

Laulōtaha; Tongan Perspectives of ‘Quality’ in Early Childhood
Education

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	vi
Attestation of Authorship.....	vii
Fakamālō/ Acknowledgements.....	viii
Ethical Approval	xiii
Abstract.....	1
Chapter 1: Talateu/ Introduction.....	2
1.1 Introduction	2
1.2 Purpose of the study.....	2
1.3 Context of the study.....	3
1.4 Importance of the study	4
1.5 Study Background.....	5
1.6 Summary.....	7
Chapter 2: Concepts of <i>Laulōtaha</i>	9
2.1 Introduction.....	9
2.2 <i>Laulōtaha</i>	9
2.3 The concepts of <i>Lālanga</i> (weaving)	12
2.4 <i>Lālanga</i> and <i>Laulōtaha</i> as conceptual frameworks for measuring ‘quality’ in Tongan Language Nests.....	16
Chapter 3: A critique of reviewed literature	18
3.1 Introduction.....	18
3.2 Perceptions of Quality.....	18
3.2.1 ‘Quality’ in Early Childhood Education	23

3.2.2 Teacher’s training and qualification	25
3.3 Relation to biculturalism.....	28
3.4 ‘Quality’ from Tongan perspectives	33
3.5 Summary.....	35
Chapter 4: Methodology	36
4.1 Introduction.....	36
4.2 Methodological Framework.....	36
4.2.1 Theoretical position	37
4.3 The <i>talanoa</i> method to research.....	38
4.4 Selection of participants.....	41
4.4.1 Background of Tongan ECE teachers that participated in this study	41
4.4.2 Background of Tongan parents that participated in this study	42
4.5 Collection of data.....	43
4. 5.1 Transcripts.....	44
4.5.2 Data Analysis	45
4.6 Ethical considerations	46
4. 7 Limitations	46
4. 8 Strengths and weaknesses of this research.....	47
4. 9 Teachers’ concerns.....	48
4.10 Summary	49
Chapter 5: <i>Koe ako laulōtaha</i> /Tongan Ideals of ‘Quality’	51
5.1 Introduction.....	51
5.2 Tongan perspectives of what ‘quality’ means	51

5.2.1	Laulōtaha.....	54
5.3	<i>Ako Laulōtaha</i>	67
5.3.1	Mo’ui lō tolu/ Tongan aspects of development	68
5.3.2	Lea faka- Tonga.....	72
5.3.3	‘Ulungāanga Faka-Tonga or anga faka- Tonga	75
5.3.4	Summary	89
Chapter 6:	Criteria for ‘quality’ used by Pālangi and education officials	92
6.1	Introduction.....	92
6.2	Education Review Office.....	92
6.2.1	ERO Visits	93
6.2.2	Perceptions of ERO Reports	99
6.2.3	Policies and Regulations	102
6.3	Measuring ‘quality’ in Tongan Language Nests.....	105
6.3.1	Documentation.....	105
6.3.3	Mat time	109
6.3.4	Fevahevahe’aki	113
6.3.5	Following the child’s interests	114
6.4	Possibilities/ Vision for the future	118
6.4.1	Cultural knowledge, values and beliefs	119
6.4.2	Measuring and defining ‘quality’ from a Tongan perspectives	123
6.5	Summary	130
Chapter 7:	Conclusion	133
7.1	Introduction.....	133

7.2 The strengths of this research	134
7.3 The limitations of this research study	134
7.4 Recommendations for future research	135
7.4.1 Implications for Tongan early childhood teachers and Tongan parents in Tongan Language Nests.....	135
7.4.2 Implications for policy makers and education officials	136
7.5 Conclusion	137
Glossary of Non- English Terms	143
Refrence List.....	145
Appendix A.....	153
Appendix B.....	157

List of Tables

Table 1: Sub themes of Lauḷōtaha	53
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Attestation of Authorship

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.

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Ethical Approval

In accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC), ethics approval was finally granted on 21st October 2010 by AUTEC with reference number 10/154.

Abstract

In New Zealand policy discussions considerable emphasis is placed in achieving ‘quality’ in early childhood services. The use of this concept creates a significant amount of tension in Tongan early childhood centres, because there is disagreement as to what ‘quality’ actually means. This research study aimed at reclaiming an understanding of ‘quality’ from Tongan perspectives. In order to establish just what ‘quality’ might mean from a Tongan perspectives, I conducted sessions of *talanoa* (dialogue and discussions) over a period of four weeks. The participants were Tongan early childhood teachers and Tongan parents who are highly involved in various Tongan Language Nests in South Auckland.

This thesis captures the perspectives and understandings of Tongan early childhood teachers and Tongan parents about the notion of ‘quality’ in Tongan Language Nests. No one term in the Tongan language translates ‘quality’ but there are several important Tongan concepts which make up a comparable conceptual framework. The research concludes with discussions on defining and measuring ‘quality’ in Tongan Language Nests. In this discussion I advocate the idea that defining and measuring ‘quality’ in this context requires depth of understanding and connectedness to Tongan culture, language, and epistemology.

Chapter 1: Talateu/ Introduction

Teuteu pea fili ho'o lou'akau
(Preparation and selection of lou'akau)

1.1 Introduction

Chapter one showcases the beginning of this journey. Chapter one delineates my positions within this research study. It contains the purpose of this study, the context, the importance of the study, and the background.

1.2 Purpose of the study

This interest arises from my experience of the notion of 'quality education' within early childhood education. One of the key components to early childhood services is that all early childhood providers must strive for high 'quality education' and services. In effect, for providers, teachers, and parents, the definition of 'quality' education within the early childhood centre is defined by the Education Review Office (ERO). The education review officers are responsible for measuring the 'quality' of the education offered by the centre. The 'quality' checklist that ERO measures are the effectiveness of the service, the 'quality' of the programme delivered, 'quality' of relationships and interaction between staffs, parents, and children, and the 'quality' of practices by staffs and so on (Ministry of Education, 1996). 'Quality' in early childhood is universal and objectives are based on expert knowledge. 'Quality' deploys certain methods based on applying templates, scales, check lists, standardized and inspection procedures. One of the issues concerning 'quality' in early childhood is that 'quality' is a concept with a very particular meaning and inscribed with specific assumptions and values (Moss & Dahlberg, 2008).

There are guidelines, policies, practices, and procedures in transcript for early childhood teachers to follow and act upon. In relation to our practices as Tongan educators, one asks, what is 'quality' for Tongans and how do we measure and perceive 'quality education' based on Tongan knowledge, perspectives, culture, values, and beliefs? It seems that Tongan perspectives of 'quality' may be added to the way 'quality' is understood in Tongan Language Nests. The purpose of this research is to define 'quality' and to explore perceptions of 'quality' based on Tongan perspectives amongst Tongan early childhood teachers and parents.

1.3 Context of the study

We live in an age of 'quality'. Every product and service must offer 'quality'; every consumer wants to have it (Moss & Dahlberg, 2008, p. 1). 'Quality' is a critical dimension in the context of early childhood education. Nevertheless 'quality' has already been defined by policy makers, Ministry of Education (MOE), curriculum, guidelines, and practices and so on. In reality we are soaked with documents of transaction of 'quality', practices and procedures in transcript for early childhood teachers to follow and act out. In most Tongan/ Pasifika early childhood centres searching for high 'quality' education within their practices are an ongoing process. We come across the word 'quality' within our everyday practices yet without fully understanding the word from our own context as Tongan teachers and parents working with Tongan children in a Tongan Language Nest.

What this research attempts to do is to reclaim Tongan perspectives of 'quality'; it is also to have a deeper understanding of the term and the world that such understanding entails

(Freire 1987). As a Tongan teacher and researcher I hope that this research will re-examine the role of ‘quality’ that is pre-defined for Tongans in Language Nests. The *talanoa* and critical dialogue with Tongan parents and Tongan early childhood teachers aims to contextualized ‘quality’ from Tongan perspectives.

1.4 Importance of the study

There has been little definition of ‘quality’ from Tongan perspectives in Tongan Language Nests. In addition, ‘quality’ from Tongan perspectives is not recognized and considered in the pre- defined content of ‘quality’ in Early Childhood Education (ECE). The researcher believes understandings of ‘quality’ from Tongan perspectives are vital to assist the professional effectiveness and efficiency of ECE service to Tongan children.

The word ‘quality’ is essential in every ECE centre. The MOE highlights the importance of having ‘quality’ education in ECE. ‘Quality’ education in early childhood is prescribed by the government, through the MOE, the early childhood curriculum, and other documents within ECE. ‘Quality’ education in early childhood is largely driven from Western perspectives (Farquhar, 1991). From the researcher’s experiences in working with Tongan children in a Tongan Language Nest, it seems that most of our work is about following prescriptions written in policies, requirements, and regulations. The concepts of establishing Tongan Language Nests was for us to sustain and maintain our language and culture through our young children growing up in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ) (Coxon, Anae, Mara, Wendt-Samu, & Finau, 2002). To do this we have our own ways of constructing, organizing, and using indigenous knowledge that defines

what ‘quality’ is for us. Tongan people in Tongan Language Nests need to define ‘quality’ from their own culture. Culture is central to the learning of Tongan children in ECE and therefore the ‘quality’ of education that our children are exposed to should be derived from Tongan culture and traditions.

1.5 Study Background

The beginning of Pacific Island language groups was set up in the 1980s. The view then was that more and more of the Pasifika children born here were in danger of losing their heritage in a largely monolingual and monocultural society (Mara, 1998). The establishment of nga kohanga reo by Maori, the indigenous people of this land, in the mid 1980s provided a model for Pasifika peoples to follow. The Kohanga reo movement and its vision are to totally immerse Maori children in their reo (language) and sustain their tikanga (customs) through ECE. Following the success of Kohanga reo, other groups from the Pacific followed through with similar visions and aspirations for young Pasifika children (Meade, Puhipuhi, & Foster- Cohen, 2003).

The history of Pasifika Language Nests was initiated by the work of Pacific women who saw the importance of sustaining cultural languages; cultural practices; beliefs and values through the education of our children. These women are seen as pioneers in their communities (Coxon, Anae, Mara, Wendt-Samu, & Finau, 2002). Some of the participants in this study are amongst those pioneers who first started the establishment of Tongan ECE here in New Zealand.

However from the 1980s to 2011 the number of Pasifika licensed centres has grown. The Annual ECE Summary Report in 2010 shows that there are 132 licenced services;

out of the 132 services, 51 were total immersion services. Thirty services are total Samoan immersion, sixteen services are Tongan immersion, two are Cook Island Māori, and three are Niuean total immersion. The remaining 81 services were identified as bilingual; fifty- six bilingual services belong to the Samoan community; fourteen belong to the Cook Island Māori; four to the Tongan community; three Tokelauan; and one Tuvaluan (Ministry of Education, 2010).

The number of Pasifika licenced services is still small compared to the Pasifika population within NZ. As Pasifika peoples we are identified as having the highest growth rate of any ethnic group within this country. With the numbers of Tongan/ Pasifika centres growing over the years the focus is on improving the quality of Pasifika services (Ministry of Education, 2010).

The MOE published the Pasifika Education Plan which prioritizes the educational progress and achievements of Pasifika peoples from early childhood to tertiary. And top of the priorities for early childhood is to increase the 'quality' of ECE experiences for Pasifika children and to also increase effective engagement of Pasifika parents in early learning and in ECE services in ways that are effective for children's learning and ways that are responsive to parents and children's cultures and languages (Ministry of Education, 2009).

The Ministry of Education implements the government's vision for Pasifika education. The Ministry has a Pasifika Education team in the national office of the MOE which includes five people, a support person, and the Manager for Pacific Education (Mead et al, 2003). The roles of the Pasifika Education team includes 'working in partnership' with the Ministry in strengthening Pasifika education in ECE, provision of policy, advice

and support, and resources, and promoting the values of education to Pasifika peoples.

The MOE and Pasifika team hold significant roles in strengthening and improving ‘quality’ in Tongan/ Pasifika communities.

Strengthening and improving ‘quality’ education from their views may be different from the views of early childhood teachers and parents. ‘Working in partnership’ with and Pasifika communities suggests the importance of having *talanoa* (dialogue) with parents and teachers about the nature of ‘quality’ education for their children (Ministry of Education, 1996). In order to increase ‘quality’ in ECE Tongan early childhood teachers and Tongan parents must reconceptualise the notion of ‘quality’ in ways that are effective to Tongan children’s learning and ways that are responsive to Tongan parents and children’s cultures and languages as emphasized by the Ministry of Education (2009).

1.6 Summary

The considerations above underpin the importance of this research. As Tongan people working in Tongan Language Nests we cannot escape ‘quality’, achieving ‘quality’ is a priority within the education of Tongan children. However, as the problems unfold the heart of the matter is the nature of education to which the younger generation has been exposed. The values and ideals and examples given by schools over the years have been derived from the content of a Western education and have often been very different from traditional Tongan ideals and values (Taufe’ulungaki, 2011, p. 1). In strengthening and improving ‘quality’ in Tongan Language Nests, it is important that parents and teachers

are ‘working in partnership’ with each other and government agencies to collaborate about the education of Tongan children (Ministry of Education, 1996).

The findings of this thesis may help policy makers, MOE, and other education officials become aware of ‘quality’ education from Tongan perspectives. This will also contribute to improving and strengthening ‘quality’ in Tongan/ Pasifika education. The next chapter will talk more about the notion of *laulōtaha* and how it helps define quality from a Tongan perspective. The concepts of *laulōtaha* and *lālanga* are the conceptual framework for defining and measuring ‘quality’ in Tongan Language Nests.

Chapter 2: Concepts of *Laulōtaha*

Tohi pea fili ho 'o fe'unu
(Splitting and selection of strands)

2.1 Introduction

The search for a Tongan definition of ‘quality’ stimulates the desire to deeply reflect upon the *fonua* (land) and the people and how they might define ‘quality’ in their own context. This chapter begins by defining the concept of *laulōtaha*. The concept of *laulōtaha* conveys characteristics descriptive of a state of ‘quality’ and excellence. This chapter will also discuss the concept of *laulōtaha* as a model for defining and measuring ‘quality’ education in various Tongan Language Nests.

2.2 *Laulōtaha*

The origin of the word *laulōtaha* is a concept that derives from the *lālanga* (weaving) of a certain mat called *lōtaha* in the context of Tongan people. The word *laulōtaha* is used to describe a high degree of excellence about someone or a thing in a particular context.

The phrase *laulōtaha* is used by Tongan people in many occasions and in different contexts but it can only apply when they recognise the significance of quality.

The word *lau* may have many meanings that include the following;

lau refers sheet, layer of paper, board, *lau* refer to the hair of someone’s head

(Churchward, 1959). *Lau* also refers to a way of speaking about a particular person or a thing, “*ai ha 'o lau*” meaning “have a say” or “what’s your perception?” *Lau* can also refer to read or count; *lau* can also be used as a prefix to other words. The word *lau* signifies inclusiveness, acceptance, and amongness. The word *lō* means a strand or

many strands, or layered, another meaning of *lō* refers to ants; the word *taha* refers to one or first. *Taha* signifies most important. So *laulōtaha* refers to a strand; it signifies oneness, uniformity, comparability, or a degree of assurance based on culturally accepted standards.

Historically Tongan people have many different types of *fala* (mats). Tongan women are very artistic and creative in *lālanga* (weaving), producing different types of mats to serve various social functions. Tongan *fala* are ranked in hierarchical order or status and every mat has a *hingoa* (name). Each *fala* is woven and designed differently to illustrate differences in social status. Different particular *fala* will have a distinctive value, patterns, length, width, colour, designs, types of pandanus used, and other characteristics. This holds a deep cultural meaning and historical *talanoa* (story) that represent its uniqueness and how they are used for different occasions. *Lōtaha* is one of the many mats that Tongan people have and is one of the lowest in rank but one of the most useful of all for everyday use.

The following explanations come from conversations I held with one of the *matu'a* about the concept of *laulōtaha*. Meleane Lolohea- Pau'uvale, who is an expert weaver (pers comm, 2010) thought that *lōtaha* may be one of the first forms of *fala* (mat) that the Tongan people produced. Women used to *lālanga* these *lōtaha* for the *faliki* (covering) of the floors of their houses for everyday living. Often Tongan people will have *a'ahi* (evaluation) where they decide upon the best *lōtaha*. The term *a'ahi* is like an inspection for state of 'quality' and excellence. When the *a'ahi* takes place all the women in the village will come together and they lay out their *lōtaha* (mats) and display them. Often the women with the mats will invite visitors or other people from

the village to come and examine the mats. The evaluators will assess the ‘quality’ of the mat based on the features, the weaving, the length, the designs, the aesthetics of the mat, and other characteristics of the mat. The evaluators will then identify the best of the *lōtaha*. From their judgment of the best *lōtaha* they then identify “*koe laulōtaha eni*” meaning this particular mat defines the best ‘quality’ of all.

A different aspect of *laulōtaha* was advanced by another of the *matu’a*, Vaivaifolau Kailahi (pers comm. 2011) who suggested that the word may originate from the making of *lōtaha* but the meaning lies in the word itself. The word *laulōtaha* exemplified a Tongan way of defining ‘quality’. For instance “*koe ‘apiako laulōtaha*”, meaning a ‘quality’ school. This particular school may be identified as *laulōtaha* for different reasons. For instance the school must hold a prominent or conspicuous characteristic in terms of collective effort; the staff are qualified and well equipped in terms of working together with parents, students, and the community; high achievement of students in Tongan national examinations; students are well behaved (*‘ulungāanga lelei*) and have good manners. A particular school can only justify a claim to *laulōtaha* if it has high achievements in the national examination but the focus is on the collective effort of everyone involved in the school.

The principle of *laulōtaha* is about the actual *ngāue* (work) that women carried out to produce a mat. The word *laulōtaha* signifies ‘quality’, but at the same time it also signifies the effort and the skills put together to produce a ‘quality’ mat. *Laulōtaha* refers to combining various strands into connected wholeness; it’s about the constructing and the uniting of many strands to form oneness. In weaving a *lōtaha* there are many things that come together: the pandanus, the strands, the designs. When

the strands are interlaced together it forms a mat. Education has significant features of a mat, being woven from complex social and educational strands.

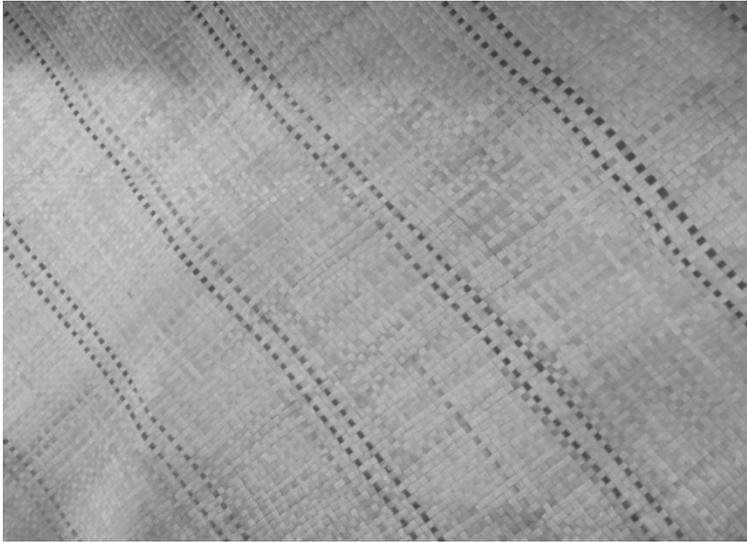


Figure 1: A picture of a *lōtaha* that was handed down from my great grandmother Mohulamu Napa'a of Olo'ua

2.3 The concepts of *Lālanga* (weaving)

The word *lālanga* in Tongan refers to weaving; Maori people have ‘raranga’ which also refers to weaving. Weaving in the Western world is the act or art of forming cloths or fabrics by interlacing threads, yarns, strips, or strands together to form a whole piece of fabric or cloth (Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2011). *Lālanga* in the Tongan context is similar to raranga in the Maori context, in the sense that the weaving gradually unites flax, fibres, or pandanus. MacIntyre (2008) added to the definition of *lālanga*; the process involves joining the *fe'unu* (strands of pandanus leaves) together by manipulating them to hold together then fastening them to create a *fala*.

Lālānga is one of the ancient *koloa* (treasure) that Tongan people have preserved from generation to generation. For hundreds of years *lālānga* has been replicated in the everyday living and practices of Tongan people in Tonga. It is a symbolic proof of cultural survival and sustainability. Maori people also regard *raranga* as a powerful symbol that evokes tribal memories of their ancestors that have survived through generations. Puketapu- Hetet (1989) on Maori weaving suggested that of all the Maori techniques, *raranga* is the one that has best survived colonization. The technique *raranga* has strong links with Pacific Island weaving. In Tonga, the survival of *lālānga* composes history, cultural knowledge, and cultural practices that have survived for centuries. The history and knowledge of *lālānga* are both presented and contained in the many forms of mats that Tongan people keep in their households, to be utilized in many cultural practices and Tongan functions.

The art of *lālānga* in the context of Tongan people is a duty performed by females only. The task is carried out either by individuals or in groups and each step represents an aspect of the women's effort and performance (MacIntyre, 2008). In many visits to the homeland of Vava'u, I found that in most of the villages *lālānga* is carried out in groups. And these groups are called *kau toulālānga* meaning a group of women weaving together. *Lālānga* is seen as a communal and collective task by the women in Vava'u. The principle of *ngāue fakataha* (working together collectively) is the core value to the work of the *kau tou lālānga* (weavers). They work together and weave together in order to produce various *fala* (mats) which will be used for traditional occasions such as births, weddings, funerals, and other special occasions of the *fonua*. These mats become the most treasured possessions in many Tongan households.

The concept of *lālanga* plays a vital role in determining what *laulōtaha* or ‘quality’ stands for in early childhood for Tongan Language Nests. When talking about the quality of *lālanga* in the Tongan context, one must look at how fine the *fe’unu* are used and how *mā’opo’opo* or close together these *fe’unu* (strands of fibre) are woven together. *Mata’i lālanga* is a reference to how a particular *fala* is woven and that can suggest the quality of workmanship and the skills of those who were involved in the process of *lālanga*.

The meanings lie in their state of hierarchical values; relevances to the cultural functions that they were woven for and their aesthetics quality. These *mata’i lālanga* may also reflect the skilful and competencies of those who were involved in the process of *lālanga* to create a *fala*.

In a personal conversation with my father Siosifa Pau’uvale (pers comm, 2011) about the concept of *lālanga* he said that “Tongan people not only refer to the word *lālanga* for the weaving of mats, but they also use the word *lālanga* as a metaphor that refers to the way people develop”. He continued that there is a saying in Tonga, “*’Oku hange ‘a e tangata ha fala ‘oku lālanga*” meaning mankind is like a mat being woven. This saying signifies the idea that a Tongan person is woven from strands that are fundamental to the essence of being Tongan. A Tongan person or the *tangata kakato* is expected to develop physically, intellectually, and spiritually (pers comm, 2011). There are also fundamental ‘*ulungāanga* or attitude and dispositions that are highly emphasised in the development of the *tangata kakato* (holistic person). These fundamental ‘*ulungāanga* or attitude and dispositions are *lālanga* (woven) in the lives of Tongan people from a very young age. The *fe’unu* used for these *lālanga* represents ‘*ulungāanga faka-Tonga* (Tongan tradition), cultural practices, and Tongan cultural values. Cultural values such as *anga’ofa* (loving

nature), *faka'apa'apa* (respect), *tauhi vaha'a* (maintaining reciprocal relationships), *mamahi'i me'a* (team spirit), and *loto to* (willing heart).

The homes, the church and the schools are the three main setting where the *lālanga* takes place. In the conversation with my father he identified various places for instance the school where he attended, and the villages where he was raised and then he said “*koe ngaahi feitu'u ia na'e fai ai hoku lālanga*” meaning these are the places where my life was nurtured and woven to become who he is today. The concept of *lālanga* reconnects the people and the *fonua* or the land. When my father refers to the villages where he was raised it includes the people and the villages.

Within the world of Tongan Language Nests here in Aotearoa NZ we need to revitalize and recapture the essence of *lālanga*. The national early childhood curriculum, Te Whaariki symbolised a Whāriki (mat in Maori), woven from principles, strands, and goals based on a bicultural approach. As for Tongan children, we also have our own *lālanga* of *fala* which reaffirms our cultural identity. Educating young children in early childhood is a form of weaving. What do we want to weave in the lives of young Tongan children who are now growing up here?



Figure 2: Tou lālanga /Collective weaving by the women of Hunga, Vava'u (Source: Totem, 2008)

2.4 *Lālanga* and *Laulōtaha* as conceptual frameworks for measuring ‘quality’ in Tongan Language Nests

These interpretations of *lālanga* and *laulōtaha* have distinguished cultural values that reflect Tongan society, culture, norms, and world views that might be relevant and effective to measuring ‘quality’ education in Tongan Language Nests. The notions of *lālanga* and *laulōtaha* provide an integrated approach to measuring ‘quality’ and also defining ‘quality’ in various locations of Tongan Language Nests here in Aotearoa NZ.

The concept of *lālanga* is full of symbolism and hidden meanings that symbolizes one’s image, identity, and culture (Puketapu- Hetet, 1989). The process of *lālanga* symbolizes the growth and development of a child and also the collective effort of women or teachers doing the *lālanga*. The achievement of *laulōtaha* will depend on the *lālanga* of the women or teachers within a particular setting. The process of weaving differs depending on the species of pandanus used. The four most common types of mat are *fala pāongo*, *fala tofua*, *fala fihu*, and *lōtaha*.

The process of *lālanga* signifies the work of Tongan early childhood teachers in different locations. In various locations and contexts of Tongan Language Nests will reflect different types of *lālanga*. These differences include the philosophy of the centre, the teachers working at that particular centre, the values, beliefs, practices, qualifications, goals, and understandings. Imagining the finishing product of a *fala* whether it’s a *lōtaha* or a *fala pāongo* evokes strong feelings of unity and togetherness. The *fe’unu* used for the *lālanga* represents cultural knowledge, language, culture, values, beliefs, traditions, and practices. *Lālanga* of a particular *fala* conceptualized the image of the Tongan child

or the *tangata kakato*. The multiple strands overlapping one another are woven tightly to reaffirm its value and aesthetic of *laulōtaha*.

The concepts of *laulōtaha* capture a defined statement of ‘quality’. Different people may define and interpret *laulōtaha* differently. *Laulōtaha* is socially- oriented and contextually defined according to the nature and context of the *lālanga*. To define *laulōtaha* requires reflection and interpretation; it also involves questioning which aims to connect the meanings in an environment of certain and uncertainty. *Laulōtaha* is an interpretive task that delineates broad understanding of the context and its culture. The *laulōtaha* approach may challenge us to broaden and deepen our understanding of how *lālanga* is carried out in different contexts. The concept of *laulōtaha* captures a defined statement of ‘quality’ where weaving the actual is related to the image of the Tongan child. The multiple strands overlapping one another are woven with Tongan cultural values and beliefs.

Chapter 3: A critique of reviewed literature

Fatu leva ho'o lālanga
(Initial composition of the weaving)

3.1 Introduction

Other pioneers and academic experts have paved the way for conducting this research. Research reveals Tongan knowledge and epistemology which contributes to the academic world. Importantly Pasifika and indigenous academics are also conducting various researches that contribute cultural knowledge and understandings in ways that benefits Pasifika and minority groups. This chapter focuses on the literature relevant to the notion of 'quality' education in early childhood in the Pacific and particularly the Tongan contexts.

3.2 Perceptions of Quality

Are Tongan values, beliefs, child rearing, cultural practices seen as 'quality' in ECE? How do we define 'quality' in the work that we do in the context of Akoteu Tonga (Tongan Language Nests)? How do we measure 'quality'? How can we practice 'quality'? What do we see as 'quality' and what doesn't in a Tongan Language nests? How do we know that we are delivering and practicing 'quality' education? How can we achieve 'quality'? Several guidelines, policies, readings, research and more have highlighted indicators of 'quality' for us based on Western epistemology and understandings. The questions asked are driven and based on defining the word 'quality' from Tongan perspectives.

‘Quality’ is a word with many contested meaning. Farquhar (2008) stated that the word ‘quality’ is a nonsensical word. What Farquhar (2008) is proposing here is that the word ‘quality’ is a word without any intelligible meaning. She stresses that the ‘Q word’ is simply a modern buzzword drawn from business management and it is becoming the popular jargon terms such as ‘synergy’ and ‘knowledge economy’ and it is part of our language, yet if we ask anyone the definition of the word, they are likely to stumble in coming up with the precise answer (Farquhar, 2008). And this is one of the many reasons why this study took place; in talking about the ‘Q’ word one feel that it is vital that we define and develop a deeper understanding of the word not only from Western perspectives but more importantly from our own perspectives as Tongan people involved in ECE.

However there are attempts to define this “nonsensical” word: ‘Quality’ is defined as: *“an essential or distinctive characteristic property that defines the apparent individual nature of something, a degree or grade of excellence or worth, an essential and distinguishing attribute of something or someone* (Web Dictionary, 2009, p. 1). The word ‘quality’ *“represents character, disposition, nature, excellence of a character, ability, skills, and talents”* (Oxford University Dictionary, 2002). *Quality itself has been defined as fundamentally relational; quality is the ongoing process of building and sustaining relationships by assessing, anticipating & fulfilling stated and implied needs* (Eta Global Report).

What is distinctive about the definitions of ‘quality’ above is that in defining ‘quality’ one cannot generalize the meaning of ‘quality’ and apply it to all services, product, nor people. Rather you look at the individual nature and the characteristics. In terms of

ECE there are different types of child care services available in NZ. So how we define 'quality' in a particular centre will depend on the nature of the service, characteristics, practices, contexts, cultures, languages, relationships and other relevant aspects.

Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence (1999) added that it is also important to look at it in relation to the times in which we live and the great changes politically, socially, culturally, economically that characterize these times (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999, p.7).

Questions of the nature of 'quality' have been raised in the reviewed literature. For instance Moss and Dahlberg (2008) asked; what is 'quality' in early childhood and how can 'quality' be discovered, measured, assured and improved? How could 'quality' take into account context and values, subjectivity and plurality (p.1)? One of the definitions suggested by Moss (1994) for 'quality' is that 'quality' is used to analyze, describe and understand the essence of nature of something- what makes it what it is. In applying these observations to early childhood services, the meaning of 'quality' requires the adoption of an essentially holistic approach. It looks at the distinctiveness and the unique combination of characteristics of what defines a centre's 'quality' (p. 3- 12). In the sense of what makes it what it is; the holistic approach is sympathetic to Tongan ideals of *tangata kakato* (the whole person). In most Tongan Language Nests here they currently emphasize the concepts of *tangata kakato* in the daily programme. The concept of *tangata kakato* contains three main aspects of how Tongan people develop which is *mo'ui fakasino* (physical well- being), *mo'ui faka'atamai* (mind or intellectual well-being), and *mo'ui fakalaumālie* (soul or spiritual well- being) (Koloto cited in Bird & Drewery, 2000).

This approach offers some supports to the notion that Tongan ECE should have a say in defining its own concept of 'quality'.

Moreover Moss & Dahlberg (2008) declares that in defining 'quality' we need to look at multiple perspectives from different groups in different places, who may have different views of what 'quality' is. Moss & Dahlberg (2008) also argue that people in certain contexts, can talk about the importance of the processes of defining 'quality' and this should include a wide range of stakeholders, from academic experts, children, parents and practitioners. Therefore, in defining 'quality' in every service, it is obvious that subjective values will be prominent in deciding 'quality'. Perception will depend on what aspects of the service are being considered and who is doing the defining (Cryer, 1999). Different cultures will perceive 'quality' from their own world views. In terms of the Tongan culture, I assume that they will have their own distinctive spiritual and intellectual definitions for the word 'quality' education within ECE.

Issues that are associated with 'quality' are also further discussed by Moss & Dahlberg (2008). Issues such as 'quality' in early childhood education are universal and policy objectives are based on "expert" knowledge. Detection of 'quality' deploys certain methods based on applying templates, scales, check lists, standardized and inspection procedures. One of the major issues concerning 'quality' in early childhood is that 'quality' is a concept with a very particular meaning and inscribed with specific assumptions and values (Moss & Dahlberg, 2008, p. 1). There are guidelines, policies, practices, and procedures amounting to scripts for early childhood teachers to follow and act out. The risk is that early childhood teachers are becoming the 'depositors' of knowledge and the children are the 'depositories' of knowledge. Freire (1970) warns of

this eventuality, this is where education is viewed as a bank where education currency is deposited and used by the depositor. Point is, “denial of diversity” and education becomes homogenize and predominates by the Western culture.

Farquhar (1991) stressed that the globalization of the Western culture dominates and is spreading worldwide through the process of globalization. Western values and assumptions are embodied in delivering predetermined learning outcomes expected of young children. Measures of ‘quality’ involve looking for what has been predefined by policy makers, government, documents, and international organization. Such measures offer predictable rationales and prescriptions for early childhood education. Policy makers, advisers and experts assume that these measures of ‘quality’ within early childhood services can define and consequently have little interest in the voices of the least powerful people, namely parents and children (Farquhar, 1993).

Farquhar (1993) tightened her argument by saying that our perceptions of ‘quality’ in early childhood education are shaped by research done mainly in the United States. However, contemporary early childhood teachers in NZ have drawn heavily on French philosophical theory such as Foucault, Bourdieu, Deleuze and others to develop critical perspectives on dominant practice. There is a tension here between the literature that supports policy and the thinking of leading ECE researchers like Farquhar, S. E (1993), Farquhar, S (2010), Gibbons (2005), White (2011), Bird & Drewery (2004). The leading paradigm in early childhood education has been ‘child development’. But teachers should take into account that the theoretical paradigms in ‘child development’ may not all relate to Tongan/ Pasifika ideas on children and childhood. On the other hand theorists such as Bronfenbrenner (1979) in his ecological approach; Vygotsky (1976) in his socio-

cultural approach; Bandura (1977) in social learning can be applied to Tongan/ Pasifika cultures (Crain, 2005). Because they prioritise *social* development, however theories should be subject to critical reflection by the teacher. As a general prompt; we are now living in a world of diverse cultures and it is time for us to re-construct and introduce diverse forms of knowledge and multilingualism within our practices in early childhood education.

Importantly Tongan/ Pasifika cultures have their own theorists in childhood, for instance, our theorists on children and childhood are our ancestors, grandmothers, and elders from generation to generation. Knowledge and practices of child rearing were transmitted through the generations and as teachers we can still validate these cultural theories in our practices. These theoretical forms of knowledge and cultural practices contribute to education. Thaman (2001) reminds us that teaching Tongan/Pasifika students should reflect a culturally inclusive approach. This means that cultural values, knowledge, beliefs, and language are highly valued and included into their learning and development.

3.2.1 'Quality' in Early Childhood Education

In the context of early childhood education, the ERO (Education Review Office) defines and measures 'quality' education in early childhood. ERO aims to contribute to a world leading education system that equips all New Zealanders with the knowledge, skills and values to be successful citizens in the 21st century. According to the Education Review Office;

The purpose of the education review office (ERO) is to assure the government that all chartered early childhood services provides high 'quality' education. The outcomes that the government have outlined for 'quality' early childhood is that every child achieves literacy and numeracy levels that enable their success, every child develops the knowledge and skills needed to contribute to the nation's

future economic, Maori enjoying success as Maori, and capable, efficient and responsive to education priorities (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 3).

‘Quality’ in early childhood education is outlined in many ECE documents and policies. One questions whether the word ‘quality’ is fully understood by Tongan early childhood teachers and parents. There are many criteria and descriptions that define the word ‘quality’, and it is often used in policies with regulatory importance. Hence, not understanding the real meaning of the English word and having knowledge of what the word refers to undermine the likelihood that Tongan Language Nests will achieve ERO’s measurement goals. Freire (1987) argues that without understanding the word we have little power in what we do. His notion of the transformational potential of education is based on understanding central terms. We need to reflect upon the word ‘quality’ in the world of early childhood. Understanding the word and the world will enable people to participate in the transformation of our society (Freire, 1987).

Mitchell, Wylie, & Carr (2008) described ‘quality’ in early childhood as the key to achieving gains on all outcomes measured. The document tends to emphasis two main aspects of ‘quality’ which are: staff qualification; and indicators of ‘quality’. Mitchell, Wylie, & Carr (2008) suggests four aspects or indicators of ‘quality’ that are particularly important: the ‘quality’ of staff and child interaction; the learning resources available; programmes that engage children; and a supportive environment for children to work together (p. 15). Earlier Podmore & Meade (2000) highlighted large numbers of ‘quality’ in early childhood settings such as: child centered; planning educational programme; high staff- child ratio; trained staff and ongoing professional development; stability of staff and children; small group sized; mixed age grouping; staff are committed

to age- integration; staff are also active; democratic parental participation; language maintenance and cultural revival (p.10). The indicators outlined in this research seem authentic and appropriate in terms of working with young children. At the very least Podmore & Meade (2000) offer categories to measure teachers, student, and environmental interaction. Teacher training and qualification is one of the major key aspects found in promoting 'quality' education in early childhood education. Hence we need to reflect upon the training and qualification whether is inclusive of a holistic approach.

3.2.2 Teacher's training and qualification

Many research projects identified the importance of teacher training and qualification, and the Ministry of Education (2009) also advocates the importance of having qualified ECE teachers (Kēpa & Manu'atu (2003), Gegeo & Watson- Gegeo (1999), Smith (2006) Taufe'ulungaki (2010), and Vaioleti (2011). Education of the staff is essential in working and teaching young children. However the education and qualification are based on Western knowledge and epistemology. Taufe'ulungaki (2002) pointed out that education today derives its meaning from Western culture and traditions is usually different in the conception from what education traditionally means in the cultures and communities of Pacific people. Vaioleti (2011) proposes in his doctoral thesis that Tongan students will achieve better in their educational outcomes from primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions through self- esteem stemming from an acknowledgement of their Tongan identity and the knowledge that their unique ways of learning and current knowing are respected in the education system of Aotearoa NZ.

Western knowledge provides a starting point for thinking about child learning and development, but the views on child development, child rearing, behaviors, mannerism are all very Eurocentric. However we should recognize Western theorists as the sources of these ideas. Samu (2010) suggested that Western theoretical frameworks may be useful, enlightening, even inspiring, but these theoretical approaches and constructs should not be the only influences on the teaching and learning of Pacific peoples. In dealing with Tongan/ Pasifika children some of the theories, perspectives, and knowledge on child development do not apply for our children. We need to ask the question: whether the educational programmes that most Tongan/ Pasifika early childhood teachers are enrolled in promote and teach Pasifika world views, practices, languages, and cultures (Sualii- Sauni, 2008).

Issues raised in one of the symposiums here in Auckland concerning students who were having trouble in understanding their lecturer (Thaman, 2010). Indigenous academics and lecturers from the Pacific gathered together and dialogued and discussed the issue raised by Thaman in a conference held at Unitec in 2009. Thaman (2009) found that our Pacific children are lost in the education programme because the contents of the study are not part of the reality of our Pacific students. Samu (2010) argued that education should be a process that is grounded in diverse cultures and the curriculum and pedagogy needs to be culturally informed and culturally responsive.

For myself I hear a lot of endless debate amongst some of the student teacher of other institutes and student teachers of AUT about the educational programme that they are currently attending. Student teachers who are attending the National diploma in ECE at AUT value the inclusiveness and validity of Pasifika cultures and epistemology in the

education programme, in contrast with Pasifika student teachers in other institutes which have little interests in Pasifika cultures and epistemology. These students often say that the programme that they are studying is far more of 'quality' because it doesn't include Pasifika studies; everything is in the Palangi way. It comes to my understanding that some of our Tongan/ Pasifika student teachers have partially or wholly internalized Western values, beliefs, and knowledge mainly because that's what they are taught or offered in the education system in which they are currently studying (Taufe'ulungaki, 2002).

One of the issues found in teacher education is that Tongan/ Pasifika cultural knowledge is not included and recognized. The qualification that we receive is based on Western knowledge, however in practice we work with Tongan/ Pasifika children. There is a mismatch between the qualification and practice, in that teachers are expected to apply Western knowledge to their practices in a Language Nest with Tongan/ Pasifika children. Again Thaman (2003) embraces indigenous epistemology as a process of decolonizing Pacific studies. She further argues the importance of decolonizing Pacific studies for the following reasons that it is about acknowledging the dominance of Western philosophy, content, and pedagogy in the lives and education of Pacific peoples; and also it is about valuing alternative ways of thinking about our world, particularly those rooted in the indigenous cultures of Oceania peoples; and lastly it is about developing a new philosophy of education that is culturally inclusive and gender sensitive (p. 2).

What Thaman (2003) is proposing is not new in academia; research on the importance of cultural inclusiveness has emerged in the last two decades. For instances Quanchi (2004) reveals that scholars were keen to affirm that not only indigenous epistemologies are

alive and well, but also that they are very much relevant and useful to the societies to which they belong. Although cultural inclusiveness in education have existed in the last two decade yet Pacific ways, values, and knowledge systems have not been included in the curriculum or the pedagogy of most schools and other educational programmes (Thaman, 2010).

Bishop & Glynn (1999) and Hereniko (2000) strongly support indigenous epistemologies in the education of Pacific people. Culture is central to the learning, and so we need to be aware of the range of socially constitute traditions for sense- making that each individual brings to the community of practice (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). Aspects of ‘quality’ in early childhood education are features in the training and qualification that we receive from institutions. The question to be asked; Are Tongan/ Pasifika ideas and values included in the educational programmes that they are currently studying? Existing professional institutes is yet to be articulated, but as Pacific peoples engaging in educational programmes, we need to re- examine and critique our positions within the education systems (Teaiwa, 2010). As an early childhood teacher working and teaching Tongan children, the researcher feel that including knowledge, skills, and values relating to Tongan children in the educational programme that Tongan teachers receive has the potential to promote ‘quality’ in ECE.

3.3 Relation to biculturalism

“Biculturalism refers to the process through which individuals enter into contact with a new culture and create a new identity by meshing values, attitudes, and behaviours of their own culture into the new one. In other words bicultural individuals adapt to ways valued in the new culture while retaining an attachment and identity with their culture of origin, Often, biculturalism has been disguised as a capacity to move from one

culture to another with relative ease and learning how to navigate and participate in both worlds” (New & Cochran, 2007, p. 72).

The bicultural approach is inclusive within the education system in Aotearoa NZ because of its significance and commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi (Grey, 1999). Such commitment is advocated in the Royal Commission on Social Policy (1987) that *“bicultural development has been proffered as an important element of any programme which has as its objective the advancement of the social and economic status of Maori people. It is an option which derives from the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi”* (p. 14). This is an important element because official policy in the national curriculum for early childhood education in Aotearoa NZ; the Te Whāriki. Carr & May (1993 cited in Penn 2000) suggested that the NZ Curriculum should recognize the significance of the Treaty of Waitangi which is the landmark treaty signed in 1840 between the Maori people and the British Crown. According to Carr & May (1993) the curriculum should incorporate Maori concepts, the guiding principles, strands, and goals provide a bicultural framework that underpins bicultural assessment.

Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996) can be seen as putting these ideas into policy as the bicultural curriculum for all early childhood education within Aotearoa NZ.

Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996) literally means woven mat. The curriculum invites educators and practitioners to weave their own curriculum, drawing on the framework of principles, strands, and goals as appropriate to the learning needs of their children and communities (Ritchie & Rau, 2006). Ritchie & Rau (2006) also say that it is vital that the Te Whāriki curriculum encourages the ECE community of Aotearoa NZ to transform its practice by honoring the language and culture of the tangata whenua, the

original people of the land. The curriculum recognized children's rights to their identities as cultural beings. As indigenous people of the land, Maori people argue that their cultural values, understandings, and epistemology must be incorporated into content and context of all services as our commitment to the Tiriti (Pakai, 2004). Respectful relationships, honours, individual rights, and collaborative dialogue constitute a shared vision of how people should be treated within the context of ECE (Ritchie & Rau, 2006). Pakai (2004) suggest that 'quality' provision is about early childhood teachers acknowledging her grandchildren's unique identity and celebrating and recognizing their cultural background and what they bring to the educational setting. Pakai's (2004) understanding of 'quality' provision is well linked to Farquhar's (1993) view on 'quality' teaching. Farquhar (1993) defined 'quality' teaching as pedagogical practices that provide for diverse children, opportunities to advance their learning.

What does bicultural means in the context of Tongan Language Nests? Where do Tongan Language Nests position themselves within both the context of Aotearoa NZ and the curriculum of Te Whāriki? The teacher's perception is that, the 'quality' of learning and teaching are pre-defined, and they must abide by these pre- defined outcomes seen on policies and regulations set out by the Ministry of Education.

The challenge that Tongan early childhood teachers are facing is to understand policies, regulations and curriculum as they translate them into practices. Within the Tongan Language Nests they are not bicultural, rather they are multicultural. Bi- cultural represents the relationships between tangata whenua and the Western culture. In Tongan Language Nests, they are multicultural because there are more than two cultures overlapping one another. This includes the; Western world views; Maori; Tongan; and

other cultural ethnic group from the Pacific Ocean. More of the Tongan people are marrying other ethnic groups and therefore Tongan Language Nests are very much multicultural. The curriculum has to take into account of this diversity within the Tongan Language Nests.

Duhn's (2008) analysis of the bicultural aspect of the child in Te Whāriki found that the construction of the child in that document is a response to the demand of governing in NZ. The document is politically driven, it is not neutral rather it is a cultural artifact; it expresses aspirations, desires, and ambitions for the child as future contributor to society from the viewpoints of powerful people (Duhn, 2008). Rose (1999 cited in Duhn, 2008) also found that contemporary political change as the response to problems of governing generating specific practices and techniques to be carried out. Two of the co-writers of The Te Whāriki; Carr & May (2000, cited in Duhn, 2008) explained that The Te Whāriki was developed through negotiation and dialogue between three major voices, government interests, early childhood professionals and families, and national and international critical perspectives. Mutch (2003 cited in Duhn, 2008) also views the document as a reflection of social, cultural, political, and theoretical perspectives of the child.

Duhn (2008) suggests that the "child" in the Te Whāriki is influenced by local (national), and global (western) govern-mentalities rather than a representation of truth about the child and his/ her childhood.

Duhn (2008) further suggests that to some extent the Te Whāriki is homogenizing the Maori languages and cultures. The document fails to recognise the differences between tribes, Maori language, cultural differences, Maori identities; it assumes that language and tikanga (customs) are universal. Duhn (2008) also emphasized the fact that Pasifika

Islands ECE is less focused on Te Whāriki as the curriculum. Pacific Islands early childhood centres are ambiguously discussed within Te Whāriki. It briefly declares that;

Groups of migrants from the Pacific Islands have established early childhood centres to keep their different cultures and languages flourishing in their communities in NZ. Because of the diversity of Pacific Island cultures, there is no single Pacific Island curriculum, but there are historic links in language and culture, and there is a common geographic heritage. Examples suggested in this curriculum, while focusing on Pacific Islands early childhood centres, also demonstrate possible models for other ethnic groups who wish to support their cultural heritage within the early childhood curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 12).

Although Tongan/ Pasifika language and culture are briefly discussed within the curriculum however it fails to give Pasifika cultures the acknowledgement that it gives Maori and tikanga. Te Whāriki clearly states that the weaving of its mat consists of social, cultural, political and theoretical perspectives on childhood from Pakeha (white European NZ) and Maori culture (Duhn, 2008). Tongan Language Nests, Tongan culture, and language are not mentioned. Nor are other cultures and languages of the numerous ethnicities that comprise the social fabric of Aotearoa mentioned in Te Whāriki. The bicultural agenda refers to the specific and special relations of Maori people and Pakeha power structures; yet Te Whāriki is the Early Childhood Education curriculum which pertains generally to all providers and consumers of ECE. So there might be a difficulty in generalizing the specific bicultural agenda of Te Whāriki across to other ethnic groups.

The image and techniques for this actual mat represent only the two cultures which are Maori & Pālangi. The two weaving techniques represent completely different world views. They have different places in modern history; they produce different results.

Rather than accepting biculturalism and its metaphor of the woven mat as given, I want to

emphasise that the metaphor is not as unproblematic as it may seem. The statement “The English and Maori” are fabricated only from their world views. However, Tongan/ Pasifika people may relate to the raranga of Te Whāriki by the tangata whenua at the same time Tongan/ Pasifika people need to revitalize their own forms of weaving based on traditions and understandings. Tongan/ Pasifika people may also add these as their contributions of *lālanga fala* to the context of early childhood.

3.4 ‘Quality’ from Tongan perspectives

A curriculum that truly provided a multicultural base for ECE would include not only Maori and Palangi but also Tongan concepts. In this section I discuss some Tongan concepts relevant to ‘quality’ but other concepts important to Tongans might be included by research focusing on other areas. These Tongan concepts have been written by Tongan academics focusing on other areas of education such as primary, secondary, and tertiary, however these concepts are inter- related to the understandings of ‘quality’ education in Tongan Language Nests.

The word ‘quality’ may apply in many aspects in the lives of Tongan people and derives in many meanings from the occasion and context it is apply to. Churchward (1959) defines ‘quality’ in Tongan as the *anga* and the *‘ulungaanga*. The word *anga* refers to habit; custom; nature; quality; character, characteristic; conduct; demeanour; ways of acting (Churchward, 1959, p. 7). The word *ulungāanga* refers to characteristic habit or quality (Churchward, 1959, p. 571).

Vaioleti (2011) proposed the concepts of *talanoa*, *manulua*, and *founga ako* as ‘quality’ frameworks for enduring Tongan educational ideas. *Talanoa* simply refers to dialogue,

discussions, interaction, and telling. *Manulua* is defined as by Vailoeti as gifted from ancestors, and *founga ako* denotes framework. These concepts are underpinned by *'ofa* (generosity or love), *poto* (intelligence and successful), *'ilo* (knowledge or information), *fatongia* (obligations, and responsibilities), and *fonua* (land and its people); it's an integrated approach that can be utilized by both teachers and students. Vailoeti (2011) introduced these concepts as underlining assumption for teaching practices in the classroom; these must be informed by deep understandings of the role of culture and in the context of social and cognitive development of Tongan children in education. The concepts of *vaa* and *vaha'a* put forward by (Thaman, 2003) as 'quality' relationships for peace and intercultural understanding. *Vaa* refers to inter- personal relationships, *vaha'a* is used to denote spaces between two things or people. The concepts of *vaa* and *vaha'a* lead to cultural identity formation of Tongan/ Pasifika people are relational rather than individualistic. The importance is based on enhancing interpersonal relationships between people. These concepts are highly crucial to the relationships obtained in teaching and learning within the classrooms. Relationships between teachers and students or amongst students must be *tauhi* (maintained) reciprocally in a harmonious ways.

Latu (2009) draws on the concept of *koloa* (what ones value) which embraces Tongan values and beliefs. *Koloa* are seen as treasures, Latu (2009) describe *koloa* as material or tangible and non- material or intangible. Qualities of *koloa* are underlying cultural values and behaviours such as *'ofa* (love), *faka'apa'apa* (respect), *feveitokai'aki* (reciprocity), *tauhi vaha'a* (caring and maintaining interpersonal relations), and *fakama'uma'u* (restraint behaviour). These are Tongan cultural values and beliefs that are seen as

‘qualities’ of a Tongan person. This should be part of a multi- cultural New Zealand curriculum as experienced by Tongan pre-schoolers.

Hau’ofa (1993) and Tu’itahi (2009) articulate on the concept of *fonua*, *fonua* refers to the people and the land. Tu’itahi (2009) says that *fonua* means land and it’s people and their on- going relationship, a concept that is present in many other Pasifika cultures.

Fonua is about the manifestations of Tongan people, their land, the culture, and the language. The concept of *fonua* is broad as it is inclusive of the culture, traditions, history, values, beliefs, and cultural practices. Preserving and revitalizing the language and culture are also essential aspects of the concepts of *fonua*. The concepts of *fonua* are major aspects of ‘quality’ that should be included and reflected within the education of Tongan children. The concepts of *fonua*, *whenua* for Maori and other indigenous cultures will have similar concepts of *fonua*; the understandings of *fonua* are widely required.

3.5 Summary

The Te Whāriki curriculum for early childhood education is based on a bicultural approach. The perspectives of those engaged in the weaving of the Te Whāriki do not address issues related to the diversity of cultures that exist within Aotearoa New Zealand. The voices of minority groups from the Pacific is absent in the creation or the weaving of the Te Whāriki. The curriculum claims to be multicultural but it is not, for Tongan/ Pasifika people in Language Nests there is a need for a multicultural approach.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Hala fakama 'u fatu
(The act of combining the strands together)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter identifies and explains the research approach, the methodology, and procedures associated in this research. It will also reflect upon the collection of data, how the data was analyzed and reported, ethical considerations, and limitations.

4.2 Methodological Framework

Indigenous methodologies tend to approach cultural protocols, values, and behaviours as an integral part of methodology. They are 'factors' to be build in to research explicitly, to be thought about reflexively, to be declared openly as part of the research design, to be discussed as part of the final results of a study and to be disseminated back to the people in culturally appropriate ways and in a language that can be understood. This does not preclude writing for academic publications but is simply part of an ethical and respectful approach (Smith, 1999, p. 15).

This research intended to define and develop perceptions of quality in early childhood from Tongan perspectives. In researching Tongan people it was vital to choose a research approach that will capture the multiplicity of Tongan perspectives. Therefore the methodologies used in this research were carefully chosen in terms of Tongan culture and protocols. As a Tongan researcher researching Tongan parents and Tongan early childhood teachers, it was essential to choose a research method that is culturally appropriate. Considering my background as a Tongan migrant residing in Aotearoa NZ and experiencing this new journey as a researcher influenced my decisions in choosing the *talanoa* method to research.

4.2.1 Theoretical position

Talanoa is a qualitative approach to research, along with grounded theory, naturalistic inquiry and ethnography, *talanoa* belongs to the phenomenological research family (Vaioleti, 2006). Sherman & Webb (2001) presented that the aim of qualitative research is not verification of a pre-determined idea, but discovery that leads to new insights (p. 5).

Qualitative approach is about exploring ideas, issues, and answering questions. Denzin & Lincoln (2000) defines qualitative research as a method of inquiry in its own right. It crosscuts academic disciplines, fields and subject matter. Denzin & Lincoln (2000) continues that:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material and practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of a meaning people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials such as case study, personal experience, life story, interview, cultural texts and describes routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives (p. 4).

Seale, Gobo, Gubrium, & Silverman (2004) on the other hand contributed by saying that qualitative research is concerned with individual's point of view. Qualitative research aims to gather an in- depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons for such behaviors. It looks at gathering authentic experience of human interests, and seeks answers to a particular question. Qualitative research is very much effective in obtaining culturally specific information about values, beliefs, emotions, opinions, behaviors, relationships, and social context of individuals or a particular group. Qualitative

researchers highly emphasize on the socially constructed nature of reality, they stress on how social experience is created and given meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

The two common methods employed for collecting qualitative research are indepth interviews and group discussions. And these are the advantages of qualitative research as it involves investigation of real life experience, face to face interviews, dialogues, and asking questions.

The definitions and characteristics of qualitative methodology persuaded me to adopt this approach for this particular research. The methodological principles are contextualized in this research. Seale, Gobo, Gubrium, & Silverman (2004) recommended that the research situation is placed in a position of dialogue with methodological rules. The principles, definitions, and characteristics of research as I have understood are interconnected and performed with the *talanoa* method chosen for this study.

4.3 The *talanoa* method to research

Talanoa is one of the indigenous methodologies for Tongans; indigenous methodologies tend to approach cultural protocols, values, beliefs, practices, and behaviours as an integral part of the methodology (Smith, 1999). *Tala* means to, tell, explain, inform, expose, talk about or command. The word *noa* means, ordinary, nothing in particular, purely imaginary (Vaioleti 2003). *Tala-noa* derives from the Tongan language and the concept of *talanoa* in the context of Tongan people is about face- to face conversation, chatting or talking and storytelling in a free and informal manner. In addition the history of *talanoa* in the Tongan context is based on discussions, a talk, exchange of ideas or thinking whether it is in formal or formal, and conversations. These discussions

and conversations often lead to deeper understanding on a particular topic or issues within our everyday living. “The understanding gained from *talanoa* is, in turn, the product of natural laws, beliefs, traditions, values, and culture of those engaged in *talanoa*” (Prescott, 2007, p. 130).

A fundamental premises of *talanoa* as a research method is that it is trustworthy and holds meaningful engagement within the research process (Vaioleti, 2003). *Talanoa* as a research method focused on understanding the perception of participants. The *talanoa* or dialogue and collaboration between the researcher and the participants provide respondents with human face to face which they can relate to (Vaioleti, 2003).

‘*Talanoa*’ is not new to us Tongans but it is essential that we are able to use this method as a tool for research (Prescott 2007). It is used by indigenous writers such as Manu’atu (2000), Halapua (2005), Vaioleti (2006), Otsuko (2006), Tu’itahi (2008), Prescott (2008) who have all found that the *talanoa* method provide useful tools for researching Tongan/Pasifika people. It is a method that is culturally relevant and most appropriate for researching our people because we can communicate and articulate in our first language. The *talanoa* method focuses on understanding indigenous people’s experiences and perspectives. Through the *talanoa* method it allow us Tongan people to express our voices and talk about our own cultural experiences, thoughts, and ideas concerning learning and development in Aotearoa NZ.

Talanoa in the context of Tongan people involves deep interpersonal relationships amongst the people involved in the *talanoa* (Morrison, Vaioleti & Vermeulen, 2002).

Talanoa enhances *fevahevahe’aki* (sharing with one another), *foaki* (giving), *fetokoni’aki* (helping each other), *fe’ofa’aki* (loving one another), *faka’apa’apa* (respect), *tauhi vā*

(maintaining positive relationships) and *ngāue fakataha* (working together collectively). These cultural values and beliefs are highly important in terms of the *talanoa* method in researching Tongan people.

As a method for the collection of data, the ontological roots are linked to the constructivist paradigms and to a lesser extent to the post-positivism (Prescott, 2008). *Talanoa* belongs to the phenomenological family (Vaioleti, 2006). Phenomenology attempts to understand meaning of events to ordinary people in particular situations. It can interpret events in many different ways, depending upon the “frame of reference” (Moustakas, 1994). The *talanoa* approach also relates to the ethnography approach and the ethno methodology approach. Ethnography looks at describing culture and the ethno methodology approach refers to the method that people use to create and understand their lives and to the way in which they go about seeing, explaining, and describing order in the world they live. The understanding that is reached as a result of *talanoa* is a constructed reality. The nature of “truths” to a particular issue or ideas is an ongoing process of *talanoa*, negotiating, debating, questioning, and reviewing and truth is the product of *talanoa*. ‘*Talanoa*’ in the Tongan context is a collective approach, everyone is inclusive in *talanoa*. In terms of research, the researcher and the participants are regarded as being equal and inseparable. Both parties can contribute to the discussion and they both will benefit from the understanding gained from the experience (Prescott, 2008).

4.4 Selection of participants

This research is focused on defining the word ‘quality’ in early childhood education from Tongan perspectives. With this understanding the participation criteria for this particular study were defined to ensure cohesion with the selection of participants needed. Two groups were chosen to be the participants. One was the group of Tongan early childhood teachers and second, was Tongan parents. Participants for the first group consist of Tongan early childhood teachers who are currently working and teaching at various *Akoteu Tonga* (Tongan Language Nests). The second group consists of Tongan parents with children who are currently attending various *Akoteu Tonga* (Tongan Language Nests).

This particular research was based in South Auckland. Overall there were 12 participants’ all together; this includes six Tongan parents and six Tongan early childhood educators. For ethical reasons the confidentiality of participants was guaranteed from the beginning of this study. Participant’s names will not be mentioned at any times and pseudonyms were agreed with all participants involved. The groups were each given a name (*fakahingoa*) for identification purposes. Naming of both groups is followed with brief descriptions of the names and its significance.

4.4.1 Background of Tongan ECE teachers that participated in this study

The six Tongan early childhood teachers that participated in this study are all mothers who have been working in Tongan Language Nests for a number of years. These mothers have children; two are grandmothers, and most of their children attended various *Akoteu Tonga* (Tongan Language Nest). The age groups range from 40 to 60, all of them

received their training here in NZ. All these women are in supervisory positions in different Tongan centres within Auckland. Six participants were co-founders of Tongan Language Nests in the late eighties. These women are pioneers in their field, very passionate about the maintenance of Tongan language and culture through our *fānau Tonga* (Tongan children) who are growing up here in Aotearoa NZ. Follows is a brief description of the name that was given to identify this particular group.

Kulupu ko Fetokoni'aki/ Tongan ECE teacher's group

The name that was given to identify the Tongan early childhood teachers that participated in this study is *Kulupu ko Fetokoni'aki* (Fetokoni'aki group). *Fetokoni'aki* literally means helping one another. The word *fetokoni'aki* is one of the many values that Tongan people hold and is highly important within the everyday living of Tongan people. The concept of *fetokoni'aki* signifies reciprocal and responsive relationships between two or more people. In reflecting upon the roles and responsibilities of Tongan early childhood teachers the concept of *fetokoni'aki* is embedded within their everyday practices. *Fetokoni'aki* is about helping one another; it enforces the concept of *tauhi vā*; maintaining positive relationships with one another and reciprocity. Participants will be referred to as *fetokoni'aki uluaki* (participant number one) to *fetokoni'aki ono* (participant number six).

4.4.2 Background of Tongan parents that participated in this study

Tongan parents that participated in this study have children that are currently attending various Tongan Language Nests. Within the six participants there were five mothers and one father. One of the participants in the parents group was born and raised here in NZ

and asked if she could use both Tongan and English in the *talanoa*. The rest of the participants were all born and raised in Tonga before migrating here. The age group for this group range from 28 to 50.

Kulupu ko Ngāue Fakataha/ The parent's group

This group is named *Ngāue Fakataha*; *ngāue* means work, the word *fakataha* denotes togetherness and collective. Within the context of Tongan people, usually when we associate with the words *ngāue fakataha* literally it means working together collectively. *Ngāue fakataha* is also one of the many Tongan values and beliefs that Tongan people have. *Ngāue fakataha* emphasised on the togetherness and the collective. As parents they like to *ngāue fakataha* (work together) collectively with the teachers and the community in various Tongan early childhood centres in the education of their children. Participants are referred to as *Ngāue fakataha fika uluaki* meaning participant number one up to *Ngāue fakataha fika ono*, to participant number six.

4.5 Collection of data

The collection of data for this investigation was conducted using the *talanoa* method. Data was collected through various formal and informal *fakataha* (meetings) with the participants. Participants had the freedom to choose a most preferred time and location for these various *talanoa*.

The beauty of this research is the *fetaulaki* (meeting up) with the participants and listening to their heartfelt stories. Laughter, tears, discussions and critical dialogues were shared amongst the participants and the researcher. This is often experienced by Tongan people as the *māfana* and the *mālie* (Manu'atu, 2000). Each participant had their

own unique and individual stories to tell. The *talanoa* for this research was a face to face authentic experience with each of the twelve participants.

Information sheets and consent forms were given out to the participants to read and decide whether they wanted to take part in this research or not. Perspectives and information collected from these various meetings were recorded by audio tape so that the information gathered was accurately recorded. These procedures were also explained in the Participants Information Sheet and participants were only asked to sign the Informed consent forms once they indicated that they fully understood the information given to them prior to the *talanoa* sessions. Participation Sheets and Consents forms were written in both English and Tongan. Most of the Tongan participants found that it was appropriate to have the Tongan translation; they had a better understanding of the research project.

Although there are no structured questions in *talanoa* however there were themes and topics that we used to drive the discussions for this research. Themes, topics, and questions were designed to search for information regarding the notion of ‘quality’ from Tongan perspectives. For the *talanoa* sessions with the participants; we used both languages, Tongan and English but the majority of the *talanoa* were conducted in the Tongan language. Only a small percentage of the participants asked if they can use both languages.

4. 5.1 Transcripts

Perspectives and informations collected from the *talanoa* sessions with the participants were recorded by audio tape. Data from the *talanoa* were gathered and transcribed by the

researcher. Transcriptions were written in the language that the participants used during the *talanoa* sessions to ensure and maintain the authenticity of cultural meanings.

Participants used both languages within the *talanoa* sessions but the majority of the *talanoa* were conducted in the Tongan language.

The information collected from the participants was transcribed into word document. During the transcribing tapes were extensively re-played for clarification of information given by the participants. It was important for the researcher to re-play and re-listen to the tapes for confirmation and to ensure that the perspectives and views of the participants are correctly transcribed.

4.5.2 Data Analysis

In maintaining the authenticity of the *talanoa* that took place with the participants; the data were transcribed using the languages that the participants used which was Tongan and English. Analyzing the data involves a lot of re-reading; the data was read several times and it generated a lot of reflections and reviewing. Major themes and topics were identified from the data. Descriptive views and perspectives of participants were categorized into relevant themes and topics. Translation of data had to take place as well after categorizing the data into themes. Translating the data into English was very difficult because to translate the Tongan words into English somehow subtleties of meaning were lost through translation. The process of translating the data involved careful reflection and clarification in case cultural meaning was diminished.

4.6 Ethical considerations

In all research undertakings within the Auckland University of Technology ethical principles are highly crucial. Research designs and procedures have to meet ethical standards from the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEK). Application for Ethics approval for this research project were submitted on the 6th of July 2010 and granted acceptance on the 21st of October 2010. Participation Information Sheets and Consent Forms are attached on Appendix.

4.7 Limitations

As a Tongan researching Tongan people it is vital to understand the concept of *talanoa* within the context of Tongan people. As a young Tongan woman, conducting these various *talanoa* with the participants requires knowledge and understandings of cultural protocols within the *talanoa*. For instance it was important to know my position within the *talanoa*. Knowing your position within the *talanoa* leads to correct use of Tongan protocols. This means acknowledging cultural values and beliefs by using appropriate language. The participants had to be approached in ways that are acceptable in Tongan culture such as *faka'apa'apa ki he kakai 'oku lalahi ange* (respect for the elders) especially since the participants were much older than I. The concept of *tauhi vā* affects the researcher's behavior with the participants at all times.

Talanoa, now in the context of Aotearoa NZ, is time consuming. Finding the right time for the *talanoa* with the participants was a difficult process; for the reasons, that all participants are working and finding the right time for the *talanoa* to take place was a difficult task for them. Most of the *talanoa* sessions took place within various Tongan

Language Nests. The reality of early childhood teachers is that they are fully occupied during the day, if they are not attending to the children and interacting with them they are occupied in paper work. All six of the early childhood teachers that participated in this study preferred to have the *talanoa* during their lunch hour or during children's nap time. In some cases the *talanoa* was inclusive of young children and other teachers, who often interrupted during the *talanoa*. It was found that involving other people within the *talanoa* and being inclusive has its advantages and disadvantages. Advantages stem from the concept of *talanoa*, everyone is inclusive of the *talanoa* and that's the reality of *talanoa* within the everyday lives of Tongan people. When other colleagues joined in they had some valid points to discuss within the *talanoa*. This approach also has its disadvantages essentially because sometimes the participants will be in deep thoughts talking about an important subject or an issue, and someone else interrupted then the participant will attend to that person and forget what she was talking about.

All *talanoa* was recorded with the permission of the participants however some of the participants found the tape recorder uncomfortable as first. Some of them thought that the institute will access the tapes and listen to what they said. It had to do with being *mā* (shy) and ensuring that their opinions are kept confidential. Procedures were explained properly to the participants that the tape recorder is there to capture the accuracy and the essences of the *talanoa*, and that no one will access these tapes apart from myself.

4. 8 Strengths and weaknesses of this research

Locations chosen for the various *talanoa* sessions with the participants were chosen by the participants themselves. In this way the participants had the opportunity to choose an

environment and conditions in which the participants felt comfortable, secure, and mostly appropriate for them. One of the participants said during one *talanoa* session that “I like the process of this *talanoa*, questions are open- ended, and your giving me time to think about the topics and subjects that we are discussing, and also you are not dictating the answers from me as a participant”. This is one of the strengths I found across twelve participants; in conducting the *talanoa* with the participants they were given the opportunities to *talanoa* without direction. Strengths of *talanoa* also lie within the face to face interaction between the researcher and the participants. Having face- to- face conversations with the participants enable the researcher to be *maheni* (get to know one another) with the participants prior to the *talanoa*. This also enables the participants to develop a sense of trust in the researcher which lead the willingness of the participants to participate in this research.

4. 9 Teachers’ concerns

In one of the *talanoa* sessions I had with one of the participants, before she could articulate on the notions of ‘quality’ she strongly raised an important issue which I deeply thought about. And in her statement she pointed out that;

These perceptions of ‘quality’ that I am about to give is not ‘the’ perceptions for all Tongans, however this is my perceptions drawn from the Tongan culture. Other Tongans may not agree with my views and they might see things differently because Tongans are still diverse in terms of understandings, values, beliefs, and ideas. And everyone will have different perceptions of the word ‘quality’ rather this is my own perception and I am speaking for myself from my own understanding and experiences (Fetokoni’aki fika 2/ Participant number 2).

What Fetokoni’aki fika 2 (participants number 2) from the teacher’s group raised here are critical dimensions that concerns with the reality of doing research. Perceptions of

participants are valid in terms of developing new knowledge that is effective and necessary for knowledge application in education (Mahina, 2008). At the same time we also need to deepen and broaden our understandings that knowledge cannot be homogenized in all contexts. Although the following perspectives of teachers and parents about ‘quality’ are based and drawn from Tongan language and culture, however the view of one person cannot be used to generalize the views of all Tongan Language Nests here in Aotearoa NZ. Tongan early childhood centres here in Aotearoa are still diverse in terms of religious, philosophy, context of the centre, values, beliefs, practices, daily routines, environment, and understandings. Ngāue Fakataha ‘s (Participant number 2) view applies to all participants within this study; their perceptions of ‘quality’ from Tongan perspectives are unique and diverse at the same time they are speaking from their own understanding and cultural knowledge within the context that they associate with. A reminder: the teachers group is identified as Kulupu ko Fetokoni’aki and the parents group is identified as Kulupu ko Ngāue Fakataha throughout chapter five and six.

4.10 Summary

Chapter four describes the method used for this particular research. The *talanoa* method was carefully chosen as appropriate for researching Tongan people. Researching Tongan people requires cultural knowledge and understandings of the *Fonua* and its people. Most importantly *talanoa* is a method drawn from Tongan culture and traditions, and both the researcher and the participants were familiar with the *talanoa* method. Ethical considerations and other issues related to conducting this research were also included in

this chapter. The following chapters will focus on the findings from the *talanoa* with the participants.

Chapter 5: *Koe ako laulōtaha*/Tongan Ideals of ‘Quality’

Lālanga ke tō e lau
(*The weaving process*)

5.1 Introduction

Aspects of Tongan thought that have fundamental importance to ‘quality’ from a Tongan perspective are included in this chapter. There is no one translation, so ideas have been expressed which come from a range of Tongan concepts, but together form a complex picture of ‘quality’ from Tongan perspectives. This chapter will present the participant’s views on what ‘quality’ means from a Tongan perspective. These Tongan ideals of ‘quality’ are drawn from the *talanoa* with the participants. The first section looks at translating the word ‘quality’ into the Tongan language while the second section, defines the notions of *ako laulōtaha* (‘quality’ education) in Tongan Language Nests.

5.2 Tongan perspectives of what ‘quality’ means

To articulate an understanding of the word ‘quality’ from a Tongan perspective one must unpack the word itself and its impact within the context of Tongan Language Nests. This section looks at translating the word ‘quality’ and defining it from a Tongan perspective. ‘Quality’ in educational management contexts is identified with bureaucratic procedures or institutional practices for monitoring effectiveness of organizational systems, usually known as ‘quality’ control mechanisms such as ‘quality’ assurance, ‘quality’ audit, and ‘quality’ assessment (Lomax, Whitehead, & Evans, 1996). ‘Quality’ in the European world includes; adherence to requirements, ‘quality’ improvements, ‘quality’ control, and accountability of work effort and cost. In business ‘quality’ simply means what the

customer wants, but there is an older meaning which refers to notions of craftsmanship, of durability, of refined materials, and of aesthetics. How much of these meanings of ‘quality’ survive in the official requirements of educational management? The original is Latin means *quales* – what kind of? So the ‘quality’ of something is just the nature of it – what kind of stuff it is made out of? Its association with ‘best’ or ‘high quality’ is a later development in English.

In the course of this study, we did not attempt to confuse people with such a deconstruction of the English word. We simply asked the questions: what is ‘quality’? How do we define and interpret ‘quality’ within the context of Tongan people in early childhood education? And what is the Tongan translation for the word ‘quality’? A lot of questions arised from the *talanoa* about the word ‘quality’ alone. The participants took some time to seriously reflect on the word ‘quality’ and how they make meaning of the word in regard to their practices and the education of Tongan children in *Akoteu Tonga* (Tongan Language Nest).

The idea of translating the word ‘quality’ in to Tongan is to have cultural connection with the word ‘quality’ within our own language and culture. It is to also deepen and broaden our understanding of the complex relationships confronted and engaged by Tongan people in ECE with the word ‘quality’ (Kēpa, 2008). In translation, the word ‘quality’ provides a deep cultural meaning which connects to the *loto* (soul) and the heart of the Tongan people which foster transformation of intentions in their context. Translation is more than the process of translating from one language to another; it is also about the communication of meaning. Communications of meanings are tied to cultural meaning which language carries (Somon, 1996). Translating ‘quality’ into the Tongan language

may differ radically according to the language, the culture, and ideological context of Tongan people.

Key words emerged from the *talanoa* and discussions with the participants about the translation of 'quality'. These words are; *laulōtaha*, *lelei taha*, *faka'ofa'ofa taha*, *mahulu hake*, *tolonga taha*, *fotunga*, and *mahu'inga taha*. The following are sub- themes and translations of these sub- themes are listed on the table below.

Table 1: Sub themes of Laulotaha

Laulōtaha- the term *laulōtaha* is a metaphor that Tongan people used to define a state of 'quality' or excellence about a thing or people. It usually defines the best characteristics of a thing or about someone.

Lelei taha- is the word that defines high standards and often when we associate with the word *leleitaha* it speaks volume; it means high standards, and expresses excellence and quality.

Faka'ofa'ofa taha- the word *faka'ofa'ofa* is about the characteristics, the appearance, and the aesthetic of something that we may refer to. The word *faka'ofa'ofa taha* also mean the most beautiful; eg the most beautiful *lōtaha* (mat)

Mahulu hake- the word *mahulu hake* refers to beyond or above, and often *mahulu hake* is used to describe something that is beyond and above the best.

Tolonga taha- The word *tolonga* means something that last long, when *taha* is added to *tolonga* it means something that will last longer the most. And often when we are searching for something that is 'quality' we also look for something that will last longer.

Fotunga- *fotunga* means the appearance or the attributes of something; it's about specification that defines a particular thing or people.

Mahu'inga taha- the *mahu'inga taha* simply translated as the most important, and 'quality' we also search for specific values that are most important to us.

5.2.1 *Laulōtaha*

The concept of *laulōtaha* have been defined in more details in chapter two, however *laulōtaha* will also be discussed in this chapter five. The term *laulōtaha* was highly recognised by some of the participants as the suitable word for the translation of ‘quality’. *Laulōtaha* signifies a state of excellence about a thing, a person, or a place. The term *leleitaha* is about the best: in association with the word *laulōtaha* implies a degree of excellence. Ngāue Fakataha fika ono (Participant number six) from the parents group on the concept of *laulōtaha* said:

Kiate au ia ko e fo'i lea 'quality' 'oku 'uhinga ia ki he laulōtaha. Ko e lelei taha 'oku fai 'e he 'apiako hangē koe kau faiako, matu 'a, moe fānau ka koe ola 'o e lelei taha 'oku ma'u ai 'a e laulōtaha (Participant number six).

Translation

For myself, the word 'quality' means laulōtaha (excellent). We can do our lelei taha (our best) as teachers, parents, and children and the outcome of lelei taha (the best) will gained the laulōtaha (excellent) (Participant number six).

When *leleitaha* takes place or in practice, the result of that becomes *laulōtaha*. However the processes of achieving *laulōtaha* are not easy and a lot of challenges and barriers must be overcome. Ngāue Fakataha fika ono (Participant number six) from the parents group had a slightly unique interpretation to this. She explained:

'Oku ou pehē ko e 'quality' ko hono 'uhinga lelei kiai ko e fo'i lea Tonga ko e laulōtaha. Ko e tu'u-ki-mu'a pē koe excellent 'oku uHINGA ia ki he laulōtaha. Ko e laulōtaha 'i he ako 'a e longa'i fānau iiki 'oku fakatatau ia moe tupu (growth), 'uhinga 'ko ha me'a 'oku tupu 'oku 'i ai 'a e mo'ui pe koe life. 'Oku tupu, 'oku 'i ai 'a e fakalalakaka, 'i ai moe feliliu'aki, 'oku 'i ai 'a e taumu'a, and it's an on-going process (Ngāue Fakataha fika ono).

Translation

In my views the word 'quality' the most suitable Tongan term for it is laulōtaha. The very best of everything or excellent defines the meanings of laulōtaha. The word laulōtaha within the education of young children symbolized growth, something that grows and there's a life. It means there is growth, there is development, there are changes, there are purposes involved and it's an ongoing process (Participant number six).

Ngāue Fakataha fika ono had a slightly different translation and interpretation for the word ‘quality’. The concept of *laulōtaha* signifies growth, it’s about a human life; and the process of achieving *laulōtaha* involves a purpose, development, and on- going changes in order to achieve *laulōtaha* (quality). Ngāue Fakataha fika ono spoke with compassion and poetry about the concepts of *laulōtaha*; she related her views to the educational journey of her daughter in the Tongan Language Nest. She explained that *“this is the life of my child, and I see her developing each and every day, and she’s growing, there is a purpose for attending a Tongan Language Nest”*.

The deep meanings of *laulōtaha* focused on the many aspects that comes together, many aspects and strengths unify together to form as one. The process of achieving *laulōtaha* in Tongan Language Nests will involve the many strengths of parents, teachers, children, and people of the community coming together for the purpose of uplifting the ‘quality’ of education for young children. However the people involved must have the same common grounds in culture, beliefs, and understandings of the purpose or the achievement of *laulōtaha*.

The majority of the participants believed in the term *laulōtaha* as the most suitable translation and interpretations for ‘quality’ in Tongan Language Nests. The term *laulōtaha* accommodates the meaning and interpretation of ‘quality’ in many aspects. *Laulōtaha* conceptualises a state or degree of excellence within the social context of Tongan people. And therefore the term *laulōtaha* becomes one of the many suitable words used to translate ‘quality’ in Tongan Language Nests.

Lelei taha

The term *lelei* refers to good, suitable, satisfactory or in a good satisfactory condition.

The word *taha* is translated as one, it defines oneness, when the terms *lelei* and *taha* are composed together it refers to the best, the use of *leleitaha* in this sense is a sheer anglicism (Churchward, 1959, p. 291).

The terms *lelei taha* are descriptive words used to describe the best in a satisfactory condition. Tongan people may refer to *lelei taha* only when they are convinced or can identified representation of what they account as the best. The term *leleitaha* may apply in many contexts in terms of the culture, the *fonua* (land,) and the people. In terms of education, *lelei taha* is employed to define the best in schools. Tongan people often say “*koe ‘apiako leleitaha*” interpreting that particular school is the best.

The perception of *lelei taha* is known to be the best; however *lelei taha* (the best) is defined and interpreted from a cultural perspective. The meaning of *leleitaha* and how Tongan people associate with the terms contained cultural principles and values. In defining *lelei taha* in the Tongan contexts it applies alternative analysis, judgements, dialogue and discussions based on the circumstances and situations. Such interpretations involves many people although the interpretations may be diverse as each individual holds different views but the interpretations are often based on Tongan cultural perspectives, theoretical standards, and history.

Tongan people often utilized *lelei taha* as a goal for education or any profession in different areas. When people associate with *lelei taha* it becomes a goal with a purpose towards an endeavor. In relation to Tongan Language Nest, the concept of *leleitaha* is

one of the major goals that Tongan early childhood teachers have in common.

Fetokoni'aki fika ua (Participant number two) viewed that:

Ko e kaveinga 'o e 'quality' ko e leleitaha, kiate au koe 'uhinga pē koe mahu'inga 'a e fo'i lea 'quality', ko 'ete fai ki he leleitaha 'i ha fa'ahinga tafa'aki pe ngāue 'oku te fai (Fetokoni'aki fika ua).

Translation

The purpose of 'quality' is lelei taha (the best), for myself the meaning or the importance of 'quality' is that you must do your best in different areas and in different profession (Participant number two).

The Tongan early childhood teachers articulated on the concepts of *lelei taha* and agreed that they prioritised the concepts of *leleitaha* in their practices. The concepts specifically describe the purposes and goals of their profession. 'Quality' in their perceptions is driven by *lelei taha*; in terms of their performance and working with young children they must do their *lelei taha* (best). Fetokoni'aki fika fa (Participant number four) supported this by stating that:

Ko e 'quality', ko 'eku faka-Tonga lelei kiai koe leleitaha pe a koe taumu'a pe ia ki he ngāue 'oku ou fai 'i heni, ki he leleitaha i he lea, 'i he ngāue, 'i he 'eku tō'onga, 'i he 'eku fai fatongia (Fetokoni'aki Fika fa).

Translation

My own definition of the word 'quality' will be leleitaha (the best) and that is my goal for the work that i do here, the best in the way that i talk and communicate, the best in the work that I do here, the best in behaviour, and also do the best in my fatongia (responsibilities) (Participant number four).

The significant meanings behind *lelei taha* are absorbed by Tongan people not only as goals but as long term visions which form positive action toward attainment and achievement. 'Quality' in Tongan Language Nests is achievable if the notions of *lelei taha* are reflected in their practices. The understandings gained from the discussions of the parents and the teachers are that the notions of *lelei taha* can be used for personal goals and collective at the same time. It is found that Tongan people live collectively and often the notions of *lelei taha* are acquainted with their work.

Tongan parents that participated in this study also had the same beliefs about ‘quality’.

‘Quality’ is about *lelei taha* hence the education that their children should be receiving at various Tongan Language Nests should be *lelei taha* (the best). Ngāue Fakataha fika tolu

(Participant number three) elaborated on this idea by saying that:

Ko e ‘quality’ i he ako ‘a ‘etau longa’i fānau ‘i he fanga ki’i ako Tonga ko ha ngaahi me’a ‘oku tau sio ‘oku lelei ‘aupito pē leleitaha ki he ako moe tupu ‘a ‘etau longa’i fānau. Ko e leleitaha ‘i he ‘etau fakakaukau, hangē koe ‘ulungāanga faka-Tonga, lea faka-Tonga, moe lotu. Koe ngaahi ‘quality’ ia ‘oku fiema’u ke ma’u ‘e he fānau ‘i he mala’e ‘o e fanga ki’i Akoteu Tonga (Ngāue Fakataha fika tolu).

Translation

‘Quality’ in the education of our children in Tongan Language Nests are something that we foreseen that are exceptional or the best in the education and development of our young children. In our perception leleitaha (the best) that we see as ‘quality’ in the education of our children is that our children are learning the ‘ulungaanga faka-Tonga (Tongan culture), the language, and spirituality in the context of Tongan Language Nests (Participant number three).

Tongan parents strongly believe in ‘quality’ education for their children in ECE; however the notions of *lelei taha* come with certain traditional Tongan ideals that should be accumulated.

Mahulu hake

The term *mahulu* means something bigger or longer, and better (Churchward, 1959, p. 317). The word *hake* denotes up, upwards, or to rise. In this sense the phrase *mahulu hake* is defined as above or beyond the best.

The notions of *lelei taha* is about the best, when the phrase *mahulu hake* is applied it incorporates the best but it must be better than the best meaning its above and beyond of what is known as the best.

The underpinning nature of *mahulu hake* has fundamental values to the definition of ‘quality’. Tongan people refer to *mahulu hake* to define or capture one’s actions or justify one’s valuable, and this can be referred to a person or a thing depending on the context where the phrase is applied. The definitions found on *mahulu hake* expresses that ‘quality’ is beyond the notions of the best, ‘quality’ is of high standards and its bigger and better than the best. Fetokoni’aki fika nima supported this by saying that:

Kiate au ia ko e ‘quality’ ‘oku ‘uhinga ia ki he leleitaha, ka ‘oku pau ke toe ova ange ia he leleitaha, he ko e ‘uhinga ko e leleitaha ‘i he fakapaplangi ‘oku pehē ‘etautolu ia ko e best. Ka kiate au ia ko e ‘quality’ ‘oku ‘uhinga ia ‘oku toe mavahe ange ia ‘i he best (Fetokoni’aki fika nima).

Translation

To me ‘quality’ means leleitaha (the best) at the same time it must be above leleitaha (best) because the English translation for leleitaha is best. To me ‘quality’ must be above and beyond the best (Participant number five).

The essence of *mahulu hake* denotes the ideas that it’s beyond and above what Tongan people refer to as *lelei taha* (best). ‘Quality’ is driven by the notions of *lelei taha* but the definitions found on ‘quality’ are applicable to the meaning of *mahulu hake* (beyond and above). Some of the participants from both the Fetokoni’aki group and the Ngāue Fakataha group quoted *mahulu hake* as one of the possible translation for the term ‘quality’. Ngāue Fakataha fika ‘uluaki (Participant number one) from the parents group quoted that:

Leleitaha (the best) and mahulu hake (above leleitaha) are the words that I can think of because as a parent what I want for my children to learn at schools is seen to be the best and above the best (Participant number one).

The interpretations of *leleitaha* and *mahulu hake* are inseparable in most contexts. In terms of education in ECE, it is found by the participants that they are incapable of being separated. The concepts of *mahulu hake* and *lelei taha* affiliate with the processes of

achieving ‘quality’. And both terms provides similar values and essential meanings to the word ‘quality’.

Mahu’inga taha

The word *mahu’inga* may refers to precious, costly, expensive, richly, luxuriously, and value (Churchward, 1959, p. 318). The word *taha* is translated as one, in other senses it can refer *ki ha taha* meaning someone, anyone, a person, or other. *Mahu’inga taha* here is referred to the most valuable or the most important one.

The term ‘quality’ is governed by the notions of *mahu’inga taha*; ‘quality’ is a state of being important or significance which can be about a particular person, a thing, contexts, or situations.

To talk or discuss ‘quality’ in the Tongan context involves specification of *mahu’inga taha*; this perpetuate the Tongan people to reflect and analyse what really counts as the most important. In Tongan Language Nests *mahu’inga taha* is taken into consideration for instance; what do Tongan people regards as *mahu’inga taha* that is of ‘quality’?

There are many aspects of *mahu’inga taha* and Tongan people will interpret *mahu’inga taha* variously and differently according to a particular context. However the concepts of *mahu’inga taha* associate with the word ‘quality’ within the context of Tongan Language Nests.

Tongan people may refer to *mahu’inga taha* to interpret ‘quality’ for instance Ngāue Fakataha fika nima (Participant number five) from the parent’s group interpreted ‘quality’ as:

I he ‘eku lau a’aku ki he fo’i lea ko ‘eni ko e ‘quality’ ‘oku ‘uhinga ia ki he mahu’inga taha pe ko e leleitaha. ‘I he tafa’aki koe ‘a e ako ‘a e longa’i fānau

'oku tau sio ki he me'a mahu'inga taha pe leleitaha 'e lava au kiai 'a e ako 'a 'etau fānau (Ngāue Fakataha fika nima).

Translation

In my views the word 'quality' defines mahu'inga taha (most important) and leleitaha (the best). In terms of the education of our children here we look at things that are most important and the best that we could teach our children (Participant number five).

The interpretations of *mahu'inga taha* as the most important or valuable has significant meanings to 'quality'. The groups of Ngāue Fakataha and Fetokoni'aki described aspects of *mahu'inga taha* in Tongan Language Nests and said that children, families, culture, Christianity, and ako (education) are the major aspects of *mahu'inga taha*. Therefore to interpret, define, and translate 'quality' will also be inclusive of the notions of *mahu'inga taha*.

Tolonga taha

The word *tolonga* literally means to last, endure, to remain in good condition, be permanent, or to be preserved (Churchward, 1959, p. 492). Again the word *taha* refers to one, or first. It is believed that the word 'quality' aligns with the meaning of *tolonga*; *tolonga* is a representation of remaining and lasting. Tongan people interpret that 'quality' consists of something that will remain in good condition (sustainability) and last longer.

Tongan mats and tapas are declared as important *koloa* (treasures) that are mostly valuable in the lives of Tongan people. Tongan people have various different types of mats with significant values according to the status of a particular mat, the name, and characteristics. With all the various different types of mats, Tongan people have already known which of the following is the most *tolonga*. In terms of *fala* (mats) *fala pāongo* is

known to be the most *tolonga* of all mats and this particular mat also holds the highest in rank amongst all the mats within the Tongan context. The meanings of *tolonga* consist of the product, the characteristics of the product and how it's produced and made.

Tolonga is another word that associates closely with 'quality'; in regards to purchasing goods or food people often search for the aspects of *tolonga*. Ngāue Fakataha fika ono (Participant number six) from the parents' group emphasised *tolonga* as one of the translations of 'quality, he stated that':

Ko e fo'i lea ko 'eni ko e 'quality' koe me'a pē 'oku te sio kiai ko e tolonga, fakatātā ki he taimi 'oku te kumi me'alele ai koe me'a 'oku te sio kiai ko ha me'a 'oku tolonga. 'I he lau a'aku koe Tonga koe me'a pe 'oku tolonga koe 'ofa, koe 'ofa 'oku mahu'inga taha fekau'aki moe fo'i lea ko 'eni ko 'quality' pea koe me'a 'oku tolonga (Ngāue Fakataha fika ono).

Translation

The word 'quality' is something that last long, for instance when I'm searching for a vehicle I look for something that last long. My views as a Tongan, the only thing that can last long is 'ofa (love) and that's the most important thing about 'quality' something that can last long (Participant number six).

Fetokoni'aki fika ono (Participant number six) from the teachers group also refer to the term *tolonga* as one of the translation for 'quality and said:

Ko e 'quality' ko ha me'a 'oku tau sio kiai 'e tolonga pea loloa 'o fe'ao mo 'etau fānau. Koe ha 'a e ngaahi me'a te tau ako'i 'aki 'a e fanga ki'i fānau Tonga 'oku tau sio 'oku 'quality' 'i he lau 'a e Tonga (Fetokoni'aki fika ono).

Translation

Quality is something that we look at and that can last long with our children. What can we teach our young Tongan children here that we see as 'quality' in the eyes of Tongan people? (Participant number six).

Fetokoni'aki fika ono (Participant number six) challenges us by asking the question, what can we as Tongan parents and Tongan teachers teach and transmit to our children that will be *tolonga* in the lives of our children? Ngāue Fakataha fika nima also extended on the notion of *tolonga* by saying:

Ako'i 'a e ki'i tamasi'i ha me'a ke fononga loloa mo ia, ke 'oua 'e ngata ka'e tolonga atu 'aonga kiai ha taimi. Ko e quality kiate au koe 'aonga, ha me'a 'e aonga ki he fānau, matu'a moe fonua. Mo'ui 'aonga the concept of mo'ui 'aonga 'i he lau 'a e Tonga (Ngāue Fakataha fika nima).

Translation

We need to teach the child things that he can grow with and will last longer, 'quality' is being useful, something that will be useful to the parents and the fonua (land). The concepts of mo'ui aonga (well-being and being useful) from the perspectives of the Tongan (Participant number five).

The concepts of *tolonga* have fundamental values to defining and translating 'quality'. The nature of *tolonga* defines the aspects and attributes of 'quality in many areas. In relation to Tongan Language Nests, Tongan parents and Tongan teachers acknowledged traditional values and beliefs that are seen as *tolonga* within the education of their children. The qualities of *tolonga* will be useful not only for parents, teachers, and children but will also be useful for the fonua and its people.

Fotunga

Churchward (1959) translated the word *fotunga* as; appearance, countenance, a person's face, or features (p. 197). The term *fotunga* that is most preferable in this sense is to do with the appearance or features of a particular thing or about a person.

Fotunga expresses the appearance, characteristic, and feature of a particular thing, a person, or a place. Subsequently *fotunga* denotes visual reflections which connect the eye to the mind, which imply the relation between the word and the outward visible aspects of a particular, a person, or places. *Fotunga* associate with what we can see and the images or appearances of what we received are often determined by cultural dimensions. Tongan people can make assumptions about someone's *fotunga* by his/ her appearances and characteristics.

The descriptions about the term *fotunga* connote certain descriptions and impressions which can relate to the process of defining ‘quality’ amongst Tongan Language Nests. In visiting a centre for the very first time, you look at the *fotunga* (appearances) of the context and also the people within the context. Tongan people also look at the *faka-fotunga* of the people within the context based on how they perform their roles and tasks. The term *faka-fotunga* refers to the way people act and performs towards others within a particular context. Tongan people can assess the ‘quality’ of a school just by the *fotunga* and *faka-fotunga* of the context and the people within the context. However critical analysis of *fotunga* and *faka-fotunga* are based and drawn on cultural aspects. In the discussions and *talanoa* with the participants about ‘quality’ in Tongan Language Nests they believed that the concept *fotunga* relates well to ‘quality’. The interpretations and definitions of ‘quality’ are gained by the concepts of *fotunga* and *faka-fotunga*. Therefore ‘quality’ cannot be defined without the aspects of *fotunga* and *faka-fotunga*. Ngāue Fakataha fika fa (Participant number four) from the parents group explained that:

Ko e fo’i lea ‘quality’ ‘oku ‘uhinga ia ki he laulōtaha, ka ko e laulōtaha ‘oku tala pe ia ‘i he ‘etau sio ki he fotunga pea moe faka-fotunga ‘oku fai ‘i ha ‘apiako (Ngāue Fakataha fika fa).

Translation

The word ‘quality’ signify laulōtaha (excellent) but laulōtaha can be defined when we look at the fotunga (appearances) and faka-fotunga (performances) (Participant number four).

Fetokoni’aki fika ‘uluaki (Participant number 1) from the teachers group also relates the term *fotunga* to the meaning of ‘quality’. Fetokoni’aki fika ‘uluaki explained that:

‘Oku ou manako ‘i he fo’i lea ko e fotunga; ko e fotunga ‘oku tau lava ai ke tau tala ha faka’ofa’ofa ‘o ha fa’ahinga me’a. ‘I he talanoa ki he ‘uhinga ‘o e ‘quality’ ‘oku kau ‘a e fo’i lea fotunga moe faka-fotunga ‘i hono faka-uhinga’i ‘o e ‘quality’ (Fetokoni’aki fika ‘uluaki).

Translation

I prefer the word fotunga; we can tell the beauty of a particular thing by looking at the fotunga. In talking about 'quality', the terms fotunga and faka- fotunga must be applied to define 'quality' (Participant number one).

Although the terms *fotunga* and *faka- fotunga* may not be the exact translation of 'quality', however the meanings and concepts of *fotunga* and *faka- fotunga* contribute to the interpretations and definitions of 'quality'. In the Tongan context these terms are an important part of the wider understanding of 'quality'.

Major points about translation.

"We argue that the foundation of a people's identity and cultural authenticity is their culturally shared indigenous epistemology, embodied in and expressed through their heritage language" (Gegeo & Watson- Gegeo 2008, p. 1).

Chesterman (2006) suggests that at different times and cultures people may well conceptualize the notion of translation in very different ways. Translations assigned to the word 'quality' from both participant groups affiliate with the way in which it is used within a particular context. Each individual provided their own translation in Tongan language in the course of which they shared similar perceptions and understanding. These perceptions and understandings derive from the relationships between the language and the culture of Tongan people. Marlowe (2004) pointed out that discussions about theories and methods of translation often involve general statements about the relationships and language to thought. In the *talanoa* and discussion with the participants we found that there is no exact word in the Tongan language for the word 'quality'. However Tongan concepts that they presented here have significant value that align with the word 'quality'. They highly recommend that the Tongan concepts that they have discussed here be understood and to be all connected to one another. And the

task of defining ‘quality’ in Tongan Language Nests may require applying these Tongan concepts of ‘quality’.

Discussing the term ‘quality’ with the participants was an opportunity to discuss ‘quality’ from the eyes of Tongan parents and Tongan teachers in ECE. Tongan parents and teachers appreciated this opportunity to debate the notions of ‘quality’ from their viewpoint. Most of the participants found that ‘quality’ is highly significant in ECE and thought it should have been discussed earlier within the context of Tongan ECE.

Fetokoni’aki fika ono and Fetokoni’aki fika fa from the teacher’s group highlighted the significant of our *talanoa* by saying:

This is an opportunity to talanoa (dialogue) and deeply reflects on the word ‘quality’. The word ‘quality’ is one of the most important words that we associate with on daily basis, but with an understanding of what’s written in handbooks. We never looked at the word from our own cultural perspectives because ‘quality’ was already defined for us. We need to define ‘quality’ within our own context based on our own culture, and to also have a Tongan translation so that we may refer to the word in that translation rather than just using the word ‘quality’ in our dialogue. This will give us an in-depth of understanding in the work that we do as teachers (Ngāue Fakataha fika ono/Participant number six)

As teachers we refer to the word ‘quality’ within our everyday work and everything that we do here is to achieve ‘quality’ that is emphasized by the Ministry of Education. In having this talanoa (dialogue) and discussions about ‘quality’ from the perspectives of us Tongans, this is an opportunity for us to sit and reflect on a Tongan translation and how we interpret the word from our own perspectives. The context that we work at is Akoteu Tonga (Tongan Language Nest) but ‘quality’ in this context are understood from what’s written in books, policies, guidelines, criteria, and curriculum (Ngāue Fakataha fika fa/ Participant number four).

The process of translating ‘quality’ forces us to re-examine the word from the context of Tongan people. Translation and interpretations found for the word ‘quality’ from the perception of Tongan early childhood teachers and Tongan parents are based on their worldviews as Tongan people. Tongan terms for ‘quality’ contained cultural principles,

beliefs, and values. These words also conceptualized Tongan understandings and perceptions about 'quality'. This leads us to cultural ways of knowing, thinking, and creating knowledge (Gegeo & Watson- Gegeo 2008).

Moss and Dahlberg (2008) found that the word 'quality' constitutes an integral part of the English language curriculum that delivered within schools. The Tongan early childhood teachers who participated in this study found that they are affected by the word 'quality' on a daily basis through the formulae/templates/ discourse of reports and handbooks, policies, guidelines, criteria, and curriculum. Both the parents group and the teachers group refer to the word 'quality' in their conversations without using a Tongan translation for it, mainly because the reality of 'quality' as used in educational discourse is understood only in terms of Western ideas. The Tongan language is the main language used within the context of Tongan language Nests but there is no term in the language which exactly translates the English concept of 'quality'. Thanasoulas (2001) argued that language is understood as cultural practice and we must grapple with the notion of culture in relation to language. 'Quality' therefore is not a universally understood concept and the difference between the language and culture on what 'quality' is and what it means in practice need to be understood and respected.

5.3 Ako Laulōtaha

Ako laulōtaha 'a e Tonga 'oku 'uhinga ia 'oku ako'i 'a e fānau 'aki 'a e ngaahi tui 'a hotau fonua 'a ia ko e lea faka- Tonga, 'ulungāanga faka- Tonga, pea moe mo 'ui lōtolu(Lolohea- Pau'uvale, 2011).

Quality education for Tongan people means that our children are educated with values of our fonua (land) and that is; the Tongan language, Tongan behaviour or ways, and the three dimensions of development (Lolohea- Pau'uvale, 2011).

The continuations are defined statements of *ako laulōtaha* (quality education). The participants highlighted three major components of *ako laulōtaha* and they are; *lea faka-Tonga*, *'ulungāanga faka-Tonga*, and *mo'ui lōtolu*. The participants elaborated on these three components as Tongan definitions of 'quality'. The three components of *ako laulōtaha* are followed as themes; sub- themes will also emerged from these discussions which will be included in the following.

5.3.1 Mo'ui lō tolu/ Tongan aspects of development

Mo'ui lō tolu are inherited qualities to being Tongan. *Mo'ui lōtolu* are aspects woven holistically in the development of Tongan people. Tongan concepts of development known as the *mo'ui lōtolu* are aspects of the *tangata kakato* (total person) which is referred to as the holistic development of Tongan people. The concepts of *tangata kakato* are inclusive of the three main aspects of *mo'ui lōtolu* and cannot be separated within the views of development of Tongan people.

Churchward (1959) defines the term *mo'ui* as; to live, to be living or alive, and to be in good health (p. 369). The term *lōtolu* here refers to layers of threes; *lō* denotes layered or folds and *tolu* refers to the number of three. Koloto (cited in Drewery & Bird, 2004, p. 61- 65) wrote about the concepts of *tangata kakato* (total person) and said that; Tongan people view life as a holistic process and the three main aspects of this *tangata kakato* (total person) are; *mo'ui fakasino* (body or physical well- being), *mo'ui faka'atamai* (mind or intellectual well- being) and, *mo'ui fakalaumālie* (soul or spiritual well- being). The views here by Koloto (2004 cited in Drewery & Bird, 2004) are not new to Tongan people; the perceptions of *tangata kakato* and *mo'ui lōtolu* here are Tongan knowledge

about their ways of development which have been generated through generations and it's still in practice till today.

Aspect of *mo'ui fakasino* refers to the physical well-being of a Tongan child. *Mo'ui fakasino* or physical well-being in Tongan Language Nests focused on the importance of being physically healthy, mentally healthy, and emotionally healthy. The physical *mo'ui* (life) of the child is promoted to be in good health or remain in good health. The term *mo'ui* highlights life, health, and living; this means any activities that will promote good health and good living for young children are to be in practice or included in their education. The early childhood curriculum have the similar views identified in one of the strands; strand one focused on the well being of young children this means their; "*health is promoted, emotional well-being is nurtured, and they are kept safe from harm*" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 46).

Mo'ui faka'atamai refers to the intellectual or the cognitive well-being. The term *'atamai* capture the human brains and its function. The *mo'ui faka-'atamai* of Tongan people refers to cultural knowledge, cultural skills, and practices to be included in their learning and development. The developmental processes of *mo'ui faka'atamai* consist of the concepts of *ako* (teaching and learning), *'ilo* (meaning of knowing), and *poto* (cleverness and skillful). The cultural knowledge, skills, and practices are accumulated through the process of *ako* (teaching and learning) within the layered of environments which is the homes, the schools, the church, and the community. The results of *ako* (teaching and learning) become *'ilo* (knowledge) and the knowledge gained leads to being *poto* (clever and skillful). Thaman (1995) articulates in the concepts of *ako*, *ilo*, and *poto* and said that being *poto* means that you understand what to do and be able to do

it well. The emphasis on *mo'ui faka'atamai* in Tongan Language Nests is that the children will acquire accumulated knowledge through teaching and learning from various contexts of the home, the school, church, and also the community.

Mo'ui fakalaumālie refers to the spiritual well- beings of Tongan people. Spirituality is one of the important aspects in the development of Tongan people, and Tongan people are known for having strong religious background and Christian faith. *Mo'ui fakalaumālie* (spiritual well- being) is inclusive in the learning and development of Tongan children. Spiritual development is integrated in Tongan cultural values and beliefs, thus, Tongan's social constructions and *'ulungāanga* (behavior) are influenced by their *mo'ui fakalaumālie* (spirituality).

Tongan people believe that the aspects of *mo'ui lōtolu* are not to be fragmented at any time; these values are inseparable in terms of the learning and development of Tongan people. In defining *ako laulōtaha* ('quality' education) for Tongans in Tongan Language Nests, the majority of the participants strongly believed that the aspects of *mo'ui lōtolu* are Tongan definition of 'quality' education. Ngāue Fakataha fika nima (participant number five) commented by saying:

Kiate au ko e 'quality' 'a e Tonga ko e ako'i 'a e mo'ui lōtolu, mo'ui faka-Sino, mo'ui faka- 'atamai, moe mo'ui faka-laumālie. Ko e 'quality' 'eni 'oku ou sio kiai ke 'ako'aki 'eku ki'i ta'ahine he 'apiako Tonga. Pea ko e mo'ui kakato 'eni 'a e Tonga pea 'oku ou tui kiai pea koe 'quality ia 'oku fiema'u ke ma'u 'e he ki'i ta'ahine ko eni (Ngāue Fakataha fika nima).

Translation

To me 'quality' for Tongans is to teach the three aspects of tangata kakato which is mo'ui fakasino, mo'ui faka'atamai, and mo'ui fakalaumālie. These are aspects of 'quality' that I want for my child to learn at school. And this is the holistic life of Tongan people and i believe these are 'quality' learning and this is what I want my child to learn at school (Participant number five)

Ngāue Fakataha fika ono (Participant number six) from the parents group also commented by saying:

Ko e ako laulōtaha 'a e Tonga ko ha 'apiako 'oku nau ako'i 'a e mo'ui lōtolu, 'a ia koe sino, atamai, moe laumālie, ko e 'quality' ia 'i he tafa'aki 'a e ECE. 'Oku mahu'inga ke tupu hake 'a e fānau 'i he mo'ui lōtolu, pea koe mo'ui kakato ia 'a e Tonga Ngāue (Ngāue Fakataha fika ono).

Translation

'Quality education for a Tongan is when schools are teaching the aspects of mo'ui lōtolu which are physical, intellectual, and spiritual, this is 'quality' in ECE. It's important that children are developing through the aspects of mo'ui lōtolu, and this the holistic development of a Tongan person (Participant number six).

Ngāue Fakataha fika nima and Ngāue Fakataha fika ono share the same views with the rest of the participants from the Ngāue Fakataha group. The group of Fetokoni'aki also had the same beliefs as the Ngāue Fakataha group. Fetokoni'aki fika fa represented their group by sharing that:

Kapau teke fakatokanga'i koe katoa 'a e ngaahi Akoteu Tonga, 'oku nau tui tatau moe fiema'u ko 'eni 'a e matu'a, ke ako'i 'a e mo'ui lōtolu 'i he ako 'a e fānau. Ko e tui ia 'a e kakai Tonga ke tau tupu hake 'i he 'ataakai 'oku ako'i 'a e mo'ui lōtolu, koe sino, atamai, moe laumālie 'oku nau 'alu fakataha pe 'i he taimi kotoa 'oku 'ikai ke nau mavahevahe i ha taimi (Fetokoni'aki fika nima)

Translation

If you noticed, in all various Tongan Language Nests they have the same beliefs with the parents in wanting to include the aspects of mo'ui lōtolu in the education of Tongan children. The belief of Tongan people is that we develop within an environment where the aspects of mo'ui lōtolu are inclusive. Body, mind, and spirit are always together they are not fragmented at any times (Participant number five).

Developmentalists and theorists from around the world have written about child development and children around the world may develop differently according to their culture, environment, and people around them (Crain, 2005). This leads us to the understanding of Tongan people about the aspects of *tangata kakato* (total person) and *mo'ui lōtolu* (three aspects of development).

In defining ‘quality’ education in Tongan language Nests identified cultural dimensions and aspects of *tangata kakato* and *mo’ui lōtolu* as values which are core/essential to the way Tongan children learn and develop in ECE. Tongan parents and Tongan teachers found that aspects of *tangata kakato* and *mo’ui lōtolu* align with Tongan definition of *ako laulōtaha* (quality education) in Tongan Language Nests. These are key factors in identity formation for Tongan children which connects them to their *fonua* (land) and the people.

5.3.2 *Lea faka- Tonga*

Ranges of structural process and indicators have been identified and recognised by theories and academic experts that contribute to ‘quality’ in ECE (Pence 1992, Moss & Pence, 1994). Indicators of ‘quality’ such as qualified staff, adult child ratios, working in partnership with parents, health and safety, environment, resources, interaction, programme planning, documentation, learning activities and many more that are considered worthy and important to offering ‘quality’ service. The participants from the groups of Fetokoni’aki (teacher’s group) and Ngāue Fakataha (parents’ group) recommended *lea faka-Tonga* (Tongan language) as an important indicator for ‘quality’. Tongan Ideals of ‘quality’ includes the notion of *lea faka- Tonga*.

The term *lea- faka-Tonga* refers to the Tongan language; *lea* means to speak; to utter or make or produce a sound (Churchward, 1959). *Faka-Tonga* denotes Tonga meaning in Tongan or the Tongan way. *Lea faka-Tonga* in this sense is about speaking in the Tongan language or communicating in the first language.

Language is about the communication of thoughts: it signifies culture and identity of people and their land (*fonua*). Scollon & Scollon (1981) pointed out that language plays a major force in the shaping of each person's self-awareness, identity, and interpersonal relationships. *Lea faka-Tonga* expresses the way Tongan people communicate with one another. Other scholars in academia have written about the importance of language maintenance through the young generations. The perceptions elaborated here focused on *lea faka-Tonga* (Tongan language) as an indicator of 'quality' from a Tongan perspective.

The importance of *lea faka-Tonga* (Tongan language) was highlighted by the participants as one of the indicators of 'quality' that they wished to be acknowledged. Maintaining and sustaining *lea faka-Tonga* (Tongan language) in children's education is very significant to the learning and development of young Tongan children here in Aotearoa NZ. Both groups of Fetokoni'aki and Ngāue Fakataha highly emphasised on the importance of sustaining the *lea faka-Tonga* in the education of their children by saying that:

Lea faka-Tonga is really important in terms of 'quality' learning and that's what I want for my children. The qualities of maintaining the Tongan language leads to developing a sense of belonging and identity for my children (Ngāue Fakataha fika uluaki/ Participant number one).

Ngāue Fakataha fika 'uluaki (Participant number one) from the parents' group aspire to maintain the *lea faka-Tonga* through the education of her children. She spoke with aspirations and emotions about the maintenance of *lea faka-Tonga* (Tongan language). Ngāue Fakataha fika 'uluaki was born and raised here and during her childhood years, Tongan Language Nests did not exist and it was only when she got much older that she

realised the importance of maintaining the first language. Even more recently Tongan people living in foreign countries have come to realise and understand the importance of maintaining the *lea faka-Tonga* through their education of their children. The success of the Kohanga Reo movement in the early 80's has influenced the Tongans and other Pasifika cultures to establish their own Language Nests as a way of revitalising indigenous languages and cultures (Meade et al, 2003).

The importance of revitalising *lea-faka-Tonga* (Tongan language) was discussed by all the participants in this study. Tongan parents and Tongan teachers in this study confirm that having the Tongan Language Nests in place is an advantage to them as Tongan people.

One of the perceptions from the participants extended her views about the values of taking her children to Tongan Language Nests by saying:

Ko e 'uhinga pe 'a e ave 'a e fānau ki he Akoteu Tonga koe 'uhinga ko 'eku mahu'inga ia ke nau poto mo kei pukepuke 'a 'etau lea faka-Tonga, 'oku kau 'eni ia 'i he 'quality' lelei kiate au mo hoku famili. Koe ngaahi criteria pe koe fiema'u a'aku ko e fa'e, ke ave 'a 'eku fānau ki he ako Tonga, 'ikai ngata pe 'i he 'enau ako 'a e lea faka-Tonga, ka ke nau toe ako foki 'a e culture faka-Tonga, ulungāanga faka-Tonga (Ngāue Fakataha fika ua).

Translation

The reasons for taking my children to a Tongan Pre-School is because I value the importance of sustaining our Tongan language; this is 'quality' to me and my family. There are many criterias and needs that I have as a mother for my children, one of the most important one is for them to learn the Tongan language, develop cultural knowledge about the Tongan culture, and 'also to learn Tongan behavioural (Ngāue Fakataha fika ua).

People from varying cultural background may have different understanding of the importance of their first language. Tongan cultural values of *lea-faka-Tonga* are one of the most important aspect or indicator to 'quality' learning in Tongan Language Nests.

5.3.3 *'Ulungāanga Faka-Tonga or anga faka- Tonga*

In defining the notion of 'quality', the participants profoundly discussed various aspects that constitute to the notion of 'quality' from Tongan perspectives. The aspects of *'ulungāanga* and *anga faka-Tonga* (the Tongan way) are seen as core elements of 'quality' in the eyes of the Tongan people that involved in this study. This section articulates on the concepts of *'ulungāanga* and *anga faka-Tonga* that encompasses Tongan cultural values, beliefs, knowledge, and practices that are regarded as 'quality'.

The term *'ulungāanga faka-Tonga* refers to someone's behaviour and ways of acting; the term *anga faka-Tonga* may represent the Tongan way. In more details, the word *anga* refers to habit, custom, nature, quality, character, characteristic, ways of acting, form, style, manner, method, behaviour, conduct. *Anga* is to conform to, or to adjust oneself to, to become used to accustomed or habited to (Churchward, 1959, p. 7).

The term *'ulungāanga* defines behaviour; in attitude, in character, in habit, in nature, in conduct. *'Ulungāanga* (behaviour) and *anga faka-Tonga* (Tongan way) were major concerns that parents and teachers raised in talking about 'quality' in the education of Tongan children in ECE. There are certain *'ulungāanga* (behaviours) that Tongan children should be adopting and these *'ulungāanga* are taught from a very young age. They rate *'ulungāanga* as one of the most important aspect of 'quality' in ECE. Tongan parents argued that for their children to be successful in schools their *'ulungāanga* (behaviour) must be taught to them in ECE.

One of the participants from the Ngāue Fakataha group shared her perceptions of *'ulungāanga faka-Tonga* and *anga faka-Tonga* by saying that:

'Oku mahu'inga aupito ke ako'i 'a e 'ulungāanga pe ko e anga faka-Tonga ki he fānau Tonga. 'Oku mau faka'amu pe 'oku hanga 'e he fanga ki'i ako Tonga 'o ako'i 'a e ngaahi 'ulungāanga faka- Tonga he kuo faka'au ke mole atu. Neongo koe ngaahi criteria ko 'eni 'oku 'ikai 'asi mai 'i he criteria 'a e Palangi, ka 'oku 'asi ia he criteria 'a e Tonga. 'Oku kau 'a e 'ulungāanga ia he me'a mahu'inga ki he Tonga he koe taha ia 'a e ngaahi me'a 'oku lava ke tala ai honau Tonga (Ngāue fakataha fika fa).

Translation

It's really important to teach the 'ulungaanga (Tongan ways of behaving) to our Tongan children. We wish that the Tongan Language Nests are teaching the aspects of 'ulungāanga faka- Tonga because we are starting to lose some of them. Although these aspects of 'ulungāanga faka- Tonga are not included in the criteria of the Palangi but it's inclusive in the criteria of the Tongan people. Tongan ways of behaving are really important to Tongan children as it is part of their cultural identity (Participant number four).

Morton- Lee (2003) acknowledged that many Tongans assert to be really Tongan not only by ancestral connections but also knowledge of *anga faka- Tonga* or the Tongan way. This concept encompasses all values, beliefs, and practices that are regarded as core elements of the Tongan culture and tradition. The views of Ngāue Fakataha fika fa above reflect the importance of *'ulungāanga* and *anga faka- Tonga*. The group of Fetokoni'aki (teacher's group) and the group of Ngāue Fakataha (parent's group) confirmed various *'ulungāanga* that they want their children to inherit with the support of Tongan Language Nests. Both groups agreed that these *'ulungāanga faka- Tonga* might not be seen as significant to other people of other cultures mainly the Western culture but in their views these *'ulungāanga faka-Tonga* or *anga faka-Tonga* are parts of the development of Tongan children. It cannot be fragmented from their development or their learning about cultural identity. The following are *'ulungāanga faka-Tonga* or *anga faka-Tonga* raised by the Ngāue fakataha group and the Fetokoni'aki group as important aspects of 'quality' for Tongan children in Language Nests.

Loto 'Ofa

The term *loto* denotes many meanings; *loto* may refer to a hole or depression in coral reef or sea bed (Churchward, 1959, p. 302). Other meanings of *loto* refers to the inner or the inside of a particular thing for instance; '*i hoku loto fale*' meaning inside my house, '*i he 'eku loto kato*' meaning inside my bag. The term *loto* is situated on the 'inner, interior, or within. The meaning of *loto* that I would like to emphasise refers to the mind, heart, and spirit. Churchward (1959) defines the term *loto* as the heart and the mind; *loto* conveys seat of affections it involves your desire, will, purpose, anger, temper, be minded, and consent or assent (p.302). The term '*ofa* refers to love, compassion, and generosity. Hau'ofa (2004 cited in Vaiioleti, 2001) shared that '*ofa* is shown as love, kindness, help, sharing, giving, concern, grief, passion and respect of others and the collective. The chief value of '*uhungāanga faka-Tonga* is '*ofa*; '*ofa* is signify the love, the compassion, and the generosity that one has for the family and the *kāinga* (extended family) and also the *fonua* (land and its people). '*Ofa* is stored within the inner heart or the *loto* of Tongan people which validate the motto of Tonga known as, "*ko Tonga mo'unga ki he loto*" meaning the mountains of Tonga are within the hearts of the people.

Loto 'ofa in this sense is about the inner heart; *loto 'ofa* contains the essence of our true beings. Our feelings are situated from within the *loto* (inner heart) which connects to the mind, the body, and the spirit. *Loto 'ofa* denotes an act of expression; *loto 'ofa* are measured by our expression and actions towards others. Hence, these expressions are through '*ofa* (loving & caring), *fevahevahe'aki* (sharing), *foaki* (giving), *fetokoni'aki* (reciprocal help), and *fefaka'apa'apa'aki* (respecting one another).

The groups of Ngāue Fakataha and Fetokoni'aki discussed the fundamental value of 'ofa in children's learning and in working with young children within the context of Tongan

Language Nests. Ngāue Fakataha fika fa suggested that:

Ko e taha 'a e 'ulungāanga mahu'inga taha 'oku ma fiema'u ke ako 'e he 'ema fānau 'i he Akoteu Tonga, ke nau ma'u 'a e loto 'ofa, ke nau ma'u 'a e loto fietokoni, loto fevahevahe'aki, moe loto faka'apa'apa (Ngāue Fakataha fika ua).

Translation

One of the most important 'ulungaanga that we want our children to develop in this Tongan Language Nests is loto 'ofa, for them to develop the hearts for helping one another, sharing, and for respect (Ngāue Fakataha fika ua).

Ngāue Fakataha fika fa shared that this is the aspirations of her whole family; the value of loto 'ofa was taught to her by her parents and the kāinga. And having her children here in NZ they realised that it's important for their children to develop the aspects of loto 'ofa because this is how my children are going to connect with the rest of the kāinga.

On the same views Ngāue Fakataha fika 'uluaki from the parents group highlighted that:

Ko e loto 'ofa koe me'a mahu'inga taha ia 'i he ako mo e ngāue moe fanga ki'i fānau ko 'eni, kapau 'oku 'ikai ke ia kita faiako 'a e loto 'ofa pea 'oku 'ikai ke totonu ke ke 'i he ngāue ko e ko eni (Ngāue Fakataha fika 'uluaki).

Translation

Loto 'ofa is the most important aspect in working with these young children, if you don't have loto 'ofa as a teacher than youre in the wrong profession (Participant number one).

Ngāue Fakataha fika ono also from the parents group shared the views;

'Oku ou mahuinga'ia 'i he loto 'ofa ke ma'u 'e he fānau Tonga, he ko 'ofa e lava ai ke nau fehokotaki moe famili, kāinga, pea moe fonua (Ngāue Fakataha fika ono).

Translation

I value the importance of loto 'ofa for the Tongan children to develop as 'ofa will connect them to the family, extended families and also the fonua (Participant number six).

The teachers group also shared the same aspirations as the parents but they were more focused on themselves as teachers. Tongan ECE teachers believe that in working with young children they must have *loto 'ofa* within them. They elaborated:

Ko e ngāue moe kau leka ke fai 'aki pe 'a e loto 'ofa moe loto lelei (Fetokoni'aki fika fa)

Translation

In working with young children it must be driven by loto 'ofa (loving heart) and loto lelei (good heart) (Participant number four).

Kiate au ko e fakakaukau ki he quality, 'i he tafa'aki ko 'eni 'o e ngāue moe fānau iiki, koe taha ia hotau 'ulungāanga faka- Tonga 'a e 'ofa. 'Oku mahu'inga ke tau ma'u 'a e loto 'ofa moe loto fie ngāue kae lava ke tau ngāue 'i he tafa'aki ko 'eni (Fetokoni'aki fika ono).

Translation

In thinking about 'quality' within the context of ECE and in working with young children; 'ofa is one of the many 'ulungāanga that Tongan people hold. It's important for us to have loto 'ofa in working with young children (Fetokoni'aki fika ono).

Ko e ngāue ko 'eni 'oku mau fai ke fai 'aki pe 'a e ongo'i mo e loto 'ofa, 'oku mahu'inga ke ako'i 'a e 'ofa ki he fānau pea 'oku toe mahu'inga pe ke ngāue'aki e he kau faiako 'a e loto 'ofa i he enau ngāue moe fanga ki'i fānau (Fetokoni'aki fika 'uluaki)

Translation

Within the work that we do, we do it with heart felted and with loving hearts, It's important to teach these aspects of 'ofa to the children and it's also important for the teachers to work with a loving heart towards young children (Participant number one).

Tongan Language Nests needs to be underpinned by cultural values such as *'ofa*; *'ofa* must be driven from the inner heart (Thaman, 2008). The participants indicated that the concepts of *loto 'ofa* must be applied in Tongan Language Nests. The views of the participants were drawn from their *loto* (inner heart). They expressed their views with aspirations, with purposes, and with understandings. The essences of *loto 'ofa* are situated within the hearts of Tongan people and it connects to the body, mind, and soul.

Loto 'ofa is the chief value of our beings and therefore it becomes a part of us and these can not be separated from our learning or development.

Faka'apa'apa / respect

Churchward (1959) refers to *faka'apa'apa* as to show deference, respect, or courtesy, to be differential or courteous (p. 128). *Faka'apa'apa* is about respect, its about showing courtesy, its about reciprocity, and its also about honour. *Faka'apa'apa* leads to the aspects of *tauhi vā*. The aspects of *faka'apa'apa* creates the way people get along with one another. In Tongan society a person must know his/her position and status within the group. And each person will have certain rights and duties to play and act accordingly. People are expected to respect one another; *faka'apa'apa* always imply reciprocation and mutual exchange between the people and also the *fonua* (land). Tongan people holds various signs of *faka'apa'apa* (respect) and courtesy that are highly significant in the everyday living of Tongan people. Fetokoni'aki fika ono and Fetokoni'aki fika nima on the importance of *faka'apa'apa* they pointed out:

Ko e faka'apa'apa mo e feveitokai'aki 'a e ngaahi 'ulungāanga oku mahu'inga ke ako'i ki he fānau ke nau tupu hake moia 'i he fonua muli ko eni (Fetokoni'aki fika ono).

Translation

Faka'apa'ap and feveitokai'aki are various 'ulungāanga that are important to teach our children that are growing up here in this foreign land (Participant number six).

Fetokoni'aki fika ono also articulated on the concept of *feveitokai'aki*; the term *feveitokai'aki* denotes the same principles as *faka'apa'apa*. *Feveitokai'aki* points to the underlying principles of respecting one another and honouring one another. Fetokoni'aki fika nima on the importance of *faka'apa'apa*:

‘Oku mahu’inga ‘a e tō’onga ‘a e fānau ke fisikitu’a mai ‘a e ‘ulungāanga faka’apa’pa. Ko e faka’apa’apa ko e taha ia hotau ‘ulungāanga faka- fonua pea ‘oku fiema’u ia ke ‘ilo’i ‘e he fānau pea ke nau kei pukepuke tautautefito ‘i he fonua muli ko ‘eni (Fetokoni’aki fika nima).

Translation

It’s important that the aspects of faka’apa’apa are reflected from the way children behave and from their attitudes as well. Faka’apa’apa is one of the many values that Tongan people have and our children need to learn and maintain them especially in living here (Participant number five).

Fetokoni’aki fika nima and Fetokoni’aki fika ono were concerned with the maintenance of *faka’apa’apa* through the Tongan children living in foreign lands. The rest of the participants from the fetokoni’aki group had the same concerns. Six of these participants explained that the aspects of *faka’apa’apa* are taught in Tongan Language Nests. With these understandings the group of Ngāue Fakataha highlighted that the concepts of *faka’apa’apa* should be taught to their children in Tongan language Nests. The parents explained that:

Ko e taha ‘eni ‘oe ngaahi ‘uhinga ‘oku ave ai ‘e ma fānau ki he Akoteu Tonga ke ako’i ‘a e ‘ulungāanga faka’apa’apa. Ko e faka’apa’apa ‘oku mahu’inga ia ‘i he ‘etau nofo faka- Tonga pea ‘i he nofo ‘a e fānau (Ngāue Fakataha fika nima).

Translation

One of the reasons why we take our children to a Tongan Language Nests is that they learn the Tongan ways of behaving. Faka’apa’apa is really important to our way of living and within our family too (Participant number five).

Ko e mataikoloa ‘eni kia kimautilu ‘a e sio ki he fānau ko ‘eni ‘oku nau ‘ako ‘a e ‘ulungāanga faka’apa’apa. ‘Oku fakafiefia ki ho mau famili he ko ‘emau fiema’u ‘eni, ke nau ‘ilo’i ‘a e mahu’inga ‘oe ‘ulungāanga ke nau faka’apa’apa. ‘Oku ‘ohovale homau famili ‘i he ngaahi me’a ‘oku ako ‘e he fānau pea ‘oku asi mai ia ‘i he ‘enau tō’onga (Ngāue Fakataha fika tolu & fa).

Translation

This is a treasure for us, seeing our children learning the aspects of faka’apa’apa. Our family are delighted with excitement because this is what we want for our children. It’s important that they learn these aspects, our families were surprised with what the children learns and these are reflected in their behaviour and attitudes (Participant number three and four).

The group of Fetokoni'aki shared the same understandings with Ngāue Fakataha fika nima, tolu, and fa. *Faka'apa'apa* is one of the many values that Tongan people have and they recognised the importance of teaching these aspects in Tongan Language Nests. The participants generally discussed various aspects of *faka'apa'apa* in more details. The following identified various practical aspects of *faka'apa'apa*.

Tulou meaning excuse me when about to pass in front of another person or in front of a group of people (Fetokoni'aki fika ono)

Mālō 'aupito meaning thank you very much (Ngāue Fakataha fika fa)

Kātaki referring to please (Fetokoni'aki fika nima)

Fakamolemole meaning sorry (Ngāue Fakataha fika nima)

The terms *tulou*, *kātaki*, *fakamolemole*, and *mālō 'aupito* are the basics of *faka'apa'apa* (respect). These are rooted in the upbringing of young children starting from the 'api (the homes or household) during childhood years. In the discussions with two of the parents from the Ngāue Fakataha group they both articulate on this by explaining:

'Oku mahu'inga ke fehokotaki mo femahino'aki 'a e mātu'a pea mo e kau faiako 'i he ngaahi m'ea 'oku hoko 'i 'apiako pea mo e me'a 'oku hoko 'i 'api foki. Hange ko e 'ulungāanga faka'apa'apa 'oku ako'i ia 'i 'api pea 'oku fiema'u ke hokohoko atu 'i 'apiako (Ngāue Fakataha fika tolu & fa).

Translation

It's important for the teachers and the parents to have that connections and understandings of what takes place within the context of the homes and also what happens within the context of the school. For instance Tongan cultural ways of respect are taught here at home and we do wish that these are also carried out at the school (Participant number three & four).

Moreover the parents and the teachers articulated the significance of Tongan Language Nests as the new 'api (home) for their Tongan children in Aotearoa NZ. The learning of cultural values that usually takes place within the context of the 'api are also transmitted and taught within the context of Language Nests. Teaching Tongan values within the 'api are still in practice however the parents found that having the Tongan Language in

place for their children alleviate them in their *fatongia* (obligation) in teaching important cultural values to their children.

Fakata'ane refers to how males sits on the floor, in this position the boys sit with their legs crossed (Fetokoni'aki fika ua).

Fāite refers to a certain way that young girls are expected to position themselves when sitting on the floor, both legs folded to one side and tucked under the rump (Ngāue Fakataha fika tolu).

The Ngāue Fakataha group brought fourth the practices of *fakata'ane* and *fāite*; four participants of the Ngāue Fakataha group asked if these are also taught especially at mat time when the children are circling on the mat. They were concerns with the retaining of *fakata'ane* and *fāite* with today's generation. One of the Ngāue Fakataha group also commented on the practices of *fakata'ane* and *fāite* she said;

"I was really surprised with my four year old daughter during our fakafamili (family gathering) and lotu (prayer): as we sat on the mat she told her older sisters to fāite because girls are expected to fāite and boys they fakata'ane. Me and my husband and my parents were surprised! At the same time we were overjoyed with happiness; seeing our four year old practicing these values that were starting to drift away. This is what she learns from the Akoteu (Tongan Language Nest) where she's currently attending, and we are grateful that the school is validating these cultural values and practices with the children."

Fakata'ane and *fāite* symbolised appropriateness and respect within the everyday living of Tongan people. Circling on the mat is often carried out in the homes, the church, and other cultural practices such as weddings, birthdays, and funerals. When these practices take place the males will sit *fakata'ane* and the females will sit *fāite*. The practice of *fāite* was much enforced and expected of young girls and young women. The underpinning beliefs about *fāite* reference the dignity and sacredness of young females.

Talangofua refers to obedience (Ngāue Fakataha fika ua)

The Ngāue Fakataha and the Fetokoni'aki groups elaborated on *talangofua* as an important aspect to children's learning and development. The majority of the Ngāue Fakataha group emphasised that it's highly valid that their children are able to *talangofua*; meaning that the children behave appropriately and that they listen to the teachers. The Ngāue Fakataha justified that the word *talangofua* is in their everyday *talanoa* with their children especially in the morning when they drop them to school. We always say; "*Pea ke 'alu 'o talangofua he ako ki he kau faiako*" meaning go to school and obey the teachers. The parents believe in the aspect of *talangofua*; to learn is to *talangofua* and *talangofua* leads to being *poto* (intelligent or clever) and successful in life.

Mateaki refers to loyalty (Fetokoni'aki fika fa)

Mamahi'i me'a refers to social obligations (Ngāue Fakataha fika 'uluaki)

Tongan values of *mateaki* and *mamahi'i me'a* were also regarded by the participants as important values of *'ulungāanga* and *anga faka-Tonga*. The values of *mateaki* and *mamahi'i me'a* are reflected when the children are learning various *'ulungāanga* and *anga faka-Tonga*. The obligations and loyalty of young Tongans to the land and the people are to be reflected in their *'ulungāanga* (attitude & behaviour) which lead to *anga faka-Tonga* (Tongan way).

Tauhi vā

The term *tauhi* is defined as maintaining, sustaining, nurturing, or keeping; *vā* on the other hand is defined as the space between two things or two people (Thaman, 2003). Tongan people refers to *tauhi vā* as the art of maintaining positive relationships with one

another. *Tauhi vā* denotes interpersonal relationships and reciprocal relationship in harmonious ways (Mahina, 2002).

The aspects of *tauhi vā* plays a huge role in the everyday living of Tongan people; the aspects of *tauhi vā* reaffirms one's identity, genealogical positions, and obligations across generations. The concept of *tauhi vā* reinforces the connections between people and the *kāinga* (kinship) and also between people and the *fonua* (land). Tu'itahi (2009) specified that the notion of *tauhi vā* are central part of the *fonua* (land). The link between land and people is embedded within the concepts of *tauhi vā*. The people and the *fonua* have mutually beneficial reciprocal relationships: people nurture and take care of their land, and in return, the land nourishes its people (Kaili, 2005).

The importance of *tauhi vā* governs different kinds of interpersonal relationships and social interaction (Thaman, 2003). The group of Fetokoni'aki extended on the concepts of *tauhi vā* by saying;

I he nofo 'a e kakai Tonga, 'oku mahulu atu 'a e ngāue'aki 'a 'etau tui, ko e tauhi hotau ngaahi vā hange ko e vā 'a e matu'a mo e kau faiako, vā 'a e fānau mo e kau faiako, vā 'a e kii leka ko e moe kii leka ko e. Ko e ngaahi vā ke tauhi kae lava ke tau fengāue'aki (Fetokoni'aki fika ono).

Translation

Within the everyday living of Tongan people, it's essential to apply our cultural beliefs of tauhi vā, for instance the relationships between the parents and the teachers, the children and the teachers, and between one child and another. These relationships are to be maintained so that we are able to work together (Participant number six).

'Oku ou mahu'inga ia 'i he tauhi vā, 'a hotau ngaahi vā moe fānau tau ngāue'aki 'i hono tauhi 'a e fānau, vā moe matu'a ke tau ngāue fakataha, pea moe vā mo e community ke tau fetokoni'aki 'i he ako 'a e fānau. Ko e tauhi vā 'oku ha pe ia 'i he Te Whāriki pea ke tau muimui pe ki ai (Fetokoni fika 'uluaki).

Translation

I value the importance of tauhi vā, our relationships with the children to be sustained through the aspects of tauhi vā, maintaining positive relationships with the parents so that we can work together collectively, and also positive relationships with the community so that we can help anoe another. The

concepts of tauhi vā are in the Te Whāriki for us to follow (Participant number one).

Fetokoni'aki fika ono and 'uluaki accentuate the importance of *tauhi vā* in Tongan Language Nests. The national curriculum in ECE, the Te Whāriki also emphasized the notion of relationships as one of the foundation principles in the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996). Maintaining harmonious and positive relationships are one of the focal points in ECE, the relationships between the parents, teachers, children, and the community are to be nurture and sustained positively. However the notions of *tauhi vā* holds many cultural aspects and certain behaviours are involved. The participants described various aspects of *tauhi vā*. Tongan values that underpin the concepts of *tauhi vā* are;

Feveitokai'aki refers to respecting one another (Ngāue Fakataha fika ono)

Fetokoni'aki refers to helping one another or having reciprocal assistance (Fetokoni'aki fika 'uluaki)

Fevahevahe'aki refers to the proses of sharing with one another (Fetokoni'aki fika tolu)

Faka'apa'apa refers to respect (Ngāue Fakataha fika ua).

Both the Ngāue Fakataha group and the Fetokoni'aki group found the significance of *feveitokai'aki*, *fetokoni'aki*, *fevahevahe'aki*, and *faka'apa'apa* as common grounds to *tauhi vā*. These aspects are characteristics of *tauhi vā* which are inclusive in the upbringing of Tongan people and therefore each individual requires the knowledge and understandings of *tauhi vā*.

Nofo a kāinga

Tongan people view their ways of living as, *coe nofo* 'a *kāinga* which literally described kinship and their ways of living. The term *kāinga* refers to genealogy, it's about people and how they are inter-related to one another. *Nofo a kāinga* signifies the collective living of Tongan people.

The concepts of *nofo a kāinga* is very much similar to the ecological model proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) in his ecological model. The concepts of *nofo a kāinga* consists of three layers of environment. The first one is the *'api* (household) which is the inner circle of nuclear family members. The second layer is the *fāmili* and that is the extended family consisting of the wider circle of relations through genealogy. The third or outer circle is the *kāinga* and this includes the village, the people within the village, schools, and churches (Crane, 1978). The importance of *nofo a kāinga* lies in the relationships of people, how you are related to other people is very important in Tongan social life. The position you hold in relation to others determines in the way you act towards them for instances a noble's position, a father's position, a *mehikitanga's* position, or a daughter and a son's positions (Crane, 1978, p. 8). Each person must know their positions within the *nofo a kāinga* and act accordingly to their obligations and responsibilities.

Significantly *nofo a kāinga* emphasize on the collective living of Tongan people and the intensify relatedness of maintaining harmonious relationships between one another (Tu'itahi, 2009). The ultimate purpose of *nofo a kāinga* underpinned Tongan cultural values, beliefs, and practices. Values such as *tauhi vā*, *loto'ofa*, *fetokoni'aki*, *faka'apa'apa*, *ngāue fakataha* and other appropriate *'ulungāanga faka-Tonga*.

Discussing *ako laulōtaha* with the participants lead us to the concepts of *nofo 'a kāinga*.

Ngāue Fakataha fika nima highlighted;

Ko e ngaahi 'ulungāanga ko 'eni ko hono mahu'inga ke lava ai 'e he ki'i leka 'o ako ai ki he anga 'oe mo'ui 'i he 'etau nofo faka- Tonga, ko e nofo a kāinga (Ngāue Fakataha fika ono).

Translation

All these 'ulungaanga are very important for the child to acquire so that child will know our Tongan ways of living is through nofo a kāinga (Participant number six).

It's essential that each individual grows up and learns what is taught and practised within their family and kin group. For instance; *faka'apa'apa* (respect); *fatongia* (obligations); *mate'aki* (loyalty); *fetokoni'aki* (reciprocal help/ responsibility); *fakatōkilalo* (humility); *'ofa* (love) and obedience (Morton, 1996). These Tongan cultural values and beliefs are the essence of *nofo a kāinga*.

Ngāue fakataha fika nima also supports these ideas:

I he 'ilo 'e he fānau 'a e ngaahi 'ulungāanga ko eni 'e lava ai ke nau poto he 'ulungāanga lelei mo ke nau lava ai o tauhi honau ngaahi vā 'i he nofo fakatokolahi (Ngāue Fakataha fika nima)

Translation

With the children learning about aspects of 'ulungāanga (Tongan ways of behaving) they will know how to behave properly and they will be able to maintain relationships within the collective ways of living (Participant number five).

These aspects of *'ulungāanga faka- Tonga* are highly valued by Tongan people. And what is important in the practice of these values is to be seen as doing the right thing within our everyday living while maintaining cordial relationships (MacIntyre, 2008).

Fetokoni'aki fika ono from the teachers group put forward;

Ko e ngaahi 'ilo ko 'eni 'oku fokotu'u atu fekau'aki moe ako laulōtaha, ko e 'uhinga, he ko e ngaahi me'a kotoa 'oku mau ako'i 'oku lālanga kotoa 'i he ngaahi 'ataakai 'o e nofo a kāinga. Ko ngaahi me'a ko 'eni 'oku ako'i 'i 'api 'i he 'ataakai fāmili, kāinga i he ako pea mo e siasi (Fetokoni'aki fika ono).

Translation

All these knowledge that we are proposing here about ‘quality’ education for the reasons, all these knowledge are woven through the multilayered of environments within the nofo a kāinga. All these aspects that we are teaching here are taught within the environment of the ‘api and within the environments of fāмили, kāinga where the schools and the churches are (Participant number six).

The perceptions of Fetokoni’aki fika ono have concluded the understandings of *nofo a kāinga*. She specifically pointed out that knowledge about *ako laulōtaha* that they have proposed in this chapter are woven through within the layered of environment in *nofo a kāinga* cycle. These aspects and knowledge are transmitted and taught within the three layers of environment. In knowing these aspects of *ako laulōtaha* will only benefit young children in the collective living of Tongan people. The importance of *nofo ‘a kāinga* is an integral part of ‘quality’ learning and development within the collective living of Tongan people. And although we cannot recreate our traditional communities here in New Zealand but we can reclaim a sense of community through the identification of culture, language, values, beliefs, practices, and epistemology in the ‘quality’ of education that our children are receiving (Taufe’ulungaki, 2008).

5.3.4 Summary

Discussions with the participants revealed Tongan ideals of *ako laulōtaha* (quality education) specifically for Tongan children in Tongan Language Nests. *Mo’ui lō tolu, lea faka-Tonga*, and *‘ulungaanga* or *anga faka-Tonga* were the three major components of *ako laulōtaha* that the participants brought forth. Other Tongan values that relate to the three components were also discussed and included in the findings. The understandings and ideas shared by the participants about *ako laulōtaha* draw heavily on

Tongan traditions of values, beliefs, and knowledge of what ‘quality’ means in their context.

Although these components may seem to be fragmented due to the way this thesis is written, but they are all aspects of one principle. The aspects of ‘quality’ that are found here are inter-related in a sense that they cannot be separated at any time. In defining ‘quality’ from the context of Tongan people these aspects must be integrated together in order to find or achieve ‘quality’.

Aspects of ‘quality’ that are discussed here reconceptualised Tongan traditions, culture, identity, sense of belonging, and acceptance. The first component, *mo'ui lōtolu* gives us an overview of the holistic way Tongan people develop. The second, *lea faka-Tonga* highlights the importance of maintaining and sustaining Tongan language. The third, *'ulungaanga* or *anga faka- Tonga* represents the manifestations of Tongan culture; these determine the ways in which members of the community and groups behave and act (Taufe'ulungaki, 2005).

Generally the participants shared the views that these aspects of *ako laulōtaha* may not be the exact definitions of ‘quality’ for other cultures especially the Western culture. However it is found that ‘quality’ for Tongans in ECE would provide an education that authentically reflects the ideals and values of Tongan peoples. These aspects of ‘quality’ are living realities of Tongan people within *nofo a kāinga*. These aspects are taught and practiced within their homes, the church, cultural gatherings and functions, and should be continued within Tongan Language Nests. One of the issues found within the education of Tongan children is that the learning within the homes, the churches are not acknowledged or recognised within the learning of young children. There is a “cultural

gap” between the education that Tongan children receive at schools and the education that they receive in the homes (Thaman, 1998). *Ako laulōtaha* or ‘quality’ education for Tongan children is co- defined by the Tongan parents and teachers in this research. The participants advocated that “cultural gap” will not exist if parents, teachers and people in the community can work together in collaboration with ‘quality’ education.

Chapter 6: Criteria for ‘quality’ used by Pālangi and education officials

*Hala fakamolemole
(Refine and level rough edges)*

6.1 Introduction

This section contains perceptions of Tongan early childhood teachers and Tongan parents about pre- defined criteria of ‘quality’ in Tongan language Nests. Criteria, guidelines and policies used by education officials to measure ‘quality’ in Tongan Language Nests are based on Western concepts and ideas. There is no consultation with Tongan people on these criteria, guidelines or policies. These criteria, guidelines, and policies used to generalise ‘quality’ in all ECE services and are regarded as universally applicable. These pre- defined definitions of ‘quality’ often contradict with the way Tongan people perceive ‘quality’ in the education of Tongan children. Some critical views about the role of the ERO in defining and measuring ‘quality’ in Tongan Language Nests are discussed within this section.

6.2 Education Review Office

The ERO is seen by people involved in education as a powerful agency within the context of ECE. The ERO is a government compliance agency which is responsible for measuring ‘quality’ in all ECE services. The role of ERO reviewers is to make independent judgments based on evidence and the use of the ERO’s evaluation indicators (Ministry of Education, 2011). Their work involves: evaluations of school’s programmes; evaluation of strategies used in schools; evaluations and reviews on

performances for teaching and learning; the processes of teaching and learning, evaluating how the curriculum contributes to student's achievement; review of performances; contributions and achievements of teachers plus administration works; and evaluate weaknesses and strengths in all areas of the school context (Ministry of Education, 2011). The ERO's responsibilities relate to the effective use of public funding granted for the operation of schools. These evaluations are written in a full report for everyone to access at any time.

The groups of Ngāue Fakataha and Fetokoni'aki explained their fundamental concerns in regard to the role of the Education Review Office and its judgments concerning 'quality' within the Tongan Language Nests. The following are themes of concerns identified by the participants.

6.2.1 ERO Visits

All ECE services may experience ERO visits differently. ECE centres are informed of the actual date and time when the ERO are due to visit to a particular centre. These visits usually take place in one or two days. Overall evaluations and recommendations are based on this visit.

The Education Review Office visits schools on an average once every three years, but could be more or less frequent depending on circumstances (Ministry of Education, 2009).

The ERO evaluates and reports on non-compliance with requirements and makes relevant recommendations. It is then the responsibility of The Ministry of Education to take action on this report and follow it up (Mitchell, 1996). ERO visits are taken very

seriously by all ECE centres and a lot of preparation takes place. Teachers often work extra long hours to complete certain documentation ensuring that requirements and regulations are met for the ERO.

Recommendations from the ERO display contradictions and conflicts in the political, economic, and social realms (Moss & Dahlberg, 2008). These recommendations are seen as problematic because models used by the ERO do not include or reflect cultural aspects of Tongan communities. Tongan early childhood teachers in this study find that visits from the ERO are highly critical of Tongan ECE centres.

The parents and the teachers that participated in this study have deeply thought about the roles and responsibilities of the ERO. The debate about 'quality' education within Tongan Language Nests was ongoing, however the participants elaborated on social and cultural issues that they associate with the ERO visits to the centres and the measurements used for evaluations. These issues are authentic experiences identified both by the participants and in various ERO reports which highlight the contradictions between Tongan perceptions of 'quality' and 'quality' proposed by the ERO and the Ministry of Education. The participants indicated that barriers are found when ERO visits their centres. These barriers are due to different worldviews; those of the Western culture and the Tongan culture.

The participants discussed various issues with the ERO visits to their center. Ngāue Fakataha fika nima shared;

'Oku ou tokanga au ia ki he a'ahi ko 'eni 'oku fai mai 'e he ERO, 'oku ou mālie ia 'i he founga ko 'eni 'a e ha'u 'a e kau a'ahi ia koe kau Pālāngi 'o sivi 'a e feitu'u 'oku faka- Tonga 'a e me'a kotoa. Na'a ku 'alu atu 'o 'ave 'eku ongo ua he 'aho 'e taha 'o sio ai he a'ahi mei ERO koe fefine Pālāngi, 'oku ta'utu pe 'o sio mo tohi, ka 'oku ou pehē pe ko e ha 'ene me'a 'oku tohi pe 'oku ne mahino' 'i 'a e talanoa moe ngāue 'oku fai (Ngāue Fakataha fika nima).

Translation

I am concerned with the visits from the ERO; I am interested in the process where a few Pālangi are visiting a place where everything is in Tongan. I dropped off my two children one day and saw a Pālangi lady from the ERO visiting the center, she was sitting there watching and writing, and I was wondering what is she writing, can she understand all the talanoa and work that's happening here (Ngāue Fakataha fika nima).

Ngāue Fakataha fika nima was concerned with the understandings that the ERO perceived when visiting a Tongan Language Nests. There is a cultural gap between the ERO observer and the existing culture of the people within this context.

Ngāue Fakataha fika fa, a father of six children who is highly involved in a Tongan Language Nest for a number of years regarded ERO visits as;

Ko e a'ahi mai ko e 'o sivi 'a e 'quality' ko e Pālangi, ka koe ha'u 'a e pālangi 'o sivi 'a e me'a 'a e Tonga, 'e kehekehe, he 'oku kehekehe pe 'etau tui moe me'a faka fonua 'oku tau' ilo kiai. Ko e me'a ko e 'oku mahu'inga ka tautolu 'oku' 'ikai fa'a mahu'inga ia ki he lau 'a e Pālangi pea koe mea koe 'oku mahu'inga ia ai 'a e Pālangi 'oku 'ikai fa'a tatau ia mo e anga 'etau tui. Hangee pe koe tauhi fānau, 'oku hē 'a 'etau fānau Tonga lahi koe'uhi ko 'enau fakatakitaki ki he founa 'a e kau Papalangi. Ko e taimi ni 'oku toe taungutu mai 'a e fānau ia kumi 'enau totonu, ka 'oku fepaki ia mo 'eku tui. Ko e lau 'a e Pālangi mei he ERO pe koe potungāue ako 'e ikai tatau ia moe lau 'a e Tonga fekauaki mo e Tonga (Ngāue Fakataha fika fa).

Translation

Visitor that comes in to measure 'quality here is a Pālangi, but how the Pālangi measures the Tongan centre will be different because of cultural knowledges. What's important to us are often not important in the perspectives of the Pālangi and what's important to the Pālangi might not be the same with my beliefs. For instance child rearing, some of our Tongan children are lost because they are copying what Pālangi people do. Nowadays children are answering back as they are fighting for their own rights and I don't believe in that. The perspectives of the Pālangi from the ERO or MOE won't be the same with having Tongan perspectives about another Tongan (Ngāue Fakataha fika fa).

During the period of my research, the perceptions of Tongan parents about ERO visits received growing attention focusing on the problem of having a Pālangi examining and measuring 'quality' in a Tongan context. Tongan parents who participated in this study like Ngāue Fakataha fika fa, nima, and 'uluaki were concerned with cultural differences

and understandings. Ngāue Fakataha specifically pointed out that having a Pālangi measuring ‘quality’ in a Tongan center will be different due to differences in culture, language, and beliefs. Participant number one is also familiar with ERO visits. She thought about the ERO visits;

At the center where my children are attending, as parents we are informed when the ERO are due to visits the center. As parents we are not there throughout the whole day to know what’s like for teachers but I feel for the teachers. They worked extremely hard throughout the years and their practices are being judge by one or two Pālangi visitors. I’m concerned with having Pālangi visitors making judgments about the centre where everything is in Tongan; I wonder if they understand what’s happening here or not (Ngāue Fakataha fika ‘uluaki).

Ngāue Fakataha fika ‘uluaki shows concern with the well- being of teachers as they prepare for ERO visits. Parents are questioning whether the ERO observers understood the language and the culture sufficiently to make valid judgements. The observer or the visitor from the ERO is seen as problematic by the Tongan parents in this study. ERO visits and written reports can be problematic given constraints on what the review officer actually observes during the usually brief visits and the interpretations they are able to make, given their lack of knowledge concerning the cultural or philosophic reasons for Tongan practices (Hurst, 1995 cited in Farquhar 1991).

Tongan early childhood practitioners who participated in this study shared their concerns with ERO visits by saying;

Hangee ko e a’ahi mai ‘a e ERO ‘oku nau ‘i heni he ‘aho pe ‘e taha pea nau lava leva ‘o tohi ‘enau lipooti fekau’aki mo e ngāue he ta’u kotoa. ‘Oku ou fa’a nofo au ia ‘o pehē ko ‘ete fu’u ngāue he tau ‘e tolu kakato pea nau ha’u pe ‘o sivi he fo’i ‘aho pe ‘e taha pea ai leva ‘enau lau ki he anga ‘a hono fakalele mai ‘a e ako (Fetokoni’aki fika fa).

Translation

Like when ERO visit they are only here for one day and they get to write reports about the centre within one day about the overall operation of the centre throughout the whole year. I sometimes reflect on the work that we do

throughout the whole three years and think; the ERO visits in one day and they get to make judgements within one day of visit. (Participant number four).

The perceptions of Fetokoni'aki fika fa from the teacher's group identified issues in conjunction with the time frame that ERO spends on a usual visit. Conformity with Regulations and requirements for accountability in the overall operations of the center are evaluated and measured within the one day of the normal visit. ERO measures 'quality' according to indicators of 'quality' such as teaching practice, learning environment and activities, interactions, relationships, programme planning, staff and child ratios, bicultural aspects, health and safety issues and more factors that could contribute to 'quality' early childhood. Teachers find that requirements and regulations are huge and these are all evaluated and measured within one day. Hurst (1995) found that ERO procedures focus more on compliance with government regulations rather than the process.

Ko e fuofua taimi ke u 'ilo ai ki he ERO, ko 'enau a'ahi mai ki he ki'i 'apiako na'a ku fuofuo ngāue ai. Ka ko 'eku sio ko 'eni ki he 'enau a'ahi holo 'a e ERO 'oku kau 'enau founa he fakaloto si'i kia tautolu kau faiako, 'oku 'ikai ke kau ia he fakaloto lahi'i kiatutolu. 'Oku ou sio au 'oku fa'a manavahē 'a e fanga kii ako 'ia he a'ahi mai 'a e ERO, 'Oku nau ha'u pe he fo'i 'aho 'e taha 'o fua ai 'a e ngāue 'o e ngaahi ta'u lahi mai, pea 'oku 'ikai ke nau misiteli ki nautolu ki he ngaahi me'a lahi 'oku hoko 'i he fanga ki'i ako Tonga (Fetokoni'aki fika nima).

Translation

The first time for me to know about the ERO was when they visited the centre where I was first employed. But seeing them visiting the center I find that they can be very discouraging to us teachers, the processes are not very encouraging to us. I see that some centres are terrified when the ERO visits them. They visited us within one day and measured all the work that's carried out within years, and they often don't have any ideas what happening within most centres (Participant number five).

Perceptions of Fetokoni'aki fika nima indicated that teachers are often discouraged by the ERO. Some teachers experienced ERO visits as stressful and intense because a lot of preparation takes place even though they only visit within a day. Preparation for

'quality' assurance is a challenge for most teachers; teachers often work long hours preparing for ERO visits. Requirements for accountability such as assessment and documentations often takes more than working hours and teachers require extra hours of their time and weekends to complete all paper work (Farquhar, 1991). This is more demanding because the regulations and requirements often make little sense to Tongan teachers in relation to achieving high standards of education within a Tongan context. It is unlikely therefore that this work will have positive benefits for teaching and learning within the centre. Fetokoni'aki fika uluaki shared her thoughts:

ERO, hau ko e 'a e ERO 'oku nau ha'u pe nautolu ia 'o sio 'i he 'enau tafa'aki pe 'a nautolu. 'Oku mau mahino'i ko e ngaahi a'ahi ko 'eni 'oku nau fai mai 'e hoko koe tokoni ki he ngāue, ka 'oku ikai ke mau fa'a ongoi pehe he taimi lahi. Ko e ki mui ni' mai 'eni 'oku ha'u 'a e fefine Tonga 'o kau mai he a'ahi, 'oku sai ke ha'u ha Tonga 'o a'ahi mai, ka ko e lipooti 'oku kei fai pe ia he lau 'a e fefine Palangi (Fetokoni'aki fika 'uluaki).

Translation

Ero, when Ero visit our centre they only measure our centre from their own perspectives. We understand that these visits should be able to help the centre but we often don't feel that way. Lately they have included a Tongan lady in the ERO visits, it's good to see a Tongan coming but the reports are still based on what the Pālangi lady says (Participant number one).

Fetokoni'aki fika uluaki highlighted here that when ERO visits their centre; the procedures and measurements are based on their own Western perceptions. The ERO have recently employed one Tongan who gets to join Europeans in visiting Tongan Language Nests. Some participants like Fetokoni'aki fika uluaki showed interest and joy in having a Tongan person in the ERO. They concluded that it is more culturally appropriate to have a Tongan representative from the ERO to visit their centre because she could understand the context and the culture of the people. Fetokoni'aki fika uluaki also shared the understanding that the purpose of the ERO visits and evaluation was to

help them improve their work effectively; however the procedures and processes can be discouraging for teachers. Hurst (1995) commented that early childhood teachers and parents may be supportive of the ERO approach but there is a need for more process-oriented evaluation method to facilitate ‘quality’ improvements (cited in Podmore, Meade, with Hendricks, 2000).

6.2.2 Perceptions of ERO Reports

The ERO have all the rights and powers to measure, investigate, evaluate, and reports on the ‘quality’ of education. The above are perceptions of participants in relation to ERO visits; ERO’s results of their visits are documented in a written report. These reports are based on their visits to a particular centre and these reports must reflect the current situation of that centre (Ministry of Education, 2009). Reports are available to the public to view at any time and are discussed with the parents and teachers.

The parents and teachers had a few concerns with the ERO reports, for instance Ngāue Fakataha fika ‘uluaki elucidates her concerns:

ERO reports can be quite damaging because a lot of people reads ERO reports; I read a lot when my son was about to go to primary schools. The ERO reports can be damaging to a lot of people, when I was looking for a primary school for my kids, a lot of my opinion came from reading the ERO reports, I just took it for word to word that everything they say its authentic and true, because they stated this is ‘quality’ and this is what our children should be learning and yet you don’t really see what really happens at schools. In reading their reports it creates your own perceptions about schools And reading about ERO reports in Tongan centres creates negative feedbacks about some of the centres, and mainly because they measure ‘quality’ from their own Western values in child rearing (Ngāue Fakataha fika ‘uluaki)

Ngāue Fakataha fika uluaki was very much aware of the ERO and their roles and operations. As a mother of four children she understands ERO reports in regard to her

children's education. Ngāue Fakataha fika uluaki was concerned with the reports provided by the ERO. She found that the reports and information provided by the ERO can be damaging to a lot of people who often read the ERO reports, and the reports about some of the Tongan early childhood centres often creates negative feedback. Negative feedback occurs because the ERO evaluates and measures 'quality' based on predefined assumptions of 'quality' from Western perspectives. She argues that as Tongan parents they need to reflect and analyse the criteria inscribed by the ERO and Ministry of Education in various Tongan Language centres. From a similar viewpoint, Ngāue Fakataha fika tolu reflected on the roles and responsibilities of the ERO:

Ko e ngaahi lipooti ko e 'oku 'omai 'e he potungāue ako, ko au ia 'oku 'ikai keu fa'a lau ia 'e au. Teu lau 'e au 'a e lipooti 'oku omai mei he kau faiako he apiako ko 'eni koe'uhi he 'oku tohi faka-Tonga mai ke u mahino'i (Ngāue Fakataha fika tolu).

Translation

The reports from the Ministry of Education; for myself I don't read it. I can read the reports from the teachers in this center because it's in Tongan and I can understand that (Participant number three).

The perspective of Ngāue Fakataha fika tolu (participant number three) was very interesting. In her statements she clearly pointed out that as a Tongan parent she does not read the reports provided by the ERO about the centre where her children are attending. However her reason for not reading the ERO reports is that the reports are written in English and she would prefer to read it in the Tongan language so that she can have a deeper understanding of what is written in the reports.

'Oku ou kau au ia he ta'e lau 'a e ngaahi lipooti ko 'eni, 'uhinga pe he 'oku fakapalangi ia 'oku feunga pe 'eku lautohi moe lea faka-Tonga (Ngāue Fakataha fika fa)

Translation

I'm in the category of not reading the reports from the Ministry of Education, mainly because it's in Pālangi. My reading is only in the Tongan language (Participant number four).

The perspectives of Ngāue Fakataha fika fa (participant number four) reflected his own understanding. Ngāue Fakataha Fika fa also articulates that he does not read the reports due to language barrier; he can only read reports available in the Tongan language.

Ko e ngaahi lipooti ko e mei he potungāue ako pe ko e ERO, 'oku ma lau pe ka 'oku ikai ke ma fu'u tui kiai. Ko e uHINGA pe he 'oku ma fakatokanga'i ko e ngaahi me'a 'oku nau 'uhinga mai ki ai 'oku 'i he 'enau founga pe 'a nautolu ko e kau Pālangi. 'Oku ma sio tonu pe ngāue 'a e kau faiako 'i heni pea ko e me'a ko e 'oku mahu'inga ka kimautolu Tonga 'oku ako'i 'e he kau faiako. He 'ikai pe ke tatau 'a e hanga ia 'e he kau palangi 'o sivi 'a e fanga ki'i 'apiako Tonga ko e 'uhinga he 'oku kehekehe pe 'etau tui moe ngaahi mea 'oku tau mahu'inga ia ai (Ngāue Fakataha fika ono).

Translation

The reports from the Ministry and the ERO; we do read it but we don't really believe in it. For the reasons we realized that the things that they are putting out are based on their Western knowledge. We are able to see the work that these teachers do for ourselves and what's important to us Tongans are taught to the children. It won't be the same for a Palangi to come and measure 'quality' in Tongan centers because we have different beliefs and values, and our beliefs and values might not be important to them (Ngāue Fakataha fika ono).

Ngāue Fakataha fika ono (participant number six) indicated that as parents they are grateful for the opportunity of having their children to learn their own language and culture in ECE. Allowing Tongan people to established Tongan Language Nests for Tongan children here Aotearoa New Zealand is acknowledged by the parents. However in terms of the ERO reports; Ngāue Fakataha fika ono also joins some of the other parents in this study that don't read ERO reports. One of the reasons for this is that she does not believe in the reports; because there is a mismatch between the culture of the representative from the ERO and the culture of the people within the context.

Ko e ngaahi lau ko e 'a e ERO 'i he lipooti 'oku nau tohi, oku fakatatau pe ia ki he lao moe policies oku nau tuku omai ke tau ngāue kiai. Ko e taimi lahi oku lahi ange 'a e me'a oku 'ikai sai pe negative 'i he me'a 'oku lelei. Neongo ko e tokolahi 'oku 'ikai ke nau sai'ia ai ka 'oku pau pe ke tau fai ki ai neongo 'a e'ikai ke tau sai'ia ai, ka kuo pau ke tau muimui kiai (Fetokoniaki fika ono).

Translation

Perceptions of the ERO in their reports are based on the regulations and policies that we are supposed to implement within our work. And in most time the reports have more negative feedbacks than positive, and most people don't like their reports but at the same time we must abide and follow it (Fetokoni'aki fika ono).

Fetokoni'aki fika ono found that they tended not to agree with what the ERO reports offer; and they find that reports often consist of negative outcomes rather than positive feedback. These reports are based on regulations, policies, and expert-derived criteria (Moss & Dahlberg, 2008). The teachers do take ERO reports into consideration in terms of abiding by policies and regulations. The following will discuss common understandings of how policies, regulations, and requirements can control 'quality' within the context of Tongan Language Nests.

6.2.3 Policies and Regulations

It is argued by Farquhar (1991) that policy makers, advisers and experts are defining 'quality' for people in early childhood. Moss & Pence (1999) also argued that 'quality' in ECE requires following experts, government education policies, and regulations. The government plays a major role in controlling 'quality' assurance in all ECE. Farquhar (1991) added by saying that within NZ 'quality' in ECE is commonly argued to be about money, 'quality' cannot be achieved without money. This leads to the role of the government controlling 'quality' assurance in all ECE; ECE services are government funded, including Tongan Language Nests. And the government has already indicated policies, regulation, measurements, legal requirements, and intervention for all ECE services. This means that 'quality' has already been defined by the government and policy makers. Quality is being driven by demands for accountability which include

compliance with legal requirements and national policy requirements for action and documentation (Farquhar, 1991).

Regulations and policies are introduced addressing certain easily measured aspects of ‘quality’ care and education (Sims, 2006). Fetokoni’aki fika ono from the teacher’s group stated that:

‘Oku ou sio au ki he ngaahi lao moe policy ‘a e potungāue ako ‘oku hanga pe ‘e he lao ia koia ‘o pule’i ‘a e ‘quality ka kiate au oku ikai keu tui au ko e ‘quality’ eni (Fetokoni’aki fika ono)

Translation

Looking at the policies and guidelines from the Ministry of Education, their policies control ‘quality’ but to me I don’t agree that this is ‘quality’ (Participant number six).

Fetokoni’aki fika ono opposes the ideas of having the policies and regulations to define ‘quality’ for all cultures and in different various contexts, because this means that ‘quality’ has already been defined for us Tongans. Fetokoni’aki fika nima felt that:

I he ha’u ko e ‘a e ERO ‘o sivi koe ‘a e quality ‘oku nau ha’u kinautolu mo checklist ‘i he me’a pe ‘a e Palangi. ‘I he taimi lahi ‘oku ‘ikai ke mau toe lava ‘emautolu ‘o fehu’ia ‘a e ngaahi fakamatala ‘oku nau ‘omai, he ‘oku nau tu’u pe kinautolu ‘i he totonu moe founga ‘a e kau papalangi. ‘Oku mau fetulituli ‘i aipe ‘a e fanga ki’i ako Tonga ke nau meet ‘a e u me’a koe ‘oku nau hanga ‘o omai. Ko e taimi lahi leva ia koe ngāue ia ko e fai fakamamata pe fai pe ke nau ha’u ‘o tick ‘a e ngaahi u mea ‘oku nau omai pe tuku mai ki he fanga ki’i ako ke nau fakahoko. Ka ‘oku ikai ke nofo ‘a e quality ia ‘i he fanga ki’i Akoteu (Fetokoni’aki Fika nima).

Translation

When the ERO visits for ‘quality’ assurance, they come with their own checklist based on their own Palangi views. And often we are not able to questions their judgements because their views are based on their Western ideas. At the centre we are busy trying to meet all the guidelines and expectations, and most of the work that we do here is for presentation only so that we may get a tick in all the criteria that we are given, And I don’t think this is ‘quality’ within Tongan Language Nests (Fetokoni’aki Fika nima).

There is general agreement presented here that regulatory requirements controls ‘quality’.

Fetokoni’aki fika nima explained that as teachers they seek characteristics of ‘quality’

implied in criteria and guidelines. These criteria, guidelines, and policies are seen as structural factors, and thus, these structural factors are found in most childcare regulations (O' Kane cited in Sims, 2006). Fetokoni'aki continued by saying that 'quality' in Tongan Language Nests is about following criteria, checklists, expectations, and guidelines. And these criteria, checklists, expectations, and guidelines are based on Western ideas not Tongan.

We need to reflect on the criteria that ERO and the Ministry are putting out; are they suitable for our children, do they apply in the context of Tongan people? And often what they give out we don't have any voices in the 'quality' that they are proposing. Too much structured in the programmes given by the Ministry (Ngāue Fakataha fika uluaki).

Tongan teachers and Tongan parents argue that they need to reflect on criteria that regulate 'quality' in Tongan Language Nests. Often these parents and teachers don't have a voice in the 'quality' proposed by government agency and education officials. Common concerns shared by the participants indicated question whether the policies, regulations, and requirements reflect the ideals, values, and beliefs of Tongan communities. Fetokoni'aki fika fa shared her understandings of this as:

Ka 'i he taimi tatau pe kuo pau ke tau talangofua ki he ngaahi tu'utu'uni kuo nau 'omai, pea tau fai pe kiai ka 'oku totonu ke hoko pe i'a ko e tanaki mai ki he ngāue 'oku fai, ka oku tonu pē ke tau sio ki he ngaahi lao ko 'eni pe oku 'alu fakataha mo 'etau tui 'a e kakai Tonga (Fetokoni'aki fika fa).

Translation

But at the same time we must abide by all the policies and guidelines that they have given, and for us to abide by but they should be added as contribution to the work that we do. And we should reflect on these policies whether it goes together with the beliefs of Tongan people (Fetokoni'aki fika fa).

Fetokoni'aki informed us that as Tongan teachers they do abide by the policies and guidelines proposed in ECE. These guidelines, policies, and regulations should be taken into account as contribution factors to their practices. At the same time Tongan teachers

should consider reflecting on these whether these regulatory requirements prioritise values and beliefs of Tongan people. The assumption remains that criteria, policies, regulation, and requirements ensure efficient production in ECE services (Gallagher, Rooney, & Campbell, 1999). Which contribute to enhancing ‘quality’ practice but they are not solely responsible for defining nor controlling ‘quality’ as other aspects and factors are inclusive (O’ Kane 2005 cited in Sims, 2006).

6.3 Measuring ‘quality’ in Tongan Language Nests

Contradictions and conflicts identified in various ERO reports which the participants explained. Conflict accumulated between the concepts learned and practiced in schools and those imparted to the children at home (Taufe’ulungaki, 2011). The participants highlighted certain conflicts found in ERO reports which derived from the content of Western ideas, knowledge, and understandings. Conflicts and issues are presented in the following sub- themes.

6.3.1 Documentation

Documentation is recognized as one of the importance tools in early childhood education as it provides evidence and accountability of the learning and practices within the centre. A multiplicity of documents is required from early childhood teachers however the emphasis here is based on the documentation of children’s learning and development. Katz & Chard (1996) refer to documentation as written information which includes samples of a child’s work at several different stages of completion; photographs showing work in progress; comments written by the teacher or adults working with the children; transcriptions of children’s discussions, comments, and explanations of interventions

about the activity, and comments made by parents (p. 2). Teachers or educators preparing an effective piece of documentation tell the story and the purpose of an event, experience, or development (Seitz, 2008). Tongan Language Nests and most early childhood services here in New Zealand are using the learning stories approach to document children's learning and development. Margaret Carr (2001) introduced learning stories as research tools which provide the audience with pictures of real people in real situations, struggling with real problems, informations included children's progress, learning and development, weaknesses, strengths, and interests (p. 280). Teachers in Tongan Language Nests explained that more recently they have changed their whole approach about the ways they document children's learning and development. When the learning stories approach first introduced by Carr (2001) they were struggling to understand the concepts of learning stories and documentation of children's learning was conducted in English. Over the years of practicing and learning about the process of learning stories; in the last 2- 3 years they have shifted from writing informations in English to using the Tongan language. Documentation of children's learning is still based on the learning stories approach but information are written and recorded in the Tongan language. Teachers in this study find that documenting children's learning in the Tongan language is much more meaningful not only for the teachers and the children but especially the parents, grandparents, and extended families. Documenting children's learning in the Tongan language enable parents and families to become intimately and deeply aware of the children's learning experiences in the school. Malaguzzi (1993) initiated that this documentation introduces parents to a 'quality' of knowing that tangibly changes their expectations (p. 64). However there were conflicts identified by the ERO

in regards to the documentation of children's learning in the Tongan language.

Fetokoni'aki fika ua reported that:

Na'e ikai ke nau sai ia he documentation 'a e ngāue moe lipooti fekau'aki moe fānau he na'e fai faka-Tonga pea nau talaange ke 'alu ia 'o 'omai ha Tonga ke ha'u lau 'a e ū me'a ko eni he ko e 'apiako Tonga eni (Fetokoni'aki fika tolu).

Translation

They didn't like the documentation and the reports about the children here because they were all written in the Tongan language, and I responded by saying that they bring in a Tongan person to come and read the documentation because this is a Tongan Language Nests and the reports are carried out in the Tongan language (Fetokoni'aki fika tolu).

Fetokoni'aki fika ono also reported on the reasons why the ERO did not agree with the documentation by saying:

Ko e 'uhinga na'e 'ikai ke nau sai'ia ai he lipooti 'uhinga he 'oku 'ikai ke mahino kia nautolu 'a e ngaahi fakamatala fekau'aki moe ako 'a e fānau (Fetokoni'aki fika ono).

Translation

The reasons why they didn't like the documentation here because they didn't understand the information written about the learning progress of young children (Participant number six).

The documentation of children's learning is in the Tongan language; the ERO had difficulty in understanding the information. In order to write their reports about children's learning they must understand the written information. Documentation of children's learning and development in Tongan Language Nests is highly important for Tongan parents and their families. Ngāue Fakataha fika ono articulate this:

'Oku fakafiefia ki homau ki'i fāмили 'a e lava ke mau lau 'a e ngaahi lipooti fekau'aki moe ako 'a e fānau 'i he lea faka- Tonga. 'Oku mau lau pea kole mai he 'eku ongo matu'a ke li ange ki Tonga ke nau sio, pea ave nau fiefia he sio he ū tā moe fakamatala fekau'aki moe ako 'a e fānau (Ngāue Fakataha fika ono).

Translation

It's an excitement for our family that we are able to read the reports about our children's education written in the Tongan language. We read it and my parents asked to send it over to Tonga so they can see it, they were so happy to see the

photographs and information about the children's learning (Participant number six).

Perspectives of Ngāue Fakataha fika ono shows enthusiasm about the documentation of children's learning and progress. The outcome of the documentation in the Tongan language enhances meaningful relationships for Tongan parents and their families.

Ngāue Fakataha fika ua also supports this view:

Ko e fakafiefia ki he kau vaivai 'enau sio ki he lipooti 'a e fānau. 'Oku sio kotoa ai 'a e fāmili pea mau talanoa ki he ako 'a e fānau. Ko e fakafiefia lahi ka nautolu ko 'enau lava 'o lau 'i he lea faka- Tonga pea nau toe sio he ū tā. Fakamālō lahi ki he kau faiako 'i he 'enau lipooti mai ke mahino kia mautolu matu'a, fanga kui, mo e toenga 'o e famili (Ngāue Fakataha fika ua).

Translation

It's an excitement for the elderly to see the reports of our children. Our whole family gets to see it and we talk about the children's learning. They are mostly excited that they are able to read these reports in the Tongan language and they see photographs too. We are thankful for the teachers in doing these reports for us so that parents, grandparents, and the rest of the family can understand (Participant number six).

Documentation of children's learning is specifically written and recorded in the Tongan language for the reasons: first, the children are Tongan and the parents are also Tongan it is only culturally appropriate to document children's learning in the Tongan language; and second, most parents prefer the reports to be written in the Tongan language so that they can share the experiences with the *fanga kui* (grandparents) and the extended families. Carr (2001) links the learning story method to a theoretical base in sociocultural theory. The sociocultural reflects the context, location, and people involved as inclusive parts in the learning. And therefore it is appropriate to document the children's learning to reflect the authentic cultural locations of the communities in practice.

6.3.3 *Mat time*

Mat time is an important opportunity for family time such as praying, singing, dancing, games, and stories. The way in which the child participates in mat time encourages self-confidence, concentration communication skills, listening skills, rhythm, and memory.

Mat time is regarded by most Tongan early childhood teachers as a time for *faka fāmili* meaning family gathering all together. The term *faka* denotes the way or the way of; *fāmili* refers to family. They gather together to *lotu* (pray), *talanoa* and share stories of particular interests like school, sports, church or any particular events that happened during the day. Often this is an opportunity for the parents and grandparents to *akonaki* and shares various cultural knowledge, values and beliefs with the children. The term *akonaki* refers to advice or instruction, and this is usually uttered by the parents and grandparents during *faka- fāmili*.

Mat time is conducted daily; it usually takes place within the morning prior to morning tea. Children are very much aware of mat time; when its mat time all the children gathers on the floor and at most centers they position themselves within a large circle. The circle symbolizes unity and wholeness reflecting that each child in the circle is equal and belongs to the whole group (Butler, 2008).

In most Tongan centres they practiced mat time according to the concepts of *faka- fāmili*, the children will read out a few bible verses, sing a few songs and teachers also use this opportunity to *talanoa* with the children about various '*ulungaanga faka- Tonga* and share a few interesting stories or activities.

Tongan early childhood teachers in this study maintained that mat time manifests important cultural values, beliefs, and practices of Tongan culture. However the ERO

proposed that there are alternatives ways of doing mat time in ECE. ERO perceived problems in regards to the length of time children are required to sit still.

Length of time for mat time is one of the common issues found in various Tongan Language Nests by the ERO. The teachers discussed that their perceptions of mat time are different from the perceptions of the ERO. Fetokoniaki fika 'uluaki reflected on this issue about mat time in the center where she's currently working:

Ko e lau 'a e ERO ko e mat time miniti e 30 'oku fu'u loloa 'aupito. Ko e miniti e 30 'oku 'ikai loloa ia 'i he lau 'a e Tonga. Ko e fānau ko 'eni 'oku nau kau kotoa ki he siasi pea koe kongā ia 'a e culture ke tau poto he ta'utu 'o fanongo, hange koia ko e ta'utu he lotu, pe koe ha 'a e loloa ka kuo pau pe ke ta'utu 'a e ki'i leka fakalongolongo mo fanongo ki he mea 'oku fai (Fetokoni'aki fika 'uluaki).

Translation

In the views from the ERO our 30 minutes mat time is too long, 30 minutes from the perspectives of Tongans, 30 minutes is not long. All the children here all attend various churches and part of the culture is sitting there and listening, just like at church, the service will go on for hours and the children are expected to sit there and listen to what's happening until its finished. (Fetokoni'aki fika 'uluaki).

According to Fetokoni'aki fika ua from her own perspectives, thirty minutes of mat time is regarded as not too long. She related her views to the reality of experiences that Tongan children are exposed to especially within the context of the church. In contrast with the perceptions of Tongan parents, Ngaue Fakataha fika ono pointed out that:

Ko' eku lau koe 'eni koe taha au o'e matu'a. 'Oku nau ako heni 'a e kātaki, ako 'a e lea faka-Tonga, ako ke nau lava o ta'utu 'o fanongo, ako 'a e hiva 'oku hiva he lotu, pea ko e kongā 'eni 'o e Tonga he 'ikai lava 'o fakamavahevahe'i mei he 'enau mo'ui. Ko e taimi'ni kuo anga 'eni 'a e fānau ki he taimi 'oku fai ai 'a e meti, ke nau ta'utu mau pe 'o fakalongolongo mo fanongo neongo 'oku 'i ai pe 'a e fanga ki'i fānau ia 'oku nau va'inga ka 'oku fai pe feinga. 'Oku ou fiema'u pē' e au ke kau eku ki'i ta'ahine 'i he meti pe ko e ha pe loloa, 'oku ikai keu tokanga au pē 'e loloa pe ikai, koe kongā pe 'eni 'ene ako (Ngāue Fakataha fika ono).

Translation

My views about this as a parent; They learn here to be patient, they learn the language, they learn to be able to sit there and listen, they learn the songs that they sing at the church, and this is part of being Tongan that cannot be fragmented from their lives. Now the children are getting used to sitting in the mat time, they are learning to sit on the mat and listen, some children often play

up during mat time but they try. I like my daughter to participate in the mat time and I don't have a problem if the mat time takes longer than expected: it's all part of the learning (Ngāue Fakataha fika ono).

Ngāue Fakataha fika ono described positive learning outcomes for Tongan children in mat time. She clearly explained that as a parent she does not have any issues in regards to the length of time that teachers use for mat time. Time is not a problem for many parents, Ngāue fakataha fika uluaki also added:

When I looked at the mat time it's very common, 30 minutes of mat time is regarded as too long, but when we look at our children, these Tongan children attend church on Sundays, and the malanga on Sundays usually takes 2 to 3 hours and the children do sit there for that long and we have no problems. Children are taught to sit there and listen and they might not understand but they can pick up the Tongan language, they can sing Tongan songs, they learn Tongan Bible verses and these children do sit there quietly and listen to what takes place in the service, I guess they are learning to be patient and so on and we take our children to funerals and weddings and these sort of things can take a lot of time. It's part of our culture (Ngāue Fakataha fika 'uluaki)

Perhaps every culture will have different understandings and practices with conducting formal sessions such as mat time. But Tongan parents like Ngāue Fakataha fika ono and uluaki highlighted that time spent on mat time, even thirty minutes is not an issue for many Tongan parents and Tongan early childhood teachers. The structures in mat time are well related to Tongan culture, practices and beliefs. Mat time promotes Tongan tradition and Christianity which are important aspects of being Tongan; cultural values, beliefs, and practices within the contexts of the homes, schools, and the church are interconnected and with reflection of Tongan tradition and Christianity.

Hange ko 'eku sio ki he taimi lotu- mahu'inga 'a e meti mo e lotu ke ta'utu ma'u ai 'a e fānau, taimi 'e ni'ihī 'e 'i ai 'a e fānau ia 'oku ikai ke nau fie kau nautolu ki he meti pea' oku tukuange pe ia ke fai 'a e me'a oku nau loto kiai. Tokua 'oku pehē, ke follow pē interest 'a e fānau. 'I he 'etau tui faka-Tonga ka fai 'a e lotu kuopau ke tau 'i ai, loto moe ta'eloto kuopau ke tau 'i ai, pea oku mahu'inga ia ke ako 'a e fānau kiai mei he 'enau kei si'i pea ke nau anga kiai he oku ikai ke nau failoto pehē kinautolu' i 'api (Fetokoni'aki fika ono).

Translation

For instance our lotu or mat time; it's important that the children are sitting there, sometimes some of the children don't want to sit there and participate and often we let them do what they want to do. With the views that we must follow the child's interests, but in the Tongan way, if we are doing a prayer we must be there whether we like it or not. It's important to teach the children these things so that they can get use to it because they don't get to have a choice at home, when its lotu time they must be sitting there (Fetokoni'aki fika ono).

Fetokoni'aki fika ono articulate that in some cases young children don't want to participate in mat time and the perception from the ERO is that we allow them to do what they prefer to do. This contradicts with our own beliefs. Children don't experience this free play during *lotu* time within their homes because it is inappropriate and it is seen as unacceptable behaviour within Tongan society. How to behave appropriately in a group is a learned skill, which prepares young children for formal education, for other group activities, and for many experiences in adult life (Butler, 2008).

Fetokoni'aki fika fa also elaborated on this by saying:

Miniti ko e 'e 30 'oku fu'u loloa i'a 'i he lau 'a e palangi ki he taimi meti. Ka ko e meti oku mau ngaue'aki ia 'emautolu koe taimi faka- famili. 'Oku mau lotu, hiva e fanga ki'i himi, lau moe veesi folofola pea mau talanoa faka- famili. Pea koe taimi 'oku mau ngāue'aki ki he faka- famili 'oku kehekehe oe he 'aho kotoa 'o fakatefito pe 'i he tokanga 'a e fānau, pea 'oku toe kehekehe pe 'a e loloa 'a e taimi fakatatau ki he ta'u (Fetokoni'aki fika fa).

Translation

Having 30 minutes for mat time is too long from the perspectives of the Palangi. We used mat time as our faka- famili time. We pray, we sing a few hymns, read bible verses and we talanoa as a family. And the time that we use for faka- famili is different each day depending on children's concentration, and it's different according to age groups (Fetokoni'aki fika fa).

Fetokoni'aki fika fa argued that the perception of the ERO that thirty minutes mat time is too long is based on Palangi perspectives. The group of Fetokoniaki further discussed that varying amounts of time devoted to mat time in different centres depending on children's concentration span. The concentration spans of young children are taken into consideration and sometimes they have mat time for fifteen minutes, twenty minutes or

even ten minutes. Time frames for mat time vary according to the age groups; the under 2's is have less than five minutes, toddlers are ten to fifteen minutes, and older children have fifteen, twenty, or thirty minutes.

6.3.4 *Fevahevahe'aki*

The term *fevahevahe'aki* refers to mutual sharing with one another. The concepts of *fevahevahe'aki* are nurtured within the development of young children. The concepts of *fevahevahe'aki* are well understood by Tongan people; the concepts of *fevahevahe'aki* are practiced in the everyday living of Tongan people. The parents and teachers found that the concepts of *fevahevahe'aki* are not well understood by the education officials. These issues were indicated by the ERO when they visited some of the Tongan centres.

Na'e sio 'a e ERO 'i he mohe fakataha heni pea na'e 'ikai ke nau sai ia ai. Na'a nau pehē 'oku 'ikai ngofua he lao ke mohe fakataha 'a e fānau. Ko e taha kotoa pe oku tonu ke 'i ai hono mohe'anga pe a 'oku 'i ai 'a e lao ki he va mama'o 'a 'enau mohe (Fetokoni'aki fika fa).

Translation

The ERO saw some of the children sleeping together and they did not agree with this. They commented that the policies don't allow children to sleep together, every child should be sleeping on his/ her own bed, and there is a policy about the spaces in between their beds when they are sleeping (Participant number four).

The teachers justified this practice by saying that the reasons why some of the children are sleeping together is that they are siblings and the parents recommended that they sleep together during nap time. Reports from the parents identified that these practices are taking place within their homes. Not only do they prefer their children to sleep together but the children prefer it as well.

Another aspect of *fevahevahe'aki* shared by Ngāue Fakataha fika ua:

Hange ko e taimi kai, oku ta'utu tautolu ia 'o fevahevahe'aki, ka 'i he sio ia 'a e Palangi oku ikai ngofua 'a e fevahevahe'aki ia takitaha kai pe e ne

me'akai. Hange 'oku ako'i ia ki he fānau ke nau angakovi pea ui ko e ta'e 'ofa, he ko e ngaahi me'a ia koia na'e ako'i ia ka mautolu tupu hake, 'a e fevahevahe'aki, ako'i ia ki he fānau ke nau fakafo'ituitui. The concept of sharing i he 'apiako Tonga fiema'u ke ako'i ki he fānau. (Ngāue Fakataha fika ua).

Translation

Another aspect is the kai time (eating time), we sit there and we share with one another, in the views of the Palangi that is not allowed the children must eat their own food. These values were taught to us when we were growing up, we must share with one another, when children are not sharing they are being taught to be individualistic. The concept of sharing needs to be taught in the Tongan centres. (Ngāue Fakataha fika ua).

Ngāue Fakataha argued that the concepts of fevahevahe'aki should be taught in Tongan centres and visitors such as the ERO should be aware of the concepts. The children are taught at homes to share their food with others; if a child does not share it is regarded as ta'e 'ofa (*not loving*) and *anga kovi* (mean) which is culturally inappropriate. The ERO shows concern with sharing food due to health and safety reasons; however the parents do not agree with these. They argue that when the children are not taught the concepts of *fevahevahe'aki* they become individualistic. Tongan people believe that they live collectively and *fevahevahe'aki* is one of the cultural values that Tongan people live by.

6.3.5 Following the child's interests

Following the child's interests in early childhood derived from Western education and theories and it is generally understood as indicator of developmental best practice. The early childhood curriculum advocates that teachers should build on children's needs, strengths, and interests and allow them to make choices by encouraging them to take responsibility for their own learning (Ministry of Education, 1996).

Adequate knowledge about following the child's interest includes: the rights of the child to freedom of choices to explore the environment; the child has the right to choose his own play; and the rights for participation in activities. The focus is on the rights of the

child, needs, and interests, and the teacher is required to follow, support, and extend children's interests and learning. Following the child's interest's lead to the child centered approach in early childhood. Morrison (2001, cited in Tzuo, Yang, & Wright, 2011) suggests that the child centered approach stresses the child's ability to construct knowledge rather than the teacher acquiring the authority to impart knowledge. Child centered approach was founded on the principles theorists Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky (Sue, 2009).

Some of the participants showed different ideas about following the child's interests. Much of what has been written about the concept of following the child's interests and the child centered approach illuminate fundamental ideas and values to early childhood education altogether. However concepts can be viewed differently by people in different cultures and in different context. The participants in this study reflect on fundamental disagreements about aspects of following the child's interests or the child centered approach. The Tongan parents emphasized the notions of *talangofua*; *talangofua* refers to obedience; core values of *talangofua* involves listening to others, respect, generosity, reciprocity, and mutual exchange. Tongan parents refer to *talangofua* as a social behaviour for Tongan children. The teachers group identifies that the concepts of *talangofua* are not understood by the ERO. ERO found the concepts of *talangofua* as too teacher directed and inappropriate. Fetokoni'aki fika ua stressed on the impact of teacher direct:

Ko 'ete muimui koe 'i he interests 'a e fānau pea 'oku te hanga poupou'i 'enau ngāue mo fakalotolahi'i, 'oku lahi 'a e taimi 'oku fa'a fehalaaki ai 'a e fānau pea 'oku nau fie mau tokoni pea oku te fakahinohino mo tala 'a e ngaahi fekau ke fai ki he fānau; 'I he taimi ko 'eni 'oku pehe 'e he ERO ia koe teacher direct. How far do you direct children and how far do you not direct young children in their learning? (Fetokoni'aki fika nima).

Translation

When you follow children's interests than I will support the children and encourage them, and in most times children often makes mistakes and they require help and I provide that help by showing and telling them the process. When this takes place; ERO view this as teacher direct. How far do you direct children and how far do you not direct young children in their learning? (Participant number five).

Fetokoni'aki elaborated that Tongan teachers are often confused with the requirements of following the child's interests. Certain prescriptions are required with the roles of the teachers in order to achieve this developmental practice. And teachers are questioning, how far do we direct children in their play? Ngāue Fakataha fika ua had opposing views on allowing the children to have the freedom of choices in the Tongan Language Nest. Ngāue fika ua discussed this issue with the teachers:

Hange koe taimi ko e 'oku seti ai 'a e fanga ki'i ngāue 'a e fānau, i he sio a'e Palangi tuku pe kapau 'oku nau fie ha'u 'o fai ha ngāue pē participate ai pea nau ha'u. Kapau 'e 'ikai pea tuku pē ke nau fa'iteliha he me'a oku nau fie fai. 'I he sio koe 'a'aku matu'a, 'oku ou fiema'u 'e au ke 'alu 'a e ki'i ta'ahine 'o ta'utu o fai ha'ane ngāue, 'uhinga kapau ko au ia teu fekau 'e au ke 'alu 'o ta'utu 'o fai ha ngāue. 'Oku hange' oku fakafo'ituitui 'enau tō'onga ko ia (Ngāue Fakataha fika ua).

Translation

Another aspect is when activities are being set up for the children, in the eyes of the Palangi is to let the children have the freedom of choices whether they want to participate in the activities, if not than just let them do what they want to do. In my views as a parent, I want my child to sit and participate in the activities if the child doesn't want to participate I will tell her to go and participate. It seems like that they are being individualistic in doing that (Participant number two).

As parents, Ngāue Fakataha fika ua explained that often she does not agree with the idea of letting the children choose whether they want to participate in the activities or not. She wants her children to participate in the activities; they learn here to work collectively with others, establish reciprocal relationships, and also interact with one another. When the children acquire the freedom to choose their own interest sometimes they like to do their own individual play or activities. Tongan parents found that the concepts of

following the child's interests are new to them and they are concerned that this practice will promote individualism. Ngāue Fakataha fika nima added that following the child's interest has its advantages and disadvantages. She explained;

'Oku ou mahu'inga pē 'i he follow 'a e interest 'o e fānau ka i he taimi tatau 'oku kei fiema'u pē' a e fānau ke nau 'ilo 'a ho nau limiti. Pea' ikai ke ngata ai ka 'e 'ikai ke kau 'a e founa ko 'eni ki hono faka'ai'ai 'e fānau ke nau fakafo'ituitui ai (Ngāue Fakataha fika nima).

Translation

It is important to follow the child's interest at the same time it's still important for the children to know their limits and boundaries. And not only that but this concept will not encourage the children to be individualistic (Participant number five).

Following the child's interests is important to an extent, at the same time the children must know their limits and boundaries of their behaviours. Behaviour in this sense are based on *'ulungaanga mahu'inga* (important behaviours) that are embedded in their socialization processes (Kalavite, 2010). The group of Ngāue Fakataha further discussed that they may agree with the concepts of following the child's interest with an understanding that this will not encourage the children to be individualistic (*fakafo'ituitui*). Another point raised by Fetokoni'aki fika fa, she explained;

Follow 'a e interest 'a e fānau pea tuku 'a e fānau ke nau explore, sio atu ko e 'i he tafa'aki ko e 'a e Tonga, ko e mea ko eni koe me'a muli i'a na'e fakangofua pē ketau explore ka 'i he taimi tatau na'e 'i ai pe 'a e ngata'anga 'a 'etau me'a 'oku fai (Fetokoni'aki fika fa).

Translation

They said to follow the children's interests and let them explore. In my views in the Tongan side of things, these are Western ideas; we were allowed to explore but at the same time we had limits and boundaries to what we do (Participant number four).

Fetokoni'aki fika fa analysed the concepts of following child's interests and pointed out that these are Western ideas and practices. The concepts of exploration are used by Tongan people but the principles were based on *fekumi*. The term *fekumi* may refer to the

word research. Another significant meaning of *fekumi*; *fe* is a prefix placed in front of the word *kumi*; *kumi* refers to look for, to seek, or search (Churchward, 1959). Tongan people are explorers in their own rights but exploring was used as *fekumi* (searching and seeking) for opportunities that will benefit the collective. For instance they explored the ocean for food that will feed the family and *kāinga* (relations), they explored the plantations for crops, *'akau faito 'o* (medicine), and *lou 'akau* (pandanus) for weaving mats to use for social functions. Having the freedom to follow your interests and explore the environment or land (*fonua*) was acceptable with the ideas that you are searching for the benefit of *mo 'ui fakatokolahi* (collective living).

6.4 Possibilities/ Vision for the future

The content of education so far had been derived from Western epistemology; the core of schools programmes for Tongan students must be obtained from that of the Tongan people and their culture (Taufe'ulungaki, 2011). Tongan parents and Tongan teachers in this particular study reflected on the same understandings as Taufe'ulungaki (2011). Although the concepts of formal educations are universally driven from the West, however the participants outlined certain criteria and requirements that reflect Tongan culture and worldviews. Culturally criteria proposed by the participants here are based on reaction to the roles of the ERO. The participants shared their understandings of how they measure 'quality' in the education of their children. This section contains values, beliefs, knowledge, and understandings proposed by the participants for this study as culturally appropriate criteria for Tongan ECE.

6.4.1 Cultural knowledge, values and beliefs

Culture refers to the way of life of a people which includes their language, values and knowledge systems (Thaman, 2009). Culture is a vital component of people's very humanity and identity (Tearo, 2002). Most diverse cultures have stores of knowledge and understandings, beliefs and values that have been developed over thousands of years and passed down from generation to generation in languages that were appropriate for living in society and meaningful to learners (Thaman, 2004, p. 4).

Tongan people have their own cultural knowledge, values and beliefs like any other ethnic cultures that exist within this world. Cultural knowledge, values and beliefs shape our way of thinking and learning and how we interpret and make meanings of our behaviours (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998). Values and beliefs hold what is important and desirable that is expressed through the ways in which people think and act (Kalavite, 2010).

The participants perceive Tongan cultural knowledge, values and beliefs as essential and unique, however they express their concerns about its continuity and recognition by people or agencies who define and measures 'quality' on behalf of Tongan ECE.

Evidence shows that 'quality' of education is still universally defined uncomfortably so within the context of Tongan Language Nests. The participants believed that education for Tongan children should offer meaningful preparation that is realistic to Tongan communities. This means that definitions and measurements of 'quality' are not centrally- imposed and borrowed from outside but they are to reflect the values, beliefs, and understandings of the Tongan people (Taufe'ulungaki, 2011). The participants are

showing the inadequacy of ERO to evaluate Tongan Language Nests. Inclusion of one or two Tongan ERO officers does not change the situation to a meaningful degree.

The participants argued that for the ERO to measure and define ‘quality’ in Tongan Language Nests cultural values, beliefs, and understandings should be included and reflected in their models of judgements. The following are arguments presented by the participants about the ERO.

The ERO measures Tongan centres based on their own western criteria, values, beliefs, and understandings. Our cultural beliefs are not included in their measurements nor defining ‘quality’ (Ngāue Fakataha fika uluaki).

In the 1970s, New Zealand education system recognized that cultural diversity is important and Pasifika Education has been developed as a phrase and a field which offers cultural differences for Pasifika children (Manu’atu, 2000). However cultural differences mean that each culture has its own epistemologies and understandings that cannot be fragmented from learning and development. These understanding include cultural values, beliefs, and practices. From a teacher’s perspectives, Fetokoni’aki fika fa illustrated her views about this;

‘Oku ‘i ai pe ‘a e ngaahi tui ia ‘oku nau tuku mai ‘oku fepaki ia mo ‘etau tui. Ko e ngaahi me’a ko e ‘oku ako’i ‘i apiako ni koe ngaahi me’a pe ia ‘oku ako’i ‘i ‘api pea pehē ki he ‘enau ‘o ki he lotu (Fetokoni’aki fika fa).

Translation

There are certain beliefs that they recommended that are totally the opposite with our own cultural beliefs. What we teach here must be the same values that are taught at the homes and also the church (Fetokoni’aki fika fa).

Fetokoni’aki fika fa argues that beliefs imposed by the ERO are not the same as their own cultural beliefs. The values, beliefs, and understandings that are taught within the school

context are reflected within the homes and church context where the children are familiar with. Fetokoni'aki fika tolu also supports the ideas shared by Fetokoni'aki fika fa:

'Oku ou pehē 'oku mahu'inga 'aupito 'a e cultural knowledge, hange ko 'eni ko a'ahi holo 'a e ERO 'i he fanga ki'i ako Tonga ke 'i ai ha'a nau ngaahi 'ilo fekau'aki moe kakai Tonga, ki he fonua, lea moe founga 'enau ngāue moe tauhi fānau. Ko e ngaahi palopalema fekau'aki moe ERO ko e 'ikai ke nau mahino'i 'a e culture moe founga 'a e Tonga (Fetokoni'aki fika tolu).

Translation

I think that cultural knowledge is really important, for instance when the ERO visits the Tongan Language Nests they should have knowledge about the Tongan people, their culture, their language, and child rearings. The problem with the ERO is that they don't understand the culture and practices of Tongan people (Fetokoni'aki fika tolu).

Fetokoni'aki fika ua argued the significance of knowing about the culture, the people, their language, child rearing, and cultural knowledge in order to define and measure 'quality' within that particular context.

Tongan parents articulated the importance of Tongan culture, values, and beliefs to be included in the education of their children. Their main concern about this is that they realized that living in a foreign land comes with profound challenges concerning revitalization and maintenance efforts in terms of the Tongan language, culture, values, and beliefs. The parents stated that having the Tongan Language Nests available for their children is highly important. However they argued that education for their children is not just about learning and speaking the language alone but it is also about learning cultural values, beliefs and practices that are essential to Tongan culture. Ngāue Fakataha fika nima shared:

'Oku 'i ai 'a e ngaahi me'a 'ia 'oku ikai fa'a 'ilo ia 'e he ERO 'i he taimi 'oku nau a'ahi mai ai. 'Oku nau fiema'u pe 'e nautolu ke tau fai 'aki pe 'a e ngaahi founga tauhi fānau koe 'a e Western culture. Ka ko e ngaahi tauhi fānau mo e founga ia 'e ni'ihī 'oku ikai hoa ia mo e tui 'a e kau Tonga (Ngāue Fakataha fika nima).

Translation

There are certain things that are often not known by the ERO when they visit. The ERO only wants us to practice Western ways of child rearing. But some of their Western child rearing and practice are often the opposite of what Tongan people believe (Participant number five).

Differences of culture means differences of child rearings also occurred. Tongan parents still believe in Tongan cultural ways of doing and being. Certain practices of child rearings are still valid in raising their children in this foreign land:

Ko e fanga ki 'i tui kou lave kiai oku fiema'u ke nau 'ilo 'i pea ke nau fai ki ai, he ko tautolu Tonga 'oku tau nofo a kāinga pea 'oku 'i ai 'a e manava'ofa, fevahevahe'aki, fetokoni 'aki pea fiema'u ke nau 'ilo kiai ka e lava ke nau survive i he anga etau nofo faka-Tonga. Ko e ERO oku nau 'ilo pe 'e nautolu 'a e culture ka 'oku nau kei vili taki pē ke fai pe 'a e founga 'a e Palangi 'i he 'etau ngāue 'oku fai (Ngāue Fakataha fika ua).

Translation

There are cultural values that I believe that our children need to know because with us Tongan we live through the kāinga (kinships) which includes love and generosity, sharing, mutual help, and they need to know these values in order to survive in the Tongan communities. The ERO only recognise culture but they still enforce the Tongan centres to implement and practice Western ways of doing things (Ngāue Fakataha ua).

The importance of revitalizing and sustaining cultural values, beliefs, and practices because these values are fundamental to our ways of living. These cultural values need to be taught and transmitted to Tongan children because they are useful and culturally relevant to Tongan society. Fetokoniaki fika nima articulates resistance to the takeover of Tongan values:

'Oku 'i ai pe 'a e ngaahi me'a 'a e Palangi oku tonu pē ke te sio pea te pehē pē 'aonga nai ki a tautolu ko e kau Tonga. 'Oku ou faka'amu 'e ō ua na'a 'i ai ha taimi mo ha 'aho 'i he kaha'u kuo tau matu'aki li'aki ai 'a 'etau ngaahi tui mo 'etau ngaahi 'ilo faka- Tonga ka tau ngāue'aki pe 'a e founga 'a e kau Palangi mo 'enau ngaahi tui. He 'oku kei mahu'inga pē 'a e me'a Tonga ke kei ako'i pē ki he Tonga (Ngāue Fakataha fika nima).

Translation

There are certain views of the palangi that we need to question whether it applies to us Tongan or not. I wish that there will never be a time or a day in the future where we neglect our own cultural beliefs and Tongan knowledge and adjust to the Palangi values and ways. It is still important for Tongans to validate and teach Tongans their ways of knowing (Ngāue fakataha fika nima).

Ngāue Fakataha fika nima is concerned with the Western culture over taking Tongan cultural values, beliefs, and knowledge. Her hopes and aspirations for the future show that as Tongan people they must validate and teach Tongan ways of knowing to Tongan children here in Aotearoa New Zealand.

6.4.2 Measuring and defining ‘quality’ from a Tongan perspectives

As the participants indicated, measuring and defining ‘quality’ from Tongan perspectives will be different from how the education officials and government agency define and measure ‘quality’ in ECE. Discussion and implications have shown how ‘quality’ has been defined and measured in Tongan ECE. In this discussion the participants raised the question, how can Tongan people such as parents and teachers measure ‘quality’ in the education of their children? The following are the views and perspectives of Tongan parents and Tongan teachers in measuring ‘quality’ in the education of their children in Tongan Language Nests.

Tongan Language and Culture

In discussing the ideas of measuring ‘quality’ in Tongan ECE, the parents and teachers articulated their own understandings of measuring ‘quality’. Perceptions from both groups have similarities and differences due to their positions within the contexts of Tongan ECE as respective teachers and as parents. However common understandings shared amongst the participants from both groups are that ‘quality’ should be measured and defined based on Tongan language and culture:

Ko 'ema sio ko e 'a maua ki he fua 'o e leleitaha pē quality 'o e ako 'e ma ki'i ta'ahine he Akoteu Tonga, 'oku lava ai ke ma tala 'i he ngaahi me'a ko 'eni; lea faka-Tonga, nau ako 'a e anga lelei, faka'apa'apa, ko e taimi koe 'oku nau lue hake' i mu'a 'oku nau lea tulou, kapau 'oku 'oange ha taha ha 'ane me'a 'oku ne lea malō; 'oku na ma'u 'a e ngaahi founga 'o e loto 'ofa, 'oku nau lava 'o vahevahe, ko e ngaahi me'a ko 'eni ko e ako'anga pea 'e lava leva ke mau tala mo fua 'a e ako 'oku na fai 'i he 'apiako (Ngāue Fakataha fika ono).

Translation

We measure the education of our daughter in the Tongan Language Nest by the outcomes. We measure 'quality' by these things; they can speak the Tongan language fluently; they are learning to be kind to others and respect others; when they are walking in front of someone they are able to say tulou (excuse me); if they are given stuff they say mālō (thank you); they have the concept of loto 'ofa (love); and they are able to share with one another, these things are learning outcomes for our children and from this we could also measure 'quality' in the learning that's taking place in the centre (Participant number six).

Fetokoni'aki fika ono advocated that they should measure and define 'quality' in the education of her daughter, based on Tongan language and Tongan culture. The learning outcomes are reflected from her daughter's language abilities; she's fluent in the Tongan language. Another aspect of such measurement should be the 'ulungāanga (the behaviours and attitudes) are based on faka- Tonga (the Tongan way).

Measuring 'quality' from the perspectives of the parents is highly crucial Ngāue Fakataha fika nima pointed out:

'Oku ou lava pe 'e au 'o tala 'a e lelei moe ola 'oe ngāue pē koe ako 'oku fai he Akoteu ko 'eni 'oku ako ai 'eku fānau mei he 'enau tupu mo e tō'onga. Pea hange pe ko e feohi 'oku ma fai moe kau faiako 'oku te lava 'o toe tala ai. Ko 'eku sio koe 'i he anga 'a e feohi 'a e kau faiako mo e fānau 'oku nau feohi 'a ki 'a e 'ofa, 'aki 'a e fetokoni'aki, 'aki 'a e ngāue fakataha, 'aki 'a e fetauhi'aki honau vā mo e fānau moe matu'a, pea 'oku 'i ai 'a e fefaka'apa'apa'aki. Ko 'eku sio koe ki he ngaahi me'a ko 'eni pea lava leva keu tala 'a e ngāue lelei 'oku hoko 'i heni. 'Oku 'i ai pe 'a e ongo 'iate au ko e fa'e au, pea ko 'eku ongo 'eni 'oku mau mei he 'apiako ko 'eni. Kapau na'e 'ikai ke ma'u 'a e ongo ia ko 'eni 'iate au he 'ikai ke 'omai 'a e fānau ia ki heni, ka ko 'eku sio ki he leleitaha 'o 'enau ngāue 'oku fai 'aki 'a e 'ofa (Ngāue Fakataha fika nima).

Translation

I could tell and measure 'quality' by the outcome of the learning and development of my children in the centre where they are currently attending. And I could measure it from the way we interact with the teachers. The way I see the teachers interacting with the children is through 'ofa (love); through fetokoni'aki (helping one another); through ngāue fakataha (working together),

through tauhi vā (maintain positive relationships) with children and parents; and through respecting one another. When I see these things taking place, I was able to measure the 'quality' of this centre. I could see it and I could feel it too because I am a mother, and these are the feelings I get from this centre. If I didn't have these feelings in me, than my children wouldn't be here (Ngāue Fakataha fika nima).

Evidence shows that Ngāue Fakataha does have her own ways of measuring 'quality' in the education of her children. She measures 'quality' based on important cultural values and beliefs which are reflected in the ways teachers care and educate young children.

The vā (relationships) of the teachers with the children and also the parents has an impact on how 'quality' is measured within the context of Tongan people.

Fetokoni'aki fika tolu and fa described their views about measuring 'quality' in their children's education:

Ko e fua 'eni 'e taha 'o e 'quality' 'oku ma sio ki ai 'i he 'e ma fānau, koe ongo ua lalahi na'a na 'ako Kindy, ko e fika tolu na'e ako ia he Akoteu Tonga. Ko 'ema sio 'eni ka fai ha mau talanoa koe ongo ua lalahi ka na fakamatala ha me'a 'oku 'ikai na to'oto'o vale 'aupito. Ko e fika tolu kapau te ne fakamatala ha me'a 'e mahino ange ia he ongo ua lalahi pea 'oku tatau pe he lea faka-Tonga pe lea fakapalangi (Ngāue Fakataha fika tolu & fa).

Translation

One of the measurement of 'quality' that we realized by seeing our children is that our two older ones attended Kindergarten, and our third one attended a Tongan Language Nests. The differences is in the language, if have a conversations the third child always have a better explanations and could articulate clearly in the Tongan language and in English than the two older ones (Participant number three & four).

Fetokoni'aki fika tolu and fa articulated on the importance of maintaining the Tongan language. Measurements that they used to measure and define 'quality' are based on the proficiency of the first language. Fetokoni'aki fika tolu & fa recognized the differences between mainstream ECE and Tongan ECE within the education of their children. They found that the two children who attended mainstream have little knowledge about the

Tongan language; the third one who attended a Tongan Language Nests is more fluent in the Tongan language and also has better communications in the English language.

Fetokoni'aki fika tolu described here an aspect of 'quality' that they have achieved which promote 'quality' standard for their school is that:

Ko e 'quality' 'eni 'e taha kuo mau lava 'o tala mo fua 'a e ako 'a e fānau 'i heni, ko e a'u ki ha tu'unga 'oku lava 'a e fānau 'e ni'ihī 'o lautohi faka-Tonga. Ko e hiki kotoa pe 'oku 'i ai 'a 'emau potu Folofola 'oku hiki he saati moe fanga ki'i Himi. Pea 'alu pe 'a e 'aho 'oku ako 'e he fānau 'o 'ilo 'a e 'u mata'itohi moe ū mata'ifika 'oku tu'u ko e 'i he saati. 'Oku toutou repeat pea 'alu ai pe 'o hoko ia 'o 'ilo 'e he fānau 'ia 'a e lautohi faka-Tonga (Fetokoni'aki fika tolu).

Translations

One aspects of 'quality' that we have able to measure in the education of our children here is that some of the children here can actually read in the Tongan language. Every week we have Bible verses and Hymns written out on a chart and we do this every day for mat time. As days goes by the children are starting to notice the differences in the letters and numbers on the charts. We repeated it a few times and the children were able to read in Tongan from that (Fetokoni'aki fika tolu).

The importance of literacy is identified by Fetokoni'aki fika tolu. Literacy and numeracy are core components of children's education. One of the major targets in the Pasifika Education Plan is to ensure Pasifika children demonstrate improved progress and achievement in literacy and numeracy in relation to the national standards (Ministry of Education, 2010). Fetokoni'aki fika tolu illustrated that this is one of their biggest achievements of 'quality' education is that some children are able to read in the Tongan language. And this becomes one of the measurements that they can identify with in the education of Tongan children.

Ngāue Fakataha fika nima highlighted that she measures 'quality' based on the holistic development of young children:

Ko 'emaufua 'a e 'quality' 'i he ola lelei 'a e ako 'a e fānau pea 'i he ema sio 'i he anga 'enau tupu 'oku 'i ai 'a e faka'atamai, fakalaumalie, moe fakasino (Ngāue Fakataha fika nima).

Translation

We could measure the 'quality' in the education of our children by their achievements and we could see that they are developing academically, spiritually, and physically (Ngāue Fakataha fika nima).

She often reflects on children's development and learning and she questions whether these children are developing academically, spiritually, and physically? Her personal judgements of 'quality' are reflected on the well beings of young children. Fetokoni'aki fika tolu shared the same values in measuring 'quality' in children's education;

Kapau te tau fua 'a e poto; ko e poto ia 'a e Tonga 'oku tala mei he 'ene tō'onga mo'ui mo hono 'ulungāanga. 'Oku 'ikai 'aonga ha poto i' a kapau 'oku 'ikai ke 'ulungāanga lelei. Te tau lava pe fua 'a e 'quality' 'i he tō'onga 'a e fānau 'i loki ako, 'oku ikai ngata pe he nau 'ilo ki he tafa'aki faka'atamai, ka 'oku kau ma'u moe fakalaumalie, mo e fakasino. Ko e fua 'ia 'a e Tonga 'oku fua i he tapa 'e tolu 'o e mo'ui, 'a e mo'ui lōtou 'a e tangata kakato (Fetokoni'aki fika tolu).

Translation

If we measure a person that is poto (cleverness & skill); in the Tongan context we measure a person that is poto by his actions, his ways of life, and 'ulungāanga (behavior). Poto won't be useful if that person does not have good attitude and behave properly. We can measure 'quality' by looking at the way children behave in the centre, not only the way that they behave but also look at the physical well being, and intellectual wellbeing. When Tongan people measure 'quality' we look at the three dimensions of tangata kakato (whole person) (Fetokoni'aki fika tolu).

Perceptions of Fetokoni'aki fika tolu identified cultural concepts of 'ulungāanga, tō'onga, poto, and the three dimensions of tangata kakato (whole person). Fetokoni'aki fika tolu rationalized on the concepts of 'ulungāanga and tō'onga. The term 'ulungāanga as mentioned before refers to behaviour; the term tō'onga has similar meaning: it refers to someone's attitudes and actions. Fetokoni'aki measures 'quality' by the aspects of 'ulungāanga and tō'onga. These aspects of 'ulungāanga and tō'onga must also reflect the holistic development of Tongan people which includes the three

dimensions of *tangata kakato* (whole person). Tongan definitions of someone that is *poto* (clever and skillful) are based on their *'ulungāanga* and *tō'onga* and therefore measuring 'quality' will also be based on the same concept.

Other important aspects of measuring 'quality' in Tongan ECE are highlighted by Fetokoni'aki fika nima. Fetokoni'aki fika nima articulated on the concepts of *ngāue*.

The term *ngāue* simply refers to work. The participants described that aspects of 'quality' are based in the *ngāue* of early childhood teachers. And they measure 'quality' based on the *ngāue* carried out by the teachers in the centre:

Ko e taimi ko e na'a ku supervisor ai na'e lava ia ai keu tala 'i he 'enau ngāue, tautautefito 'eku sio ko e ki he 'enau ngāue pe 'oku 'i ai 'a e ongo'i 'ofa. Ko e ngaahi faka-fōtunga ia 'oku te lava 'o tala 'oku te ongo'i 'ofa, 'a ia ko 'eku sio faka-Tonga ko e ki he quality kapau 'e ikai pē ke 'i ai 'a e 'ofa 'i he 'ete ngāue 'oku fai pea 'oku 'osi mole ai pe 'a e quality ia mei ha ngāue 'anga. He ko e 'ofa 'oku 'i ai 'a e feongoi'aki, 'a e fe- tauhi vā i he anga pe 'a e kau faiako mo e fānau ako, pea 'oku te 'ofa ki he fānau, 'ofa ki he kau faiako, ki he matu'a pe 'oku te 'ofa ki he 'apiako pea moe ngāue (Fetokoni'aki fika nima).

Translation

When I was a supervisor I measure 'quality' by seeing if the teachers are working with 'ofa (love and generosity). You can measure 'quality' by seeing if the teachers are working with love; love for the children, if the 'ofa (love) is not there than there is no 'quality' in that centre. Because 'ofa (love) leads to tauhi vā (establishing harmony and positive relationships) between the teacher and the child, and also the parents. When you have love, you love the children, love the parents and love the work that you're doing (Fetokoni'aki fika nima).

Fetokoni'aki fika nima has been a supervisor for numbers of years, and over the years she has been responsible for defining and measuring 'quality' in the *ngāue* (work) of teachers in the centre. She strongly believed that 'quality' depends on the work of early childhood teachers. Her assessment is based on Tongan culture, values, and beliefs. This means that Tongan cultural values and beliefs are highly reflected within the practices of her teachers. Fetokoni'aki strongly argues that *'ofa* is the most important 'quality' of a teacher in ECE:

I he 'eku sio ko e a'aku ko e Tonga faiako he long'a'i fānau Tonga, ko e anga ko e 'eku fua 'a e 'quality' 'oku ou sio au ki he anga 'a e ngāue moe fānau. Pē' oku anga fefē 'a hoto vā moe fānau pehē ki he matu'a, te sio pe 'oku te fai lelei 'a e ngāue mo 'ofa he ngāue 'oku fai, te sio pē ko e ha 'e te ngāue 'oku fai moe fānau, ko e ngāue pē activity oku fai pē 'oku ako 'e he fānau ha mea mei ai, te sio ki he anga 'ete talanoa moe fānau. 'Oku te fua pē 'ete ngāue 'o fakatatau ki he lelei fakalukufua 'e ma'u 'e he fānau (Fetokoni'aki fika nima).

Translation

The way I measure 'quality' is by reviewing the work that I do with the children. I measure 'quality' by reflecting on the aspect of tauhi vā, the relationships between me and the children and also the parents, am I doing my best in the work that I do, do I have the passion and the love for the work, are children learning anything from the activities that I'm implementing throughout the day, how am I interacting with the children. 'Quality' in the work that I do as a teacher is measured for the benefit of the collective (Participant number five).

As a teacher, Fetokoni'aki fika nima measure 'quality' within her own practices and teaching. She reflects on her relationships with young children and parents, and also her own teaching practices. In her view the work that she is doing must be measured according to the collective values of Tongan people.

Some parents' measure 'quality' based on children's confidence, sense of belonging, and social behaviours. Ngāue Fakataha fika uluaki explained:

In seeing my children growing up in a Language Nest they are more confident in themselves as young Tongans. They can speak the language, they have developed a sense of identify and belonging, they can socialise with other people in the Tongan language. I measure 'quality' by these outcomes as well (Ngāue Fakataha fika 'uluaki).

Tongan parents aspire to an ideal situation in which their children are gaining confidence in themselves, they are proud of being Tongans, and they can socialise with others positively. Ngāue Fakataha fika tolu also supports this:

'Oku 'ikai ke nau toe mā, 'oku nau lava tu'u 'o hiva pe fai ha fa'ahinga pe tau'olunga, lau leseni 'i he falelotu; 'oku lava 'o fetu'utaki he lea faka-Tonga moe kāinga pehe ki he kau vaivai. Pea oku mau tala ai pe 'a e fua 'o 'enau ako (Ngāue Fakataha fika tolu).

Translation

Children are not shy anymore they are able to perform any cultural dance, they can read out Bible verses in front of the whole church; they are able to communicate with the older generations in the Tongan language. And we can measure the 'quality' of their education by these (Ngāue Fakataha fika tolu).

Fetokoni'aki shared that her children are developing the confidence, they can perform in any cultural functions within the church or family functions. And most importantly they are able to communicate with the elders within the families. These are achievements that they have noticed in the education of their children.

6.5 Summary

The language of 'quality' aspires to be a statement of facts of universal expert- derived norms and of criteria for measuring the achievement of these norms (Dahlberg et al. 2007). Tongan Language Nests recognize that Tongan people have their own ways of measuring 'quality'.

The participants use the words *fua* and *tala* as the Tongan terms that they refer to in measuring 'quality' in the education of Tongan children. *Fua* is about the dimensions of measurement; by weight, or by height (Churchward, 1959). Another definition of *fua* implies to fruitful or fruition of someone's crops, plantation, or the fruition of someone's work. The term *tala* denotes to tell, to inform, or to expose. The participants use *fua* and *tala* as forms of measurements; explicitly they refer to *fua* as to measure, and *tala* is an act of telling, explaining and clarifying their measurements.

They also refer to the term *ola* and *ngāue* for instances, *ko e ola 'oe ngāue* meaning the success of work efforts. The term *ola* represents success, achievements, or favorable outcomes. The term *ngāue* denotes work, actions, or doings (Churchward, 1959).

The outcomes of their *fua* and *tala* informed us that measuring ‘quality’ depends on the *ngāue* (work) and the *ola* (success and achievements). Measuring ‘quality’ is based on the *ngāue*, the craftsmanship, the collective efforts put together. Tongan early childhood teachers in the centres produce *ngāue* of this kind. The results of their *ngāue* accentuate the *ola* of their endeavors.

The group of Ngāue Fakataha or the parents group draws their attentions to the *ngāue* and practices of teachers in their centres. Teachers themselves measure their own practices by reflecting on their own teaching methods and contributions to children’s learning. However common views shared amongst both groups focused on measuring the outcomes (*ola*) and what their children have achieved, and how they succeeded in their learning and development. Both groups give prominence to Tongan cultural values, beliefs, practices, child rearings, and knowledge, through *fua* and *tala*.

The participants concluded by discussing different measurement outcomes used by Tongan parents and Palangi Education Review Officers in measuring ‘quality’.

Participants recognized that measurements by the ERO are based on their own Western perceptions of ‘quality’. ‘Quality’ is pre-defined by powerful people like policy makers. Measurement of ‘quality’ therefore is controlled by policies, regulations, and requirements. The teaching practices are also prescribed for teachers based on Western ideas, and often promote individualism for Tongan children. Palangi measuring ‘quality’ in a Tongan context result in a “cultural gap “and “cultural mismatch”. Participants found that years of hard work are being measured and judged on one day of visit, and can be problematic for some centres. The ERO reports, with their negative feedback create

damaging effects both to Tongan people and Tongan centres. These ERO reports in Tongan Language Nests do not reflect Tongan language and culture.

The participants recommend that it's only culturally appropriate for Tongans to measure 'quality' in Tongan centres. Measuring 'quality' requires deep understandings of the culture and the people. Tongan parents and teachers found that measuring 'quality' are ongoing and main features are on the *ngāue* and the *ola* of what their children have achieved intellectually, physically, and spiritually (*mo'ui lotolu*).

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Hikihiki pea tu'utu'u
(The completion process of the lālanga)

7.1 Introduction

This thesis was conducted with the desire of defining 'quality' within the context of Tongan Language Nests here in Aotearoa New Zealand. The term 'quality' becomes a fulfillment of human expectations in excellence, it is an implied need of individuals or groups. Every product and services must offer 'quality' and every consumer wants to have it (Moss & Dahlberg, 2008). The concept of 'quality' is one of the most desired concepts in early childhood education. The issue with 'quality' in early childhood is the assumptions: 'quality' is homogenous, 'quality' is uniformity structured as processes by policy makers and education officials. And the understanding of 'quality' is pre- defined and understood from a Western perspective. The essence of this research is to claim Tongan perspectives of what 'quality' means within the context of Tongan people. Tongan parents and Tongan teachers in this study emphasized the importance of revitalizing and reconceptualising Tongan culture, language, values, and beliefs within the education of their children. This drives us to re- think and re- examine the notion of 'quality' within Tongan Language Nests. This thesis represents the voices and perceptions of Tongan early childhood teachers and Tongan parents in various Tongan Language Nests. This chapter marks the final stages of this journey, which will includes discussions on the strengths of this research, the limitations, recommendations for future research, implications for Tongan early childhood teachers, implications for policy makers, and the conclusions of this thesis.

7.2 The strengths of this research

This research found that defining and measuring ‘quality’ in Tongan Language Nests do not reflect Tongan ideals and worldviews of what ‘quality’ means in Tongan culture.

The strengths of this research aims at reclaiming Tongan perspectives of what ‘quality’ means within the context of Tongan people in Tongan Language Nests. This research allowed and invited people who are usually overlooked to have their say. Conducting this research was an opportunity for some of the Tongan parents and the Tongan early childhood teachers to reunite together and *talanoa* , discuss, and reflect on fundamental concepts of ‘quality’ that are culturally understood by Tongan people in Tongan communities. The participants were very articulate in defining and measuring ‘quality’ to convey depth of understanding and connectedness to Tongan culture, language, and epistemology.

7.3 The limitations of this research study

The limitations of this research study are identified as the following:

- This particular study was conducted in specific geographic area in South Auckland which cannot be used to generalize the whole context of Tongan Language Nests here in New Zealand. However the experiences shared in this research may be applied in other context of ECE and other ethnic groups.
- This study involved six Tongan early childhood teachers and six Tongan parents who are fully involved in various Tongan Language Nests. Overall there were twelve participants and their perceptions about certain values, beliefs, and understandings will not also be generalisable, as Tongan people are still diverse in

terms of cultural knowledge and understandings. Yet commonalities of understandings may be applied in many contexts of Tongan ECE.

- The research focused on small numbers of early childhood teachers and parents from various Tongan Language Nests. The study could involve more people who are involved in Tongan ECE, also from Tongan communities; however the numbers chosen were manageable for this particular study.

7.4 Recommendations for future research

- Defining ‘quality’ in Tongan Language Nests is on-going; on-going *talanoa* and discussions are required with Tongan parents and teachers about the significant of ‘quality’ in the education of Tongan children in ECE.
- Tongan Language Nests may define *laulōtaha* based on their context, religions, philosophy of the centre, people involved, and understandings.
- The *talanoa* and discussions could also further extend by wider consultations with Tongan communities about the concepts of ‘quality’.
- Other indigenous groups from the Pacific Oceania could also apply this research interest of defining ‘quality’ from their own worldviews such as Samoan, Niuean, Cook Islands, Fijian, and Tokelauan.

7.4.1 Implications for Tongan early childhood teachers and Tongan parents in Tongan Language Nests

It is highly essential for Tongan early childhood teachers and Tongan parents in Tongan Language Nests to have an understanding of what ‘quality’ means within the education of their children. Understanding what ‘quality’ means include the understandings of

diversities within different contexts. Although we may belong to the same culture within Tongan Language Nests but we are still diverse in terms of differences in contexts and locations, religions, philosophies of centres, and understandings. Defining ‘quality’ within this context can be co-defined by Tongan teachers, parents, and communities in Tongan Language Nests. Therefore it is vital that the topic is widely debated and discussed within Tongan communities.

7.4.2 Implications for policy makers and education officials

Policy makers play a significant role in creating efficient policies and regulations for schools all over New Zealand. The ERO and the Ministry of Education are also vital in strengthening and improving ‘quality’ education within schools. In relation to the education of Tongan/ Pasifika children here in New Zealand, ‘quality’ is generally defined and measured from Western ideals. There is an assumption that Western ideas are universally applicable. These pre- defined ideals of ‘quality’ give rise to legislative requirements that apply to all early childhood services (Mara1998). This research proposed that Tongan/ Pasifika thoughts must influence policy so that it reflects the realities of education for Tongan/ Pasifika people.

This particular study identified the following implications for policy makers and education officials.

- Research found that the concept of ‘quality’ in education that Tongan children are exposed to in Tongan Language Nests are structured and pre-defined by powerful organizations such as policy makers, ERO, and the MOE.

- The language of ‘quality’ fails to recognize the diversities of cultures that exist here in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- ‘Quality’ is not a universally understood concept and the difference between the languages and cultures on what ‘quality’ is and what it means in practice needs to be understood and respected.
- Defining and measuring ‘quality’ in Tongan Language Nests does not reflect Tongan ideals and worldviews of what ‘quality’ means in Tongan culture.
- The Education Review Office should employ Tongan/ Pasifika people to visit Tongan/ Pasifika ECE centres. The participants in this study proposed that it is more culturally appropriate for Tongans to measure ‘quality’ for Tongans in Tongan Language Nests.
- ERO and education officials should develop deep cultural understandings of Tongan language, culture, and beliefs when visiting the centre.
- Defining, measuring, and evaluating ‘quality’ must be discussed in wider communities.

7.5 Conclusion

This thesis captures the perspectives and understandings of some Tongan early childhood teachers and Tongan parents about the notion of ‘quality’ in Tongan Language Nests.

The participants first unpack the word ‘quality’ itself in- searching for a Tongan translation. This research found there is no exact word in the Tongan language for the word ‘quality’. But various Tongan concepts were identified as having significant value

for the concept of ‘quality’. ‘Quality’ aligns with the concepts of; *laulōtaha* (‘quality’ and excellence), *lelei taha* (the best), *mahulu hake* (above and beyond the best), *mahu’inga taha* (most important), *tolonga taha* (last long), and *fotunga* (characteristics and appearances). These concepts are inter-related and must be connected in order to define ‘quality’. The understandings and ideas proposed by the participants here are that the meanings of ‘quality’ are interpreted differently according to the relationships inherent in the language and the culture of Tongan people.

Laulōtaha is the most profound concept in the Tongan language and culture that could be used as the Tongan translation of ‘quality’. The concepts of *laulōtaha* symbolized a state of ‘quality’ and excellence within the context of Tongan people. The concepts may derived from the *lālanga* of a particular mat called *lōtaha*, however the fundamental values of *laulōtaha* signifies the effort put together, the many strands put together to form unity, and the collective work of Tongan women. The word *laulōtaha* signifies ‘quality’, but at the same time it also signifies the effort and the skills put together to produce a ‘quality’ mat. *Laulōtaha* refers to combining various strands into connected wholeness; it’s about the constructing and the uniting of many strands to form oneness. The concepts of *laulōtaha* and *lālanga* were introduced as the conceptual framework for defining and measuring *laulōtaha* (‘quality’) within Tongan Language Nests. Education in Tongan Language Nests is symbolic of the *lālanga* (weaving), but the process of this *lālanga* must include the ideas of the parents, the teachers, and the people from the community. *Lālanga* is a collective effort carried out by women; the ‘quality’ of the *lālanga* heavily relies on the effort put together which evokes unity and togetherness. Therefore ‘quality’ is co- defined by the people involved in this context.

Thus, the *laulōtaha* (quality) of this mat must truly reflect Tongan cultural values, beliefs and understandings.

The saying, “*’Oku hange ‘a e tangata ha fala ‘oku lālānga*” meaning mankind is like a mat being woven. This saying signifies the idea that a Tongan person is woven from strands that are fundamental to the essence of being Tongan. The perceptions of the participants are *lālānga* throughout this research thesis. The strands (*fe’unu*) are composed of: the *tangata kakato* (holistic way children learn and develop) which refers to *mo’ui lōtolu* (intellectual well beings, physical well being, and spiritual well being); *lea faka-Tonga* (Tongan language); *’ulungāanga* or *anga faka-Tonga* (The Tongan way); *faka’apa’apa* (respect); *tauhi vā* (maintaining reciprocal relationships with one another); *’ofa* (love and generosity); *fetokoni’aki* (helping one another); *ngāue fakataha* (working together collectively); *talangofua* (obedience); *mate’aki* (loyalty); *mamahi’i me’a* (social obligations); and *fevahevahe’aki* (sharing with one another).

The participants proposed that these strands must be combined and joined together in order to form *laulōtaha* (‘quality’).

This research identified concerns with Western pre-defined concepts of ‘quality’ in Tongan Language Nests. The ‘quality’ of education is understood by policy makers and education officials as an attribute of services that ensure efficient production of pre-defined outcomes (Dahlberg & Moss, 2008). These outcomes relate to criteria of ‘quality’ documented in regulation, policies, and requirements. Western concepts of ‘quality’ in policies, regulations, and requirements may be useful in enlightening our practices within early childhood. However these pre-defined concepts should not be seen as a social construct of ‘quality’ for all services. Social and cultural groups have

their own construction of 'quality', and the meanings are governed by the realities of their world (Taufe'ulungaki, 2008). The participants argue that policy makers and education officials should recognise and acknowledge that definitions of 'quality' are diverse. This means that the value system which underpins policies, regulation, requirements, processes, programmes, and outcomes of 'quality' in Tongan Language Nests are based on cultural values, beliefs, and understanding of Tongan people.

Other major concerns from Tongan teachers and parents in this study were to do with the ERO in measuring 'quality' within Tongan Language Nests. Research identified that measurements and evaluations of 'quality' in Tongan Language Nests are shaped by the pre-defined expert criteria of Western policy makers and education officials. The participants argued that for education officials to measure and evaluate 'quality' in Tongan Language Nests required depth of connectedness to an understanding of Tongan culture, beliefs and values. Measuring and defining 'quality' should be based on the culture and world views of the people and children involved. Culture is inclusive of the education system of a people. Culture for indigenous communities in Oceania is something that is lived and continually demonstrated as a matter of behaviour and performance (Thaman, 1995, p. 1). This leads to the 'quality' of cultural identity; cultural identity refers to Tongan understandings of what it is to be Tongan and how they evaluate one another according to those understandings (Morton- Lee, 1997).

Participants identified the mismatch between the culture of their context and the culture of ERO officers. The measurements and evaluations are in Palangi, and the outcomes of their reports are also in Palangi. Some of the parents refused to read the reports because it's written in a different language; Parents found that ERO reports have negative impact

and it can be quite damaging to a lot of parents. And the conflicts and issues that are associated with these reports are due to lack of cultural understanding. The measurement and evaluation do not reflect the culture and language of Tongan people. Therefore the participants proposed that the educational officers from the ERO should be Tongans; it's more culturally appropriate for Tongans to measure and evaluate 'quality' for Tongans in Tongan Language Nests.

Incorporating the voices and perceptions of Tongan early childhood teachers and Tongan parents in this research study accentuates the nature of decolonizing and decontextualising our ways of thinking about centrally- imposed product of 'quality' in the education of Tongan children in Tongan Language Nests (Smith, 1999).

The criteria for 'quality' education that the participants proposed in this research are the manifestation of *laulōtaha* which literally refers to a state of 'quality' and excellence within the context of Tongan people. And the ideal images of the *fānau Tonga* (Tongan children) are reflected in the concepts of *laulōtaha* ('quality').

The early childhood curriculum the Te Whāriki invites educators and practitioners to weave their own curriculum, drawing on the framework of principles, strands, and goals as appropriate to the learning needs of their children and communities (Ritchie & Rau, 2006). This constitutes to an invitation to all Tongan Language Nests; all Tongan Language Nests shall take the opportunity to *lālānga* (weave) their own *fala* (mat) in addition to the bicultural raranga of the Tangata whenua and the Western culture. Every Tongan Language Nests should be able to *lālānga* their own *fala* drawn on the framework of principles, strands, and goals of the Te Whāriki. The *fe'unu* (strands) used for the *lālānga* should be a reflection of Tongan ideals of what *laulōtaha* ('quality')

means within their context. The *fala* woven will unite the many voices of Tongan parents, people from the community, the teachers, and also the children. *Laulōtaha* is a collective effort of the *fonua* and its people; this forms unity and wholeness, this represent *laulōtaha*.

Glossary of Non- English Terms

The glossary of non- English terms refers to Tongan terms and concepts which are inclusive in the writing of this thesis. The glossary is arranged according to the Tongan alphabet. There are various meanings and interpretations of these terms and Tongan people may have defined these terms differently, however the meanings and definitions of these terms are translated in relation to the context which it was used.

ako - teaching and learning

Akoteu Tonga- Tongan Language Nests

anga'ofa - loving nature

anga faka- Tonga- The Tongan way, Tongan traditions, customs

faka'apa'apa - respect

faka'apa'apa ki he kakai 'oku lalahi ange- respect for the elders

fakafamili- family time

fala- mat

faliki – covering of the floors

fe'ofa'aki- loving one another

fetokoni'aki- reciprocity or helping one another other

fevahevahe'aki -sharing with one another

fānau- young children

foaki- giving

Fonua- the land and its people

fotunga- appearance

hiva- singing

'ilo- knowledge

kau tou lālanga – meaning a group of women weaving together

lālanga- weaving

laulōtaha- state of quality and excellence

lea faka-Tonga - Tongan language

lelei taha- the best

loto- the heart and the soul

loto two- willing heart

lotu- prayer

lou 'akau- pandanus

mo 'ui lōtolu- the three main aspects of development

mā - shy

mamahi 'i me 'a - team spirit

mahu 'inga taha- most important

mahulu hake- above and beyond

nofo a kāinga- refers to the collective living of Tongan people through kinship

ngāue fakataha- working together collectively

'ofa- love and generosity

poto - clever and skillful

tauhi vā- maintaining positive relationships

tauhi vaha 'a - maintaining reciprocal relationships

tolonga taha- remain in good condition and last longer

'ulungāanga faka- Tonga- Tongan ways of behaving

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Appendix A

Participant Information Sheet



Date Information Sheet Produced:

27 August 2010

Project Title

Laulōtaha: Tongan Perspectives of ‘quality’ in Early Childhood Education.

An Invitation

Malo ‘e lelei my name is Dorothy Lorraine Pau’uvale. I am currently studying for my Masters degree in Education in Early childhood at the Auckland University of Technology. I would like to warmly invite you to take part in a research project where your ideas, knowledge will give us better understanding of Tongan ideas about quality in Early Childhood Education. It is important that you read the following information carefully and please notify me if there is anything that you are not clear about. Participating in this research project is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from it until the completion of data collection. Thank you for taking time out to read and consider the following information.

What is the purpose of this research?

As a student studying at the Auckland University of Technology I am required to carry out a research as part of my study for the Masters of Education in ECE. The method that I have chosen to use in order to collect my data will be the *talanoa* method. The *talanoa* method is a collective approach to research. The purpose and the aim of this *talanoa* is for us to dialogue, debate, and discuss about what ‘quality’ education in early childhood might mean for our Tongan children growing up in Aotearoa New Zealand.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You heard about this research project through *talanoa* at various meetings and you have volunteered to be one of the participants. Participants selected to participate in this study are Tongan early childhood teachers who are working and teaching at Tongan Language Nest and parents who also take their children to a Tongan Language Nest. Your perspectives, views, and knowledge are essential and highly valued in this research project. Overall there will be 6 Tongan early childhood teachers and 6 parents involved in this research project

What will happen to the results of this research project?

Results of this research project will be part of a thesis for Auckland University of Technology. A summary of the final report of this research will also be presented in our final meeting for everyone to discuss and *talanoa* (talk) about. The material gathered may be used in future publications and conference presentations.

What are the discomforts and risks?

There should be no discomforts or risks during the time of *talanoa* (discussions & dialogue) but possibly if the conversation may evoke responses which are emotional or distressed. The participants will have the rights to withdraw at any time; the participants will also encouraged to seek emotionally & culturally meaningful support.

What are the benefits in participating in this research project?

In most Tongan/ Pasifika early childhood centres searching for high 'quality' education within their practices is an ongoing process. This research will explore perceptions of 'quality education' among Tongan early childhood teachers and parents. This research project will give us the opportunity to share our knowledge, ideas, and views about 'quality education' drawn from our own Tongan culture, values, beliefs, knowledge and so on. There's hope that this research will extend this notion of quality to include Tongan perceptions and understanding.

How will my privacy be protected?

I will respect the rights of the participants and protect the knowledge gained from this research which means that no personal details or information will be divulged. Appropriate protocols and Tongan cultural values will be inclusive, protected, and respected at all times. The participant's interests, qualities, and rights will also be respected and protected, as well as using appropriate Tongan language to conduct our (*talanoa*) dialogue sessions. The information given by the participants will be collected and used in the findings for this research. All the information that will be collected from our *talanoa* (dialogue) for this research will be kept strictly confidential. Although your perspectives will be documented in the final report of this study, your name will not be used. A coding system will be used to refer to your responses in the main findings.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There will be no financial cost to yourself in participating in this research all participants in this research is completely voluntary. However refreshment will be provided during our meeting for discussions and travel expenses incurred will be reimbursed at the conclusion of this research project.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Taking part in this research project is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not you want to take part in this project. If you do decide to participate in this research project you will be given this information sheet and you will be asked to sign a consent form. *Talanoa* sessions, venue, and time will be arranged to suit your schedules. Perspectives and information collected from these meetings will be recorded by audio tape so the information gathered is accurately recorded. There are no structured questions in *talanoa* however there will be subheadings and topics to drive our discussions. The Tongan language will be the

language used in this group discussions and translation will be made of the main points and features to emerge from the *talanoa*.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Yes - you may receive a copy of the final report of this research at the end of this project

Participant Concerns:

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research you can contact and notified Associate Professor Nesta Devine – Associate Professor from the School of Education at Auckland University of Technology. Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Madeline Banda, *madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz*, 921 9999 ext 8044.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Researcher: Dorothy Lorraine Pau'uvale

Contact details: email- lorpau12@aut.ac.nz

Mobile: 021 1834 882

Project supervisors Contact Details:

Associate Professor Nesta Devine: email- nesta.devine@aut.ac.nz

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 21st October 2010 by AUTEK with reference number 10/154.

Appendix B

Consent Form

Consent to Participation to Research

Project title: Laulōtaha; Tongan Perspectives of ‘quality’ in Early Childhood

Education.

Project supervisor: **Associate Professor Nesta Devine**

Researcher: **Dorothy Lorraine Pau’uvale**

- I have read and understood the information provided about the research project.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that the information that I will be given will be collected and gathered for future report.
- I understand that participants names will be kept confidential at all times
- I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this interview at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I understand that I can view the researchers report if I may wish to
- I agree to take part in this research
- I agree to the future use of the findings of this research in publications and presentations within an academic context
- I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research

Tick one: Yes No

Participant’s Name:.....

Participant’s Signature:

Participant Contact Details (if appropriate):

Date:.....

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 21st October 2010 by AUTEK with reference number 10/154.