Fatu Lālānga ʻi Falehanga:

Subjectivity in Tongan thinking and in New Zealand ECE policy

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Abstract

In Tongan epistemology, the interplay of mind, body and soul, self and collective, spatiality and temporality, subjectivity and objectivity, provide complex notions of how Tongans understand being. This research investigates the notion of subjectivity in Tongan thinking and in New Zealand (NZ) Early Childhood Education (ECE), by theorising, critiquing and linking notions of 'self' in official documents on the one hand, and the understandings of Tongans on the other. In the NZ ECE context, Tongan philosophy concerning the subject has to exist against a background of European theory and practice. The problem, as experienced by practitioners, is that the official (European-based) documents do not acknowledge the expression of Tongan ideas concerning subjectivity. The tensions that arise as a consequence between Tongan and European give rise to confusion and misunderstanding. In this research, my aim has been to clarify the Tongan theories of the subject that come into conflict with ECE documentation (including *Te Whāriki* and *Tapasā*) and to clarify Tongan ideas on subjectivity which influence the behaviour of Tongan teachers and children. My research will add to the emancipatory work of Tongan and Pacific researchers from a post-structuralist indigenous position, presented for a broader audience. Therefore, this work has taken the dangerous step of bringing Pacific cultural knowledge and material into the discourse of the Anglophone academy of Aotearoa. I have used philosophical talanoa (encountering discourse with an openness to emergent possibilities) and critical discourse analysis (CDA) and drawn upon the works of philosophers, including:

Foucault, on concepts of subjectivity that incorporate discourse, power and technologies of the self (on genealogy); Levinas (on totality and infinity); and

Lyotard (on "differend"). This research will allow Tongan philosophy and practice to disentangle its own ideas from universal notions of subjectivity, and to adopt a philosophical examination of the 'self' within the context of official ECE documents in Aotearoa. The collective place of the Tongan subject embedded within tangata kakato, deeply rooted intersubjectivities within the 'api demonstrates the inseparability of Tongan ontology, epistemology and axiology. The reconciliation of the two would be a futile aim: rather, awareness of the differences will enable policy makers and practitioners to approach the 'self' with more humility, tolerance and understanding.

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Si'i tauhi fakalekesi – fai hono lehilehi'i Lalaka
he maheni – faifio feluteni
Nima olo ne hapai – fakataha e ongo'i
Siomata ke 'ilo'i – 'a e hohoi vāofi
(Fa'u 'e Siosifa Pau'uvale)

'Oku ou tomu'a tuku ha fakafeta'i ki he Tu'i 'o e Langi ko 'ene taulama hao 'o lava ketau a'usia ai he 'aho ta'e'iloa koeni, ka koe 'aho fakakoloa ki he 'eku mo'ui. Taumaiaa na'e lavelave 'iloa teu lava ke a'usia ha tu'unga pehe'ni 'I he mala'e 'o e ako' kae 'uma'a hoku kāinga, ka 'oku ou tuku pe ke fai ha fakafeta'i he 'oku mei 'olunga hotau fakakoloa. Hange pe koe lau 'a e tohi Saame, teu tangaki hoku mata ki he ngaahi mo'unga, 'oku ha'u mei fee 'a hoku tokoni', ko hoku tokoni 'oku meia Sihova, 'a ia na'a ne ngaohi e ngaahi Langi mo mamani.

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Faka'apa'apa Atu: Dedication

Si'eku Tamai 'Ofa – Dedicated to you Dad.

'Oku ongo ki loto

Still, I feel your presence with every word of this thesis.

'Oku mau manatua

Still, I feel that we're walking through Hofoa, our homeland to the seashores of Halamaui, gathering kuka and 'a'ahi paa to share with our kāinga.

'Oku mau faka'anaua atu

Still, with all the sacrifices you did for us, you had envisioned this moment for so long

'Oku toka 'i loto

Still, we will continue your legacy in feako'aki, fetauhi'aki, fetokoni'aki, fe'aonga'aki, fetu'utaki, feveitokai'aki, femahino'aki and fengaue'aki.

'Ofa atu Soakai

Still, captures the essence of the 'alaha and manongi of our kato kakala endures the momona of kuka ola with our deeply rooted intersubjectivities of Mate Ma'a Tonga.

(Poem by Jeanne Pau'uvale-Teisina)

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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.

Signed:

Date: 10.08.2021

1. Fatu Lālānga: Introduction

Fatu lālānga: Ko e langa ngāue´ mo e fatu ngāue ʻa e fefine fita mo nima meaʼaʼ ke langa mo uki ʻa e mahuʼinga ʻo e ngāue   fakameaʼaʼ, lālangaʼ, toulālangaʼ mo e kokaʼanga ki he kakai fefineʼ ʻoku nau manako ke ngāue fakataha mei falehanga.

(Fatu Lālānga is the first foundational hala (road) in the weaving formation of the fala)

Tulou moe talamalu ʻo e fonua
Kau lave ki he faʼunga ʻo e nofo ʻa kāinga
ʻOku kamata he ʻuluaki matuʼa
Moe fua hona manava ko hona fakakoloaʼ
Koe fāmili eni ʻo e Tamai ʻa e maʼuanga talaʼ
Ke ne tala e tapuʼ mo e ngaahi ngofuaʼ tauhi
ʻa e fakaʼapaʼapa mo e loto ʻofa
Talangofuaʼ moe tauhi vā.
ʻA e ngāue mateakiʼ moe mamahiʼi meʼaʼ
ʻIsa naʼa ngalo e ngaahi felaveʼi ki tuʼaʼ
ʻA e famili ne tupu ai siʼi faʼe ʻofaʼ
Pehee ki he Tamai mo hono huʼungaʼ. Koeni
ʻa e puleʼanga ʻo e nofo ʻa kāingaʼ

This research starts with TULOU[1] acknowledging the sacredness of the multiple layers within the Tongan knowledge systems, inherent in the complexities of vā - in the relational space that connects us. The wise words of my father mentioned above in the Tongan language, are acknowledged to open the world to vā, in his absence in the physical world, yet navigating the present through storying and maau (poetries) for you, the readers, with the hope of recapturing the essence of Tongan subjectivity in Aotearoa. In this research, we aim to highlight the stories

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[1] Tulou is the Tongan word that you say for please excuse me, when you go pass someone out of respect with a lowered head. It is disrespectful to just go pass someone without saying TULOU! conceptually to allow the author to discuss the vā, a space that is sacred to all Tongans

that make up our Tongan worldviews, that may reject dominant discourses of language. The framing of the different 'hala' or roads is momentous in our striving to weave a fala (mat) - to fofola e fala ma'ae kainga kenau nofo ai o fai e alea (rolling out the mat for our kainga to come together and unite in talanoa). In this way, our Tongan and Pasifika communities are inspired to use their own language and cultures in research to bring mo'ui or life into the work that they do. I share the same vision with Cajete (2017, p. 129) that it is possible -

> ....to evolve learning and teaching models which build on shared ideas while honouring unique differences. Story is the way that we remember to remember who we are and where we have come from and of where we may go as we engage the potentials and challenges of a 21st century world.

Our stories presented to ensure the health of our lea faka-Tonga and taufatunga motu'a – Tongan language and cultural heritages, will continue to live through our fanau and mokopuna (children and grandchildren and future generations).

Each chapter in this research reflects a Tongan epistemological, ontological and axiological stance from how we construct our intersubjectivities of lālānga or weaving from falehanga. Our fala signals our place of strength that unite the multiplicities of voices and the deeply grounded intersubjectivities of our peoples within the landscape of education in Aotearoa NZ while embracing the unique differences. This framing encourages the theorising of Tongan epistemic world which is set to disrupt the ways in which we normally set up to explain ourselves in academia. Nerida Blair (Blair, 2015, p. 475) agrees that this way of framing in research will empower the voices of Indigenous peoples "to deliver tangible outcomes to our communities, the core, the essence of another way."

The core and the essence of my being and becoming is grounded in Tongan cultural contexts, where I will now illustrate for those who wish to know more of where my thinking originates. Tonga is only a dot on the global map yet that smallness does not define who we are as peoples. Tonga as an island is the only Kingdom in the Pacific and it belongs to Polynesia, located in the South Pacific Ocean with an archipelago of about 170 islands (only 36 inhabited). Tonga is made of groups of islands with the main islands of Tongatapu (mainland), Vava'u, Ha'apai, 'Eua and Niua. The populations of Tonga according to the Tongan Statistics census in 2016, there are 100,651 people living in Tonga (Tongan Statistics Department, 2016).

Tonga as a centre point is surrounded by Fiji, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Samoa, Cook Islands and Aotearoa. Tonga is completely surrounded by the Pacific Ocean. Tonga is the only island in the Pacific that was never colonised and remains to this day under the rule of the King of Tonga – King George Tupou VI and the royal family. There are three main hierarchical classes that includes the King and the Royal family at the top, Hou'eiki - high chiefs and nobles in the middle class and then the commoners. There are different languages used for each of these hierarchical classes, captured in the epistemological, ontological and axiological responsibilities within the Tongan language and culture. As a commoner or fefine tu'a in the Tongan hierarchichal classes, my fatongia or responsibilities varies from those of the other classes (see further details in chapter 4). My duties and responsibilities include serving the King and the nobles when it comes to our formal gatherings. I know my position, where I sit to converse to the King and the Royal family including the hou'eiki which is lower my head and remain on the

floor as a sign of faka'apa'apa - respect towards them. The language used to address the King and Royal family would not be the same as the one used for myself and my kāinga (family). This practice is already embedded within our nofo 'a kāinga where we acknowledge our father's side as the family 'Eiki (superior status) in contrast to the family fa'e (mother's side holds inferior status) . There are further implications of fie'eiki (See more in chapter4) if we don't know where position within the nofo 'a kāinga or the village.

The complexities and the subtle differences inherent in our thinking and being are often invisible and acknowledged but highly valued because they carry the nuances and essences of our anga faka-Tonga (Tongan Indigenous way of living and being). Our anga faka-Tonga in Tonga is just as important for us to maintain as we migrate to Aotearoa holding onto what makes us who we are as Tongans. The aspirations to mobilise our Indigenous anga faka-Tonga in the context of Aotearoa remain close to the essence of this thesis and the work that I do within the community. Matapo (2021) talks about the Moana onto-epistemology and the kāinga affinity that connects Pacific peoples and the Māori peoples through genealogical ties of fonua – whenua and navigation histories. We share with Maori and other Pacific ethnic groups commonalities of struggles and stories of Maui and the Gods before Christianity arrived in the Pacific. These commonalities also signal the relational thinking and being. The commonalities lie in the embodiment of natural reciprocal cultural knowledge that is related to our way of being and our lifeworlds through ancestral fananga (creation stories) of Tangaloa, Maui and our Gods that unite us. The decolonial attempts by Pacific researchers to emancipate Pacific peoples from the hegemonic constructs of western thinking

within academia remain a struggle all around the world. Even though we are not Indigenous on this land weland we recognise and acknowledge the first peoples of the land and therefore we add a fakatapu and fakafeta'i or our utmost honorific respects to them for their Mana that has encouraged us as Tongan educators/researchers to contribute and reframe, recontextualise and recentre our Tongan way of thinking in Aotearoa. Part of the decolonial efforts of this thesis is to ensure that tangata whenua as the Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa are still recognized.This is part of fe'unu (pandanus strands) for this process of fatu lālānga.

1.1 Fasi: Introduction

The concept of 'self' is a common term found in most of the official documents by the Ministry of Education with which each centre is required to comply. The conception of the individual self-stemmed from liberal educational philosophies and idealist traditions which is evident in the way the Ministry of Education portray 'self'. This study will be looking at the notion of 'self' and how it may be articulated or understood clearly by Palangi teachers and leaders working in a Tongan Early Childhood centre where 'self' is perhaps not very clear. 'Self' is an important term in the field Early Childhood Education (ECE) as it is part of the prescribed ways of maintaining documentations and complying with the Ministry of Education's rules and regulations. Teachers are exposed to a world that is dominated with self in the titles of official documents. It can be an overwhelming process trying to meet at the intersections of what 'self' means for policy makers and finding a place for 'self' within the Tongan epistemic and ontological world. There are also

significant challenges that must be discussed as we attempt to perpetuate and develop a widespread respect and understanding of cultural values that underpin a minority culture such as the Tongan culture within an Anglophone academic environment. This research shares the same sentimental values as Tamasese et al. (2005), embracing the challenge of including our own version of what 'self' might mean for us Pacific peoples in Aotearoa:

> I am not an individual; I am an integral part of the cosmos. I share divinity with my ancestors, the land, the seas, and the skies. I am not an individual, because I share a "tofi" (an inheritance) with my family, my village, and my nation. I belong to my family and my family belongs to me. I belong to my village and my village belongs to me. I belong to my nation and my nation belongs to me. This is the essence of my sense of belonging (p. 1)

This research promotes the understanding of the 'self' in a vā or space that perhaps is outside the 'common' conceptions of what subjectivity is, "according to the particular discourses and practices to which we are subject," as Hodgson (2010, p. 17) put it. This research embraces the challenge of including the "knowledge, wisdom and worldviews of Pacific peoples (the indigenous peoples of the Pacific islands and their descendants who live in New Zealand)" (Tu'itahi, 2010, p. 135). Within this context, this research explores the range of possible meanings of the self for Tongan migrants in Aotearoa. This research is motivated by an attempt to understand why Tongans' way of being and knowing does not align with the prescribed outcomes of the official documents. My area of study highlights issues, conditions, and contradictory implications in the Ministry of Education documentation already available in the education community.

Two research questions have been used to capture the aims of this thesis:

1. *How can educators or practitioners facilitate the expression of Tongan values in Tongan ECE in NZ? (Focusing on the concept of subjectivity or the self.)*

2. *What is the effect of the tension between Tongan ideas of subjectivity and official expectations, as they affect understandings of 'self' and the professional practices that emerge from ideas of self?*

The next section discusses in more detail where 'self' is positioned in the socialisation of Tongan people, both historically and as Tongan migrants living in Aotearoa.

1.2 History of education for Tongans

Pacific Islands parents migrated to Aotearoa over 50 years ago in search of a better future for their children (Lātū, 2009; Manu'atu, 2000; Pau'uvale, 2011; 'A Taufe'ulungaki, 2004; Teisina, 2011; Tu'itahi, 2005; Vaioleti, 2011). However, there were differences in the education that these Pacific Islands peoples faced in New Zealand. Research highlights the problems faced by Pacific communities in Aotearoa: they are in the lowest socioeconomic groups, and have relatively high unemployment, low educational achievement, and poor health status (MacIntosh, 2011; Matapo, 2021; Pau'uvale, 2011; Sanga, 2004; 'A Taufe'ulungaki, 2004; Vaioleti, 2011).

For Tongan/Pasifika ECEs, recent education policy has had disturbing consequences. The Government's 2010 policy change, which reduced a target of 100% of ECE teachers practicing in a centre being 'qualified' to only 80% of practising teachers being 'qualified', brought major concerns to ECE centres. This has limited the ability of Tongan ECEs to send more teachers to study within the education discipline, and hence to be able to 'translate' official requirements into practices that make sense in the Tongan context.

The establishment of Kōhanga Reo in the field of ECE in the 1980s was part of the educational initiatives designed to revitalise Māori language and culture. Pacific cultures used this same model to build their own ECE centres in Aotearoa in order to maintain their own languages and cultures. Most of the Tongan centres have their own unique philosophies and aspirations, but regulations prescribed the standards and the outcomes that each centre must adhere to. These outcomes represent "success" for the Ministry of Education but not necessarily for Tongans. Tongan ECEs must work together with both the Ministry of Education (for funding purposes) and the Tongan community in order to succeed. Most of the Pacific-operated ECE centres (including Tongan ECE centres) are obliged to run like "small business[es]" (Mara, 2005) that are largely regulation driven. Many of the women who set up these Pacific ECE centres aspire to pass on the Pacific languages and cultures that they brought from the home island nations, but "not necessarily to become business managers" (Mara, 2005, p. 7;

Teisina, 2011).

There is a growing concern among Pacific researchers that the NZ education system does not have adequate resources to understand the values and cultures of Tongan and other Pacific groups (Alefaio, 2008; MacIntosh, 2011; Manu'atu, 2000; 'A Taufe'ulungaki, 2004; Tu'itahi, 2010). The successive Pasifika Education Plans designed by the (Ministry of Education, 2013) to lift the achievements of Pasifika peoples in NZ have been ongoing for more than 10 years, which indicates that there is a disconnection between the NZ education system and the peoples of the Pacific in NZ. Much of the emphasis of government, schools, researchers, initiatives and communities are placed on the 'failures' of Pacific peoples rather than on "educating Pacific students for life-long enculturation" (Penetito & Sanga, 2003, p. 23). This situation can be problematic because it is based on a common perception that is "divorced from the reality" of those who are termed as the 'failures' and overrepresented within NZ statistics (Elias & Merriam, 1980; Sherrard, 1994, p. 9). The identification and development of cultural knowledge and information remain neglected while particular agendas are addressed that underline the reification of culture for our Tongan and Pacific communities in Aotearoa. The reification of culture encourages treating culture as a 'thing', something that can be shared without consideration of the historical, social, cultural, and political ramifications. This research seeks to better articulate Tongan concepts of the 'self' that will create meaning within a landscape that is neither homogenous nor stable. A broader understanding of the desired outcomes leads on to appropriate and meaningful pedagogy, with a greater

capacity to generate benefits for the Pacific group here in NZ (Manu'atu, 2000), according to their own definitions of what is beneficial for themselves.

Rationale and significance

This work is not limited in importance to Tongan ECE. This research has the potential to better inform Ministry of Education policy settings for the education of Tongan people in NZ. There are no research studies on the conceptions of subjectivity/self in ECE official documents and in practice within Tongan (and other Pacific) ECE centres in Aotearoa. This idea of setting up a background of Tongan practice (not preaching philosophy) that younger generations can grow up to be proud of and refer to is central to the mission of this research. Such an undertaking has the potential to be particularly important in "mainstream" institutions that serve the needs of Pasifika students and their families. Many of the tensions between European and Pasifika (and others) ways of thinking about education can be attributed to a "difference" over views and knowledge, or epistemologies and ontologies. This research highlights the "different" and sheds light on the incommensurable differences between concepts of self (J. Lyotard, 1984) . And the benefit of highlighting the incommensurability is that it does not legitimise one view over the other. Rather, this proposal aims to employ the incommensurability as a resource to help enable the growth of knowledge through a cogent comparison of the two different worldviews (Chen, 1997).

Tongan perspectives on indigenous education derive from their indigenous knowledge systems grounded in the existing set of values, beliefs, customs, and traditions of how one sees and understands the world that have been passed down from generation to generation. Indigenous approaches to education are largely informal but still have some significant aspects that require formal engagement within Tongan society. Importantly, indigenous education encouraged social order, duties and obligations, spiritual and moral ideals, and collective practices. Within this social order, genealogy determines one's role or place within society. Indigenous (pre-European) education for Tongan people emphasised learning to understand the hierarchical nature and multiple layers of relationships, including genealogies of a mythical nature, that go to make up a strong Tongan identity.

The social ranking system within the Tongan culture includes Tui' mo hono fale (King and his household/royal family) ranking at the top, then hou'eiki mo e kau nōpele (chiefs and nobles) and then the kakai tu'a (commoners). Indigenous education included learning how to facilitate group cohesions within the nofo 'a kāinga, the family and the villages. There was no separation between the theory and the practical side of things. Consequently, if we want to learn more about people and how well they see things then "we need to watch how they walk" (Walsh & Middleton, 1984, p. 17). Our learning was formed in social settings, through lived experiences rather than in formal school settings. Our ancestors were people of the sea or the tahi/moana and our peoples felt at home there,

given that they were raised in it. 'Epeli Hau'ofa (1983), writing about the sea of islands, had this to say about our people:

> We are the sea, we are the ocean, we must wake up to this ancient truth and together use it to overturn all hegemonic views that aim ultimately to confine us again, physically and psychologically, in the tiny spaces which we have resisted accepting as our sole appointed place, and from which we have recently liberated ourselves (p. 5).

Tongan people value history carried through the fananga (oral traditions, legends, stories), metaphors and proverbial stories passed down from generation to generation. Our cultural history maintains the genealogical connections between the past and the present, and the future, which are part of the essence of a Tongan spiritual being. Indigenous education ensured the nobles and high chiefs retained their power – educating a chosen few to restrict access to the valued information and knowledge of genealogy which determined one's place in the hierarchical status of society. Consequently the privileges of accessing this koloa or valued information belong to those who hold special vā relationships with the Tongan cultural experts. Most of the informal education in the 'api (home) was carried out through the talanoa fananga *(*stories, myths and legends), maau (poems and proverbs), hiva ta'anga (songs), mātanga (historical sites) and certain cultural rituals. The emphasis for many Tongans has shifted "from the here and now and the practical to the there and then and the abstract" (Helu-Thaman, 1999, p. 72) that is inherent in formal education.

This meant that the less explicit Western ideologies of European cultures were introduced through the hidden curriculum (Helu-Thaman, 1999). The curriculum was designed to represent what was important to the missionaries and disregarded some of the traditional and customary skills that the people had valued (Mara et al., 1994). Contradicting sets of values for learning continue to affect the values of Tongan people even after moving to New Zealand and those contradictions are not well understood or documented (Helu-Thaman, 2002). Jackson (2007) contended that power of the dominant culture devalues and continues

> Destroying the world-view and culture of indigenous peoples [which] has always been as important as taking their lives, because the actual process of disempowerment, the key purpose of any colonisation, has to function at the spiritual and psychic level as well as the physical and political (p. 178)

For some people like Tupua Tamasese (2005), the concerns are for the priority of indigenous thought. The importance of the "pursuit of indigenous Pacific knowledge is that it survives – and survives because it gives us meaning and belonging" (p. 5).

1.3 Conceptions of self

Self is well defined by various sources. Self is often associated with the idea of the individual or the 'I' as opposed to collectives and groups. Self can also be looked as one or singular as opposed to plural or two or more. Self can also be connected to ideas of being alone, alienated, in isolation, a monoculture,

domination, distinction, best, one and only, etc. In whatever way we flip around the term 'self', it somehow points to something that I would not find myself connected or attached to. To theorise the concept of 'self' would mean that I have to find a way to connect to the 'self'. How do we connect to something that stands alone? Or how do we attach ourselves to something that is isolated? How are we able to put it in our voices when there is only one voice that matters? Is there only one truth? How else can we see the world if there is only one lens? This definition of self probably appears highly sensible to most people who have grown up, or been educated, in the New Zealand mainstream, but does it have universal relevancy? In the next section, I write about finding the self in relation to the nofo 'a kāinga.

Tupu'anga - Finding the self

It is essential to talk about my personal journey to understand the socialisation and the upbringing within which this research is positioned. These questions tend to shape the way this research is carried out: Who am I? How did I get here? Why am I here? Why am I doing this? What am I? How did this happen? These questions remind me of the journey to find my 'self' in this journey. I am aware of the ancestors that are responsible for bringing me into this world and I do acknowledge their contributions in raising me up to be the person that I am today – it is because of them that I am here.

My position for this research is of a female commoner or *fefine tu'a* who is married or takai fala to a *tangata Ha'ano Ha'apai* (male commoner) Ha'ano with whom I have three girls. I had most of my schooling experiences in

Tonga. I was born and raised in Vava'u by my maternal grandparents until the age of five. Our parents were teachers who therefore moved around various schools and places in Tonga. I attended kindergarten in Vava'u, then Fanga 'o Pilolevu primary school on the main Island, attended Queen Salote College and later Tupou High School. We migrated to Aotearoa in December 1995 and I only attended seventh form here in NZ. I attended 3 tertiary institutions while at the same time working in the ECE field in NZ. I do acknowledge that this research is influenced by my social upbringing and educational experiences therefore my perceptions about Tongan subjectivity may differ from other Tongans.

My name is Jeanne Weston Blaser Pau'uvale Teisina. My hingoa or name may tell of a journey because it represents something far important than just the name in itself. How can we tell someone from merely looking at a name? People may think that I am not of Tongan descent when they see a name like my name. To me it means more than just an English name as my parents were teachers for more than 30 years in Tonga. The name is a symbol of the relationships that our parents had made during their journey as teachers in Tonga. Before we migrated to Aotearoa we were already taught the values of building relationships that are open to embracing other cultures and not to put any other culture down; this is one of the core values of being a Tongan, known as faka'apa'apa or respect.

Our parents had volunteer/Peace Corps teachers living with us at the time when my mother was carrying me in her womb. In the Tongan culture, we would have to give the honour to our father's family to name the unborn child or, if it is the second or the third, then the mother's family may have a chance to name the unborn child depending on the number of kids within the family. My parents Meleane Lilio Lolohea Pau'uvale of Ha'akio, Olo'ua Vava'u, and Siosifa Pau'uvale of Felemea, Niua and Hofoa, were both teachers in a Free Wesleyan Church (FWC) High School in Tonga. When my older sister Sulieti was born, my father's family named her. When it came to myself being the second born, the opportunity was gifted to Jeanne who was a Peace Corps teacher from America. At the time she was volunteering as a teacher in Ha'akio, mother's village in Vava'u, where I was born. The point is not the actual name but lies in the significance of the story of how that volunteer teacher had journeyed from America to Tonga, bringing hope and education to our people in the village.

The perception of what a hingoa might mean in a Tongan cultural context is attached to the meaning. The literal meaning of a hingoa brings far connections to those who have come before and those who are yet to come. What is in the hingoa? Within the Tongan culture, we could identify the person from just hearing and seeing their hingoa. A name can automatically connect us to places and family lineages and genealogy or kāinga. As soon as someone introduces themselves as being from Tonga, we instantly start making the connections: if it is not the family, it will be someone who is linked to that family, or the villages. This ritual of making or attempting to establish the connections that we have with

the other person allows the talanoa or the conversation to flow. If there are no blood connections, the place of origins such as the villages or the families that are married into the village are other basis of connections. This very connection is inherent in the vā. Making connections with others are highly welcomed and help to make those involved feel at home or at ease. And through these connections or the vā, it is only appropriate that I talk about my connections to Tongan ECE as my socialisations plays a big part in the way this research is carried out.

Our mother, Meleane Lolohea Pau'uvale,[2] is a strong person in Tongan ECE in Aotearoa. She founded the vision in a garage in 1999, as we had just migrated from Tonga in 1995. She noticed how some of her nieces and nephews were not attending any sort of early childhood centre or kindergarten before going to primary school, and she wondered about their transitions to primary school from a home environment. During this time, she was also doing relieving jobs while looking for a full-time job that suited her situation as a migrant mother living in Aotearoa. During her relieving experiences in some of the primary schools in Ōtara she realised the problems that some of our children were facing as they entered the new entrants' class. Most of the children that she came across were finding it difficult in their transition from home to the mainstream primary schools.

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[2] She is the fifth child of the 10 children of Kato Kakala Mate Ki He Lotu Napa'a Lolohea and Fatai Nu'uhiva Lolohea of Ha'akio Vava'u.

She then decided for the sake of all her grandchildren and the grandchildren of her brothers and sisters to do something about it. This was the beginning of the new chapter as she knows that her calling was with the children especially the Tongan Pacific children who are growing up in Aotearoa that deserve a better future in Aotearoa and therefore must start from a strong foundation.

Meleane's vision was to start in the field of ECE, which was a big difference from when she was teaching in Tonga in secondary schools. This was more on a child's level and she had to take on the challenge of getting to know how to be a good teacher in that level for children under 5. It was a challenge at first, trying to settle into the new environment of New Zealand, yet she also had to learn how to become an ECE teacher. Therefore, in 1999, with the help of some of the earlier Tongan workers at the Ministry of Education, Meleane was able to establish a playgroup that initially started as Katokakala playgroup which was situated in the garage of our home in Māngere East. The founding students were Meleane's relatives and mokopuna, and members of the extended family. This meant that while we were trying to stand on our two feet, we also needed to know how and what it means to become an ECE teacher, so Meleane took on further studies to extend her learning to be able to better facilitate the children who were attending the playgroup. Therefore, she took up studies at Auckland University of Technology on a scholarship and studied for three years while still running the preschool. She found another passionate teacher to work with; this was Silipa Kautai. Both Meleane and Silipa Kautai took on more studies to further their skills

and knowledge in ECE in Aotearoa. We were fortunate that there were Tongans who worked in the Ministry of Education office who helped to build up our work in the playgroup. Unfortunately, Silipa Kautai passed away on a vacation trip to the United States of America with her eldest daughter, which was a tragedy for the rest of the family. Despite the setbacks, Meleane still continued with the help of her children and some of the relatives volunteered to help out with the playgroup.

The family made history when the Prime Minister of the time, Hon. Helen Clark, visited the humble garage on October 8th, 2003, to advise how to obtain successful funding to build a new centre in Ōtara. This meant a great celebration for the kāinga involved and the whole Tongan community. The announcement made it to the headlines in the local Tongan newspaper in Tonga and abroad. This was only the beginning of a journey towards building success in Tongan ECE in Aotearoa.

This was only the beginning of a new chapter, as the new ECE centre was fully licensed on June 1st, 2006, in the area of Ōtara with 33 children. When the centre was finally opened there were a whole lot of learning to take place as we took on 'langa ngāue' or building success in Aotearoa with the aspirations to build success in Tongan ECE. We found that there is more than just opening a centre; there has to be more knowledge to gained in order to effectively operate a centre in Aotearoa. This meant that more people in the centre needed to gain more knowledge, so we could understand more about the regulations and the rules that were prescribed for us to learn.

The responsibility of running and operating a centre or in this context Akoteu (Tongan language nest) meant that the aspirations of Tongan language and culture had to be lived and practiced on a daily basis. The vision was easy in theory but how that translates into practice, taking into considerations the time and space and the context of which the Akoteu Tonga will be placed is more complex. There were high expectations when the foundation started for Tongan ECE in Aotearoa (thankful to the Kohanga Reo movement) and therefore the responsibility to sustain the momentum of this important work that was founded by those who came before us to this land continues. We are not Indigenous peoples on this land of Aotearoa but we acknowledge tangata whenua and respect the opportunity to have a voice on their land. Therefore the foundation had prompted us Tongan teachers and researchers to continue the legacies of this great work for our children who are growing in Aotearoa, building their own sense of belonging and identity so they could thrive and contribute to the fabric of Aotearoa in a positive way.

Decolonisation

As a Tongan/Pasifika student and a practitioner working within the context of a Tongan ECE Centre, I have experienced first-hand the ongoing struggles of finding a 'space' with meaning that includes the Tongan epistemic and ontological world against a background of European theory and practice. My talanoa (stories/dialogue) in this research are located on a Tongan fala (mat), where fofola e fala kae fai e alea – the mat is rolled out to make space for

transformational and valuable talanoa. The fala where this research is situated comes with the hope of contributing to the landscape of education for our Pacific and Tongan peoples living in Aotearoa. This fala is rolled out with the best intentions to make transformations for our peoples, using what is local, our Tongan language and culture, our strengths-based thinking where decolonisation finds most value when it is kāinga with each other or relational.

Decolonising from a position of strength has the capacity to empower other non-indigenous cultures to experiment for themselves and see that there are other, multiple ways of knowing that exist aside from that of the prevailing one. There is a difference between the kind of linear thinking that contains fragmented values and the kind of thinking and being that is relational. The ontological and epistemological benefits of our own worldview as Tongan and Pacific peoples is the fluid and flexible nature that makes space to connect with other ways of knowing and being. A sentiment that is closer to the Tongan indigenous way of thinking and being. It will be a difficult task, though, to recentre our own Tongan language and culture within a fixed education system that resists other ways of knowing and thinking. Decolonisation has to start from a place of strength, a place that does not have a deficit way of thinking, a place that does not blame, a place of differing worldviews, and a place that seeks transformation and change for the better (Martin et al., 2019). The deficit experiences of Pacific peoples captured in the statistics and disempowering research in New Zealand have also been overwhelming (Vaioleti, 2006). To decolonise from a place of strength means that research needs to build on the strengths so the result can reciprocate and

transform the landscape of the education system. My place of strength situates my being and thinking within the Tongan language and culture.

Decolonisation from a Tongan indigenous perspective embraces the sacred 'space' known as the vā that exists outside the 'common' construct of educational research rejecting universal truth but embraces post-structuralist ideas which acknowledge difference. What remains consistent with this idea of the vā is that knowledge/worldview is holistic, and it lives through the process and the experiences that are practiced in everyday living. Decolonisation remains a challenge for those who are involved within Western discourses of thinking within the university, especially if our (Tongan) place is rooted in the fonua where land, relationships, peoples, seas, skies and the entire cosmos is connected (Teisina, 2011).

In the Tongan cultural context, the interplay of mind, body, and soul, individual and collective, time and space, provide complex notions of how one sees the world. This complexity indicates some of the struggles of attempting to translate our 'differences' in thinking and being within Western discourses. For myself as a Tongan/Pasifika researcher, explaining this can be a difficult and hesitant task of "bringing existing parameters of thought and behaviour into consciousness" (Devine & Irwin, 2005, p. 317). To add a layer to this complexity, the premise of decolonising history, literature, curriculum and thought in general builds tensions as a consequence of this 'difference' between Tongan and European thinking.

The quest for decolonisation includes working towards developing a widespread respect for and understanding of cultural values that underpin a minority culture such as the Tongan culture within an Anglophone academic environment.

On a personal level, our parents migrated to New Zealand hoping for better educational opportunities for their children. The learning journey continues with contradicting sets of values, even after migrating to Aotearoa, and those contradictions are not well understood or documented (Helu-Thaman, 2002). Even at university, pursuing doctoral research with the desire to highlight issues, conditions, and contradictory implications in rhetoric about Tongan teachers' experiences versus the official requirements in ECE, my thoughts often veered to an uncomfortable 'space' because of prevailing worldviews assumed to be universal as our Pacific peoples are rendered visible and overrepresented in educational research and statistics highlighting 'failures'. This idea informs the kind of modernist thinking of the competitive environment that is created by a belief in universal truths and reality, which makes no sense to those who have a different sense of realities.

I would say that decolonisation has to start from a place of strength, a place that is open to learning other ways of knowing and being, and only then can we find meaning and belonging within our own sense of identity. My place of strength is inclusive of this poem, even though Tonga may appear as a small dot or piliote on the world map but we think it shouldn't define us as peoples living in Aotearoa:

We think we are! By Jeanne Pau'uvale Teisina.

Tonga our way of being

Our island worldview

Mate Ma'a Tonga

Yet a small dot

Mapped on the globe

But the heart amplifies the dot

Thinking aloud

We are not small!

This dot

Action full stop

To the hegemonic view

To begin the new

To discontinue the confinements

To halt the stereotypes

To stop the assumptions

Enough with the deficit

Thinking out loud again We

are not small!

Relational

Holistically interwoven

Adorned within collective-self

Genealogically rich in kakala

Intertwined with 'ofa, tauhi vā,

Living tangata kakato

Interconnected, united and strong!

Deeply rooted inter-subjectivities

Waves of being and becoming

Navigates moana, fonua and langi

Surpasses the science of the dot

Reimagine from our point of reference, not the dot We

are not small!

(J. Matapo & J. Teisina, 2020)

1.4 Puni: Thesis structure

Chapter 2 explores the literature and the problematisation of the thesis topic within the context of Tongan ECE, where this research is undertaken. I then discuss the concept of subjectivity in the field of education particularly in the ECE sector. Next, I look at unpacking subjectivity from a post-structural position, including the perspectives of Foucault, Derrida, Levinas and Lyotard. I also discuss what subjectivity means from a Pacific ontological and epistemological point of view and, more specifically, a Tongan perspective. I draw from my own knowledge of the Tongan language and culture to support some of the ideas that I feel that are important to acknowledge, due to the lack of written literature in this field.

Chapter 3 introduces the theoretical groundwork of this thesis and the underpinning theoretical ideas of my research methodology. I discuss the Tongan philosophical ideas that unite theoretical ideas and the methods used to carry out my research. Throughout this research, I draw on traditional Tongan narratives and talanoa to delineate Tongan ontology and the Tongan epistemic world. I also draw upon the works of philosophers including Foucault (on genealogy) and Levinas (on difference). My analysis of these Western philosophers may differ from those who come from a non-Tongan, non-Pacific, or non-indigenous background. In this research, I explore the contributions of talanoa and the work of these philosophers, as well as articulating critical discourse analysis (CDA) in the study of Tongan subjectivity in ECE.

Chapter 4 reveals the ideas of Tongan thinking and being that tie in to our health and wellbeing. This thesis aims to raise the awareness of Tongan philosophical thinking and way of being within Aotearoa and abroad. I consider the notion of Tongan subjectivity in terms of the self, which starts locally from the 'api or the home, the 'apiako or the school environment, and tangata or personhood and Tongan cosmogony.

Chapter 5 aims to connect the ideas of the Tongan subject within the context of the 'api to the context of 'api in ako or education within Aotearoa NZ. The first part of this chapter starts with a discourse analysis of the so-called 'Pacific' official documents. There has been increasing use of Pacific worlds and concepts in some of the official documents but it is still superficial. There is still difficulty in writing meaningful documents that cover the Pacific Island groups and are able to acknowledge the distinct values of Pacific communities.

Chapter 6 will use a case study on the praxis of Akoteu Kato Kakala to show how productive/creative a Pacific setting can be when exceptional circumstances provoke and allow the development of responses firmly based in the Pacific, in this case Tongan principles and understandings.

Chapter 7 gives an overall account of what this thesis is all about. The last chapter will also give a summary on what the thesis covered and discuss it's limitations.

I also talk about the implications and possibilities that falehanga has to offer in the context of education in Aotearoa. I will also end this thesis by writing an account of falehanga in the Tongan language which will hopefully highlight the significance that Tongan language and concepts have in carrying out Tongan epistemology, ontology and axiology within academia.

2. Hala Fakama'ufatu: Problematisation

Hala fakama'ufatu: Ko e hala ia hono ua mei he hala fokotu'u pe fatu 'o e fala. Ko e hala mahu'inga eni he koia 'oku ne fakama'u 'a e fatu. Pea 'e kamata mei heni ho siofi mo e fakatonutonu 'o e fala.

(Hala fakama'ufatu is the second hala within the process of weaving the fala. This hala for the weavers is crucial in making sure that the foundational fatu weaving of the fala is united and woven appropriately.)

2.1 Fasi: Introduction

I remember one day a grandmother came to our centre to drop off her grandson and it was my first time meeting her. When she walked through our entrance, I could tell that she was impressed with the children's photos and the artworks on display, which were linked to the current learning at the centre. I observed her as she took a while to leave after dropping off her grandson, looking through the photos and artworks, so I walked up to her and asked her how she was doing and she said that she was doing fine. So I asked:

> *"Can I help you with anything at all?" The grandmother said,*
> *"Yes, can you let me know where my grandson is? And why is*
> *he not in these photos?" (pointing to the display of photos). I*
> *said that perhaps your grandson did not attend on this day and*

that is why there weren't any photos of him present in the display. The grandmother then said, "Can you please make sure that my grandson is on the wall next time I come to drop off my grandson." I assured her that I would work with our team to make sure that a photo of her grandson was on display! And she was very happy with that. That same day we had a talanoa with our staff to review our presentation of information, especially photos at the entrance. On her next visit, which was the following week, she walked in smiling and I asked her if everything was okay. She pointed to her grandson's photo on display and said, "Malo 'Aupito!" (thank you), with a tear in her eye.

By the end of this encounter, it was an emotional moment for everyone involved. The grandmother felt subjective about having her grandson included on the display at the centre's entrance. It gave the family a sense of confirmation of their belonging at the centre. After this incident, our team became more conscious of the way we practice. The emphasis on our practice is that it should not just be a matter of display, but it has got to have meaning to those who engage with the centre. This means that we need to include all of the children in the reports so that our children feel worthy and valued. Later on, that year we had our Education Review Office officers' review of our centre. When we had the chance to talk about the centre's performance, the lady officer commented that possibly there could be too many photos on display when they walked in compared to a mainstream centre in town that had been reviewed the week before which only had one photo on display at the entrance, unlike us. I shared the story I have just told with the Education Review Office officers so they could understand the context in which our centre is positioned. Our worldview may be different from the practices of other mainstream centres in other areas of New Zealand. This is who we are, we value the vā or the relationships with our parents and their

families. Despite the limited spaces available through our entrance, finding the grandson a space on the wall made a difference for his grandmother that extended to the rest of the family. This research is about finding our conception of subjectivity in a vā or space, a subjectivity that perhaps is outside the 'common' conceptions of what subjectivity is, but accords with "the particular discourses and practices to which we are subject" (Hodgson, 2010, p. 17).

This section explores the literature within the context of Tongan ECE where this research is undertaken. I then discuss the concept of subjectivity in the field of education, particularly in the early childhood sector. I then look at unpacking subjectivity from a post-structural position including the perspectives of Foucault, Derrida, Levinas and Lyotard. I also discuss what subjectivity means from a Pacific ontological and epistemological point of view and, more specifically, a Tongan perspective. I draw from my own knowledge of the Tongan language and culture to support some of the ideas that I feel that are important and need to be acknowledged, due to the lack of written literature in this field. My intention is not to limit the conception of subjectivity to one way of seeing it but rather explore the various conceptualisations of subjectivities that might contribute to building an understanding for those in the particular discourse to which they are subjected.

Problem of the present

The idea of the individual 'self' is excessively used within official documents and causing underlying issues and tensions especially for those who perhaps may be raised and grounded on and with the 'self' from a collective understanding (J. Matapo & J. Teisina, 2020). Within the context of the education sector, 'self' can mean many things. There can be confusions within the discourse of Education in Aotearoa because 'self' is perhaps not well understood or defined for the teachers (Grey, 2010). This includes teachers of mainstream institutions who might also struggle with the definitions of self. This may also hold further implications for our teachers especially for those who are from marginalized backgrounds. From confusions to more understanding search, we will look further into what makes up the world of 'self'.

2.2 Unpacking the notion of subjectivity

From a Tongan point of view, the European view of self appears to associate with the idea of the individual or the 'I' as opposed to collectives and groups. Self can also be looked upon as one or singular as opposed to plural or two or more. Self can also be connected to ideas of being alone, apart, alienated, in isolation, a monoculture, domination, distinct, best, one and only, etc. 'Self' somehow points to something that I would not find myself connected or attached to. To theorise the concept of 'self' as a Tongan would mean that I have to find a way to connect to the 'self'. How do we connect to something that stands alone? Or how do we attach ourselves to something that is isolated? How are we able to use our voices

when there is only one voice that matters? Is there only one truth? How can we articulate our vision if there is only one lens? This definition of self probably appears highly sensible to most people who have grown up, or been educated, in the New Zealand mainstream, but it does not have universal relevancy. This research presents a space for the possibility of a view of the self that is perhaps outside universal applicability.

The nature of the self has been a central philosophical question in the traditions of European philosophy since time immemorial. Foucault did not agree with the 19th century and phenomenological ideas of a universal, timeless subject which was at the heart of how Europeans made sense of the world. To Foucault, it was problematic because this conception of the subject fixed the status quo and attached people to specific identities that could never change. Foucault's conception of 'subjectivity' and the 'technologies of the self' articulates how the subject constitutes itself in different forms at different times through varied practices (Kelly, 2013, p. 513). This notion of 'different' leads us to a different way of being and thinking: towards a way of the Tongan self.

Tongan ideas of 'self'

The Tongan ideas of 'self' stands in opposition to the idea of individualism. Self refers to oneself or the individual. The contemporary 'Western' notion of the self, founded on individual thinking and being, is at odds with the kind of self that is implicit in Tongan thinking and being. The Tongan idea of self opposes the

ideologies that rest on the individual as a separate being detached with no connections to the aspirations and goals of their nofo 'a kāinga. The tensions embedded in our Tongan sense of identity are inconsistent with conventional Western values and goals. Self in the Tongan language literally can refer to au, kita or taha. In order to unpack the Tongan ideas of self in a clearer view, it is essential that I talk about these three qualities that contributes to building the Tongan ideas of self, which is inherent in au, kita and taha. It is my intention to build the awareness of the layers of complexities in Tongan thinking and being that underlines the Tongan 'self'.

Au

The Tongan self in 'au' is not an individual. Au is linked to the sense of Tongan identity that is carried by Tongan language and culture. **Ko au** is the response to the calling of names in any formal or informal gatherings. **Ko au** does not necessarily mean that it is about the individual person, but it can also capture the collective identity of the person involved. For instance, if my name is called out at a national fono, my **ko au** will be utilized in a different meaning such as I am there on behalf of my kāinga and my village whether they are there or not. So the k**o au** encapsulates the ideas of the collective even in their absence they are acknowledged and included. **Au** in this case has dual meanings because it can be used to refer to the individual and also the collective at the same time. **Au** is used to identify who they are within the Tongan culture. **Au** within the royal kava ceremony or taumafa kava, as the names of the talking chiefs including the King are called out, the *au* is accepted in silence with only the sound of fū (round clap).

The acceptance of the kava with the fū signals the duties and obligations that each chief holds on behalf of their peoples and their villages.

Au can also refer to the strands used for weaving. In saying that each au or strands are used together with other strands to weave the mat or fala. The emphasis lies on the many strands put together to create one fala. When weaving the fala, the au has to be in harmony with each other, because they ought to make a strong connection with each other in order to make the weaving process easier and the fala stronger.

Kita

Kita is also associated with a lot of negative meanings in the Tongan language. *Kita* is also a word to describe the new mothers who have just given birth and are not looking after their body and keeping it sacred, which can cause them illnesses; it can also refer to irresponsible behaviours of mothers. Then we have sio *kita*, which refers to being selfish in the Tongan culture. *Kita* is already a negative notion in the Tongan culture. For instance, taonakita refers to suicide. There is a proverb in the Tongan culture which – tuku ho kita; it is morally used to remind our people not to be an individual or selfish and to stop looking out for your own good, instead look out for the collective good. There is already a negative connotation about the moral values of the Tongan personhood, and it is not an individual. The tendency then to be an individual within the Tongan culture almost equates to someone who is not healthy and not complete, and it is culturally and morally suicidal.

Taha

Self can also mean '*taha*'. Taha is also knows as number one in the English language. Taha is also used within the royal kava ceremony or taumafa kava to count and identify the gifts that are placed within the kava circle, known as the ngāue. *Taha* is also a positive conceptualisation to use in the Tongan language and culture. For example, *taha* can be associated with a strong verb or noun to make a superlative meaning such as: poto *taha* – meaning the most intelligent; lelei *taha* – to be the best; tika *taha* – expertise in what one does; talavou *taha* – the prettiest; and so on. *Taha* is conceptualised in a context where it is great to be united; *Taha* aspires to make the differences become 'one' or, in this case, unite their differences to become one! This is transparent in the word '*fakataha*' which means united/together, or meeting and collaborating with a group of people for a higher purpose. Tu'itahi (2010) wrote about the notion of *'kafataha'* where different coconut ropes are woven together for strength and unity: unity in diversity. Pau'uvale (2011) used laulōtaha to define the state of quality in Tongan ECE. She believed that there is not a single definition of 'quality' within the Tongan culture; instead, it is a few factors or ideals that make up 'laulōtaha' or quality within the Tongan world. Perhaps this whole notion of 'taha' does not equate to the Western understanding of the word; instead, 'self' as 'taha' refers to the opposite meaning of self, or 'non-self'.

Tangata kakato

Tangata is found on the basis of Tongan traditional thinking of a man, a person or people. The place where tangata is placed on is not an individual but sacredly a collective place. Tangata can also be recognized as an individual or it can also be used to identify the tribe where tangata belongs to. The man and the person can be both translated in Tongan as *tangata.* The ontological importance of tangata holds value within the kāinga or the collective rather than the individual. Predominantly, tangata holds ontological significance when it is constructed on the basis of Tongan epistemic language and culture. The tangata then is naturally attached to the land or the fonua where people, land, trees, animals, seas and the entire cosmos are bound together (J. Matapo & J. Teisina, 2020; Teisina, 2011; Tu'itahi, 2005). The fonua where tangata is born holds familial, natural, ecological, social, spiritual, and biological connections with the kāinga. There is a reverse in the construction of meaning when it comes to tangata from a Western perspective because it would rather ask the question what the collective can do for the individual rather than what the individual can do for the betterment of the collective. In this case the Tongan subjectivity is defined when it is linked to the collective but in western thinking it is the opposite where the collective is defined by the individual per se. The point that each individual can only make sense of who they are if they are linked to the community or the collective and for Tongan thinking, we as tangata are related, connected, united, linked like the umbilical cord that ties past present and future.

The holistic worldview that is embedded in Tongan ontological thinking of tangata is shown in how we use the word tangata kakato which refers to the full

personhood. Tangata also indicate the mulitplicities in the thinking and becoming of Tongan full personhood. Tangata is used to describe the collective, and it can also used to describe the male or the man within the collective. Tangata kakato is not limited to just the man but grounded in the genealogical importance of the vā relationships that connect people to their Tongan sense of identity. In the Tongan language and culture it reveals the thinking and being of a tangata Tonga. It is always the aspirations of a Tongan family for their child to grow up and become a tangata kakato. For Tongan cultural context, tangata kakato or full personhood cannot be achieved at birth, but it is a process that is achievable, as they get older the higher the chance that they will become more of a person as they grow older. When a male child is born they are identified as a tamasi'i. As he gets older in life and start achieving and building knowledge and skills he will be acknowledged as a tangata and no longer identified as a tamasi'i. The ontological importance of tangata is also linked to the accomplishments and the progress made to fulfil their duties and obligations within the nofo 'a kāinga (collective/extended family/village). Tangata kakato allude to having pōto'i (skilled/expertise), laulōtaha (excellence), and ngāue mateaki (hard working) to achieve tangata kakato or full personhood. This might be in the sense that they need to be achieving in all aspects of life that is laulōtaha faka'atamai (mentally), laulotaha fakasino (physically), and laulotaha fakalaumālie (spiritually). Once they reach this state of achievement then they are considered tangata kakato. The expectations of tangata kakato share laulōtaha (excellence) ideals that aspire to reach full potentials and nothing less. There is no guarantee that everyone within the community can achieve the state of tangata kakato, and

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anyone can fail and not succeed. For Tongan cultural context, the process of achieving tangata kakato gets more explicit as people develop in age over time and space. There is an ontological claim that a qualitative difference exists between old and young as the person remain the same but competently built from the loto (heart) they become who they are. There is also a claim that tangata kakato can only be possible as you get older and not something that will change often whereas your younger you have more room to grow to become tangata kakato. (J. Matapo & J. Teisina, 2020).

'Ana Koloto (2000) also talks about tangata kakato as the total person where the vā is essential to sustain wellbeing and harmonious relationships physically, intellectually and spiritually -

> Tongans view life as a holistic process, the main purpose of which is the development of the tangata kakato (total person). There are three main aspects of development emphasised in the concept of tangata kakato: mo'ui fakasino (body or physical wellbeing) mo'ui faka'atamai (mind or intellectual wellbeing), Mo'ui fakalaumalie (soul or spiritual wellbeing). Inherent in this thinking about development is the belief that the individual is born to perform certain Fatongia (responsibility, duties or obligation) and to become 'aonga (useful) to their famili (family), siasi (church), and fonua (country) (p. 62).

From this idea of harmonious relationships achieved in tangata Kakato, it is important that we talk about how that is related to fonua thinking.

Fonua

Fonua is significant in the Tongan culture because it encapsulates the conceptualisations of the land, peoples, the seas and the skies, and the interdependent relationships that bind them together (Ka'ili, 2005; Mahina, 1992; Manu'atu, 2000; 'A Taufe'ulungaki, 2004; Tu'itahi, 2005). In other Pacific countries such as Samoa, Fiji, Vanuatu, Cook Islands and Aotearoa, people also refer to the fonua concept to define the 'health and wellbeing' of the Pacific community. 'Ana Taufe'ulungaki (2004) observed that the fonua concept can be used to understand the health and wellbeing of Pacific peoples as communities but not as individuals, an interpretation that is consistent with the worldviews of Pacific peoples here and abroad. Tu'itahi (2005) also added to the importance of the fonua concept, noting that

> [It] is the interdependent relationship among peoples and between people and the environment. The ultimate purpose of this relationship and exchange between the environment and humanity is to maintain harmony in sustainable ways (p. 12).

The construct of Pacific worldviews is inherent in the fonua way of thinking where there are no fragmentations of vā but a holistic worldview that links people physically, emotionally, and spiritually to the entire cosmos. As a model, fonua espouses a philosophy of the life that systematically combines both society and ecology in on-going relations of process, cycle, and exchange with one another, with sustained aims of creating harmony and beauty between people and their environment (Mahina, 1992; Teisina, 2011; Tu'itahi, 2005).

Tauhi vā

The relationship between space and time can also refer to the vā. Ka'ili (2005) uses vā to describe the social or relational space that connects people. Ka'ili suggested that vā places more emphasis on spaces that link and join people. For Tongans overseas who are related, no matter how far apart they are dispersed in physical space, they can still be sociospatially connected to one another through genealogy.

An in-depth understanding of vā refers to the space between two or more parties and their interpersonal connections (Tu'itahi, 2005). To look after the vā, or to maintain reciprocal relationships between subjects or people, is tauhi vā. To maintain such harmonious relationships, there are certain behavioural expectations involved. The persons involved in the relationships must know their fatongia roles (duties and obligations) and act accordingly. The practice of tauhi vā promotes the ultimate purpose of peaceful and harmonious relationships within the collective (Teisina, 2011). What we find consistently in these worldviews is the relationships that bind people together.

The concept of tauhi vā plays a significant role in the Tongan culture and the identity of Tongan people. Tauhi vā literally refers to maintaining and looking after reciprocal relationships connecting spaces between people genealogically or among groups who are related to one another in various ways (Helu-Thaman, 2002; Ka'ili, 2005; Tu'itahi, 2005; Vaioleti, 2011). Ka'ili (2005) further acknowledged the importance that the vā places on the space that connects people. However, to maintain such harmonious relationships there are certain

behavioural expectations involved, and the persons involved in the relationships must know their fatongia roles (responsibilities) and act accordingly. Behavioural expectations include establishing reciprocal relationships, such as 'ofa (love), faka'apa'apa (respect) and fetokoni'aki (helping one another). The practice of tauhi vā promotes the ultimate purpose of peaceful and harmonious relationships within the collective.

In relation to the education of Tongan children in Aotearoa, tauhi vā is inclusive of their learning and development. The concept of tauhi vā is one of the core values that underpins cultural identity and sense of belonging of Tongan people. Tauhi vā is nurtured from birth, through either formal or informal practices within the home and in the community. The birth of a child or a baby is one of the most significant occasions in the lives of Tongan people. When a baby is born, the importance of tauhi vā and the roles and responsibilities each member of the family and the kāinga (extended family) plays is realised. In the ECE context, understanding tauhi vā would encourage the space between the teachers and the Tongan children to connect, providing meaningful experiences that are lifelong. Within the education, it is very important that we understand and make the connections with fatafata māfana, which is an important process that tauhi vā encourages.

Fatafata māfana

The concept of māfana is experienced inwardly when one is filled with joy, gratitude, contentment and happiness. Māfana encapsulates the wholeness in the Tongan thinking and the complexities that it brings. When a baby is born, Tongan mothers (and others) are encouraged to fatafata māfana, to hold their babies close to the heart where māfana flows from within. I interpret māfana in this sense as a feeling of connectedness which ties to the emotional feelings flowing between the baby and the mother (and other caregivers/family members).

The development and the wellbeing of the Tongan child starts from when they are born. Tongan people believe that, from an early age, infants can identify māfana, knowing that māfana is what gives them a feeling of love, peace and harmony that will ensure their ideal state of wellbeing and sense of belonging. According to Glasgow and Rameka (2017), teachers should use indigenous values "to enhance and extend their pedagogical practices" (p. 92) to better serve the growing demands of Pasifika infants and toddlers within the contemporary ECE setting in Aotearoa. The point is that, for a Tongan infant/child to have a sense of belonging in an ECE centre, there must be a connection between the home setting and the ECE setting. The link must be clearly reflected in the making of a programme that is meaningful for the child, and inclusive of māfana through the language and culture that will be familiar to the child. Manu'atu (2000) described the importance of drawing from Tongan pedagogical ideas such as the notion of māfana to help make sense of the relationships that are constructed and co-constructed by Tongan people in Aotearoa.

The pedagogy of fatafata māfana will empower the vā between teachers and children to have a shared understanding of how and when to approach Tongan children in their learning through play. The use of these two concepts will afford children the opportunity to engage in va'inga that holds meaningful experiences. *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017) supports learners engaging in "meaningful interactions with people, places and things – a process that continues throughout their lifetimes" (p. 12). The possibilities fashioned by knowing these Tongan pedagogies of play will enable practitioners in ECE to stop assuming that a 'one size fits all' approach to play will work for Tongan Pasifika children who are in their care. Instead, it will afford opportunities that stand against the statistics of our Pacifica peoples in New Zealand who are failing in terms of housing, health, and education. A pedagogy of fatafata māfana and tauhi vā will help us practitioners to reconceptualise ECE practices that are meaningful and culturally appropriate and that will better understand and support our Tongan children now and in the future.

Within the context of Tongan children in education, teachers who have Tongan and Pacific children in their care should build an understanding of concepts such as tauhi vā and fatafata māfana against a backdrop of European theory and practice. Promoting such concepts will help in acknowledging what is important to Tongan/Pacific children and their families and in aiming for a more culturally responsive pedagogy. Perhaps outside the common construct of how play is perceived lies the 'difference' in thinking and being that means that it is only through Tongan knowledge and practices that teachers can make sense of howto

better approach Tongan children in their care with more understanding, humility and patience.

European concept of the self

The concept 'self' in political documents derives from a long history of European philosophical discussion. I outline some of the ideas of the major participants in this discussion here, as a beginning to understanding what is meant in contemporary documents. Devine and Irwin (2005) wrote about the whakataukī, which asks what is important? The answer is '*he tangata, he tangata, he tangata'* which can be translated to 'a person, the individual, the disaggregated mass of individuals" but the culture in which the 'tangata' has its place is a collective, not an individualistic one, and the phrase is more accurately translated as "the people, the people, the people" (Devine & Irwin, 2005, pp. 317-318). The quality of the translation depends largely on the understanding of the cultural background.

The Neo-liberal self

The Greeks, from Homer onwards, were concerned with 'man's' relationship with the Gods, who can be both indifferent and vengeful (Odyssey, 1919). Plato, however, showed an educational concern with the development of political leaders (Republic, 2007). This is an interest in some but not all selves. This interest was taken up again by Peter Abelard who saw a direct (and possibly theoretical) relationship between persons and God, which has a personal, penitential and effective tone (Devine, 2000). The popularity of Protestantism is

a side-effect of the invention of the printing press which allowed a multitude of readers to see themselves in religious literature.

Descartes, who in some ways compromised between traditional catechism and the new view of the autonomous self, argued that the head controls the body. More recent literature in Foucault (1990) and Levinas (Davis, 1996), including but not only post-structural writers, has addressed the more social nature of the self, drawing attention to the way people develop their notions of self through discourses according to the cultural norms to which they are exposed. This applies to both the educational establishment and to Tongan ECE teachers, parents, and children. The post-structural critique of the subject was foretold by Nietzsche in his rejection of the liberal 'self' as a Christian teaching and putting forward of a more empirical/phenomenological theory of the subject (Devine & Irwin, 2005; Fitzimons, 2007). The neo-liberal self-reverts to a fixed form of self.

The Fixed Self

The concept of the "subject really opened up for debate in the west when Augustine wrote his *Confessions"* (Devine & Irwin, 2005, p. 318). Augustine's idea of subjectivity sees the human mind as separate, as a self-thinking subject (O'Daly, 2008) . This contributed to the landscape of our society, which came to be dominated by Western conceptualisations of the individual developed by Immanuel Kant, who introduced the word "subject" into modern philosophy, refining the notion of subjectivity-with-consciousness that had already been

established by René Descartes (Balibar, 1994). Descartes said that conscious experience is a mode or a state of a conscious self or subject.

The representation of 'self' in ECE documents appears to derive from neo-liberal writings. The ideas of colonial discourses are good at using this representation to surrender to the particular way of thinking that results in the kinds of situations where we believe that this 'self' is what's best for us. The sense of realities of the 'self' in this representation is encouraging the type of thinking within the discourse that is divided in pieces and is individualised. There are existing theories and ideas that exist in colonial discourses that are fundamental to encouraging these types of representations within education. According to Mcleod (2010):

> Theories of colonial discourses have been fundamental to the development of postcolonialism as an academic practice. In general they explore the ways that representations and modes of perception are used as subservient to colonial rule (p. 19).

Peters (2018) agrees that the self is intimately linked with the "historical emergence of humanism as a form of pedagogy" (p. 7). The internalisation of the value of self is transparent in the Western canon of education, especially within the documentation related to Pacific peoples. The thoughts about making sure the notion of self and humanist ideals are strong enough to prevail over Pacific peoples' worldviews within education discourses are very strong. It is the kind of self that is transparent in Descartes and that resist the kind of self that is understood within the relational and holistic worldviews of Pacific peoples.

The shifting self

From the 16th century, since Descartes, the philosophical notion of self has shifted from a static conception to a 'shifting self'. A few philosophers have contributed to this shift, among them Heidegger and Levinas. Critical points relate to Martin Heidegger's shift of focus from the noun to the verb, Dasein, meaning 'to be' or 'being there', to the ever-changing, contingent historical possibility of being a human being. Levinas's views of subjectivity inspired "new ways of looking at education such as creating a new possibility for education to escape from the humanist trap of a 'fixed essence'; and provide[d] new ground for moral education albeit toward a new and very different subjectivity" (Zhao, 2012, p. 659). It is useful to look at Foucault's conception of subjectivity and his history of 'technologies of the self', along with the concept of difference developed by Derrida. Since the Enlightenment, the Western approach to human subjectivity focused on "formulating the essence or nature of the human and building actions on this knowledge" (Zhao, 2012, p. 659).

Foucault and Derrida tried to approach subjectivity differently by "deconstructing the humanist modern subject and viewing human subjectivity either as mere forms constituted by discourses and power relations, or as fragmented pieces that can never hold together" (Zhao, 2012, p. 659). The notion of *difference* in the work of Jacques Derrida comes with a broader attempt to undo the claims to what is known as 'foundationalist' thought, which is the alleged certainty with which a discourse proposes its view of the world (Barrett, 1987, p. 33). The work of

Derrida (1991, as cited in Devine & Irwin, 2005) is described as "the dissolution of the conceptual apparatus of the 'individual', the rational autonomous self of the enlightenment and liberalism and the end of the era of the essential soul" (p. 328). To find a new way forward, it is vital that we come back to the question of culture and worldview. Nakashima and Rou`e (2002, p. 10) stated that there is no sound basis for deciding that one worldview offers a superior reference point for 'reality' than another, which brings me to explore subjectivity from a Pacific perspective.

Despite more recent European philosophies tending to the nomadic, fluid, etc., policy document writers seem not to have noticed that even European notions of the self have moved on from the Augustinian/Cartesian notion of a fixed conscious, individual self. Therefore, in this review of the literature, I attempt to show, in abbreviated fashion why this research is needed.

Logic of difference

Since the Enlightenment, (G. Biesta, 2010) strongly suggests, Levinas's subjectivity made it possible to conceive of an alternative pedagogy that is profoundly different from the pedagogy of sociality, interrupting students from the "normal way of being and doing" as a "new inspiration" (Zhao, 2012, p. 660). Levinas's idea of subjectivity creates new ground for a moral education that is not fixed but acknowledges the differences that exist within, for example, the Tongan way of being and thinking.

The preoccupation of Western ontology with the logic of sameness challenges the Indigenous, Māori and Pacific ontologies which have been preoccupied with the "logic of difference" and "relationality" (T. Hoskins, 2010, p. 1).T. Hoskins (2010) explained the value of kanohi-ki-te-kanohi (face-to-face) relationships as the basis of sociality within the Māori culture, stating her priority as follows:

> My purpose for such an exploration has been to begin a process of consciously giving priority to the kanohi ki te kanohi relation as a foundation of social ethicality. Without such a prioritisation, I argue, attempts to address injustice and to develop political and cultural relationships across difference in contexts such as Aotearoa-New Zealand will founder. (p. 28)

The logic of difference is transparent within the Tongan hierarchical way of anga faka-Tonga or Tongan way of living and tauhi vā. The logic of difference is found on the idea of *fatongia* or duties and obligations. There are certain fatongia that upholds the nature of the anga faka-Tonga. Within the Tongan culture, the fatongia tells the logic of difference that exist within the nofo 'a kāinga (nuclear,extended,village) and the Tongan culture. Fatongia is the embodiment of tauhi vā to ensure harmonius relationships is maintained within the nofo 'a kainga. refers to the reciprocal relationships that connect people. Fatongia has an element of presence in the family functions that happen. For example fatongia for a fahu (dad's sister) is special within a putu or funeral because her fatongia as a fahu includes her sitting at the front of the head of the deceased. Fatongia in this case is her presence showing kanohi-ki-te-kanohi to ensure that the circle of harmonious relationships, interrelated but essential to the smooth running of the putu. If the fahu is not there then it is not complete! Every putu there is a fatongia that tells where your position is within the nofo 'a kāinga. Those differences or kehekehe is what makes the circles of interrelated harmonius

relationships are complete and achieved. The putu has great outcomes when everyone is performing their fatongia and nurturing the vā within the nofo 'a kāinga. The value of connectedness and of the vā is fundamental within the Tongan ontology and some of the conceptual frameworks such as talanoa, kakala, fonua (among others) depend on it (Ka'ili, 2005; Mahina, 1992; Teisina, 2011; Vaioleti, 2011).

The logic of difference is transparent within the Tongan hierarchical way of living. In the context of Tongan culture, this alternative way of being and doing is refreshing that emanates with the concept of *kato kakala. Kakala* refers to the Tongan fragrant flowers and *kato* is the basket that holds it. This notion of *kato kakala* signifies the notion of difference within the Tongan ontology.

Conceptually, within the *kato* or basket, there are different types of *kakala* and in this case *kakala* may be finished or unfinished, may consist of different colours and textures, may have different names, and may be made with different purposes in mind, but they are all united within this *kato.* The beauty of this collection of 'difference' is inherent in the *'alaha* or the aromatic fragrance that emerges from the collection of different kakalas when put together. This is the beauty of having the logic of difference from a Tongan perspective.

Each *kakala* or necklace made of fragrant flowers is gifted to someone to signify the relationships that tie those people together. The gifting of the *kakala* is part of taking care of the *vā* or the space between the giver and the other/s. *Tauhi vā* refers to the reciprocal relationships that connect people. The value of connectedness and the vā is fundamental within the Tongan ontology and some

of the conceptual frameworks, such as *talanoa, kakala, fonua* (among others), depend on it (Ka'ili, 2005; Teisina, 2011). Another point also is that the act of gifting or *luva* of the *kakala* is done face to face; this signifies presence and active value of *tauhi vā.* This is highlighted within the practice of talanoa which I discuss further in the next section.

Self-concept from a Pacific perspective

The difference between European and Pacific conceptions of self was highlighted by research carried out by Tamasese (2005) in a qualitative investigation into Samoan perspectives on culturally appropriate services in mental health. From a Samoan perspective, 'self' is identified as 'relational self'. Participants felt the need to understand the concept of the Samoan self before they could understand Samoan concepts of mental health and ill health. The Samoan concept of self is described as "having meaning only in relationship with other people, not as an individual" (Tamasese et al., 2005, p. 303). The conception of self "differ[s] between cultures and time periods in terms of the extent to which they are groupbased versus individually-based and the extent to which they are based on ascribed characteristics, doing, or having" (Belk, 1984, p. 754). The use of the plural word 'we' was used often by the tribe or clan to refer to their behaviours and ownerships and the singular form 'I' still referenced the group (Belk, 1984).

There are a number of research studies (within the Tongan context) carried out on the success stories of students in tertiary institutions in NZ (Kalavite, 2010); in families and the kāinga context (Lātū, 2009; MacIntyre, 2008; Pau'uvale, 2011;

Vaioleti, 2011); and in the education context (Manu'atu, 2000; Teisina, 2011; Vaioleti, 2011). These success stories emphasise the importance of the collective support of people who experience 'success'. Ewalt and Mokuau (1995), writing from a Hawaiian cultural context, said that the individual is viewed in the context of relationships as well and that "the pronounced value of group identity and cohesiveness among the diverse cultures of the region is defined by values of collective affiliation rather than by individualism" (p. 40). Gilbert (2005) contended that "the idea of people as self-contained, individual, thinking 'subjects' is giving way to a focus on relationships, synergies, and connectedness" (p. 17). "There is ecological flexibility or fluidity in one's ethnic identity and in the multi-ethnic community to which one belongs" (Anae, 2010, p. 14). Discussing a Fijian conception of self, Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba (2012) also emphasised the importance of relationship as "intersubjectively constituted by past experiences, imagination, the environment, emotions that occur through remembering, and each person's bodily and verbal responses to one another…" (p. 9).

How do we articulate the 'self' into a communal way of 'living' and 'knowing' as leaders and teachers in ECE so we can make meaning of our documentation within our practice? Nineteenth century ideas and phenomenological ideas were of a universal timeless subject which was at the source of how one made sense of the world. To Foucault, who did not agree with this, and other philosophers in the 1960s, it was problematic because this conception of the subject fixed the status quo and attached people to specific identities that could never be changed.

Foucault's conception of 'subjectivity' and the 'technologies of the self' articulates the idea that the subject constitutes itself in different forms at different times through varied practices (Kelly, 2013, p. 513). A different conception of the 'subject', which comes from Descartes and Plato, believes in the inherent separateness of soul from body, and Plato in *Alcibiades* says that the "self is the soul, a separate entity temporarily united withy the body during this lifetime" (Kelly, 2013, p. 514).

Collin Morris (Morris, 1972) traced the neo-liberal form of self through Protestantism and Peter Abelard. Protestantism posited a direct relationship between the person and God, cutting out the priest and the church. Much of the confessional and moral implications of this relationship can be seen in various educational exhortations to self-review and self-improvement. There are however other traditions in the 'Western' canon.

2.3 Tensions in the notion of the self as presented in official documents

'Self' is widely used in official documents and can cause great confusion for those who come from a cultural context in which the notion of 'self' has little significance. Within the context of the education sector, 'self' can mean a lot of different things. For example there is the 'self' review, 'self' report, 'self' evaluation, 'self' reflection, etc. In recent times, in research on self-review, there has been evidence to "suggest confusion exists" as to what this term means within ECE (Grey, 2010, p. 29). If teachers with Western backgrounds are finding this concept confusing, then it is likely to cause just as much or more confusion for people from Pacific

backgrounds. It is useful to look further, therefore, into what constitutes 'self' in the history of ECE in Aotearoa.

The history of early childhood context in Aotearoa shows that ECE has gone through a lot of changes over the past 30 years due to social, economic, and political factors. ECE started in 1889 in Dunedin in the South Island, aiming to cater for children of working parents from poor backgrounds (Hughes, 1989). This idea was driven by Christian and humanitarian motivations. Similar sentiments underpinned the first childcare centre established by the Catholic Church in Wellington, in 1908 (McLachlan, 2011). The Ministry of Education (1996) stated that the first ECE services in NZ had the primary goal of catering for disadvantaged children.

The establishment of Kōhanga Reo ECE in the 1980s was part of the educational initiatives designed to revitalise Māori language and culture. Pacific cultures used this same model to build their own ECE centres in Aotearoa in order to maintain their own languages and cultures (Teisina, 2011). Since the 1990s, ECE services have increased in number and variety to cater for the demand for ECE services to cater for children of different cultural and social backgrounds (McLachlan, 2011) and in response to the perception that children are disadvantaged if they are not attending ECE services. Loveridge and McLachlan (2009) contend that the landscape of early childhood education in Aotearoa has become more complex in response to:

historical, cultural and political factors, as well as a response to dominant and emerging theories of how children learn. [ECE] has variously promoted social regulation, philanthropic concern for children, support for mothers, equality for women, cultural assimilation and survival, and economic outcomes (p. 22).

Implicit in the discourse is the number of educational initiatives that are designed with government support to target Māori and Pasifika peoples in order to improve their educational outcomes (Stuart, 2011, p. vii). The theme that underlies this history of ECE is the more-or-less subtle implication that ECE is provided to compensate for disadvantage. The 'self' in this context has political implications.

Education policy for Pacific peoples in Aotearoa

Ko e ako 'a e kakai Pasifika: Pacific Islands Peoples' Education in Aotearoa New Zealand: *Towards the Twenty-first Century* (Ministry of Education, 1996) was designed to raise the quality of the education received by Pacific peoples in Aotearoa. This was historic because it was the first time Tongan words were used for the title of the plan (Tongati'o, 1998). The first *Pasifika Education Research Guidelines* and the first *Pasifika Education Plan* were released in 2001 (Ministry of Education, 2001) The second time any Pacific language was used in the title of a document was in the following year with *Te Au Kite Pu'apiga, Useful Resources: Pasifika Education* in 2002, followed by *Picking up the Pace* (Phillips et al., 2002), a literacy project in South Auckland decile one schools. In the same year, *Issues of Participation* was released by Turoa et al. (2002) and a report on

Pacific peoples in tertiary education by Anae et al. (2002). In 2003, *Pasifika Education Research Toolkits* documents (Ministry of Education, 2003b) were released, alongside the sustainability of professional development in literacy and its evaluation documents (Ministry of Education, 2003a). Then a statistical snapshot of Pasifika peoples in NZ (Minisry of Education, 2004) was released with the focus shifting in 2005 to the parents which showed through the *Pacific Islands School Community Parent Liaison Project* (Ministry of Education, 2005). There were more literature reviews on the effectiveness of engagement of Pasifika parents and community in education (Fraser, 2006) and at the same time the Pasifika Education plan and it's monitoring report was released in the following year. In 2008 there were more literature reviews published on the experiences of Pasifika learners in classroom (Ferguson et al., 2008). The third time a Pasifika language was used in a title was in 2009 with *Ua Aoina le Manongi e le lolo: Pasifika Schooling Improvement Research* (Amituanai-Toloa et al., 2009). *The Pasifika Education Plan* and *Pasifika Tertiary Students in Education Report* were also released in the same year. The following year the use of Pasifika concepts was inherent in the title of *Teu le Vā: Relationships Across Research and Policy in Pasifika Education* (Airini et al., 2010). The concept of 'priorities' started to appear in the titles of these official Pasifika documents such as *Pasifika Education Research Priorities: Using Research to Realise our Vision for Pasifika Learners* (Ministry of Education, 2012). The policy documents of the Pasifika education plan for the next five years were released in 2013, along with another publication on the *Analysis of Recent Pasifika Education Research literature to Inform and Improve Outcomes for Pasifika Learners* (Chu et al.,

2013). In the same year, *Understanding special education from the perspectives of Pasifika families* by Mauigoa-Tekene et al. (2013) was released. In 2014, the *Pasifika Education Plan Progress Report Against Quantitative Indicators for 2013-2017* was published (Ministry of Education, 2013). In 2018 the Samoan concept of Tapasā was included in the title of this big document *Tapasā: Cultural Competencies Framework for Teachers of Pacific Learners* (Ministry of Education, 2018). The *Pacific Evidence Brief 2019* was released alongside the *Pacific education action plan for 2020-2030 (*Ministry of Education, 2020a). At the same time, *Supporting Research and Community Voice* was released (Ministry of Education, 2020b) and research to understand the features of quality Pacific bilingual education appeared alongside the *Review of Best Practices* (May, 2020). [This list is adapted from the list of the publications available from the Ministry of Education and (Matapo, 2021)]

According to the Education Review Office report titled *How Do Leaders Support Improvement in Pacific Early Childhood Services*, "leaders of Pacific early childhood services viewed their role as custodians of the Pacific cultural practice within the context of their centre" (Education Review Office, 2015, p. 1) . It is clear that the leaders and teachers are mostly driven by their aspirations to maintain their Pacific knowledge and values through their children at a very young age, beginning at the early childhood services.

This invites us to rethink the role of the philosopher of education in relation to policy documents (Snook, 2013). It is essential to know about official policy documents and what they 'mean' in the semantic sense but it is much more important to find out what they mean in "the sense of how they will, if implemented, affect real students and the wider society. As we learned to say 'Whose interests will be served?'" (Snook, 2013, p. 196). Te One (2010) contended that "national educational aspirations, teachers' advocacy for children's rights to high quality ECE would be more effective if it were more politically focused and directed towards policy makers" (p.13). Perhaps this is an impossible aim, the higher risk, though, is that increased policy interest and activity would lead to the same sort of cultural appropriation and tokenism that is apparent with relation to Māori and that is reflected in *Te Whāriki*.

In Aotearoa, the official curriculum document for the ECE sector is *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017). With respect to the tangata whenua of this land and engaging with our bicultural practice, we need to acknowledge our connections to the Treaty of Waitangi. However, a document that highly values the bicultural practice of Western and Māori cultures does pose a risk of providing prescribed outcomes for those who perhaps do not fit within those paradigms. Although there are significant concurrences between Māori and Tongan worldviews, the already suspect interpretations of Māori viewpoints of *Te Whāriki* do not necessarily represent Tongan ways of thinking and acting.

Te Whāriki – The New Zealand early childhood curriculum

In Aotearoa, the official curriculum document for the ECE sector is *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017). This is a guiding document that helps teachers to implement the curriculum that is appropriate for the context of their ECE setting. *Te Whāriki*'s curriculum provides guidance on the ways in which teachers can support and implement the curriculum within their practices that are vital for the development of the infants, toddlers, and young children. It also provides support for teachers on their daily planning, assessment and evaluation in the ECE setting. *Te Whāriki* places emphasis on a bicultural curriculum using Māori and English texts throughout the document. It advocates that, "in early childhood settings, all children should be given the opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding of the cultural heritages of both partners to the Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti o Waitangi" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 9). *Te Whāriki* curriculum document also provides the founding principles that "children grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body, and spirit" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 5).

Whāriki is a metaphor used in this document; it refers to a woven mat. A whāriki can be interpreted as one woven mat but if we dig deeper into the construction that makes a whāriki, then we find that there are many strands of pandanus or, in this case, harakeke (flax) used to make the whāriki. Forsyth and Leaf (2010) said that the whāriki provides an interesting space for us to make connections and to explore the frontiers and boundaries of education . Engaging with our

bicultural practice, we need to acknowledge our connections to the Treaty of Waitangi by showing a commitment to deliver curriculum pedagogies with cultural respect (Devine et al., 2012). Rameka (2018)uses her own Māori metaphor of whatu kākahu, which

> 'involves weaving the Kaupapa Māori theory elements of conscientisation, resistance, transformative praxis and Māori ways of knowing and being, across and within historical, cultural and educational paradigms and understandings, to fashion assessment kākahu that afford comfort, warmth and flexibility in a contemporary early childhood context. (p. 329)

The ECE curriculum document *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017) advocates the importance of relationships. One of the foundation principles of Te Whāriki states that "children learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places, and things" (Ministry of Education, 2017). For Tongan ECE, 'reciprocal relationships' may not be the equivalent of the Māori and other Pacific cultures mentioned in the *Te Whāriki*. The reciprocity of relationships in Tongan culture refers to the concepts of vā. Tongan ontologies and epistemologies are placed within a collective orientation made up of tauhi vā or reciprocal relationships with our people, connected to the fonua (land), genealogies and the entire cosmos (Devine et al., 2012; Teisina, 2011; Tu'itahi, 2005). Consequently, it is important that Tongan values explain a practice that is inclusive of vā (relationships) and connectedness with a profound cosmological backstory/history underpinning traditional practices (Helu-Thaman, 2002; Kalavite, 2010; Manu'atu, 2000; Teisina, 2011; Vaioleti, 2011). Even though it is an advantage to refer to *Te Whāriki* in ECE, some of the principles fail to capture the essence of Tongan cultural values and traditional practices. Tongan culture is described and inscribed in the lived experiences of Tongan people and how

they live; it is the system of relationships or tauhi vā that upholds the Tongan social structure.

Tongan pedagogy of play

Play is a well-researched concept within Western contexts. Literature in this area informs teachers about supporting the ways some children engage with play. However, there has not been much research from a Tongan Pacific perspective where 'play' is situated within cultural practice in ECE centres. The problem, as experienced by practitioners like myself, is that the official (English-based) documents, such as *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017), do not acknowledge the expression of Tongan ideas about play. Drawing upon Tongan language and culture, this section identifies some "core values" and concepts, such as tauhi vā and fatafata māfana (both explained shortly), that influence how Tongan people view 'meaningful' play within the context of Tongan ECE. Tauhi vā, as a process, encourages fatafata māfana, a pedagogy of connectedness from a Tongan perspective that can assist teachers who are trying to grasp Pacific values so they can establish culturally appropriate, respectful and responsive pedagogies for Pacific children in their care.

Perspectives on play

Play is part of childhood and growing up. It has also been recognised as a natural way that children learn about their worlds (Friedman, 2011; Leaupepe, 2011). Friedman (2011) contended that "children are born ready to experience, to learn, and to make sense of their interactions with people and things in their

environment" (p. 98) which becomes their playground. Much of what we understand about the play of very young babies is derived from the observations and ideas of Piaget and Freud. They believed that play is valuable for children because it helps them to cope with the frustrations of everyday life (Gaskins, 2014) and profoundly, for a child, play is life. If play is life for a young child, then understanding the concept of play is fundamental in children's learning development (Hedges, 2003). Meckley (as cited in Wood & Attfield, 2005) said that play tends to focus on the process of the players instead of the adults. Extending on Piaget's ideas about play, Vygotsky (1967) viewed play as the most important activity in early childhood "placing children in the Zone of Proximal Development" (Gaskins, 2014, p. 14), where children's behaviour during play was believed to support their ability to gain more "complex cognitive understanding". Consequently, Bateson (1955) wrote specifically about 'group play' and the "social mechanisms needed to sustain it through interaction" (Gaskins, 2014, p. 15). It is important to note, however, that Dockett and Fleer (2002) believed that "play cannot be defined by activities, rather it is an attitude of mind" (p. 14). The way play is conceptualised by these theorists as being 'individual' or 'social' calls for a closer look at the social, cultural and the political context within which 'play' is positioned.

Play is a universal activity although it varies across different cultural contexts (Leaupepe, 2011). According to Wood and Attfield (2005), play holds multiple meanings for adults and children in different contexts. It is further understood that play should not be fixed and therefore cannot be boxed up into categories.

Perhaps play is something that is not so easy to define because it is complex and is dependent on the context children are in. Most theories about play have researched Western contexts from Western perspectives (Dockett & Fleer, 2002). So what does *Te Whāriki* say about the notion of play?

As a curriculum document, *Te Whāriki* is constructed on the founding principle that "children grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body, and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 5). It has been 25 years since *Te Whāriki* was first distributed as the national curriculum, and it made history on the educational map. Its "durability lies in a conceptual framework that interweaves educational theory, political standpoints and a profound acknowledgement of the importance of culture" (Te One, 2010, p. 30). The new version of *Te Whāriki* was released in 2017 and is still a strong advocate of children's active exploration of the environment where the value of play is found in a meaningful setting. *Te Whāriki* also recognises the importance of spontaneous play in which children learn to make sense of their world (Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017). These references are quite specific, and White et al. (2009) contended that play is ingeniously interwoven into *Te Whāriki"* yet Tongan and other Pasifika pedagogies of play are not represented. However, the social aspects of play that I go on to describe next draw closer to Tongan pedagogies of play. The social features of play were recognised by Bronfenbrenner who believed that children learn and develop within the social context of their environment (Berk, 2009) and this is linked to *Te Whāriki's*

socialcultural approach (Ministry of Education, 1996). Friedman (2011) further highlighted the importance of allowing holistic experiences for the children within the context of play and learning to avoid the fragmentations of the two. Thus, play can contribute to the wellbeing of children's holistic learning and development. Play brings positive vibes and strength in children's learning, so it is important that we keep that momentum going by fostering children's interests using a play-based curriculum where teachers follow the child's lead. Nixon and Aldwinckle (2002, p. 80) said that "in curricula today play is valued for its contributions to the development of the whole child" (p. 80).

Children learn a great deal when playing or working in groups because play can be used as a learning opportunity to foster social competence and peer relationships. Piaget advocated the importance of children's learning through the process rather than the product (Dockett & Fleer, 2002). Therefore, tauhi vā, as a process, contributes to culturally responsive pedagogies for Tongan infants and toddlers that begin with understanding how play is placed within the context of Akoteu Tonga (Tongan ECE).

Play within the Tongan context

From a Tongan (Pasifika) perspective, play is defined according to the core values that make up Tongan identity. Play is translated as va'inga within the Tongan language. Va'inga is inclusive of how Tongan children and parents nurture and look after the vā or the sacred relationships that exist within the group. Va'inga within the context of Tongan children may differ from other Pasifika cultures because there are layers of relationships that take into

considerations the dynamics of the family. For instance, there is a sacred vā that exists between brothers and sisters (or cousins, who are still considered brothers and sisters) that therefore decides the nature of play in this specific context. Other examples of va'inga were connected to homely roles and duties while going to the plantations with their parents, or fishing for food for the families, etc. The obligations and roles in different contexts within village living were woven together with their ako (teaching and learning) va'inga. Perhaps that is why play is so complex to define for us Tongans, because it was never disconnected from our everyday learning and practices, which made it seem so serious to others; however, it was about the process of providing meaningful va'inga that built not only skills and knowledge, but also families and communal living.

Other Pasifika cultures may have different perceptions of what play is within their specific cultural context. According to Leaupepe (2011, p. 9) "Pasifika early childhood teachers' views on play are under-represented" (p. 9). There is a need for more research on how play is perceived from outside the 'common' conceptions of what play should be for our Pasifika children. This would allow other teachers who have Tongan and Pasifika children in their care to acknowledge that the worldview they use to interpret play comes from their own contexts, and to consider and design meaningful play experiences for Pasifika children drawing on more culturally appropriate understandings of play. Pau'uvale (2011) and Teisina (2011) believed that culture is central to the learning of Tongan children in ECE. Therefore, in order to build success within

Tongan ECE, the 'quality' of education that our children are exposed to should be connected to the Tongan culture, such as the holistic process of tauhi vā.

2.5 Puni: Conclusion

My intention is not to limit the conception of subjectivity to one way of seeing it but, rather, to explore the various conceptualisations of subjectivities that might contribute to building an understanding for them in the particular discourse to which they are subjected.

The identification of Tongan subjectivity and the 'core values' has philosophical importance as it is developing its own subjectivities with a different ontological position that Western paradigm is not able to capture. The 'difference' that could be made by 'knowing' of the Tongan and the Pālangi worldviews is not a matter of remedying a deficit. This 'difference' could also be a site of hope with tauhi vā as a space to connect and maintain a cohesive front in educational leadership. Bush and Middlewood (2010) articulated how leaders serving in diverse populations should have an understanding of the contexts so they could be reflected in the designs of educational programmes. We ought to rethink leadership for Pasifika people and use the people themselves as a source of knowledge, rather than as target, and enable them to contribute to changing the ways of thought of European and other non-Tongan leaders who have Tongan and Pasifika people in their care. The role of the European-educated Pacific leader with a strong grasp of Pacific values is to take one step closer towards

understanding and establishing culturally appropriate, respectful and responsive pedagogies in the endeavour of langa ngāue – building success in Aotearoa.

3. Hala Fakahilihili: Introducing the Theoretical Groundwork

Hala fakahilihili: Ko e hala faka'osi ia pea fai e hehele. Kuopau ke lalanga fakahilihili pe kosi'i, ke faingofua hono vete pea kamata e fala fo'ou.

(Hala fakahilihili is the last hala before cutting the end of the panadanus or lou'akau of the existing fala to make way to start a new fala with the existing strands of pandanus)

3.1. Fasi: Introduction

These stories, this language, these ways, and this land are the only valuables we can give you – but life is in them for those who know how to ask and how to learn. (Cajete, 1994, p. 41)

This chapter theorises and describes my research methodology and how my research project will be carried out. In Aotearoa New Zealand, there has been the emergence of more emancipatory forms of research with Māori and Pacific identities that both utilise and resist Western traditions of research (T. K. C. Hoskins, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Vaioleti, 2006). Carl Mika asserted that there is a "particular set of values and conceptualisations of time, space, subjectivity, gender relations and knowledge" that underpin Western research (Mika, 2013, p. 61). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), in *Decolonizing Methodologies*, described this as "research through imperial eyes" (p. 19): it holds an authoritative

voice, marginalising the stories of the Other. Seeing things differently signals that

there is not one way of seeing the world: there are other ways of seeing the world.

While it is important to note the differences between seeing and being, it is also
important for those who are involved in education or early childhood education

to:-

> recognise that there are different perspectives, that the work we do
> (whether as practitioners or parents or policy makers or researchers)
> always takes a particular perspective – and that therefore choices – or
> judgements of value – are always being made from which flow enormous
> implications in terms of theory and practice. (Dahlberg et al., 2007, p. 119)

This research contributes to a growing body of work by Tongan and Pasifika

researchers based on a 'different' (that is, a Tongan) way of seeing the world.

Sanga (2004) supported Pacific research in the sense that it should be built on

the basis of Pacific thinking and being. For us, European theory is the other,

differing from our own forms of socialisation. This research aims to be 'aonga

(meaningful/useful) in the sense that it will be of great use to Tongan and Pacific

academics but can also be extended to assist those of other cultures who may

be engaging with Tongan/Pacific peoples within their care. This illustrates the

fluidity of possibilities and the openness of potentialities of subjectivities present

within our own way of thinking and being if used in the right frame.

I want to engage with both Tongan philosophy and European philosophy (without conflating the two) to help understand, clarify, and explain Pacific philosophies – as, for instance, do (T. K. C. Hoskins, 2010; Lafitani, 2011; Mika, 2013; Smith, 1999; Stewart, 2007). In this research we reject modernist forms of European thinking, i.e., those that claim universal truth, but embrace post-structuralist ideas which acknowledge difference. Modernist thinking is about universal truth and the Enlightenment idea of 'man'. Modernism lies behind the universal kind of 'official belief' that one system can be set up. Bauman (1993) described the "widely shared view of modernity as the first universal civilization" (p. 210) that tends to use the difference to deepen the separation between itself and the rest of the world (p. 215). Research, then, can become challenging to conventional notions of research if it is based on "epistemological issues that move beyond the limitations of modernist paradigms…" (Stewart, 2007, p. 7). Kelly et al. (1998) suggested that the modernist approach means

> giving up certain freedoms in return for which there are provided some universal objectives, some order and known facts that can be discovered, which is so nihilistic that there is no meaning since there is no context. (p. 137)

If there is no context then there is no learning, there is no meaning, there is nothing new but the same everything, there is no new knowledge, there is only one way. This idea informs the kind of modernist thinking of the competitive environment that is created by a belief in universal truths and reality, which makes no sense to those who have a different sense of realities. Moss and Dahlberg (2008) referred to the "values what regulatory modernity finds problematic: complexity and multiplicity, subjectivity and context, provisionality and

uncertainty" (p. 7). To apply this thinking to this research, is to understand that in order to conduct meaningful research, context is key to claiming the Tongan/Pasifika epistemology and ontological thinking and being, and to how this research has been carried out. I give you, the reader, a language with which to think about Tongan philosophy; this is the position from which to stand/think/write. This research is aligned with the aspirations of Blair (2015, p. 475) to encourage the use of indigenous knowledge in research: –

> Embedding and centering Indigenous worldviews allows us to frame our research to enable our voices and to deliver tangible outcomes to our communities, the core, the essence of another way.

The problem, as experienced by ECE practitioners, is that the official documents do not encourage the expression of Tongan ideas concerning subjectivity. The tensions that arise as a consequence between European theory and Tongan practice give rise to confusion and misunderstanding. In this research I aim to clarify and critique the European theories of the subject that lie behind ECE documentation, including *Te Whāriki*; and to clarify Tongan ideas on subjectivity which influence the behaviour of Tongan teachers and children. My research aims to add to the emancipatory work of Tongan and Pacific researchers from a post-structuralist viewpoint, articulating an indigenous position for a broader audience. In addition, I explore how the resources of academic thought and research contribute to the education of Tongan children within the context of Tongan culture. The task throughout this research, and especially from my position as a researcher, is to contribute to Tongan philosophic ways of thinking and writing.

Throughout this research I draw on traditional Tongan narratives and talanoa to delineate Tongan ontology and the Tongan epistemic world. I also draw upon the works of philosophers including Foucault (on genealogy) and Levinas (on totality and infinity) and lyotard (differend). My analysis of these Western philosophers may differ from those who come from a non-Tongan, non-Pacific or nonindigenous background. CDA is used to investigate how our experiences of subjectivities in practice and in texts arise out "of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 132).

In this research I explore the contributions of talanoa and the work of these philosophers, as well as articulating CDA in the study of Tongan subjectivity in ECE. The next section explains the focus of this research in more detail.

Research questions

This study aims to investigate the notion of subjectivity, comparing and linking notions of 'self' in official documents on the one hand and the understandings of Tongans in New Zealand on the other. The focus is on the relationships between the conceptions of 'self' in the documentation and how teachers practice in ECE centres. In Tongan epistemology, the interplay of mind, body and soul, self and collective, space and temporality, subjectivity and objectivity, provide complex notions of how one sees the world. This complexity is an indication of 'difference'

in thinking and being. For the researcher, explaining this can be a difficult and hesitant task of "bringing existing parameters of thought and behaviour into consciousness" (Devine & Irwin, 2005, p. 317). Such an undertaking has the potential to be particularly important in institutions that have Pacific children and their families in their care. These research questions aim to guide this research:

1. How can educators or practitioners facilitate the expression of Tongan values in Tongan ECE in NZ? (Focusing on the concept of subjectivity or the self.)

2. What is the effect of the tension between Tongan ideas of subjectivity and official expectations, as they affect understandings of 'self' and the professional practices that emerge from ideas of self?

In the next section I present further discussion of my position as a researcher coming from the Tongan indigenous paradigm of 'Api conceptual thinking that informs my thinking and being.

3.2 Underpinning theoretical ideas:

This section looks at research methodological ideas that align culturally with our Tongan values and belief system. Our ontologies and epistemologies are placed within a collective orientation made up of tauhi vā, or reciprocal relationships with our people, and connected to the fonua (land), genealogies and the entire cosmos (Devine et al., 2012; Teisina, 2011; Tu'itahi, 2005). In this research,

Tongan values are essential for creating a culturally appropriate research framework that is inclusive of vā (relationships) and fatafata māfana connectedness (HeluThaman, 2002; Kalavite, 2014; Pau'uvale, 2011; Teisina, 2011; Tu'itahi, 2005; Vaioleti, 2006) and meaningful.

'Api Conceptual Thinking

'API FAKALANGI - SPIRITUAL HOME
'oku 'i ai e 'api 'oku 'alu kiai hono laumalie kae nofo 'a e sino i mamani.

KAUNGA'API-BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS Nurturing relationships with your neighbours and the other. 'Apitanga refers to people coming together in camps.etc

'APISIA - FUNERAL
'Apisia - When one passes away or funeral and your spirit returns to the 'api faka langi in the heaven

'API - WEDDING
'Api - Sacred Ritual of the wedding couple for the first time, two become one bound by blood.

'API SIASI - CHURCH
'Api Siasi - Church context where most of the Tongan cultural traditions are guided by Christian values.

FONUA -PREGNANT
'Api - is the home for the baby where fonua is located in the womb of the mother.

'APIAKO - EDUCATION
'Apiako - home is the first school,and then they leave for formal school known as 'apiako.

'API - HOME & PLANTATIONS
-'Api Kolo is the place where child is born in and nurtured in the Tongan culture. 'Api 'uta plantations provide food - ngaue for the kainga and fullfill fatongia obligations.('api tukuhau)

'API 'A FAFINE
you can tell the success of a home through the works of the mothers - showcasing koloa i falehanga

Figure 1: Api Framework

'Api refers to our home in Tonga where life begins. 'Api in this research refers to the foundational place where we start to naturally engage with the concepts of fonua, ngāue, kakala and tauhi vā. 'Api internalises the essence of being Tongan. 'Api is our local, 'api is our loto, 'api is our fatu, 'api is our fonua, 'api is our place

of strength and is used in this research to magnify the epistemological, ontological and axiological importance of being and becoming Tongan in Aotearoa. For this research 'api will be used as a conceptual thinking that importantly recentre Tongan thinking and being that is often invisible in western thinking. 'Api is the foundation of strong Tongan identity, rich in Tongan core values like faka'apa'apa (respect). Sacred vā, rules and tapu have to be considered in the makeup of 'api which are included in the ako of the collective. With ako comes the significance of the social and moral values embedded within the teaching and learning of the collective. These values of ako are found within the thinking of the tangata from a collective place of strength that is sacred and relational. The place where tangata Tonga is situated takes precedence over the reality of an individual's life existence. The collective place of 'api demonstrates the inseparability of Tongan axiology, ontology and epistemology.

Nabobo-Baba (2008, p. 141) from a Fijian, Pacific perspective discusses the challenges on carrying our research among indigenous peoples in the Pacific : -

> One of the most powerful of these is the unchecked and careless use of frames that do not take into account languages and Indigenous knowledge protocols, philosophies and principles, especially where and when their own knowledges and tribal issues are researched

For indigenous peoples, Chew (2019, p. 1) agrees that language is meant to be practiced in conjunction with the rituals of ceremonial contexts. Chew (2019) stated the importance of using metaphors in research : -

…. upholding metaphors for language work which reflect Indigenous epistemologies, we become guided by a sense of hope for the continuance of language. (p.1)

Drawing on other philosophical ideas

It is important to note, however, that this research is not confined to Tongan philosophy alone. For instance, I will draw on Smith's (1999) idea of decolonising methodologies, Tamasese's idea of a relational self (2005) and Wilson's (2008) idea of a relational paradigm from an indigenous perspective resisting a 'universal' take on subjectivity. Linda Tuhiwai Smith said that the decolonisation of methodologies "has not meant a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge. Rather, it is about centering our concerns and worldviews and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes" (Smith, 1999, p. 41). The Tongan worldview on research aligns with other indigenous groups such as the Māori worldview on Kaupapa Māori. Kaupapa Māori shares a similarity with the views of Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) on research:

> We have a different epistemological tradition that frames the way we see the world, the way we organize ourselves in it, the questions we ask, and the solutions we seek. (p. 230)

Fundamental to this development of method is the work of Tongan academics such as Futa Helu (1999), Tā Vā by Mahina (1992),Talanoa by Vaioleti (2006), the Fonua model by Tu'itahi (2005), Mālie and Māfana by (Manu'atu, 2000) and the Kakala by Helu-Thaman (1993) amongst others. Such work has encouraged Pacific academics in the field of education to be courageous about putting their own thinking into perspective and articulating their own epistemologies in the

research world. I briefly explain each of these methodological ideas that have contributed to the way this research is conducted.

Tongan philosophical ideas

Katinia si'oto sei manakoa

(Gardenia my favourite sei)

'Alaha kapui ai 'e si'ete 'ofa

(The fragrance that captures my love)

Ha sino mai ho'o to'onga

(Your every move occupy my thoughts)

Kae vaifaa 'a lo'i fofonga

(As these tears keep falling like a waterfall)

This verse is extracted from a composition by the late Queen Salote (who was the Ruler of Tonga – Tupou the Third) which she wrote about the loss of her husband (Taumoefolau, 2019). Queen Salote is still to this day considered one of the most respected and famous poets in Tongan history. *Katinia* is used metaphorically to represent her late husband which she termed her *sei manakoa* or her favourite *sei*. Traditionally, the *sei* is the flower that a woman puts on her ear when there is a special function or occasion that she wants to attend, to make herself feel and look extra special. *Sei* signals a strong woman with confidence, who is proud of the choices that she makes, and the preferences she has, and it portrays inner beauty. In this verse she is internalising the sei as her husband because sei in the material form which often comes in the way we use the art of

heliaki. Heliaki refers to the essence of metaphorical languages embedded in the formations of ta'anga or songs that signal the mulitplicities and the critical perspectives beyond the literal meaning of written words. Heliaki expressions hold deep connections and relational understanding that unite the living world and the spiritual realm of thinking. Heliaki is a way of understanding the world through the discourse of ta'anga or words that articulate the other. Heliaki is used frequently by the Queen Salote in her ta'anga and songs to portray the relational thinking and being in the Tongan cultural context.

This verse metaphorically represents the discourse of where the poet is situated, how her worldview is connected to the *fonua* (land), '*akau* (flowers/trees), *kakai* (peoples) and the entire cosmos. This is intrinsic in the Tonga epistemic. These words of the late Queen describe conceptual thinking that links the physical, cognitive and emotional elements that resist Descartes' (1637) thinking on the separation of the mind and body. As a Tongan language tutor, when I teach this particular song to a group of keen people who want to learn the Tongan language within the context of Aotearoa, it takes them to another level of meaning making within the Tongan language and culture. These adult students have heard of this song so many times before but never really taken notice of it because they did not really understand the lyrical meaning of the song. But when they start to learn about what the language of this verse means within the discourse, and get to understand the meaning of these words, it makes them love this song even more, and then they continue to relive the experience with their families. It signals what powerful understanding and meaningful practices can do for our people and, importantly, how they can be carried out within this context of *ako* (teaching and

learning) in Aotearoa. I briefly explain each of these methodological ideas that have contributed to the way this research is conducted. In addition, I explain the *ngāue* metaphor, linking it to the fonua model which was initiated as a contribution to Tongan research methodology.

Fonua

The *fonua* concept refers to the land, people and the relationships that binds them together with the entire cosmos (Tu'itahi, 2005). The *fonua* concept includes the stages which are interconnected with each other throughout the life cycle and which represent the connectedness of concepts in living and language. When a baby is in the mother's womb, that place is called the *fonua.* Then, the baby is born into this land and their *fonua* or the umbilical cord is cut and buried in the *fonua.* Then this baby or person grows up, forming relationships with the family, extended family and people which are bound by the *vā* (the relationship between people that is affirmed by the space between people). Then, this person eventually dies and returns to the cemetery which is called the *fonualoto,* translated as the land within the land. And it is believed that their spirit is then uplifted to the heavens which is another *fonua 'o e tala'ofa.*

Ngāue

Ngāue as a concept holds as one of its tenets the cogency of *anga faka-Tonga* (Tongan way) that constructs our own understanding of the Tongan ontological and epistemological way of *anga faka-Tonga. Ngāue,* as a noun, literally refers to the place of work or practice; as a verb, it can be interpreted as working,

practising, studying.etc. *Ngāue* as a concept refers to all of the gifts presented inside the *taumafa kava* (royal kava ceremony) circle which includes kava plants, sugar canes, pigs, and '*umu* baskets (food baked in an underground oven). *Ngāue* is inherent in the everyday lives of Tongan people, encapsulating everyday practice holistically, whether it is *toutai,* or fishing in the ocean, *fangamanu,* or feeding the animals, *ngoue,* or planting in the plantations, *ngāue pa'anga,* or working for money, *ako,* or studying at school: all come under the concept of *ngāue* (see Teisina, 2012). Hence the importance of *ngāue* is already illustrated in its position within the *taumafa kava* circle*.*

Conceptually, when we look at the *ngāue*, automatically we make the connection that it is from the *fonua,* therefore we can declare that the *ngāue* is the *fonua.* The connection between these concepts reflects the interconnection between ideas and thinking within the Tongan world: it is not a fragmented world but it is interconnected, which is reflected in the language and culture. *Ngāue* is not *ngāue* if it is not connected with the *fonua* and *fonua* is not *fonua* if *ngāue* is not involved. They must go together to represent a strong Tongan identity.

Kakala

Konai Helu developed the *kakala* framework to help contextualise her teaching and learning within the context of the university (Helu-Thaman, 1993). *Kakala* in the Tongan context refers to the garland of fragrant flowers that includes a process of *toli,* which is gathering the appropriate flowers, *tui,* which includes weaving those flowers to make a garland, and *luva,* which is presenting and sharing the *kakala. Toli* include the understanding of what one is aiming for, so

as a researcher one would be gathering appropriate data that will eventually be used to weave a beautiful *kakala*, worthy of being shared with the people involved in the research. *Kakala* requires certain cultural knowledge and skills to weave the *kakala,* to ensure that the kakala flowers are hierarchically proportional in sizes and textures, and fit for the context where the *kakala* is to be situated. The *kakala* framework is widely used by Tongan and Pacific researchers all around the world. The philosophical characteristics of the Tongan conceptual thinking is inherent in the 'knowing' of what holds value and the essence of our sense of belonging that ties us to these conceptual ideas of *fonua*, *ngāue* and *kakala* (among others).

History of the present

Michel Foucault's work in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* stressed the value of history and the history of values and ideas that connect the past with the present (Foucault (2005).This is significant because it opposes the tendency of neoliberal discourse towards an amnesia about how the conditions of today are a consequence of the past. Like Foucault, I use 'the genealogy of the present' as a lens so we can make the connection and understand why we see the world the way we that we do (Garland, 2014). Foucault's idea of the 'history of the present' does not mean that the approaches used in the past constitute the present or that holds the same value as if it was constructed in the past. Foucault, unlike most historians at the time, referred to the history of the present as an approach that

"explicitly and self-consciously begins with a diagnosis of the current situation" (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 119).

The Foucauldian approach to writing history in the 1960s led to the development of two concepts, archaeology and genealogy, to characterise the 'history of the present'. 'Archaeology' is the physical evidence that has survived to the present, where history is the written record. 'Genealogy' exists in the present from relationships of persons formed by ancestors or with people in the past. Foucault (1983) described the three domains of genealogy:

> First, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to truth through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge; second, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to a field of power through which we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others; third, a historical ontology in relation to ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents. (p. 262)

These three domains of genealogy relate us through knowledge, power and ethics that link to how we constitute ourselves as subjects and as moral agents. This we can relate to as teachers, educators and leaders resisting the ideas of being the objects of knowledge

Genealogy

Genealogy is not so much about the physical evidence; it embodies the relationships of the past that made the present possible. Intrinsic in this is the assumption that the present is formed by the relationships of the past: this is the core of genealogy, which is very clear in the anga faka-Tonga or Tongan way of living.

Genealogy within our Tongan culture is highly valued because it determines one's positions within the family and society. Tonga's hierarchical way of living has the King and the royal families (Tu'i mo e Fale 'o Tupou) on top, below them are the Nobles and the high chiefs (hou'eiki mo ha'a matapule) and on the bottom lie the commoners (kakai/me'atu'a). Tonga is the only kingdom in the Pacific and kingship is based on the genealogical lineages of the royal family lines. Genealogy determines who can own the land or *ma'u tofi'a*; it also determines the different *tu'unga* or positions that come with different *fatongia* (responsibilities and obligations) that unite the *nofo 'a kainga* (large extended family). The highest rank within the family setting is the position of *fahu* or *mehikitanga*; this position can only be claimed by the father's sister and her lineage. And if someone dies or gets married or has a birthday, one would know what and where one's 'place' is within this gathering. For the *putu* (funeral), if one's line is connected to the mother of the deceased then one's place will be associated with the duties of the *ngoto 'umu/peito* (earth oven/kitchen); within that line if one is part of the *fa'etangata* (mother's brothers and their kids), one will be expected to wear the

biggest *ta'ovala* (a mat that is tied around the waist) as a sign of respect towards the deceased. However if one is connected to the deceased through the father, then one's duties will be different, especially if one is the *fahu,* which means one will have to sit at the head of the deceased and not lift a finger at all as one will be inside the house as the highest guest there for the *putu.* One will be expected to wear a small <u>*ta'ovala*</u> around one's waist because the deceased is below one's rank in the family. The eldest of the children who come from where the deceased's father comes from will hold the title of *'ulumotu'a* (matured leader) and will be in charge of the *putu.* Each position has its own obligations that must be upheld in order to maintain the *tauhi vā* (reciprocal relationships to be sustained). This is inclusive of all that was not so good and the good relationships, but it still lives in the present, capturing the continuity that exist in 'genealogy'. There is a distinct difference between Tongan genealogy, which is purely about family relationships, and Foucault's form of genealogy which concerns the relationships of ideas and practices. Foucault is using 'genealogy' of the Tongan kind as a metaphor for understanding the historical relationships of ideas and practices (Devine, 2000).

Michel Foucault's historical research was motivated by what he called a "concern for truth" and a "concern for the present" (O'Leary, 2002, p. 88). Using this idea in research allows me as a researcher to avoid merely fictionalising history; rather, I can work in amalgamation with practice, the idea of concern for truth and for the present to give rise to new 'discoveries' and 'possibilities' in the field of contemporary philosophical debates on subjectivity (O'Leary, 2002).

Archaeology

When we look at archaeology we see the evidence of what used to be, and we try to map out what happened in the past based on what is left in the present. Foucault (1984) in *What is Enlightenment?* resisted the ideas of 'universal structures'; rather, he moved towards a transformed critique, saying that:

> It is genealogical in its design and archaeological in its method. Archaeological – and not transcendental – in the sense that it will not seek to identify the universal structures of all knowledge or of all possible moral action, but will seek to treat the instances of discourse that articulate what we think, say, and do as so many historical events. (p. 46)

This idea of archaeology makes us believe that there are some truths of the present because we can physically verify that some things did take place and it makes us examine and inspect the discursive traces to construct our thinking and writing of the 'history of the present'. For example, within the Tongan culture, we grew up with a lot of stories or talanoa that contained myths and legends; they were never really documented through books but through oral talanoa. These myths and legends, passed down from generation to generation, are supported through the archaeology of stone buildings left behind that contribute to our understanding of the present.

Logic of difference

Since the Enlightenment, G. J. Biesta (2010) strongly suggests, Levinas's subjectivity made it possible to conceive an alternative pedagogy that is profoundly different from the pedagogy of sociality, interrupting students from the "normal way of being and doing" as a "new inspiration" (Zhao, 2012, p. 660). Levinas's idea of subjectivity "makes authentic the purpose of liberal education and provides a new ground for moral education" (p. 675). Zhao (2012) says that this creates a possibility for education "to get away … from the humanist trap of a fixed essence" (p. 675).

The preoccupation of Western ontology with the logic of sameness, challenges the Indigenous, Māori and Pacific ontologies, which have been preoccupied with the "logic of difference" and "relationality" (T. K. C. Hoskins, 2010, p. 1). Hoskins explained the value of kanohi-ki-te-kanohi (face-to-face) relationships as the basis of sociality within the Māori culture. Hoskins also asserted that, for Māori, the account of the world is expressed

> …through whakapapa (genalogies) in terms of a relation, encounter or struggle between differences. All is produced through engagement, and we are always already inside or *as* relationships. Others are not observed in an objectifying gaze from outside relationships, hence the idea that others are fully knowable or containable is not entertained. (p. 2)

The logic of difference is transparent within the Tongan hierarchical way of living. In the context of Tongan culture, this alternative way of being and doing is refreshing that emanates with the concept of *kato kakala. Kakala* refers to the

Tongan fragrant flowers and *kato* is the basket that holds it. This notion of *kato kakala* signifies the notion of difference within the Tongan ontology.

Conceptually, within the *kato* or basket, there are different types of *kakala* and in this case *kakala* may be finished or unfinished, may consist of different colours and textures, may have different names, and may be made with different purposes in mind, but they are all united within this *kato.* The beauty of this collection of 'difference' is inherent in the *'alaha* or the aromatic fragrance that emerges from the collection of different kakalas when put together. This is the beauty of having the logic of difference from a Tongan perspective.

Each *kakala* or necklace made of fragrant flowers is gifted to someone to signify the relationships that tie those people together. The gifting of the *kakala* is part of taking care of the *vā* or the space between the giver and the other/s. *Tauhi vā* refers to the reciprocal relationships that connect people. The value of connectedness and the vā is fundamental within the Tongan ontology and some of the conceptual frameworks, such as *talanoa, kakala, fonua* (among others), depend on it (Ka'ili, 2005; Teisina, 2011). Another point also is that the act of gifting or *luva* of the *kakala* is done face to face; this signifies presence and active value of *tauhi vā.* The next section focuses on Lyotard's work on 'differend'.

Exploring the 'Differend'

Jean-Francois Lyotard's notion of the 'differend' has encouraged me to present what is, perhaps, not presentable according to the view of some people (J. F. Lyotard, 1984). Lyotard suggested that we (understood here as minority peoples) should not allow our localised narratives to be dictated by the metanarratives that legitimise what people should do and who they may become in society.

> They (the members of the dominant culture) thus define what has the right to be said and done in the culture in question, and since they are themselves a part of that culture, they are legitimated by the simple fact that they do what they do. (p. 23)

G. T. Stewart (2020) presented the concept of 'differend' as the 'gap' in understanding the different worldviews of the Māori and the Pakeha. The two different worldviews may find that the language will not be 'fully translatable' in the final analysis of the data in a research project (Stewart,2020, p.24). Thinking about the overwhelming process of translating what is not Tongan knowledge into Tongan language within the field of education remind us of the 'differend' in education. There are certain concepts that is in reduced modes in their attempts to fit the words within the dominant discourse. The 'differend' concept remind us of the epistemological 'gap' that can be regarded as the unresolved vahanoa between the western pālangi worldview and the Tongan indigenous worldviews. Vahanoa is made up of two words, where vaha refers to the space and noa denotes nothing or it can refer to the endless possibilities. Vahanoa referred to the ideas of separation, of Tonga and the 'other' countries, occupied with the unknown and the uncertainties of time and space. On the contrary, I have used falehanga to articulate our practices within the context of Tongan ECE as an

attempt to disrupt the formalities of education discourse. Falehanga in this case is positioned in the 'vahanoa' of the education discourse. What is liberating to think that vahanoa can become a place of transformation thinking and practices. Falehanga stands to unapologetically ground 'being Tonga' and not have to be in tune with the background of Western thoughts. Lyotard's work allowed us to dodge the appropriation and reduction of Tongan language and culture and include 'vahanoa' in the hopeful contribution and in transforming the praxis of the present which will further explored in the ideas of totality and infinity.

Totality and Infinity -Philosophies of the same and otherness.

According to Levinas, the problem of western thought is the persistence of ontological imperialism, presented in different forms. The ontological imperial agenda works to offset the "shock of alterity" meaning that difference within an ontological stance is not validated or valued ((Davis, 1996, p. 40) With the same shock, I find myself as the 'other' living in a world that alienates my sense of being from the things and the systems that do not represent who I am.

Levinas's idea of the 'totalizer' is clear: they are satisfied with how they are with the system and that they can do whatever they want because they are in control of their system. However the opposite side of the totalizers known as the 'infinitizers' are not satisfied with how they are within the system, and therefore strive for what is other than themselves (Levinas, 1961). John Wild summarised Levinas's approach (Levinas, 1961, p. 17) in saying that the totalizer self in this context continues to seek for power and control whereas the other seeks for a higher quality of life - "the former strive for order and system; the latter for freedom

and creative advance." There is a contrast between the former and latter where former dominates Western thought and the latter remain 'unknown and untried' (Levinas, 1961, p. 17).

Levina presented his approach of 'ethique' in the main text of Totality and Infinity (Davis, 1996, p. 40) –

> A calling into question of the Same – which cannot occur within the egoistic spontaneity of the Same – is brought about by the Other. We name this calling into questions of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other ethics. The strangeness of the Other, his irreducibility to the I, to my thoughts and my possessions, is precisely accomplished as a calling into question of my spontaneity, as ethics, metaphysical, transcendence, the welcoming of the Other by the Same, of the Other by ME, is concretely produced as the calling into question of the Same by the Other, that is, as the ethics that accomplishes the critical essence of knowledge….

Essentially the relationship with the other is an ethical challenge for others. Levinas says that there are difficulties inherent in the philosophy of the self and the 'other' because both are independent and autonomous but have a relation in a way to each other (Davis, 1996). This relation idea of infinity presents the idea of having to go beyond the formal gaze of the totalizers to earn a place "in the logic of interiority – in a sort of micro logic" approach. It is not as simple as it may look in terms of the relation between other and self (Levinas, 1969, p. 17). The challenge that Levinas is making is that we should not allow the 'other' to reduced itself to the 'same' which can end up appropriating the culture of the other. in the context of this thesis, the culture at risk is the Tongan language and Culture.

Levinas's ethics encourage the possibility of having to encounter something other than myself. Arriving at the point where the self is able to see what the other is and yet acknowledges that the other's language and culture wants to be still preserved, it finds this 'relation' challenging. Learning to live ethically in a relationship that doesn't appropriate is a challenge for this important work in Tongan education. The explanation of Tongan ideas is not an invitation to appropriation. Through the work of Levinas on the alterity, it is also important to note that European philosophy is capable of recognizing it's own limitations and the other.

3.3 Research methods

I use philosophical talanoa and CDA. This research approaches a philosophical examination of the concept of 'self' in official early childhood documents in Aotearoa, and proceeds to describe Tongan philosophy and practice outside universal subjectivities. In this research CDA allows the researcher to examine 'texts' meaning both written texts and performed actions based on European philosophy and Tongan philosophy and practices. So my research questions ask how subjectivity is presented in New Zealand ECE documents and CDA will allow different types of focus in terms of its textual, societal and discursive levels.

My research methods have included working with European theories and Tongan theories and practice. Talanoa was selected as the most appropriate research approach to use for this research, given the authenticity and value of its

application in capturing the essence of the subjectivity that exists within the discourse. The talanoa method fits culturally with Tongan experts/teachers. I use CDA in an effort to better understand how the language of subjectivity is portrayed in ECE policy documents and how these impact the phenomenon of subjectivity within the practice of Tongan teachers in ECE. I adopt Fairclough's view that language is a "form of social practice in which individuals act upon the world and upon each other" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 63).

Philosophical talanoa

In the Tongan language, tala literally refers to talk, tell, or conversation. Noa denotes nothing, zero, unlimited, endless within the Tongan language. Talanoa therefore refers to the way of communication through dialogue, talking, and telling stories among Pacific peoples. There are different types of talanoa which can be in the form of face-to-face contact or, with the technologies available nowadays, talanoa has extended to the internet, telephones, etc. Talanoa is considered a koloa or treasure within our Tongan language and culture which was passed down from our ancestors and from past generations to the now and will remain for the future generations to come (Lātū, 2009; Otsuka, 2005; Vaioleti, 2006). Talanoa is part of the qualitative family in research design. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) described qualitative research to be:

> …multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p.2)

We recognise the phenomenology in talanoa, but there are definite procedural changes in it. In academic research, Vaioleti (2006) has explored this methodological approach of talanoa that also exists in other Pacific countries as well. Halapua stated that there are commonalities in talanoa that has the potential to "demand … the freedom to maintain or change the direction of developments" in people's lives (Halapua, 2013, p. 5).

From the idea that the self is not given to us, "I think that there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art" (Foucault, 1984b, p. 351). Throughout, the use of the *talanoa* approach has grounded this research into rethinking universal subjectivity. I endeavoured to *talanoa* with expert informants in the Tongan world about the nature of subjectivity, which will 'earth' this research process. These *talanoa* were not just about discussing the importance of the *vā* and genealogy but also connected us to the *ngāue* and the *fonua.* The notion of the relational self is very much embedded in our understanding as Pacific peoples where the I is replaced by the We and everything else is considered clutter if indigenous knowledge is not included (Bush et al., 2005).

The Akoteu Kato Kakala praxis involves the Tongan kāinga cultural perspectives and understandings through an ethnographic methodologic approach. Ritchie (2019) reminds us that ethnography within an ECE context, involves lengthy and consistent periods of time immersed in the learning context with attention to

relational, cultural and ethical responsibility. As an insider to the Tongan ECE context, the relationships with kāinga were already established and the consistent and frequent talanoa with kāinga supported an evolution of community practice where kāinga were open to share their cultural understandings and perceptions at a time of COVID-19 lockdown. The Tongan ECE centre became a falehanga, where kāinga are supported beyond education outcomes. The Tongan ECE as a falehanga became a place of strength and mobilisation for the critical resourcing and provision for kāinga wellbeing.

Talanoa consultations with Tongan experts

Talanoa includes a lens of critical talanoa (critical dialogue) that Manu'atu (2000) supported by saying that talanoa includes a critical lens that is personal and collective. A critical talanoa means that it is not 'fixed' or static; instead it can be flexible. Talanoa can also be fluid, with informants able to go outside the confinements of the discourse without pressure. Blair (2015, p. 473) presented an indigenous perspective on how powerful indigenous research can impact academia, even though it has taken so long to arrive at this point: -

> Researchers engaging with Indigenous research cannot rely on the colonial research process and the silencing of Indigenous voice. We must engage the integration and interplay of a series of voices: community peoples' voices, Indigenous and non-Indigenous academic voices.

In this part of the research, talanoa was carried out with 4-6 identified Tongan experts or elders within the community in NZ and in Tonga, to capture their perceptions and views of subjectivity from a Tongan viewpoint. The language of the talanoa is the Tongan language, which was transcribed and translated once the talanoa were completed to identify themes to be collated and included in the research. The transcripts from these consultations add to the discourse / corpus of Tongan philosophy.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

I used a holistic approach that took Foucault's three domains of genealogy into consideration and thus made meaning within the context of this research.

CDA is a term that generally refers to the close study of the relationships between written or spoken texts as 'objects of inquiry' (Wodak, 2011). Norman Fairclough, one of the founders of CDA, drew on Michel Foucault in defining a discourse as "a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning" (Foucault, 1992a, p. 64) as cited in (Locke, 2004, p. 5). CDA aligns with other post-structural and Foucauldian ways of thinking within the discipline of social science. Language is central to CDA. CDA is used to "systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes;" and to find out the relationships between the practices and the texts that is shaped by

"relations of power and struggles over power" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 132).

Foucault asserted that "the production of truth and of true discourses is made possible by relations between bodies of knowledge and individual and institutional practices." (O'Leary, 2002, p. 99). I adopt Terry Locke's view on CDA:

> The aim is not to reveal some sinister and manipulative hand aiming to impose power over others, but to provide opportunities for critical detachment and review of the ways in which discourses act to pervade and construct our textual and social practices in a range of contexts. (p. 89)

CDA was used in an attempt to contribute to the understanding of what subjectivity means in the official requirements and how this interacts with the understanding of Tongan practitioners in their practice. CDA is meaningful if it is context-based and, in this case, I was able to use this method to achieve the mission of this research, which is to ensure that this research benefits the discourse for our future generations.

Analysing the discourse

The CDA for this research was supported or guided by writing on subjectivity by Levinas and Foucault. This literature is used in this thesis to illustrate and refine reading of documents and the understanding of Tongan ideas and behaviour.

CDA tends to move beyond the confinement of traditional discourse analysis by not only giving a description of the language used but also discussing the relationships of the language and the representations implanted within the

discourse. I have drawing on Foucault's notion of CDA to analyse important 'official' documents and texts that have impact within the field of ECE, to find out about the history of subjectivity, and how subjectivity might be rethought in a Tongan way. Foucault had a strong belief that "the production of truth and of true discourses is made possible by relations between bodies of knowledge and individual and institutional practices" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 99). It was only appropriate to use CDA "for political and cultural contextualisation, allowing a richer textual understanding (Mentha, 2016, p. 24). I read and analysed a corpus of official education documents, including *Te Whāriki* and *Tapasā* , using Foucault's CDA to identify the historical thinking about subjectivity. Through this process, I have been able to rethink these documents, especially the ones that have a major impact on Pacific ECE, to show how they might be rethought in a Tongan way.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

This research will not be seeking Ethics approval because the talanoa will only be with Tongan experts. This research is also governed by further ethical considerations, especially by the core principles of Tongan behaviour: The order of ngāue (ritual of love presented through the presentations of gifts) is a reminder that in order for the kava to be used in any kava ceremony, the roots must be mixed well with water in a ritual manner that involves haka (ritual dancing) movements of the whole body. Conceptually, in order for this research to be carried out ethically, the ethical expectations of myself as a Tongan researcher

and as a researcher in Aotearoa within the context of AUT must unite to provide research that will empower our people.

Ngāue is central in Tongan society but the underpinning of that process is driven by 'ofa or love. 'Ofa is inherent within the ngāue context of Tongan society (Kavaliku, 1977) because, if there is no 'ofa there will be no effort put into the ngāue. Many Tongan researchers have spoken about 'ofa as a philosophical underpinning for the anga faka-Tonga or the Tongan way of life (Kavaliku, 1977; Pau'uvale, 2011; Vaioleti, 2016). Inherent in these ethical considerations are the values of faka'apa'apa (respect), fetokoni'aki (empowering), 'ofa (love) and tauhi vā (maintaining reciprocal relationships) (Vaka, 2016). I have a responsibility to AUT and also to my community and my people to whom this research is targeted. As a researcher, I have to ensure that people feel empowered and still have their dignity as human beings (Cohen, Lawrence & Morrison, 2001).

3.5 Puni: Conclusion

Overall, this research allows Tongan philosophy and practice to disentangle its own ideas outside universal notions of subjectivity and to adopt a philosophic examination of the 'self' within the context of official early childhood documents in Aotearoa. Although this research is not aiming at a reconciliation of the two different cultural philosophies, the Western and Tongan philosophies, an awareness of the differences will enable policy makers and practitioners to approach the 'self' with more humility, tolerance and understanding.

4. Hala Fakama'uma'u: '*Api* to *'Eiki* – The Basis of Tongan Subjectivity

Hala fakama'uma'u: Ko e 'osi ko ee hono hehele 'o e fala pea fai e lalanga fakama'opo'opo. Ko hono fakama'opo'opo ia 'o e helenga pea teuteu mo e fe'unu ke hoko atu kiai. Ko 'ene 'osi pe ia pea lele leva 'a hala fakama'uma'u. Ko e hala ia hono ua mei he hehele. Pea kamata leva hono fakatonutonu mo e faofao lelei 'o e fala 'o hangee ko e ngāue ki he hala fakama'ufatu 'I he lālānga fo'ou.

(The fala is almost complete and the weavers hehele or cut the ends of the lou'akau (pandanus) of the fala. The weavers will make sure that they leave enough lou'akau to finish off the existing fala and to start a new fala. The weavers then prepare their lou'akau and create appropriate au (strands) to finish the existing fala, and to begin the weaving of the new fala)

4.1 Fasi: Introduction

This chapter welcomes the reader into our Tongan world with the kinds of ideas that take us to the Pacific Ocean/Oceania/Moana and into the waters of the Kingdom of Tonga. When we speak of Tonga we understand that our geographical position on the world map appears to be a small dot or *piliote* against the gigantic continents of the world. The kingdom of Tonga may be a *piliote* to the world but to a Tongan heart this *piliote* is the whole world. 'Epeli Hau'ofa (1994) says that the idea of small is common thinking that resonates with people who live in the continents, based entirely on the extent of land surfaces that people can see. This consideration of the *piliote* does not take into account the "myths, legends and oral traditions and the cosmologies of the peoples" from the *piliote* (Hau'ofa, 1994, p. 7).

We use Hau'ofa's (1994) sentiments to begin the talanoa about our world of Oceania:

> Oceania is vast, Oceania is expanding, Oceania is hospitable and generous, Oceania is humanity rising from the depths of brine and regions of fire, deeper still; Oceania is us. We are the sea, we are the ocean. We must wake up to this ancient truth and together use it to overturn all hegemonic views that aim ultimately to confine us again, physically and psychologically, in the tiny spaces that we have resisted as our sole appointed places and from which we have recently liberated ourselves (p.37).

This chapter attempts to open other hearts and minds to the non-linear world of Tongan philosophical thinking, most crucially in the attempt to translate our own Tongan world into the English language. Finding the right words to illustrate the way we see Tongan subjectivity through a relational Tongan lens is almost unbearably difficult at times. The ultimate challenge is to *ongo'i* or feel the words that are written down, especially if it is introducing another worldview outside the dominant worldviews for those who may not be familiar with this type of thinking. Through this journey on paper, I want the reader to desire to feel what Tongan philosophies are all about, and hope to assist readers in starting to make a first step towards the way we (Tongan people) see our world. Building an understanding of the Tongan world with some reference to the backdrop of Western thinking and being is the mission that this work is hoping to contribute to education in the context of Aotearoa. The binary of Tongan and 'Western' identities, ways of thinking and being is central in this work, which endeavours to de-naturalise the Western construct of thinking in identities. The effort to give words to the feelings, the sensations, the textures, the multiplicities, the

complexities that come with the context of being Tongan explores the exciting possibilities in undertaking this mission. I hope to also capture the essence and the facticity of living with the restraints and obligations of Tongan life (Tuedio, 2002). As Tongan people living in Aotearoa, striving to negotiate this facticity of living within the context of Aotearoa, we try to maintain the only thing we brought with us from Tonga which is our Tongan language and culture. To a Tongan, the possibility of losing that very precious treasure or *koloa* from this world implies that we would be left with no firm ground upon which to stand in this material world.

In Tongan thinking and being, our health and wellbeing is dependent on the context of our subjective existence. The Tongan subject is attuned to a harmonious relationship with its cosmological happy moments. Growing up in Tonga, the environment was already in tune with such harmonious relationships such as planting certain foods to grow at certain times of the year, and harvesting them, and having certain fish to eat over the course of the seasons. The Tongan subject thrives on such harmonious connections, not only in the natural environment but with the Tongan people. The irreducible difference in concepts of personhood is between the individual who is and the person who becomes. This thesis aims to raise the awareness of Tongan philosophical thinking and the Tongan way of being within Aotearoa and abroad. I begin by discussing Tongan subjectivity in terms of the self, which starts locally from the '*api* or the home.

4.2 'Api onto-epistemology

'*Api* as a word and a concept is the foundation that other contexts are linked to. '*Api* refers to an allotment of ground; a home, area of land, or enclosure, devoted to a particular purpose (Churchward, 1959). For instance '*api*ako refers to the school, '*api* siasi is the church; '*api* popula is the prison grounds; '*api* kolo is town allotment or home in a town; '*api* 'uta is for the gardening allotments which are also known as '*api* tukuhau.

'*Api* is also used to describe a collective personhood. For example when a family welcomes visitors or relatives, they would identify themselves as '*api* masiva, our poor and humble family. Somehow this is a stepping stone to opening up a space that makes everyone involved feel free and open to contribute to the talanoa. The idea is that it is crucial to be humble. The belief is that the materialistic things tend to create barriers in the process of building vā or relationships. *Koe ha'u mei 'api ki 'api* is a proverb used when you are leaving your '*api* for another '*api* yet still feel connected as if you are in your own '*api*. The sense of belonging connected to your own '*api* is present even in this new '*api* context. Even when you are not at home, the *loto,* or the heart, still longs to make the connections to the familiarity of the '*api*. The influential contributions of Tongan and Pacific indigenous scholars past and present have stimulated my rethinking on how to contextualise indigenous concepts and epistemologies to chart new meanings and make connections *mei 'api ki 'api* (Helu-Thaman, 2002; Ka'ili, 2005; Mahina, 1992; Tamasese et al., 2005; AM Taufe'ulungaki, 2004; Vaioleti, 2006)*.* Some of the

Tongan words signal important values that come with the importance of being attuned to time and space as in the *tā vā* thinking (Mahina, 1992). For instance 'api'api means we are running out of time. In terms of space, *halaloto'api* refers to people who are invading personal spaces and boundaries. *Kaungā'api* is the word for your neighbours in which *kaungā* is the connecting link to 'api. 'Api is also a sacred ritual for the newly Tongan wedding couples who are expected to remain virgins until their wedding night and establishing a physical connection which will bound them to eternity. On the other hand, 'api is also connected to the departure of life from earth. The ritual of 'apisia refers to the sacred ritual of the putu or funeral as we prepare for the next life after death.

In the Tongan word 'api, the local language and culture constructs the identity of the subjects that live in the home. The 'api is experienced within a cultural, social, emotional, spiritual and material environment. The materials used to construct the 'api have to be related to the people who are living inside the 'api. Traditionally, the architecture of the 'api reflected the ontological structures and relationships within it. 'Api is the foundation of strong Tongan identity that is rich in Tongan core values of *faka'apa'apa* (respect). There are sacred vā, rules and sanctions that have to be considered in the makeup of 'api. For instance, the ethical nature of 'api has to take into consideration the sacred ritual of *feveitokai'aki* that forms the *tuofefine* (sister) and *tuonga'ane* (brother) relationships within the Tongan culture. The *tuofefine* in the Tongan culture is unable to share a room or watch tv with her *tuonga'ane*, she is expected to wear respectable covering clothes, cannot engage in talanoa that is inappropriate or

inclusive of sexual topics, and so on. The role of the *tuonga'ane* is to look after the *tuofefine* and ensure that they abide by the rules of their families and always to be very protective of their wellbeing. This sacred ritual of *feveitokai'aki* that binds the brother and sisters within the Tongan culture is very special. The '*api* is constructed and co-constructed in such a way as to include and strengthen these ties and rules.

The *fatongia* or obligations of each and everyone inside the '*api* is to maintain the kāinga or the family unit. These obligations are symbolised or made explicit in certain rules that exist between the tamai (father) and the fanau (children). The fanau are not allowed to touch his hair, eat his leftovers, talk back to him, or wear his clothes and so on. There are certain boundaries which the fanau understand cannot be crossed, because such crossing will disrupt the flow of tauhi vā within their '*api*. Ideally, the *tamai* reciprocates his obligations as the provider of food, shelter, expert advice and security for his wife and children and the rest of the kāinga.

In this '*api*, the *fa'ē* or the mother is the nurturer of *falehanga*. The idea of *falehanga* refers to the place where the mothers carry out their work including Tongan arts and crafts and preparations of *koloa (*weaving, kakala making and tapa making*, etc.). The fa'ē weaves a *ta'ovala* or mat for her children's upcoming wedding and birthdays, she makes food, she weaves kakala to be worn by her children and husband. The role of the mother also involves care for the holistic

wellbeing of her family. This is the key to the proverb *fofola e fala kae fai e alea,* which translates to 'rolling out the mats', meaning that she embeds *akonaki* or moral teachings within the '*api*. These moral teachings make the '*api* complete and thriving. If this is how '*api* is constructed, then we understand that this has created an important space for thriving and growing in terms of the wellbeing of Tongan subjectivities. When we explore the notions of '*api* and how crucial it is to the wellbeing of our peoples, we realise how important it is to understand who we are and how we can relate to a new place. How do we ensure that the '*api* that we find in this new place is still filled with 'ofa (love) and māfana (warmth) and malu (secure)? Tauhi vā will now be explored for further knowledge on keeping a harmonious 'api.

Tauhi Vā: Maintain reciprocal relationships

The concept of tauhi vā plays a significant role in the Tongan culture and the identity of Tongan people. The word tauhi refers to "maintaining, looking after, tending, or to keep or adhere" (Churchward, 1959, p. 463). Definitions found for the word vā refers to "distance between, distance apart, feeling, and relationship towards each other" (Churchward, 1959, p. 528). Ka'ili (2005) talked about the vā as the social or relational space connecting people; it suggests that the Tongan notion of space places more emphasis on the spaces that link and join people together. An in-depth understanding of vā refers to the space between two or parties and their inter- personal relationship (Tu'itahi, 2005). Tauhi vā literally refers to maintaining and looking after reciprocal relationships connecting spaces

between people genealogically or among groups who are related to one another in various ways (Thaman, 2003; Ka'ili, 2005; Vaioleti, 2011(Mahina, 2002)).

Although to maintain such harmonious relationships there are certain behavioural expectations involved and the persons involved in the relationships must know their fatongia [3] roles and act accordingly. Behavioural expectations include establishing reciprocal relationships include 'ofa (love), faka'apa'apa (respect) and fetokoni'aki (helping one another). The practise of tauhi vā promotes the ultimate purpose of peaceful and harmonious relationships within the collective (Matakaiongo, 2014) .

In this hierarchical structure, genealogy is central to the roles and obligations within the kin or nofo 'a kāinga in Tongan society. Manu'atu (2000) contends that Tongan people in NZ continue to make social, political, economic and strong cultural connections with their Tongan heritage. The customary Tongan family or nofo 'a kāinga have their own multiple layers of complex and hierarchical relationships and require a great leader to understand these complexities in order to be effective. I will now discuss one of the important aspects of this great leadership, which is known as the 'fahu'.

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[3] Fatongia is the observance of the ranking within the Tongan culture that is generally referred to by Tongan peoples as duty or commitments used to maintain tauhi vā

Fahu Context

The fahu is a distinctively female leadership role which is essential to the success of a Tongan family in the nofo 'a kainga. According to Rivers (1910), a father's

sister is one of the most respected positions within the Tongan culture surpassing the status of any other relative within the kāinga. This is the fahu (or mehikitanga). The eldest sister will receive the utmost honour of holding the position of fahu or mehikitanga. The principle of fahu is that the sister of the father has superiority over the brother and his lineage of children and grandchildren (Paea, 2016). This entitlement of fahu can only be inherited by birth unless you are adopted into the family and fit the position of fahu. Fahu therefore could only be inherited through the father's side which is the 'superior' side of the family. In her own generation the fahu can only perform this role on her mother's side and not on her father's side. In the Tongan language father is also known as Tamai or 'Eiki! The conceptual thinking on 'Eiki equates to 'Otua which is of the same level as God. Which means that the role of the fahu is so powerful that it is compared to the divine status of God or 'Eiki in this context. There is a sacred element of holding this complex title of Fahu. Here are some examples of the sacred roles of fahu.

At a birth the fahu is given the opportunity to name the new-born baby, and there is an exchange of gifts -koloas - that the fahu takes over to the mother of the baby. These gifts are known as the pae, and then in return, baby's mother gifts more koloa for the fahu. When it comes to the ceremonial celebrations of

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weddings and birthdays, the best of the mats and tapa (referred to as koloa) are presented to the fahu who is always seated at the top tables. At a funeral or putu, the fahu is the only person allowed to sit at the 'ulu where the head is, because the head is considered tapu.. During mourning times at the funeral, the fahu is the only one that can release the tapu around the house through the fakamalele ritual,when fahu release the restrictions of the mourning of the families within the house of the deceased, allowing them the freedom to go about their normal business. Importantly the ritual of kosi 'ulu often takes place during funerals where the fahu is given the privilege of cutting the deceased's children's hair (and those who are positioned inferior to the deceased) and is rewarded with koloa and money.

Child's experiences of fahu

Ko hoku hingoa ko Siaosi, ka kuo liliu ia he ako ko George!

'When I begin school my name was Siaosi and now my name is George after starting school! By Siaosi Moa 7years (NZ)

The experience related by Siaosi, my nephew, is common when children start primary schools. From the voice of this child you can hear the beginning of a different kind of subjectivity. Schools and other institutions, despite possible good intentions, lead our children to become disconnected from the sense of reality that is grounded in Siaosi's world. In the Tongan culture the birth of a child or a baby is one of the most significant occasions that nofo 'a kāinga celebrate. Pregnancy, birth and after are bound by the concept of Fonua (Tu'itahi, 2005).

When a baby is born, it is a celebration of both families including the mother's and father's kāinga. Pregnancy and birth bring the importance of tauhi vā and the roles and responsibilities each member of the family and the kāinga (extended family) into high relief. On the father's side, the fahu holds the sacred obligation of naming the child, especially if it is the first child. Both the maternal side and the paternal side have certain obligations in raising the child. These fatongia are practised as a way of reaffirming and reinforcing their vā or relationships. The changing of names from Siaosi to George implies disrespect of the vā and of the sacred rituals that took place when Siaosi was born. Where Siaosi comes from is no longer important in the institution, where his sense of identity is marginalised and he feel like he has to be 'George' to fit in to their system. How does this ensure that Siaosi/George feels a sense of belonging at the school? Confusion in identity or forming subjectivity is not a good educational start.

During prizegiving or graduations for Tongan children in schools or at church, when their name is called out, their villages are called out as well and when they receive their prizes they look for their fahu in the crowd and start walking to where the fahu sits and greet them with a kiss of gratitude and also hand over the awards to their fahu. In return the fahu puts money on them and kakala (garland of flowers and lollies) as an appreciation for all the hard work they have put in to achieve such awards. This heightens the strength of the vā that exists between the child and their fahu. Cultural values of 'ulungaanga (behaviour) places significant emphasis on the tauhi vā that is achieved through collective living. Children must learn the 'ulungaanga and know the position in which they stand, so that from that basis they can relate to family and society. These are the basic starting points

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of learning about the concept of tauhi vā; it is a continuation from what the children learn at their homes, and at the church.   Emphasis on the contexts of the homes, the school, church, and in the community can be understood by reference to the ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979).   His theory looks at the system of relationships between the multiple layers of the child's contexts.   Claireborne & Drewery (2010, p.20) pointed out that the emphasis of Bronfenbrenner's theory lies on the relationship between the child and the complexities of their own culture, "influences of society and culture on the child's development makes the important point that development is always grounded in a particular society at a particular time in history."

For example a child grows up in the 'api where they are nurtured with Tongan values and beliefs that are maintained through tauhi vā. Because of that, HeluThaman (2008) recommends that classroom emphasis should be not so much on the child as an individual but on the relational being, on the relationships of the vā. These points contribute to an understanding of the context in which Tongan children should learn. Vā as knowledge/worldview is holistic, and it lives through social practices and daily experiences. Vā thinking on a greater scale acknowledges differing worldviews and resists the Cartesian view of the subject.

Vā Mafana

In the Tongan language and culture, vā refers to the sacred space that connects people together (Ka'ili, 2005). It is through this vā connection that Tongan people

are involved in *mālie* and *māfana* – in deep and heart-warming cultural practices (Manu'atu, 2000). Spirituality is a crucial element of *"laumālie* (essence, spirit, wairua), of concepts, notions, emotions or expressions" embedded in Tongan cultural practices (Vaioleti, 2011, p. 32). The same aspirations are inherent in this chapter, with the hope of capturing the epistemological and ontological potential of talanoa from conversation with the experts, so doing, bringing to this work a Tongan cultural lens to examine Tongan personhood/subjectivity.

What follows are some of the stories that portray a different way of seeing the world and particularly the roles and places of people within the Tongan world. These stories are grounded in Tongan thinking and being, which takes us on a journey of genealogical connections in the multiplicities of the Tongan subject. These talanoa or stories illustrate the multiplicities of connections within the kāinga and explain the logic behind these genealogical connections of the vā within the 'api. The interconnectedness of the Tongan subject is essential for maintaining the *nofo 'a kāinga* which provides the logic inherent in the stories. The momentum of these stories is fluid and they do not necessarily have an ending because it feels like the ending of the current story connects to the introduction to the next story and the cycle continues. For me, these stories help us understand the philosophy of knowing: this becomes even clearer to me as I make sense of the stories. What is not said in the stories is also fascinating because they are also moments that celebrate the vā: knowing what to say and knowing what to leave behind, because you can pick it up, if you are embedded

in the culture. There is no ending to the stories being told and they always connect to what comes next.

4.3 Ako – Relationality

Ako in the Tongan language refers to the teaching and learning of Tongan people, and it can be carried out through formal and informal practices. Ako emphasises social and moral values of learning tailored to benefit the collective (Thaman,1988). Ako is a reciprocal process that both learners and teachers benefit from. According to Vaioleti (2011, p. 97) "ako means the teacher does not have to be the font of all knowledge and should co-create contexts for learning" (p. 97). There is a saying in the Tongan culture*: Koe 'uluaki 'api 'a 'api.* It translates as 'the first education begins in the context of the home'. The relational thinking of ako placed within the context of the relational '*api* says a lot about the strong relationships that complement each other. In the following sub-sections I discuss the examples that highlights the ako relational thinking of being that emerged from the context of '*api* (see Figure 1:).

Figure 1:Ako Relationality

The importance of the particle 'fe' is that it relates the verb or the actual *ngāue,* in this case 'ako', to make it a reciprocal process. 'Fe' is used with other words, followed by 'aki to show subtle differences in meaning. These differences are not often explored but make the biggest impact. There are eight elements of ako that I would like to focus on as they relate to how we see ako with a Tongan lens. Ako is comprised of feako'aki, femahino'aki, fe'ofa'aki, fengaue'aki, fetauhi'aki, fe'aonga'aki, fetu'utaki and feveitokai'aki.

Feako'aki

Feako'aki refers to the process of reciprocal *ako* of teaching and learning. There is a sense of reciprocity in the *feako'aki* concept in Tongan thinking. *Feako'aki* is

a process that flows from the inside to the outside and vice versa, such as the akonaki. *Akonaki* refers to the actual moral teachings that are offered to guide people in their life journeys. *Akonaki* is the embodiment of the teachings in the person's lived experiences. The reason for having moral and cultural values embedded in the daily ako is that it will provide meaningful learning experiences that will benefit the collective. Not only is *Akonaki* often formalised through the practice of 'fofola e fala kae fai e alea', which refers to when the mat is rolled out for the families to talanoa, but in the broader contexts of the village it is carried out through the *fono* where the gathering of the village is organised. *Akonaki* is a teaching practice that is morally and ethically focussed and takes into consideration the context and the people involved within the nofo 'a kainga (kinship group/extended family).

The key to understanding Tongan subjectivity lies in the understanding that Tongan people live in cultural contexts in and with the kāinga (Fa'avae, 2018). "At a deeply philosophical and practical level, it is hard for Tongan individuals, and I assume the same for other collectivist societies, to think, presume, and position themselves as being of more significance than others" (Fa'avae, 2018, p. 127). It is within the collective that the individual finds the vā that connects him or her to others, and understands its obligations and duties, to ensure that they stay connected, in presence and even in absence. An example of the makeup of the vā connections is illustrated in this story by Tevita who is an expert from the Ha'apai Island group. As Tevita talks, he speaks as if he is discussing the present

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moment, and I have chosen to keep his words in the present tense to show and respect his style/talanoa.

During his high school years, every year before Tevita leaves his island, he goes through the process of *fe'iloaki*. *Fe'iloaki* is the practice of greeting family members and people within the villages; the custom varies slightly depending on the contexts and place where it takes place. Fe'iloaki is used to greet and farewell and give *naki* to those who are leaving temporarily and, as in this case, this was a common practice when students leave the small islands to attend high schools in the main Island of Tongatapu. There is a duality of meaning packed in the concepts of *fe'iloaki* which contribute to the ontological importance of *fe'iloaki* within the Tongan language and culture. As a concept, *Fe'iloaki* is not just about farewell: there is continually an expectation that when you leave the island, you will return one day to *fe'iloaki* with your families and *kāinga* in your villages and share the knowledge that you have collected. Another important common practice of *fe'iloaki* is upon the first day of the new year, when people on the islands embrace and hug each other as a renewal of vā relations within the familial collective of *nofo 'a kāinga*. Even if they are not leaving the Islands, *fe'iloaki* is still essential. Tevita still remembers walking to the other end of the island with food offerings and gifts to take with him and his family to his father's sisters, the *fahu*. And in return he's gifted tapa and coconut oil as a *kafu*

(translated as blankets) to use upon their return.

When the missionaries arrived in Tonga they tried to shift the same practice of *fe'iloaki* to the church settings where the head ministers became *fahu* in the context of the church. Nowadays it is becoming a common practice within the church settings, even in overseas settings. It is even getting bigger as all the small branches of the churches gather together to take offerings of gifts to the head minister's house.

Tevita remembers vividly how he would go around farewelling the elders on the islands who were unable to make it to the port and, at every house he went to, the people/inhabitants had gifted him words of encouragement and advice *fonua* that he would need during the time he is away from home for school. And when he reaches the small port on the island the rest of the villagers are there praying, singing and talking, saying their goodbyes until he leaves and as the boat moves further away from the island he could still see his grandparents, parents and the rest of the kāinga waving at him with tears. For about eight years he went through the same routine. Even though he was on the main island studying, in his mind the stories and the words of encouragement stayed with him for the course of the time he was there. The goals and values expressed through these akonaki made him strive harder in his studies. His goals and values also belong to the rest of the families and to whole entire islands, and his successes would belong to them as well.

It is clear that the Tongan way of thinking rests on communal values and how they relate to the individual person. It is about the collective rather than the

individual's goals. The collective and the communal good are shared to help and assist the individuals but not in the interest of achieving an individual's goals but rather in order to achieve the goals of the collective, the kainga, the village, the island. The Tongan view of the self which comes through in this story is not that of an individual per se, but of the way an individual fits into the aspirations of the larger group.

Femahino'aki

In the Tongan language *femahino'aki* literally refers to the process of achieving shared understanding. The *Femahino'aki* construct is essential in the 'api to ensure harmonious relationships are established and maintained within the collective. From the thinking of the collective, *ako* seeks to understand the 'other' in the process of ako. The idea of this shared understanding rests on the betterment of the community rather than on being marginalised by the other. I now relate the stories of growing up in Tonga and how important it was to make the connections with the 'other'.

Tevita emotionally expressed his childhood memories in his talanoa from his ancestral land in Ha'apai. He remembers growing up on the small island of Ha'ano with his father, the town officer ('ofisa kolo), who had no formal education or training. Before Tevita left for the main islands for schooling, his grandfather sat him down and said that it is crucial that he got a good education. Tevita can still remember these words like it was yesterday – "*Tevita, 'alu 'o tokanga kihe*

ako , sio 'oku faka'ofa ho'o tamai, ha'u e kau palangi he 'aho koē' pea nau lea atu

kiai kae si'i katakata pe 'ikai ke lava 'o tali atu 'enau lea" – In literal terms,

"Tevita you have to do well in education for the sake of your father because the

other day there were some Europeans who visited the islands, and they were

trying to communicate with your father but he could only responded by smiling

because he couldn't understand or communicate with them." The moral value of

having an education within Tevita's family is that to be educated stems from a

place of strength, a place of knowing and understanding the 'other' so we could

contribute. What grandfather was saying to Tevita was do it not for himself but

more importantly for his families and the all the islands. The fact that Tevita's

father was the town officer and everyone on the islands looked to him for

guidance meant that it was also crucial to establish connections with those who

are not Tongans. Tevita's choice to do well in school was strongly influenced by

the values of this story.

The idea of connecting with and understanding another culture, especially with

the Palangi, was also welcomed by the elders on the islands. As with the

understanding that the missionary brought with the introduction of formal

education to Tonga, and especially when it came with to the remote islands of

Ha'apai, the idea is that in order to be educated you had to be able to speak the

Palangi language. As Tongan people, we were taught early on to be able to

navigate through the tides and waves of times. Tevita's journey had only just

begun in finding out what it means to take the aspirations and the visions of his

family with him on his education journey. For Tevita, understanding another world is the femahino'aki he had to achieve in order to achieve fetauhi'aki, looking after his family, village and island.

Fetauhi'aki

In the Tongan language, *fetauhi'aki* literally refers to the process of taking care and looking after each other. Fetauhi'aki is inclusive of *tauhi vā* in a reciprocal sense, knowing that there is someone who is looking out for your wellbeing. *Ako* seeks to care about people. *Fetauhi'aki* bring forth a sense of nurturance for those who are involved in the process. Ako seeks to care for those who are receiving the learning and for those who are bringing forward the teachings, so as to make it an empowering experience.

Mele ane remembers in Tonga the ritual of *fakafetongi me'akai*, or exchanging plates of food every Sunday, was something that everyone always looked forward t o. Every Sunday the kaunga'api or houses next to your house will bring you a plate of *me'akai* (food) and then you are obligated to return the favour by gifting them some of the *me'akai* that you have cooked for your Sunday lunch (which takes place after the Sunday service). Meleane and her husband were both teachers at the Wesleyan Church High School in Tongatapu. One Sunday she went away with her husband to another function in another village and they knew that they would be coming back with some me'akai which will provide for the *fakafetongi me'akai* ritual that morning. Meleane had five *kaunga'api*

(neighbours) in their block so that meant fives plates are expected to go out. By the time the church had finished they weren't back but Meleane's younger brother and sister with another nephew from the village were the only ones at home. So when the first plate came they informed them that they will bring back the *me'akai*. They then used that plate of *me'akai* to give to the second neighbour. In exchange the second neighbour returned the plate of me'akai which ended up going to the first *kaunga'api's* house. Then the third *kaunga'api* came with their *me'akai* and then that was given to the fourth *kaunga'api* and when the fourth *kaunga'api* gave their me'akai it went back to the third kaunga'api. Then the fifth kaunga'api arrived with a plate of me'akai, the brother asked him to go and they will come back with his plate of food because there is no food to give back. Funnily enough, the fifth *kaunga'api* insisted on waiting for the plate of food to take back. After going back and forth with this *kaunga'api*, the nephew who lives in the village came out and told him, please just go because we have no *me'akai* to give back on your plate. This made the neighbour walk away disappointed with his empty plate, not looking happy at all.

The moral of this story is that *fetauhi'aki* is embedded in our everyday living. The ideas of reciprocating love are expected and are taught at a very young age. Nowadays, this ritual of exchange is rare on the main islands of Tongatapu but is still practiced in some of the outer islands. What if there is nothing to give back, that we are so empty that we cannot reciprocate? There are implications for education in this concept of *fetauhi'aki.* There is a reciprocal obligation for the

teachers and students. From *fetauhi'aki* comes the thinking of *fe'aonga'aki* from a Tongan lens.

Fe'aonga'aki

Fe'aonga'aki refers to the notion of being useful to one another or to those who are in your life. Ako, in this context, ought to be useful for those who are involved. There is a sense of connection between what they are learning in a formal setting and the informal setting at home. Growing up in our 'api and as a child who attend school, "*koe haa 'a e 'aonga ho'o ako kapau 'oku 'ikai keke 'ilo e me'a tonu ke fai*" – which translates as "there is no use of going to school and getting educated if you still don't know what to do here in our home". There is a sense of responsibility that education should be providing enough knowledge and education to prepare anyone for their lifelong journey. Two experts shared how their education journey ensured that it resulted in *fe'aonga'aki* with their families and villages, etc.

For Sifa, it was running the theatre shows in his hometown in Hofoa and being the interpreter who translated the movies in the theatre for the whole village. This was one of the favourite times for the village people as they could see that Sifa's education was useful in terms of providing joy and happiness for their village. What he found was that he could expand on some of the storylines to fit in with the context, and that it captured the village's attention, and they kept on asking for more and more sessions.

As for Tevita in the islands of Ha'apai, he remembered clearly how the Australian team visited Fiji in the 1970s and the match came on the radio while they were out in the plantation. Everyone stopped their planting to watch Tevita demonstrate and interpret the game on the plantation field. He would get sticks and construct a rugby field in the plantation and used coconuts to demonstrate how the game was played during the rugby match. There was so much excitement and so many happy memories from that day. Tevita was happy to continue to interpret and translate the game into the Tongan language while he was still on the islands, and everyone looked forward to hearing about the next game. The talk of the little islands was filled with the stories from the games and it could be heard from the kava gatherings that some parts of the games were emphasised and extended as if they were attending the games in real life. From *fe'aonga'aki* comes the conceptual thinking of *fe'ofa'aki* that is underpinned with *'ofa* or love.

Fe'ofa'aki

Having '*ofa* embedded within the 'api is one of the essential values within the nofo 'a kainga. There is a return on love given. *Fe'ofa'aki* is guided by *'ofa* with aspirations to grow and thrive where 'ofa is present. This family story included Fatai, my hard working grandfather in the islands of Vava'u. He used to trade coconuts for money to pay for all his kids to attend school. Education was a priority for Fatai and he worked really hard growing vanilla and also drying coconuts (talinga) and trading them as an income to provide for his big family.

The house that they lived in was built by his own hands in the islands of Vava'u. He chopped down the coconut trees and used them to build their house. They had no point of contact overseas as would be necessary today, but that didn't stop him from building a secure home for his family. Every morning the household woke up to Fatai coming back from the plantations with fruit and food included in his *ha'amo*. There was always a *ha'amo*, which translates as the stick with baskets of food tied at both ends. There were no vehicles at the time. When Fatai passed away there was a sign that will never leave my memory, which is the dent on his shoulder which is the place where the *ha'amo* was always placed as he found food for his family. His love was to ensure that his kids got the best education that they could possibly access. Today, that love lingers and has been reciprocated when one of his children, Meleane, graduated and started up her own preschool in Aotearoa. There is a feeling that the fe'ofa'aki continues to the next generation.

Feveitokai'aki

Feveitokai'aki refers to achieving mutual respect within a group of people with mutual goals and obligations. Ako is inclusive of *feveitokai'aki* because if there is no mutual respect then there will be tensions and problems trying to achieve the goals of ako. One of the core values of being Tongan is the idea of *faka'apa'apa* (respect) which included in the process of *feveitokai'aki*. *Feveitokai'aki* underpins important considerations on how to take care of the sacred rituals of *faka'apa'apa* within the *'api.* There are certain *feveitokai'aki* which hold sacred implications for

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the rituals of the *tuonga'ane moe tuofefine*, or brother and sister's relationships, and also between the *matu'a moe fanau* or parents and the children. According to tapu, *faka'apa'apa* is tailored for the commoners. There are certain aspects of *faka'apa'apa* that do not apply to the nobles and the Tongan royal family. For instance, within the royal family and the high chiefs/nobles, *faka'apa'apa* can be different in certain aspects, such as that they are able to marry their cousins or relatives to maintain their royal connections, upon the approval of the King and his family. However *feveitokai'aki* within the circle of the *kakai tu'a*. or the commoners, does not allow relatives or cousins to marry each other. From the idea of keeping *feveitokai'aki* we move to *fetu'utaki*.

Fetu'utaki

Fetu'utaki refers to the process of making connections or communications. Ako contributes to better communication and through interactions that leads to better understandings. According to Seini, when she was younger growing up in NZ, she did not realise the value of the Tongan language till she attended university. She used to catch the bus to university. One time she was on the bus and came across a Tongan man who was lost and he didn't know how to communicate in English to the bus driver. At that moment, Seini realised how important it was to be able to speak Tongan because she spoke to the man in Tongan and his face lit up. It was a relief that he was able to talk and communicate to someone who can speak Tongan and Seini will never forget that day. *Fetu'utaki* is used to empower and to make the relational connections between groups of people.

Fetu'utaki is not a singular activity but there is a sense of reciprocity within this concept. There are certain obligations and contexts that require contextual *fetu'utaki* to make meaningful connections in the process. There are obligations inherent in the process of fetu'utaki to relate important and meaningful information to our people, so they are able to put that information into application of *fetokoni'aki* which is helping each other.

Fengāue'aki

Fengāue'aki refers to the notion of teamwork or working together to build meaning and purpose. *Ako* requires everyone involved to come together as a team to work for a bigger purpose in life. *Fengāue'aki* is inclusive of the holistic way we see the world in practice. In this instant we are putting what we have learnt at school into practice at home. There are some doubts that what is learnt at school does not meet or connect with the sense of realities of the people in education. I have explored this concept of ngāue in depth in Teisina (2011).

Sifa reflected on the number of times that he finds himself conceptualising the position of a leader of the family or *taki 'o e fāmili*, especially for his own offspring/children/descendants. He understands the roles and responsibilities which were taught by his parents growing up in their household in the village on the main islands of Tonga. He understands that the role of the eldest includes sorting through the clutter of life. The duties and obligations involve picking up the pieces after everyone else. Implicit in this notion of being a leader is the

expectation of having the most patience, most love and to be the most giving person. The moral values in these words alone imply huge responsibilities for anyone who is a first born in the 'api. **Na'e 'omai pe koe keke lahi; You were born to be a leader.** The leadership for the nofo 'a *kāinga* belongs to the 'ulumotu'a. He has his duties that he is obligated to carry out in his *ngāue* but he also needs the rest of the family to work with him to ensure that they achieve meaning and purpose. If they are not *fengāue'aki* than there will be a lack of māfana and mālie, which will create further tensions within the nofo 'a *kāinga* (Manu'atu, 2000; Vaioleti, 2011)

There is a tendency impulse to care for those who you feel responsible for, to carry them with you during your education journey. This is an obligation, a moral duty of care that is instilled in the tangata (person or people) when they are embarking on their education journey.

4.4 Tangata – Personhood

In Tongan traditional thinking, the idea of a 'person' or 'people' can be translated in Tongan as *tangata. Tangata* as an overall concept can also refer to all humankind, where gendered features are not highlighted. At the same time, it can also be used to refer to the all males of the species. Tangata can be used to refer to as an individual or as a collective. For instance, *tangata'i fonua Tonga nofo I Aotearoa* refers to Tongan people who are now residing in Aotearoa. In this sense, tangata comes from a collective place. *Ko e ki'I tangata mei Vava'u*, which

translates as this man comes from Vava'u. The *tangata* in this context is present because of his family originated from Vava'u; inherent in it are the collective connections to the tangata who are absent. *Tangata* comes from a collective place of strength that is sacred and relational. The place where *tangata Tonga* is located takes precedence over the reality of an mo'ui fakafo'ituitui or individual's life world. The collective place of *tangata* prioritises the ontological significance of Tongan epistemic knowledge and culture. The relational attributes of *tangata* are bound by the people tied to the *fonua*, land, seas, and the entire *langi* or cosmos. When you bring life into this world, that life is founded on the special *vā* of the *tangata* and its connections to the *fonua*. This new life is nurtured in the *fonua* (mother's womb), and eventually birthed onto the *fonua* (land). The umbilical cord, which is also known as the *fonua*, is buried back on the land which is the fonua. The process of the *tangata Tonga* growing up to *tauhi vā* – form relationships with the people surrounding them – is within the *fonua* (contextual '*api* and the environment). From a Tongan view of the tangata, each person can only make sense of who they are if tangata is linked to the community or the collective. The Tongan relational thinking of tangata rests on epistemological grounds of the *fonua* and the collective before the individual subject. Tongan personhood intrinsic in *tangata* is defined by the *vā* relationships that are formed within the collective, within the *fonua*.

The holistic worldview that is embedded in Tongan ontological thinking of *tangata* is emphasised in some of the concepts that are used to describe Tongan personhood. Tangata'i fonua refers to the Tongan personhood that showcases

the values and ideals of a Tongan subject. Tangata'i fonua is connected to the holistic nature of the Tongan personhood. If one wants to be specific in terms of the level of the people then tangata can be used to describe the male-gendered generations and fefine is used to describe women. *Tangata kakato* refers to 'whole' persons or 'complete' persons. *Tangata kakato* is a state of complete being. It is not a birth right or something that each Tongan child is born with; instead, it is a goal that every child wants to grow into in their adult life. Tangata is a goal at infancy which the infant is intended to achieve as they mature in life. It is an achievement to reach this ideal state of tangata kakato through moral values within the fonua. The ideas of *tangata kakato* can vary from context to context. *Tangata kakato* showcases the movement of personhood within Tongan thinking and being. *Tangata kakato* contributes to the building and moulding of a holistic personhood where heart, mind, body and soul are connected and at peace and in harmony with others. *Tangata kakato* is not limited to the individual but is connected to the Tongan sense of identity. *Tangata kakato* is a common aspiration and dream for Tongan families to achieve, especially for their children (Koloto, 2000).

Hingoa – Naming and Becoming

One of the milestones that is identified through the shifting of *tangata* to the state of *tangata kakato* is marked by the changes of *hingoa* or names. For instance, the *kakala* or garland in this instance refer to a form of name that is bestowed on a person, by either a member of the royal family and high chiefs or a noble,

because of their great work and achievements within the village or *nofo ʻa kāinga*. Kakala is metaphorically used to describe the fluid nature of the culture. The *kakala hingoa* is reflective of the movement of personhood within the hierarchical status or ranks in the nofo ʻa kāinga. Kakala hingoa is the shifting of the name from the birth name. Identity is acknowledged differently in a Tongan function; for example, there is an expectation that the kakala hingoa will be used instead of the birth hingoa to address that person. If somehow the person is not living up to the kakala hingoa then the birth name will be used to address that person, depending on the context. The kakala hingoa does not necessarily have to have a kava ritual to make the kakala official, unless the noble or high chiefs feel that they should have one; in that case they will formalise the kakala hingoa through the ʻilo kava ceremony. The kakala hingoa can be passed on to someone that the high chief or nobles feel is deserving of it, and in some cases it remains within the lineages of the family.

There is also another type of name change that is inherited, which is the title, and this is often referred to as kafa. The name is inherited through blood and if you die, it will passed on to the next in line and so forth. The difference is when you are in a gathering, the name that will be used is the title name not the name that you were born with. Each of these naming shifts is a signal of achieving tangata kakato. The hingoa given at birth is not the name earned through life. The infant is given a name by the fahu. Then comes the kakala. This name can be used throughout life, depending on the occasion. Kafa is a permanent name or title that can be passed on through generations. This is also bestowed by a noble.

In the Tongan hierarchical structure, tukufakaholo, or genealogy, is central to the roles and obligations within the kin or nofo 'a kāinga in Tongan society. (Vaioleti, 2011)contends that Tongan people in NZ continue to make social, political, economic and strong cultural connections with their Tongan heritage. The customary nofo 'a kāinga have their own multiple layers of complex and hierarchical. Kāinga are strongly linked together in our Tongan society. It is through our tukufakaholo that we are able to make genealogical links to our kāinga and family. Through our tukufakaholo, it is important to go back because we will be able to find the original place that our ancestors or fanga kui came from. The original places where our ancestors come from is known as the fonua tupu'anga. If we want to investigate and know more about the tukufakaholo, we have to know our identity and our fonua tupu'anga. So, it is vital for us to value and start building a strong foundation of learning about our own family and identity at an early age, so we can grow up confident knowing who we are.

4.5 Tongan Cosmology

Tongan cosmology is known through the creation stories of *fananga* which existed before missionaries arrived in Tonga. There are not just one but multiple creation stories and I will use the story of 'Ahoeitu because it is the one that is most often talked about. Ancestral connections between the *langi* (skies) and the earth abound. We understand that our '*Otua* or *'Eiki* who reside in the skies, among the stars and the moon, look after us. We tend to ask them for

environmental success and balance. When there is a big storm, for Tongan people a higher power in the *langi* is responsible. There is a message that this higher power is sending us because we are neglecting the natural environment. The storm reminds us of our role to reciprocate the *tauhi* or care for the *fonua* or the land. The land and the trees are interconnected and in order to thrive harmoniously, the reciprocal values of *fetauhi'aki* (looking after each other) need to be strengthened. Sacred rituals of planting of crops and plants are always in tune with the relationship of people and the environment. For instance, the ritual of *polopolo* is the offering of the first harvests to the highest chief in the village or the *fahu* (who is the father's eldest sister) before anyone can eat from the harvests.

A continuity of intersubjectivities thrives on these sacred rituals. The belief is that the '*Otua* is impressed when there is a reciprocity of fetauhi'aki in the environment, therefore it is inherent in successful harvests. The Tongan idea of cosmogony is fulfilled when the environment and peoples' behaviour complement each other in prosperity and success. *Fonua* is the concept that encapsulates the ideas of the relationships that bind the environment, people, skies, and the nonliving, which I discuss next (Ka'ili, 2005; Mahina, 1996; Tu'itahi, 2005).

'Eiki

Nofo 'a kāinga is a site that is genealogically rich in the values that have maintained our ancestors and have connected us through the creation story of

Tangaloa Eitumatupu'a, the ancestral God with divine (*'Eiki*) status, who lived in the langi (sky), loved Va'epopua (a mortal girl) on earth. Through their union, the first King of Tonga – 'Aho'eitu (a demi God) was born. Observations of these legends are crucial, according to Mahina (1996, p. 30), because there is a "strong tendency to historical continuity in human and social activities" (p. 30). They source important ancestral social origins, connections and values. Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a's story affirms *nofo 'a kāinga,* collective living, and is embedded in the understanding of the important foundations in our culture that have survived through stories, names, and places relating the past, present and future, bound by the vā.

Conceptually, the state of *'Eiki* construct is founded on the idea of 'absence' and 'presence' in the ta vā ideologies (Mahina, 1996). Tangaloa was of divine status, which was absent from the material world of people, and he only came down through the toa tree to impregnate Va'epopua to have 'Ahoeitu (who became the first King of Tonga) but he returned to his home in 'langi'. *'Eiki* refers to divine status, God/Lord or equivalent of a superior rank. *'Eiki* equates to 'Otua who is of the same level as God. We also refer to our God as Jesus, as *'Eiki* who is absent from the material world. *'Eiki* is also associated with the langi or the skies, conveying the idea that those of the *'Eiki* status are above or in a position of superiority. *'Eiki* is a position that we are unable to touch or see but still exists, as in the notion of 'Eitumatupu'a residing in the skies or heavens, or in a place that is untouchable to us.

'Eiki in the material world

In the mortal world *'Eiki* is also used to describe your father and your father's kāinga. 'Famili *'Eiki*' stresses the hierarchical importance of the famili tamai (father's family) because your mother's kāinga will be of lower status compared to your famili *'Eiki*. *'Eiki* is used in the context of the chiefs and nobles, where they are acknowledged as hou*'eiki*. If there is a gathering and there is a chief present, then it is *'eiki*sia which is acknowledged only in the chief's presence. According to Biersack (1996), there is an inherent sacred connection between divinity and humanity. The existence of the tapu system is to ensure that the Tongan cultural hierarchical way of living of Tu'i (King), Hou'eiki (Chiefs and Nobles) and kakai tu'a (commoners) is strengthened and to ensure that the *'Eiki* structure is upheld.

The sacredness of the vā within the context of *nofo 'a kāinga* emphasises the element of 'Eiki inherent in the position of the *fahu* who comes from the famili *'Eiki*. The *fahu* is also known as *'Eiki* maama which literally translates as a mortal God. This means that the role of the *fahu* is so powerful that it is compared to the divine status of God or *'Eiki*. There is a sacred element to this complex title of *fahu*.

'Eiki maama – Fahu context

The *'Eiki* maama (also known as *fahu* or mehikitanga) is a distinctively female leadership role which is essential to the success of a Tongan family in the nofo 'a

kāinga. According to Rivers (1910), a father's sister is one of the most respected positions within the Tongan culture. It surpasses any other relatives within the kāinga. The principle of *fahu* is that the sister of the father has precedence over the brother and his lineage of children and grandchildren (Paea, 2016). This entitlement of *fahu* can only be inherited by birth, unless a woman is adopted into the family and fits the position of *fahu*. *Fahu* therefore could only be inherited through the father's side which is the superior side of the family but, for a woman to be *fahu*, she can only perform this role on her mother's side and not on her father's side. So a *fahu* is *fahu* to her brother's children. Here are some examples of the sacred roles of *fahu*.(see fahu context)

Tapu

Tapu literally refers to the forbidden rules or something that is prohibited and is often used to maintain the social cohesion of Tongan society. Tapu in this case can refer to the special privileges that the Tongan people are made aware of in order to maintain the hierarchical structure of the Kingdom of Tonga. For instance, there are forms of language used for the King and the royal family, some for nobles/chiefs, and some for commoners. It is 'tapu' to use the commoner's language to address the King and the royal family. This is prohibited in the Tongan culture because it is crossing the boundaries of what is deemed tapu.

For instance for eating there are three separate words used: Taumafa for the King, 'Ilo for the nobles and chiefs, and kai for the commoners. There are certain rituals that are used to highlight the power and toputapu nature of the King and the royal family, etc.

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Fie'eiki and Moral Expectations

The moral expectations of *'Eiki* also hold sway within the *nofo 'a kāinga*. *'Eiki* is a status or rank that is inherited through birth. The conception of personhood in this case embraces cultural, historical and social values that define the moral values of the collective. With regard to this status, links to the divine status of *'Eiki* are understood in a communal sense that links the absent and the present, the nonhuman and human living, mortal and immortal worlds with the *fonua*.

According to Tevita, it was important to not be 'fie'eiki, which refers to those who try to become *'Eiki* when they clearly do not belong to the *'Eiki* rank. The weight of knowing your position highlights the moral expectations of Tongan people within the Tongan way of living. The most common advice that he got from the kāinga in the islands was not to be fie'eiki. A person who is fie'eiki is someone who looks down on people. The emphasis was to not be fie'eiki because he would diminish the faka'apa'apa (respect) for the house that he will stay in. It was always good to be humble and stay grounded because the family you will stay with continues to accept you living with them in their homes so that you can finish your education on a good note.

From fie'eiki, we move to the realities of the next world, where *'Eiki* is still present in Pulotu. In Tongan mythology Pulotu is the ancestral homeland or the resting place of the deceased which I discuss next.

Pulotu is an important element in understanding Tongan personhood. Pulotu is the next world after death and it was also meant to be for the high chiefs or hou'eiki and there was lalo fonua refers to another place that is part of the pulotu that is designed for the commoners (Francis, 2006). It is the world that has so many connections to how we do things in this world that we live and, despite not being able to see it, we know it exists. Pulotu also refers to the experts involved in composing and singing Tongan poetry and hymns. There is a connection between the pulotu after-life and the present. Pulotu is a world the immortal soul enters but that soul is still mortal in the living minds of this world. Pulotu have their own *'Eiki* known as Havea Hikule'o who appear in our Tongan mythology. Musicians and poets have a link to the transcendental, as expressed in words such as pulotu fa'u (poet/musician experts composing songs), pulotu fasi (musicians who leads the songs in tunes and harmonies) and pulotu haka (music experts in choreographing the dance to the songs).

One of the fananga or creation stories of Tonga starts from the sea and Pulotu. Floating on the surface of the sea was limu (seaweed) and kele (soil) who were together and floated away to Pulotu. They were interrupted and separated, so in between them sprung up a rock called Touia 'o Futuna ('to be caught at Futuna'). Then came some shaking tremors which shook the rock four times and up sprung pairs of twins Pini and Kele first, 'Atungaki and Ma'aimoa 'o Longona second, Fonua'uta and Fonuavai third, and the fourth twins were Hemoana and Lupe

(Herda, 1988, p. 27).

Tapu, an expert from the Vava'u islands, says that the current motto of Tonga was influenced by the missionaries and the arrival of Christianity in Tonga. The motto is 'Otua mo Tonga ko hoku tofi'a, which translates as God, King and Country are my inheritance. Tapu said that during the ancient days before missionary contact, the initial motto was focused on Tonga and Pulotu. Nowadays, there is an emphasis on the notions of the spirit leaving the earth to be in heaven, which occurred after the missionaries brought Christianity to Tonga, as reflected in the tonganisation of the word 'heaven' to hēvani. The tonganising of *hēvani* indicates the time and space when it was introduced and the influence of the missionaries when they came to Tonga. According to Tapu, the evidence of the original importance of Tonga and Pulotu is still in existence today at one of the past fortresses or kolotau in the village of Feletoa in the islands of Vava'u. Inside this fortress there was a big well that collected water for the people of Feletoa. Now buried and standing only as a hill, it is known as Tonga mo Pulotu. In ancient times, the emphasis was on Tonga first and then Pulotu.

Pulotu is the place where the moral values of the immortal souls are realised and acknowledged. In Tongan culture, there is a sacred ritual when a person passes away that signifies the amount of respect for Pulotu. The sacred ritual in the funeral or putu includes certain lineages that are allowed to handle the body of the deceased. They are known as ha'a Tufunga. For the King's funeral, some of

these people become the royal undertakers knowns as the *nima tapu* or sacred hands. For instance, during the funeral of the late King Tupou the 5th, the *nima tapu* also isolated themselves for 100 days and were unable to use their hands for anything and weren't allowed to shower or shave or cut their hair out of respect for the King's passing. At a celebration afterwards, the royal family bring gifts to the *nima tapu* for remaining faithful to the sacred rituals during the 100 days. For Tongan people, the lives of the non-living continue to play a big part morally in the lives of the physically living persons. Pulotu is the place where our ancestors reside and we are morally guided by them in this material world.

The idea that the non-living have so much morally to do with the living is complex, because everything that is carried out within the nofo 'a kainga takes into consideration the non-living as they are present in spirit. They continue to play a big part in our everyday lives: the relational aspect of the living and the non-living is always present. 'I am' is possible because of the collective behind me. This concept automatically takes into consideration those who are not physically present. This idea is further illustrated in 'Otulangaivalu.

Otulangaivalu consists of three main words, which are 'otu, referring to rows, langa, constructing or to build, and valu, which refers to number eight. According to Tapu, there are rows of water rivers in Pulotu shaped or fuo of the number eight. Conceptually, it means two separate entities but they are connected together by 'ofa or love. This sign is often used in love letters when you sign on

the bottom of the letter you write the valutokoto or a horizontal number eight. It means "'koe fe'ofa'aki ha ongo sino'i me'a kehekehe pea taimi tena mate ai tena 'alu naua ki pulotu tena kei pipiki pe pea tena hoko koe vai ko hono fuo koe fo'i valu." There is a belief that two people who love each other will be reunited in Pulotu when they die, as waters shaped as a vertical eight where two circles are connected, as in the infinity sign in mathematics. Their love is infinite, and even when they leave this life they are bound by 'ofa or their love for each other. The moral of this story is that love continues to Pulotu and it does not end here where we are in this world. Ferris-Leary (2013) summed up Pulotu accordingly:

the paradisiacal home where the spirits and gods abide, not a physical place but a spirit home, a sacred place to be experienced only by those who are open and insightful enough to experience the feelings referred to in Tonga as māfana. For it is only through māfana that we can experience laumālie and gather the flowers of beauty from Pulotu and partake of its fruits, fruits that can truly enrich and contribute to our humanity. (p. 240)

4.6 Puni: Conclusion

The distinctive nature of 'self in Tongan thought is embedded in the notion of 'api as a Tongan 'collective' personhood. In the 'api the local language and culture make up the identity of Tongan intersubjectivities. The '*api* is experienced within a cultural, social, emotional, spiritual and material environment. Traditionally, the architecture of the '*api* reflected the ontological structures and relationships within

it. '*Api* is the foundation of strong Tongan identity, rich in Tongan core values like *faka'apa'apa* (respect). Sacred vā, rules and tapu have to be considered in the makeup of '*api* which are included in the ako of the collective. With ako comes the significance of the social and moral values embedded within the teaching and learning of the collective. Ako is comprised of feako'aki, femahino'aki, fetauhi'aki, fe'aonga'aki, fe'ofa'aki, feveitokai'aki, fetu'utaki and fengaue'aki. These values of ako are found within the thinking of the tangata from a collective place of strength that is sacred and relational. The place where tangata Tonga is situated takes precedence over the reality of an individual's life existence. The collective place of *tangata* demonstrates the inseparability of Tongan ontology and epistemology.

What is the absolute essence of Tongan personhood? This question in itself is conceptually rooted in Western thought and has to be rethought to be meaningful in Tongan life. The qualities and different perspectives that make up the ideas of Ako imply aspects of Tongan personhood that are invisible within the Ako in Aotearoa. Even though attempts to implement these distinctive differences in the delivery of education in Aotearoa may be unrealistic instead educators could offer acknowledgement of the incommensurable differences in tangata. The discourse of Tongan personhood implies that teaching to the child's cultural strengths must make connections with the 'api and falehanga. This is vital, especially if the focus is on wellbeing at a time where cultural approaches are not connecting with the ako of our fanau.

It is important that 'tangata kakato' is included in the learning of our fānau Tonga. Tangata kakato embodies the movement of personhood within Tongan thinking and being. Tangata kakato indicates the ways in which a not-yet person may develop towards full personhood. Tangata kakato contributes to the building and molding of a holistic personhood where heart, mind, body and soul are connected and at peace and in harmony with each other. Tangata kakato is not limited to the individual but it is connected to the Tongan sense of identity. The way to relate to the tangata kakato is inseparable from ideas of Tongan ontology and epistemology. I would think that education should be building on the tangata kakato as a complete person in the making and not a rigid system in which tangata kakato is jeopardised. The very idea of education is jeopardised for the tangata kakato if we continue to equip only a certain kind of personhood.

5. Hala Fakama'opo'opo: From Tangata Kakato to the Official Documents

Hala fakama'op'opo: Ko e 'osi ko ee hono lele'i 'o e hala fakama'uma'u pea hoko leva 'a e hala fakama'op'opo. ko e fo'i hala ko'eni , kapau na'e 'iai ha fehalaaki pea fakatonutonu, vete e fehalaaki , fe'unu e me'a 'oku avaava mo nonou. Puni e ngaahi me'a 'oku totonu ke puni. Pea kapau 'oku hipa, pea vete ka e fakalelei'i , faofao ke hangatonu pea tata'o leva e ongo mui'i lālānga 'aki e ongo maka taonga pea heka leva e kau lalanga.

 (This hala determines the completion, whether the weave of the fala is straight, tight, and beautiful. If the weavers find faults in the weaving, they would take the weave out and reweave it again untill it looks perfect. Once approved then two of the special stones are placed on both ends to ensure that the fala is aligned and straight, while they complete the fala).

5.1 Fasi: Introduction

This chapter aims to connect the ideas of the Tongan subject or tangata within the context of the Tongan '*api* to the context of 'api in ako or education within Aotearoa NZ. This chapter will start with a discourse analysis of the 'Pacific' official documents. There has been increasing use of Pacific words and concepts in some of the official documents but still these are superficial. There will always be difficulty in writing meaningful documents that cover all the Pacific Island groups and yet acknowledge the distinct values of Pacific communities

Outcomes, Indicators and Priorities

Today the NZ Government and its education system are focused on achieving specific outcomes. Curriculum frameworks, indicators and regulations lead the

education system in a certain direction, which is clearly articulated. This is made explicit in the Pacific Education plan (Ministry of Education, 2020a, p. 6). Yet there are still concerns that the education system is not working well for our children. The statistics for our Pacific communities in Aotearoa, in terms of education, show that we are the lowest achievers (Statistics New Zealand, 2020). It would be misleading to assert that the underlying values of education offered for our Tongan and Pacific peoples here in Aotearoa have improved. The emphasis on 'priority learners' is transparent in the theme promoted in the education sector for better educational outcomes (Education Review Office, 2015). The term 'priority learner' has become a catch-all phrase for Māori and Pacific peoples and has acquired negative overtones (J. Matapo & J. P. Teisina, 2020). The statistics of education today (Statistics New Zealand, 2020) tell a disturbing story of the contemporary context of education at both systemic and epistemological levels. However, as Tamasese et al. (2005) said, that we should connect with the contemporary contexts in which we live, implying that we should still be able to achieve well within the wider education system from within our Tongan context. The Tongan indigenous knowledge system has a contribution to make towards the progress of langa ngāue (building success) of Tongan/Pacific peoples in Aotearoa. Part of searching for and building success or langa ngāue (Teisina, 2011) for Tongan people is to find ways to communicate Tongan conceptual thinking to policy makers (Pau'uvale, 2011).

There are repercussions for Pacific peoples for not conforming to western ways of thinking and therefore not achieving well in the statistics. Despite their

enthusiasm for education, they continue to be over-represented in negative educational statistics (MacIntosh, 2011; Sanga, 2004; 'A Taufe'ulungaki, 2004; Vaioleti, 2011). Even the NZ education system, although well aware of the importance of Pacific education, lacks the resources to understand the values and cultures of Tongans and other Pacific groups (Alefaio, 2008; MacIntosh, 2011; Manu'atu, 2000; J. Matapo & J. P. Teisina, 2020; Penetito & Sanga, 2003; 'A Taufe'ulungaki, 2004; Tu'itahi, 2010). Although the first Tongan ECE Centre or Akoteu Tonga was established at the Tokaima'ananga church over 25 years ago in Ōtara, and there are quite a few church-affiliated centres in Auckland, the dominant culture still finds recognition of an alternative culture difficult to understand or to welcome their ways of knowing. Mainstream educational thinking in the last 30 years has been strongly influenced by a belief in a competitive environment underpinned by universal truths and reality – a modernist ideology contradicting Pacific values. Fractures happening within our own communities indicate a need for support by developing a more nuanced understanding of the Pacific episteme in the contemporary context.

Discontinuity of Values

Many of the tensions underlying the statistical evidence derive from the discontinuity of values, beliefs, ideas, languages and practices. The emphasis built up from government educational convention focussed on the 'failures' of Pacific peoples rather than what they are capable of throughout their lives (Penetito & Sanga, 2003). Educational policy and practice assumptions are divorced from the reality of those who are described as 'failures'. The modernist

values of liberalism, capitalism and neo-liberalism have had an impact on Pacific communities and their ways of thinking about themselves. To avoid rigid tensions, we must begin from a place of strength and seek to preserve the essence of our own narratives and storytelling for the sake of our future generations (Martin et al., 2019; G. Stewart, 2020).

The significance of keeping indigenous knowledge alive has become a priority for indigenous scholars around the world (Helu-Thaman, 2002; Tamasese et al., 2005; 'A Taufe'ulungaki, 2004). The challenge for Indigenous scholars who are within the university is the universal assumption that there is a common truth. Our 'place' is engrained and rooted in the very fonua where land, relationships, peoples, seas, skies, and the entire cosmos are whole. In a Tongan cultural context, the vā or the relationship between mind, body and soul, individual and collective, space and time creates complexities inherent in how we see the world. Such complexities are difficult to communicate in the ongoing struggles to justify our 'differences' in thinking and being within Western discourses. The process of translating and explaining this can be problematic, creating tensions because of this 'difference' between Tongan and European thinking (Teisina et.al, 2018). The construct of a linear and fragmented worldview needs to give way to a holistic, relational fluidity and flexibility of being.

There is acknowledgement in the way Pacific worldviews are now included in the titles of some of the official documents in the discourse. The well-meaning official documents attempt to help raise the outcomes and achievements of Pacific

peoples, and we applaud the government for doing that for our people. It is also important to stand and reflect on whether or not these decisions are putting our people at risk. But there is still work to be done now that it includes Covid-19 experiences and lockdown periods that add to the complexities of the discourse on matters such as wellbeing.

Well-being

For instance, over the last couple of years we have noticed the rising use of the term 'wellbeing' appearing in official documents, guidelines and frameworks. The government named its 2021 budget the 'wellbeing budget'. For instance, the government-designed policies that aim to capture the wellbeing theme in the social, cultural, and political aspects of living for Māori and Pacific peoples in Aotearoa. But this theme omits an important consideration for Pacific and Tongan peoples. We need to include considerations of ako when discussing social, political, and economic circumstances that hold implications for education. Ako would lead to forms of education that would, in turn, have new meaning for our fanau growing up in NZ. Few people in Aotearoa are aware of such ways of thinking which have the potential to change the landscape of knowledge and education in Aotearoa. The 'api 'in NZ has vastly different characteristics from the 'api in Tonga.

5.2 Ako – The current discourse

Practice in the early childhood context in Aotearoa has changed substantially over the past 30 years for social, economic, and political reasons. Since the 1990s, ECE services have increased in number and variety to cater for the demand for ECE services for children of different cultural and social backgrounds (McLachlan, 2011) and in response to the perception that children are disadvantaged if they do not attend ECE services. Loveridge and McLachlan (2009) contended that the landscape of ECE in Aotearoa has become more complex in response to "historical, cultural and political factors, as well as a response to dominant and emerging theories of how children learn" (p. 22).

Affecting the discourse is the number of educational initiatives that are designed, with government support, to target Māori and Pasifika peoples in order to improve their educational outcomes (Stuart, 2011, p. vii). The kind of 'self' referred to in this context has political implications. The theme that underlies this history of ECE is the more-or-less subtle implication that ECE is provided to compensate for disadvantage, an original discourse of compensation for disadvantaged which persists in reference to Pacific ECE. Yet there has been a change in discourse from providing for disadvantaged children to a position which regards children who do not attend ECE as disadvantaged, with implications for Pacific children who do not attend or do not have access to ECE.

Since 1996 there has been a plethora of Pasifika education publications, ample in their goals and objectives and desire to succeed but always lacking in outcomes. Participation and engagement issues in setting pathways to identifying Pacific education issues, and in setting best practice to improve pedagogy with Pacific children, mean these publications still do not seem to achieve 'improvement'. The publications for Pacific peoples in the past 20 years released by the Ministry suggest the direction of where the discourse of ECE for Pasifika peoples is heading.

Official documents

In 1996, *Ko e Ako 'a e Kakai Pasifika: Pacific Islands Peoples' Education in Aotearoa, New Zealand Towards the Twenty-first Century* (Ministry of Education, 1996) was designed to raise the quality of the education received by Pacific peoples in Aotearoa. This was of historical importance because it is the first time Tongan words were used for the title of the plan, probably because Lesieli Tongati'o was involved with the Ministry of Education at the time (Tongati'o, 1998). The second mention of any Pacific languages, in this case Cook Islands Māori, in the title was in 2002 with *Te Au Kite Pu'apiga, Useful Resources: Pasifika Education* (Phillips et a*l., 2002).* The third time a Pasifika language, Samoan, was used in the title was in 2009 with *Ua Aoina le Manongi e le Iolo: Pasifika Schooling Improvement Research* (Amituanai-Toloa et al., 2009). The following year another Pasifika concept was used *Teu le va: Relationships across Research and Policy in Pasifika Education* (Airini et al., 2010). The language used

is Samoan but Tongans also recognise the concept in tauhi vā. In 2017, *Te Whāriki* included one Tongan concept of '**Falehanga'** within the document (Ministry of Education, 2017). Then, in 2018, the Samoan concept of Tapasā was included in the title of the significant document *Tapasā: Cultural Competencies Framework for Teachers of Pacific Learners* (Ministry of Education, 2018).

The history of the key 'official' documents released by the Ministry of Education in the past 25 years is that the Ministry has only used Pasifika concepts and languages within the titles of these five documents. The text of the documents is almost exclusively English with chapter headings and occasional references in

Māori. This gives a hint of the abstract power that underlies some of these 'official' documents produced by the Ministry. What is clearly highlighted is the complex interaction of the subtle influences and assumptions of 'power' with the urges to change the way Pasifika education proceeds in Aotearoa. This is because of the underlying values and processes of neo-liberal ideas that the education system is firmly now based upon. But going even deeper, we see that there is no firm grounding for Pacific education in Aotearoa to stand on its own yet. Even after five 'official' documents over 20 years, it has come down to this – Pasifika education is not yet grounded in firm foundations.

More recently emphasis seems to have moved from targeting Pasifika children directly to targeting teachers (who are assumed to be Palangi). Underlying these worthy aims is a strategy of investment in Pasifika education in order to avoid problems in the future. But there are problems with the assumption that 'the

teacher' that these documents are aimed at will be a Palangi with little understanding of Pacific values and ideas.

Tensions grew in Aotearoa due to the rise of neo-liberalism influencing the landscapes of ECE (J. Matapo & J. Teisina, 2020; Westbrook, 2018). Neoliberalism encouraged commodification, competition, privatisation and individualisation (Peters & Marshall, 1996). This discourse saw people as human capital. The economics-driven ideas positioned our children as 'commodities'; in terms of dollar values, there would be less spending in the future on courts, jails and social welfare if we invest in them in earlier years, that is in education (Devine, 2000). Most ECE centres are operating within these dominant neoliberal ideals. The 'incommensurable differences' of the two worldviews means that the dominant culture of our falehanga forms the challenge for Pacific education in NZ. The difficulty inherent in writing documents to cover the island groups and acknowledge the variety of Pacific communities in Aotearoa becomes evident as we look more closely at two of the most widely used official documents in ECE, *Te Whāriki* and *Tapasā*.

Part 1: Te Whāriki to faliki

Perhaps reconciling official policy and differences within the various Pacific communities is an impossible aim: the higher risk, though, is that increased policy interest and activity would lead to the same sort of cultural appropriation and tokenism that is apparent with relation to Māori in *Te Whāriki*. The grounding of Tongan/Pasifika decolonial aspirations will help acknowledge the whenua/fonua

(land), tangata whenua, and their stories and struggles. Although there are significant concurrences between Māori and Tongan worldviews, the already suspect interpretations of Māori viewpoints by the authors of Te Whāriki do not necessarily represent *Tongan* ways of thinking and acting, let alone the subtleties within claims to being Tongan. Rameka (2018) pointed out with regard to Maori that:-

> Although the lived experiences of whakapapa connectedness may not be the reality for many Māori, whakapapa remains a potent identifier of being and belonging as Māori. Whanaungatanga, associated with whānau, hapū and iwi groupings, is today an expression of belonging within wider contemporary urban sites, both Māori and non-Māori. As these sites of belonging become more diverse, it is important to recognize that the huge majority of Māori identify as being Māori; however, how they wish to belong as Māori is open to interpretation. (p. 376)

These interpretations of being and belonging hold further implications for kaiako in ECE. Even though they may understand te reo Māori, it is not guaranteed that Māori do feel closer to being Māori. This might have implications within the field of ECE, especially if there are no connections to Māori being and belonging in a Pacific setting. Māori being and belonging encouraged "interconnected frames, both historical and contemporary, that support understandings from a Māori perspective" (Rameka, 2018, p. 376). Building on the interconnectedness of

frames is the importance of knowing and understanding Māori philosophy, and Georgina Stewart (2020) stressed the importance of Māori philosophy:

> Māori philosophy belongs to a different spatial and temporal reality from that of European philosophy. Time and space in Māori philosophy are unified: in the Māori language, separate words for space and time do not exist. Therefore, past events do not lose their significance and ancestors can collapse the space-time continuum to be co-present with their descendants. (p.3)

Not all Māori would agree on the Māori viewpoints in *Te Whāriki*. The complexities that will add to the ongoing attempts to reconstruct the thinking as kaiako. How do we ensure that kaiako align with our conceptual thinking of faiako? The only way to relate to these concepts is through our way of thinking and being, which is in discussed further in the next section.

Deconstruction and reconstruction

Fofola e fala kae fai e alea 'a e kāinga refers to rolling out the mat to *faliki* or the whāriki in Māori for the kāinga to meet. *Faliki* for us Tongans unites the value of the fonua, kāinga, tauhi vā, the feveitokai'aki, the tapu crucial in nofo 'a kāinga. Faliki can be viewed as opening up the critical space to talanoa. It is a ritual that incorporates more than talanoa, inviting the laumālie or the spirit into the 'api so

it can encourage a sense of 'ofa and māfana (heart-warming with love). The foundational idea of 'api celebrates the essence of laumālie that fuels the continuity of transformational living. The whole idea of transformation begins from 'api, and therefore, within our setting of Tongan language nests, we take the official forms of knowledge and localise them. This means that we need to interpret the strands and translate the knowledge from the original context so it works in the context of 'api. Translating knowledge from another context runs the risk of a mismatch of knowledge and information, and it is unlikely that the outcomes prescribed will emerge the same way. Yet Tongan teachers always attempt to tick all the boxes required for compliance from the Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office (Pau'uvale, 2011). The implications of having to tick all the boxes are that Tongan teachers must deconstruct the documents and reconstruct them in our own epistemological forms, in this case our Tongan language and culture. Our teachers are trained in Western institutions and the language used for their education is the English language. The struggle to translate that knowledge into praxis is part of a teacher's work in Tongan educational settings. The use of Māori language adds further complexity: for example, ways in which the word 'mana' is used in *Te Whāriki* differs from the use of the word in Tongan thinking and being.

Connecting and reconnecting

Mana refers to blessings or miracles within the Tongan language and culture but it can also refer to thunderstorms. Mana Atua equates to the sense of wellbeing

within the question that says 'Can I trust you?' (Ministry of Education, 2017). Mana can be regarded as an umbrella concept that is embodied through the nofo 'a kāinga, and it is used in formations of identities and fonua within the Tongan culture. There is a Tongan proverb that says Tama tu'u he fa'ee, which literally says that a child's foundation rests on the mother. Mana refers to the higher power that has allowed the fa'ee or the mother to give birth to her children. This thinking is also inherent in another Tongan saying which is normally used after how many years of longing to have kids and when the couple finally granted a child after how many years, then it is regarded as – 'Ko e Mana Mei Langi' which translates to the miracles from up above. The mana is granted through the wombs of the mother in exchange for all the prayers and ngāue that they have done to receive this beautiful mana inherent in the newborn babies. The baby is growing up with the natural language which is known as the mother tongue. This is the life of the newborn baby and that mother tongue has to be sustained because it was gifted through the embodiment of mana. They become our biggest blessings from God.

Conceptually, mana can refer to the important roles that a mother plays in the lives of her children within the 'api. The person responsible for their wellbeing is their 'mother' in falehanga, that is their teacher. Mana here implies moulding and akonaki of the child so they could grow up achieving the poto'i or skills and knowledge that will ensure productive relationships within the 'api. Some of these poto'i are crucial within the nofo 'a kainga such as:

- Poto'i lālānga – expertise in weaving

- Poto'i lea – expertise in public speaking and communicating

- Poto'i toutai – expertise in fishing

- Poto'i hiva – expertise in singing

- Poto'i ngoue – expertise in plantations

- Poto'i kuki – expertise in cooking

- Poto'i ngāue – expertise in all aspects

Not everyone will become expert in all 'poto'i'. There are different types of poto'i that contribute to building the complete tangata kakato or complete personhood. Most of these poto'i are achieved from falehanga and the environment of the 'api within the village of nofo 'a kainga. The poto'i signals the fluidity of the Tongan personhood as they grow from poto he ngāue into the poto'i ngāue. One of the core values of poto'i is poto'i he 'ulungaanga, which is knowing morally what to do, what to say and how to carry yourself within the 'api. The assumption that 'mana' and other words have the same meaning to everyone in NZ has unfortunate implications for some of the population. There is very little in *Te Whāriki* which acknowledges the needs of Pacific peoples to provide ECE which is consistent with and supportive of Pacific practices and values.

Part 2: Tapasā to kāpasa

The *Tapasā* framework brings Pacific perspectives to effective and quality teaching practice at different stages of a teacher's journey in key areas and transition points for Pacific learners in early learning, primary and secondary education (Ministry of Education, 2018). Tapasā is the Samoan word for compass

and it is described as a guide to navigate through education. Tapasā is translated to kāpasa within the Tongan language which also holds similar meanings to the Samoan word of Tapasā. Accordingly, its purpose is to

- support governance, strategic, and programme planning;

- develop local curriculum;

- develop induction, mentoring and appraisal systems; and

- guide professional learning and development.

According to the foreword of the *Tapasā* document, Hon Jenny Salesa (Associate Minister of Education) agreed that the *Tapasā* document was designed for these reasons (Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 1): --

> Tapasā is designed to primarily support non-Pacific leaders, teachers and boards to engage with Pacific learners in culturally responsive ways.
> Tapasā is the first step in an ongoing development journey to better understand the identity, language and culture of Pacific people, to connect, collaborate, and co-construct teaching and learning with Pacific children, young people, their parents, families and communities. I encourage all leaders and teachers to use this tool alongside other resources to enable every Pacific learner to achieve their full potential and be valued.

The *Tapasā* framework had great intentions to support teachers with more awareness of the Pacific cultures for the Pacific learners, similar to that of Te

Kōtahitanga framework (Bishop et al., 2003). The intentions are explicity in the *Tapasā* document (Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 6) , designed specifically to -

> …support teachers to become more culturally aware, confident and competent when engaging with Pacific learners and their parents, families and communities. It aims to contextualise quality teaching and learning within a Pacific learner setting by providing a Pacific lens to the Standards for the Teaching Profession and the Code of Professional Responsibility.

Tapasā is written on the assumption that teachers are pālangi. It reverts very quickly from a consciousness of collectivism to individualism. The struggles inherent in these documents such as *Te Whāriki* and *Tapasā* reflect the struggles by Pacific peoples to design documents that are not formed on these assumptions. The formation of these Pasifika documents has political implications influenced by the dominant culture (Markus, & Kitayama, 1991). To say that teachers need to be "culturally aware" is inappropriate for a Tongan Pacific teacher like myself who is already aware of my Tongan identity (Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 6). This idea of being "competent when engaging with Pacific learners and their families and communities" (Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 6) seems to fit someone who is an outsider – it is designed for someone who has no idea of Pacific ways of knowing and thinking. The basis upon which this idea of *Tapasā* is built is not of the Pacific but of the same universalist assumptions that are permanent in the education discourse. Even Pacific scholars are finding it hard to escape from these assumptions because they are

part of their training, and they have become part of the furniture of education. Ngugi, a Kenyan writer (Thiong'o, 1986, p. 16), made the point that

> …language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. How people perceive themselves affects how they look at their culture, at their politics and at the social production of wealth, at their entire relationships to nature and to other human beings (p.16)

It is important to reflect on how power and language can become the reality that houses the permanent furniture of colonised minds; values that tend to take over our own thinking and being. What is perceived to be the best, and the only worldview that matters, becomes the permanent feature of our 'api and it will require a lot of recentring to bring forward what is important, especially for our Pacific peoples. Mcleod (2010, p.21) agrees on the "persistence engendered by getting both colonising and colonised people to see their world and themselves in a particular way, internalising the language of Empire as natural, true order of life".

From Pasifika to Pacific

Another signpost in the shifting discourse is the use of the word 'Pasifika' which was used over 20 years ago to define Pacific peoples. Push back by Pacific peoples (Tongati'o, 1998) has now caused a change in discourse. Pasifika has been amended in the *Tapasā* document to Pacific instead (Ministry of Education, 2018). Matapo (2021) says that the replacement of term 'Pasifika' can be problematic because

> ....the term 'Pacific' runs the risk of the erasure of a term that has been used with increasing relevance and significance in education discourse over the last two decades. A change in terminology influences shifts in the conceptualising of Pasifika as a well-established body of scholarship in education. Pasifika is specific to a New Zealand location with the broader Pacific region and informs Pasifika education research through a myriad of suppositions, diaspora, transnational, hybrid, and nomadic. (p. 83)

The term 'Pasifika' has its time, uses and problems. Pasifika is not a 'fixed' term that can be used within the established body of scholarship Just when we had developed an understanding of how the word 'Pasifika' could be meaningful in our history, then the change of government and those in power brought about this change in the discourse. The shift to 'Pacific' perhaps makes the connections or will become useful with younger people of mixed or distant Pacific heritage.

Assumptions

Tapasā focuses on outcomes, a fundamental purpose which the ideas of Tongan subjectivity do not support. Tongan thinking would place more importance on the process and would find it hard to fit into some of the categories created by the document. Pacific peoples are being pressured to adhere to standards generated from social, cultural, political and historical assumptions created in a different time and space. Historical impacts produce ideas that are universal and hard to detach from. The discourse of the education sector reflects the disciplines of business and economics and there is some enthusiasm for it from NZ Pacific scholars. There is a connection here to the neo-liberal regimes of truth. Neo-liberal discourse within the ministry and wider governmentality dictates the discourse within education, including in ECE, and over Pacific education, which should be, by its own judgement, distinctly different from the individualisation inherent in neoliberalism (Devine et al., 2017; Stewart, 2007). Tongan concepts are often at odds with underlying concepts expressed in *Tapasā*.

5.3 Puni: Conclusion

My argument here is not to conflate or to put down the attempts and the efforts in having Pasifika documents within the education regulations of ECE, but rather to show the internal conflicts within the neo-liberal positions that are fundamental in the landscapes of policies and the official documents. It also raises an important task regarding the development of the NZ Pacific context, against a backdrop of European ideas. It is to provoke and propel critical thinking in Pacific minds regarding the compliance the Pasifika context against the backdrop of European ideas, rather than an over-eager compliance with texts founded on European ideas. The struggles Pacific ECE teachers experience in implementing these

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documents such as *Te Whāriki* and *Tapasā* reflect the struggles by Pacific peoples to design processes that are not formed on the assumptions inherent in these documents.

The potential of Pacific ways of thought can be seen through the use of the only Tongan concept in Te Whāriki known as the 'falehanga' concept. In the next section, will show how 'falehanga' has emancipated our thinking from the ideological ideals of liberalism, capitalism and neo-liberalism inherent in the official documents. Falehanga is historically the only Tongan concept ever mentioned in curriculum documents like *Te Whāriki*. Falehanga has been a useful concept for us to use within our practices and signals that the demand for more acknowledgement of Tongan (and other Pacific) forms of thought, or the license to use Pacific ways of thought, to be expressed in official documents. We do sincerely hope that the government and the NZ education system are more proactive in the future and will not wait another 30 years to include concepts from Tonga or the other Pacific nations in the curriculum. According to Chinua Achebe cited in (Thiong'o, 1986, p. 8),

> "the English language will be able to carry the weight of his African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit new surroundings."

Falehanga is in agreement with this; it can only endure with its ancestral 'api as the basis of its inter-subjectivities. Malie kuo u ma'u ha mo'ui kakato – Amazing, we feel complete at last!

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6. Hala Fakamolemole: From the 'official' documents to falehanga.

Hala fakamolemole: Ko e hala faka'osi ia pea hikihiki e fala. Ko e 'osi e hala ko 'eni pea 'oku siofi leva 'ehe fefine lālānga 'ene lālānga pe kuo tukunga mālie pea toki kamata leva hono hikihiki.

(This is the last hala before hikihiki is carried out by the weavers. Hikihiki includes the final weave to complete the fala. The weavers look to continue weaving the new fala that awaits the new beginning of fakama'u fatu)

6.1 Fasi: Introduction

This chapter will use a case study on the praxis of Akoteu Kato Kakala showing how productive and creative a Pacific setting can be when exceptional circumstances provoke and allow the development of responses firmly based in Pacific, in this case Tongan, principles and understandings. My argument here is not to conflate or to put down the attempts and the efforts in having Pasifika documents within the education regulations of ECE, but rather to show the internal conflicts within the neo-liberal positions that are fundamental in the landscapes of policies and the official documents.

The Tongan subject in the context of the '*api*. '*Api* is our grounded place with the *fonua* that includes people, land and the entire cosmos. To conceptualise and articulate the notion of '*api* within the context of philosophy and education within Aotearoa is a challenge for a Tongan theorist. '*Api*, theorises the crucial 'place' where the Tongan subject is formed, reformed and reframed to enhance our

understanding of what it means to be living as a Tongan in Aotearoa. '*Api* contributes to the formation of subjectivity for Tongan people living in Aotearoa.

The Tongan subject thrives on the connections between their '*api* and their current life. However, uncertainties arise as a result of an important phenomenon philosophically, for without our traditional 'api the misconceptions and the anxieties have escalated. Without 'api we have been led to think of ourselves as 'homeless'. This has psychological and economic consequences.

6.2 Economic consequences

I now take you to a familiar '*api* within the praxis of *ako* that shows the transformations within our *kāinga ako* community founded on the tenets of Tongan language and culture, one that reflects the strengths that lie in community *kāinga* context. A holistic *kainga* ako enlists the participation of the '*apiako* – the centre, teachers, staff, children, families, extended families and the communities. '*Api* in Aotearoa NZ can be operationalised in an ako- (education-) focussed community connected to our 'apiako in this context. My example is a Tongan language nest of Akoteu Kato Kakala located in Ōtara, South Auckland where I am currently working as a manager.

Ōtara represents an economically vulnerable population. According to the 2018 Census, Ōtara is known for its high population of Pacific Island people, who make up 46% of the Ōtara population compared to the low number of Pākehā at 16.8%

(Statistics New Zealand, 2020). In the 1970s, dawn raids on some of the residents by the police took place as they searched for Pacific overstayers in the area, supporting Prime Minister Rob Muldoon's immigration policies. According to Anae (2020), dawn raids in the 1970s showed the distance between the government and the people from the Pacific Island nations. It really did represent dark times for our people. Anae believes that 'education' can lead our peoples out of oppression into the light (Anae, 2020). This praxis is hoping to use the same light that is discussed by Anae (2020) as a tool to take our thinking and being out of the darkness.

This is my 'apiako where I currently work, where langa ngāue (building communities) is happening. The *ako* here goes beyond the limits of the classroom to incorporate the *wellbeing* of the families. It is more important now to bring stories from a different worldview, thinking and being that supports a school like Akoteu Kato Kakala from a place of collective resilience and strength. This sentiment brings us closer to the Tongan way of thinking and being.

6.3 Praxis of 'Apiako Akoteu Kato Kakala

The journey through building ako aimed to benefit not only the faiako (teachers/educators/facilitators) and fānau (learners) but the rest of the village or our Tongan community. This is a place where meaningful learning experiences are made for our children, kāinga (families), faiako, and pule (leaders) within the context of Tongan values in Aotearoa. People who belong to Akoteu Kato Kakala

wish to make meaningful connections with the curriculum that is put in place by the Ministry of Education! But, more importantly for us, Akoteu Kato Kakala is a place that will create space for our own stories that explain the importance of our ways of knowing and being within our falehanga! Falehanga refers to the place of our stories that aim to recentre Tongan ontology and epistemology within our practices in Tongan ECE in Aotearoa as we celebrate the richness of Tongan language and culture. We ask ourselves what falehanga is for us at Akoteu Kato Kakala and how that fits into the contexts of ako for our kāinga (nuclear and extended families) and fānau, especially through the unpredictable times such as the current Covid-19 era.

Falehanga conceptual thinking

In the Tongan language and culture, fale means house and hanga refers to the measurement used by the hands of women for their mats that equates to in the scientific world one foot. Falehanga refers to the 'place' where women carry out their duties and obligations for their families as nurturers such as weaving or lālānga, etc. Macintyre (2008,p.14) in her doctoral thesis talked about the role of Falehanga is the –

> …. where of the lālānga is usually held in a fale-kautaha (corporate building) that becomes their Falehanga, one big, open room where the materials and tools are store safely – restricted to outsiders but accessible to the members. It is a place where women weavers (kau toulālānga) can work while they talk or sing. The product is achieved in a location where

skilful women are the weavers, where plenty of food for sustenance and information are available to share, and where the atmosphere is relaxed and enjoyable.

In Falehanga, poto'i or skills and the expertise gained in the work of Falehanga are shared amongst the group that encourages a sense of commitment and resilient with the aspirations to enrich their kāinga with the work of their hands.

For Akoteu Kato Kakala, falehanga translates as the place of strength where ako is embedded and which is rich in Tongan language and culture. Falehanga is the only Tongan concept acknowledged in the latest edition of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017) and therefore we need to explore the extent of this concept and develop its implications for Tongan ECE in NZ:

> Pasifika approaches that have influenced ECE in New Zealand draw on different ethnic-specific ways of knowing and being, for example, kopu tangata (Cook Islands), falalalaga (Samoan), **falehanga (Tongan**), and inati (Tokelau). (p.62)

The inclusion of falehanga in *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017) is a gesture towards shielding us from being marginalised by the dominating theories and practice that are already embedded within ECE system in Aotearoa. Speaking literally, falehanga is foundational to Akoteu or Tongan ECE in Aotearoa. Akoteu Kato Kakala seized on the opportunity to maximise the only Tongan word/concept in *Te Whāriki* to build an entire educational ethos. The educative possibilities of

this whole entire educational ethos created by the inclusion of falehanga in the *Te Whāriki* were significant in the relationships that we wanted to have with the new *Te Whāriki*. This one word allowed us to create avenues to build on. Akoteu Kato Kakala was able to utilise the falehanga concept to lead many projects: teachers' symposiums; professional learning developments; art exhibitions; parents' gatherings; pedagogies; and curriculum development. We did not want to use falehanga to conflate both worlds. Instead this falehanga ethos allowed us to aspire to build a stronger connection to *Te Whāriki* curriculum so we could make meaningful contributions to Aotearoa and the education system and, importantly, so our fānau and kāinga were able to thrive. The interconnections of falehanga go beyond its material value. Spiritual connections deeply grounded in Tongan values and experiences are critical to creating meaningful ako experiences inclusive of the vā (Helu-Thaman, 2002; Manu'atu, 2000b; Teisina, 2011; Vaioleti, 2006) for our fanau and their families. Part of our mission is to find ways to communicate Tongan concepts, mobilising falehanga for those who might not understand what that means for our children growing up in NZ.

The lifetime connections with the growth of Akoteu Kato Kakala and Tongan Education in Aotearoa have always been the inspiration behind this research and especially continuing the legacies for those who came before us and for those who are yet to come. The genealogical connections of Akoteu Kato Kakala are therefore also explained in the next sub-section to illustrate the snapshot of the journey and the position of this falehanga.

Kato kakala philosophy

In the Tongan context, kakala as a concept literally refers to both a garland and the fragrant flower used to make it. Kakala is based on the traditional process of fragrant floral garland making. Kato refers to the basket that holds the kakala together. Conceptually, in our kato there are different types of kakala with different fragrances, different natures, different textures, and different forms of beauty with different names. The diverse collections of kakala represent the children in our centre and their 'differences' which make each of them unique and special in their own ways. The kato that holds the kakala together represents our ongoing mission to our children with the holistic aspirations to maintain Tongan language and culture (and this can extend to other Pacific cultures) bound by the spiritual connections and values of the vā (reciprocal relationships) so they could become 'alaha pea manongi (fragrances/aromas), which refers to the holistic way our children will continue to flourish, thrive, and become confident in who they are with lifelong learning experiences. Our philosophy and our aspirations centre on the mana of our children and acknowledging that their differences are their strengths.

This foundation signals the place of the falehanga that our 'village' is placed on, despite its being unusual within our Tongan and Pasifika ECE contexts. There is a Tongan saying, **'oku 'ikai ha to'a 'e tu'u tokotaha**, that says it is not the work of one individual, but it takes a whole village to build success.

Ethnographic case study: falehanga in practice

The following section of this study presents Tongan kāinga cultural perspectives and understandings through an ethnographic methodologic approach. Ritchie (2019) reminds us that ethnography within an ECE context, involves lengthy and consistent periods of time immersed in the learning context with attention to relational, cultural and ethical responsibility. As an insider to the Tongan ECE context, the relationships with kainga were already established and the consistent and frequent talanoa with kainga supported an evolution of community practice where kainga were open to share their cultural understandings and perceptions at a time of COVID-19 lockdown. The Tongan ECE centre became a falehanga, where kainga are supported beyond education outcomes. The Tongan ECE as a falehanga became a place of strength and mobilisation for the critical resourcing and provision for kainga wellbeing.

The years 2020 and 2021 will most definitely go down in history as a time to remember: Covid-19 changed the landscape of ECE and the education sector forever. We have been involved in ECE for over 20 years, and there had been changes in our profession in terms of policies and practices, but we definitely were not prepared for this Covid-19 pandemic. We were used to the routines and assumed 'certainties' of time and place until Covid-19 arrived and we suddenly went into lockdown. Opportunity to develop our provision of education in the context of ECE using Tongan principles and values. The resilience of our people has been shown in demonstrated strengths and potentials that we never knew or anticipated.

Ko e ui fai mei he ate is a Tongan proverb that reminds us of our calling as ECE teachers who thrive on the spiritual interconnections of the vā, and it was made especially important during the absence of our children from the centre. Such a calling nurtures a sense of connectedness between teachers and fānau, focussing on being present through the course of the lockdowns.

Fetauhi'aki

Fetauhi'aki was key for us and our parents during COVID19 era which was inclusive of *tauhi vā* in a reciprocal sense. The sese of peace and nurturance were present knowing that we were looking out for each other's wellbeing which meant a lot for kāinga ako at Akoteu Kato Kakala. *Fetauhi'aki* bring forth a sense of nurturance for those who are involved in the process. Ako seeks to care for those who are receiving the learning and for those who are bringing forward the teachings, so as to make it an empowering experience.

Fetauhi'aki and staying connected became a priority in rethinking alternative ways of nurturing the vā, not in the typical face-to-face contact but through virtual connectedness. It was important to foreground tauhi vā (reciprocal relationships) in our falehanga. Reconceptualising and nurturing tauhi vā through online connections raised questions about how to guide the talanoa and practices so they can be meaningful in how ako is implemented, practiced and executed with our village of learners. It was also fundamental to stay connected to our calling as teachers, bound by the 'mana' in *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017) to our fānau and their families. We were able to do this through the visual

presentation of the curriculum in action while children were learning from home with interactive connections and intentions. Communication with parents has always been an essential part of our professional practice because we value our parents' and families' contributions to their own children's learning.

Fetu'utaki

We thrive on talanoa, talking with parents face to face about the progress of their children's learning and development, as well as any other issues concerning their children. Suddenly, we found ourselves in new territory as we navigated our thinking and being, thinking of ways that we could still provide meaningful learning experiences for our fānau during unprecedented times. Virtual online learning was the only option that would work for us. The survey/poll given out to the parents in the three days before lockdown told us the way of learning and communication during lockdown preferred by most people was to be conducted through the private Akoteu Kato Kakala Facebook page.

One of the single parents shared her story: how she appreciated the online programme which helped reduce her anxieties and worries about how she was going to look after her family during covid era.

Femahino'aki

The idea of femahino'aki or reaching a collective understanding rest on the idea of the betterment of the Akoteu Kato Kakala community as a whole. Before the

lockdown, we managed to design our programme planning for the following six weeks in lockdown and break it down to daily plans to make it easier for our families or kāinga ako to understand. Femahino'aki was crucial in the process so we could gain the same understanding of how we were going to get through covid19 era together. We undertook that it would involve not only our fānau in ECE but the family as a whole. Our curriculum plan was posted on our private Facebook page and parents were encouraged to use the plan for their children and kainga at home. They were also encouraged to post videos and pictures of these experiences to share with other families. It was exciting to see how everyone stayed connected through this online programme. Teachers were leading these activities from daily prayers, hymns, and songs to home and other fun activities. Some of the families were able to lead some of the prayers from the comforts of their homes. We also got to see the work of our fanau at home, and we found out that we sometimes interacted more on another level with some of the parents that we did not know really well – we were able to engage online with their children's learning progress. Building on our digital va with the children and their families were indeed one of the great highlights of lockdown learning.

The Matekuolava family shared how their whole family was included in the learning programme. They were happy to carry out the prayers and the singing for the rest of the Kainga Akoteu Kato Kakala during the family week in May 2020. Their family did not feel neglected at all because of the experiences gained during this programme with Akoteu Kato Kakala online and even through the shopping

and emotional support offered to them during the lockdown (Akoteu Kato Kakala, 2021). The connections between the teachers, them and the other families were very helpful and became a great encouragement for them during the pandemic. Their family felt the connections that they built and definitely the vaa was growing.

Fe'ofa'aki

Having 'ofa embedded within the 'api Akoteu Kato Kakala is one of the essential values within the nofo 'a kainga. Fe'ofa'aki is guided by 'ofa with aspirations to grow and thrive where 'ofa is present. We could feel the 'ofa present during this time when we were able to reach out to our vulnerable community and our parents by delivering food parcels and wellbeing packs for all our families, especially those who were struggling during Covid-19 lockdown. To be able to go outside of our comfort zone of teaching and ensure the wellbeing of our families was hugely important and was an unexpected and rewarding aspect of 'ofa in our falehanga. We learnt that there is a holistic nurturance of the vā that is crucial and goes beyond the buildings of Akoteu Kato Kakala into the heart of our village, our community, our people, our kāinga, our fanau. When some of the friends of Akoteu Kato Kakala heard about what we were doing, they voluntarily reached out with vouchers and donations as this programme was not funded. It was evident the 'ofa that drove the helping hands to feed not only the families within Akoteu Kato Kakala but it stretched out to those other families who were in the same situations including our past students and their families but were still very much involved with the kāinga ako.

A mother of twins also expressed her appreciation for the work that was provided for her and the kāinga ako during Covid-19, from the wellbeing shopping packs to the online programme. She found herself and her husband, and the grandparents, were involved in the activities planned by Akoteu Kato Kakala for the children, and they felt the 'ofa/love. It was a very interactive time to be with their children and it was great to see, especially the dads involved in the learning process of the children. They felt a sense of fe'ofa'aki and belonging with the kainga at Akoteu Kato Kakala.

Fengaue'aki

Kainga Ako: Resilience and Wellbeing is the title of the book that Akoteu Kato Kakala launched to celebrate the great work carried out together with our parents and community during the lockdown period in 2020 (Akoteu Kato Kakala, 2021). Kainga Ako is the term that could encapsulate the work of the collective that made the Akoteu Kato Kakala village stronger than ever, despite the challenges. Ako were there for each other during the hard times. Success stories for us during the Covid-19 lockdown were defined through the strong support systems reflected by the experiences of our Tongan parents, nofo 'a kāinga and their fānau within our falehanga. To Konai Helu-Thaman (2008), the vā is really about 'honouring' and taking care of the relationships that involve people in different contexts. The nurturance of the vā during the absence of our fānau from the centre was crucial during the uncertain times of Covid-19 lockdown. The book published Akoteu

Kato Kakala (2021) celebrate the voices of the kainga ako within our falehanga. Here are some of the voices that reflected the solidarity that made the falehanga where Akoteu Kato Kakala is placed.

The Ha'unga family emphasised the importance of being open to change during the pandemic and believed that, "in all aspects of our every day lives we must be ready to change the way we work in our workplaces, the way learning is in our schools" (Akoteu Kato Kakala, 2021, p. 5). For the 'Uhila family, staying prepared as a unit and having a consistent approach to keeping safe is crucial for their wellbeing and resilience (Akoteu Kato Kakala, 2021). The Leuga-Sili family shared how they were not mentally prepared for the pandemic but connections and family really helped them prioritise what is important in life.

Feveitokai'aki

Feveitokai'aki refers to achieving mutual respect within a group of people with mutual goals and obligations. One of the stories of our doctor parent who was working through lockdown, reflected the faka'apa'apa or respect that she has for the parents and teachers involved in the ako for the programme online run by Akoteu Kato Kakala. She was able to gain insights to the amount of work that the teachers were doing every day to cater for her child's learning. Through Covid19, there were anxieties as to what would keep their daughter engaged, and she was thankful to see the other families engaged from home, to know that they were not

alone through this journey. "We are resilient beings and we are more than capable of overcoming such obstacles by working together" (Akoteu Kato Kakala, 2021, p. 12).

The Fonua family shared about their experiences during lockdown, which enabled them to learn more about how to work together with Akoteu Kato Kakala and the other families who were experiencing the same things to continue nourishinga and nurturing their children. They realised how resilient families can be and they had a chance to re-prioritise what is really important in life. This pandemic has also taught us how to work together with the school and other families to continue nourishing and teaching our little ones (Akoteu Kato Kakala, 2021).

Fetu'utaki

Some of the parents talked about how their families were involved not just physically but emotionally and spiritually. The Paea family talked about how important it was to have daily prayers available online and her family joined every morning just to stay connected. They felt a sense of holistic ako, feeling physical, emotionally, mentally and spiritually empowered through the journey with Akoteu Kato Kakala during Covid-19 (Akoteu Kato Kakala, 2021). The Falala family reflected on how quick Akoteu Kato Kakala was to go through the planning before lockdown. They were happy that they were able to maintain communications and stay connected throughout the course of the lockdowns with the teachers and

kāinga ako. The whole family, including other siblings, got involved and shared their learning experiences online with the other families through the daily learning planning offered by the team (Akoteu Kato Kakala, 2021).

The Tuaato family also shared how awesome the online programme was because it provided them as parents with ideas on what to do and how to get their children engaged during the lockdown periods (Akoteu Kato Kakala, 2021). Another parent reported how appreciative she was of the online programme that was provided by Akoteu Kato Kakala, and how it took a lot of the anxieties and the pressures off her as a mother. The activities were meaningful and gave them ideas about what to do with their children during lockdown. Seeing the other kids on screen with the teachers was really welcomed by her own kids during lockdown.

Mafile'o, a mum, expressed the significance of including the Tongan core values of Family in the learning of their children. They were able to celebrate the special occasions that mean a lot to them from Fakame (children's white Sundays), Sapate Fa'ee (Mother's Day), Sapate Tamai (father's day), and Kui (grandparents' week). This mother of seven enjoyed the routines of the prayers and singing hymns and reading bible verses every morning. She was really happy with how Akoteu Kato Kakala used a holistic approach to unite the kāinga ako throughout the lockdown period. She got to witness the amount of effort that the teachers put in for the education of their kids (Akoteu Kato Kakala, 2021).

Feako'aki

These voices are reflections of the resilience of the kāinga ako in 'api and falehanga. With everything that happens in life come beautiful learning experiences that also still have challenges and room and opportunities for more learning and improvements. The links between the learning of the fānau with the new *Te Whāriki* and new Pasifika document *Tapasā* (Ministry of Education, 2018) encouraged us teachers to dig deeper into the pedagogies that are holistically, culturally and age appropriate for our children, and that afford opportunities where active exploration is recognised through spontaneous play, social interactions, problem solving and a sense of belonging. When we used a historical lens to look at all of the photos and videos that the parents were posting up and the activities that us teachers were putting up online, we noticed how creative we needed to be instead of always relying on buying the resources from the shops. We decided to use existing available resources that everyone could just use or recycle; we needed to be more considerate and resourceful in terms of what, how and why we carried out our online activities. What we found triggered us to look at the different strategies teachers could include in their delivery online, especially if the children draw extensively from their social experiences in their family and community environment. The social features of play were recognised by Bronfenbrenner who believed that children learn and develop within the social context of their environment, and which is linked to *Te Whāriki*'s falehanga's social-cultural approach (Ministry of Education, 2017).

One of our challenges was also trying to become more competent with the demands of online learning, as some of us were behind in terms of skills, especially in loading videos and using zoom for the very first time. Our daily zoom sessions with the teachers during the lockdown period were helpful, as we became more reflective in terms of our practices. We then tailored our professional learning development to occupy our talanoa sessions based on the daily reviews that we had of our children's learning progress. This was preparing our knowledge and kato kakala so we could better facilitate, and be creative, in how we conducted this online learning programme. We were also fortunate to attend webinars run by the professional experts from the Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office staff and to be able to present to all of the Tongan ECE centres in Aotearoa during the lockdown period.

Consequences of Covid-19

Since the first lockdown, our curriculum planning has become more transparent online, and more inclusive of not only the child but their kāinga. Our practice seeks to understand and to connect with our fānau and their kāinga. ECE lockdown experiences have opened up more opportunities for us to explore the ako of 'api and falehanga. It has allowed us the opportunity to get to know our parents more, not just in person but also through online connections. The degree of creativity in the efforts to replace lost opportunities with new ones still exists within '*api* and *falehanga*.

The aftermath of this great work that took place during the lockdown is growing as we continue to build on the digital va with our kainga ako. We were able to secure more financial help from the Ministry of Education to help build further digital resources to strengthen what was started during the lockdowns as we build on the digital vā with our children, their families, and the community. We were able to run fono and workshops with the parents to learn about cyber safety. One of the highlights of this great work which led to the publication of the book title Kainga Ako – Wellbeing and Resilience by Akoteu Kato Kakala (2021). To add to that was having an App that could help make the communications easier for the parents and teachers at Akoteu Kato Kakala. It makes sense that parents feel that they belong and from that feeling of belonging comes the strong vā māfana that we always talk about, but now see in practice for all of us. We were able to go beyond the walls of the classroom out into the community and take care of their wellbeing as a whole, as a village. It has allowed us to tailor our practices to fit in with the fānau and their kāinga.

ECE services have a key role in building strong learning foundations to enable young children to develop as competent and confident learners (Ministry of Education,2017). While there may be external factors impacting the way we practice as teachers that are outside of our control, such as Covid-19, such events should not affect nor jeopardise the children's access to quality education, especially for our Tongan Pasifika children in Aotearoa. The reward for us was when our fānau and their families returned with smiling faces after lockdown,

because for them we were always there, not in person but in spirit. We never left their sides, our faces and voices were still present in their homes! Through these interconnections of the vā māfana, we are still present, and working within our falehanga within our nofo 'a kāinga at Akoteu Kato Kakala. From a small start, the use of 'falehanga' in *Te Whāriki*, we hope that that recognition of Tongan culture will grow in other government publications.

Mo'ui kakato

Seini is a New-Zealand-born Tongan, a scholar in academia and a Tongan expert for this study. She explained how ako is crucial and that is important to plant it deeply in strong cultural and spiritual grounds. There is a perception that excuses bad behaviour within the context of Tongan culture because a person was born in NZ not in Tonga. So there is a lesser expectation to behave in a moral way. But according to Seini, we often use the context of where we live now outside of Tonga to take accountability for not being Tongan and for behaving badly. However, the consequences of bad behaviour do not end there; instead, it reaches the parents and the rest of the kāinga. The saying that comes with that is "fefine ta'e akonaki'i": your family is responsible for your behaviour as you weren't taught at home to behave appropriately. The individual's actions have consequences for the collective. These bad behaviours are relational in terms of the wellbeing of the collective. But then we have to reflect on how the basis of Western thinking endorses failure to behave in the Tongan way. There is a certain way of thinking that influences this type of behaviour. In retrospect, the view is that children find it okay not to behave because being Tongan is not valued within

the context of New Zealand. They have been raised in an environment where there is only one way to behave and that is the Western way. So there is hardly any incentive there to really stick to the way of thinking of the Tongan and Pacific peoples, because one has been raised up in an environment where one's identity and values are only acknowledged at home and not anywhere else, especially in the education field.

David Fa'avae's (2016) doctoral thesis titled *Tatala 'a e Koloa 'o e To'utangata Tonga i Aotearoa mo Tonga. The intergenerational educational experiences of Tongan males in New Zealand and Tonga* talked about the 'family cultural capital that is a priority within the generation of Tongan males in NZ and Aotearoa and agrees that

> Western knowledge is valued more than Tongan cultural knowledge in New Zealand schooling. As a response to the deficit view of Tongan cultural knowledge and practice,..his study has identified 'family cultural capital' valued by each generation of Tongan males in New Zealand and Tonga. (Fa'avae, 2016, p. 245).

This issue has implications that will affect our Tongan and Pasifika children who are growing up in Aotearoa and internalising only the values and language of a particular culture that is outside their own. These are the 'fundamentals' of education that are permanently fixed within the discourses of education that we have a mission to transform from the 'api and falehanga.

I have discussed the ontological importance of **tangata kakato** as a concept of

Tongan personhood or the 'whole' person where physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of life are in harmony, and complete. The work of falehanga has shifted ontologically from the tangata to include the mana that binds the fonua, seas, the skies, people, 'api in the search for the continuity of harmonious relationships. Mo'ui refers to life and kakato literally translates as complete, total or full. Mo'ui kakato as philosophical thinking and being rests on the complete totality or cycle of life that is harmonious. Mo'ui kakato encapsulates the ontology, epistemology and axiology of life forms that thrives on the mana that we were born with, our language and culture. Mo'ui kakato complements the tangata kakato personhood to ensure the full cycle of life is achieved for our Tongan and Pacific peoples within our 'api. We have a mission to transform these issues from within the 'api.

6.4 Puni: Conclusion

The mission to recontextualise education within the Aotearoa education system so our children can thrive is a crucial one and the system must go through some fundamental changes to succeed. For us Tongans, 'api, theorises the crucial 'place' where the Tongan subject is formed, reformed and reframed to enhance our understanding of what it means to be living in a Tongan 'api in Aotearoa. It is an important task for us to work as a collective in education to bring a clear view of our 'api to the forefront. The ontological importance of 'api will contribute to solutions to the problems of Pasifika education enunciated over the last 30 years.

This is inherent in the praxis of Akoteu Kato Kakala, the Tongan language 'api located in the low socio-economic suburb of Ōtara within Aotearoa. The important learning here is that there is not just one way of seeing the world as there are multiplicities of ways that fit each context. The Akoteu Kato Kakala procedures may not be the solution for all the other cultures, but they do show readers a different way of seeing the world. To develop in teachers a respect for what they do not know, we need to open spaces for development of Pacific education and cultures.

The praxis of Akoteu Kato Kakala helps to demonstrate the possibilities of being innovative and creative within the theories imposed on us, to make it meaningful within our Tongan cultural context. In Tongan thought, ako combines the epistemology, ontology and axiology. We have also learnt that there are distinct values of ako are silent within mainstream education that needs to be meaningfully expressed, buts not in fragmented or disconnected parts inherent in the current education system. We have learnt that if the story is seen through a clear lens and if it is founded on 'api, our place of strength, then there is a chance to thrive here. Because, in seeing through this clear lens, everyone has to work out what thriving looks like, so the view is not only clear but transparent in the make-up of the programmes in the 'api – our falehanga.

7. Fala Pāongo: Conclusion

Fala Pāongo: Fakafeta'i e lalanga kuo tau sio mata kihe fala 'o e katoanga.

The fala paongo is now complete and it is the highest ranking fala in the Tongan culture. The poto'i lālānga of falehanga is celebrated and gifted within the nofo

'a kāinga. The weavers are ready to luva the fala paongo that awaits them at the ceremonial celebrations, before they weave the new fala.

7.1 Fasi: Introduction

The identification of Tongan subjectivity and the 'core values' has philosophical importance as it explores its own subjectivities, with a different ontological position that no Western paradigm is able to capture. The challenges presented for Pasifika education within the conditions of liberalism, neoliberalism and capitalism are fixed in ontological and epistemological praxis in Aotearoa. Neoliberal ideals dominate and overtake the intentions of Tongan and Pacific indigenous education. The politics of education is linked to the neoliberalisations of the landscape of Pasifika education. Although there have been numerous attempts to build effective pedagogies and strategies that are culturally appropriate for our schools, apparent in the production of some of the official documents such as Te Whāriki and Tapasā document, all fall short because they do not sufficiently address the cultural assumptions of the teacher or the society in which the teacher works which reinforces those assumptions.

7.2 Tangata Kakato – Intersubjectivities

The conception of the individual self-stemmed from liberal educational philosophies and idealist traditions, evident in the way the Ministry of Education portray 'self'. Contrary to the backdrop of European philosophy, this research wanted to go beyond the bounds of conventional or palangi educational theory and practice into the Tongan basis of personhood, self, or subjectivity, with the hope of capturing greater significance and meaningful epistemology, ontology

and axiology over time and space. I wanted to create a space that include multiplicities of thinking and being that is grounded locally and connected with the conceptual thinking of 'api. The urge to find ways to localise the 'api epistemology, ontology and axiology stretches into the potentials of becoming and being Tongan within the context of education in Aotearoa. The aim of this research was to highlight the mismatch of the sense of 'self' that is already fixed for us in education and in western thinking from the sense of self that is naturally representing 'us'.

7.3 Hikihiki: Summary of the Research

My intention from the beginning of this research was not to limit the conception of subjectivity to one way of seeing it but, rather, to explore the various conceptualisations of subjectivities that might contribute to building an understanding for them in the particular discourse to which they are subjected.

The 'difference' that could be made by 'knowing' of the Tongan and the Palangi worldviews is not a matter of remedying a deficit. This 'difference' could remain a site of hope, with tauhi vā as a space to connect and maintain a cohesive front in educational leadership. We ought to deconstruct and reconstruct these ideas of selves or subjectivities for Pasifika people and use the people themselves as a source of knowledge, rather than as target, and enable them to contribute to changing the ways of thought of European and other non-Tongan leaders who have Tongan and Pasifika people in their care. The role of the European-educated Pacific leader with a strong grasp of Pacific values is to take one step closer towards understanding and establishing culturally appropriate, respectful

and responsive pedagogies in the endeavour of langa ngāue – building success in Aotearoa.

This research allows Tongan philosophy and practice to disentangle its own ideas outside universal notions of subjectivity and to adopt a philosophic examination of the 'self' within the context of official early childhood documents in Aotearoa. Although this research is not aiming at a reconciliation of the two different cultural philosophies, the Western and Tongan philosophies, an awareness of the differences will enable policy makers and practitioners to approach the 'self' with more humility, tolerance and understanding.

Tongan ideas of self

The distinctive nature of 'self in Tongan thought is embedded in the notion of 'api as a Tongan 'collective' personhood. In the 'api the local language and culture make up the identity of Tongan intersubjectivities. The 'api is experienced within a cultural, social, emotional, spiritual and material environment. Traditionally, the architecture of the 'api reflected the ontological structures and relationships within it. 'Api is the foundation of strong Tongan identity, rich in Tongan core values like 'ofa (love), tauhi vā (reciprocal relationships) and faka'apa'apa (respect). Sacred vā, rules and tapu have to be considered in the makeup of 'api which are included in the ako of the collective.

With ako comes the significance of the social and moral values embedded within the teaching and learning of the collective. Ako is comprised of feako'aki,

femahino'aki, fetauhi'aki, fe'aonga'aki, fe'ofa'aki, feveitokai'aki, fetu'utaki and fengaue'aki. These values of ako are found within the thinking of the tangata kakato from a collective place of strength that is sacred and relational. The place where tangata Tonga is situated takes precedence over the reality of an individual's life existence. The collective place of tangata demonstrates the inseparability of Tongan ontology and epistemology.

What is the absolute essence of Tongan personhood? This question in itself is conceptually rooted in Western thought and has to be rethought to be meaningful in Tongan life. The qualities and different perspectives that make up the ideas of AKO imply aspects of Tongan personhood that are invisible within the AKO in Aotearoa. Even though attempts to implement these distinctive differences in the delivery of education in Aotearoa may be unrealistic, instead we offer incommensurable differences in tangata. The discourse of Tongan personhood implies that teaching to the child's cultural strengths must make connections with the 'api and falehanga. This is vital, especially if the focus is on wellbeing at a time where cultural approaches are not connecting with the ako of our fanau.

It is important that 'tangata kakato' is included in the learning of our fanau Tonga. Tangata kakato embodies the movement of personhood within Tongan thinking and being. Tangata kakato indicates the ways in which a not-yet person may develop towards full personhood. Tangata kakato contributes to the building and

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moulding of a holistic personhood where heart, mind, body and soul are connected and at peace and in harmony with each other. Tangata kakato is not limited to the individual but it is connected to the Tongan sense of identity. The way to relate to the tangata kakato is inseparable from ideas of Tongan ontology and epistemology. I would think that education should be building on the tangata kakato as a complete person in the making and not a rigid system in which tangata kakato is jeopardised. The very idea of education is a jeopardy for the tangata kakato if we continue to equip only a certain kind of personhood.

The mission to recontextualise education within the Aotearoa education system so our children can thrive is a crucial one and the system must go through some fundamental changes to succeed. For us Tongans, 'api, theorises the crucial 'place' where the Tongan subject is formed, reformed and reframed to enhance our understanding of what it means to be living in a Tongan 'api in Aotearoa. It is an important task for us to work as a collective in education to bring a clear view of our 'api to the forefront. The ontological importance of 'api will contribute to solutions to the problems of Pasifika education evident over the last 30 years. This is inherent in the praxis of Akoteu Kato Kakala, the Tongan language 'api located in the low socio-economic suburb of Ōtara within Aotearoa. The important learning here is that there is not just one way of seeing the world as there are multiplicities of ways that fit each context. The Akoteu Kato Kakala procedures may not be the solution for all the other cultures but does show readers a different way of seeing the world. To develop in teachers a respect for

what they do not know, we need to open spaces for development of Pacific education and cultures.

The philosophical importance of 'api thrives when the faliki is meaningful and contextualised: when it is reframed and rethought to make meaningful connections within our 'api and 'apiako. The praxis of Akoteu Kato Kakala helps to demonstrate the possibilities of being innovative and creative within the theories imposed on us, to make it meaningful within our context. We have learnt that if the story is seen through a clear lens and if it is founded on 'api, our place of strength, then there is a chance to thrive here. Because, in seeing through this clear lens, everyone has to work out what thriving looks like, so the view is not only clear but transparent in the make-up of the programmes in the 'api.

Importantly this research has shown what Tongan educators, given the freedom to develop their own programmes based on Tongan principles and understanding, are capable of. My argument here is not to conflate or to put down the attempts and the efforts in having Pasifika documents within the education regulations of ECE, but rather to show the internal conflicts within the neo-liberal positions that are fundamental in the landscapes of policies and the official documents. It is to provoke and propel critical thinking in Pacific minds regarding the compliance of the Pasifika context against the backdrop of European ideas, rather than an over-eager compliance with texts founded on

European ideas. The struggles Pacific ECE teachers experience in implementing these documents such as *Te Whāriki* and *Tapasā* reflect the struggles by Pacific peoples to design processes that are not formed on the assumptions inherent in these documents.

The 'falehanga' concept has emancipated Akoteu Kato Kakala from the ideological ideals of liberalism, capitalism and neo-liberalism inherent in the official documents. Falehanga is historically the only Tongan concept ever mentioned in the curriculum documents like *Te Whāriki*. Falehanga has been a useful concept for us to use within our practices and has provided so many unforgettable moments within our practices because we could make the connections as we have striven to achieve mo'ui kakato. We do sincerely hope that the government and the NZ education system are more proactive in the future and will not wait another 30 years to include concepts from Tonga or the other Pacific nations in the curriculum. According to Chinua Achebe (as cited in Thiong'o, 1986, p. 8),

> "the English language will be able to carry the weight of his African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit new surroundings."

Falehanga is in agreement with this; it can only endure with its ancestral 'api on the basis of its inter-subjectivities.

7.4 Further Implications and Possibilities

Falehanga is positioned in the 'vahanoa' of education discourse as a result of exploring the concept of 'differend'. What is liberating to think that vahanoa can become a place of transformational thinking and practice. Falehanga stands to unapologetically grounded 'being Tongan' and not have to be in tune with the background of Western thoughts. Lyotard's work on 'differend' allowed this research, the possibility to evade the appropriation and reduction of Tongan thoughts in the hopeful attempts to contribute and transform the praxis of the present .

Essentially the relationship with the other is an ethical challenge for others according to Levinas. This relation idea of infinity presents the idea of having to go beyond the formal gaze of the totalizers to earn a place "in the logic of interiority – in a sort of micro logic" approach. It is not as simple as it may look in terms of the relation between other and self (Lévinas, 1969, p. 17). The challenge that Levinas is making is that we should not allow the 'other' to reduced itself to the 'same' which can end up appropriating the culture of the other. in the context of this thesis, the culture at risk is the Tongan language and Culture. Levinas's ethics encourage the possibility of having to encounter something other than myself. Arriving at the point where the self is able to see what the other is and yet acknowledges that the other's language and culture wants to be still preserved, it finds this 'relation' challenging. Learning to live ethically in a relationship that doesn't appropriate is a challenge for this important work in Tongan education. The explanation of Tongan ideas is not an invitation to appropriation.

7.5 Limitations

This thesis, as with all researches, has limitations and considerations. A challenge for this research has to take into considerations the Covid19 era and the way things ended up in lockdowns which opened another new way of looking at the discourse of education, which will open more innovating thinking of talanoa and research. There will also be more opportunities for Falehanga to be fully explored and recontextualized within the context of education as a whole for our Tongan children growing up in Aotearoa. The challenge also included some of the politics in education that has changed the landscapes of education especially within the makeup of the official documents in education. The limitations of trying to capture the essence of Tongan language and culture within the English language have also been a challenge since the beginning of my journey in academia. In future we would like to build the database of writing Falehanga in the Tongan language and culture. Because in order for Falehanga to thrive in the context of education in Aotearoa, it must be written in the Tongan language and carried in the Tongan culture so it can have a strong foundation built on the basis of Tongan thinking and culture. This idea will be further explored in the last section of this thesis.

7.6 Ko e mālie 'o Falehanga

'Oku hala ha faka'uli'ulilātai´ pe ko ha to e 'uhinga fakasaienisi ke tipeiti'i 'aki 'a e mahu'inga mo e koloa 'oku ngaohi 'e he fefine Tonga´ mei falehanga´. He ko e langilangi´ mo e ngeia 'o e Tonga´ 'oku fakasino mai ia 'aki 'a e koloa 'oku ngaohi 'e he ngaahi nima mea'a 'o falehanga´. Pea 'oku 'i ai hono mahu'inga´ mo 'ene

mālie fakahisitolia´, ke kumuni pea ngāue'i 'e he to'utangata kotoa pe´ ke hoko ia ko e ngaahi mata'i koloa´ ke tuku fakaholo ki he ngaahi kuonga´.

'Oku 'i ai hono lea´ mo e ngaahi tala fakatalutalu´ 'o falehanga. Pea neongo he 'ikai lava ke 'a'au kotoa´, ka he 'ikai ke tuku e vaka´ ka e fai ha kakau. 'E fai pe ha okooko telia e taimi´ mo 'ete kei ma'u 'a e faingamālie´. Ka 'oku kei 'ata´ pe 'a e fangā´ ki he okooko. Kaikehe, 'oku kei tauhi 'e he Tonga´ 'a hono ngaahi tala fakatalutalu, tukufakaholo mo e ngaahi lea heliaki´ ke fakamālie'i 'aki 'etau talanoa lālanga´. Ko e taha 'o e ngaahi tala ko ia´ 'a e pehē, **'Oua e sio mata ka e sio fata:** Ko e lau ia ki he kumi mali 'a e fānau tangata´ - 'oua teke sio ki hono mata 'ene kovi´ ka ke sio koe ki he'ene lālanga ko e´ 'oku longa´ pea mo e kofukofu 'oku hili mei fata´. 'Io, 'oku lau 'a e poto´ mo e lava me'a 'a ha fefine Tonga´, mei he lahi e me'a 'oku ne malava ke lālanga pea ngaohi mei falehanga´. Pea tānaki 'o longa 'i hono lalo mohenga´ pe ko e lahi 'o e kofukofu 'oku hili mei he fata´. Ka 'e toki fakamo'oni'i 'a e lau ko ia´ 'aki 'a e lau 'oku pehē, **'Oku toki tala ha poto 'o ha fefine Tonga 'i he 'aho 'o e kātoanga´, he 'oku tatau hono ngutu mo hono tuhu**. 'Uhinga ia´ 'oku tatau 'ene lau koloa mo e me'a 'oku ne fakafotunga mo fola he'ene kātoanga´. Ka 'oku kehe 'aupito foki 'a e ngaahi 'aho ni ia´, he kuo fakapa'anga e me'a kotoa pe ia´. Pea 'oku vilo e me'a kotoa pe 'o fakatatau ki he natula hotau mamani´. Kuo hoko 'a falehanga ko e pisinisi lahi´ mo e ma'u'anga mo'ui´ ki he ngaahi fāmili ke fai 'aki e langa fakalakalaka. He 'oku lālanga e kau lālanga ia 'o fakatau ki he kau ngāue pa'anga´ pea kapau 'oku lahi 'ete pa'anga´ 'e lahi e koloa fakatonga 'e tānaki´. Ka te tau hoko atu ki he ngaahi lea mo e tūkuhua 'o falehanga´.

Koloa 'o Falehanga:

Ko falehanga ko e fu'u fale na'e langa fakakautaha 'i he ngaahi kolo´, pea na'e ngāue'aki 'i he kuo hili ki he fakataha'anga´ pea fai'anga toulālanga´ mo e koka'anga 'a e hou'eiki fafine´. Pea na'e hoko 'eni 'o manakoa´ pea faingofua ange ki ha'a fafine 'oku nima tuitui´ mo nima ngāue 'i he kolo´ ke fai ai 'enau ngāue´. He na'a nau manako ke uki e ngāue fakakautaha´, mo e tou ngāue´ koe'uhi ko 'ene vave ange, pea malavalava ai 'enau ngāue´ mo 'enau lava me'a´. 'Ikai ko ia pe´ ka 'oku nau feako'aki ai´; fetauhi'aki ai´; fe'ofa'aki ai´; fengāue'aki ai´; fe'aonga'aki ai´; fetokoni'aki ai´; fetu'utaki ai´ mo ma'u ai 'a e feveitokai'aki´ pea fakatupulekina mei ai 'a 'enau nima mea'a´ mo e ngāue mālohi´ ke ikuna ha taumu'a ngāue kuo nau fokotu'u´.

Ko e falehanga 'o e ako he fonua´ ni, 'oku mahu'inga pe kiate kitautolu kau faiako´ ke longa e fata´ kae lava ketau fakakoloa 'etau fānau mo e to'utupu´ 'aki 'a e ako´. 'Oku 'ikai ke tau fakamahu'inga'i faka'ekonomika´ pē fakapa'anga 'etau langa ngāue 'oku fakahoko 'i loki ako´ koe'uhi´ pe na'a uesia ai ha fanga ki'i laumālie. Ka ko e faka'amu ia 'o e ki'i fekumi´ ni, ke tau tānaki ke longa 'etau ngaahi koloa´ ke lava ke fakakoloa 'aki e ako he fonua´ ni. Ke tau ngāue fakataha mu'a´ 'i falehanga ke lālanga ha ngaahi mo'ui 'oku fonu 'i he 'ofa fonua´ mo e tauhi fonua´ pea ke lalaka 'i he ngaahi mālie o falehanga´.

Ko e ngaahi lea fakatalutalu mo e heliaki 'o e lālanga´:

Kapatohi:

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✦ Ko ha ki'i la'i kapa kuo kosi'i tapatolu pe tapafā, pea oloolo ke molemole ke fai 'aki he tohi lou'akau pe fe'unu. Ka 'i he kuonga'ni foki kuo faingofua ange he kuo hifi pea ngaohi 'a e kapatohi 'o fakafika pe 'o fakatatau ki he au mo e tu'o 'o e fe'unu 'oku te fiema'u ki he'ete lālānga. Kapau ko e au taha, ko e kapa fika taha pe 'e ngāue'aki. Ko e au valevale ia pea ko e au ia 'o e tu'oua tonga'. Pea 'e fakaholoholo ai pe ki 'olunga 'o te fili ai pe. Kuo 'osi fokotu'utu'u pe 'e he kau nima mea'a 'a e fika ki he ngaah lālānga taau taha. Ko e falavala mo e lokeha ko e fika ua mo e tolu. Kie tonga mo e fihu ko e fa mo e nima pea toki hokohoko hake ai ki he fala, lotaha mo e papa 'o fakatatau ki he fiema'u.

Maka tata'o lālānga:

✦ Ko e ongo fo'I maka 'e ua 'oku ngaue'aki ke tata'o 'aki e ongo mui'i lālānga. 'Oku 'uhinga ia ke tokoni ki hono fafama'u 'ete lālānga ke 'oua 'e heke holo mo hangatonu pe 'a lālānga . Ko e 'osi pe ha ngaahi fo'i hala hono lālānga pea to'o e maka he mui 'e taha, ka e fao, faofao lelei pe ke hangatonu pea fakafoki e maka 'o tata'o ka e hoko atu e lalanga ia.

 Hanga:

✦ Ko e hanga ko e lea ia 'oku ngaue'aki ki hono lau e lōlōa mo e laulahi 'o e lālānga . Ko e fute 'e taha ko e hanga ia 'e taha 'i he lau fakatonga, ka 'oku ngāue'aki pe 'a hoto lau'i nima ki hono hanga. Ko e lula ko e fute ia.

Palapala:

✦ Ko e lula fua ia 'oku ngaue'aki 'e he kau lālanga 'i he'enau tou lālanga .

Fatu lālānga:

✦ Ko hono fatu pe kamata 'o ha lālānga. Hangee ko e fatu 'o ha fala pe lotaha.

Fatu lālanga 'i falehanga:

✦ Ko e langa ngāue´ mo e fatu ngāue 'a e fefine fita mo nima mea'a´ ke langa mo uki 'a e mahu'inga 'o e ngāue fakamea'a´, lālanga´, toulālanga´ mo e koka'anga ki he kakai fefine´ 'oku nau manako ke ngāue fakataha mei falehanga.

Hala fakama'ufatu:

✦ Ko e hala ia hono ua mei he hala fokotu'u´ pe fatu 'o e fala´. Ko e hala mahu'inga 'eni´ he ko ia 'oku ne fakama'u 'a e fatu´. Pea 'e kamata mei heni hono siofi´ mo e fakatonutonu 'o e fala´.

Hala fakahilihili:

✦ Ko e hala faka'osi ia pea fai e hehele´. Kuopau ke lālanga fakahilihili pea kosi'i, ke faingofua hono vete´ pea kamata e fala fo'ou´.

 Hala fakama'uma'u:

✦ Ko e 'osi ko ee hono hehele 'o e fala´ pea fai e lālanga fakama'opo'opo. Ko hono fakama'opo'opo ia 'o e helenga´ pea teuteu mo e fe'unu ke hoko

atu ki ai´. Ko ‘ene ‘osi pe ia´ pea lele leva ‘a e hala fakama’uma’u´. Ko e hala ia hono ua mei he hehele´. Pea kamata leva hono fakatonutonu´ mo e faofao lelei ‘o e fala´ ‘o hangē ko e ngāue ki he hala fakama’ufatu´ ‘i he lālanga fo’ou.

Hala fakama’op’opo:

✦ Ko e ‘osi ko ee hono lele’i ‘o e hala fakama’uma’u´ pea hoko leva ‘a e hala fakama’op’opo´. Ko e fo’i hala ko ‘eni´, kapau na’e ‘i ai ha fehālaaki pea fakatonutonu´, vete e fehālaaki´, fe’unu e me’a ‘oku avaava mo nonou´. Puni e ngaahi me’a ‘oku totonu ke puni´. Pea kapau ‘oku hipa´, pea vete ke fakalelei’i´, faofao ke hangatonu´ pea tata’o leva e ongo mui’i lālanga ‘aki e ongo maka taonga´ pea heka leva e kau lālanga´.

Hala fakamolemole:

✦ Ko e hala faka’osi ia´ pea toki hikihiki e fala´. Ko e ‘osi e hala ko ‘eni´ pea ‘oku siofi leva ‘e he fefine lālanga´ ‘ene lālanga´ pē kuo tukungamālie´ pea toki kamata leva hono hikihiki´.

Helenga:

✦ Ko e founga ia ‘oku ngāue’aki ‘e he kau lālanga ‘o e ngaahi ‘aho ni´ ko e helenga. ‘Oku ‘uhinga ia´ ko ‘ene ‘osi pe ‘ete lālanga e fala´ pea hehele e konga kimui ke kamata’aki e fala fo’ou´. Ko e konga na’e hele’i mei ha fala ke kamata ‘aki ha lālanga ‘o ha fala fo’ou´

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Helenga vete:

✦ Ko e fo'i hala fakahilihili´ ko e kamata'anga ia 'o e hehele´. Pea fai leva 'a e lālanga fakamā'op'opo´ pea lele mo e hala fakama'uma'u´. Pea ko e fo'i hala ko ia´ 'oku ui ko e helenga vete 'o e lālanga fakahilihili´ ke faingofua hono vetevete´ pea lōloa fe'unga ke fai 'aki e hikihiki e fala´.

Hehele:

✦ Ko e hehele´ ko hono tu'usi pe hele'i 'a e konga kimui 'o e fala ke kamata'aki ha lālanga fo'ou´. Pea 'oku anga pehee' ni leva ia. Kapau ko e fala tekumi ma nima´, ko 'ene lava lelei pe 'a e tekumi ma nima´ pea faka'ilonga'i leva ia´. Pea hoko atu 'aki 'a e lālanga fakahilihili´ 'o fakafuofua ki he laulahi 'e lava ke vetevete 'amui ke fai mei ai e hikihiki 'o e ongo fala´.

Hikihiki:

✦ Ko hono lālanga faka'osi pea fakama'u takai e fala´ pea toki tu'utu'u.

Fasi:

✦ Ko hono kamata ha hala fo'ou ke lālānga. Fasi mai hena ha'o fo'I hala.

Puni:

✦ Ko e puni hala ko hono lālānga tapuni 'ete hala ke fenapasi lelei mo e hala fo'ou na'e fokotu'u fefine hoko mai 'I he tu'ung toulalanga pe ko ha'ate

halafo'ou kuo lalanga ke fetaulaki pe puni lelei ki ha'ate hala motu'a ne 'osi lalanga.

Fala:

Ko e fala 'oku lalanga lōua. Ko e lou'akau 'oku toka 'i 'olunga 'oku ui pe ia ko e 'olunga. Pea ko e lou'akau 'oku toka lalo, 'oku ui pe ia ko e lalo. Pea 'oku faka'aonga'i ia pe ia 'o fakatatau ki he fiema'u 'a e kakai Tonga. Ka ko e lahi taha 'oku nau faka'aonga'I ki he'enau ngaahi katoanga mo e 'apisia.

Fakafeta'i e ngāue

Ko falehanga´ ko e feitu'u malu ia mo fiefia´ pea faka'amu pe ke hoko ia ko ha 'api 'e lata ki ai 'etau fānau he ako´, he ko e lelei taha pē 'etau ngaahi ngāue´ 'e fakakoloa'aki kinautolu he mala'e 'o e ako´. 'Oku fai ai 'a e feohi´ mo fatu ai ha ngaahi lālanga´ pē ko ha ngāue ke ne hulu'i mai e mālohinga 'o kitautolu kakai Tonga´. Neongo pe ko fē ha potu 'oku tau 'i ai´ pē ko e hā ha mala'e te tau kau atu ki ai´, 'oku fakalotolahi'i 'e he ki'i fekumi´ ni ke tau ngāue'i hotau TONGA´, ke tau ala tonu pe 'o ngāue'i 'a 'etau koloa 'o e ako, 'ilo mo e poto´ 'oku tauhi he fata´ koe'uhi´ ka tau lūsia ki taulanga.

Fakafeta'i e fakakoloa ki Aotearoa!

Fakafeta'i e Lālanga!

Fakafeta'i e Ngāue!

Appendices

Taumafa Kava Circle

(Teisina, 2012, p. 25)

Tu'i
Kanokupolu

Nuku

Tu'ipelehake   Fielakepa

Niukapu   Fakatoufifita

Fotofili   Olovaha   Havea Tu'iha 'ateiho

Luani   Fakafanua

Lavaka   Malupo

'Alofi   Tu'ivakano   Tu'iha 'angana   'Alofi

Fohe   Tu'i 'afitu

Lasike   Tuita

Fakatulolo

Fulivai

'Ahome'e   NGĀUE

Veikune

Ve'ehala

Fasi 'alofi   Ma'afutukui'aulahi   [Angaikava]   **Tou'a**   [Angaikava]   Ata   Fasi 'alofi

Vaha'i   [Taukava]

Tangipa   Fusitu'a
Vaea

Kalaniuvalu   Tupouto'a

'Ulukalala

Tungi

Fonua (Teisina, 2012, p.32)

Feitama/Pregnancy:
Baby's placenta is called *fonua*

Fa'ele'i/Birth:
The remains of the *fonua* when the baby is born is also returned to the *fonua* where it is buried.

Mate/ Death:
When someone dies they are returned to their resting place called *fonualoto* (land within)

Moral Responsibility - Global/Nation

'api/family

Kainga/Extended Family

Kumi Fonua
Country/Tongan in NZ

Valevale/Newborn:
When the *pito* falls off it is also returned to the *fonua* where it is buried.

Langa Fonua:
Maintaining reciprocal relationships, carry *fatongia* to the *fonua* in order to sustain peace and a harmonious society

Kolo /Village

Tutupu/ Development:
Baby grows up on the *fonua* where they are looked after and nurtured by people of the *fonua*.

Glossary of Tongan Terms

Tulou	Tulou is the Tongan word that you say for please excuse me, when you go pass someone out of respect with a lowered head.
maau	poem/poetry
mo'ui	life
lea faka-Tonga	Tongan language
taufatunga motu'a	Tongan cultural heritages
fanau	Children/Kids
mokopuna	Grandchildren
Pālangi	European Culture or Person
vā	Space, social spatial space that connects people
Tui' mo hono fale	King and the royal family
hou'eiki mo e nōpele	High chiefs and nobles
the kakai tu'a	Commoners
nofo 'a kāinga	the family/extended family/community and the villages.
fananga	oral traditions, legends, stories
'api	Home
talanoa fananga	stories, myths and legends
Proberbs	Paloveape
Songs	Hiva
mātanga	historical sites
Tupu'anga	Origins/Where you come from/Heritage
Hingoa	Name
fala (mat), where	Mat
fofola e fala kae fai e alea	– the mat is rolled out to make space for transformational and valuable talanoa
Fasi	
Puni	
Au/Ko Au	Me, Myself, I, I'm here or the strands of the pandanus used for weaving.

Kita	Individual/Tongan Self
Taha	Tongan aspect of self/individual or number one
taumafa kava	Royal kava ceremony
fū	Special round clap used in kava ceremonies
poto taha –	meaning the most intelligent; most smartest.etc
lelei taha –	to be the best or quality
tika taha –	expertise in what one does
talavou taha	prettiest, most beautiful, handsome
Fakataha	means united/together, or meeting and collaborating with a group of people for a higher purpose.
kafataha	where different coconut ropes are woven together for strength and unity: unity in diversity.
tangata kakato	Complete persons
tamasi'i	Boy or male
Fonua	land, peoples, the seas and the skies, and the interdependent relationships that bind them together
Tauhi vā	relationship between space and time can also refer to the vā.
fatafata	Chest/heart
māfana	Warmth/love/inner feelings and happiness
Ko e ako 'a e kakai Pasifika	The education of the Pacific peoples
Va'inga	Play
Vahanoa	Vahanoa refers to the unknown that stands in the middle to separate Tonga and other countries.
langa ngāue	Building success and empowering work
'aonga	meaningful/useful
Katinia si'oto sei manakoa	Gardenia my favourite sei or flower
'Alaha kapui ai 'e si'ete 'ofa	The fragrance that captures my love
Ha sino mai ho'o to'onga	Your every move occupy my thoughts
Kae vaifaa 'a lo'i fofonga	As these tears keep falling like a waterfall

ma'u tofi'a;	Owning land/inheritance
tu'unga	Positions

Mehikitanga/fahu	Father's sister
Putu	Funeral
Mali	Wedding
ngoto 'umu/peito	earth oven/kitchen
fa'etangata	mother's brothers and their kids
ta'ovala	a mat that is tied around the waist
'ulumotu'a	Matured leader of the family
kato kakala	Basket of flowers/fragrant flowers in the Tongan culture
Kakala	Fragrant flowers/The finished garland of flowers
'alaha/manongi	Fragrance and aromas of the kakala
Luva	Sharing and gifting
Falehanga	The idea of *falehanga* refers to the place where the mothers carry out their work including Tongan arts and crafts and preparations of *koloa (*weaving, kakala making and tapa making*,* etc.)*.
'api	Home – local
Talanoa	Dialogue, talk, tell, conversate, interact
Ngāue	To work, build, construct, school work.etc.
'ofa	Love
Piliote	Fullstop, dot, tiny, small.
Ongo'i	To feel, internalize, emotions.
'apiako	refers to the school
'api siasi	Church
api popula	the prison grounds
api kolo	is town allotment or home in a town
'api 'uta/ 'api tukuhau.	is for the gardening allotments which are also known

Koe ha'u mei 'api ki 'api	a proverb used when you are leaving your '*api* for another '*api* yet still feel connected as if you are in your own '*api*.
'*api'api*	we are running out of time.
In terms of space, *halaloto'api*	refers to people who are invading personal spaces and boundaries.

Kaungā'api	is the word for your neighbours in which *kaungā* is the connecting link to '*api.*
'*apisia*	Funeral
Faka'apa'apa	Respect
Tuofefine	Sister
Tuonga'ane	Brother
Fatongia	Duties and obligations
malu	Secure
fetokoni'aki	Helping each other
'*Eiki*	Divine, status of divinity
ulungaanga	Behaviour
Feako'aki	refers to the process of reciprocal *ako* of teaching and learning.
Akonaki	Advices and guidance
Fono	Formal gathering of the village to talanoa
Fe'iloaki	Greeting and also farewelling
Kafu	Blankets
Femahino'aki	In the Tongan language *femahino'aki* literally refers to the process of achieving shared understanding.
ofisa kolo,	Town officer
fetauhi'aki	In the Tongan language, *fetauhi'aki* literally refers to the process of taking care and looking after each other
fakafetongi me'akai,	*Exchanging plates of food*
Fe'aonga'aki	refers to the notion of being useful to one another or to those who are in your life
Fe'ofa'aki	Love each other
Ha'amo	*ha'amo,* which translates as the stick with baskets of food tied at both ends

Feveitokai'aki	refers to achieving mutual respect within a group of people with mutual goals and obligations
Fetu'utaki	Communication with each other
Fengāue'aki	refers to the notion of teamwork or working together to build meaning and purpose.
tangata	Person, mankind, man
Tukufakaholo	Genealogies
'Otua	God
Langi	Skies/Cosmos
Polopolo	First harvest
Tapu	special privileges that the Tongan people are made aware of in order to maintain the hierarchical structure of the Kingdom of Tonga
Pulotu	Afterworld for high chiefs
Lolofonua	Refers to the after world for commoners.
Poto'i	Skillful and experienced/abundance of knowledge
Hala	Road, pathway
Fala	Mat
Fala Paongo	Mat woven with the paongo which is the highest ranking mat in Tonga
Lou'akau	Panadanus used to weave the mats
Fakafeta'i	Honorific way of thanking someone from the heart.

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