

**'Onemato: The Impact of the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme with
Participating Students, School and Community at Onehunga High School.**

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by

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ABSTRACT

Titled 'Onemato, this thesis examines the impact of the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme at Onehunga High School, exploring how leadership is experienced by participating Tongan secondary students, school leaders and kāinga in Aotearoa New Zealand. Guided by the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology, which integrates the four values of 'Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā alongside eight practice principles, the study articulates how culturally aligned leadership supports student wellbeing, cultural identity, academic engagement and relational connection across home and school contexts.

A qualitative Indigenous research design informed by Tongan epistemology and the knowledge traditions of Ngā Iwi o Moana nui a Kiwa was employed. Talatalanoa served as the primary method of data generation and was facilitated by a Research Assistant to support appropriate relational and ethical practice. Participants included two former students, one set of parents, the school's Relationship Manager and the Principal. Data was analysed through an iterative, relational and values-led process consistent with the methodological framework.

Findings demonstrate that leadership is experienced as relational, culturally centred and sustained over time. Participants described strengthened identity, belonging, confidence and purposeful direction. The eight practice principles illuminated interconnected expressions of leadership growth: Manatu, MataKāinga, Tokonaki, Lea, Mālie mo Māfana, Tuli ke ma'u hono ngaahi mālie, FetuiakiMālie and Taumu'a.

This study concludes that culturally aligned leadership programmes enhance student wellbeing, identity and engagement while strengthening relational accountability between schools and Tongan communities. It contributes to Tongan scholarship, Indigenous research literature and leadership studies by offering an Indigenous, relational reframing of leadership anchored in cultural identity and intergenerational responsibility rather than positional authority.

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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 used artificial intelligence tools or generative artificial intelligence tools (unless it is clearly stated, and referenced, along with the purpose of use), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Context

Indigenous knowledge systems understand leadership as relational, ethical and intergenerational, expressed through service, responsibility and continuity. Indigenous scholars affirm that leadership emerges through cultural knowledge, relational accountability and collective wellbeing (Chilisa, 2019; Nakata, 2007; Smith, 1999, 2012, 2021). Within Tongan contexts, leadership is understood through inherited responsibility and carried through the values of 'Ofa (care and compassion), Tauhi (relational attentiveness), Fatongia (responsibility) and Tukupā (enduring commitment). These values guide leadership as service to family, community and ancestors, sustained across generations, reflecting Indigenous knowledge systems understood as complete and authoritative rather than supplementary to Western models (Helu-Thaman, 2003; Johansson-Fua, 2007; Manu'atu, 2000; Taufe'ulungaki, 2018).

Leadership within Indigenous and Ngā Iwi o Te Moana Nui a Kiwa knowledge systems is understood as relational, ethical and intergenerational. It is sustained through genealogy, responsibility and the ongoing work of nurturing collective wellbeing. Within this worldview, learning and leadership are expressed through service, reciprocity and relational accountability. The Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme is guided by four core values, 'Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā, which provide the ethical and relational orientation of this study and inform how participants' experiences are interpreted throughout the thesis.

Spirituality is integral to these understandings of leadership. In Tongan worldviews, spiritual presence, prayer and collective acknowledgement of faith shape ethical conduct, relational care and responsibility. As Helu-Thaman (2003) affirms, education and leadership within Indigenous contexts cannot be separated from spirituality, as moral purpose, relational obligation and wellbeing are inseparable from learning and practice.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, Tongan learners contribute significantly to school communities, yet leadership development opportunities that reflect Tongan epistemologies, relational practices and intergenerational responsibilities remain limited. Educational research affirms that belonging, cultural identity and relational support are central to engagement and success; however, leadership pathways within secondary schooling frequently emphasise individual visibility and

positional authority. Tongan leadership traditions centre collective responsibility, service and continuity, carried through relationships and shared purpose.

The school-based Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme was introduced at Onehunga High School in 2014 to respond to this context. Onehunga High School has a longstanding relationship with Tongan communities, providing conditions where culturally aligned leadership learning could be cultivated and sustained. Guided by Tongan values and articulated through the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology, the programme integrates the four core values 'Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā with eight practice principles, Manatu, MataKāinga, Tokonaki, Lea, Mālie mo Māfana, Tuli ke ma'u hono ngaahi mālie, FetuiakiMālie and Tukupā that support leadership development as a relational, ethical and culturally meaningful practice. The programme aims to strengthen belonging, identity, responsibility, confidence and purpose among Tongan youth.

In this thesis, Te Moana Nui a Kiwa refers to the ancestral oceanic world that situates leadership within place, movement and relational geography. The term Ngā Iwi o Te Moana Nui a Kiwa refers to the Indigenous peoples of this region, including those of Tonga, Sāmoa, Fiji, the Cook Islands, Niue, Tuvalu and neighbouring nations, understood through distinct genealogies, languages and cultural knowledge systems. Manu'atu (2000) critiques the use of the term Pacific as a homogenising label that obscures these specific cultural and linguistic realities.

Leadership, from this perspective, is contextualised within ancestral, linguistic and relational worlds rather than abstracted into a single regional category, a concern also raised by Helu-Thaman (2003) in her critique of Western academic traditions that flatten Indigenous epistemologies. Writing from Aotearoa New Zealand also carries responsibilities to place and relationship. The use of Te Moana Nui a Kiwa acknowledges the ancestral ocean that connects Ngā Iwi o Te Moana Nui a Kiwa with tangata whenua Aotearoa and affirms the ways Tongan language, worldview and leadership concepts sit in respectful relationship with te reo Māori and mātauranga Māori. This naming reflects a commitment to cultural specificity, relational accountability and leadership carried through people, place and oceanic connection.

These considerations underscore the need to understand how culturally aligned leadership growth influences student engagement, identity and relationships within schooling. This study examines how the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme shapes student engagement, identity and relationships within schooling and across kāinga and community, contributing to understandings of Indigenous leadership growth and culturally responsive education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

1.2 Problem Statement

Although educational research increasingly acknowledges the importance of culturally sustaining practice, limited scholarship examines Tongan specific leadership development within secondary schooling. Western championed leadership models often emphasise individualism and hierarchy, which sit differently from Tongan values that centre service, collective responsibility and intergenerational continuity. While research on achievement and engagement has expanded, leadership development for Tongan learners presents a critical and timely area for focused scholarly attention. Freire’s critique of the “banking” model of education reinforces this stance, positioning leadership learning as dialogic and problem-posing—centred on relationships and praxis rather than passive transmission (Freire, 1970).

Tongan scholars emphasise the significance of kāinga, identity, language, responsibility, spirituality and relational ethics in learning and leadership (Helu-Thaman, 2003; Manu’atu, 2000; Taufe’ulungaki, 2018). However, there remains limited research exploring how these values guide leadership development for Tongan youth within secondary schools. To date, few published studies examine leadership programmes informed by Tongan epistemologies in school contexts. As a result, there is limited understanding of culturally aligned approaches that may strengthen identity, confidence, engagement and relationships for Tongan students in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This study addresses this gap by examining how the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme is experienced within one secondary school and how it influences students, school culture and relationships with the Tongan community.

1.3 Research Context

The Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme was established at Onehunga High School in 2014 to support Tongan students through a leadership approach situated within Tongan values, relationships and responsibility. The programme acknowledges the journeys of Tongan families who migrated to Aotearoa New Zealand and the cultural, spiritual and ancestral teachings they carry.

Over more than a decade, the programme has supported students, families and staff to observe developments in confidence, belonging, voice, relational care and purpose. Each programme session begins and concludes with student-led prayer, expressing spirituality as a lived leadership

practice that nurtures gratitude, humility and collective care. Leadership learning is therefore experienced as ethical, relational and spiritually informed.

The programme continues to be delivered at the school and remains guided by the four core values 'Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā, alongside eight practice principles that inform culturally meaningful leadership learning. This research was conducted between 2024 and 2025 and draws on Talatalanoa with participants who engaged with the programme between 2014 and 2024.

This study explores the experiences of former students, parents, the Relationship Manager and the Principal, offering a relational and multi-layered understanding of the programme's influence on students, school culture and relationships with kāinga.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to examine the impact of the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme at Onehunga High School and to understand how Tongan students, school leaders and families experience leadership development informed by Tongan values and cultural practices.

The study aims to:

1. Explore how participation influences students' wellbeing, academic engagement and sense of identity.
2. Examine how school culture, relationships and leadership practices are influenced through the programme.
3. Understand how kāinga experience the programme and how it strengthens relationships between home and school.
4. Consider how the programme's principles may inform culturally responsive leadership development in other educational settings.
5. Present a culturally aligned approach to leadership that may support schools working with other migrant communities.

Accordingly, I draw on Freire's (1970) concept of praxis to frame leadership as a process linking reflection and action within culturally located contexts. While the term *leadership development* is used to reflect existing educational language and programme structures, this study conceptualises leadership primarily as *leadership growth*. Leadership growth is understood as a relational,

culturally anchored and intergenerational process through which leadership is awakened, nurtured and carried over time rather than delivered through positional or skills-based models.

1.5 Research Questions

Main Research Question

What is the impact of the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme at Onehunga High School on the wellbeing, academic engagement and leadership development of Tongan students, and how does it influence school culture and relationships with the Tongan community?

Sub-questions

Impact on Students

- How does participation influence students' academic engagement?
- How does it influence wellbeing, cultural identity and belonging?
- How does it influence confidence, behaviour and contribution within school and community settings?

Impact on School Culture

- How has the programme influenced school culture and inclusivity?
- How has it contributed to relationships between Tongan students, peers and teachers?
- What shifts have occurred in school practice or the relational environment as a result of the programme?

Impact on the Tongan Community

- How has the programme strengthened relationships between the school and Tongan families?
- What role does kāinga play in sustaining and supporting the programme?
- How has the programme influenced community perceptions of the school?

Broader Application

- How might the programme's strategies support other migrant or culturally diverse communities?
- What lessons from the programme can inform culturally responsive leadership development in schools?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study makes a substantive contribution to Indigenous, Tongan and educational scholarship by examining a leadership approach shaped by cultural identity, relational responsibility and intergenerational continuity. It responds to calls from Smith (1999, 2012, 2021) and Chilisa (2019) for research that is culturally accountable, relationally informed and ethically purposeful.

By drawing on the lived experiences of former students, parents, the Relationship Manager and the Principal, the study demonstrates how culturally sustained leadership development strengthens identity, belonging, confidence, spirituality and purpose. It also illustrates how the programme enhances relationships between home and school and contributes to culturally responsive practice within mainstream education.

The insights generated extend beyond the Tongan context, suggesting possibilities for developing leadership programmes that affirm cultural identity, strengthen relational learning environments and support young people from diverse communities to thrive within Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organised as follows:

- **Chapter One** introduces the study, its context, purpose, significance and research questions.
- **Chapter Two** reviews literature on Tongan epistemology, Indigenous leadership, student wellbeing, cultural identity and schooling in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- **Chapter Three** outlines the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology and describes the research design, Talatalanoa process and analysis.
- **Chapter Four** presents the findings organised through the eight practice principles.
- **Chapter Five** discusses the findings in relation to scholarship, theory and Tongan epistemology.
- **Chapter Six** concludes the thesis with implications, limitations and directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Research in Aotearoa New Zealand has identified longstanding structural challenges within schooling systems in responding to the cultural and relational contexts of Ngā Iwi o Moana Nui a Kiwa learners. Sector-wide reviews highlight patterns of disengagement and misalignment where institutional practices fail to recognise community knowledge, relationships and values (Coxon et al., 2002).

Research on Tongan learners in Aotearoa New Zealand demonstrates that belonging, identity and wellbeing are strengthened when cultural values are upheld within schooling environments and when relational connections with kāinga are supported (Chu et al., 2013; Kalavite, 2010). Despite these insights, leadership development for Tongan secondary students remains under-examined, and no published studies have evaluated a secondary school leadership programme explicitly anchored in Tongan epistemology, such as the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme.

Accordingly, this literature review examines five interconnected areas of scholarship: Indigenous leadership, Tongan epistemology, the educational experiences of Tongan learners, wellbeing and belonging and youth leadership development. Together, these strands situate the study within wider Indigenous and educational literature and affirm the value of exploring leadership through a culturally aligned Tongan approach.

2.2 Indigenous Leadership in Moana Nui a Kiwa

Leadership across Ngā Iwi o Moana Nui a Kiwa and wider Indigenous contexts is relational, ethical and intergenerational. It is sustained through genealogy, shared responsibility and enduring commitments to collective wellbeing. Within these worldviews, leadership emerges through service, humility and care for people, place and the continuity of relationships. These teachings emphasise spirituality, reciprocity and interdependence, guiding how individuals contribute to their kāinga and communities. Smith's (1999) foundational work on decolonising methodologies, later expanded in subsequent editions (Smith, 2012, 2021), positions Indigenous research as an ethical, relational and political act grounded in collective responsibility.

Scholarly work across Indigenous contexts consistently demonstrates that knowledge is created and expressed through relationships, place, spirituality and cultural identity (Chilisa, 2019; Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Smith, 1999, 2012, 2021; Wilson, 2008). This body of literature foregrounds relational accountability as central to ethical practice, learning and leadership. Chilisa (2019) positions Indigenous research methodologies as anchored in collective responsibility, while Wilson (2008) conceptualises relational accountability as ethical action grounded in sustaining relationships.

These understandings align with Tongan epistemology, in which genealogy, responsibility and intergenerational continuity are sustained through familial, spiritual and communal connections, reflecting Indigenous knowledge systems understood as philosophically complete rather than culturally supplementary (Helu-Thaman, 2003; Mafile'o, 2005; Manu'atu, 2000). Within these perspectives, leadership is enacted through contribution and service, expressed through inherited and practiced responsibilities. Nakata's (2007) Cultural Interface theory further strengthens this scholarship by illustrating how Indigenous learners navigate intersections between Indigenous knowledge systems and Western institutions, underscoring the importance of leadership approaches that uphold cultural identity, relational ethics and contextualised ways of knowing. Indigenous ways of knowing therefore position leadership as an ethical responsibility enacted through relationships, reciprocity and care for collective wellbeing rather than individual authority, providing a critical foundation for understanding leadership as lived, relational practice within Ngā Iwi o Moana Nui a Kiwa.

Nabobo-Baba (2006) describes Indigenous knowledge as an ethical invitation to act with compassion, dignity and responsibility within relational worlds. Helu Thaman (2019) cautions that when education systems privilege dominant languages and epistemologies, Indigenous learners may be distanced from their identities, histories and ways of knowing.

Research with Indigenous community leaders across the region further affirms leadership as culturally situated and values-led, emphasising relational responsibility, community partnership and collective wellbeing (Talení et al., 2018). Utumapu-McBride et al., (2008) provide early evidence that Samoan students' achievement is shaped by relational support, family involvement and teaching practices that recognise learning as a whole-person and collective process within educational settings. Spiller et al., (2015) similarly frame leadership as a form of wayfinding informed by Polynesian navigational traditions, highlighting the importance of relational awareness and environmental attunement.

Educational achievement patterns in Aotearoa New Zealand reflect both areas of strength and persistent inequities. These disparities cannot be understood through cultural or individual deficit explanations but are shaped by systemic conditions, including streaming practices, uneven access to advanced coursework, variable resourcing and inconsistent provision of learning support. Such institutional arrangements disproportionately affect Māori, Ngā Iwi o Moana Nui a Kiwa, disabled and low-socioeconomic learners, demonstrating that unequal achievement emerges from the design and operation of the education system rather than from differences in learner capability or motivation. Recognising inequity as structurally produced underscores the importance of wellbeing as an educational condition, as students' engagement, confidence and sense of belonging are outcomes of the relational, cultural and material environments in which learning occurs. This framing situates the present study within broader system dynamics and clarifies why analysing wellbeing, engagement or achievement requires attention to the institutional contexts that enable or constrain equitable participation.

Freire's (1970, 1998) humanising pedagogy aligns with these Indigenous worldviews through its emphasis on dialogue, dignity and mutuality. His work affirms that transformation emerges from respectful interaction and shared humanity, principles that resonate with relational leadership practices across Ngā Iwi o Moana Nui a Kiwa and reinforce leadership approaches grounded in responsibility rather than authority.

Traditional leadership roles, whether held by chiefs, navigators, orators or knowledge holders, carry responsibilities that extend across generations. These roles safeguard collective wellbeing, maintain genealogical and spiritual connections and uphold stewardship of land and resources. In contemporary contexts, these expectations continue to shape families and communities in Aotearoa New Zealand, where parents and elders nurture young people's aspirations through service, care and relational guidance.

While Indigenous scholarship articulates relational leadership extensively, fewer studies examine leadership development for young people within secondary schooling. Research focusing on Tongan and other Ngā Iwi o Moana Nui a Kiwa communities in Aotearoa New Zealand highlights the importance of belonging, wellbeing and identity (Chu et al., 2013; Kalavite, 2010). These studies demonstrate that students thrive when cultural identity and relational connections are sustained in learning environments. However, leadership development in school settings remains limited, and few initiatives reflect the cultural values of the communities they serve.

This study contributes to this emerging field. The Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme is guided by the relational teachings of Ngā Iwi o Moana Nui a Kiwa, where leadership is expressed through responsibility, cultural identity, service and continuity. This body of scholarship provides meaningful context for understanding how culturally aligned leadership development supports Tongan secondary students and strengthens relationships across kāinga, school and community. As Chilisa (2019) emphasises, Indigenous leadership and research must remain accountable to the communities, relationships and cultural worlds from which they arise, reinforcing the importance of culturally specific leadership frameworks rather than universalised models.

2.3 Tongan Epistemology: Genealogy, Responsibility and Relational Wisdom

Tongan epistemology is relational, genealogical and spiritual, connecting people with ancestors, land and collective purpose across generations. Knowledge is lived and transmitted through genealogy, cultural practice and intergenerational responsibility, shaping how individuals understand themselves, their roles within kāinga and their contributions to community life.

Ka'ili (2017) affirms genealogy as a dynamic system that links people to ancestors, kin groups and cultural obligations, providing identity, purpose and direction. Within this epistemological framing, leadership informed by genealogy is expressed through humility, attentiveness and service, carried through relational accountability and collective responsibility.

Manu'atu (2000) identifies māfana (relational warmth) and mālie (uplifting resonance) as central to Tongan teaching and learning. These qualities cultivate a sense of assurance and participation, strengthening cultural identity and learner confidence. Mafile'o (2005) emphasises relational and spiritual responsibilities within Tongan life in Aotearoa New Zealand, demonstrating how everyday acts of service and care sustain family wellbeing and youth identity. Helu-Thaman (2003) likewise affirms that spirituality is inseparable from learning, decision-making and collective wellbeing, positioning Indigenous education as an ethical and moral endeavour rather than a neutral technical process.

Puloka (2017) articulates leadership and wellbeing through the metaphor of the double-hulled kalia (Katea Māhanga), framing leadership as moral navigation sustained through balance, harmony and 'Ofa as an ethical force. Leadership, in this framing, is sustained through moral orientation, relational steadiness and shared responsibility. Education within Moana nui a Kiwa knowledge systems is inseparable from values, spirituality and cultural continuity, shaping how leadership,

learning and responsibility are understood and practised as relational and ethical obligations (Helu-Thaman, 2006).

Leadership within Indigenous knowledge systems is relational, ethical and intergenerational, expressed through service, responsibility and continuity. Indigenous scholars affirm that leadership emerges through cultural knowledge, relational accountability and collective wellbeing (Chilisa, 2019; Nakata, 2007; Smith, 1999, 2012, 2021).

Within Tongan contexts, leadership is understood as inherited responsibility carried through the values of 'Ofa (care and compassion), Tauhi (relational attentiveness), Fatongia (responsibility) and Tukupā (enduring commitment), guiding leadership as service to family, community and ancestors across generations (Helu-Thaman, 2003; Johansson-Fua, 2007; Manu'atu, 2000). In educational settings, these values are reflected in leadership practices that prioritise ethical conduct, relational skill and community connectedness as central dimensions of effective school leadership in Tonga (Johansson-Fua, 2014).

Relational ethics remain central within Tongan epistemology. Tofua'ipangai and Camilleri (2016) articulate fatongia (responsibility) as a relational duty enacted across church, family and community settings, teaching humility, attentiveness and shared obligation. These responsibilities help explain why Tongan learners respond positively to environments characterised by cultural familiarity, emotional resonance and relational care.

Nakata's (2007) Cultural Interface theory also resonates with Tongan epistemology, highlighting the complexity of navigating multiple knowledge systems and the importance of approaches that honour cultural identity while recognising the realities of schooling within education systems shaped by diverse and evolving leadership approaches. Pau'uvale-Teisina (2021) articulates Tongan subjectivity through Fatu lālānga 'i falehanga (the weaving of knowledge, identity and being within relational and cultural spaces), where knowledge, identity and responsibility are constituted through genealogical and relational connections. Tongan ways of being are shaped through ancestral continuity and ethical obligation, influencing how learning, leadership and responsibility are understood and enacted. Knowledge emerges through relational accountability to people, place and genealogy within lived social and cultural practice. Pau'uvale-Teisina's work therefore serves as a conceptual anchor for understanding leadership and learning as relational practices situated within Tongan ontological and ethical worlds. These relational and genealogical understandings are carried forward in this study through the Fakatoukatea framework, where

leadership is expressed as a relational and evolving practice guided by Tongan values and collective responsibility.

Research consistently shows that cultural affirmation enhances engagement, wellbeing and confidence for Tongan learners (Chu et al., 2013; Kalavite, 2010). The Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme responds directly to these epistemological understandings of service, responsibility and relational commitment. Guided by the values of 'Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā, the programme positions leadership as humility, relational care and service.

Fakatoukatea is articulated in this study as a Tongan Indigenous leadership philosophy developed in Aotearoa New Zealand. The term was named by Dr Linitā Manu'atu to express an intention of balance, capability and cultural fluency for young Tongan leaders navigating multiple cultural contexts. Fakatoukatea draws on Tongan ancestral knowledge systems that emphasise relational accountability, ethical responsibility and intergenerational continuity, while recognising the lived realities of Tongan youth growing up and leading within contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand society.

The philosophical meaning of Fakatoukatea aligns conceptually Puloka's (2017) articulation of Katea Māhanga, which likewise draws on the metaphor of the double-hulled kalia to convey balance, harmony and collective navigation. While Fakatoukatea and Katea Māhanga are distinct conceptual framings and have been named separately, both position leadership as a relational and ethical practice sustained through cultural continuity, spirituality and shared responsibility. Together, these Indigenous articulations affirm leadership as collective, values-led and intergenerational, rather than individual or positional.

Collectively, this scholarship affirms that Tongan epistemology is relational, genealogical and ethical. Knowledge is lived through relationships connecting people, places and generations. These teachings inform the methodological commitments of this study, particularly the use of Talatalanoa as a culturally meaningful approach to inquiry.

2.4 Educational Experiences of Tongan Learners in Aotearoa New Zealand

Tongan learners experience schooling within contexts shaped by migration, cultural identity, community networks and the structural conditions of the education system. Learning is influenced by belonging, teacher relationships, family engagement, curriculum access and the responsiveness of school environments.

Migration continues to shape educational aspirations. Many Tongan families hold collective expectations that education will provide stability, social mobility and opportunities to serve kāinga (Airini et al., 2010). Belonging is a significant contributor to engagement. Research demonstrates that Tongan learners flourish when their cultural identity, language and values are affirmed within schooling environments (Chu et al., 2013). Visibility within school culture, through teachers, curriculum content and leadership opportunities, supports confidence and participation. Conversely, when cultural identity is marginalised or rendered invisible, learners may experience disengagement.

Family and community networks provide emotional, cultural and spiritual support that strengthens resilience and continuity. When schools engage meaningfully with these networks, students benefit from stronger home–school relationships and more consistent support (Ferguson et al., 2008). Such engagement reflects culturally responsive educational practice that values partnerships with families and recognises cultural identity as central to learning. Research further demonstrates that Māori and Ngā iwi o Moana nui a Kiwa student success is strongly influenced by relational teaching practices, cultural recognition and institutional responsibility rather than individual deficit (Airini et al., 2010).

Teacher relationships and classroom practices play a pivotal role in students' educational experiences. Māori scholarship demonstrates that relational pedagogy, characterised by care, respect and high expectations, supports Indigenous learners to thrive (Bishop & Berryman, 2009, 2010; Macfarlane, 2004). Relational leadership practices that centre trust, high expectations and culturally responsive relationships are similarly identified as critical to improving Māori student achievement, reinforcing the role of institutional responsibility in shaping equitable educational outcomes (Bishop & Berryman, 2012). These relational principles align with Tongan values of harmony, humility and collective responsibility, contributing to culturally affirming learning environments. In contrast, deficit thinking and cultural misunderstanding undermine engagement and participation, while Indigenous leadership values are frequently marginalised within formal schooling structures despite their continued strength within families and communities ('Otunuku et al., 2021).

Patterns of academic achievement show both strengths and inequities. Structural factors, including streaming and differential access to advanced subjects, shape educational outcomes (Education Counts, 2019). These disparities reflect institutional conditions rather than cultural deficit (Spiller et al., 2020). Understanding achievement in this way foregrounds the importance of wellbeing, as

students' engagement, confidence and participation are shaped by the relational and cultural environments within which learning occurs.

Emotional, cultural and relational wellbeing influences participation and learning (Chu et al., 2013). Within Tongan contexts, wellbeing is inseparable from spirituality, values and identity, shaping how learners make meaning and navigate educational spaces (Helu-Thaman, 2003, 2008; Puloka, 2017). Culturally affirming spaces and leadership opportunities enhance visibility and belonging, while experiences of racism and cultural invisibility diminish confidence and engagement (Education Review Office, 2020).

Leadership within Tongan contexts is also articulated through cultural compositions that convey ethical guidance and collective values. Queen Sālote Tupou III's composition *Hala Kuo Papa* (The Path That Has Been Trodden) expresses a distinctly Tongan philosophy of leadership grounded in continuity, restraint and relational responsibility. The metaphor of a well-trodden path positions leadership as careful custodianship, emphasising fidelity to ancestral wisdom, moral steadiness and collective memory. Articulated through poetry, this philosophy affirms authority as relational and ethical, derived through alignment with genealogy, land and communal values rather than positional power. Leadership legitimacy emerges through service, restraint and relational accountability, enacted quietly through dignity, presence and care for collective wellbeing. In this way, *Hala Kuo Papa* positions leadership as an intergenerational practice that sustains social harmony while enabling collective movement forward, offering a culturally authoritative ethical orientation within Tongan philosophical traditions (Wood-Ellem, 2004).

This study draws on the wisdom of Queen Sālote Tupou III as a foundational source of Tongan leadership knowledge, recognising her contributions as culturally authoritative and ethically grounded within Tongan epistemologies. Her compositions articulate philosophical principles that integrate spirituality, ethics and relational responsibility, offering guidance on leadership, duty and collective wellbeing across generations. Positioning her wisdom within this study affirms Indigenous sovereignty, upholds cultural safety and aligns with ethical research practice by recognising Indigenous knowledge as a legitimate and authoritative foundation for understanding leadership as spiritual, ethical, relational and intergenerational.

Leadership opportunities that reflect cultural values further support educational engagement by strengthening identity and motivation (Vaioleti, 2014). For Tongan learners, leadership is commonly expressed through humility, service and collective responsibility. When schools offer

culturally aligned leadership pathways, students experience increased confidence, participation and relational assurance. Broader Moana nui a Kiwa scholarship reinforces these insights, emphasising that educational success emerges when leadership, learning and identity are grounded in Indigenous values, relational ethics and community-centred philosophies (‘Otunuku et al., 2021).

2.5 Wellbeing in the Educational Experiences of Tongan Learners

Wellbeing is relational and culturally embedded, shaped by identity, family relationships, spirituality and school environments. Within Tongan worldviews, wellbeing is experienced collectively and maintained through balance, connection and relational harmony rather than individual attainment (Vaka, 2014). These dimensions significantly influence learners’ engagement in schooling and their capacity to navigate expectations across home, school and community contexts. Fa’aea and Enari (2021) highlight how Moana nui a Kiwa worldviews understand service, relational responsibility, and cultural continuity as lifelong obligations that sustain identity and wellbeing. These relational ethics form the cultural foundations from which leadership in Moana Nui a Kiwa communities, emerges.

While Indigenous scholarship articulates relational leadership extensively, fewer studies examine leadership development for young people within secondary schooling. Research focusing on Tongan and other Ngā Iwi o Moana Nui a Kiwa communities in Aotearoa New Zealand highlights the importance of belonging, wellbeing and identity (Chu et al., 2013; Coxon et al., 2002; Kalavite, 2010). These studies demonstrate that students thrive when cultural identity, relational connections and community expectations are recognised and sustained in learning environments. However, leadership development in school settings remains limited, and few initiatives reflect the cultural values, relational responsibilities or Indigenous worldviews of the communities they are designed to serve. Taufe’ulungaki (2018) emphasises that culturally sustaining education, guided by language, values and community relationships, is central to learners’ sense of identity, confidence and purpose.

Relational pedagogy supports wellbeing by fostering care, respect and reciprocal responsibility within learning environments (Bishop & Berryman., 2009; Macfarlane, 2004). Academic identity is strengthened when collaboration and relational ways of knowing are valued and affirmed (Spiller et al., 2020). Such environments enable learners to engage with learning in ways that align with their cultural identities and relational responsibilities.

Spirituality remains an important dimension of wellbeing for many Tongan learners. Puloka (2017) describes spirituality as a source of moral orientation, emotional steadiness and relational balance, supporting resilience and ethical discernment. In educational contexts, spirituality is closely connected to values, identity and meaning-making, shaping how learners understand their place within school communities (Helu-Thaman, 2003, 2006).

School environments also play a critical role in supporting or constraining wellbeing. Culturally affirming spaces enhance visibility, safety and belonging, while experiences of racism and cultural invisibility undermine confidence and engagement (Education Review Office, 2023). Leadership opportunities that reflect Moana nui a Kiwa cultural values can enhance educational engagement by strengthening belonging, identity, motivation, and relational participation (Johansson-Fua, 2014).

Wellbeing, therefore, forms the relational environment through which leadership can emerge and flourish. Understanding these interconnections provides essential context for examining how the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme supports identity, relational assurance and purposeful leadership development within secondary schooling.

2.6 Leadership Development within Tongan and Aotearoa New Zealand Contexts

Leadership development for Tongan learners is shaped by cultural values, genealogy, spirituality and relational structures. Across Tongan and Ngā Iwi o Moana Nui a Kiwa worldviews, leadership is understood as an ethical practice enacted through service, attentiveness and responsibility, and sustained across generations. Johansson-Fua (2014) describes Indigenous leadership as emerging through service and relational responsibility rather than positional authority, reflecting Moana Nui a Kiwa understandings of leadership as relational and ethical. Freire's problem-posing pedagogy supports this orientation by positioning learners as co-creators of knowledge through dialogue, a stance that aligns with Tongan relational epistemologies (Freire, 1970).

Within Tongan traditions, leadership is negotiated through relationships. Johansson-Fua (2007) explains leadership as situated within *vā*, the relational space that connects people, and guided by *faka'apa'apa*, respect enacted through conduct. While genealogy situates individuals within relational networks, leadership legitimacy is realised through ethical practice, humility and care for others.

This understanding aligns closely with Tongan epistemological views of leadership as cultivated over time through relational practice, cultural responsibility and intergenerational continuity. Leadership is understood as an ethical obligation to serve others and uphold collective wellbeing, carried through relational responsibility rather than positional authority — an understanding reflected in Ngā Iwi o Moana nui a Kiwa leadership scholarship, which highlights the everyday, community-rooted and values-led nature of Indigenous leadership (Sanga, 2005).

Educational contexts influence how leadership is recognised and made visible. Relational pedagogy and cultural recognition have been shown to strengthen participation and confidence (Bishop & Berryman, 2009). However, Indigenous leadership approaches within secondary schools are frequently constrained by institutional structures that privilege dominant norms over relational and culturally responsive practice. Hynds et al., (2015) demonstrate that leadership initiatives grounded in Indigenous values are often undermined by hierarchical decision-making, limited partnership with communities and uneven implementation within mainstream schooling contexts. These system-level constraints mirror wider critiques of hierarchical school structures that limit student agency and culturally grounded leadership development (Lyons & Brasof, 2020).

Research with Indigenous community leaders further affirms leadership as enacted through careful listening, relational responsibility and ethical accountability to community, positioning leadership as a collective and values-led practice rather than a formal role (Talení et al., 2018). From this perspective, leadership is not absent within Indigenous communities but is frequently unrecognised within formal school structures.

The literature therefore indicates a continuing need for leadership development approaches that recognise and nurture leadership already present within Tongan families, churches and communities. This study responds to this need by adopting the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology, with Talatalanoa as the primary method, aligning leadership inquiry with relational ethics, cultural identity and intergenerational responsibility.

2.7 Critical tensions and gaps in literature

Across Indigenous leadership and Tongan education scholarship, tensions remain between relational, values-led conceptualisations of leadership and dominant leadership approaches that prioritise individualised accountability and measurable outcomes. These tensions shape how programmes are designed and evaluated in school settings and point to methodological risks when

cultural concepts are reduced to generic engagement strategies rather than recognised as complete knowledge systems.

The second gap concerns evidence at secondary level. While there is growing scholarship on culturally sustaining pedagogy, few peer-reviewed evaluations examine Tongan-centred leadership programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand secondary schools. Consequently, claims about impact are often inferred from broader wellbeing or achievement studies rather than from leadership-specific designs. This study contributes by providing a Tongan-anchored, programme-level analysis grounded in participants' experiences.

Finally, there is limited discussion of how spirituality is operationalised in empirical studies of leadership development. Spiritual practice is frequently acknowledged in Tongan epistemology yet seldom analysed as a design principle that shapes participants' confidence, voice and ethical stance. By foregrounding student-led prayer and spiritual attentiveness as part of the learning environment, this thesis extends the field and identifies an area for future comparative research.

CHAPTER THREE – METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction to the Methodological Approach

This chapter outlines the methodological approach used to explore the impact of the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme on Tongan students, the relational environment of Onehunga High School and the wider kāinga connected to it. The research design aligns with Tongan understandings of knowledge, responsibility and relationship, ensuring that the methods reflect the cultural and ethical worlds from which participants speak.

As established in Chapter Two, leadership development in this study is understood as relational, ethical and anchored in genealogy, carried through the values of ‘Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā. These values provide the ethical foundation for research design and shape how meaning is interpreted throughout this study.

To uphold this orientation, the study employs a qualitative Indigenous research design informed by Tongan epistemology and related genealogical and ethical understandings across Ngā Iwi o Moana Nui a Kiwa and wider Indigenous scholarship (Chilisa, 2019; Smith, 1999, 2012, 2021). Nakata’s (2007) concept of the cultural interface supports an understanding of how participants navigate multiple knowledge systems within schooling contexts. This design centres relational engagement and supports Talatalanoa as a culturally meaningful space where participants express lived experience with dignity and integrity.

Guided by these understandings, this methodological approach upholds relational responsibility and the lived experiences of Tongan learners and their kāinga in Aotearoa New Zealand. The following sections outline the theoretical positioning, research design, Indigenous methodological framework, Talatalanoa method, data analysis, trustworthiness, ethical considerations and limitations that guide this study.

3.2 Theoretical Position

The theoretical position of this study arises from Tongan epistemology and the Indigenous knowledge systems in relationship with it. These knowledge traditions affirm that identity, learning and leadership are relational processes expressed through ancestry, responsibility and collective care. This worldview shapes the design of the research, the enactment of Talatalanoa and the expression of the four values; ‘Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā, which guide the inquiry.

Tongan epistemology positions knowledge as relational and carried through genealogy, spirituality and collective responsibility. Manu'atu (2000), Kalavite (2010), Ka'ili (2017), Mafile'o (2005) and Johansson-Fua (2007) emphasise that learning and leadership develop through connections nurtured within kāinga, community and fonua. These scholars illuminate a Tongan intellectual tradition in which knowledge is lived, embodied and held within social, genealogical and spiritual ties.

Within this worldview:

- 'Ofa strengthens compassion and spiritual presence.
- Tauhi reflects the care and accountability sustained through relationships.
- Fatongia articulates inherited and practised responsibility.
- Tukupā affirms continuity through intergenerational commitment.

Together, these values influence the logic, ethics and relational stance of the methodology.

Smith (1999, 2012, 2021) asserts that Indigenous research must uphold genealogy, relational ethics and accountability to people and place. Nakata's (2007) concept of the cultural interface further illuminates the realities of Tongan learners and their kāinga within a Western schooling context, where Indigenous knowledge, community expectations and institutional structures intersect. Positioning this study within the cultural interface affirms the need for a research approach that honours Indigenous standpoints while engaging critically with the schooling context. These perspectives reinforce a culturally aligned approach that honours the relational foundations of Tongan knowledge and supports the methodological coherence of this study. The dialogical stance in this study echoes Freire's insistence that humanising education is constituted by dialogue and praxis (Freire, 1970).

3.2.1 – Leadership as Relational, Emergent, and Practice-Based

Building from this Tongan epistemological foundation, contemporary leadership scholarship similarly reconceptualises educational leadership not as the actions of a single individual but as an emergent, relational practice shaped through ongoing interactions across multiple layers of school life. Rather than viewing leadership as a fixed positional authority, these perspectives emphasise the dynamic and co-constructed nature of how leadership unfolds within everyday activity, inquiry, and shared sense-making. This orientation foregrounds the importance of collaborative processes,

distributed influence, and learning that evolves over time as relationships deepen and contexts shift. Leadership as an emergent, multi-layered practice is illustrated in Youngs and Ogram's (2024) decade-long account of co-constructed leadership development across groups of schools, highlighting the centrality of inquiry, adaptation, and shared practice over time. This long-view understanding aligns closely with the relational, genealogical and ethical commitments underpinning Tongan knowledge, underscoring that meaningful transformation arises not from isolated actions but through sustained cycles of collective reflection, relational engagement and context-responsive practice.

3.3 Researcher Positioning

Genealogy, Fakahingoa and Relational Accountability

My positioning as a Tongan, a researcher living in Aotearoa New Zealand is shaped through genealogy, lived experience and the cultural teachings passed down through my kāinga. My early life in Hofoa, Tongatapu, within my mother 'Ailine Tupou Kanongata'a Likiliki's kāinga, continues to influence how I understand relationships, responsibility and leadership. These understandings were nurtured through shared wisdom, collective care and the strength of extended family life.

My maternal grandfather, 'Isileli 'Isoa Kanongata'a, held a formative role in my upbringing. When my mother migrated to Aotearoa New Zealand in the mid-1970s, he assumed primary responsibility for my care. Through his steady presence, guidance and protection, I learned early lessons of responsibility, resilience and relational obligation. His care reflects how leadership and tauhi kakai are lived quietly within kāinga, shaping character and values long before they are named or theorised.

Migration Positioning

Migration to Aotearoa New Zealand forms an important dimension of my positionality. Living away from my fonua while remaining connected through genealogy and kāinga has deepened my understanding of continuity, belonging and responsibility. These experiences continue to shape the cultural care I bring to this research and guide how I uphold relationships with Tongan learners and their families, particularly within educational spaces where cultural knowledge may be overlooked or under-recognised.

Fā'e, Kuí, Tuofefine and Mehikitanga

My roles of Fā'e (mother), Kui (grandmother), Tuofefine (sister) and Mehikitanga (paternal aunt) deepen the cultural, relational and ancestral obligations I carry into this study. These roles hold distinct forms of authority, spiritual significance and genealogical responsibility. As Fa'e, I embody nurturing, guidance and everyday fatongia. As Kui, I carry intergenerational responsibility for safeguarding values, stories and the unfolding journeys of our descendants. As Tuofefine and Mehikitanga, I uphold dignity, respect and genealogical strength within extended family relationships.

Together, these identities deepen my understanding of 'Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā, shaping how I listen, interpret and honour the stories shared in this research. They locate me within an intergenerational continuum of fefine Tonga, where leadership is lived through service, relational attentiveness and cultural obligation rather than positional authority.

Fakahingoa, Tauhi Kakai and Women's Inherited Authority

Within Tongan epistemology, naming, voice and meaning making are relational practices governed by genealogy, responsibility and cultural authority (Manu'atu, 2000). Knowledge is held within kāinga and expressed through culturally ordered relationships in which the authority to speak, to name and to interpret is exercised with care. Meaning is sustained through māfana and mālie, enabling knowledge to be carried forward across generations.

Fakahingoa operates within a wider system of tauhi kakai, the inherited responsibility to care for, hold and safeguard people, knowledge and land through genealogy. Naming significant undertakings is entrusted to those who carry recognised authority, most often within the paternal line. Women of the father's paternal line, especially the mehikitanga, hold naming authority. This authority is enacted as moral, spiritual and relational leadership that sustains continuity and collective responsibility.

My paternal genealogy enacts this system of tauhi kakai. My father Popa'i's father is Oskar Höglund, the son of Theodór Höglund of Karlstad, Värmland, Sweden and Tupouvava'ui Tu'itupou of Tongoleleka, Ha'apai, Tonga. Among Oskar Höglund's siblings was Aulula Svea Höglund, who is one of my father's mehikitanga and whose lineage continues to carry recognised responsibility

within the family. This genealogical positioning establishes the ethical grounding through which this research is undertaken.

The name 'Onemato arises from the phrase "One na'e 'omi mei he mato", recalling events during the Battle of Velata in 1826 in Ha'apai, Tonga. Within my paternal family, 'one is understood in relation to the events of the battle and the responsibilities associated with its transport and safeguarding that is gunpowder and bullets.

During this time, Taufa'ahau, later became King Siaosi Tupou I, reached an agreement with the leader Kaufana of 'Eua to use his 'one. Following this agreement, sailors from Ha'apai transported the 'one from the mato in 'Eua to Ha'apai, where it was safeguarded on the land of my great-great-grandfather, Tu'itupou. Kaufana is remembered as a courageous leader who held a significant role in the events of the battle.

The safeguarding of the 'one on Tu'itupou's land established the basis for the name 'Onemato. That land was later fakahuafa (named) 'Onemato by King Siaosi Tupou I, thereby situating the land within genealogy, place and recognised authority. This act reflects the falala'anga (trust) bestowed in Tu'itupou by his majesty and the responsibility to care for what was entrusted.

Our family name Fotuaitakata'ane was also bestowed by King Siaosi Tupou I, meaning "Fotu mai moe 'one mei he mato", referring to the transportation and safeguarding of the 'one. Together, these names affirm the trust placed in our family and the responsibility carried through generations.

In accordance with Tongan protocol, I approached Maria 'Enilemoni Veatupu, in her role as my mehikitanga, to fakahingoa this study. Through this act, the research is placed within inherited authority and tauhi kakai, carried through women's leadership and held in accountability to kāinga across generations.

Maria 'Enilemoni fakahingoa this study 'Onemato, drawing directly from the name of my paternal family home, 'Onemato. In doing so, the study carries forward its genealogical, historical and relational significance and signals an intention that the research serves and remains accountable to the people and knowledge it represents.

Fakahingoa operates within a wider system of tauhi kakai, the inherited responsibility to care for, hold and safeguard people, knowledge and land through genealogy. Naming significant undertakings is entrusted to those who carry recognised authority, most often within the paternal

line. Women of the father's paternal line, especially the mehikitanga, hold naming authority. This authority is enacted as moral, spiritual and relational leadership that sustains continuity and collective responsibility.

Naming of the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme and Pō Ako Foundations

The practice of fakahingoa also informs the origins and naming of the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme examined in this study. Designed in 2013 and first delivered in 2014, the programme was guided by a Tongan understanding of leadership as relational, ethical and sustained through collective wellbeing. From its inception, it sought to support Tongan learners to navigate educational spaces in Aotearoa New Zealand while maintaining connection to genealogy, values and ways of knowing.

In establishing the programme, I approached Dr Linitā Manu'atu to name it, recognising her standing as a Tongan scholar, educator and community leader whose scholarship and community practice centre kāinga, language and Indigenous pedagogy. Her involvement was grounded in long-standing educational leadership and community engagement. Dr Linitā Manu'atu's connection to Onehunga High School extends to the early 1990s through her involvement with Pō Ako. At the time, she was a teacher at Mt Roskill Grammar School and through the leadership of then social worker Lita Foliaki, contributed to Pō Ako as a tutor. Pō Ako was established in 1991 at Onehunga High School in partnership with Tongan parents, including Tevita Pepa, Totoa 'Oliveti and Lauloe Pale, to support Tongan students in Years 9 and 10 by familiarising parents with the schooling system and repositioning them as knowledgeable partners in education.

Working alongside other tutors, including university students such as James Prescott, Manu'atu contributed to Pō Ako as a relational learning space beyond formal school hours. This model linked school, university and kāinga, affirming education as a collective endeavour sustained through tauhi kakai. In her later scholarship, Manu'atu (2000) theorises Pō Ako as a kāinga-based pedagogical practice grounded in Indigenous knowledge systems and collective care. Dr Manu'atu's involvement in Pō Ako as a tutor and her later scholarly articulation of kāinga-based pedagogy, provided important intellectual and cultural foundations for the development of the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme.

It was important to mark the first cohort with the Booklet of Poems: Words & Wisdom (Kepa, Manu'atu, & Pepe, 2014), a publication by the Forum of Indigenous Thinkers, Artists, Poets,

Scholars and Educators, with Dr Linitā Manu'atu as both editor and contributor. The book was gifted to encourage and uplift students as they began their leadership journey.

The leadership programme was thereafter named Fakatoukatea, expressing its purpose of supporting young Tongan leaders to carry both their Aotearoa New Zealand experiences and their Tongan inheritance with confidence, care and responsibility. While 'Onemato names the research itself and establishes its ethical and genealogical grounding, Fakatoukatea names the leadership programme examined in this study and provides the conceptual framework through which leadership growth is analysed.

Historical foundations

The following narrative traces the beginnings of the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme and the relational influences that shaped its growth.

The origins of the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme can be traced to a pivotal moment on 29 November 2013, following my keynote address at a graduation event of University of Auckland recognising students from Ngā Iwi o Moana nui a Kiwa who had completed their social work qualifications. At the time, I was a registered social worker and Manager at Children, Youth and Family in Ōtāhuhu. For this occasion, I invited Sosepa Hausia-Schaumkel to join me.

Present at the event was Professor Graeme Aitken, then Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Auckland, attending with him was his daughter, also an alumna of Onehunga High School. Both had previously volunteered at the school and continued to serve there at the time. In that moment, the connection between us was relational, as Sosepa, Professor Aitken, his daughter and I were all former students of Onehunga High School.

Following the event, Professor Aitken asked us a question that would remain with me: "What are you doing to give back to your school?" This question called us into reflection on our fatongia to our kāinga and the communities that had shaped our educational journeys. From this moment, the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme began its folau, its direction set by service, relational leadership and a commitment to nurturing Tongan learners within Aotearoa New Zealand, as I carried this reflection forward into action.

Ethical Positioning in the Research Process

My involvement in the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme provides important contextual insight. To uphold ethical and relational integrity, all Talatalanoa were facilitated by a Research Assistant, ensuring participants' voices remained central and that power was carefully managed within relational spaces.

3.4 Research Design – The Fakatoukatea Research Methodology

This study is anchored within the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology, an Indigenous methodology developed over more than a decade through cultural practice, community leadership and scholarly reflection. The methodology draws from Tongan epistemology and Indigenous research traditions and is guided by four interwoven values: 'Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā. These values provide the ethical and relational orientation of the research and are enacted through eight practice principles that guide engagement, analysis and interpretation.

The Fakatoukatea Research Methodology aligns with Indigenous scholarship that understands knowledge as relational, genealogical and ethically carried through responsibility to people, place and future generations (Manu'atu, 2000; Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Smith, 1999, 2012, 2021; Taufe'ulungaki, 2018). It affirms Tongan epistemology as a complete and coherent knowledge system, articulated through its own intellectual, cultural and relational traditions (Johansson-Fua, 2007).

By centring Tongan ways of knowing, being and relating, the methodology honours the lived realities of Tongan learners and kāinga in Aotearoa New Zealand. Each stage of the research is shaped through relational care, cultural integrity and genealogical accountability, ensuring that knowledge is approached, generated and held with dignity, reciprocity and collective responsibility.

Within this research design, leadership is understood as ethical responsibility enacted through relationships, service and continuity across generations. The Fakatoukatea Research Methodology therefore provides a culturally aligned framework through which participants' experiences are engaged, interpreted and represented with care, clarity and intergenerational responsibility.

The Four Values

The Fakatoukatea framework is anchored in four interwoven values: 'Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā. Together, these values form the cultural and ethical foundation from which all practice principles emerge.

'Ofa – Spiritual Presence, Compassion and Inner Steadiness

'Ofa refers to love expressed through spiritual presence, compassion and emotional steadiness. Within Tongan epistemology, 'ofa is not sentiment alone but an ethical orientation that shapes how individuals attend to others with care, patience and humility. Puloka (2017) articulates 'ofa through the metaphor of the Katea Māhanga, emphasising balance, harmony and moral alignment as essential to collective navigation. In this frame, 'ofa nurtures inner steadiness and spiritual clarity, enabling leadership to be exercised with integrity rather than reaction.

Manu'atu (2000) further highlights māfana (relational warmth) and mālie (uplifting resonance) as expressions of 'ofa that support confidence, participation and transformation. Within the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology, 'Ofa provides the spiritual and emotional foundation from which leadership is enacted with compassion, clarity and purpose. 'Ofa is lived through spiritual attentiveness, expressed in practices that open and close relational spaces with gratitude, reflection and collective care.

Tauhi – Relational Stewardship and Attentive Care

Tauhi refers to relational stewardship expressed through attentive, disciplined and sustained care. It centres on the guardianship of relationships, knowledge, roles and environments that support collective life. Ka'ili (2017) explains that vā requires continual attention and nurturing; Tauhi provides the ethical orientation through which such attentiveness is enacted as everyday practice. Through Tauhi, leadership is expressed as presence, consistency and care that sustain relationships across time.

This ethic of stewardship is powerfully articulated in the leadership teachings of Kuini Sālote Tupou III of Tonga. Drawing on Tongan cultural understandings of care and responsibility, her address at the centennial celebration of Tongan independence in Ha'apai emphasised that value is realised through deliberate acts of protection and nurture. She expressed this wisdom "*Ko e koloa, ko e me'a 'oku tauhi*" (Kuini Sālote Tupou III, 1962, as cited in Manu'atu & Tu'itahi, 2021, p. 7), which

foregrounds the principle that what is treasured is that which is actively tended and sustained. Extending from this cultural insight, tauhi emerges as a relational ethic of intentional guardianship through which growth, continuity and intergenerational transmission are enabled. In this sense, tauhi positions leadership as a practice grounded in ongoing relational accountability and the collective wellbeing of the community.

Tauhi also encompasses care for the social and ecological contexts that sustain wellbeing, extending stewardship to relationships between people, land and future generations. Mafile'o (2005) highlights that collective wellbeing is upheld through ongoing practices of care, dignity and relational balance. Within the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology, Tauhi positions leadership as the sustained maintenance of relational wellbeing, ensuring that trust, harmony and continuity are actively nurtured through practice.

Fatongia – Moral Obligation and Relational Duty

Fatongia refers to moral obligation arising from genealogy, role and relational position. Latukefu (1974) defines fatongia as traditional responsibility embedded within Tongan social organisation, where duties are inherited through kinship, rank and service to the collective. This understanding situates individuals within enduring networks of accountability that extend across family, church and community life.

Building on this foundation, Tofua'ipangai and Camilleri (2016) conceptualise fatongia as a relational duty that governs conduct, contribution and accountability over time. Within the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology, Fatongia provides the ethical mandate for leadership, affirming obligation as a lived responsibility carried in service to others and sustained across generations.

Tukupā – Enduring Commitment and Intergenerational Continuity

Tukupā refers to enduring commitment sustained across time, generations and changing circumstances. It reflects perseverance, loyalty and the willingness to carry responsibility beyond immediate outcomes. Puloka's (2017) articulation of the Katea Māhanga reinforces Tukupā as the commitment required to remain steady in collective navigation, even in uncertainty.

Tukupā ensures that leadership is not episodic but continuous, upheld through relational loyalty, ethical consistency and long-term responsibility to people and values. Within the Fakatoukatea

Research Methodology, Tukupā affirms leadership as an intergenerational undertaking, where commitment is sustained beyond individual presence and immediate success.

‘Ofa provides the spiritual orientation of leadership, Tauhi governs ethical and relational practice, Fatongia establishes moral obligation and Tukupā sustains commitment across generations. Together, these values form the cultural and ethical framework guiding the research. They ensure that the inquiry remains aligned with the relational worlds from which participants speak and that knowledge shared through Talatalanoa is held with care, dignity and intergenerational responsibility.

The following section introduces the eight practice principles, which operationalise these values within the research process and provide the methodological movement through which Talatalanoa, analysis and interpretation unfold. Together, the values and practice principles ensure that the research design maintains ethical coherence, cultural safety and relational accountability throughout all stages of the study, supporting credibility, trustworthiness and ethical integrity consistent with AUT Ethics Committee expectations.

3.5 Practice Principles of the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology

The Fakatoukatea Research Methodology is enacted through eight practice principles that guide the ethical, cultural and relational conduct of the study. These principles arise from Tongan epistemology and Indigenous scholarship that affirm knowledge as relational, lived, genealogical and sustained through responsibility (Johansson-Fua, 2007; Manu‘atu, 2000; Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Smith, 2012; Taufe‘ulungaki, 2018).

The following sections define and elaborate the eight practice principles: Manatu, MataKāinga, Tokonaki, Lea, Mālie mo Māfana, Tuli ke ma‘u hono ngaahi mālie, FetuiakiMālie and Taumu‘a. Clarifying how each principle is enacted within the research process. Together, these principles provide a relational and cultural framework that shapes how participants are engaged, how knowledge is generated and how meaning is interpreted.

The following section outlines the Indigenous methodological framework that informs this study and clarifies how the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology responds to the cultural interface within the schooling context.

3.5.1 MANATU – Inspiration, Ancestral Memory and the Awakening of Purpose

Manatu refers to a state of inner awareness through which meaning, purpose and moral orientation are gathered before action is taken. Within Tongan epistemology, Manatu encompasses remembrance, reflection and ancestral consciousness, drawing individuals into attentiveness to who they are, where they come from and what they carry forward.

Manu'atu (2000) explains that transformation begins through internal shifts, where intention forms through relational and spiritual awareness. This understanding positions Manatu as the ethical beginning of leadership and learning, where clarity emerges through reflection. Puloka (2017) similarly describes spiritual remembrance as a stabilising presence that nurtures balance, steadiness and direction, enabling individuals to move with purpose and care.

Manatu is sustained through wisdom carried within kāinga and faith traditions, where remembrance connects individuals to ancestral guidance and collective responsibility. Through Manatu, identity is affirmed as something carried across generations, shaped through memory, spirituality and relational belonging. This awareness supports participation that is intentional, ethically oriented and grounded in respect for relationships.

Within the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology, Manatu establishes the ethical entry point of inquiry. It affirms that reflection, ancestral awareness and cultural clarity guide engagement, interpretation and meaning making. Knowledge is approached with attentiveness and humility, ensuring that what is shared is received with care.

Through Manatu, the four core values begin to move together. 'Ofa emerges as compassion and spiritual steadiness. Tauhi begins with recognising one's own worth as the basis for relational care. Fatongia recalls genealogical responsibility and obligation. Tukupā affirms continuity, anchoring action within intergenerational purpose. Manatu therefore initiates the methodological movement of the study, shaping how inquiry is entered, how relationships are approached and how knowledge is ethically held.

3.5.2 MATAKĀINGA – Belonging, Relational Presence, Kāinga, Fonua and Faith

MataKāinga refers to the act and orientation of recognising one's place within kāinga, acknowledging relational ties and locating identity through genealogy, responsibility and belonging.

It expresses belonging as a relational state that is lived, affirmed and carried through reciprocal ties across people, fonua and generations.

Within Tongan epistemology, identity is genealogical and relational, shaped through intergenerational responsibilities and the obligations embedded within them (Latukeyu, 1974). Belonging is enacted through reciprocity, honouring those who cared for one's ancestors and recognising those whose stewardship provides a place of standing in the present. Identity is therefore understood as something held within relationship and responsibility, rather than as an individual attribute.

This understanding of belonging and inherited responsibility aligns with the declaration of King Siaosi Tupou I: "Ko e 'Otua mo Tonga ko hoku tofi'a." The concept of tofi'a positions identity as inherited responsibility, carried with dignity, spirituality and genealogical depth. It affirms that belonging is inseparable from moral obligation, spiritual orientation and collective continuity.

Within MataKāinga, the four core values move together in relational harmony. 'Ofa nurtures warmth, care and relational presence. Tauhi sustains attentiveness and reciprocity across relationships. Fatongia affirms genealogical responsibility and collective care. Tukupā carries continuity across generations and places, ensuring that belonging remains enduring and accountable. Faith strengthens MataKāinga by offering an anchored presence that deepens belonging, responsibility and moral orientation. Within the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology, MataKāinga frames relational engagement as a space where identity, dignity and reciprocity guide participation and the ethical holding of knowledge.

3.5.3 TOKONAKI – Preparation, Clarity and the Movement of Legacy

Tokonaki refers to the deliberate work of preparation that enables action to be undertaken with care, competence and responsibility. Within Tongan epistemology, Tokonaki recognises that individuals arrive carrying legacy genealogical, relational and cultural and that preparation involves honouring what has been entrusted while readying it for continued responsibility.

Preparation within Tokonaki is therefore retrospective and forward-looking. It involves attentiveness to inherited obligations, awareness of present context and readiness for future contribution. Responsibility is understood as an intergenerational thread that sustains collective wellbeing and continuity across time (Tofua'ipangai & Camilleri, 2016). Tokonaki affirms that

meaningful action is shaped by what one carries from the past and how that inheritance is carefully prepared for what comes next.

Tokonaki is relational, enduring and ethical. It requires consideration of relationships, timing and roles, ensuring that engagement unfolds with integrity and respect. Preparation is understood as stewardship, attending to people, purposes and responsibilities so that action is aligned with dignity and trust.

Tokonaki also expresses accountability to kāinga, fonua and future generations. Readiness is held as a collective condition, supported through shared responsibility and mutual care. Through Tokonaki, individuals and communities prepare themselves and the conditions through which leadership, learning and service may continue.

Within the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology, Tokonaki guides the preparatory movement of inquiry. It shapes how inherited commitments are acknowledged; how ethical considerations are anticipated and how responsibility is carried into engagement. Tokonaki affirms that preparation is an ethical practice that safeguards relationships and honours legacy.

Through Tokonaki, the four core values continue to move together. 'Ofa informs preparation through care for what has been entrusted. Tauhi sustains attentiveness to relationships and inherited responsibilities. Fatongia guides ethical obligation in carrying legacy forward. Tukupā orients preparation toward continuity, ensuring that what is prepared contributes to enduring purpose. Tokonaki strengthens the methodological movement of the study by holding legacy, readiness and ethical stewardship together as preparation for action.

3.5.4 LEA – Voice, Expression and Relational Confidence

Lea affirms voice as ethical and relational expression. Within Tongan epistemology, Lea encompasses the ways knowledge, intention and responsibility are communicated through language, tone, silence, posture and relational awareness. Voice is carried with care and shaped through genealogy, context and accountability to others.

Communication operates as a culturally patterned practice. Taumoefolau (2004) demonstrates that meaning in Tongan contexts is produced through established ways of talking, where respect, authority and responsibility are enacted through purposeful language use. What is spoken, implied

or restrained contributes to relational meaning. Lea therefore reflects cultural fluency and ethical awareness, recognising expression as situated within relationships and shared understandings.

Lea carries ethical responsibility. It is guided by attentiveness to *vā*, *faka'apa'apa* and the relational positioning of speaker and listener. Voice gains legitimacy through humility, clarity and alignment with collective wellbeing. Expression is shaped by responsibility to relationships and to the wider genealogical field in which communication occurs.

Lea also affirms knowledge as shared and co-constructed. Communication unfolds through reciprocity, listening and responsiveness. Meaning emerges through interaction, where stories, reflections and insights are offered in ways that uphold dignity, safety and relational balance. Within Tongan and Indigenous contexts, voice carries consequence. Words shape relationships, affirm identity and influence future possibilities. Lea therefore involves stewardship over expression, recognising language as a site of care, responsibility and continuity.

Within the *Fakatoukatea* Research Methodology, Lea guides the ethical conduct of expression throughout the inquiry. It shapes how voices are articulated with cultural awareness and relational accountability. Through Lea, *'Ofa* is expressed through compassion and sincerity in communication, *Tauhi* is enacted through attentiveness to the relational impact of words, *Fatongia* guides responsibility for what is spoken and shared, and *Tukupā* ensures that expression contributes to continuity across generations.

Lea marks the movement from preparation into articulation, where intention, knowledge and responsibility become visible through ethical expression. It enables leadership, learning and research to proceed through dialogue that is culturally anchored, relationally accountable and oriented toward collective wellbeing.

3.5.5 MĀLIE MO MĀFANA – Warmth, Relational Rhythm and Uplifting Energy

Mālie mo Māfana articulate the relational and emotional vitality through which learning, leadership and knowledge are experienced as meaningful and sustaining. Within Tongan epistemology, *Mālie* refers to a sense of resonance, alignment and collective affirmation that arises when actions, intentions and relationships are in harmony. *Māfana* describes the warmth, energy and emotional vitality that animate participation and strengthen relational connection.

Manu'atu (2000) positions mālie and māfana as central to Tongan teaching and learning, positioning them as culturally embedded expressions of meaningful engagement. Mālie affirms shared purpose and ethical alignment, while Māfana energises participation and nurtures confidence. Together, they signal that learning and leadership are being carried out in ways that uplift individuals and strengthen collective wellbeing.

Mālie mo Māfana are cultivated through ethical relational practice. When relationships are tended with care, contributions are honoured and participation is affirmed, learning environments become emotionally sustaining and culturally resonant. These conditions support assurance, motivation and a sense of shared purpose, enabling individuals to participate with confidence and presence.

Within this principle, 'Ofa is expressed through compassion and relational warmth, creating emotional safety and affirmation. Tauhi is enacted through attentiveness to relational energy and balance, ensuring that engagement is sustained with care. Fatongia guides responsibility for maintaining collective wellbeing, and Tukupā affirms continuity by nurturing conditions that allow confidence, vitality and purpose to endure across time.

Mālie mo Māfana also function as ethical guides. Their presence reflects alignment between intention, action and relational responsibility, affirming that leadership and learning are unfolding in ways that honour people, values and relationships. In this way, Mālie mo Māfana orient practice toward balance, resonance and collective affirmation.

Within the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology, Mālie mo Māfana affirm that leadership and learning flourish through relational vitality. They ensure that the research process remains attentive to warmth, resonance and ethical alignment, supporting knowledge creation that is culturally anchored, relationally sustained and enduring.

3.5.6 TULI KE MA'U HONO NGAHI MĀLIE – Purposeful Striving and Disciplined Movement

Tuli ke ma'u hono ngaahi mālie affirms purposeful commitment as an ethical and relational practice. Within Tongan epistemology, tuli reflects sustained targeted movement carried with intention, patience and responsibility, while mālie signifies alignment, resonance and the positive outcomes that emerge when effort is ethically guided and relationally held.

Manu'atu (2000) situates purposeful effort within relational and cultural contexts, emphasising that commitment becomes transformative when it is infused with māfana and oriented toward shared

wellbeing. In this understanding, excellence is realised through perseverance that honours relationships, values and collective purpose. Tuli ke ma'u hono ngaahi mālie therefore expresses commitment as consistency, care and ethical resolve enacted over time.

This principle recognises that leadership development unfolds through disciplined engagement and sustained participation. Individuals pursue learning, growth and responsibility with clarity of intention, supported by cultural values and relational networks. The pursuit itself becomes an offering, contributing to the wellbeing of kāinga, community and future generations.

Within this principle, 'Ofa sustains compassion and patience throughout the journey of commitment. Tauhi guides attentiveness to balance and relational care. Fatongia reinforces responsibility to carry effort in ways that honour collective expectations, and Tukupā affirms enduring commitment, recognising that meaningful outcomes mature across time and generations.

Tuli ke ma'u hono ngaahi mālie also serves as an ethical guide, orienting action toward perseverance that is thoughtful, steady and values aligned. Effort is understood as relational endurance, carried with humility and purpose, and directed toward outcomes that uplift both individuals and the collective.

Within the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology, this principle affirms that leadership and learning develop through sustained, values-led commitment. It ensures that inquiry, reflection and action are carried out with intention, continuity and ethical clarity, supporting outcomes that are meaningful, relationally anchored and enduring.

3.5.7 FETUIAKIMĀLIE – Continuity, Harmony and Collective Movement

FetuiakiMālie expresses the movement of coming together in relational alignment, where connections are woven with care, intention and shared purpose. Within Tongan epistemology, fetuiaki refers to the act of joining, integrating and strengthening relationships, while mālie signals resonance, harmony and collective affirmation. Together, they describe a state in which relationships, intentions and actions are ethically aligned and mutually sustaining.

Kēpa and Manu'atu (2006) illuminate mālie as arising through connection, generosity and shared purpose. In this understanding, collective alignment is not imposed but emerges when individuals contribute with sincerity, care and relational attentiveness. FetuiakiMālie therefore affirms

leadership and learning as practices that are strengthened through cooperation, ethical interaction and shared responsibility.

This principle recognises that meaningful outcomes emerge when diverse contributions are brought together with respect and clarity. Knowledge, insight and leadership are integrated through relational processes that honour each participant's presence and contribution. Collective understanding is formed through dialogue, generosity and attentiveness to relational balance.

Within FetuiakiMālie, 'Ofa is expressed through openness and relational warmth, enabling trust and mutual affirmation. Tauhi governs the careful tending of relationships as they are joined, ensuring balance and respect. Fatongia affirms responsibility to contribute meaningfully to collective purpose, and Tukupā sustains commitment to shared direction across time.

FetuiakiMālie also serves as an ethical orientation. It affirms that alignment and coherence arise when relationships are honoured and contributions are integrated with care. Leadership and learning are understood as collective achievements, strengthened through generosity, connection and shared intent.

Within the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology, FetuiakiMālie affirms integration as a relational process. It ensures that knowledge generated through the research is woven together with ethical clarity, relational care and collective purpose, supporting outcomes that are coherent, culturally anchored and enduring.

3.5.8 TAUMU'A – Purpose, Direction and Collective Contribution

Taumu'a affirms purposeful direction as the culmination of relational, ethical and cultural movement. Within Tongan epistemology, taumu'a refers to an oriented forward movement guided by intention, values and responsibility. It is not simply an end point, but a shared direction shaped by genealogy, relational accountability and collective aspiration.

Taumu'a gathers the preceding principles into coherent purpose. Manatu awakens intention, MataKāinga establishes belonging, Tokonaki prepares with legacy in mind, Lea gives voice with integrity, Mālie mo Māfana sustain relational vitality, Tuli ke ma'u hono ngaahi mālie carries commitment over time, and FetuiakiMālie weaves contributions into collective alignment. Taumu'a gives direction to this movement, ensuring that leadership, learning and inquiry are oriented toward outcomes that serve collective wellbeing.

This principle recognises that purpose is carried out together. Direction emerges through shared understanding, ethical responsibility and relational commitment rather than individual ambition. Contributions are offered with humility and care, mindful of their impact on kāinga, community and future generations.

Within Taumu'a, 'Ofa affirms that purpose is guided by compassion and care. Tauhi ensures that direction is sustained through relational stewardship. Fatongia reinforces responsibility to contribute meaningfully to collective goals, and Tukupā secures continuity, recognising that purposeful direction unfolds across generations. Taumu'a also functions as an ethical anchor. It affirms that leadership development is oriented toward service, contribution and continuity, ensuring that outcomes are culturally aligned and relationally responsible. Purpose is understood as collective advancement carried with dignity and integrity.

Within the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology, Taumu'a affirms that inquiry is directed toward meaningful contribution. Knowledge generated through the research is oriented toward strengthening identity, leadership and relational wellbeing, ensuring that the study contributes ethically and constructively to kāinga, school and community contexts.

Together, these eight practice principles constitute an integrated methodological framework that guides the ethical, cultural and relational conduct of the study. Enacted through the values of 'Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā, the principles structure the movement of the research from awareness and belonging through preparation, expression, relational vitality and sustained commitment, toward collective alignment and purposeful contribution.

3.6 Indigenous Methodology Framework

Indigenous methodologies affirm that knowledge is relational, contextual and carried through responsibilities that connect people, place, spirituality and ancestry. Smith (1999, 2012, 2021) maintains that Indigenous research must arise from cultural and historical realities, restoring intellectual authority and centring relationships as the foundation of meaning-making. Nabobo-Baba (2006) highlights that knowledge is expressed through relational presence, cultural identity and the ethical responsibilities that bind communities together. Chilisa (2019) argues that collective responsibility forms the ethical core of Indigenous inquiry, shaping how knowledge is generated, interpreted and shared.

Within Tongan epistemology, learning, leadership and wellbeing are understood through genealogy, spirituality, kāinga and relational responsibility. In this study, particular attention is given to the warm relational spaces where respect, resonance and care guide meaningful engagement, and to fatongia as an ethical and cultural duty that binds individuals to mutual care, reciprocity and collective responsibility. These understandings align with the four values of the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology 'Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā, which guide ethical engagement, relational attentiveness and intergenerational purpose.

Consistent with the definitions established in Chapter One, this study recognises Te Moana Nui a Kiwa as the oceanic and ancestral context, and Ngā Iwi o Te Moana Nui a Kiwa as the distinct Indigenous peoples whose knowledge systems, leadership practices and relational responsibilities inform this research. This distinction affirms cultural specificity and resists the homogenisation of Indigenous knowledge within educational research.

Nakata's (2007) development of the concept of the cultural interface extends these methodological commitments. He argues that Indigenous research must attend to the tensions and possibilities that emerge where Indigenous and Western knowledge systems meet. For this study, the cultural interface is located within Onehunga High School, where Tongan students, families and staff navigate the relationships between Tongan epistemology, Ngā Iwi o Te Moana Nui a Kiwa knowledge traditions and Aotearoa New Zealand educational structures. The Fakatoukatea Research Methodology responds to this interface by centring Tongan values and leadership principles as the primary interpretive view.

Freire's (1970, 1998) emphasis on dialogic engagement complements these Indigenous perspectives. His understanding of dialogue as an ethical, reflective and relational practice aligns with the Fakatoukatea principles of Lea, Mālie mo Māfana and FetuiakiMālie, which support relational presence, emotional resonance, voice and purposeful exchange.

Together, these orientations form the Indigenous methodological frame for this study. They affirm that knowledge emerges through relationships, is strengthened through responsibility and is interpreted with cultural dignity, care and genealogical awareness. Informed by Tongan epistemology and supported by broader Indigenous scholarship, the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology provides a culturally aligned, ethically coherent and relationally anchored foundation for this research.

3.7 Talatalanoa as Method

Talatalanoa is the primary method used in this study, offering a culturally meaningful, relational and dialogic approach to knowledge generation. It reflects Tongan epistemology and resonates with wider Indigenous approaches to relational inquiry, where learning and meaning emerge through shared presence, reciprocity and values-led engagement. As with Freire's dialogics, Talatalanoa positions participants and researchers as co-inquirers whose shared reflections become action-oriented knowledge (Freire, 1970).

Vaioleti (2006) conceptualises Talatalanoa as a relational research process that enables sincerity, openness and mo'oni (authenticity), allowing participants to speak with assurance within culturally familiar and respectful spaces. Knowledge is generated through reciprocal exchange, relational accountability and ethical presence. The researcher is positioned as relationally accountable to participants and the knowledge shared. This framing affirms Talatalanoa as an ethical and dialogic method orientated in trust, respect and relational integrity.

Talatalanoa, as conceptualised by Fa'avae and Fonua (2020), requires deliberate attentiveness to relational ethics, including responsibility, care and the relational histories that participants bring into the dialogue. Within their framing, dialogue is not understood as casual conversation but as an ethical encounter shaped by *faka'apa'apa* (respect), *loto tokā'i* (care), and *loto fiefoaki* (generosity), which guide meaningful and culturally grounded engagement. Knowledge therefore emerges through a sustained commitment to people, context and relational responsibility, rather than through transactional exchanges.

Fa'avae and Fonua (2020) further describe Talatalanoa as an ongoing, negotiated relational process rather than a single moment of data generation. They emphasise that Talatalanoa unfolds over time through presence, vulnerability, and ethical care, requiring participants to remain open to discomfort, dialogue and mutual meaning-making. Knowledge, in this process, is held collectively and shaped by generosity, reciprocity and relational balance. This positions Talatalanoa as a method that prioritises dignity, trust and the careful stewardship of stories, aligning with Tongan relational ethics and the broader values of Ngā Iwi o Moana nui a Kiwa Indigenous knowledge.

Talatalanoa unfolded within relational spaces shaped by spiritual attentiveness, where shared prayer and reflection-oriented participants toward humility, gratitude and mutual care. These practices supported emotional safety and ethical presence throughout the research encounters.

Within the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology, Talatalanoa is shaped by the eight practice principles, which guide the ethical, relational and cultural conduct of each encounter. Manatu informed the intention and clarity carried into each conversation. MataKāinga affirmed belonging, identity and relational presence. Tokonaki guided preparation as a movement of inherited responsibility and readiness. Lea upheld voice as culturally situated and ethically accountable expression. Mālie mo Māfana nurtured warmth, emotional resonance and relational ease. Tuli ke ma'u hono ngaahi mālie supported purposeful reflection and sustained engagement. FetuiakiMālie ensured continuity, balance and relational harmony across Taumu'a. FetuiakiMālie is understood in this study as a relational practice of talking together that centres listening, trust and collective responsibility, where knowledge and authority emerge through ethical engagement rather than positional power (Kēpa & Manu'atu, 2006), oriented conversations toward meaning, contribution and future purpose.

The four core values of 'Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā were active throughout each Talatalanoa. 'Ofa strengthened compassion and emotional steadiness; Tauhi sustained relational attentiveness beginning with the self; Fatongia clarified inherited responsibility to people and knowledge; and Tukupā affirmed intergenerational continuity and ethical commitment.

Together, these values and principles enabled Talatalanoa to be enacted with cultural integrity, ethical care and relational dignity. Through this approach, participants' lived experiences were shared with confidence and cultural safety, ensuring that knowledge was generated, held and interpreted in ways consistent with the relational worldview that underpins the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis followed an iterative, relational and values-led process aligned with the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology. Analysis was undertaken as a cultural and interpretive practice shaped through identity, genealogy and responsibility. The four core values 'Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā provided the ethical orientation for interpretation, while the eight practice principles guided each stage of engagement with the data.

Transcription and Familiarisation

Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, requiring repeated listening to attend carefully to tone, emphasis, pauses and emotional resonance. This process reflected the principles of Lea, Mālie mo Māfana and MataKāinga, ensuring that the relational and emotional dimensions of participants' voice informed interpretation. Multiple readings supported familiarity with participants' expressions, relational contexts and lived experiences.

Fa'avae (2021) emphasises that Talatalanoa requires a relational posture grounded in cultural understanding, responsibility and humility. This orientation shaped the familiarisation process, ensuring that listening preceded interpretation and that meaning was approached with care.

Stage 1: Initial Immersion

The first stage involved attentive and reflective reading of transcripts to identify significant expressions, emotional cues and emerging interpretive threads. Manatu guided the intention brought into this stage, supporting openness, reflection and cultural attentiveness. Tauhi shaped the relational care taken in holding participants' reflections with respect and responsibility. During this stage, meaning surfaced through presence, memory and culturally informed listening rather than predetermined categorisation.

Stage 2: Relational and Cultural Interpretation

The second stage involved interpreting insights into conversation with the eight practice principles, recognising that meaning is shaped through cultural identity, relationships and values. Tokonaki supported analytical clarity by connecting insights to inherited and emerging responsibilities. Taumu'a guided interpretive direction toward contribution, purpose and shared meaning. Tuli ke ma'u hono ngaahi mālie encouraged depth and deliberateness, supporting sustained engagement with participants' reflections.

Fa'avae (2021) argues that Talatalanoa-centred analysis requires returning to the relational and cultural contexts that shape meaning, recognising each narrative as part of a wider relational story. Analysis at this stage was therefore undertaken as a dialogic process between participant narratives, cultural values and the researcher's interpretive responsibility.

Stage 3: Cross-Case Analysis

The third stage involved comparing experiences with former students, school staff and parents to identify shared patterns and meaningful distinctions. FetuiakiMālie supported relational continuity across participants, affirming the connections linking their experiences. Tukupā recognised intergenerational purpose, acknowledging that participants' insights reflected ancestral values, family legacies and aspirations for future generations. This stage enabled the identification of collective themes while continuing to honour the uniqueness and dignity of each narrative.

Data Analysis Within the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology

Throughout the analysis, the four values shaped the interpretive stance. 'Ofa affirmed compassion, warmth and spiritual steadiness in holding participants' narratives. Tauhi sustained relational attentiveness and ethical care. Fatongia has the responsibility to interpret accurately, respectfully and with cultural integrity. Tukupā recognised continuity, situating each narrative within an intergenerational horizon of leadership, identity and responsibility.

Together, these values and principles supported a culturally aligned, ethically coherent and relationally assured approach to analysis. Meaning emerged through careful listening, cultural understanding and accountability to the relationships that shaped each participant's story.

3.9 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in this study was upheld through sustained relational engagement, transparency of process and accountability to participants and their kāinga. Consistent with tauhi vā as an ethical commitment to nurturing relational space, responsibility and care over time (Ka'ili, 2005), trustworthiness was enacted through culturally aligned and values-led research practices grounded in the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology. Credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability were addressed in ways that honoured relational accountability, cultural integrity and responsibility to participants and their communities.

Credibility

Credibility was strengthened through verbatim transcription, iterative review and participant verification. All participants were provided with their Talatalanoa transcripts via email and invited to review them for accuracy, clarity and representation of meaning. Participants were also offered

the opportunity to confirm and clarify initial interpretive summaries. No substantive changes were requested, and participants confirmed that the transcripts accurately reflected their intended meanings.

These practices align with Indigenous research principles that position knowledge as relational and ethically accountable to those who share it (Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). Within Talatalanoa, credibility is upheld through openness, trust and participant involvement in confirming meaning, ensuring that knowledge remains relationally held and ethically accountable (Fa'avae, 2021; Vaioleti, 2006).

To support cultural safety and accuracy, a Research Assistant facilitated Talatalanoa and supported transcription and participant follow-up. This process maintained relational care, respect and ethical responsibility while ensuring participants could speak freely (Nabobo-Baba, 2006).

Dependability

Dependability was supported through a transparent, values-led and consistently enacted research process guided by the four core values of 'Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā, alongside the eight practice principles of the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology. Together, these provided a stable methodological framework that informed decisions across data collection, transcription and analysis.

Procedural consistency was maintained using a Research Assistant who facilitated all Talatalanoa, supported transcription processes and undertook participant follow-up. This ensured that each Talatalanoa was conducted in a culturally safe and ethically consistent manner, while reducing variability in facilitation and supporting continuity across research encounters.

Dependability was further strengthened through reflexive documentation and ongoing dialogue between the researcher and Research Assistant. Reflexive notes recorded methodological decisions, ethical considerations and relational responsibilities as they arose, providing transparency in how the research unfolded over time. This approach aligns with Indigenous methodological expectations that emphasise coherence, ethical consistency and accountability across the research process (Smith, 2012).

Confirmability

Confirmability was upheld through reflexive practice, relational accountability and careful alignment between participants' narratives, interpretive decisions and the methodological values guiding the study. Analysis remained closely grounded in participants' words, expressions and relational contexts, ensuring that findings emerged from the data rather than from researcher presupposition.

Throughout the study, the researcher remained attentive to positionality, genealogical relationships and ethical responsibility. Reflexive journaling was undertaken following each stage of data engagement to document interpretive decisions, cultural considerations and relational responsibilities. This practice supported transparency in how meanings were developed and ensured that interpretations were carried out with care and accountability.

Participant verification of transcripts and initial interpretive summaries further strengthened confirmability by affirming that the findings accurately reflected participants' intended meanings. This approach aligns with Indigenous research methodologies that emphasise shared authority, ethical accountability and responsibility to relationships in knowledge creation (Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Wilson, 2008).

Transferability

Transferability was supported through rich, culturally situated description that foreground participants' identities, relational worlds and the specific schooling context in which the study was conducted. Detailed attention was given to genealogy, kāinga relationships, school environment and the cultural values shaping leadership experiences, enabling readers to make informed judgements about the relevance of the findings for other contexts.

Rather than claiming universal applicability, this study positions transferability as a relational consideration. The leadership insights generated through the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology offer meaningful resonance for other Indigenous and migrant communities where leadership is shaped by genealogy, relational responsibility and intergenerational continuity. In this way, the study provides analytic insight that may inform leadership development practice beyond the immediate research site while remaining ethically grounded in its specific cultural and contextual realities.

Synthesis of Trustworthiness

Taken together, credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability were upheld through culturally aligned, relational and ethically grounded research practices consistent with the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology. Trustworthiness was not treated as a technical checklist but as a lived ethical commitment enacted through 'Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā, and expressed through sustained relational accountability to participants, kāinga and community.

Talatalanoa, participant verification, reflexive practice and procedural consistency ensured that knowledge was generated, interpreted and held with care, dignity and transparency. By situating trustworthiness within relational responsibility rather than methodological abstraction, the study honours Indigenous epistemological commitments that position knowledge as collective, contextual and accountable to the relationships from which it emerges. In this way, the research maintains integrity, cultural safety and ethical coherence across all stages of the inquiry.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) on 17 July 2025 (reference number 25/187). Ethical practice throughout the research was guided by the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology and its four core values: 'Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā. These values shaped how relationships were entered, maintained and concluded, ensuring that ethical responsibility was enacted as a relational and cultural practice rather than as procedural compliance alone.

Informed consent was obtained verbally at the commencement of each Talatalanoa and audio-recorded with participants' permission. Participants were clearly informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. This process reflected Tauhi through sustained attentiveness to relational care, dignity and continuity across all research encounters.

To protect confidentiality and minimise any potential power imbalance, all Talatalanoa were facilitated by an AUTEC-approved Research Assistant. This arrangement enabled participants to speak freely while maintaining cultural safety and relational integrity. Pseudonyms were assigned to all participants, and identifying details were removed from transcripts. Audio files, transcripts and analytic notes were stored securely in password-protected files accessible only to the researcher, reflecting Fatongia through responsible stewardship of entrusted knowledge.

Relational ethics were further upheld through the principles of MataKāinga, Lea, Mālie mo Māfana and FetuiakiMālie. These principles shaped how relational space was created and sustained, ensuring that participants experienced respect, emotional safety and affirmation throughout their involvement. Spiritual practices that opened and closed Talatalanoa sessions supported humility, gratitude and ethical presence, reinforcing cultural integrity within the research process.

Together, these ethical commitments ensured that the study was conducted with cultural care, relational accountability and adherence to both AUTEK requirements and Indigenous ethical expectations. Ethics within this study were therefore not confined to approval processes but enacted continuously through responsibility to people, relationships and the intergenerational implications of the research.

3.11 Researcher Reflexivity

Reflexivity within this study is understood as an ethical and relational practice rather than a purely methodological requirement. Within the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology, reflexivity acknowledges that knowledge is carried out through identity, genealogy and responsibility, and that the researcher's presence shapes how meaning is heard, interpreted and held.

As a Tongan woman living in Aotearoa New Zealand, my worldview is shaped through genealogy, lived experience and the cultural teachings passed down through my kāinga. My early life in Hofoa, Tongatapu, and the intergenerational wisdom shared within my family inform how I understand leadership, responsibility and relational care. These foundations continue to guide the ethical stance I bring to this research.

The interwoven roles I hold as Fa'e, Kuí, Tuofefine and Mehikitanga carry distinct cultural responsibilities within Tongan epistemology. These roles deepen my understanding of 'Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā as lived obligations rather than abstract concepts. They shape how I listen to participants' stories, how I attend to emotional and relational cues and how I hold knowledge with care and dignity.

Migration to Aotearoa New Zealand further informs my reflexive positioning. Living away from fonua while remaining connected through genealogy and kāinga has strengthened my awareness of belonging, continuity and cultural responsibility. This experience informs my attentiveness to the realities faced by Tongan learners and families navigating schooling within a Western institutional context.

My 11 years involvement in the design and delivery of the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme provides important contextual insight for this study. At the same time, it necessitates deliberate reflexive practice to ensure that participants' voices remain central. Indigenous scholars emphasise that researchers carry relational responsibilities to people, place and genealogy, and that these responsibilities must guide ethical interpretation (Wilson, 2008).

To mitigate potential power dynamics and maintain relational integrity, all Talatalanoa were facilitated by an AUTEC-approved Research Assistant. This ensured that participants could speak freely without obligation arising from existing relationships. I undertook the analysis, interpretation and reflexive journaling following each stage of the research, maintaining transparency in how meanings were developed and decisions made.

Reflexive journaling was used throughout the study to document interpretive decisions, cultural considerations and ethical responsibilities as they arose. This process supported careful meaning-making and ensured that interpretations remained aligned with participants' intentions and the values of the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology. Reflexivity in this study is therefore an ongoing commitment to listening with humility, interpreting with care and honouring the knowledge entrusted by participants. It affirms responsibility not only to academic integrity but to the relational, cultural and intergenerational worlds from which this research emerges.

This study is intentionally situated within a single school community, Onehunga High School, where the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme has been enacted within established relational networks. While this enabled depth, cultural integrity and relational closeness, the findings are contextually specific and reflect the histories, relationships and institutional conditions of this setting.

Although the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme is also delivered with adults and community groups beyond the school context, these sites were not included in the present study. Including participants from additional cohorts may have provided comparative insight into how leadership is experienced across different contexts. The focus on one school community was a deliberate methodological choice to maintain coherence, relational accountability and depth of engagement.

A further limitation relates to the relational conditions under which Talatalanoa was facilitated. The Research Assistant did not have prior relational history with participants. Within Tongan relational protocols, the depth and form of Talatalanoa are shaped by familiarity, kinship positioning and

established trust. In the absence of such relationships, participants may exercise cultural restraint in what is shared, particularly in relation to personal or emotionally grounded experiences.

This relational dynamic was also shaped by gender. All Talatalanoa were facilitated by a male Research Assistant, while most participants were female. In Tongan contexts, Talatalanoa across gender is often mediated by relational history and cultural protocol. Without established relationships, participants may moderate how they speak, particularly around sensitive or gendered experiences.

The use of a Research Assistant was necessary to mitigate potential power dynamics arising from my prior relationships with participants as a programme founder and community member. However, my absence from the Talatalanoa may have influenced the depth and nature of some narratives. This reflects a methodological tension between relational familiarity and ethical distance.

3.12 Summary

This chapter outlined the methodological approach guiding the study, presenting the theoretical, cultural and relational foundations of the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology. Informed by Tongan epistemology and Indigenous knowledge systems, the chapter articulated how knowledge, identity and leadership are understood through relationships, genealogy and cultural responsibility.

The eight practice principles: Manatu, MataKāinga, Tokonaki, Lea, Mālie mo Māfana, Tuli ke ma'u hono ngaahi mālie, FetuiakiMālie and Taumu'a shape the relational, ethical and interpretive commitments of the methodology. These principles operate in continuity with the four core values of 'Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā, ensuring that Talatalanoa, analysis and interpretation are carried with dignity, cultural integrity and intergenerational purpose.

The chapter articulated how Talatalanoa was enacted as a culturally meaningful method, guided by relational awareness, warmth, purposeful preparation and values-led dialogue. Data analysis was shaped as an iterative, interpretive and relational process, carried through cultural identity, emotional resonance and the collective aspirations expressed by participants.

The limitations acknowledged the contextual, relational and methodological realities of the study, strengthening the integrity and clarity of the research design.

Chapter Four now brings these methodological commitments into practice, presenting participants' experiences through the values and principles of the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction to the Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the study through the eight practice principles of the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology. These principles: Manatu, MataKāinga, Tokonaki, Lea, Mālie mo Māfana, Tuli ke ma‘u hono ngaahi mālie, FetuiakiMālie and Taumu‘a, provide a culturally aligned structure for interpreting participants’ reflections on identity, responsibility, leadership and belonging. Each principle illuminates a distinct aspect of growth experienced by students, parents and school staff.

The four values of the methodology; ‘Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā, were consistently evident throughout participants’ Talatalanoa. While the practice principles organise the presentation of findings, the values provide the ethical and relational orientation through which participants experienced and understood leadership. ‘Ofa was reflected in compassion and spiritual steadiness; Tauhi in relational attentiveness; Fatongia in responsibility to family and community; and Tukupā in the continuity carried across generations. These values enriched participants’ reflections and deepened the meanings shared.

To uphold confidentiality and cultural care, pseudonyms have been used:

- **Lototo‘a** – former student (participated in Year 9 and Year 13)
- **Lotomateaki** – former student (participated in Year 9 and Year 13)
- **Fakato‘ato‘a** – Relationship Manager
- **Tamai** and **Fa‘e** – parents of two programme participants
- **Lotohouna** – Principal (pseudonym)

These names honour the dignity of each participant and maintain the relational context of their contributions. They are drawn from the Onehunga High School motto *Loyalty and Courage*, reflecting values that align with the leadership qualities expressed throughout the findings.

Presenting the findings through the eight practice principles enables a culturally coherent interpretation of how the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme supported confidence, hope, belonging, voice, responsibility and purpose. Each section reflects the relational values participants experienced and the pathways of leadership development expressed in their stories. The chapter

begins with Manatu, the early movement of awareness, recognition and intention. Findings are presented without evaluative commentary, in keeping with Indigenous qualitative research practice that prioritises participants' meanings and relational context.

Note on Confidentiality and Identification

Although a pseudonym is used for the Principal, Onehunga High School is named in this study and therefore full anonymity for the principal cannot be assured. The use of a pseudonym remains appropriate as a consistent ethical practice across participants and supports relational care in reporting.

4.2 MANATU – Inspiration, Ancestral Memory and the Awakening of Worth

Manatu refers to the quiet movement of awareness that precedes purposeful action. It involves awakening to one's worth, recognising potential and sensing the guidance of those who have contributed to one's journey. Participants reflected on this early stirring as the moment they began to see themselves differently and to recognise leadership as part of their identity including spirituality as part of this relational environment, particularly through student-led prayer that opened and closed sessions. These practices reinforced calm, focus and collective care, contributing to emotional steadiness and confidence.

Across the Talatalanoa, Manatu was expressed through initial insights, encouragement and early affirmations that opened the way for deeper engagement. Former students spoke about the significance of being recognised by teachers and Fakato'ato'a noting that this recognition created an early sense of possibility.

Lototo'a recalled how receiving the invitation to join the programme in Year 9 made her feel "chosen," affirming her potential at a time when she was still finding her place within the school. Lotomateaki similarly reflected that the programme helped her recognise strengths that had previously gone unnoticed. For her, Manatu was experienced as a shift in self-belief initiated by someone else seeing her capability.

Parents also observed this shift in their children. Tamai and Fa'e noted a visible change in their children's motivation, explaining that the programme "sparked something in them," encouraging greater seriousness toward learning and awareness of the hopes carried by the family. These early

shifts affirmed identity, strengthened cultural assurance and supported students to carry themselves with confidence.

For Fakato'ato'a, Manatu was evident in the early openness students showed toward learning about themselves, their values and their relationships. She observed that students arrived with curiosity and a willingness to reflect, creating a strong foundation for leadership development.

The Principal, Lotohounga, affirmed Manatu as beginning with belief and self-efficacy. She described the programme as building the internal conditions for success, emphasising that “success starts with... believing in yourself,” and that it gives students hope and confidence about what they can achieve. She also explained that the programme demystifies university by introducing students to university-level texts early, supporting students to realise, “we can do this.” This aligns with Manatu as an awakening of worth that shifts students from uncertainty toward possibility.

The four values were clearly present in these early experiences. 'Ofa emerged through compassion and encouragement; Tauhi was reflected in relational attentiveness shown by staff who recognised students' potential; Fatongia surfaced as students began to recognise responsibilities to family and school; and Tukupā connected emerging aspirations to the journeys of previous generations.

These experiences show that Manatu unfolded gradually through recognition, encouragement and relational assurance. Leadership awakening began when students sensed their worth, understood the responsibilities they carried and felt supported by those around them. This early movement set the tone for participation in the programme, anchoring emerging confidence in the four values of 'Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā.

4.3 MATAKĀINGA – Belonging, Relational Presence and Kāinga Connection

MataKāinga reflects a deep sense of belonging expressed through relational presence, cultural recognition and reciprocal connection, shaping how participants entered and experienced the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme. Across the Talatalanoa, participants shared how cultural familiarity, shared identity and relational warmth created conditions for confidence and engagement. Within this principle, the four values; 'Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā, were active as warmth, relational attentiveness, responsibility and intergenerational continuity.

Lototo'a shared that belonging emerged through connection with other Tongan students and supportive staff. She recalled feeling that the programme created "a space where you could breathe and be yourself," reinforcing her cultural identity and deepening her sense of assurance. This relational environment strengthened her willingness to participate and contribute.

Lotomateaki also spoke about the significance of MataKāinga. Entering secondary school with uncertainty about where she fits, she found that the programme affirmed her identity and offered cultural familiarity within a large school setting. This strengthened her readiness to take on leadership roles and participate more confidently.

Tamai and Fa'e emphasised the importance of relationships between school and kāinga. For them, MataKāinga was evident when teachers and leaders upheld values of respect, humility and genuine care in their interactions with families. These relational qualities assured them that their children were seen, supported and valued. Belonging was experienced across generations, strengthening trust between home and school.

Fakato'ato'a, the Relationship Manager, noted that MataKāinga was central to the programme's effectiveness. She explained that culturally aligned relational spaces enabled students to participate with assurance, knowing they were welcomed and valued. This sense of belonging influenced how students approached challenges and opportunities within the school.

Lotohounga reinforced MataKāinga as a deliberate home–school partnership, describing how the programme brings kāinga into the school from Year 9 and sets expectations collectively. She described moments when families stand behind students as they introduce their kāinga in *lea faka-Tonga*, signalling kāinga as a pillar of strength and an active presence in learning. She also linked cultural identity to achievement, noting that when students are secure in their cultural identity and connected to their Tongan roots, they are more likely to engage and succeed academically. This affirms MataKāinga as a relational environment and a foundation for achievement.

Across all participants, MataKāinga emerged as an ongoing relational presence through which identity was affirmed, engagement was sustained and confidence was able to grow. 'Ofa brought emotional warmth, Tauhi upheld reciprocal care, Fatongia clarified responsibilities carried between people and Tukupā linked belonging to ancestral continuity and future purpose.

These insights highlight that MataKāinga functioned as a sustained relational environment in which cultural recognition and respectful relationships supported students' confidence and participation.

Through MataKāinga, leadership learning emerged within a context of cultural assurance, relational support and collective responsibility.

4.4 TOKONAKI – Purposeful Preparation, Clarity and Responsibility

Building on belonging and relational assurance, Tokonaki reflects the movement toward intentional preparation and responsibility. Tokonaki reflects purposeful preparation, where intention aligns with responsibility, identity and future direction. Across the Talatalanoa, participants affirmed Tokonaki as a movement toward clarity, an inner readiness shaped by cultural expectations, kāinga guidance and the four values of 'Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā.

Former students spoke about Tokonaki as a shift from uncertainty toward intentional planning. Lotomateaki recalled entering the programme unsure of her goals and sense of direction. Through Tokonaki, she began to recognise her strengths and organise her commitments with greater clarity. Preparation was not experienced as a technical skill alone but as an ethical practice shaped by her understanding of responsibility to her family and future. She explained that Tokonaki supported her to manage her studies, relationships and leadership roles with confidence and care.

Lototo'a similarly associated Tokonaki with intention and accountability. She articulated preparation as a way of honouring the belief others placed in her and the sacrifices made by her kāinga. Tokonaki encouraged her to think carefully about how she approached opportunities and how her actions reflected the values she carried. Preparation became a relational commitment, reinforcing her responsibility to represent her family with integrity.

Parents identified Tokonaki as a familiar cultural movement within kāinga life. Tamai and Fa'e explained that preparation reflects how families plan, organise and uphold responsibilities for one another. They observed increased discipline, confidence and willingness to take responsibility for their children at home, in the community and school. For them, Tokonaki was expressed through attentiveness, consistency and care, signaling maturity and respect for collective expectations.

Fakato'ato'a observed Tokonaki as students developed clarity around their aspirations and leadership potential. She noted that many students entered the programme seeking direction and Tokonaki supported them to align their intentions with responsibility and cultural values. Preparation strengthened students' confidence to contribute meaningfully to school life and to approach opportunities with thoughtfulness and purpose.

The Principal, Lotohounga, also reflected Tokonaki as strengthened through clear expectations and consistent discipline. She highlighted the importance of foundational habits such as punctuality, preparation and behaviour, noting significant improvement over recent years. She framed preparation as future-oriented, emphasising that academic readiness creates pathways for opportunity and should be expected for all students. In this sense, Tokonaki became visible in students' personal organisation and in the school's leadership commitment to high expectations and sustained support.

Across these reflections, Tokonaki was expressed as a steady, values-led movement that supported students to approach learning, relationships and leadership with intention. 'Ofa encouraged inner steadiness and self-belief; Tauhi reinforced attentiveness to relationships and obligations; Fatongia clarified responsibility to family and community; and Tukupā connected preparation to the legacy carried forward across generations.

Tokonaki supported purposeful preparation as a cultural, relational and ethical practice. Students learned to organise their commitments with clarity, honour the responsibilities they carried and prepare themselves for future contribution. Leadership growth unfolded through readiness shaped by identity, expectation and continuity, positioning Tokonaki as a critical movement in sustaining leadership growth.

4.5 LEA – Voice, Expression and Relational Confidence

Lea reflects the strengthening of voice, expression and relational confidence that emerges when learners experience cultural affirmation, relational safety and ethical support. Across the Talatalanoa, participants articulated how the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme created conditions in which students could express themselves with increased clarity, assurance and dignity.

Former students spoke of noticeable changes in how they communicated within school and family contexts. Lototo'a expressed how her participation in the programme shifted her from silence toward confident expression. She recalled that earlier in her schooling she often hesitated to speak, uncertain whether her contributions would be valued. Through the programme, she became more confident contributing to class discussions, group activities and cultural settings. This change was not experienced as learning to speak louder, but as learning that her voice mattered.

Lotomateaki similarly reflected that Lea supported her to communicate with confidence and composure, particularly in situations that previously caused anxiety. She explained that as her sense of identity and self-worth strengthened, she found it easier to ask questions, share ideas and engage respectfully with others. Feeling recognised as a Tongan learner allowed her to speak with greater assurance, demonstrating how voice is closely linked to belonging and cultural affirmation.

Parents observed corresponding changes at home. Tamai and Fa'e noted that their children communicated more clearly, confidently and respectfully within family conversations. They interpreted these changes as signs of growing maturity and cultural assurance. For them, Lea was an extension of values already practised within kāinga, where speaking carries responsibility, humility and care for relationships.

Fakato'ato'a identified Lea as one of the most visible areas of growth among students. She observed that as students became more confident in who they were, they participated more openly in classroom discussions and engaged more confidently with teachers and peers. She identified this shift as relational rather than performative, noting that expression was shaped by trust, encouragement and cultural safety.

The Principal, Lotohounga, reinforced the significance of Lea through visibility, modelling and opportunity. She highlighted the importance of students seeing Tongan leadership reflected within the school, noting that this challenges assumptions about who belongs in leadership spaces. She also reflected how students were supported to deliver speeches in lea faka-Tonga, engage with university level texts and practise structured expression, strengthening confidence and communication across academic and cultural contexts. She further noted that several prefects had participated in the programme, suggesting that strengthened voice and confidence can flow into formal leadership pathways.

Across participants' experiences, Lea was supported by the four values. 'Ofa nurtured emotional steadiness and care, enabling students to speak with confidence. Tauhi upheld respectful communication and attentiveness to relationships. Fatongia clarified the responsibility to speak with dignity and integrity. Tukupā connected voice to the legacy students carry forward, shaping how expression contributes to future pathways.

Lea therefore emerged as a significant expression of leadership development. Students did not simply learn to speak; they learned to speak with purpose, confidence and relational awareness. Through culturally affirming relationships and ethical support, voice became a means of participation, contribution and leadership grounded in identity and collective responsibility. These developments in voice exemplify dialogic learners speaking with and to one another in ways that transform participation (Freire, 1970).

4.6 MĀLIE MO MĀFANA – Warmth, Encouragement and Emotional Resonance

Mālie mo Māfana reflect the warmth, encouragement and emotional resonance that shaped participants' experiences of the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme. Across the Talatalanoa, students, parents, and school leadership affirmed an environment characterised by affirmation, cultural familiarity and emotional steadiness. These qualities created conditions where learners felt safe, uplifted and motivated to engage.

Former students consistently associated Mālie mo Māfana with the emotional tone of the programme. Lototo'a recalled feeling encouraged by peers and facilitators, explaining that the atmosphere allowed her to participate without fear of judgement. She identified the sessions as spaces where encouragement flowed naturally, making it easier to contribute, reflect and take leadership risks. This warmth strengthened her sense of confidence and eased participation in wider school contexts.

Lotomateaki similarly emphasised the importance of encouragement. She reflected that being supported and affirmed by others made her "want to do better," not out of pressure, but because she felt genuinely valued. Mālie mo Māfana were experienced as emotional uplift that reinforced belonging and self-belief, helping her to engage in conversations and activities that had previously felt intimidating.

The Relationship Manager, Fakato'ato'a, observed Mālie mo Māfana in the collective dynamics of the group. She recalled moments where students celebrated one another's achievements, offered encouragement and demonstrated pride in each other's growth. These interactions shifted group relationships over time, creating unity and relational care that extended beyond the programme into everyday school life. She understood this emotional resonance as central to sustaining engagement and leadership development.

Parents also recognised these qualities within the home. Tamai and Fa'e reflected noticing increased warmth, kindness and emotional steadiness in their children's interactions with family members. Fa'e observed that her child communicated with more patience and empathy, while Tamai noted greater emotional balance in daily responsibilities. For them, Mālie mo Māfana reflected cultural values of encouragement, humility and collective care being lived out beyond the school setting.

The Principal, Lotohounga, extended this understanding to the wider school environment. She recalled moments of collective pride and emotional uplift during cultural events such as Polyfest, where students' confidence, cultural identity and joy were visibly affirmed. She also highlighted the significance of staff participation in these moments, including teachers learning Tongan songs alongside students, as expressions of respect and shared engagement. These experiences reinforced Mālie mo Māfana as a whole school relational energy that affirmed students' identity and belonging.

Across participants' accounts, the four values were interwoven within Mālie mo Māfana. 'Ofa nurtured compassion and emotional steadiness. Tauhi supported attentiveness and care within relationships. Fatongia affirmed responsibility to uplift and encourage others. Tukupā connected emotional warmth to continuity, ensuring that encouragement and affirmation were carried forward across cohorts and generations.

Mālie mo Māfana therefore functioned as more than a positive atmosphere. They operated as relational conditions that sustained engagement, strengthened confidence and affirmed cultural identity. Through warmth and encouragement, the programme fostered emotional environments where leadership learning could flourish, supporting students to participate with assurance, dignity and relational presence.

4.7 TULI KE MA'U HONO NGA AHI MĀLIE – Purposeful Striving and Disciplined Commitment

Tuli ke ma'u hono ngaahi mālie reflects purposeful striving carried through discipline, responsibility and relational accountability. Across the Talatalanoa, participants expressed how the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme supported students to align their efforts with cultural values, family expectations and long-term aspirations. Striving was understood as collective ambition and commitment shaped by relational responsibility and intergenerational purpose.

Former students spoke about developing greater clarity and discipline in how they approached their goals. Lototo‘a reflected that the programme prompted her to think seriously about her future and the responsibilities connected to it. She explained that her aspirations became anchored in her kāinga, noting that her success was not only for herself but for her family. This shift marked a movement from uncertainty toward purposeful striving guided by Fatongia and Tukupā.

Lotomateaki identified a similar process of development. She emphasised that Tuli ke ma‘u hono ngaahi mālie was experienced through consistency rather than visibility. Leadership, for her, meant showing up prepared, following through on commitments and managing responsibilities with care. She explained that the programme strengthened her discipline in schoolwork and daily routines, supporting her to act with intention and reliability. This reflects striving as a steady practice shaped by Tauhi and Fatongia.

The Relationship Manager, Fakato‘ato‘a, observed purposeful striving in students’ everyday behaviour. She noted that students became more willing to volunteer, take initiative and contribute during school and cultural events. These actions were often subtle and consistent, demonstrating maturity and accountability over time. She articulated these patterns as evidence that students were internalising responsibility and carrying leadership through action rather than status.

Parents also recognised this disciplined commitment within the home. Tamai and Fa‘e shared seeing improvements in routines, focus and follow-through. Fa‘e noted that her children became more determined to complete tasks and manage time effectively, while Tamai observed increased respect and responsibility in family obligations. For them, Tuli ke ma‘u hono ngaahi mālie was visible in the way cultural values were enacted through daily discipline and relational care.

The Principal, Lotohounga, connected purposeful striving to institutional expectations and outcomes. She described noticeable improvements in academic achievement for Tongan and other Ngā Iwi o Moana nui a Kiwa learners at the school, noting that pass rates had increased markedly in recent years. She framed these outcomes as the result of sustained belief, consistent expectations and structured support. She also highlighted that students connected to the leadership programme were contributing to a culture of aspiration and responsibility, reinforcing a school-wide commitment to achievement.

Across these reflections, the four values were evident in shaping disciplined striving. ‘Ofa supported emotional steadiness and perseverance. Tauhi sustained attentiveness to

responsibilities and relationships. Fatongia affirmed accountability to family, school and community. Tukupā connected students' efforts to intergenerational continuity and future contribution.

Tuli ke ma'ū hono ngaahi mālie captured leadership development as consistent, values-led commitment. Students learned to strive with purpose, recognising that their actions carried meaning beyond individual success. This disciplined movement prepared the way for FetuiakiMālie, where collective continuity, harmony and shared leadership become increasingly visible across relationships and time.

4.8 FETUIAKIMĀLIE – Continuity, Harmony and Collective Movement

FetuiakiMālie reflects the movement of coming together in harmony, where relationships are sustained over time through reciprocity, care and shared purpose. Across the Talatalanoa, participants experienced leadership as increasingly collective, expressed through continuity, unity and relational alignment between students, families and the school community. Rather than being confined to individual roles, leadership was understood as something strengthened through togetherness and ongoing relational commitment.

Former students spoke about experiencing leadership as a shared journey. Lototo'a articulated leadership as "moving together," explaining that the programme encouraged unity among Tongan students rather than competition. She recalled students supporting one another across classes, cultural events and challenges, creating a sense of collective strength that extended beyond the formal sessions of the programme. This reflected FetuiakiMālie as leadership enacted through solidarity and shared responsibility.

Lotomateaki identified moments of gathering as particularly significant expressions of FetuiakiMālie. She recalled the shared dinner involving students, families and staff as a moment of deep connection and affirmation. Seeing kāinga, teachers and students together in one space created a sense of pride and belonging. She identified this as a moment where "everyone felt like one," highlighting harmony, presence and relational continuity.

The Relationship Manager, Fakato'ato'a, observed that this sense of togetherness became embedded within everyday school life. She noted that students increasingly supported one another, welcomed new students and worked collaboratively during school activities. Over time,

these practices contributed to a culture of care and mutual responsibility. She saw leadership as something that “settled into the group,” becoming visible through consistent relational behaviour.

Parents also recognised FetuiakiMālie within the home environment. Tamai and Fa’e observed that their children showed greater consideration toward siblings and took initiative in shared family responsibilities. These behaviours reflected relational maturity and continuity, demonstrating how leadership learning extended across settings. For them, FetuiakiMālie was evident in the way responsibility and care were carried forward within everyday family life and in the community.

From an institutional perspective, the Principal, Lotohounga, expressed FetuiakiMālie through collective structures and shared governance. She referred to a ngā iwi o Moana nui a Kiwa committee comprising students, parents, teachers and board members, working together to strengthen achievement and partnerships. She noted that students connected to the leadership programme were actively contributing within these spaces, reinforcing continuity across cohorts. This demonstrated FetuiakiMālie as a sustained relational movement, where leadership is reinforced through ongoing collaboration and shared purpose.

Across participants’ reflections, the four values supported this collective movement. ‘Ofa was expressed through generosity and relational warmth. Tauhi upheld attentiveness and care across relationships. Fatongia reinforced shared responsibility for collective wellbeing. Tukupā ensured continuity, connecting present relationships with past commitments and future aspirations.

FetuiakiMālie therefore captures leadership as an enduring relational rhythm. It affirms that leadership growth within the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme was sustained through harmony, connection and shared commitment over time. This collective continuity provides the foundation for Taumu’a, where purpose and future contribution are articulated with clarity and confidence.

4.9 TAUMU’A – Purpose, Direction and Collective Contribution

Taumu’a reflects purposeful direction, clarity of intention and commitment to contribution beyond the self. Across Talatalanoa, participants experienced leadership growth culminating in a strengthened sense of direction shaped by cultural identity, relational responsibility and intergenerational expectation. Taumu’a gathered the preceding principles into forward movement, where confidence, belonging and preparation translated into purposeful aspiration and service.

Former students articulated Taumu'a as a clearer understanding of where they were heading and why their goals mattered. Lototo'a shared that participation in the programme helped her "know where I'm heading now," explaining that she entered secondary school uncertain of her future direction and then gained clarity through leadership learning. She connected her aspirations to the sacrifices and hopes of her family, stating that her goals were "not just for me," but carried for her parents and siblings. This positioned leadership as responsibility enacted through contribution through clarity of purpose.

Lotomateaki experienced Taumu'a as recognising her strengths and understanding how they could be offered in service to others. She spoke of being motivated in her personal ambition and having an awareness that younger siblings and peers were watching and learning from her journey. Her determination to "keep going for my family" situated her aspirations within an intergenerational continuum, reflecting Fatongia and Tukupā as guiding forces shaping direction and perseverance.

The Relationship Manager, Fakato'ato'a, observed that students who completed the programme demonstrated increased clarity and intentionality. She noted that participants understood "why they were showing up," approaching school life with focus and purpose. Taumu'a was visible in students' goal setting, initiative-taking and willingness to contribute to cultural and leadership activities. For her, leadership maturity was expressed through consistency, responsibility and meaningful participation.

Parents expressed Taumu'a as a noticeable shift toward future orientation within the home. Tamai and Fa'e shared that their child became more focused, organised and reflective about long-term goals. They observed increased self-management and responsibility, alongside clearer articulation of aspirations and the steps required to achieve them. These changes were understood as leadership enacted through discipline, commitment and cultural expectation and purposeful actions.

From the school leadership perspective, Lotohounga framed Taumu'a as both an individual and institutional commitment. She viewed the programme as nurturing strong cultural identity alongside academic achievement, emphasising the importance of removing barriers and modelling success so that students could envision positive futures. She articulated the programme's legacy as one of "hope, pride and success," where leadership development contributes to sustained aspiration and high expectations across cohorts. This positioned Taumu'a as a shared vision, linking student purpose with school-wide responsibility and future pathways.

Across these accounts, the four values were consistently evident. 'Ofa supported aspirations through care and compassion for others. Tauhi sustained relational accountability as students navigated their goals. Fatongia reinforced responsibility to family, school and community. Tukupā ensured that purpose was understood as enduring, carried forward across generations and lived in the immediate outcomes.

Taumu'a represents the culmination of the eight practice principles within the findings. Leadership development unfolded as a relational journey, beginning with early awareness, strengthened through belonging, preparation, voice, warmth, perseverance and continuity, and ultimately oriented toward purposeful contribution. Through Taumu'a, participants articulated leadership as service lived in cultural identity, relational responsibility and commitment to collective wellbeing.

4.10 Summary of Findings

This chapter presented the findings of the study through the eight practice principles of the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology, offering a culturally aligned and relational interpretation of participants' experiences. Across students, parents, the Relationship Manager and the Principal, leadership was consistently understood as a values-led practice shaped by identity, responsibility, service and intergenerational continuity.

The findings demonstrate that leadership development through the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme unfolded as a relational journey. Participants' experiences reflected a progression from early awareness and affirmation to purposeful direction and contribution, guided throughout by the four core values of 'Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā.

Manatu emerged as the foundational movement, where students began to recognise their worth and potential through encouragement, belief and relational assurance. Early affirmation from staff and family created internal conditions of confidence and possibility, enabling students to engage with learning and leadership from a place of assurance rather than uncertainty. This early awakening was strengthened by 'Ofa and Tukupā, linking students' emerging aspirations to care, hope and ancestral continuity.

MataKāinga highlighted belonging as a critical condition for leadership development. Participants consistently recognised the programme as creating culturally familiar and relationally safe spaces where identity was affirmed and connection with kāinga was visible. Belonging strengthened

confidence, participation and trust across home and school, with Tauhi guiding relational attentiveness and Fatongia clarifying shared responsibility between families and the school.

Through Tokonaki, preparation and clarity became visible as students aligned intention with responsibility. Participants identified growing discipline, organisation and readiness to carry leadership with care. Preparation was understood as a cultural and relational practice, shaped by family expectations and future orientation, rather than as individual self-management alone.

Lea reflected on the strengthening of voice and relational confidence. Students gained assurance in expressing themselves across classroom, cultural and leadership spaces, supported by environments that affirmed their identity and dignity. Voice was expressed with care, responsibility and humility, guided by relational safety and encouragement rather than performative leadership.

Mālie mo Māfana captured the emotional and relational vitality of the programme. Participants expressed warmth, encouragement and uplift as central to their engagement. Emotional resonance strengthened belonging, confidence and wellbeing, enabling students to participate more fully and to support one another with generosity and pride. These conditions reinforced leadership as collective uplift rather than competition.

Tuli ke ma'u hono ngaahi mālie revealed leadership as purposeful striving sustained through discipline, consistency and relational accountability. Participants affirmed perseverance as commitment to family, cultural expectations and future responsibility. Striving was expressed through steady effort and reliability supported by Fatongia and Tukupā as guiding values.

FetuiakiMālie illuminated continuity and collective movement across time. Relationships between students, families and the school were strengthened and sustained, with leadership expressed through togetherness, cooperation and shared responsibility. Continuity was evident across cohorts, home school partnerships and governance structures, affirming leadership as relational and enduring.

Taumu'a brought these movements into a purposeful direction. Participants articulated clearer aspirations and a desire to contribute meaningfully to their families, school and communities. Purpose was consistently framed as service, responsibility and contribution, carried forward through genealogy and cultural identity.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme supported leadership development as a culturally anchored, relational and values-led process. Leadership was experienced as an ethical responsibility enacted through relationships, preparation, voice, warmth, perseverance and continuity. The programme strengthened identity, belonging, confidence and purpose for Tongan learners, while also deepening connections between kāinga and school.

These findings provide the insights for the discussion in Chapter Five, where they are examined in relation to existing scholarship, the implications for culturally aligned leadership development and the broader contributions of the Fakatoukatea Research Framework.

CHAPTER FIVE – DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction to the Discussion

These findings align with Puloka's (2017) framing of leadership as collective navigation guided by balance, ethical responsibility and 'Ofa. Leadership growth within the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme was enacted as an ethical, relational and culturally located practice. Across students, parents and the Relationship Manager, leadership was expressed through service, responsibility, belonging and contribution, with authority carried through relationships and conduct rather than position. Together, these accounts foreground cultural values, intergenerational ties and relational disciplines as central to how Tongan learners experience leadership within educational contexts.

This chapter interprets the findings through the eight practice principles of the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology: Manatu, MataKāinga, Tokonaki, Lea, Mālie mo Māfana, Tuli ke ma'u hono ngaahi mālie, FetuiakiMālie and Taumu'a. Each principle illuminates a distinct dimension of leadership development, while leadership is understood as an interconnected experience in which the principles strengthen one another through cultural identity and collective responsibility.

Belonging and affirmation emerged as influential conditions across participants' experiences. Students described strengthened self-belief and cultural assurance when they were recognised and valued, while parents observed increased maturity, emotional steadiness and contribution within home contexts. These patterns align with Manu'atu's (2000) articulation of māfana and mālie as relational energies that foster confidence, connection and transformation, and with Puloka's (2017) emphasis on spiritual and relational steadiness as a foundation for wellbeing and leadership. This assurance also reflects Tongan understandings of wellbeing, where care and responsibility are nurtured through *tauhi va* and the relational practices that support daily life, shaping confidence, resilience, and ethical orientation (Muimuiheata, 2021).

Leadership development was further expressed through responsibility and purpose. Participants described shifts in preparation, follow-through and how obligations to kāinga and community were understood. These reflections align with Tongan scholarship emphasising fatongia as lived duty enacted through humility, service and accountability (Latukefu, 1974; Mafile'o, 2005; Taufe'ulungaki, 2018). Purpose was articulated as a meaningful contribution to kāinga, school and future aspirations, held within an intergenerational horizon of responsibility and service.

Talatalanoa enabled participants to share these experiences through a dialogic process that supports openness, reciprocity and relational integrity (Fa'avae, 2021; Vaioleti, 2006). While Talatalanoa arises from Moana nui a Kiwa knowledge traditions, its dialogic orientation aligns with Freire's (1970, 1998) view of dialogue as reflective, ethical and humanising. Together, these perspectives support interpretation of how culturally aligned leadership approaches strengthen identity, belonging and confidence while deepening relationships between home and school.

Importantly, the Principal's perspective demonstrates how culturally located leadership approaches can be integrated within mainstream schooling, offering evidence that Indigenous leadership frameworks can inform institutional practice, strengthen school–community relationships and support sustained educational achievement. This understanding aligns with regional education scholarship that frames education and leadership as collective endeavours oriented toward continuity, responsibility and long-term contribution rather than individual advancement ('Otunuku et al., 2021).

In this study, leadership is understood primarily as growth. Growth refers to an awakening process through which individuals come to recognise and step into leadership over time, shaped by relationships, cultural identity, responsibility and lived experience within kāinga, school and community contexts. Leadership growth is relational and cumulative, emerging through participation, recognition and contribution. Alongside this, leadership practice is supported through the development of specific skills and competencies, including preparation, communication and follow-through. The Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme attends to both dimensions, with its central strength lying in the cultivation of leadership growth through values-led relational experience. This framing aligns with Tongan epistemology, where becoming is carried through tauhi, enacted through fatongia and sustained through tukupā, and where leadership is recognised through conduct, service and continuity.

5.2 Cultural, Relational and Ethical Commitments Shaping Interpretation

Interpretation in this study is informed by Tongan epistemology, Ngā Iwi o Moana nui a Kiwa knowledge traditions and ethical responsibilities that centre relationships, identity and intergenerational purpose. These commitments position meaning as emerging through genealogical, spiritual and cultural worlds carried within shared relationships and collective life. Interpretation is therefore understood as an accountable act, shaped by responsibility to people, place and collective wellbeing. Spirituality functioned as an ethical orientation within these

commitments, shaping how leadership, learning and responsibility were approached with humility, care and intergenerational awareness.

Tongan scholarship affirms that learning, leadership and wellbeing are constituted through relationships nurtured within kāinga and community life. Values such as 'Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā guide how dignity is upheld, contribution is enacted and continuity is sustained across generations (Latukeyu, 1974; Mafile'oa, 2005; Manu'atu, 2000). These values guide the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme and, by extension, frame the interpretive orientation of this chapter. Leadership is understood as a collective ethical undertaking expressed through care, responsibility and relational accountability.

Interpretation is further shaped by perspectives from Ngā Iwi o Moana nui a Kiwa, where identity, knowledge and purpose are carried through reciprocity, interdependence and shared responsibility across generations. Within these worldviews, cultural identity is inseparable from wellbeing, belonging and contribution. Reading participants' experiences through this perspective ensures their reflections are held with cultural dignity and contextual integrity, attentive to the relational worlds in which they are embedded.

Talatalanoa, the dialogic method through which participants shared their experiences, also shaped interpretive practice. Talatalanoa supports openness, sincerity and relational presence (Vaiotele, 2006) while requiring attentiveness to responsibility and ethical care (Fa'avae & Fonua, 2020). This ethical attentiveness reflects Talatalanoa as an ongoing, complex process of relational negotiation, where care, responsibility and trust are enacted continually rather than assumed (Fa'avae & Fonua, 2020). These qualities shaped how narratives were understood, ensuring interpretation remained responsive to emotion, memory and cultural meaning. While Talatalanoa arises from Tongan and wider Moana nui a Kiwa epistemologies, its dialogic orientation aligns with Freire's (1970, 1998) conception of dialogue as a humanising and mutually transformative practice. This alignment strengthens the ethical integrity of interpretation in this study.

Because this research is situated in Aotearoa New Zealand, interpretive commitments are also informed by Te Tiriti o Waitangi / The Treaty of Waitangi. Te Tiriti affirms relationships between tangata whenua and Tangata Tiriti and reinforces obligations of equity, respect and relational accountability. In this study, honouring Te Tiriti involves recognising the place of Tongan and other Ngā Iwi o Moana nui a Kiwa communities within Aotearoa New Zealand, valuing their knowledge systems and interpreting participants' experiences in ways that uphold cultural identity and

relational wellbeing. This commitment aligns with expectations for culturally responsive education and Indigenous research practice.

Together, these cultural, relational and ethical commitments shape how the findings are interpreted. They ensure participants' experiences are understood within the genealogical, spiritual and intergenerational contexts that give them meaning and that interpretation remains accountable to the relationships through which these stories were shared. The principal's perspective further reinforced that these commitments are enacted in practice through school leadership approaches that prioritise cultural identity, relational care and high expectations for learners.

5.3 Manatu – Early Awareness, Recognition and Intention

Manatu refers to the early stirrings of awareness and recognition that precede purposeful action. In this study, Manatu illuminated how being seen, affirmed and invited into leadership generated early shifts in confidence, self-belief and intention for students and their kāinga. Manatu demonstrates that leadership growth begins as an awakening, taking shape through recognition, trust and relational responsibility before becoming visible in action. These movements reflect the internal beginnings of transformation articulated by Manu'atu (2000), where awareness forms quietly before being expressed through practice.

Former students expressed Manatu as emerging at the point of recognition. For Lototo'a and Lotomateaki, being selected to participate in the programme in Year 9 signaled belief in their potential and initiated early reflection on their capabilities and future direction. Their return to the programme in Year 13 reinforced this awakening, supporting sustained confidence and readiness for leadership opportunities, including experiences such as the visit to Parliament in Wellington. These cumulative moments demonstrate how early recognition shapes engagement over time and strengthen intentional participation.

From a school leadership perspective, Lotohounga affirmed Manatu as foundational to student success. She emphasised that belief and self-efficacy must be established early, noting that "success starts with believing in yourself." Her reflections positioned Manatu as an institutional responsibility, where schools actively cultivate the internal conditions that allow students to recognise themselves as capable learners and leaders. She further highlighted that introducing students to university-level texts and expectations at an early stage demystifies academic

pathways and affirms that success is achievable. This perspective reinforces Manatu as a deliberate leadership practice that nurtures confidence, aspiration and readiness.

Fakato'ato'a, the Relationship Manager, observed similar early movements in students' openness and readiness. She recalled students arriving at initial sessions with curiosity and attentiveness, noting that early affirmation helped them recognise that they belonged in the space. This recognition softened hesitation and supported relational safety, allowing students to engage more confidently and reflect on their identity and values.

Parents also recognised Manatu unfolding at home. Tamai and Fa'e observed increased maturity, motivation and intentional behaviour in their children following selection into the programme. These early shifts were interpreted as signs of growing awareness of responsibility and aspiration, shaped by recognition from the school and reinforced through kāinga expectations. Such observations align with Vaiolēti's (2006) emphasis on relational conditions that support openness, trust and willingness to grow.

Manatu therefore affirms that leadership growth is initiated through relational awakening rather than immediate performance. Recognition within Tongan epistemology is relational; it is offered, witnessed and sustained through relationships. When schools intentionally recognise students' strengths and potential, they create conditions where confidence, belonging and purposeful engagement can flourish. In this study, Manatu operated as an invitation into leadership, shaping how students entered the programme, how they understood their worth and how they carried the expectations of their kāinga.

5.4 MataKāinga – Belonging, Relationship and Relational Assurance

MataKāinga reflects belonging, relational connection and the assurance that comes from being known, recognised and supported within culturally meaningful relationships. In this study, MataKāinga illuminated how leadership growth was strengthened when students experienced school as an extension of the relational worlds lived through kāinga, shared identity and reciprocal care. Belonging functioned as a stabilising condition through which confidence, participation and responsibility could emerge.

Former students described belonging as essential to their sense of confidence and engagement. Lototo'a and Lotomateaki reflected that participation in the programme created a space where cultural familiarity, shared values and relational warmth supported their leadership growth. Feeling

secure and recognised enabled them to contribute more confidently across school settings. These experiences demonstrate how leadership growth is sustained when learners are affirmed within relationships that acknowledge who they are and where they come from.

Fakato'ato'a reinforced this understanding, observing that students became more at ease within the programme because they felt culturally affirmed and relationally safe. She noted that shared language, humour and mutual understanding allowed students to "be themselves," supporting openness and relational assurance. This sense of belonging extended beyond the programme, strengthening peer relationships and encouraging positive contributions within the wider school environment. Through MataKāinga, leadership growth was nurtured as confidence rooted in relational safety.

Lotohounga provided an institutional perspective on MataKāinga as a deliberate partnership between school and kāinga. She described how the programme intentionally brings families into school from Year 9, establishing shared expectations and reinforcing collective responsibility for student success. Practices such as students introducing their kāinga in lea faka-Tonga, with families standing behind them, were described as powerful affirmations of identity and strength. These moments positioned kāinga as active participants in leadership growth rather than peripheral supporters.

Lotohounga further linked MataKāinga to academic engagement and achievement, noting that when students are confident in their cultural identity and connected to their roots, they are more likely to persist and succeed. Her reflections affirm belonging as both a relational and educational condition, where cultural assurance supports motivation, aspiration and sustained effort. In this way, MataKāinga functioned as a relational base from which leadership growth could continue to unfold.

Parents echoed these perspectives, emphasising the importance of respectful, valued relationships between school and home. Tamai and Fa'e expressed reassurance when teachers and leaders engaged with humility, care and attentiveness. These interactions strengthened trust and affirmed that their children were known and valued, reinforcing leadership growth across generations.

Taken together, MataKāinga demonstrates that leadership growth is sustained through relational assurance anchored in cultural identity and reciprocal partnership. When schools intentionally

honour kāinga, language and cultural presence, they create environments where students can grow into leadership with confidence and purpose. Through MataKāinga, leadership growth was experienced as a shared journey carried collectively by students, families and the school community.

5.5 Tokonaki – Preparation, Legacy, Clarity and Responsibility

Tokonaki reflects purposeful preparation, where intention is aligned with responsibility, discipline and future direction. In this study, Tokonaki illuminated how leadership growth was strengthened as students moved from early awakening into deliberate readiness, learning to organise themselves, understand expectations and act with clarity across school, kāinga and future pathways.

Former students identified Tokonaki as a shift in how they approached responsibility and effort. Lototo'a described becoming more intentional about her goals and the steps required to achieve them. Preparation was understood as a way of honouring the belief placed in her and recognising her responsibility to her family. Similarly, Lotomateaki emphasised consistency and follow-through, explaining that leadership growth involved showing up prepared, managing commitments and acting with purpose over time. These reflections illustrate how preparation functioned as an ethical response to trust and expectation.

Fakato'ato'a observed Tokonaki through students' increasing readiness to take initiative across school life. She noted that students became more deliberate in how they prepared for leadership activities, cultural events and academic responsibilities. This readiness was not imposed but emerged as students recognised their place within the collective and the responsibilities attached to that position. Tokonaki was expressed as internal alignment between intention, action and relational obligation.

Lotohounga extended this interpretation by situating Tokonaki as a shared responsibility between students and the school. She described the programme as reinforcing foundational practices such as punctuality, preparation, behaviour and follow-through, noting sustained improvements over time. Preparation, in her view, was inseparable from high expectations. By introducing students early to academic expectations and pathways, the school cultivated readiness and aspiration. Tokonaki thus operated both as individual leadership growth and as an institutional ethic that supports achievement.

Parents also recognised Tokonaki through changes at home. Tamai identified increased organisation and focus, while Fa'e observed greater determination and willingness to complete responsibilities without prompting. These shifts reflect preparation as relational practice, where responsibility is learned and enacted through family teaching, care and cultural values.

A further dimension of Tokonaki evident in this study is its intergenerational character. Within Tongan epistemology, preparation carries foresight, discipline and sacrifice across generations. Students' growing clarity and readiness can therefore be understood as part of a wider lineage of preparation, where each generation readies the next to stand with purpose. Tokonaki thus carried awareness of legacy, recognising that preparation in the present contributes to continuity and future wellbeing.

These insights demonstrate Tokonaki as purposeful preparation carried through responsibility, clarity and expectation. Students aligned action with the responsibilities they carry, while the school affirmed preparation as essential to success and future opportunity. Through Tokonaki, leadership development was strengthened as disciplined, relational and future-oriented practice shaped through 'Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā.

5.6 Lea – Voice, Expression and Confidence

Lea reflects the development of voice, expression and relational confidence as leadership capacities that grow through cultural affirmation, relational assurance and opportunity. In this study, Lea illuminated how students' confidence to speak, participate and contribute developed when identity was recognised and presence was affirmed within both the programme and the wider school environment. Shared prayer also supported emotional regulation and confidence, strengthening relational safety through which voice and participation grew.

Former students described shifts in how they expressed themselves. Lototo'a reflected becoming more confident speaking in class and group settings because the programme created an environment in which her ideas were welcomed and respected. She framed this confidence as relational, noting that when she felt culturally understood, her voice emerged more naturally. Lotomateaki similarly described Lea as strengthening her capacity to articulate thoughts with clarity and assurance, particularly in settings where she previously felt hesitant. For both students, voices developed through belonging.

Fakato'ato'a observed Lea becoming visible beyond the leadership sessions. She described students contributing more confidently to classrooms, meetings and cultural spaces, expressed through thoughtful participation shaped by respect, cultural awareness and relational confidence. She observed students becoming surer of themselves, able to speak with purpose and composure.

Lotohounga strengthened this interpretation by situating Lea within broader school leadership practice. She emphasised the role of visibility, modelling and opportunity in strengthening student voice. She described how students benefit from seeing successful Tongan leadership return to the school, widening assumptions about who belongs in leadership spaces. She also highlighted deliberate opportunities for students to speak in lea faka-Tonga, engage with complex academic texts and practise public speaking within culturally supportive environments. For Lotohounga, voice is developed when schools actively create conditions for expression with confidence and dignity.

Parents noted similar developments at home. Tamai described clearer communication and increased willingness to engage in family discussion, while Fa'e observed greater confidence in expressing ideas respectfully. These changes reflect maturity and cultural assurance, indicating that Lea extended beyond school into everyday relational contexts.

The development of voice was supported by warmth and encouragement. Students linked confidence to the supportive climate created through the programme. This aligns with Manu'atu's (2000) emphasis on māfana as relational energy that uplifts participation and strengthens expression. Within the Fakatoukatea framework, Lea is sustained through 'Ofa as emotional steadiness, Tauhi as respectful communication, Fatongia as responsible contribution and Tukupā as continuity across generations.

Together, these insights demonstrate that Lea functioned as a culturally aligned process through which students developed confidence, clarity and relational presence. Voice emerged through affirmation, opportunity and relational safety rather than individual assertion. When schools intentionally support culturally aligned expression, they strengthen leadership development through dignity, responsibility and collective wellbeing.

5.7 Mālie mo Māfana – Warmth, Relational Energy and Emotional Resonance

Mālie mo Māfana illuminate the emotional and relational climate through which leadership development is experienced as uplifting, affirming and sustaining. In this study, Mālie mo Māfana were expressed as warmth, encouragement and emotional resonance that enabled students to

engage with confidence, ease and cultural assurance. These qualities were not incidental; they functioned as conditions that supported learning, participation and leadership growth.

Former students identified the programme as a space characterised by mutual encouragement and uplift. Lototo'a recalled a sense of safety that enabled freer participation, noting that collective encouragement reduced self-doubt and hesitation. Lotomateaki described the group's warmth as motivating, explaining that encouragement strengthened both effort and confidence. For both students, Mālie mo Māfana supported emotional steadiness that enabled engagement and growth.

Fakato'ato'a observed Mālie mo Māfana through the relational dynamics among students. She described students celebrating one another's successes and offering encouragement without prompting, shaping the group toward collective uplift and care. She also observed this resonance extending beyond the programme into wider school life.

Lotohounga located Mālie mo Māfana within the wider school environment, including cultural events such as Polyfest, where cultural expression generated confidence, joy and shared affirmation. She also emphasised the significance of staff participation, such as teachers learning Tongan songs alongside students, as acts of respect and solidarity that reinforced an emotionally supportive school climate.

Parents recognised these shifts at home. Tamai and Fa'e described increased warmth, steadiness and kindness in family interactions. They observed that encouragement experienced in the programme translated into more confident, respectful communication at home. These reflections show Mālie mo Māfana moving across settings, strengthening relational maturity and cultural confidence within everyday family life.

Across these accounts, Mālie mo Māfana operated as sustaining relational energy that supported engagement, identity and wellbeing. 'Ofa nurtured compassion and steadiness, Tauhi maintained attentiveness to relational balance, Fatongia strengthened responsibility to uplift others and Tukupā sustained continuity across time.

5.8 Tuli ke ma'u hono ngaahi mālie – Purposeful Striving, Discipline and Steady Commitment

Tuli ke ma'u hono ngaahi mālie illuminates leadership development expressed through sustained effort, discipline and commitment carried with cultural responsibility. In this study, purposeful

striving was understood as steady movement shaped by family teaching, cultural values and relational accountability. Students' efforts were guided by clarity of purpose and awareness of responsibilities to kāinga, school and future aspirations.

Former students described shifts in how they approached effort and responsibility. Lototo'a linked her striving to family hopes and sacrifice, describing motivation as strengthened by a desire to honour family effort. Lotomateaki similarly emphasised organisation and consistency, noting that leadership meant showing up properly and following through. These reflections show perseverance carried as ethical responsibility shaped through Fatongia and sustained through Tukupā.

Fakato'ato'a observed this principle in practical school participation: initiative, volunteering for cultural and leadership roles and responding to challenges with increased maturity. She described these shifts as visible in reliability and consistency, where effort was expressed through everyday action. From her perspective, purposeful striving became relational practice supported by encouragement and reinforced through collective expectation.

Lotohounga is purposefully striving within school culture. She linked improved outcomes to sustained belief, clear expectations and consistent support for learners. She also connected improvement to disciplined habits such as punctuality, preparation and academic focus, reinforced through high expectations and institutional commitment. Her perspective affirms that purposeful striving is strengthened when leadership sets clear expectations and actively supports students to meet them.

Parents also recognised purposeful striving at home, describing increased discipline, focus and determination within daily routines. They observed stronger commitment to completing tasks, managing time and upholding family responsibilities. These everyday expressions of perseverance show cultural values enacted consistently across settings.

Together, these perspectives show Tuli ke ma'u hono ngaahi mālie as steady, values-led commitment. Effort was carried through 'Ofa as steadiness, Tauhi as attentiveness to responsibility, Fatongia as obligation to family and community and Tukupā as continuity across generations. Purposeful striving enables students to align actions with aspirations and responsibilities, strengthening confidence, discipline and resilience.

This principle highlights that leadership development for Tongan learners is sustained through consistent effort supported by cultural values, family expectations and institutional belief. Through Tuli ke ma'ū hono ngaahi mālie, participants demonstrated that progress emerges through disciplined commitment carried with relational accountability, preparing the way for the continuity and collective movement expressed in FetuiakiMālie.

5.9 FetuiakiMālie – Relational Continuity, Harmony and Collective Movement

FetuiakiMālie brings the discussion to the relational continuity that sustains leadership beyond individual participation. In this study, FetuiakiMālie was expressed through enduring connections between students, families and the school, where leadership unfolded as collective movement carried across time. Across the Talatalanoa, participants affirmed leadership as lived through ongoing relationships, shared responsibility and mutual support.

Former students described leadership as growing through togetherness. Lototo'a framed leadership as moving together, emphasising unity, encouragement and shared progress among Tongan students. This collective orientation aligns with Kēpa and Manu'atu's (2006) articulation of mālie as emerging through generosity, relational alignment and shared purpose. Leadership, in this sense, was sustained collectively through cooperation and care.

Lotomateaki's reflection on the shared dinner exemplifies FetuiakiMālie in practice. She described the gathering of students, families and staff as collective affirmation, pride and cultural connection. Such events did more than mark achievement; they reinforced relational bonds and affirmed belonging across generations, strengthening connections across home and school.

Fakato'ato'a observed FetuiakiMālie through continuity within the school: older students mentoring younger peers, graduates returning to encourage participants and students supporting one another across cultural and leadership spaces. These practices position leadership as shared responsibility sustained through Tauhi and Fatongia, visible in how students cared for one another and upheld collective wellbeing.

Lotohounga provided an institutional account, describing the development of collective governance structures involving students, families, staff and board members focused on strengthening achievement and partnership. She highlighted continuity across cohorts, where students connected to the programme continued contributing to school life as they progressed. Her

reflections position FetuiakiMālie as school culture: relationships, expectations and responsibility sustained over time.

Parents also observed continuity at home, noting increased cooperation, thoughtfulness and responsibility in relationships with siblings and extended family. These behaviours signalled leadership enacted through everyday relational practice and reflect Tukupā as enduring commitment carried across settings and generations.

Together, these accounts show FetuiakiMālie as sustaining force for leadership development. Leadership was strengthened through relational alignment, shared purpose and continuity across people and contexts. The programme did not sit apart from school or kāinga; it functioned as a relational thread weaving leadership into the wider life of the community.

FetuiakiMālie affirms leadership as an ongoing collective journey sustained through relationships that are nurtured, renewed and carried forward. This continuity creates the conditions through which leadership purpose is clarified and enacted, flowing into Taumu'a where direction and contribution are articulated with confidence and cultural assurance.

5.10 Taumu'a – Purpose, Direction and Collective Contribution

Taumu'a represents the forward-facing orientation of leadership, where purpose, direction and contribution are held with clarity and responsibility. In this study, Taumu'a was articulated as a commitment to contribute meaningfully to kāinga, school and future generations, guided by cultural identity and intergenerational responsibility. Leadership purpose was expressed as collectively carried, shaped through relationships, values and duty.

Former students described developing clearer direction through the programme. Lototo'a linked aspirations to the sacrifices and expectations of her family, holding goals within a genealogical horizon of continuity and obligation. Lotomateaki similarly described recognising strengths and responsibilities in relation to siblings and peers, situating aspiration within intergenerational purpose. These reflections align with Taufe'ulungaki's articulation of education as collective endeavour oriented toward opportunity, responsibility and continuity across generations (Taufe'ulungaki, 2018).

Fakato'ato'a observed Taumu'a in students' growing intentionality and motivation. She noted participants carrying themselves with greater clarity about why they were engaging in leadership

activities and how their actions affected others. This purposeful orientation was evident in mentoring, contributing to cultural initiatives and taking responsibility across school spaces. Leadership, in this sense, was enacted through service and relational accountability.

Lotohounga situated Taumu'a within institutional vision. She emphasised high expectations, visibility of success and the removal of barriers to achievement. Her articulation of success as "hope, pride and success" reflects leadership purpose oriented toward equity and future generations. By positioning academic achievement alongside strong cultural identity, she affirmed Taumu'a as a school-wide commitment to sustained progress, where leadership development supports long-term outcomes for students and community.

Parents reinforced this orientation through observations at home. Tamai and Fa'e described their child becoming more future-focused, disciplined and reflective about long-term goals. These shifts were understood as maturing purposes, where aspiration was accompanied by responsibility and effort. Purpose was nurtured through family guidance and cultural values, not imposed externally.

Collectively, these accounts show Taumu'a as the culmination of the leadership journey discussed in this chapter. Purpose emerged through earlier movements of awareness, belonging, preparation, voice, emotional resonance, striving and relational continuity. It was expressed as clarity of direction carried through cultural identity, relational accountability and commitment to others.

Taumu'a therefore affirms leadership as forward-moving, values-led commitment to contribution. It demonstrates how leadership development, when aligned with Tongan epistemology, supports young people to navigate transitions with confidence, cultural assurance and responsibility. Leadership purpose was held not as an endpoint, but as an ongoing commitment to serve kāinga, school and future generations.

5.11 Summary of Discussion

This chapter has integrated the findings with Indigenous and Tongan leadership scholarship through the values and practice principles of the Fakatoukatea Research Methodology. It has examined how leadership, identity and responsibility are enacted through everyday relational practice within the educational and community contexts of this study. These interpretations are situated within the institutional setting of Onehunga High School and informed by the methodological and epistemological commitments of this research.

Manatu highlighted the significance of early recognition and affirmation in shaping confidence and readiness to engage. Being seen and selected signaled belief in students' potential and initiated early movements of intention. MataKāinga demonstrated belonging as a base condition for leadership growth, strengthened through culturally familiar spaces where identity, language and relational warmth were affirmed. Tokonaki revealed leadership development as purposeful preparation shaped by responsibility and legacy, where discipline and organisation were read as cultural responsibility rather than individual self-management alone.

Lea demonstrated that voice and confidence emerged through relational safety, cultural affirmation and deliberate opportunity. Mālie mo Māfana centred emotional resonance as a critical dimension of leadership development, where warmth, encouragement and shared uplift strengthened wellbeing and participation across school and home. Tuli ke ma'u hono ngaahi mālie illuminated leadership as steady commitment carried through consistency, responsibility and perseverance. FetuiakiMālie demonstrated leadership continuity through enduring relationships, shared responsibility and collective movement across cohorts and contexts. Taumu'a brought the discussion to leadership purpose, articulated as meaningful contribution to kāinga, school and future aspirations held within an intergenerational horizon.

This study extends Indigenous and Tongan leadership scholarship by demonstrating that leadership development for Tongan learners is cultivated through culturally aligned conditions within secondary schooling, rather than through formal roles or individualised programmes. Taken together, the discussion affirms the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme as a values-led leadership journey in which leadership is cultivated through recognition, belonging, preparation, voice, emotional resonance, disciplined effort, relational continuity and purposeful direction. The following chapter draws these insights together to articulate the study's contributions, implications, limitations and directions for future research.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the thesis by drawing together the key findings, methodological contributions and implications of the study. It reflects on how the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme supported leadership development for Tongan learners through culturally aligned, relational and values-led practice. The chapter revisits the research purpose, summarises the contributions of the study to leadership theory, educational practice and Indigenous research, and outlines implications for schools, policy and future research.

6.2 Key Findings of the Study

The findings demonstrate that leadership development, as experienced through the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme, is relational, ethical and culturally aligned. Leadership was consistently understood and enacted through service, responsibility, belonging and contribution, expressed as lived practice within everyday relationships and responsibilities. Students, parents, school staff and the principal articulated leadership as shaped through relationships, cultural identity and intergenerational responsibility.

Across the eight practice principles, leadership development unfolded as a connected movement rather than a linear pathway. Manatu supported students to recognise their worth and potential through early affirmation and recognition. MataKāinga strengthened cultural identity and confidence through belonging and relational assurance, enabling students to participate with greater ease and authenticity. Tokonaki supported purposeful preparation, developing clarity, discipline and responsibility shaped by family expectations and legacy. Lea developed through relational safety and cultural affirmation, strengthening voice and expression. Mālie mo Māfana created conditions for confidence, encouragement and sustained engagement through warmth and emotional resonance. Tuli ke ma'ū hono ngaahi mālie reflected disciplined commitment and perseverance guided by cultural values and collective responsibility. FetuiakiMālie was evident in continuity and collective movement through enduring relationships across cohorts, families and the school. Taumu'a culminated in students articulating aspirations oriented toward service to kāinga, school and future generations.

Across participants' accounts, Fatongia was enacted as a living responsibility. It was evident in students' preparedness, reliability and willingness to serve within school and kāinga, reinforcing

leadership as an obligation carried through consistency, contribution and intergenerational awareness.

6.3 Spirituality as Lived Leadership Practice

Spirituality emerged as a lived and relational dimension of leadership development throughout the programme. Each Fakatoukatea session began and concluded with student-led prayer, situating leadership learning within spiritual presence, gratitude and collective care. Prayer was not treated as a symbolic or separate practice but functioned as an ethical orientation shaping the relational tone of each gathering. Through this practice, 'Ofa was expressed as spiritual attentiveness, emotional steadiness and moral alignment, strengthening confidence and relational safety.

Parents recalled how this spiritual confidence extended into the home. They shared that their children increasingly volunteered to lead prayers within the family, demonstrating initiative, assurance and a growing sense of responsibility. Where prayer had previously been prompted by adults, students stepped forward unprompted, signaling a shift in leadership presence and spiritual confidence. These observations illustrate how leadership learning moved across school and kāinga contexts, reinforcing intergenerational continuity and the everyday enactment of values. These expressions of spiritual leadership also reflected Fatongia, as students acted from a sense of moral responsibility to contribute, guide and uphold values within their families.

6.4 Contributions to Leadership and Educational Scholarship

This study contributes to leadership scholarship by offering an Indigenous, Tongan-centred articulation of leadership development anchored in values, relationships and genealogy. It extends existing literature by demonstrating how leadership can be cultivated through frameworks that foreground identity, belonging and collective responsibility, rather than through individualised or position-based leadership models. In doing so, the study challenges dominant leadership paradigms that privilege visibility, competition and individual achievement, and instead affirms leadership as a lived, ethical and intergenerational practice.

The Fakatoukatea Research Methodology provides a coherent and integrated approach that brings together values, practice principles and method. It contributes to Indigenous methodological scholarship by demonstrating how Indigenous epistemologies can guide both the design and interpretation of leadership research within educational contexts. The methodology offers a viable

alternative to deficit-oriented frameworks by centring cultural knowledge systems, relational accountability and intergenerational continuity as sources of leadership strength.

Within educational scholarship, the findings highlight the significance of leadership programmes that affirm cultural identity and strengthen connections between home and school. The study illustrates how leadership development can enhance student confidence, wellbeing and engagement when educational environments recognise and value the cultural worlds students bring with them. In this way, the study contributes to growing scholarship on culturally sustaining and Indigenous approaches to leadership and education.

6.5 Implications for Practice and Policy

For schools, the findings indicate that leadership development for Tongan learners is most effective when situated within environments that prioritise belonging, care, spiritual presence and intergenerational responsibility. Leadership initiatives that recognise responsibility, service and consistency as valued forms of leadership are more likely to align with students' lived experiences and cultural expectations. Recognising Fatongia as a leadership strength encourages schools to broaden their understanding of leadership beyond formal roles and to value leadership enacted through everyday contribution and reliability.

School leaders are encouraged to identify and affirm leadership already present within families and communities and to design leadership pathways that reflect these expressions. Programmes that intentionally involve kāinga and establish shared expectations between home and school can strengthen trust, engagement and sustain leadership growth.

At a policy and system level, the study underscores the need for leadership and wellbeing initiatives that move beyond narrow measures of individual achievement. Approaches that attend to relationships, spirituality and collective responsibility offer more meaningful pathways for supporting Indigenous and migrant learners within Aotearoa New Zealand. Policy frameworks that enable schools to design culturally responsive leadership initiatives can contribute to more equitable and inclusive educational outcomes. This implies a leadership posture by educators that is explicitly ethical, modeling humility, responsibility and encouragement.

6.6 Methodological Contributions

The Fakatoukatea Research Methodology contributes to Indigenous research by articulating a values-led framework that integrates cultural ethics, relational accountability and intergenerational responsibility. In this study, Talatalanoa functioned as the primary methodological approach, enabling participants to share experiences through culturally meaningful dialogue that honours reciprocity, openness and care.

The eight practice principles provide a clear methodological movement for inquiry, analysis and interpretation. They demonstrate how Indigenous epistemologies can guide rigorous and ethically accountable research practice, while remaining responsive to context, relationship and cultural meaning. By foregrounding values such as 'Ofa, Tauhi, Fatongia and Tukupā, the methodology ensures that research processes and interpretations remain accountable to the communities and relationships from which knowledge is shared.

The methodology offers a practical and transferable framework for Indigenous and culturally aligned research in education, supporting approaches that are methodologically robust, culturally coherent and ethically accountable.

6.7 Limitations and Future Research

This study was intentionally situated within one secondary school community, Onehunga High School, reflecting the relational and institutional setting in which the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme has been enacted. While this focus enabled depth, cultural integrity and relational closeness, the findings remain specific to this context. Including participants from additional school or community-based programme sites may have provided broader comparative insight.

The conditions under which Talatalanoa was facilitated also shaped the scope of the findings. The Research Assistant did not have prior relational history with participants and gendered dynamics were present, with a male facilitator and predominantly female participants. Within Tongan relational contexts, these factors may influence how and what is shared. The use of a Research Assistant was a deliberate decision to mitigate potential power dynamics arising from my prior relationships; however, my absence may also have shaped the depth and form of some narratives.

The findings are not intended for statistical generalisation, instead offer culturally situated insight carried through relational experience. Their relevance is found in resonance and applicability across contexts rather than universal transferability.

Building on these considerations, future research could extend this work by including additional school sites or community-based delivery contexts of the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme to broaden participation and enable comparative insight across settings.

Longitudinal research following students beyond secondary schooling would further enhance understanding of how leadership growth, cultural identity and spiritual confidence continue to evolve across life stages. Such research could also examine how leadership practices cultivated through the programme are sustained and enacted in tertiary education, employment and community leadership contexts.

6.8 Final Reflections

This thesis affirms that leadership growth for Tongan learners is enacted through deeply relational, culturally sustained and spiritually informed practice. Through the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme, students experienced leadership as service, responsibility and contribution carried across generations. The study highlights the strength of culturally aligned leadership approaches in supporting identity, belonging and purpose, offering insights for educators, researchers and communities committed to sustaining leadership development that honours Indigenous knowledge systems.

Throughout the study, Fatongia emerged as a sustaining force, shaping leadership as a moral commitment carried through everyday actions, relationships and responsibilities that extend beyond the school into family and future life. The Fakatoukatea folau continues, carried by students, families and schools who navigate leadership together with care, integrity and hope for those who follow. Carrying this forward requires educators and leaders to enact the civic courage Freire (1998) articulates so that culturally anchored leadership can thrive for future generations.

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Appendix A - Ethics Approval letter

21 July 2025

Tafili Utumapu-McBride

Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Tafili

Re Ethics Application: **25/187 Exploring the impact of the Fakatoukatea Tongan leadership programme at Onehunga High School, on students, the school and the community**

Thank you for your responses to AUTEK's conditions.

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 17 July 2028.

Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1. Please include a privacy section in the Information Sheet (Principal/Relational Manager/Community member) so that the participant understands if the school is named or not and what this means for their privacy. While privacy advice is provided for the principal, there is none for the Relational Manager or Community member. Please consider what level of confidentiality can be offered given the size and nature of the pool of potential participants and inclusion of clear advice that limited confidentiality only may be offered in the Information Sheet and Consent Form. The level of privacy may be different for each of these participants so please ensure there is advice for the different participants that is tailored to them.
2. In the Information Sheet Focus Group, please reinsert the deleted withdrawal statement "I understand...removal of my data may not be possible"

Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTEK unless requested but must be completed before commencing your study.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research and as approved by AUTEK.
2. All public facing documents must have the AUTEK approval number and be of a high standard of spelling and grammar. Dates on the Information Sheet(s) and Consent Form(s) must be consistent.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEK prior to being implemented.
4. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date.
5. The final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or upon completion of project.
6. Any serious or adverse events must be reported to AUTEK, this includes unforeseen issues that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
7. AUTEK grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management permission for access from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted, and you need to meet all ethical,

legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

The application number and title need to be referenced on all correspondence related to this project.

All forms are available online <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

For any enquiries, please contact the Secretariat at ethics@aut.ac.nz

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEK Secretariat

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: rtq2345@autuni.ac.nz

Appendix B- Tools

Email for Board of Trustees

Tēnā koutou, Mālō e lelei,

My name is Pakilau 'o Aotearoa Manase Lua, and I am the Research Assistant supporting 'Anahila Kanongata'a in her Master of Education research at Auckland University of Technology. The research is titled "Exploring the Impact of the Fakatoukatea Tongan Leadership Programme at Onehunga High School on Students, the School, and the Community".

As part of this important project, we are seeking to include the voice of the Onehunga High School Board of Trustees in understanding the influence and outcomes of the Fakatoukatea programme. We kindly invite the Board to nominate one trustee member to participate in a one-on-one interview with me.

The interview will take approximately one hour and will be scheduled at a time and place that is convenient for the participants. All participants will receive a detailed Information Sheet and Consent Form that outlines the purpose of the research, voluntary participation, and how data will be used. While every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality, due to the small participant pool and the naming of the school in research outputs, limited confidentiality may apply.

Your perspective as a Board member is vital to capturing the broader impact of this leadership initiative, and your support in identifying a representative would be greatly appreciated.

Should you have any questions or wish to discuss further, please feel free to contact me directly via email.

Ngā mihi nui, Mālō 'aupito,

Pakilau 'o Aotearoa Manase Lua

Research Assistant

Email: pakilau001@gmail.com

Participant Information Sheet for the Focus Group

26 May 2025

Kia ora! Mālō e lelei,

Project Title: Exploring the Impact of the Fakatoukatea Tongan Leadership Programme at Onehunga High School, on students, the school, and the community

You are invited to participate in a research study on the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme at Onehunga High School. This study is being conducted by Researcher, 'Anahila Lose Kanongata'a from Auckland University of Technology, as a requirement for the Master of Education degree. Pakilau 'o Aotearoa Manase Lua is the Research Assistant who will be organising and facilitating the Focus Group Talanoa.

What is the purpose of this research?

We are inviting you to be part of an exciting and meaningful conversation about the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme at Onehunga High School, we want to hear your story! We are conducting research where it seeks to understand how the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme influenced the academic success, well-being, and cultural identity of Tongan students who attended the programme. We aim to explore whether this programme enhances student engagement, school culture, and relationships between schools and their local communities.

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

We are bringing together a small group of former Onehunga High School students to share their experiences. You responded to the recruitment advertisement asking for five Alumni of Fakatoukatea from 2017 and 2018, who can converse in the Tongan language. This is a chance to reconnect, reflect on your journey, and contribute to something bigger than yourself.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you would like to take part in this research, a Participant Information Sheet and a Consent Form will be sent to you

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You can withdraw from the study at any time. Participants can choose not to answer a question or leave without providing a reason; however, data cannot be removed due to context of a group discussion.

What will my participation involve?

The research will engage a total of eight participants, comprising:

- Focus Group (5 participants) – Alumni from the 2017 and 2018 cohorts of the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme at Onehunga High School conducted by the research assistant at the school.
- The Research Assistant will also conduct a 1-1 Talanoa with the School Principal, Relational Manager and Community member to find out their respective insights on the impact of the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme on themselves and on the school.

What are the benefits?

- Inform best practices for culturally responsive leadership in schools.
- Provide recommendations for educators and policymakers.
- Contribute to academic publications and community-based initiatives.

What is the level of confidentiality?

All information shared at the Focus group will be kept confidential. What are the costs?

There are no costs involved, but up to four hours for the Focus group participants.

Will the results of the study be published?

The results of this research will be published in a *master's thesis*. This thesis will be available to the public through the AUT library. Results may be published in peer-reviewed, academic journals and will also be presented during conferences or seminars to wider professional and academic communities. You will not be identified in any publication.

What are the discomforts and risks?

There will be no or very minimal discomforts and risks.

What will happen to information about me?

- The data collected will have no personal identifying information.
- The research data and the consent forms will be kept separately for six years, in a secure AUT One Drive computer file.
- All participants will be given a pseudonym, and their identity will remain confidential in all research outputs.
- That by signing the consent form the participant is agreeing to the use of their information as stated in this Information Sheet.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You have two weeks to consider whether to take part in this research.

How will data be verified?

To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data collected, a summary of the themes will be sent back for checking.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

I will send a summary of the research to you at the end of the study if you request this

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Tafili Utumapu-McBride, tutumapu@aut.ac.nz, (09 9219999 ext. 7727).

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTECH, ethics@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext. 6038.

Who do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details: 'Anahila Lose Kanongata'a, Email is rtq2345@autuni.ac.nz

Research Assistant: Pakilau 'o Aotearoa Manase Lua email pakilau001@gmail.com

Project Supervisor Contact Details: Dr Tafili Utumapu-McBride, Email is – tutumapu@aut.ac.nz

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 17/07/2025,

AUTECH Reference number 25/187

Consent Form

For use when interviews are involved.

Project title: Onemato: The Impact of the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme with Participating Students, School and Community at Onehunga High School.

Project Supervisor: Dr Tafili Utumapu-McBride

Researcher: 'Anahila Lose Kanongata'a

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 26 May 2025
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- I agree to take part in this research and understand that since the school will be named it will impact on my privacy and limited confidentiality.
- I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes
No

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 17/07/2025.

AUTEC Reference number 25/187

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Consent Form

For use when focus groups are involved.

Project title: Onemato: The Impact of the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme with Participating Students, School and Community at Onehunga High School.

Project Supervisor: Dr Tafili Utumapu-McBride

Researcher: 'Anahila Lose Kanongata'a

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 26 May 2025.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that identity of my fellow participants and our discussions in the focus group is confidential to the group, and I agree to keep this information confidential.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the focus group and that it will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I understand that if I withdraw from the study then, while it may not be possible to destroy all records of the focus group discussion of which I was part, I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one):
Yes No

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 17/07/2025. AUTEK Reference number 25/187

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Questionnaire for Principal, Relationship Manager and Board of Trustee representation.

Purpose:

This interview seeks to explore how the school has supported the Fakatoukatea Leadership programme's impact on students, families, and the wider community for the 2017 & 2018 Cohort. Your insights will help guide the future of the programme and ensure it continues to inspire and shape the next generation of leaders.

1. School's Role in Supporting the Programme (Tokonaki – Preparation & Legacy Continuation)

- What inspired Onehunga High School to let the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme into the school?
- How does the school ensure the programme empowers students to thrive as leaders, for the duration and in their futures?

2. Impact on Students & School Culture (MataKainga – Self & Relationships)

- In what ways has Fakatoukatea transformed the identity, academic success, and leadership skills of Tongan students?
- How has the programme sparked a shift in the school culture, fostering deeper engagement and leadership among students?

3. Family & Community Engagement (Ngaahi Lea – Communication & Connection)

- How has the school collaborated with Tongan families to elevate students' leadership journeys?
- How does the school inspire families and the community to actively support and celebrate students in the programme?

4. Language & Cultural Identity (Ngaahi Lea – Language & Cultural Expression)

- How has Fakatoukatea empowered students to embrace and express their Tongan language and culture with pride?

- What actions has the school taken to create a space where students feel inspired to celebrate and lead with their cultural identity?

5. Leadership Development & Future Pathways (Tuli e Ngaahi Mālie – Pursuit of Excellence & Growth)

- How has the programme shaped students into confident leaders, preparing them for both high school challenges and their future ambitions?
- What doors has the school opened for students to continue their leadership development beyond the programme?

6. Holistic Well-being & Cultural Fulfillment (Māfana & Mālie – Passion & Joy)

- How has the programme nurtured students' well-being, confidence, and connection to their cultural roots?
- In what ways does the school celebrate the achievements of Fakatoukatea graduates, reinforcing their journey of growth?

7. Programme Sustainability & Growth (Tokonaki – Legacy & Future Planning)

- What are the key challenges and opportunities for sustaining the Fakatoukatea programme and expanding its impact?
- How can Onehunga High School inspire other schools to adopt similar leadership programmes that celebrate culture and empower students?

8. Reflections & Recommendations (Fakatoukatea – Excellence in All Things)

- What has been the most rewarding part of supporting the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme, and how has it impacted you personally?
- If you could shape the future of Fakatoukatea, what changes or innovations would you bring to elevate the programme?

Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme Focus Group Questionnaire

For Cohort 2017 & 2018

Purpose:

This questionnaire is designed to gather insights from students who participated in the Fakatoukatea Leadership Programme in Year 9 (2017 & 2018). Your reflections will help assess how the programme shaped your academic journey, leadership growth, cultural identity, and family involvement. Your feedback may inform and improve future leadership programmes and ensure continued support for Tongan students.

1. MataKāinga (Self & Relationships)

- How has Fakatoukatea influenced your confidence and leadership in different areas of life?
- What values from the programme continue to shape your decisions and interactions with others?

2. Ngaahi Lea (Tongan Language & Culture)

- How has using or understanding the Tongan language helped you connect with others or take on leadership roles?
- Did the programme make you prouder of your Tongan identity? In what ways?

3. Tokonaki (Preparation & Legacy)

- How did Fakatoukatea prepare you for high school challenges and future opportunities?
- What lasting impact do you think the programme has had on students like you?

4. Tuli e Ngaahi Mālie (Pursuit of Excellence & Action)

- How has the programme encouraged you to set and achieve your goals?
- Can you share an example of when you applied what you learned in Fakatoukatea to a real-life challenge?

5. Māfana (Warmth & Support from Family & Community)

- How did your family's support impact on your experience on the programme?

- In what ways did the school or wider community help strengthen your cultural and leadership identity?

6. Mālie (Fulfillment & Joy in Leadership)

- What was the most inspiring moment you experienced through Fakatoukatea?
- If you could pass one key lesson from the programme to future students, what would it be?

7. Parliament Visit & Role Models in Leadership

- How did visiting Parliament or seeing Tongan leaders in action influence your leadership aspirations?
- Why is it important for young Tongan students to see role models from their own background?

8. Former Student Speakers & Their Impact

- Did hearing from past students give you new perspectives on your own future?
- How can sharing experiences across generations strengthen leadership among young Tongans?

Final Thoughts

- What improvements would you suggest for the programme to make an even bigger impact?
- Should more schools offer leadership programmes like Fakatoukatea? Why or why not?

Appendix C – Glossary of Tongan Terms

‘Api

Home or family dwelling. ‘Api signifies a relational space of care, belonging and responsibility within kāinga rather than merely a physical house.

Fa‘e

Mother. A role encompassing nurturing, guidance and everyday responsibility for wellbeing within the family.

Fatongia

Moral obligation and relational duty arising from genealogy, role and social position. Fatongia governs responsibility, service and accountability to kāinga, church and community.

Fakahingoa

The culturally governed practice of naming people, places or significant undertakings. Fakahingoa carries genealogical authority, ethical responsibility and relational accountability, situating knowledge within kāinga and inherited leadership.

Fakatoukatea

A Tongan Indigenous leadership philosophy and programme name expressing balance, capability and cultural fluency. It refers to the ability to navigate multiple worlds with confidence, care and responsibility while maintaining genealogical and cultural integrity.

FefineTonga

Tongan women. The term recognises women’s genealogical authority, relational leadership and responsibility within family and community structures.

Fonua

Land, people and place understood as an interconnected whole. Fonua signifies identity, belonging and responsibility to land and community.

Kāinga

Extended family network. Kāinga represents a collective system of care, responsibility, belonging and relational accountability.

KateaMāhanga

A double-hulled voyaging canoe used as a metaphor for balance, navigation and collective leadership. Katea Māhanga symbolises ethical direction, relational harmony and shared responsibility.

Kuí

Grandmother. A role associated with intergenerational wisdom, continuity and the safeguarding of values, stories and cultural knowledge.

Lea

Voice, speech and expression. Lea encompasses spoken language, silence and relational awareness, carrying ethical responsibility within communication.

Māfana

Relational warmth and emotional resonance. Māfana describes the sense of encouragement, assurance and connection that supports confidence and participation.

Mālie

Uplifting harmony or resonance. Mālie refers to a sense of affirmation, rightness and collective wellbeing experienced within relational spaces.

Manatu

Reflection, remembrance and inner awareness. Manatu involves ancestral memory and ethical attentiveness that guide intention and action.

MataKāinga

Belonging and relational presence within kāinga. MataKāinga affirms identity, place and responsibility through genealogy, faith and family connections.

Mehikitanga

Father's sister. A position of significant genealogical authority within Tongan kinship structures, particularly in matters of naming, dignity and relational leadership.

‘Ofa

Love expressed as spiritual presence, compassion and ethical care. ‘Ofa guides conduct, emotional steadiness and relational responsibility.

‘Onemato

The name of this study. ‘Onemato refers to ancestral land named by King Siaosi Tupou I and signifies inherited trust, guardianship and responsibility. In this study, ‘Onemato establishes the ethical and genealogical positioning of the research, signalling accountability to kāinga and the intention that the knowledge produced serves collective benefit across generations.

PōAko

A kāinga-based learning initiative operating beyond formal school hours. Pō Ako supports relational learning, parent engagement and collective responsibility within education.

Talatalanoa

A Tongan method of dialogic engagement involving open, respectful and relational conversation. Talatalanoa centres trust, reciprocity and ethical care in knowledge sharing.

Tauhi

Relational stewardship and attentive care. Tauhi refers to the active nurturing and maintenance of relationships, roles and responsibilities over time.

TauhiKakai

The inherited responsibility to care for, hold and safeguard people through genealogy and relational obligation. Tauhi kakai frames leadership as service, stewardship and accountability sustained across generations.

Taumu'a

Purposeful direction and collective contribution. Taumu'a represents movement toward shared goals grounded in responsibility, continuity and ethical intention.

Tokonaki

Preparation and readiness. Tokonaki involves honouring inherited responsibilities while preparing them for future contribution and continuity.

Tukupā

Enduring commitment and perseverance across generations. Tukupā affirms loyalty, continuity and long-term responsibility.

Tuofefine

Sister. A role associated with dignity, respect and relational authority within kinship networks.

Vā

Relational space that connects people. Vā must be nurtured and maintained through respectful conduct, attentiveness and ethical care.