamaiti	Eg) Tala tuu, fagogo	Elements of 'alofa' in the children's learning stories	Eg) Salu le faleaoga – displaying alofa and tautua O a ni mea'ai o loo atagia mai ai le alofa	Gagana Programme Planning – inclu assessment tools used Self review - teuloto	-is setting inclusive, embracing, spatial for children to openly display alofa for each other -do the sleeping arrangements or regulations exude alofa?
<b>Tautua</b> Loto fesoasoani i faiaoga ma isi tamaiti	Eg) Tala tuu, fagogo	same	Eg) faaula Bdays celebration – Taimi o mea'ai	Programme Planning inclu self review, leadership	-is the setting supporting 'tautua'?
<b>Faaaloalo</b> gagana faaaoga (faafetai, faamolemole, tulou, faaaoga le t/k tausi leleia le va ma isi tamaiti,	Eg) sitting down when talking, eating Faatai vae Not talking with mouth full Faalogo ma usitai i le faiaoga ma isi tamaiti	same	Taimi o mea'ai -	Programme Planning Laei o faiaoga	How is the environment promoting 'faaaloalo'?
<b>Ola FaaKerisiano</b> Faaaoga tala mai le Tusi Paia	Mat time Tauloto mai le Tusi Paia,	Faaaoga upu faaKerisiano i faamaumauga  Faamaumau aoaoga faale Kerisiano	Tusi Paia, Tusi tala, Pese Lotu During morning devotion and end of the day prayer, what are the Christian values emphasized?  O a mea'ai faaleagaga o loo maua e tamaiti?	O ni Kerisiano? Agamalu Loto faamagalo, le tauai ma sui Loto alofa	O lava ni alagaoa mo aoaoga faale Kerisiano?
<b>VAEGA FAAOPOPO PE FOU</b>					

## Appendix 12: Fa Fe Fi Fo Fu Chart

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	<b>a</b>	<b>e</b>	<b>i</b>	<b>o</b>	<b>u</b>
<b>f</b>	<b>fa</b>	<b>fe</b>	<b>fi</b>	<b>fo</b>	<b>fu</b>
<b>g</b>	<b>ga</b>	<b>ge</b>	<b>gi</b>	<b>go</b>	<b>gu</b>
<b>l</b>	<b>la</b>	<b>le</b>	<b>li</b>	<b>lo</b>	<b>lu</b>
<b>m</b>	<b>ma</b>	<b>me</b>	<b>mi</b>	<b>mo</b>	<b>mu</b>
<b>n</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>ne</b>	<b>ni</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>nu</b>
<b>p</b>	<b>pa</b>	<b>pe</b>	<b>pi</b>	<b>po</b>	<b>pu</b>
<b>s</b>	<b>sa</b>	<b>se</b>	<b>si</b>	<b>so</b>	<b>su</b>
<b>t</b>	<b>ta</b>	<b>te</b>	<b>ti</b>	<b>to</b>	<b>tu</b>
<b>v</b>	<b>va</b>	<b>ve</b>	<b>vi</b>	<b>vo</b>	<b>vu</b>
<b>h</b>	<b>ha</b>	<b>he</b>	<b>hi</b>	<b>ho</b>	<b>hu</b>
<b>k</b>	<b>ka</b>	<b>ke</b>	<b>ki</b>	<b>ko</b>	<b>ku</b>
<b>r</b>	<b>ra</b>	<b>re</b>	<b>ri</b>	<b>ro</b>	<b>ru</b>



