

**The Full Expression of *Talanoa alofa*: A Pedagogy to Enrich the
Spiritual Wellbeing of *Pasifika* children in Early Childhood
Education from a *Samoan* Perspective**

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Upu tomua: Abstract

This research explores the pedagogical ideas of the concept of “*talanoa alofa*” from a Samoan perspective, and how it can help enrich the spiritual well-being of Pasifika children, in Pasifika early childhood education (ECE) Aotearoa New Zealand. The study exhibits the views of six Samoan early childhood education (ECE) teachers (a mix of New Zealand born & Samoan born), about the concept of *talanoa alofa* and spiritual wellbeing from their personal and professional lived experiences. In addition, the study aims to contextualise the knowledge and meaning/s that was discovered/rediscovered from the *talatalanoaga* into Pasifika ECE. The study utilises the conceptual framework of *talanoa* as a qualitative research design. Participants were invited to partake in individual *talanoaga* sessions with the researcher. This gave them a place to freely express themselves and share their thoughts, wisdoms, knowledges and understanding about the topic of interest. Most importantly, it gave them an opportunity to tap into their own spirits to rethink, reflect, reconnect and appreciate their upbringing and lived experiences as positive contribution, to who they have become as Pasifika people in their home countries and Aotearoa New Zealand, especially as parents and educators.

Weaving together the meanings, wisdoms and knowledges that were discovered and produced through the *talanoaga* between the researcher, participants and the literature, this brought about a deeper understanding about the phenomenon. *Talanoa alofa* is defined in this research as a concept that is derived from the combination, of the term/practise *talanoa* and the value/principle of *alofa*. The influence of *fa'akerisiano* (Christianity) and *fa'asamoa* (Samoan culture) is also evident in these discussions. In addition, *talanoa alofa* is identified in the research as one of the most important ways of parenting in the Samoan cultural view. Hence, our proverbs “O tama a manu e fafaga i fuga o laau, a’o tama a tagata e fafaga i upu ma tala” (The offspring of the birds are fed with flowers but the offspring of people are fed with words

and stories), O au o matua fanau (The pinnacle of a parents eye are their children). “E leai se gaumata’u na’o le gaualofa” (What you do out of love or with love nurtures and endures - fear does the opposite)” (Tui Atua, 2009, p.54). Furthermore, the relationship between *talanoa alofa* as a pedagogy, holistic learning and spiritual well-being is identified, examined and discussed in this research. In addition, factors that would possibly influence the implementing of *talanoa alofa* as a pedagogy are also highlighted and examined.

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Attestation of Authorship

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

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Chapter 1: Folasaga: Introduction

- **‘Oto’otoga o le folasaga: Introductory statement.**

This chapter aims to examine,

- a) The purpose of the study
- b) The context of the study
- c) The importance of the research
- d) The research processes
- e) The outline of the thesis

The research explores the concept of *talanoa alofa* as a pedagogy to enrich the spiritual well-being of Pasifika children in early childhood education (ECE), from a Samoan perspective. The voices, personal and cultural views of six Samoan early childhood teachers are utilised in this paper to examine the phenomenon.

O le fa’amoemoega o le su’esu’ega: Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the pedagogical ideas of the concept of *talanoa alofa*, from a Samoan perspective. This is to help further enrich our *talanoaga* (interactions) with our Pasifika children in ECE. In addition, is to examine the Samoan view of spiritual wellbeing and how this can be further enriched, when the full expression of *talanoa alofa*, is effectively utilised in our *talanoaga* with the children. Furthermore, to emphasise the importance of acknowledging that diversity, highly influence the pedagogical views, values, beliefs and practises within the educational context in New Zealand (Santamaria et al., 2014).

Therefore, the study believes that to further enrich the spiritual wellbeing of our tamariki through our *talanoaga*, we must understand, acknowledge and respect their *tupu’aga* (their

beginnings), their families, cultural backgrounds and aspirations, values and beliefs. With that being said, the study purposefully aims to inform and remind educators of Pasifika (Samoan, Tongan, Niuean, Māori, Cook Island, Fijian, Kiribati etc.) learners, that “one size” does not fit all. Although the *Moana* (ocean) connects us, we view the world through different lenses. Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2017), argues that for children to be empowered to learn and grow, we ought to enhance their *mana* by valuing and respecting their cultural backgrounds, ways of being and ways of knowing in the context of early childhood education. Thus, this research intends to weave in a Samoan indigenous pedagogical idea/s, utilising the notion of *talanoa alofa*, into the conversation/s on talanoa and spiritual wellbeing in ECE Aotearoa New Zealand, with the addition of the value/virtue of *alofa, aroha, ‘ofa* (love) (Manu’atu, 2013).

O le tulaga ‘amata o le su’esu’ega: Context of the study

Diversity is the beauty that is fashioned by the dissimilarities among people and their ways of living, belonging and existence (spiritually, emotionally and physically). Aotearoa New Zealand is without a doubt a nation, with many cultures and ethnicities, socio-economic positions, political views, religious values and beliefs (Greider & Garkovich, 1994). “Tangata o le moana” (Pasifika peoples) (Mackley-Crump, 2015, p.1), is one of the many cultural groups that makes up the multi-cultural population of Aotearoa New Zealand. The concept of Pacific/Pasifika/Pasefika is defined by Leaupepe and Sauni (2014) as, “...a collective term used to refer to people of Pacific heritage or ancestry who have migrated or been born in Aotearoa New Zealand ...” (p.1712).

However, Mara et al., (1994) critique the concept as a “blanket term”. Although it is commonly used in New Zealand and around the world, the use of such “blanket terms” undermines and takes away the value and uniqueness of Samoan, Tongan, Fijian, Cook Island, Kiribati,

Tuvaluan, Niuean, and Tokelauan social, political, cultural and historical backgrounds. Therefore, diverse people that are carelessly classified together in this manner were/are/will be unable to fully participate as themselves in society. In other words, marginalisation and colonisation will continue to disempower the minority if they are continued to be “blanketed” together by the people who are in control (government, and policy makers) (Smith, 1999).

In the context of education, diversity highly influence the pedagogical views, values, beliefs and practises in Aotearoa New Zealand. Diversity is also known to be one of the contributing factors that continues to influence the effectiveness of curriculum implementation and assessment processes, specifically early childhood education (ECE) (Santamaria et al., 2014). In addition, teachers and students’ diverse, values and beliefs about learning highly influence the collective and individual targets, aspiration, results and learning outcomes (Ball & Tyson, 2011; Harrison & Sin, 2006).

Santamaria et al., (2014), argues that there is a need to acknowledge these differences and utilise ways to bring about inclusiveness, so we may be able to respond effectively to the diverse learning aspirations of learners and their families and the communities we serve. This is supported by Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995, as cited in Samu, 2006) who believes that, *“there is a need to respect similarities and differences among human beings and to go beyond sensitivity to active and effective responsiveness ...”* (p.8).

Māori and *Pasifika* learners were/are labelled as underachievers in educational achievement statistics, however, Hattie (2008, as cited in Peterson et al., 2016) argues that this continuous pattern is due to *Māori* and *Pasifika* learners being marginalised and misunderstood. Moreover, is the lack of teachers’ knowledge on how to be culturally responsive when it comes to responding appropriately and effectively to the learning aspiration of *Pasifika* learners. In addition, Tagoilelagi-Leota (2010) argues that the educational system and government needs

to pay more attention to children with English as a second language, such as *Pasifika* children. Furthermore, although there have been recent educational reforms addressing inequalities within the educational system, very little change has happened (Bishop et al., 2009). However, resources such as *Tapasa* (MOE, 2018) is now available to help and support teachers on how to be more culturally responsive when it comes to *Pasifika* learners. Hopefully, more resources as such will continue to be introduced in the near future to further enrich the knowledge and practise of *Pasifika* educators, in order to bring about positive learning outcomes for *Pasifika* learners.

In the context of Early Childhood Education, Shuker and Cherrington (2016), highlighted that ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand is vastly diverse in relation to their nature, leadership, philosophies and service providers. *Pasifika* ECE is one of its many branches. The Te Kohanga Reo movement in the 1980s-1990s (Mara, 2013) inspired the establishment of *Pasifika* ECE. The philosophy of *Pasifika* ECE revolves around maintaining *Pasifika* languages and cultures in Aotearoa New Zealand. This is so *Pasifika* children can be empowered by the knowledge of knowing who they are; their cultural identities, values, beliefs and languages without excluding the other perspectives that are also part of their learning and development in Aotearoa New Zealand (Tagoilelagi-Leota et al., 2013).

The aim (*fa'amoemoega*) and belief (*talitonuga*) was/is for *Pasifika* educators and communities to work towards empowering our *Pasifika* children with using our cultural languages, as our languages are tightly woven with our identities, cultures and sense of belonging (Manu'atu, 2013). Because without a language, there is no culture, and if we lose our culture, we lose who we are, hence our *Samoan* proverb “...a leai se gagana, ona po ai lea o le nu'u” (*the village will plunge into darkness if there is no language...*) (Amituana'i-Toloa, 2010, p.81).

The United Nation Conventional Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989, as cited in United Nations General Assembly, 1989) in its Article 30 emphasises the rights of every child to their heritage languages and cultures, values and beliefs, regardless of where they come from and who they are. Thus, it is our responsibility to ensure that our children learn and realise the importance of our heritage languages and cultures to who they are as people. In addition, is to sustain and to maintain them for future generations. From a *Samoan* perspective, the words of Aiono (1996) emphasises that the spirit of *Samoan* language and culture is only brought to life through our understanding, customarily experiences, wisdoms and knowledges that are lived and practised continuously. Consequently, the spirit/s of people are enlightened as we partake in living and loving our God given gift/s of language, culture and family. Moreover, it is significant for our children to acquire an understanding of how our languages are spoken within the different domains of one's culture and the values and beliefs that governs the relationships that are brought about during these *talanoaga* (interactions) (Mara, 2013).

Pasifika ECE recognises the links between children's learning and their cultural identities (Manu'atu, 2013; Tagoilelagi-Leota et al., 2013). Moreover, Tike (2018), argues that the issue of *Pasifika* learners being labelled as underachievers stems from the lack of *Pasifika* ECT (early childhood teachers) educating our *Pasifika fanau*, who can connect and understand them and their families as well as their learning aspirations. Cummins (2001), similarly argues that the barriers between *Pasifika* children and excellent achievement is due to the mismatch between the languages/language spoken in their homes and their educational settings. Therefore, there is a need for more *Pasifika* educators, or early childhood educators who are passionate and well equipped with multiple knowledge, wisdom and pedagogy that are *Pasifika*-based and designed for *Pasifika* learners. Moreover, this calls for more support from the government through teachers' education and professional development for teachers in relation to how to be more culturally responsive when it comes to dealing with *Pasifika* learners.

Unfortunately, according to McCaffery and McFall-McCaffery (2010) and Hau'ofa (1993) our cultural languages and beliefs are viewed as 'insignificant' by our own *Pasifika* people when it comes to educational success and achievement in the economic world, because for years, we have been taught and told that the dominant perspective is the only way to success. Thaman (2003), wrote that the notion was stimulated by the beliefs and the minds of people that are in control of political and economic policies who have very less or no understanding and concern about our ways of "being". The world needs to understand what success looks like from a *Samoan, Tongan, or Maori*, and so forth worldview. The researcher believes that success is not merely about credentials. Getting an A+ and getting a highly paid job is an achievement. However, personal qualities and strengths that we gain and acquire, in the process of our living and learning, are lifelong learning lessons that are more important. It is our ability as people and persons to relate to others and show the goodness within our hearts. In addition, the learning dispositions of our spirits, which is to love one another, to serve, to give, to forgive, to persevere, to be determined to keep going, to never give up and to feel empowered in this world. Thus, enriching the spiritual well-being of our *Pasifika* children it to be taken seriously, hence the topic of this study.

The researcher believes that often, society tries to "fix" the learners by using technical processes or external learning resources and assessment processes, based on societies objectives that are mostly "materialistically based". In addition, is the utilising of ideas and beliefs that are framed by the dominant worldview of what it means to be the ideal learner (Bradbury, 2014). The researcher believes that society is failing to firstly nurture and enrich the spiritual well-being, the heart (*loto, fatu, agaga*) of *Pasifika* learners in our educational settings. In addition, society fails to understand and fully acknowledge and welcome what it means for our *Pasifika* learners to be Samoan, Tongan, Niuean, or Maori etc. in this country. Because of this, our *fanau* are not well equipped to triumph over adversity and difficulties in

life let alone within their educational journey. Because the spirit (*loto, fatu, agaga*) strengthens us to be transformed and to move on and keep going when all else fails (Palmer, 1998). If our *Samoan, Tongan, Niuean, Cook Island, Kiribati, Fijian* etc. learners are spiritually enriched, they will embark on a transformative journey of living and learning for a brighter future for themselves and the collective. This will enable them to believe, in the strength of their *mana* sourced by God, their past, present and future experiences to face adversity. This is the knowledge that educators and teachers need to enrich the lives of all learners. In saying all that, the words of Cullingford and Blewitt (2004) urges “*One day, universities might be forced to reconsider what they have to offer in a world of global poverty, environmental degradation and uncivilized behaviour. This is the big issue of our time*” (p.22).

Te Whariki (MOE, 2017) is the curriculum or a bicultural conceptual framework utilised as a guideline for teaching in ECE. According to Marek (2015), *Te Whariki* is the first bicultural curriculum in New Zealand and as well as around the world. *Te Whariki* is the aspiration for children to grow up as “...*competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit and secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a value contribution to society*” (p.5).

In its second principle – *Kotahitanga* (Holistic development), it argues that the ECE curriculum mirrors the way children holistically grow and learn. That the significant aspects of children’s development are inclusive of their “*hinengaro* (cognition), *tinana* (physical), *whatumanawa* (emotional), *wairua* (spiritual)” (p.19). These aspects ought to be woven together with their social and cultural experiences as they are interdependent. This is to ensure, that the aspiration as mentioned before is met. It also emphasised that spirituality from a *Māori* worldview is central to the holistic development of a person, as it binds and connects all aspects of human development “...*across time and space*” (MOE, 2017, p.19).

This study explores a similar view, where the researcher aims to bring about an understanding of spirituality and spiritual well-being from a *Samoan* perspective. Furthermore, is to examine how *Samoan/Pasifika* children's spiritual well-being can be enriched in the context of ECE, with the use of the concept of *talanoa alofa* as a pedagogy. The concept of *talanoa alofa* is defined in this study as – to talk with love or talk from a place of love. *Talanoa* is a *Pasifika* research methodology and method (Vaioleti, 2006), however, it was commonly known and practised in many *Pasifika* cultures before it was developed into a research method and methodology (Fa'avae et al., 2016; Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014). *Alofa, aroha, 'ofa* is love. The question is – How can we best define love?

- **O le taua o le su'esu'ega: The importance of the research**

This research is an important contribution to the conversations on child and teacher interaction in the context of ECE. Hamre (2014) highlights that teacher and child interaction is an “...essential ingredient in effective early childhood programme” (p.223). The quality of child and teacher interaction in the learning environment have gained research attention for years around the world. Findings showed that high-quality interactions between teachers and children in ECE highly influence the multiple dimensions of the children learning such as cognitive development, social skills, language development and more (Cordoba & Sanders-Smith, 2018). Hu et al., (2017) in their research discovered that in China, children's cognitive skills are highly influenced by teacher and child interactions in the classroom rather than their emotional well-being. Hamre and Pianta's research (2007, as cited in Hamre, 2014), discovered that children's learning is influenced by three domains, these are found in their interactions with teachers. The domains are inclusive of classroom organisation, emotional support and instructional support. However, it is also believed that the ability of teachers to respond effectively to the learners' learning needs during these interactions is mostly significant to the children's learning and development (Hamre, 2014; Hamre et al., 2014). The practise of a responsive educator during

these interactions is allowing the child/learner to freely express himself or herself without having to control or judge the way they think, talk or even try to change their worldviews and beliefs to how we see the world (de Vocht, 2015). It is important for teachers to realise that the quality of their interactions with the children, highly influence their learning and development and perhaps who they become in the future.

Most importantly, this research aims to remind us all that there is *koloa/tamao'aiga* (richness) in the diverse heritage languages and cultures, wisdoms, knowledges and beliefs that *Pasifika* people bring into our society (Manu'atu, 2013; Tike, 2018). Especially, when people are enabled by giving them the freedom to express themselves as who they aspire to become. As educators of our *tamariki* in a diverse country such as *Aotearoa* New Zealand, we have a significant role to play in making sure that we welcome whole-heartedly the “full expression of diversity”, that our children, their families and communities as well as our colleagues, bring with into our educational settings and journeys (Gibbs, 2009, p.226). Although we are blanketed under the label “*Pasifika*” (Mara et al., 1994), and share similar cultural values, beliefs and practises, *Samoan, Tongan, Niuean, Fijian, Cook Islanders*, and each “*Pasifika*” Island is significantly unique in their own ways. There is beauty in the differences amongst these cultures. Therefore, teachers and leaders must advocate for these differences to be welcomed, acknowledged and celebrated as part of the holistic learning and development of our *tamariki* in ECE (MOE, 2017).

The acknowledgement of diversity in this study creates a theoretical platform for the researcher to bring about the significance of utilising indigenous pedagogies, for *Pasifika/Samoan* children from *Pasifika/Samoan* beliefs, values, wisdoms, knowledges, worldviews and *fanua* (land). In doing so, the meaning of spirituality and spiritual well-being is explored through the voices of six *faia'oga amata* (ECT) and the literature. This is *so* we can improve our understanding of what spiritual well-being looks like and what it means for the children (*fanau*

iti) to be spiritually enriched from a *Samoan* perspective. Tui Atua (2005) asserts that the spiritual well-being of a *Samoan* person is significant to their whole self, which is inclusive of the physical self and the mental self. One cannot exist without the other, as it brings a “*sense of wholeness, sacredness and uniqueness from its place of belonging in its family and village, its genealogy, language, land environment and culture*” (p.303).

As mentioned earlier, the use of our indigenous pedagogies that are informed by our wisdoms, knowledges, languages and cultural values and beliefs is emphasised in this research. Therefore, to explore and gain an understanding of how we can further enrich the spiritual well-being of *Samoan/Pasifika*, the study examines the practise of *talanoa alofa* as a pedagogy through the lived experiences of the six participants and their current practises as teachers. The practise of *talanoa* is grounded on the values of respect, honesty, love, forgiving and reciprocity. It gives people the chance to share, discuss and nurture good relationships with one another (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2012; Halapua, 2000). Because of the researcher’s past experiences and *talanoaga* with children, she wanted to examine and look at the concept of *talanoa* with the addition of the value/principle of love as a pedagogy from her *Samoan* culture and upbringing. Moreover, the *talatalanoaga* during this research, gave the researchers and the participants the chance to reflect upon their practises, specifically their *talanoaga* with the children and how important it is to *a’oa’o* (teach) our *fanau iti* (young children) *ma le alofa* (with love), *mai ‘i le alofa* (from love), *‘ona o le alofa* (because we love them). The researcher hopes for this important study to be a valuable contribution to ECE specifically *Samoan/Pasifika* Education in relation to enriching the spiritual well-being of our *fanau iti*, so they may grow up with strong and good spirits to overcome adversity and become great leaders of tomorrow.

- **Atina'eina o le su'esu'ega: The research processes**

Amatamaiga o leni folauga: My journey into the research

I was born and raised in *Samoa*. My late father was *Samoaan*. He was a Pastor, a *mata'i ali'i* (chief & leader of his *aiga*) a police commissioner and his main role – a father to 12 children. My dear mother who is still with us is *Niuean*; she was the wife of a Pastor, and wife of a *matai*. She was a fantastic primary school teacher and still is the greatest mother for all her children, as well as to her grandchildren and great grandchildren. I was raised in neither of my parents' families. My entire life and journey happened in the village of *Satupaitea, Savaii* where they were church ministers for 29 years. I barely knew anyone from my mother's *Niuean* side because she was the only member of her *aiga* that lived in *Samoa*. As for my father's side, the only time I see them was when there was a *fa'alavelave*. Or when they came to ask for *ietoga* (finemats), food or money. My parents never failed to show us the importance of our service to God, our family, village and country.

Our relations were inclusive of the people who were not related to us by blood. My parents never failed to take them in as their own, to help them, to shelter them; they never turned anyone away that came to our house for help. Even the prisoners that were transitioning back into the community, my parents took the risk to take them in. They loved them like their own and in the end, some of them wanted to stay with us for good. Looking back now it is amazing how love can transform and turn people's lives around. My father was the one who was always on to us with his fatherly '*ote* straightening us up when we needed it. Through these *talanoaga*, I came to reflect and understand the types of *talanoa/talanoaga* that he would have with us. The nature of these *talanoaga* was all from his *alofa fa'amatua* (a parent's love). This same approach was used on everyone that was under our roof including the prisoners. My house was always full of people. We did not have much, but we were never hungry. My parents made sure

no one went to school without having breakfast first (which was almost, always *koko alaisa* or *sua alaisa*), no one went to school without lunch, and no one went to sleep with an empty stomach. We were taught to love and share even when there was very little to share. To sum up my parent's lives, they were the most-hard working, caring and loving people I've ever known in my life.

Education wise, because I was the baby of the 12 apostles and the family. My dear mother, made sure that I read books. The older ones were also expected to do the same, but because they were older, they were also expected to attend to the household chores as well and the church youth and more. Education was very important in our *aiga*. Dad would say – '*A'e fia 'ai pisupo, ko'aga le aoga*' (If you want to eat corned beef, work hard in school). It was almost as if they were teaching us how to survive. They loved us dearly, but they wanted us to be able to survive 'out there', come the time we leave the loving nest of 'mom & dads' care. When I left home in 2000 to go study in *Samoa* College, I stayed in the hostel, I felt scared. This was my first time away from home. On the first day, I cried while clinging to my mother's hand, calling for my Dad to take me back with him to *Savaii*. I remember vividly, how he stood from outside the window of the dormitory, with teary eyes he told me – '*Kikilo mai ou maka, 'aua ke pala'a'ai i kalie mai kamaiki ga e ia oe - koa lou loko*' (Look at me, don't be a chicken, otherwise those kids might laugh at you – be strong). I think that was the first and the last time I cried to go home. They really prepared me spiritually and mentally to overcome fear and to be a strong woman.

Reflecting to my college years in *Apia* (town of *Samoa*). It was one of the most colonised experience of my existence. Coming from a very traditional environment that is often referred to as the "*kua back*" (the bush area of the Island) it was all new to me. English was mostly spoken, the fashion was different (I wore many baby-waisted dresses that my mother tailored for me in *Savaii* – by "loving force"), the girls were meaner, and the boys were more handsome

(and richer). My materialistic eyes were mostly fascinated by the many *afakasi* (half-caste) students with “neat” English who were usually dropped off to school in flash cars. They were favoured by most teachers and were always at the canteen during interval because they had money. Although the *Savaai* girl stared and drooled a little bit (but not every day), I was always reminded in my heart, to be grateful with what my parents gave me and never forget how hard they worked with love for me and everyone in our household. Most importantly, I was always reminded of their *fautuaga fa’amatua* (advising as a parent) – “*ia e loto maualalo*” (stay humble). However, I was still wondering how my life would have been, if my upbringing were different, more like if my upbringing was more “English”. Remarkably, when it came to the end of my college years, most of my friends who made it to University and grew up to become more accomplished academically later in life were from “*kua back*”.

Fast forward to nine years later (2013), I migrated to New Zealand and started my journey as an Educator for *Pasifika* ECE at the AUT South Campus. The desire to further my studies was always there. However, my desire to explore this profession was the product, of not only my love of children, but stemmed from the heart of a woman who was longing to be a mother and to have the blessing of raising a child. Little did I know that the transformation of thinking, and of heart that this journey was going to take me through would be an absolute life-changing experience for me. This journey gave me an eternal renewed and transformed perspective about myself (my upbringing, parents, family and culture/s). In addition, the transformation of my thinking as not just a woman but also a *Pasifika* woman, a *Samoan* woman and a Christian woman. For the first time in my life, learning was meaningful, fun and filled with *alofa* away from my home. I felt respected in the learning environment because I felt that I was loved, my cultural background was welcomed and appreciated and therefore, I enjoyed learning. In fact, I learned more during my years (2013-2015) in this Bachelor of Pasifika (Early Childhood Teaching) programme than I have ever learned in an educational setting before. It was because

I was able to connect with my lecturers that shared similar cultural values, beliefs, understanding and worldviews with me. Moreover, the sincerity of *aroha* that was reciprocated during our *talatalanoaga* with our *Pasifika* lecturers enabled me to love and appreciate myself more, so I can love and appreciate others more as well, especially the diverse learners that I will love and teach later in life.

Tike (2018) in her study explores the journey of some of the teachers that were part of this “cutting edge” programme (Manu’atu, 2013). The programme’s conceptual framework was grounded on *Pasifika* epistemologies, ways of being, worldviews, values and beliefs. The knowledges, wisdoms and understandings that were taught through all the 21 papers in this special degree (Bachelor of Pasifika Education (ECT)), encompass the richness of knowledge and *koloa* that *Pasifika* people bring with them into this country. Moreover, the programme emphasised the significance of living together as *Samoan, Tongan, Maori, Cook Islanders, Fijian, Niuean*, and more, in harmony, relating to each other through our cultural knowledges, wisdoms, beliefs and values such as ‘*alofa/aroha*’*’ofa* (love). In addition, is appreciating the cultural *koloa* we have, our lived experiences, our roots, our beautiful diverse and unique cultures, and learning to use them to enrich *Aotearoa* New Zealand (Manu’atu, 2013; Tike, 2018; Utumapu-McBride & Manu’atu, 2019).

My Standpoint

Although I am strong in my *aganu’u fa’asamoa* (*Samoan* culture) and my *gagana Samoa* (*Samoan* language), the programme transformed the way I think about education, my upbringing, my language and culture, the way I ought to relate to people and the kind of teacher I aspire to be. Leading up to this research, I was always curious and concerned about the quality of teacher-child interactions in the ECE centres that I have worked at including the ones that I

did my practicum with. I developed a new *alofa/aroha/'ofa/love* for children, and through this love I was able to engage in meaningful *talanoaga* with the children. I felt like this approach was reciprocated by the children once they felt the *mafana/mafanafana/warmth* that was brought about during our *talanoaga*. I was fascinated by this and I observed and discovered that the children who were engaged in more meaningful *talanoaga* with the teachers were more engaged in their learning too. They were the most confident, creative and expressive children. There were no barriers for them when it came to expressing themselves and when they actively explored their learning environment. In addition, these children were able to role model good behaviours to their friends and often showed kindness through their actions and words. Therefore, I strongly believe that my topic **“The full expression of *Talanoa Alofa: A pedagogy to further enrich the spiritual well-being of Pasifika children in Early Childhood Education from a Samoan perspective*”** is relevant to quality teaching and positive learning outcomes for *Pasifika* children in ECE.

Furthermore, it is important that indigenous ways of knowing and ways of being are explored, understood, acknowledged and respected in our work as teachers. This is so *Pasifika* educators and non-*Pasifika* educators of *Pasifika* learners respond effectively to the learning aspirations of *Pasifika fanau* and their *aiga* (family). Through *alofa/aroha/'ofa/love* we welcome and acknowledge that we are different from one another in relation to our diverse worldviews, upbringing, languages and cultural values and beliefs. However, our differences can enrich our current place of being, our second home (*Aotearoa* New Zealand), our homes (*aiga*), and our educational settings (*a'oa'oga*). Tui Atua (2005) reminds us that as we migrate and change places of living, we must remember that working harmoniously alongside others is the way for indigenous people, to enhance and preserve our indigenous historical and cultural capital. In addition, it is important to understand that working alongside institutes that respects indigenous ways of being is “...critical to restoring culture, bridging knowledge gaps and enhancing ethnic

identity, security and health” (p.68). Exploring the pedagogical ideas of *talanoa alofa* and its relationship to the spiritual well-being of the children in this study, can help us gain more knowledge on how we can further enrich our *talanoaga* with our *fanau*, our *lumana’i* (future) in ECE. This is with the hope that they turn out to be strong and responsible leaders for their families, communities, country and be proud of themselves. I have chosen to use the first-person narrative approach, because of my connection with the topic and how I fit into the research.

- **Outline of the thesis**

Chapter 1: is the Introduction which introduces the topic of interest. In addition, it highlights the purpose of the study, the context of the study, the importance of the study and the process of the research, which is inclusive of the researcher’s journey into to the study as well as her standpoint as a researcher.

Chapter 2: is the Literature Review, which presents the weaving of existing research that are related to the topic of interest. It embodies the intellectual research genealogy of this study from an international scale, to a national scale and a *Pasifika* scale to a *Samoan* scale.

Chapter 3: is the Methodology, which presents the conceptual framework of the study, the methods of data collection and analysis. Moreover, this chapter presents the main question, questions and sub-questions.

Chapter 4: presents the Findings from the *talatalanoaga/talanoa* sessions with the six participants.

Chapter 5: includes the Discussions of the themes and meaning/s that were identified through the analysis of data.

Chapter 6: presents the Conclusion/s, limitations, and strengths of the study. This chapter is also inclusive of further research possibilities.

- **Summary**

This chapter introduced the topic of the study: “The full expression of “*Talanoa alofa*”: A pedagogy to further enrich the spiritual well-being of *Pasifika* children in Early Childhood Education from a *Samoan* perspective”. In addition, this chapter highlighted my journey into this research and my standpoint as a researcher in the study.

Chapter two: Literature Review

- **Introduction**

Much has been documented about the significance of quality teaching and learning in ECE around the world. There has been ongoing research attention towards examining and identifying ways that influence the way children learn and develop (Fenech, 2011). However, children's interaction with adults and their environment is no doubt a huge influence in relation to their learning and development as identified in the literature. For example, in the western view, theorist Bronfenbrenner (1977) with his ecological systems theory believes that the child's development is influenced by his/her interactions and relationships with the multiple environments in which they affiliate. Whereas Vygotsky (1978, as cited in John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996) argues that social interactions highly influence the way children, learn and develop cognitively. In addition, his idea of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) believes that in this space, the process of scaffolding is highly required, as the children need assistance from an adult to role model, to scaffold and support them to get to the next level of their learning. Therefore, a child's cognitive development is highly influenced by the quality of these interactions. A Pasifika view according to Kingstone (2003) however emphasises that extended family, kinship is crucial to a Pasifika child's holistic learning and development (spiritually, emotionally and physically). The children learn while they participate in daily activities within the family through observing, demonstrating and role modelling the practises and knowledges passed down to them by their elders and family members. This is similar to Rogoff (1994, p.209, as cited in Williams- Kennedy, 2004, p. 81), who stated that, "...learning and development occur as people participate in the socio-cultural activities of their community" and family.

Because of the importance of children's interaction with their environment and adults in their learning and development, child and teacher interaction in educational settings is one of the

most researched aspects of the child's learning and it is identified as an "...essential ingredient in effective early childhood programme" (Hamre, 2014, p.223). Multiple researchers have been examining how the quality of interactions in the context of ECE influences different areas of the children's learning and development such as cognitive development, language development, social skills and emotional well-being. For example, in China, Hu et al., (2017) in their research discovered that teacher-child interactions have an impact on Chinese children's cognitive skills instead of their social skills. Hamre and Pianta (2007, as cited in Hamre, 2014) argues that there are three domains in teacher and child interactions that influences learning – a) emotional support b) classroom organisation and c) instructional support. However, some research argues that teachers' responsiveness to children's needs during their interactions is key to quality teaching and learning in ECE (Hamre, 2014; Hamre et al., 2014). In addition, an aspect of being a responsive educator during interactions with children is to allow them to actively participate in our conversations without controlling the way they think and talk or try to change their worldviews (de Vocht, 2015).

Te Whāriki (MOE, 2017) is a bicultural curriculum for ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand. It highlights that children learn best when teachers are more responsive to their cultural backgrounds and ways of being. In addition, it believes that children will be more successful in their educational lives when their cultural roots and backgrounds are understood and acknowledged as part of their learning. This view is supported by Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995, as cited in Samu, 2006) who argues the "need to respect similarities and differences among human beings and to go beyond sensitivity to active and effective responsiveness ..." (p.8) within our educational settings. In relation to higher learning, Benseman et al., (2006), also recognises that educational success for Pasifika students can be achieved when there is strong connection between tertiary institutions and Pasifika communities. Thus, this belief provides an avenue for the researcher to explore teacher and child interactions from a Samoan

cultural perspective and how it can enrich the spiritual well-being of children in Pasifika ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand. The research translates the concept of interaction to *talanoa* with the addition of *alofa* (love). The notion of *talanoa alofa* is then defined as to talk, interact or converse with love or from a place of love and compassion. The aim of the researcher is to explore the pedagogical ideas of *talanoa alofa* and its significance to the enriching of the spiritual well-being of children from a Samoan perspective.

- **Talanoa in the Pasifika**

To interact, talk or communicate is commonly known to the Pasifika people as to *talanoa*. According to Fa’avae et al., (2016), the concept of *talanoa* remains to be deeply woven into the cultural practises of many Pasifika Islands such as the Tongan, Samoan and Fijian people. Suaalii-Sauni and Fulu-Aiolupotea (2014) argues *talanoa* was known and used in the lives of Pasifika people way before it was developed as a Pasifika methodology/method of research. Vaioleti (2006) defines *talanoa* from a Tongan perspective as to talk about nothing specific or “nothing in particular”, in contrast with the Samoan perspective where he defines *talanoa* as “the ancient practice of multi-level and multi-layered critical discussions” (pp. 23–24). In addition, *talanoa* brings about a space for people to be expressive without feeling controlled. Most importantly, *talanoa* takes away the space between people bringing about respectful relationships (Wilson, 2010). *Talanoa* is the talk that can bring about a space to further our conversations and challenge ourselves through enquiry and the weaving of our stories, lived experiences and emotions. *Talanoa* is deeply concerned with building and strengthening relationships. It is grounded on the principles of love, respect, inclusion, honesty, reconciliation and it allows the participants to discuss what they are interested in, share their views and develop trust amongst each other. It is not merely about arriving to an agreement or a right and wrong answer, instead it is the process of the talk and how people’s lives and ways of thinking can be improved, renewed and transformed throughout this process (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba,

2012; Halapua, 2000). In addition, Vaka (2014) talks about *talanoa* as a way of tapping into one's heart to release and let go of any difficult emotions to bring about freedom. Tecun et al., (2018) believes that this aspect of talanoa is crucially helpful to the well-being and recovery of people mentally and makes talanoa an appropriate approach for sensitive topics as such.

- **Diversity in Education**

The mixture of ethnicities and cultures continue to grow in New Zealand in relation to its population. Blackmore (2006) discussed in his study that diversity is "... about addressing highly specific cultural, linguistic, economic and social needs; building individual and collective cultural and social capital..." (p.182) Diversity continues to highly influence the process of learning and teaching within educational settings in the country. This is in relation to teaching and learning pedagogical ideas, views and practises, values teaching, learning pedagogical ideas, views, practises, values, and beliefs (Pearson, 2014). Alton-Lee (2005), Ball and Tyson (2011), Harrison and Sin (2003) (as cited in Samu, 2006) share a similar view that teachers and children bring into the learning context diverse socio-cultural backgrounds, political views, worldviews, identities and broad relationships/connections. These diverse aspects highly influence the way teachers educate learners and how learners learn and acquire knowledge. Thus, also influences curriculum and assessments, learning aspirations/objectives, goals and learning outcomes. Evidently, diversity has a strong influence in the educational settings in Aotearoa New Zealand. Therefore, there have been major research attention towards ways in which diversity, can be acknowledged and fully welcomed into educational contexts to maximise positive learning outcomes and to actively and effectively respond to learners. In addition is to further enrich the teaching knowledge, beliefs and practises of educators on how to respond to the diverse learning aspirations and needs of learners, their families and communities (Harrison & Sin, 2003). However, Cushner (1992) addresses in his study that because of the lack of knowledge within Teacher Education in relation to cultural diversity and

their influence on people's ways of being and knowing, minority teachers are continued to be marginalised and underrepresented within the context of education. Cooper and Hedges (2014), argues that there is a need for Teacher Education to genuinely assess and ensure the readiness of educators, to adequately respond to diversity within the learning environment, especially in a multi-cultural country like New Zealand. However, Foster (1989, as cited in Gunter, 2006) argues that the approach to acknowledging, understanding and welcoming diversity within the learning grounds is through leadership that is shared and utilises an inclusive and transformative approach. Alton-Lee (2005) argues that our educational system fails to respond effectively to diversity, as a result, the minority population of students such as Pasifika students continues to be at-risk of failing at school as identified in reports such as the Education Review Office (ERO, 2012) report . Fortunately, resources such as Tapasa: Cultural Competencies Framework for Teachers of Pacific Learners (MOE, 2018) is now available to support, empower and provide insight and cultural awareness to educators of Pasifika learners, so they can respond effectively to the learning aspirations and needs of Pasifika children and whanau.

- **Place of Indigenous (Maori) and Migrants (Pasifika) in Education Aotearoa New Zealand.**

Katene and Taonui (2018) highlights that New Zealand declares its support of the United Nations (UN) Declaration of the Right of Indigenous people in April 2010. The declaration embraces and upholds the rights of indigenous people as first and original people of lands. Moreover, it acknowledges the rich cultures, socioeconomic spiritual and environmental beliefs of indigenous people that ought to be protected and looked after, instead of being marginalised and oppressed. The UN Convention on the rights of the child (UNCRC, 1989, as cited in United Nations General Assembly, 1989) similarly upholds the right of the child to his/her cultures, language, education and the right to be protected from harm. However, the questions are; 1) How well are the underpinning principles of these articles implemented in

Aotearoa New Zealand? 2) To what extent, and depth can our leaders go to ensure that the UN declaration and convention is effectively utilised to benefit everyone and bring about inclusion? According to Katane and Taonui (2018), regardless of the collective advocacy of indigenous leaders efforts to grow and deepened government's realisation and application of the declaration, Aotearoa New Zealand has yet to fully implement and reflect the principles of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous people along with the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (TOW) in its many systems. This is inclusive of its educational system (Bills & Hunter, 2015). Unfortunately, the consequences of these actions are reflected in the learning outcomes and achievement of the indigenous people and migrants/minority cultural groups such as Pasifika people in Aotearoa New Zealand.

In the case of Māori (tangata whenua) as the indigenous people of New Zealand and Pasifika people as one of the many groups of migrants. The two cultural groups are interrelated in relation to some of their cultural values and beliefs and similar experiences such as their "colonised histories" (Kēpa & Manu'atu, 2011, p.1) and shared socioeconomic backgrounds (Keung, 2018). In addition, Māori and Pasifika are continued to be labelled and portrayed as the "underachievers" or the "priority group" in the New Zealand educational achievement statistics (Reynolds, 2017). For example, according to the NZQA (2014) report, in the year 2013, only 55.3% of Māori and 64.8% of Pasifika students gained the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 1, compared to the 82.0% of Asians and 78.7% of Pakeha. The issue was previously identified in the (ERO, 2012) report, and although there have been improvements; the achievement gap continues to exist leaving Māori and Pasifika to remain at the bottom. Kēpa and Manu'atu (2011) believes that such issue is a product of an educational system that employs, "prevailing pedagogy resulting from assumptions of individualism and competition marginalising indigenous and migrant peoples whose languages and cultures express principles and innovations of collectivity and connectivity" (p.1). Spolsky

and Hult (2008) view this notion as insignificant and are a pervasive unpleasant result of colonisation.

This notion also influences the minds of educators who are educating Māori and Pasifika learners. According to Turner et al., (2015) highlights that one of the contributing factors to student failure is teachers' low expectations for students. Unfortunately, their study revealed that all ten teachers that were interviewed communicated deficit thoughts and beliefs about Māori and Pasifika learners regarding their family backgrounds, aspirations and attitude towards education. Therefore, they have much lower expectations for Māori and Pasifika compared to their expectations for Asian and Pakeha students. However, Asafo (2019) during his interview upon receiving a scholarship argues that "...many systems in New Zealand fail minority groups, particularly Māori and Pacific people". He continued on by stating that, "it's vitally important that we do more than just acknowledge this. We need the tools to identify the socially constructed framework that upholds injustice, in order for us to bring about change..." (para. 8).

Contextualising this notion into the educational achievement of Māori and Pasifika people/learners, Smith (1999) highlights that the ways of the dominant perspective or status quo has brought about very less change and continues to broaden the gap between unequal levels of educational achievement, marginalisation and socio-economic for the minority and indigenous people in Aotearoa New Zealand. Tagoilelagi-Leota et al., (2013) and Manu'atu (2013) argues that a transformative approach ought to be utilised in the educational system/settings, in relation to acknowledging that there is a strong link between educational success and one's cultural identity, cultural values, beliefs, knowledges, indigenous languages and philosophies. In addition, both should not be put against each other, instead, they ought to co-construct and to be woven together to improve and bring about better learning outcomes. Van Peer (2006) parallels this view by stating that education success and development can be

achieved and helped by the utilisation of cultural and traditional educational approaches. Moreover, Peterson et al., (2016), Bishop et al., (2009) asserts that the reproducing of poor educational achievement for Māori and Pasifika learners/people is a result of the indigenous/minority people being marginalised continuously by educational system/s and policy makers, who have very little understanding about Māori and Pasifika ways of being. Hence the very little change regardless of educational reform that addresses inequalities within the educational system/s and settings in New Zealand. However, multiple researchers continue to bring up these issues faced by Māori and Pasifika learners with the hopes to bring about change, positive educational outcomes and influence educational policies (Bills & Hunter, 2015; Matapo, 2016).

- **Indigenous/Pasifika epistemologies and pedagogy in Education.**

Battiste and Youngblood (2000), argue that indigenous people have been oppressed and forced to change their ways of being during the process of European colonisation. Moreover, colonisation has put indigenous ways of knowing/being, languages, wisdoms, spirits, minds and cultural capital endangered and in a vulnerable situation around the world. Stabinsky and Brush (1996) highlights that indigenous knowledges continue to be colonised and narrowly defined in studies by Western perspectives and researchers such as anthropologists with the desire to “validate the knowledge systems of cultures or languages that are subordinated and often depreciated by the dominant national culture and threatened with extinction” (p.5). Thus, indigenous ways of knowing, values, beliefs and ways of being are continued to be misunderstood, undermined and marginalised. However, in the context of education and research, Hart (2010) mentioned that although indigenous people and the minority continue to face effects of colonisation in the academic world, numerous indigenous researchers are actively working to bring about culturally sensitive processes and approaches that respects and acknowledges indigenous peoples worldviews in educational contexts.

Koloto et al., (2006, p.4) elaborates *Pasifika* pedagogy as “an integration of teaching and learning methods that are informed by and validate Pacific values, world views, knowledge and experience”. According to Matapo (2016), *Pasifika* similar to Māori in the context of educational research continue to struggle in relation to advocating the legitimacy and validity of indigenous knowledge, ways of knowing and epistemologies that were subverted by their “colonised histories” and experiences (Kēpa & Manu’atu, 2011, p.1).

Hau’ofa (1993) argues that colonisation has continued to influence the minds of our people with the belief that the dominant perspective is the only way to success and higher achievement, specifically in the economic world. Smith (2012) and Thaman (2003a) argue that this belief continues to discredit the rich/deep indigenous ways of knowing, knowledges, wisdoms, and continue to disempower indigenous and minority people. However, from a Samoan perspective, Lipine (2010) argues that successful achievement for Samoan learners or those with indigenous backgrounds is highly influenced by their *aiga* (family), *aganu’u* (culture), *lotu* (church/prayer/spirituality) and *suiga* (change/transformation). Thus, the inclusion of *Pasifika/Samoan* cultural pedagogy in the learning of *Pasifika/Samoan* learners is crucial. Kolone-Collins (2010) asserts that educating Samoan learners without acknowledging and valuing Samoan wisdoms, knowledges and ways of life narrows their ways of thinking about themselves and the world. In addition, it deadens their spirits and disempower them when their *aganu’u fa’asamoa* is devalued and excluded from their learning.

Tongati’o (2010) in her study argues that formulating an educational plan for *Pasifika* students can be more effective and responsive when *Pasifika* learners and communities’ pedagogies and epistemologies are acknowledged, valued and prioritised. This would empower *Pasifika* learners and communities to realise their educational potential and give them a voice, which would increase engagement, participation and educational achievement. This does not apply solely to the *Pasifika* and Māori people in Aotearoa Zealand but also indigenous people in other

parts of the world such as Hawaii. According to Kana'iaupuni (2005) in her study, she argues that the "...creation of knowledge is critical to the self-determination of Native Hawaiians and other indigenous people" (p.37). In addition, she asserts that there ought to be "strengths-based" methods and approaches that honours and build upon Hawaiian people's indigenous cultural wisdoms, knowledges and ways of knowing when it comes to the pursuing of learning for the indigenous people. Saleeby (2002) describes that strength-based approach acknowledges and recognises "the wisdom of the human spirit, the inherent capacity of transformation of even the humbled and the abused" (p.1). Moreover, Manu'atu (2005) argues that indigenous peoples such as Tongans, who are migrants in New Zealand, could better understand and be informed about their place/s in Aotearoa New Zealand, educational context/s and in their homelands, when they are encouraged to draw from/upon their cultural knowledges and wisdoms of their fonua/fanua/land. In addition, this could help indigenous people to create and reconstruct ways of thinking in relation to working together and alongside others, with the hope to put an end to the marginalised and colonised way/s of thinking and living within our own homelands and the new-land/s that we have adopted as our second home/s.

- **Spirituality an Indigenous Epistemology**

Spirituality is defined and expressed in different layers and depths of knowledges by diverse people with diverse backgrounds, lived experiences, values and beliefs. Vaughan (2002) describes spirituality as an "...ultimate belonging or connection to the transcendental ground of being ...relationship with God, to fellow humans, or to earth. In addition, spirituality can be defined as a form of "devotion and commitment to a particular faith" (p.17). Kennedy et al., (2015) argues that "spirituality is part of Indigenous ontology and epistemology; that is, part of our theory about the nature of reality or what is known, and part of our relationship as knowers with what is knowable" (p.153). Smith (1999) argues that indigenous perspectives and concepts of spirituality is vital to indigenous epistemological approaches, ways of learning

and knowing, and ways of being. Passi (2011), Mila-Schaaf and Robinson (2010), argues that spirituality underpins the commitment of learners with indigenous backgrounds such as Pasifika students to succeed in their educational journeys. The underpinnings of spirituality in this context is inclusive of positive relationships with family, affirming of identity, cultural values and beliefs, support and reciprocity. According to Tuagalu (2013, as, as cited in Kennedy et al., 2015), there are three common epistemological principles across the cultures of the Pasifika: “people are strongly connected to their community or collective; people are strongly connected to their spiritual, mental, physical and emotional worlds and knowledge is collectively owned” (p.153). Tu’itahi (2005), similarly argues from a Tongan perspective that utilising the underpinning beliefs of the concept of *fonua/fanua/whenua* (land) signifies that, people’s ways of being and knowing are inseparable physically, ecologically and spiritually. This interdependence calls for an approach that upholds harmonious relationships in all aspects of the human life, to achieve balance and quality living in relation to the well-being of the fonua, physical well-being, emotional well-being and spiritual well-being.

- **Spirituality from a Samoan perspective.**

Tui Atua (2014) highlights that spirituality is deeply embedded in the everyday lives of Samoan people and highly sourced and influence by the two realms of *fa’asamoa* (indigenous Samoan spirituality) and *fa’akerisiano* (Christianity spirituality). According to Betham (2008), Christian spirituality is the search for an authentic and meaningful life guided by people’s faith and beliefs in the underpinning principles, values and beliefs of Christianity, God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Samoan spirituality and indigenous religion is deeply “rooted in the Polynesian Myths of Creation held by the Samoan people” (Betham, 2008, p.5), which believes in God Tagaloalagi as an ancestor of men and the “progenitor of all living things on earth” with the emphasise on all relationships amongst all living things to be “governed by the imperatives of being kin”. Therefore, man is of God’s descendent with “genealogical links between man,

the sun, the moon, the seas, the rocks and the earth” (Tui Atua, 2014, p.4). McDonald (2007, as cited in Toso, 2011) argues that the spiritual identity of a Samoan person is moulded and shaped through relationships. The true self is discovered when placed in real relational situations. Hence our Samoan proverb, “O tama a manu e fafaga i fuga o laau ao tama a tagata e fafaga i upu ma tala” (Offspring of birds are fed with blossoms whereas offspring of people are fed with words) (Tui Atua, 2007). People can tell the kind of upbringing you have had and the kind of person you are by the way you relate to other people. Lee (1985) argues that the ultimate purpose of spiritual practises leads to awakening once true self in relation to our relationships with the sacred world. These spiritual practises offer numerous spiritual gifts and benefits to enrich and nurture the hearts and spirits of Samoan people, which drives to bring about spiritual well-being.

According to Dodd (1990) and Narokobi (1983, as cited in Ihara & Vakalahi, 2011), the survival of these indigenous stories and spiritual beliefs for Samoan people, as well as other Pasifika cultural groups, such as Tonga is dependent on our elders who are “essentially intergenerational connectors ... to our past and the gateway to the future and are central to the survival of indigenous Pacific cultures through the world” (p. 406). Tavale (2013, as cited in Filisi, 2018) asserts that *fa’asamoa* and *fa’akerisiano* is maintained and upheld by the Samoan people utilising the underpinning values and principles of our *alagaupu* (proverb) “O le ala i le pule o le tautua” (The way to becoming a leader is through service). Taulealo (2001) and Toso (2011) highlights that *tautua* (service), is contextualised and positioned within the Samoan context/s, as one of the values, principles and practises that aspires to bring about harmony and balance within the lives of Samoan people. For example, *tautua fa’amatai* (service as a *matai*), *tautua fa’alelotu* (service to the church), *tautua fa’aleaiga* (service to your family). Tui Atua (2007), explains through the guiding principles of *tautua*, Samoan people seek to bring about harmonious relationships with the *fanua* (land/environment), man and one’s

self, and man and other men to attain blessings, life balance and holistic wellbeing. These relationships are governed by cultural values such as *alofa* (love), *fa'aaloalo* (respect), *fefa'asoa'i* (reciprocity), *fa'amagalo* (forgiveness), *foa'i* (giving), *soalaupule* (collaboration) and more. Sauni (2011) asserts that *fa'asamoa* is known as the Samoan ways of living and knowing which is inclusive of cultural values, beliefs and principles that governs the relationship of Samoan people and guides their social behaviour. Moreover, the foundation of spiritual awareness, knowledge, wisdoms and experiences of Samoan people are highly influenced and based on these cultural concepts throughout once life journey

- **Samoan/Pasifika spiritual wellbeing**

Mulitalo et al., (2000) explains that spiritual wellbeing is crucial to the *soifua maloloina* (optimum wellbeing/wellness) of a Samoan person's life holistically. Laing and Miteara (1994) (as cited in Tiatia et al., 2003) highlights that *soifua maloloina* is defined as *soifua* (life or living/to live) where as *maloloina* means (recover from illness, health or rest). Lui and Schwenke (2003) describes that *soifua maloloina* is achieved by adhering and respecting the *tapu* (sacred) and boundaries that governs relationships between man and man, man and God and man and *fanua* (land). Tamasese et al., (1997) highlights that *tapu* (sacred boundaries) are there for the protection and enhancing Samoan people's everyday lives. Thus, balance is achieved when these *tapu* are adhered to which is crucial to a Samoan person's *soifua maloloina* (optimum wellbeing/wellness). This belief is parallel to Ihara and Vakalahi (2011) who is their research highlights that "from a Pacific perspective, spirituality is central, and wellness does not exist without balance of the spirit, body, mind, and environment" (p.405). In addition, Tui Atua (2005) emphasises that a Samoan person's spiritual wellbeing is crucial to their whole self (*tagata ato'atoa*), which includes the mental self and the physical self. These significant aspects of a Samoan person's life cannot be excluded from one another as is brings about a "sense of wholeness, sacredness and uniqueness from its place of belonging in its

family and village, its genealogy, language, land environment and culture” (p.303). From a health perspective, this notion is parallel to George et al., (2000) in their study, which identified the positive relationship between spirituality and people’s physical and mental wellbeing.

- **Nurturing a Samoan child: A spiritual journey**

Raising a Samoan child/person is a highly spiritual central task and blessing. There are many Samoan culturally proverbs and proverbial phrases that are transmitted through oral traditions and everyday practices that are utilised as foundation/guidelines/reminder for *matua* (parents/elders), *aiga* (family) and *nu’u ma alalafaga* (villages and communities) on how to raise our children to become great human beings and leaders in the future. The words from Tui Atua (2002) articulates who/what a Samoan person is all about from a Samoan worldview

I am not an individual; I am an integral part of the cosmos. I share divinity with my ancestors, the land, the seas and the skies. I am not an individual because I share a tofi with my family, my village, my nation. I belong to my family and my family belongs to me I belong to my village and my village belongs to me. I belong to my nation and my nation belongs to me. This is the essence of my sense of belonging (p. 80).

His words highlight that a Samoan person is spiritually, physically, and emotionally connected to the God/s, the cosmologies, the world, people, the past, present and future. Masoe and Bush (2009) highlights from a Samoan perspective that, a child’s spiritual wellbeing and that of their collective *aiga* is a crucial integral part of their holistic wellbeing that cannot be excluded. In addition, the spiritual wellbeing of a Samoan child is nurtured from before birth by the *tinā* (mother) adhering to the *tapu* (boundaries) of the pregnancy, and the family supporting the *tinā* by treating her and the unborn child with extra care (*fa’apelepele*) and being prayerful (*nofo tatalo/tapua’ia*) (Taulealo, 2001).

Masoe and Bush (2009) and Tui Atua, (2005) highlights that when the child is born, the aiga will then call upon their extended families, friends and the *faiife'au* (pastor), for a (*faigalotu/alalafaga*), where they collectively give thanks to God through prayer for the new life and new addition to their family (Mamea, Ioane & Slater, 2018; Tui Atua, 2002). Kolone-Collins (2010) explore the notion/practice of *fagogo* (fables, tales, and storytelling) as a common and traditional way of nurturing a Samoan child's spiritual wellbeing. Tui Atua (2002) explains that *fagogo* is inter-generational and it is told by grandparents (elders) in their loving tones to soothe the young ones to sleep. Through the process of *fagogo*, a child learns and inherits his/hertheir ancestral stories, cultural meanings, wisdoms, knowledge and cultural communal aspirations. Hence our proverb "O tama a manu e fafaga i fuga o laau, a'o tama a tagata e fafaga i upu ma tala" (The offspring of the birds are fed with flowers, but the offspring of people are fed with words and stories). One of the most important inheritance that the children acquire from the process of *fagogo* is their *gagana Samoa* (Samoan language). Aiono (1996) argues that the absence of one's cultural language would mean that our cultural values and beliefs will not be genuinely explained, understood or even preserved. Amituana'i-Tolosa (2010) asserts that our language speaks for who we are as peoples, our *fonua/fanua*/lands, our past, present and future hence our Samoan proverb "A leai se gagana ona po ai lea o le nu'u" (a village will plunge into darkness if there is no language) (p.81).

In addition, Tui Atua (2002) highlights the notion of "*mama*" (food that is chewed by an elderly for the babies) as a practise that is more than just food but instead, it holds a spiritual element, as through this *mama*, comes the nurturing of the physical, cultural and spiritual self. Therefore,

Both *mama* and *fagogo* bespeak the passing on of physical and cultural life from generation to generation in closeness and alofa. It is an image of intimacy, of sharing, of love, of connection and communication. It imparts mana and shares the feau (i.e. the message) between generations (p.19).

The multiple Samoan proverbs that are used as cultural guiding principles on nurturing children are highly based on *alofa* (love) and are inclusive of indigenous and Christian values and beliefs. For example, Tui Atua (2005) highlights the proverbs; O au o matua fanau (The pinnacle of a parent's eye are their children) "E leai se gaumata'u na'o le gualofa" (What you do with love nurtures and endures - fear does the opposite)". He asserts that from a Samoan view, children ought to be nurtured without using excessive discipline through words or actions, to save them from growing up with broken spirits (*ola pala'ai/ola fefe*). Contextualising these cultural collections into Pasifika ECE, the researcher draw upon the words of Manu'atu (2013), Utumapu-McBride and Manu'atu (2019), who argue the importance of *alofa/aroha/ofa/love* in education and that education that is not drawn from *alofa* is wasted as it is not spiritually felt and received by the learners. It is from these views/conversations that the researcher aims to explore the pedagogical ideas of the concept of *talanoa alofa* to further enrich the spiritual wellbeing of Pasifika children in ECE from the Samoan worldview. In addition, there have been research exploring spirituality from a Samoan perspective in relation to raising a child (Anae, 2010; Taulealo, 2001; Toso, 2011; Tui Atua, 2009), however this study aims to explore appropriate pedagogies to enrich the spiritual wellbeing of children in Pasifika Early Childhood Education (PECE).

Chapter 3 Faiga fa'avae ma auala fa'asu'esu'ega: Methodology & Methods

• Introduction

Chapters 1 and 2 of this study highlighted and explored the significance of utilising indigenous ways of knowing, wisdoms, knowledges and pedagogical approaches to help and relate to Samoan/Pasifika children in ECE and to bring about positive learning outcomes. To fully explore and understand the topic of interest (The full expression of “Talanoa alofa”: A pedagogy to further enrich the spiritual well-being of Pasifika children in Early Childhood Education from a Samoan perspective), the researcher aims to avoid any disconnection between the participants, the researcher and the topic of interest in order to bring about data that is genuine and real. This is so this study can influence the minds and spirits of readers and teachers of Pasifika children to further understand the *Pasifika koloa* that are deeply connected and related to the Pasifika children in ECE (Kallery & Psillio, 2001, as cited in Tike, 2018).

The real meaning of spirits, people and wisdoms of the indigenous population such as Pasifika have been and continue to be altered and influenced by colonisation and marginalisation. Sadly, this has influenced the spirits of Pasifika learners in the educational settings and is reflected on their achievement in school. However, Gaugatao (2017) reminds us not to blame each other, but try and understand Pasifika children and families “...understand how they see the world, promote difference as a strength and help them understand that their identities, linguistic and cultural assets are vital to their educational success in Aotearoa New Zealand” (p.1). He argues that instead of celebrating the small achievements of Pasifika learners and giving false hope, there is a lot of work that needs to be done. In addition, he suggests that, the government should set “high expectation blueprint to tackle the inequities that Pasifika students continue to experience in our supposedly high performing education system” (p.1).

The good news is Manu'atu et al., (2016) believe that our cultural values and beliefs, languages, traditions and practises can be useful in relation to renewing, transforming and empowering our spirits to prevail and triumph within an educational setting that is “Eurocentric”, and controlled by the dominant perspectives and English language. In addition, the possibilities rests within the hands of Pasifika educators, learners, families and communities because only they know how. This is supported by Smith (1999), who advocates the decolonising and reclaiming of indigenous ways of thinking and unravelling indigenous ways of knowing and viewing the world from that of the dominant culture. This is so indigenous people such as Pasifika people in educational settings improve their existing circumstances and avert losing who they are in the process of living and learning, in a society that is controlled by western views. This chapter explores the methodology and method of talanoa as a suitable research conceptual framework for this study.

Research Design

- **Theoretical framework**

Considering Smith's (1999) argumentation, the research aims to utilise the conceptual framework of talanoa as a qualitative research design. A qualitative research design welcomes the possibility of multiple truths (Newby, 2010) that are constructed by multiple people as a community and as individuals. Moreover, qualitative research design welcomes flexibility in its process (Zanutto, 2013). This is like Lichtman (2006) who described qualitative research as a process with a nature that embodies and employs compound practises – it is “fluid and ever-changing” (p.9). Additionally, it is the study of contextualising and conceptualising experiences as they are. Furthermore, Creswell (2008) asserts that qualitative research is a communal multifaceted interaction that is constructed by the exchanging and weaving of thoughts and hearts of the researcher and participants. The aim of the researcher is to examine

and understand the topic of interest from the perspectives and lived experiences of the participants (Samoan educators in Pasifika ECE) as well as their teaching experiences, specifically their *talanoaga* (interactions) with the children. This is an interpretivist approach, which is also referred to as a constructivism approach, which values the ability of people to bring about meaning and the meanings that are brought about by people (Mack, 2010).

- **Talanoa Methodology**

Johnston (2014) asserts that cultural consideration ought to be maintained when researching in contexts that are highly diverse, regardless of the nature, purpose, design and analysis of the research. *Talanoa* is relevant to this study due to the cultural backgrounds of the participants and the researcher. The methodology/method of *talanoa* according to Otunuku (2011) is applicable to researching Pasifika indigenous wisdoms, knowledges and ways of knowing because it is “...culturally sensitive and recognises the participants’ social relationship as an appropriate context for collecting data” (p.51). *Talanoa* is similar in context with the phenomenon explored in the study, in relation to its originality/roots (*talanoa* & *talanoa alofa* are concepts of the Pasifika), epistemological views, pedagogical ideas, cultural beliefs and underpinning values. There are multiple types of *talanoa* in the Pasifika (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2012), however, it is commonly rooted in the oratory and traditional discussions in most Pasifika Islands such as Tonga, Fiji, Samoa, Cook Islands. In addition, *talanoa* is deeply woven into the everyday lives of Pasifika people (Fa’avae et al., 2016; Prescott, 2008). Suaalii-Sauni and Fulu-Aiolupotea (2014) explains that *talanoa* was known and used in the Pasifika people’s way of life, long before it was developed as a Pasifika methodology/method of research.

A Tongan definition of *talanoa* (like the Samoan perspective) breaks it down to *tala* (story, talk) and *noa* (nothing, zero). To define *talanoa* according to this meaning simply puts it as *talanoa* – talking about nothing specific or nothing in particular (Vaioleti, 2003). However,

talanoa is not only about the talk, but it is a personal encounter where people exchange and weave emotional stories of lived experiences, which can bring about data that is authentic, genuine and real (Otsuka, 2006; Vaioleti, 2006). In addition, Manu'atu (2000, 2002) asserts that aspects of *talanoa* are drawn from the hearts of those who are part of the *talanoa* that are abundance with good spirits, love and happiness that can be energising. This can bring about *mafana/mafanafana*/warmth that will then create relationships that ought to be governed by the values of respect, reciprocity, love, service, inclusion, honesty and more (Taulealo, 2001; Thaman, 2003; Toso, 2011). Similar beliefs about *talanoa* by Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba (2012) and Halapua (2000), highlights that *talanoa* is deeply concerned with building, maintaining and strengthening relationships governed by our cultural values. Furthermore, *talanoa* allows the researcher and participants to discuss and share views in what interests them without being limited or controlled.

The cultural underpinning values of *talanoa* is highly appropriate for this study, due to the cultural background of the participants, researcher and the context of the study. The research constructs its findings and discussions from the *talanoaga* between the six participants and the researcher as well as the literature. This is an inclusive approach which *talanoa* emphasizes according to Vaioleti (2006) who highlighted that the “researcher is not a distant observer but is active in the *talanoa* process and in defining and re-defining meaning/s in order to achieve the aim of what is being *talanoa*” (p.23). *Talanoa* takes away the space between the researcher and the participants bring about respectful relationships and meaningful *talanoa* (Wilson, 2010).

- **Research process.**

Research Participants

The topic of interest - The full expression of “*Talanoa alofa*”: A pedagogy to further enrich the spiritual well-being of Pasifika children in Early Childhood Education from a Samoan perspective, focus specifically on exploring the phenomenon from a Samoan perspective. Therefore, the initial anticipation was to invite six Samoan early childhood teachers (ECT) (three New Zealand born (NZB) & three Samoan born) to participate in the study. The idea was to explore the topic through their voices, lived experiences as Samoans and Samoan teachers in ECE through individualised *talanoa/talanoaga* sessions. The motive behind the idea of inviting a mix of Samoan-born and New Zealand-born Samoan teachers from Aoga Amata are as follow:

- a) This is the current mix of Samoan teachers that are teaching and caring in Aoga Amata
- b) I needed to know the differences between their views of the concept of *talanoa alofa* and what influences these views
- c) I needed to find out if the answers and reasons from (b) and (c) influences the way; they practise/will practise *talanoa alofa* as a pedagogy to enrich the spiritual well-being of children in Pasifika ECE. I believe the examining of these reasons are relevant to the study because the practise of *talanoa alofa* should/is stemmed from the heart and the spirit of the teacher. Therefore, as a researcher, I need to be aware of the teacher’s views, beliefs and understanding of the concept and the reasons behind all these. This is so I can identify how might *talanoa alofa* can be effectively used as a pedagogy in the context of ECE to enrich the spiritual well-being of the Pasifika children in ECE.

Participants' recruitment

I used my Samoan cultural values of *fa'aaloalo* (respect), during the process of inviting participants to take part in this study. Because the study explores the Samoan worldview of the phenomenon, the anticipation was to recruit the participants from *Aoga Amata*. The initial plan was to advertise on Facebook and going into a few *Aoga Amata* to introduce myself, and the research to their management or team leader, and then ask for permission for me to invite members of the staff to participate. This was done in person and over the telephone. Participants Information Sheets and Consent Forms were then given out to the staff with the agreement to confidentially reply to me personally via email or text. The responses were mostly from Samoan born ECT, however the search for NZB ECT was still going and was getting difficult due to people's availability, commitments and the low numbers of NZB ECT in the *Aoga Amata*. In addition, the aim was to also have a Samoan male view on the topic of interest which I was unable to achieve due to the same reasons as previously mentioned.

Method of Data Collection

The method of data collection was *talanoa/talanoaga*. This method was used because of its deep connection to the participants' cultural backgrounds and ways of being. In addition, *talanoa* gave an opportunity for the participants and myself as a researcher as well as a Samoan educator to freely share, exchange and communicate our stories and lived experiences from our hearts (Otsuka, 2006; Vaioleti, 2006). Most importantly, the participants were able to extensively and deeply share their knowledges and views about the topic of interest providing new and interesting avenues for this study to explore in order to further understand and examine the topic. In addition, the participants and the researcher bonded as they reflect upon their journeys from Samoa, their families, their cultural values and beliefs. *Talanoa/talatalanoaga*

took away the space between the researcher and the participants (Wilson, 2010), bringing about a spiritual connection driven by their energised spirits (Manu'atu, 2002).

Gagana Samoa (Samoan language) was mostly used throughout the *talanoaga* sessions, however for some participants specifically the NZB ECTs, bilingual (Samoan and English) was utilised, as this was easier for them to fully share and communicate their thoughts. Each participant was scheduled according to their preferable time and availability. Most of the *talanoaga* took place in the weekend. The *talanoaga* sessions were meant to be for 30 minutes to one hour, however the *talatalanoaga* took longer than anticipated. This provided enough rich data that there was no need for second *talanoaga*. The main questions were asked as well as spontaneous sub-questions. However, the participants were notified and contacted thereafter two weeks from the first *talanoaga* session whether they had any additional comments to their initial *talanoa*. They were happy with what they had already shared and given and so the process continued.

Transcripts

After every meeting with the participants, I began transcribing the *talanoa* sessions by myself. The *talanoaga* sessions were transcribed on Microsoft Word as well as handwriting. All interviews were transcribed two weeks after every *talanoa* sessions with each participant due to my availability as I work full time and the long *talanoaga* that were recorded. The participants were informed after their *talanoa* sessions were going to be transcribed. They were happy with what they have shared already and had not intended to add changes it. The *talanoa/talanoaga* sessions were recorded by mobile phone using an App from Google. The recorder was safe and reliable.

Data analysis

During each *talanoa* sessions with the participants, I began to note down some of the main points and themes from each *talanoaga* according to the questions and sub-questions that were asked. By the time the transcribing was done and after numerous times of re-listening to the recordings, I had already familiarised myself with the themes from each *talanoaga* and began colour coding them. The transcribed data was then analysed from a qualitative data analysis view. Qualitative analysis aims to bring about or add meaning/meanings to the raw data, transforming it into new knowledge. From this perspective, I searched to identify relationships between the different themes in the data and moved to explaining why certain views have become certain views (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995; Marshall & Rossman, 1990). To support the data analysis, findings were generated by using categorisation and theme-based analysis as tools.

Ethical consideration

The Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEK) gave approval for this study to be carried out after assessing whether its procedures and design met the ethical standards. Ethics application number 18/284 - The full expression of “Talanoa alofa”: A pedagogy to further enrich the spiritual well-being of Pasifika children in Early Childhood Education from a Samoan perspective was approved on the 20 of July 2017.

Research Question and Sub-questions

The pedagogical views, ways of knowing, beliefs about teaching and learning in a multi-cultural country like Aotearoa New Zealand is extremely influenced by diversity (Santamaria et al., 2014). Therefore, we ought to acknowledge the differences amongst us and utilise ways to bring about inclusiveness, so we may be able to respond effectively to the diverse learning aspirations of learners and their families (Luafutu-Simpson, 2011). The researcher’s motivation

for this research is to explore Pasifika indigenous ways of teaching and learning based on a Samoan perspective, by exploring the concept of *talanoa alofa*. Moreover, is to explore indigenous pedagogy that can help further enrich interactions and bring about positive learning outcomes for Pasifika children. In addition, is to identify and examine cultural ways of knowing, teaching and learning that Pasifika children and Pasifika ECT can relate to. This is the hopes that it will contribute to improving educational achievement for Pasifika learners' families and communities in Aotearoa New Zealand.

From experience, success for Samoan people is not merely based on educational credentials but learning to nurture and maintain relationships with others and the world, let alone one's self. This is paramount to the spiritual well-being of a Samoan person (Tui Atua, 2009). *Talanoa/Talanoa alofa* is one of the most important practice/method to scaffold and guide the young's lives as they grow up in Samoa hence the proverb. "O tama a manu e fafaga i fuga o la'au, a'o tama a tagata e fafaga i upu ma tala" (The offspring of the birds are fed with flowers, but the offspring of people are fed with words and stories). *Talanoa alofa* is stemmed from the heart of the Samoan parent, elder or leader, the talk is always from a place of love. To contextualise *talanoa alofa* to the context of early childhood education in New Zealand, I draw upon the words of Manu'atu (2013) who argues that, education that is driven by/with love can produce learning that is meaningful and lifelong. The research aims to weave in a view of Samoan indigenous pedagogical ideas derived for the notion of *talanoa alofa* to the conversation/s on talanoa and quality interactions in early childhood education. Moreover, the influence of *talanoa alofa* in nurturing the spiritual well-being of children in the context of Pasifika ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand. Thus, the main research question would be –

How would Samoan teachers effectively use the full expression of *talanoa alofa* in their practise to further enrich the spiritual well-being of Pasifika children in ECE?

Talanoaga/Talanoa Questions;

1. O lea le 'ese'esega o le talanoa ma le talanoa alofa? (What is the difference between talanoa and talanoa alofa?)
2. I le tatou aganu'u fa'asamoa e fa'ataua lava le fa'aaloalo e ala lea i le amana'iaina o tulaga fa'alenu'u, fa'alemalo ma isi lava tulaga faapena o tagata tatou te talanoa iai. E fa'apefea ona tatou fa'aogaina lea tu ma aga i fanua a Samoa i le tatou galuega fa'alefaiaoga. (When we talanoa with others in our Samoan culture, we respectfully consider a lot of things such as the status of the people we are talking to, the context and more. How would we use the Samoan cultural underpinning values of talanoa in the context of ECE?)
3. I lou manatu fa'amatua, o lea se taua tele o le talanoa alofa i le fa'afaileleina o alo ma fanau i Samoa? (From a Samoan parent's view, how important is talanoa/talanoa alofa in raising Samoan children?)
4. O a ni foliga o le talanoa alofa i lau galue ai o se faiaoga po'o totonu foi o lou aiga? What does talanoa alofa look like? (in your practise, your home)
5. E te fa'aogaina le talanoa alofa i lau galue fa'afaioga? (Do you practise talanoa alofa in your centre? (Yes/No)
6. O lea se tali atu a le fanau laiti ia te oe pe'a e talanoa alofa iai? (How do children respond to you when you talanoa alofa to them?)
7. Fa'amata e fa'apefea ona fesoasoani le talanoa alofa i le olaga 'ao'aoina o le fanau? How does talanoa alofa helps with children's holistic learning?
8. Oa ni mea e ono a'afia ai a tatou talanoaga ma le fanau? (What are some of the factors that can influence the way we talanoa with children?)

9. O lea sou malamalama'aga i le uiga o le olaga fa'aleagaga po'o le tagata lilo fa'asamoa?
(What is your understanding of spiritual well-being from a Samoan perspective?)
10. Fa'amata e iai le a'afiaga o le talanoa alofa ma le olaga fa'aleagaga po'o le tagata lilo fo'i mai le fa'akerisiano? (Does Christianity influence talanoa alofa and spiritual well-being from a Samoan view?)
11. E te talitonu e mafai e le talanoa alofa ona fa'atamao'aigaina le olaga fa'aleagaga po'o le tagata lilo o fanau laiti i totonu o Aoga Amata po'o le ECE fo'i? (Do you believe that talanoa alofa can help enrich the spiritual well-being of Pasifika children in ECE?)

These are the main questions that were asked during the talanoaga sessions. However, when I saw an opportunity to further examine a new knowledge that the participants shared, I would often ask sub-questions to further explore and understand what was said. Questions were also asked in the Samoan language.

Strengths

The strength of the research conceptual framework that was used in this research was that it provided more thorough, rich and genuine data to elucidate and explore the phenomenon or the topic of interest. *Talanoa* as a qualitative research methodology and method benefited this study immensely in relation to the depth and extent of knowledge that was discovered and rediscovered during the talanoaga sessions. This research approach created a space for the participants and the researcher as Samoans and ECT to reflect, rethink and transform their spirits and hearts in relation to the quality of teacher-child interactions and teaching practises in ECE. Talking about one's culture and sharing lived experiences can be quite emotional and sensitive and in fact can bring back memories that are either happy or sad. The nature of *talanoa* and its cultural underpinning values brought about harmonious and positive relational space (*va*) between the participants and the researcher to freely share and open up bringing about

authentic data. Moreover, *talanoa* as a method of data collection for this study was cost-effective, straight forward and without any hustle.

Limitations/Weaknesses

This research did not go without any hurdles. Firstly, even though I am a Samoan, I have always been working in Tongan centres, therefore, upon introducing myself and the research to some of the Aoga Amata and possible participants, I felt like an outsider and this was reflected through the response I received in the end. So even though I am a Samoan emerging researcher and educator, I still felt like an outsider for this reason. However, I believe that I was also an insider in relation to my deep understanding of the *aganu'u fa'asamoa* and fluency in my *Gagana Samoa*. In addition, one of the criteria specified in the recruitment forms and invitations was that the research aims to recruit New Zealand born ECT and Samoan born ECT, however, finding NZB ECT was very hard as most of the teachers in *Aoga Amata* are Samoan born. The highest hurdle for this research was due to my personal and work commitments. Working full-time and doing this research on a full-time basis, not forgetting the many unexpected life events that happened during the process became barriers to the completion of this study on the initial anticipated due date.

Summary

This chapter bullet points the multiple aspects of the research methodology and method utilised in this research. To conclude this chapter, *talanoa* as a qualitative research methodology and method for this research was highly appropriate in relation to the nature of the topic of interest and the cultural backgrounds of the participants as well as the participants. Strengths and weaknesses of the study have been identified.

Chapter 4: Manatu fa'aalia: Findings

- **Introduction**

This chapter highlights the findings from the data that was gathered through the *talanoa* sessions with the six participants. For identity protection, fictitious names are given to the participants. A brief summary of the participants' personal and professional backgrounds are detailed as follows.

- **Profile of the Participants**

Name	Place of birth	Years of Experience	Employment	Age-group
<i>Asenati</i>	Samoa	8 years	Aoga Amata	45-55
<i>Pele</i>	New Zealand	7 years	Aoga Amata	25-35
<i>Olaga</i>	Samoa	7 years	Aoga Amata	35-45
<i>Teuila</i>	Samoa	10 years	Aoga Amata	55-65
<i>Nise</i>	New Zealand	5 years	Home-based	45-55
<i>Sosefina</i>	Samoa	6 years	Mainstream	35-45

Listed below are the questions that were asked during the *talanoaga* sessions with the participants. Some sub-questions were spontaneously asked when it was needed to further extend new and interesting ideas that came about during these *talatalanoaga*. Evidently, the *Samoan* language was mostly used during the *talanoa* sessions with the participants except for the NZB participants who were mostly comfortable to share most of their thoughts in English. The translations were done by the researcher.

- **Fesili/Questions**

1. *O le a le 'ese'esega o le talanoa ma le talanoa alofa?* (What is the difference between *talanoa* and *talanoa alofa*?)
2. *I le tatou aganu'u fa'asamoa e fa'ataua lava le fa'aaloalo e ala lea i le amana'iaina o tulaga fa'alenu'u, fa'alemalo ma isi lava tulaga faapena o tagata tatou te talanoa iai. E fa'apefea ona tatou fa'aogaina lea tu ma aga i fanua a Samoa i le tatou galuega fa'alefaiaoga.* (When we *talanoa* with others in our *Samoa* culture, we respectfully consider a lot of things such as the status of the people we are talking to, the context and more. How would we use the *Samoa* cultural underpinning values of *talanoa* in the context of ECE?)
3. *I lou manatu fa'amatua, o lea se taua tele o le talanoa alofa i le fa'afaileleina o alo ma fanau i Samoa?* (From a *Samoa* parent's view, how important is *talanoa/talanoa alofa* in raising *Samoa* children?)
4. *O a ni foliga o le talanoa alofa i lau galue ai o se faiaoga po'o totonu foi o lou aiga?* What does *talanoa alofa* look like? (in your practise, your home)
5. *E te fa'aaogaina le talanoa alofa i lau galue ai o se faiaoga?* (Do you practise *talanoa alofa* in your centre? (Yes/No)
6. *O le a se tali atu a le fanau laiti ia te oe pe'a e talanoa alofa iai?* (How do children respond to you when you *talanoa alofa* to them?)
7. *Fa'amata e fa'apefea ona fesoasoani le talanoa alofa i le olaga 'ao'aoina o le fanau?* How does *talanoa alofa* helps with children's holistic learning?
8. *Oa ni mea e ono a'afia ai a tatou talanoaga ma le fanau?* (What are some of the factors that can influence the way we *talanoa* with children?)

9. *O lea sou malamalama'aga i le uiga o le olaga fa'aleagaga po'o le tagata lilo fa'asamoa?* (What is your understanding of spiritual well-being from a Samoan perspective?)
10. *Fa'amata e iai le a'afiaga o le talanoa alofa ma le olaga fa'aleagaga po'o le tagata lilo fo'i mai le fa'akerisiano?* (Does Christianity influence *talanoa alofa* and spiritual well-being from a Samoan view?)
11. *E te talitonu e mafai e le talanoa alofa ona fa'atamao'aigaina le olaga fa'aleagaga po'o le tagata lilo o le fanau laiti i totonu o Aoga Amata po'o le ECE fo'i?* (Do you believe that *talanoa alofa* can help enrich the spiritual well-being of *Pasifika* children in ECE?) HOW? /WHY?

- **Thematical Analysis:**

The thematic analysis was used to systematically identify, analyse, organise and report patterns that were commonly shown in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematical analysis as an analysis approach or tool for this research gave the researcher an opportunity, to identify and make sense of the shared and collective meanings and experiences shared by the participants. Braun and Clarke (2012) argues that the thematically method of data analysis is not merely about identifying commonalities, but more importantly the patterns of meanings that can be identified that is crucial to exploring and understanding the topic of interest. In addition, the nature of the thematically data analysis approach parallels with the nature of the qualitative research approach utilised in this research as its conceptual framework research design.

The findings are presented using the three themes that were commonly identified in the data.

1. **Samoan cultural cluster of *talanoa***
2. **Spiritual aspect/s of *talanoa alofa***

3. Talanoa alofa and holistic learning

4. Factors influencing *talanoa alofa* as a teaching pedagogy

- ***Samoan* cultural cluster of *talanoa***

It was evident in the data that *talanoa* is highly multi-faceted due to its contextualisation within the *Samoan* culture and traditions. Upon its contextualisation, *talanoa* is also conceptualised according to the *Samoan* cultural hierarchy and statuses of people utilising its cultural underpinnings. This theme is in two parts of (1) *Samoan* cultural contextualising and conceptualising of *talanoa* and (2) *Talanoa alofa* deepens *talanoa*

Samoan* cultural contextualising and conceptualising of *talanoa

“*E tele itu’aiga talanoa i la’u iloa iai, talanoa fa’amatai, talanoa a le tama ma le tina, talanoa fa’auso, talanoa fa’afai feau, ‘ia oe le ote ma isi ituaiga talanoaga i totonu a ia o le fa’asamoa. E ala la ona talanoa isi tagata i isi taimi ia e faasoa ai so’o se ituaiga story lava, ‘ia ae ‘afai o se talanoaga fo’i lea e serious, ia e pei foi lea e talanoa e soalaupule ai ni fa’afitauli, ‘ia ma ‘e i luga lava o le alofa po’o le mafatia fo’i ...lea e ala ai ona faia le soalaupule e fa’aleleia ai le va fealofani ma maua ai le fealofani ma lagona lelei ...ia ma si a tatou talanoa fa’asamasamanoa foi lele e le’o ano lava iai” (Sosefina).*

Translation:

There are many kinds of *talanoa* in my belief in the *Samoan* culture, there’s the *talanoa* as a chief, *talanoa* as parents, *talanoa* as siblings, *talanoa* as a Pastor, there is also the telling off. Often people *talanoa* as a way of sharing different stories. When it is a serious talk it usually is concern with bringing about solutions to solve an issue that might disturb the peace and

harmonious relationships amongst people. It is always stems from love. And then there's the talk about nothing serious or nothing in particular (Sosefina).

“O le talanoa, e tele ituaiga talanoa, talanoa fa’asamasamanoa e soo se topic lava e focus iai. Pei e amata e leisi le talanoaga ia oso mai lea soso’o le talanoaga ...o leisi ituaiga talanoa fa’asamasamanoa le fetau ai tagata ma fa’amalo ona te’i lava lea ua talanoa”

(Asenati)

Translation:

The different kinds of *talanoa*, talking about nothing usually focuses on any topic of interest. Someone would start the *talanoa* and then someone else will jump in the *talanoa* and add their piece of the story ...sometimes people just randomly meet, say hello and then they *talanoa* just like that (Asenati).

“O le Samoa lava ia, a kalagoa pe relate isi kagaka, pe laikiki pe makua le kagaka e fa’aoga lava values faasamoa, fa’aaloalo, tu ma amioga fa’aaloalo e faailoa aku i ou lavalava, uiga tausaaafia, appreciation, so’o se kaimi e kakau lava ga fa’aali uiga ma ku ma aga fa’asamoa”

(Teuila)

Translation:

A Samoan person is expected to use their Samoan values of respect when relating to other people whether they are young or old. We ought to use our Samoan values of respect that is shown through our behaviour character, the way we dress, kindness, appreciation. Every time we are expected to show our Samoan loving ways (Teuila)

“E ala ga kakau ga fa’aoga a kakou ku ma aga fa’aaloalo pe’a o’o iga kakou kalagoa ma kamaiki. E iai auala e fa’aoga ai ...e.g. – i le agagu’u fa’asamoa, e ke le sooga ave’a so’o se upu fa’aaloalo i se kamaikiki ae fa’aoga upu pei o le tulou, fa’afetai, fa’amolemole e kele

kago la e role model ...go the level of the children, fa'afesaga'i ...talanoa fa'afesagai"

(Olaga)

Translation:

It is appropriate to use our cultural values and respectful ways when we talanoa with the children. There are ways to do it ...e.g. – in the *Samoan* culture, you can't just say any respectful words to the children. You start from words such as tulou (excuse me), thank you, please and you ought to role model it ...go to the level of the children, face to face ...*talanoa* face to face (Olaga)

" E kele ikuaiga kalagoa, pei la o le kalagoa fa'amakai e makua ese lava le tone e kiliva ai le kalagoa a le makai ...e iai kaimi e sau ai le makou faifeau ii ma loga falekua ke iloa lelei le ikuaiga kalagoa e sui foi le ikuaiga kalagoa e status pei oga ka'ua "ia susu maia o a mai le kaeao i lau susuga i le fa'afeagaiga?" e le iloa la e kamaiki ae iai kaimi makou ke kalagoa ai i kamaiki i iku'aiga fa'aaloalo e.g. – a valaau le kamaikiki "fia inu" oga fa'asao aku laia e le fa'aoga "fia inu fa'amolemole" Ia ma le tone malie o le leo, e o'o aku i leisi kaimi ua faalogo ua vala'au le kamaikiki "fia inu fa'amolemole" ...e feel e le kamaikiki le faaogaga o loka leo ma fa'akaikai iai ma ioa foi le aoaoga o le mea lea kake faiaku ai" (Asenati)

Translation:

There are multiple kinds of *talanoa*, like the talanoa of the matai (chief), which is done with a very different tone to deliver the message. Sometimes our Pastor comes to visit with his wife and so there is a particular kind to respectful *talanoa* that is used "welcome (politely), how are you this morning Reverend". The children won't understand the meaning of these words but we talk to them about the basic acts of respect such as when they call for a drink " I want a drink" teachers will remind them by saying "I want a drink please" in a very soft tone. The

next time, we could hear the children saying “I want a drink please” ...the children will learn easily and understand when teachers use respectful words and tone (Asenati)

Talanoa alofa deepens talanoa

“O le kele o ikuaiga talanoa i le fa’asamoa e pei e afua uma mai lava i le alofa. Aua o le alofa e lauku ai mea uma e pei o le upu a le kusi. A’o foliga makagofie lava ia o le kalagoa alofa pe’a ofa fika aku iai e kakau oga aofai ai le kalagoa ma le ogosa’i, filemu, e ku’u avagoa, e mafagafaga upu e le sooga lafoa, e kalagoa ma le fa’aaloalo, kalagoa mai le faku ia e lagoga foi e le kamaikiki ...e le kaikai ga galo i le kamaikiki le kalagoa lea ma e makua ifo lava e ola ai ma role model aku foi i isi kagaka” (Sosefina)

Translation:

In the Samoan culture, many types of *talanoa* is stemmed from love. Love covers all as the book (Bible) says. But the beautiful face of *talanoa alofa* in my opinion is inclusive of *talanoa* with patience, peace, giving second chances, warm words instead of harsh words, *talanoa* with respect and from the heart, therefore the children can feel it. A child will never forget this *talanoa* that when they grow up, they will live it and will also role model it to others (Sosefina)

“Talanoa alofa ia more in depth because it is done with love and from love it can be shown in our facial expressions ...it is done with your whole self ...talanoa is just to talk briefly like a mutual conversation ...talanoa alofa is more deeper” (Pele)

“Is it so important to talanoa alofa especially ... the dressing what I mean is ... (laugh) children are small you have to go down to their level eye contact body language as some of the children can’t verbally talk to you so they can feel the alofa in the talanoa” (Nise)

“Talanoa alofa can empower the kids to learn that they have a purpose ...we are not babysitters e kele le kakou galuega e aoao kamaiki not just to teach numeracy etc. but for them to know that they are valued ...be consistent” (Pele)

“Talanoa e tele ina leai se autu ...so’o se ituaiga talanoa lava e talanoa ai – tala means story noa means nothing. A’e talanoa la ma lou alofa ona iai lea o le meaning ...e iai le uiga ona e ete manao e faailoa atu lou alofa through your facials, voice ina ia lagona e le tamaititi le feau lea e momoli atu” (Teuila)

Translation:

Talanoa usually is without a specific topic ...any topic can be talked about in talanoa – tala means story noa means nothing. But when you talk with love then there is meaning ...there’s meaning and the reason is because you want to show your love through your facials, voice so that the child can feel and get the message or learning you are trying to pass on (Teuila)

The holistic characteristics of *talanoa alofa* in practice

“talanoa alofa ma kamaiki e fa’afesaga’i, saofa’i i lalo ...occurs mostly when something big happens...ua iai se mafuaaga ma e ku’u uma iai lou loko ma lou mafaufau alofa o ga o se mea ua kupu ...e ke kalagoa aku ma lou loko i le kamaikiki e lagoga lelei e le kamaikiki, kele lofa eseese ma le talanoa lava ia” (Olaga)

Translation:

When you *talanoa alofa* with the children you need to have eye contact or face to face, even sitting down. It occurs when something big happens ...it comes with a reason and put your heart into it, your thinking and your love because of what happened ...when you talk to the child with/from your heart the child can feel it. *Talanoa alofa* is very different from *talanoa* (Olaga)

“It’s what you say and how you say it – your tone is very important ...your actions like cuddles etc. and the way you dress” (Nise)

- **Summary**

The theme *Samoan cultural clusters of talanoa* combines the shared understanding, thoughts and lived experiences of the participants in relation to the many clusters of *talanoa*, in the *Samoan* culture and ways of living. The participants shared how *talanoa* is contextualised and conceptualised within the *Samoan* culture, through people’s cultural and political statuses and within families and the *Samoan* community. Moreover, the participants shared how *talanoa* is deepened and becomes more meaningful when it comes from a place of *alofa*/love. The face/s and holistic practical characteristics of *talanoa alofa* were also shared in the *talatalanoaga*.

- **Spiritual aspect/s of *talanoa alofa***

The analysis of data showed that there is a spiritual aspect of *talanoa alofa* that is influenced by the two domains of *fa’akerisiano* (Christianity) and *fa’asamoa* (*Samoan* culture/traditions). In addition, discovered in the data is another form of *talanoa alofa* that is highly utilised as a way of nurturing children by their parents. This theme is in three parts of (1) Influence of *fa’akerisiano* (Christianity) on *talanoa alofa*, (2) *Talanoa alofa* in the *fa’asamoa* (*Samoan* culture) and parenting and (3) *Talanoa alofa* and spiritual wellbeing.

Influence of *fa’akerisiano* (Christianity) on *talanoa alofa*

“I can’t say that I am spiritual if I don’t believe in God who created the spirit in me ...talanoa alofa can be a Christ-like attribute in my practise ...it’s all about love, aganu’u fa’asamoa, Samoan cultural aspirations ...people are spiritual because they believed in a God, Samoan people were already spiritual because they had a God ...respect the land, sami and air. Even before the missionary arrived, we believed in a

God and so that is why we've accepted the God that we worship now easily because we've had experience with our own God" (Nise)

"Spiritual well-being is your whole self ...something that bind the whole person together ...it's like soifua maloloina soifua laulelei ...it is our relationship too with God and people and yourself ...intellectually too" (Pele)

"O kakou kau ke kalikogu i le Atua ma Iesu le fa'aola, kauke lei va'aia ae kau ke kalikogu a inside our hearts i le loku ma le faku i le soul lava ia ...aka sau foi la ii le galuega o kakou o foliga vaaia o le Atua e ui e lei va'ai i le fa'aola ae ka ke alofa ma kalikogu ...o le alofa foi la lea le kake sau ai vaai ai ma kalagoa ai i kamaiki e pei loka fagau aua aka le faia 'ia e 'aafia ai loka kalikoguga lea" (Asenati)

Translation:

We believe in God and Jesus Christ our saviour, whom we haven't seen but by faith we believe him inside our hearts and soul. So, when I come to work/school, I represent my faith and the face of God as a believer that loves him. The same love I ought to utilise when talking and relating to the children. There is a significant connection between my faith and my view of children (Asenati)

"I le olaga o le Samoa e tatau ona a'oa'o tu ma aga fa'akerisiano, alofa, faasoa, aufa'atasi e o fa'atasi ma le alofa ...a ia oe le alofa ua ia te oe foi le fa'akerisiano ...e le mafai ona o eseese le alofa ma le fa'akerisiano faapena foi le fa'akerisiano ma le fa'asamoa ...having the spirit of God within you, the voice le sau i totonu o lou loto e feed ai lau practise ...e iloa ai foi you are emotional ...talanoa e sau mai lou loto, a leai se alofa i lau talanoa, you talk nothing, talanoa alofa ma le Agaga o le Atua o mea ia e lua e o faatasi ...e reach out foi i isi tagata ma 'e role model i teachers, parents ma fanau" (Teuila)

Translation:

In the life of a Samoan person, Christian values and beliefs ought to be taught, love, sharing, coming together in/with love...when you have love you have Christianity...love and Christianity are inseparable so as Christianity and the Samoan culture...having the spirit of God within you, the voice that comes from within feeds your practise...and it shows that you are emotional...talanoa comes from your heart, if there is no love in your talk you talk nothing, talanoa alofa with the spirit of God these two go together...it will influence others such as other teachers, parents and children ” (Teuila)

Talanoa alofa in the fa’asamoa (Samoan culture) & parenting

“...reflecting back to my upbringing, the discipline was all about alofa (love) ...talanoa alofa is an approach that allows transformation ...kumau le faavae ae sui faiga (the foundation remains the same, but changes can be made to the approach/es) (Nise)

“Talanoa alofa, you can feel in your heart. In my household it always involves kakalo (prayer)...heart to heart talanoa with our parents ...then there’s the discipline talk ...a leai se alofa e maimau le taimi, because o le alofa e break off mai ai le fealofani, galulue fa’atasi, fa’aaloalo, gaua’i, sogasoga” (Pele)

Translation:

Talanoa alofa, you can feel in your heart. In my household it always involves kakalo (prayer), heart to heart talanoa with our parents ...then there’s the discipline talk ...if there is no love it is a waste of time., because encompass reciprocity, working together, respect, submission, motivation (Pele)

“O le talanoa alofa i la’u philosophy as a teacher, ou ke faakaua mea e kolu, alofa, kaukua, fa’aaloalo ...kele kaimi e kauke kaukua ai oga o le alofa ...a le lelei lau kaukua e ke le alofa i

lau galuega ma kamaiki ...ae leiloa fa'aaloalo i le kagaka makua e ke leiloa foi fa'aaloalo i le kamaikiki laikiki, kakau ga akoa uma le kolu ...we are not perfect but we should try and keep trying (cries and then giggled) ...o le kaukua e alu iai ma lou loko e le ga'o le fai lava"

(Olaga)

Translation:

Talanoa alofa in my philosophy as a teacher values three things, love, service and respect ...many times we serve because we love ...if you don't serve well it means you don't love your job and the children ...if you do not respect older people who cannot respect children, all three values has to be present in my work ...we are not perfect but we should try and keep trying (cries and giggled) ...when you serve your heart had to be in it not just for the sake of doing something (Olaga)

"Ia o upu masani lava ia a le atunuu o tama a manu e fafaga i fuga o laau ao tama a tagata e fafaga i upu ma tala. O le makua alofa lava ia e oke – e leai se ku'ufau. Aso uma lava e kaulogologo lava i le oke, faufaukua ma kalakalagoa lemu foi i isi kaimi. O le gaugau lava ia ola maguia le fagau ma aveia ma kama ma keige lelei i le lumaga'i. Ia ma maua gi lumagai maguia aua aiga gu'u ma ekalesia. Pe okegia pe sasa e afua mai mea uma lava i le alofa fa'amakua" (Sosefina)

Translation:

The usual saying in Samoan goes "The offspring of the birds are fed with flowers, but the offspring of men are fed with words and stories. A loving parent tells their children off when needed – children are never left alone. Every *Samoan* child is reminded on a daily basis through scolding, encouragement and gentle *talanoa* sometimes. The aspiration is for children to live a good life, become good boys and girls with successful futures so they can be a blessing to

themselves, family, church and communities. Whether they get a telling off or a hiding, it all stems from a parent's love (Sosefina)

“Ga aoga le ‘oke a lo’u kiga ...kele kaimi sa ‘oke ai, ae ka ke lei take iga i lega kaimi seiloga lava e kalagoa lemu mai fa’akoa oka gaua’i aku iai ...kaimi gei ua ka learn le kaua o le oke a loka kiga” (Olaga)

Translation:

My mother's 'oke (telling-off) was useful for me ...she used to tell me off plenty of time, but I did not listen then, only when she talked nicely to me ...right now I've learned that she meant well (Olaga)

“ O le matua Samoa lava ia e tatau lava ona talanoa e aoai ma faatonu, you have to ...ina ia direct the tamaititi i le auala amio lelei e tatau ona fai ...a tuufau e ola ifo e aunoa ma se tapasa ...e alu o gangs ...e le manao le matua Samoa e ola lana tama i se olaga leaga ...e le tuufaua mulimuli i ala lelei o le alofa, ala o le Alii- e le mafai ona le aoa'ia ...e tatau lava ona iai le faavae poo le direction ...that's the belief” (Teuila)

Translation:

A Samoan parent has to talk and discipline their children, we have to ...in order to direct and guide the child to the best of their behaviour, if we don't the children are gonna grow up without knowing any boundaries ...they will end up in gangs ...Samoa parents aspire for their children to live a good life ...Samoa children are not left without directions, instead they are expected to grow up to be loving and honour God ...there has to be a solid foundation ...that's the belief (Teuila)

“Parents come and share how difficult they are (children) at home, its good cause we can share it means they need help ...o le lu’i foi ...we can help with CYFs too so children won’t have to be taken away from home” (Pele)

Talanoa alofa and spiritual wellbeing

“Spiritual wellbeing is your whole-self, not just your physical being but your heart, your soul, your mind ...hauora? Something that binds the whole person together, it’s like soifua maloloina, soifua laulelei ...it is relationship too – with God and people and yourself ...intellectually too” (Pele)

“Kids can sense le faiaoga alofa ma le le alofa (Kids can sense and differentiate a loving teacher from a teacher that is not loving)...give your all to the child and they will have a bond and close relationship and trust ...actions speak louder than words” (Teuila)

“It is important for the children to feel your love ...they have to feel it before they learn to live it ...talanoa with love ...teachers have to be the best example” (Nise)

“Kele le influence o kakou kalagoaga ma kamaiki io lakou olaga ...e ke iloa lelei lava le kamaikiki e lei lelei ai le kalagoa alofa iai from their young age e makukua ifo e le mafuka mai. E ke iloa lelei foi le kamaikiki e lei lelei le kalagoa alofa iai, e kupukupu e kupukupu ae foi lava e le mafuka lelei i makukua ma le aiga. (Asenati)

Translation:

Our talanoaga (interactions) highly influence the lives of our children ...you can really tell a child that was raised in an environment where talanoa alofa was used for their young age, because they grow up to be family oriented and have good relationships with their parents and

family. Whereas the child that was not raised in an environment where talanoa alofa was never present tends to distant from their families, peers and parent (Asenati)

“O le spiritual well-being lava ia i lo’u iloa, o le olaga fa’aleagaga foi lea. O kakou Samoan e fafaga a olaga faaleagaga o fagau mai kokogu o aiga ma kokogu o loku. E aoai ai amio ma ku ma aga aemaise lava le va fealoai ma makua, o aiga ia ma le va i fafo ma kagaka. Pei o le kakou upu foi lea ...e iloa oe i lau ku, kaukala ma lau savali ...aua e kau aku ai ma lou aiga ...you know. “E le kau fa’ailoa kama a kausala” (laughs) (Sosefina)

Translation:

In my opinion, spiritual well-being is concern with your spiritual being. Samoan children’s spiritual beings are nurtured from within our families and churches. Our children are taught how to behave especially when it comes to their relationships with their parents, elders, families and people from outside of our families. As our saying goes – “People can tell who you really are by how you stand, walk and talk ...because you represent your family ...you know. “Introduction/s is not needed for the offspring of the *tausala* (a beautiful dancer used in this proverbial as a metaphor to represent parents that teaches their children well) (Sosefina)

“Children spend a lot of time with us, enough time for us to push and encourage this type of talanoa. Children come in with different sort of discipline, some kids the centre is like a safe home to them, they can come and share their lagona (feelings) when they are respected, alofagia (loved), amana’ia (acknowledged) ...teachers shouldn’t give up instead push this kind of talanoa so they know they have a voice ...talanoa alofa can empower to learn and that they have a purpose” (Pele)

- **Summary**

The theme spiritual aspect/s of *talanoa alofa* highlights the participants shared beliefs and cultural understanding of the concept of *talanoa alofa* in relation to its spiritual dimension. The participants shared that *talanoa alofa* is highly influenced by Christian values and beliefs and the *Samoan* cultural values, beliefs and traditional way of life. In addition, the participants shared about *talanoa alofa* as a significant parenting skill when it comes to nurturing and raising children. It is encompassed through all types of parent and child relational *talanoaga* even if it was a 'ote (discipline *talanoa*) as it stems from a place of love with the hope to improve and enrich the lives of the children – a *Samoan* parent's intimate prayer and aspiration. In addition, the participants also shared their thoughts regarding the relationship between the notion of *talanoa alofa* and spiritual well-being of children and how this influence their adulthood lives.

- ***Talanoa alofa* and holistic learning**

This theme is divided into three parts, (1) *talanoa alofa* and the learning dispositions of the heart, (2) *Talanoa alofa* and *tausi va* (nurturing relationships) and (3) *Talanoa alofa* and inter-cultural relationships.

Talanoa alofa and learning dispositions of the spirit

“...o lea fa’atoa amata ona atina’e le tino, mafaufau, agaga ma le social etc. ...talanoa alofa le fafau atu i’i i lou leo ma le message ...that’s how you bring up that child, ua amata na’e atina’e le alofa i le loto o le tamaititi mai le laititi ...o se fa’avae mautu lea o lona olaga”

(Teuila)

Translation:

This is early stage in the child's development in relation to their bodies, brains, spirit and social etc ...this is the time to talanoa alofa to the children with your voice and message ...that's how you bring up the child, you are starting to build and shape the child's spirit/heart with love from a young age ...this will be a child's life solid foundation (Teuila)

“Talanoa alofa is the key to their learning ...they feel the love and talanoa mafana allowing them to be free and not limited ...part of talanoa alofa is not being lazy to clean up after the children ...it's part of the tautua (service)” (Nise)

Talanoa alofa and tausi va (nurturing relationships)

“Talanoa alofa takes away the fear and allow them to communicate and express themselves, it helps with relationship building as it takes time to build trust. Talanoa alofa creates that bond with the children ...feeling emotional when they leave ...e manatua e tamaiti lou agalelei (children will remember your kindness) because of how you talanoa alofa to them”

(Pele)

Ouke iloa e kele se fesoasoagi oe le talanoa alofa, e le gaka e aoga e build ai le trust ma le bond ma kamaiki, ia ae pei foi lea e maua ai lava loka filemu. Aua aka kalagoa alofa gei ma faifai lemu i kamaiki, e calm foi lava lakou ma fa'aali mai foi o lakou uiga lelei. Ia ae le gaka i lea e le fefe ai foi e sau le aoga (Sosefina)

I know *talanoa alofa* helps a lot with building our bond with the children which would give them the ability to trust us but also it gives us the peace of mind. Because if we talanoa alofa and go easy on the children, they will reciprocate the same thing, they will remain calm and show good behaviour. In addition, they won't be afraid to come to school (Sosefina)

Talanoa alofa and Inter-cultural relationships

“O makou e iai kamaiki Maori, Cook Island ma Koga. O kamaiki piko sili a ga ga lakou iloa lelei le faiaoga alofa – mo’i a! E o’o fo’i la i makua, ou ke iloa e oaku a kamaiki fai iai faaupuga i o lakou makua, e omai foi la i le kaeao e muamua a valaau le igoa o le faiaoga lea e faapega foi la i makua ...e iloa e le kamaikiki le faiaoga alofa oga o le auala e ke kalagoa ai i kaimi o kalagoaga ma galuega fa’akigo, e pau foi la ga o le faiaoga e sooth ai i le kaeao” (Asenati)

Translation:

We have Māori, Cook Island and Tongan children. These children can really identify a loving teacher – I’m telling you the truth! Even their parents, I know the children go home and say things to their parents, because in the mornings they would come and call this specific teacher by their names, even the parents do. Children can really tell a loving teacher by how they talk and work with them and these are the teachers that can only help them sooth in the mornings (Asenati)

Summary

The participants were able to highlight a significant connection and influence of *talanoa alofa* to the learning dispositions of the children’s hearts from their personal and professional lived experiences. In addition, some were able to raise the connection between *talanoa alofa* and the children’s mental, physical and cognitive development during the *talatalanoaga*. Moreover, this also highlights the participants thoughts, stories and experiences about the relationships between *talanoa alofa* and inter-cultural relationships with links to children’s learning and development.

- **Factors influencing *talanoa alofa* as a teaching pedagogy**

The analysis in this theme highlights the three main commonalities of meanings and ideas identified through the *talatalanoaga* sessions between the participants and the researcher. The

ideas are inclusive of (1) Impact of teachers' stress level/s on *talanoa/talanoa alofa*, relationship/s and learning, (2) Teachers' beliefs, upbringing and lived experiences and (3) Teachers' cultural content knowledge.

Impact of teachers stress on talanoa/talanoa alofa, relationships and learning

“E ke le stress, e leai seisi e ‘alo mai ai, ae ka ke kaumafai lava ...kake sau ma loka stress e iloa lelei lava e kamaiki ...a sui laka kalagoa ia ua le koe pipii mai foi aua la ua iai le fear, e iloa lelei lava e le kamaikiki – it changes the relationship ...energy transfer ...e iai faiaoga ua ou vaai iai e faapega e gofo mai ii ae makua ese lava, ele gofo umi ai le kamaikiki and it causes the children to wonder around oga ua le iai le loko o le faiaoga. E ke iloa gofie lava ua pisa kamaiki loga uiga ua leai foi se energy poo se alofa aua la foi ua kaumafai e enjoy themselves ma fa’amalie lakou ...you can tell le suiga i le floor, kake faalogo aku ua kagi mai le kamaikiki ...e a’afia ai foi le learning a leisi kamaikiki when they cry ...it causes fear to others” (Asenati)

Translation:

Stress is constantly there, no one can escape from it, but I try ...when I come to work with my stress the children can really tell ...when I change the way I talk the children distant themselves because there is fear. They know very well – it changes the relationship ...energy transfer ...I have seen teachers here at work with no passion or their minds are somewhere else, and it cause the children to wonder around because the teachers' heart is no longer there. You can tell by the loud noises that of the children that there is no energy or love from the teachers and that the children are trying to satisfy their own learning aspirations and enjoy themselves. You can tell the change on the floors ...lots of crying and screaming ...this can influence the learning of other children and causes fear to others (Asenati)

“Pei o personal issues e aafia ai, but we can’t help it we are only humans ...e a’afia ai le loko o le kamaikiki ae le gaka i lea o isi foi faiaoga” (Olaga)

Translation:

Personal issues can influence, but we can’t help it we are only humans ...it influences the child’s heart and other teachers too (Olaga)

Teachers beliefs, upbringing and lived experiences

“Tele le a’afiaga o le talanoa alofa a le faiaoga a le fanau mai lana upbringing. Because o isi sa abuse ...e reflect le upbringing i le practise ...ese mai le tagata sa lelei le atina’e o lona olaga mai lona aiga ...e fa’ailoa foi uiga tusaafia ma uiga lelei pea fesootai ma tamaiti ...e o’o i tu ma aga fa’akerisiano pei o le onosa’i, alofa, fa’apalepale, tu’u avanoa, talanoa ma faailoa mafua’aga o mea uma ...e opposite ma le tagata sa abuse” (Teuila)

Translation:

Teachers’ upbringing highly influences the way they *talanoa alofa* to the children. Because some might have been abused ...the upbringing is reflected in the practise ...its different from someone who had a good upbringing in their families ...they show kindness and good behaviour when they relate to the children ...even Christian values are shown such as patience, love, self-control, forgiving/giving second chances, able to talk and explain the reason/s for everything ...its opposite with someone who was abused (Teuila)

“My upbringing was within the church, there was a very strong spiritual connection. New Zealand is very diverse and I wondered how am I going to let people know that I am Samoan ...now as a teacher I want the kids to carry on speaking Samoan language after Aoga Amata, know their culture and be proud of who they are” (Pele)

“...some teachers come from abusive upbringing ...I use to get lots of hidings cause I was naughty (laughs) ...but for me growing up and that why it’s important that we have the education that we do now ...my life changed because of the degree that we did ...you know my perspective of teaching children talanoa alofa came from my upbringing but it was something that was sprung up because of this Pasifika study (Bachelor of Pasifika Education, ECE at the Auckland University of Technology). I’m changing my approach ...we’ve grown now and have that spiritual connection with God ...kumau le faavae ae sui faiga (the foundation remains but the approach has changed) (Nise)

Teachers’ Cultural Content knowledge

“...action speaks louder than words. I encourage that it is a must for all teachers e o e a’o’oga (to go and study) ...learn something new every day, go to PD (professional development, even if you hold a PD teachers need to go on PDs, learning result is better. E ui lava o tatou values ma aganuu, e tatau lava ona iai se fa’amanatu through pds (Even though its values and culture, we still need to be reminded through PD)” (Teuila)

“Magaomia lava le komai o faiaoga aua le fa’aleleia akili o kakou interaction ma kamaiki. E aoga mea ia o PDs, e o’o foi i PDs foi lea e koe faamagaku ai kakou lava ia ku ma agagu’u ...pei la o le talanoa alofa, ou ke iloa e sao lelei lava le kalikoguga ia ae kakau lava oga koe faamagaku ma kakala aua loga apalaiiga i le kakou galuega” (Sosefina)

Translation:

There is a need to further enhance teacher’s knowledge on how to improve our interaction with the children. Professional development (PDs) courses are important, even PDs to remind us about our own cultural knowledges like *talanoa alofa* ... we need to be reminded and be able to open up the concept so we can effectively apply it in our practise (Sosefina)

“and that’s why it’s important that we have the education that we do now ...my life changed because of the degree that we did ...you know my perspective of teaching children *talanoa alofa* came from my upbringing but it was something that was sprung up because of this *Pasifika study* (Bachelor of Pasifika Education, ECE at the Auckland University of Technology) ...I’m changing my approach” (Nise)

Summary

The theme factors influencing *talanoa alofa* as a teaching pedagogy exhibits the shared knowledge of the participants and the researcher in relation to factors that are/could/would influence that utilisation of *talanoa alofa* as a teaching pedagogy. Evidently, factors such as teachers’ stress-level/s from the undeniable and never-ending struggles of life influences the way we *talanoa/talanoa alofa* with the children. In addition to this factor are teachers’ lived experiences and upbringing as well teachers’ cultural content knowledge.

- **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter systematically exhibits the analysis of the raw data, the voices, stories, knowledges, wisdoms, personal and professional lived experiences of the six participants and the researcher. The four main themes are opened up to further explore and deeply understand the topic of interest or the phenomenon from the *Samoan* perspective. The themes:

- 1) Samoan cultural clusters of *talanoa*

Highlights the contextualisation and conceptualisation of *talanoa* within the Samoan culture. In addition to that, is how *talanoa* is deepened and considered meaningful when love is added, hence the concept of *talanoa alofa*. Moreover, this theme presents a holistic characteristic of *talanoa alofa* in a teacher’s practise.

- 2) Spiritual aspect/s of *talanoa alofa*

Highlights the participants' view on how *talanoa alofa* is highly influenced by Christian values and Samoan cultural values and beliefs in the Samoan traditional way of life. *Talanoa alofa* is also identified in this chapter as a significant parenting skill or/and it is also encompassed through the nurturing processes and practises of child rearing in the *Samoan* culture. In addition, the relationship between *talanoa alofa* and the spiritual well-being of children is identified within the shared thoughts of the participants and the researcher about the phenomenon.

3) *Talanoa alofa* and holistic learning

Highlights the important connections and links of *talanoa alofa* to the way children learn in relation to the learning dispositions of the heart. Furthermore, links between *talanoa alofa* and children's physical, mental and cognitive development were mentioned and shared in the *talatalanoaga* with the participants. In addition, the connection between *talanoa alofa* and inter-cultural relationship within ECE is also mentioned in this theme.

4) Factors influencing *talanoa alofa* as a teaching pedagogy

Highlights the view/s of the participants on some of the aspects that are/could/would influence the effective utilisation of *talanoa alofa* as a teaching pedagogy. These factors are inclusive of teachers' stress-levels, teachers' upbringing, lived experience and beliefs, and lastly teachers' cultural content knowledge. The next chapter will further discuss and examine the meaning/s behind the analysed raw data to further understand and explore the phenomenon.

Chapter 5: Fa’alatele ma lalaga manatu: Discussion

- **Introduction**

This chapter is a discussion of the thematically analysed findings that were collected from the *talatalanoaga/talanoa* sessions between the researcher and the six participants. The discussion will be presented according to the four main themes and their sub-headings. The voices, wisdoms, knowledge and spirits of the participants and the researcher will be woven together with the literature to add meaning to the discussion/s of the findings.

- **Themes**

Samoan cultural cluster of talanoa

This theme emphasises the *Samoan* cultural perspective on *talanoa*. Evident in the findings, although *talanoa* is commonly known and used in the *Pasifika* cultures and practises (Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014), it is utilised in the *Samoan* culture with the highly consideration of the context/s in which the *talanoaga* is taken place, the nature of the *talanoa* and the statuses of people that are participating in the *talanoa/talanoaga*.

Samoan cultural contextualising and conceptualising of talanoa

Evident in the participants’ views, *talanoa* in the *Samoan* culture is highly complex and it is uniquely utilised according to the variety of *Samoan* cultural relational dominions. However, *talanoa* in this manner is cautiously utilized to bring about harmony and to *soalaupule* (negotiate/collaborate/reciprocate) from/with a place of love. *Soa* means (to pair up/pair, companionship, two), *lau* means (yours), *pule* means (authority or freedom). Therefore, *soalaupule* is defined in this study as to be in partnership or equally acknowledged in a space where we seek to freely, but respectfully express one’s opinion on a matter at hand, to bring about peace, solutions and harmonious relationships. This is supported by Utumapu-McBride et al., (2008) who describe *soalaupule* as a complex and lengthy process, which requires a lot of patience, and skills in problem-solving and decision-making. Thus, contextualising

soalaupule in the teacher-child relationship is appropriate from the view of this study in order to bring about a learning environment that is holistically co-constructed by the learners and educators.

The participants shared that although *talanoa* is multi-faceted, contextualised and conceptualised in the *Samoa* culture, it encompasses *alofa* (love), *tautua* (service) and *fa'aaloalo* (respect). As mentioned in the findings, *talanoa* is sensibly practised with much respect hence our saying “*’aua le to’ia le va*” (do not spoil/disrespect the space). Instead, people ought to respect each other when relating to one another and that in every relationship in the *Samoa* culture, there is a boundary (Vaitimu Tuafuti, 2016). *Talanoa* was contextualised in the talk between the participants and the researcher using some of the relationships in the *Samoa* culture. These relationships are of different natures and are highly respected within the *Samoa* culture that some of our traditional proverbs were constructed based on these relationships. For example

- ***Talanoa fa’amātua* (talk of/as parents)**

The participants highlighted the significant of *talanoa fa’amātua* in child rearing in *Samoa*. *Talanoa fa’amātua* is always with/from a place of love whether it is a *’ote* (telling-off) or *talatalanoa lemū* (gentle talk), hence our proverbs “*O tama a manu e fafaga i fuga o la’au, ao tama a tagata e fafaga i upu ma tala*” (Offspring of birds are fed with flowers but offspring of people are fed with stories or words). *Talatalanoa lemū* resembles with the pedagogical ideas of the practise of *fagogo* (storytelling, fables) as explored by Tui Atua (2002); Mamea et al., (2018); Kolone-Collins (2010) as a *Samoa* inter-generational way of passing down knowledge. Moreover, *talatalanoa lemū* resembles the nature of our *Samoa* proverb, *A’oa’o le tama e tusa ma ona ala a matua ‘e le toe te’a ese ai lava* (Teach the child while he is young, and when he grows up, he will never forget) as mentioned by Tagoilelagi-Leota (2017). This

is also similar to Betham (2008) who explains that parents as well as elders and grandparents are primarily responsible of “*fafaga i upu*” (feeding the children with words) to nurture their “being, doing, knowing and feeling” of the *Samoan* way of life (p.2). Furthermore, Tui Atua (2002) explains that the practise of *fagogo* is mostly done by elders where a loving-soft tone of voice is used, and through this process, children inherit and learn about their cultural knowledges and wisdoms as well as their ancestral stories. Moreover, the research shares a similar view to the context of educational learning. The valuable meaning of this *Samoan* practise aligns with a belief by Manu’atu (2013) who argues that education and learning that is not drawn from the heart or from a place of love, is meaningless and does not endure.

- ***Talanoa fa’amatai* (talk of/as chief)**

The participants contextualised *talanoa* in the context of *fa’amatai/matai* (Samoan chief) when sharing about their *Samoan* cultural views of *talanoa*. According to some of the participants, *talanoa fa’amatai* is one of the most important and sacred kind of *talanoa* and although it has a very uniquely different tone to it, the talk is stemmed from the love, respect and service to one’s family and the collective. Moreover, the *talanoa fa’amatai* is a serious talk that aims to bring about *fa’aleleiga* (reconciliation), harmonious relationships and for the betterment and future of the collective. A *matai* (chief) is a family leader who represents a family in a village council. This view is supported by Va’a (2007) who describes *fa’amatai* as a social political system/group, which includes titled men of established villages or villages with *fa’alupega* (salutations) in *Samoa* representing each family in a village council. Any disputes within the village are carefully dealt with in the *fono a matai* (meeting). The participants acknowledged that the *talanoa fa’amatai* often aims to problem solve and this is done delicately and with so much care and consideration. This belief is supported by Huffer and So’o (2005), who explains that a *matai* or a person holding this kind of leadership position is expected to have the wealth of knowledge, wisdom and patience to carefully decide on family matters such as land

ownership and rights as well as resolving disputes and more. In addition, a matai title is given to someone who has served their family well, hence our *Samoan* proverb, *o le ala i le pule o le tautua* (the way to leadership is through service) (Talení et al., 2017). Moreover, Tui Atua (2009), who claims that the matai (chief) is responsible for nurturing a Samoan child's life together with elders, parents and the collective, also supports this caring nature of talanoa fa'amatai from the participants' stories. "*The principle function/purpose of this nurturing is to identify, teach and respect the boundaries between child and parent, child and elderly, child and matai, child and child, and child and village*" (p.55).

Talanoa alofa deepens talanoa

Although, there are many layers of *talanoa* in the *Samoan* culture that were mentioned in the *talanoa* sessions with the participants. It was evident that participants agree that love deepens and makes *talanoa* meaningful, when engaging with the young ones. Most importantly, the participants believe that when children are spoken to with love and compassion, it influences their learning positively and who they become in the future. In addition, the participants believed that *talanoa alofa* helps the children role model good behaviour when relating to other people. This belief is like the work of Burchinal et al., (2008) which emphasises that learning is likely to happen when children experience and engage in interactions that are sensitive and responsive. Thomason and La Paro (2009) also support this belief by arguing that how children learn and develop emotions are highly influenced by their relationships and interactions with adults in their lives. Moreover, the participants' belief agrees with our *Samoan* saying "*E leai se gaumata'u na'o le gaualofa*" (What you do with love nurtures and endures - fear does the opposite)". Meaning, in the *Samoan* culture, excessive discipline is not encouraged, instead children are nurtured, *a'oa'o* (teach), *fa'atonu* (direct), appropriately with compassion, love, patience and kindness (Tui Atua, 2005).

The holistic characteristics of talanoa alofa in practise

The participants shared about the characteristics of *talanoa alofa* in teachers' practise from a holistic view. These characteristics are inclusive of the tone of voice and the way teachers dress (physical characteristics), the presence of the teacher's mind (mental characteristics) and the presence of the teacher's heart (spiritual characteristics). Here the participants holistically contextualised *talanoa alofa* within teachers' personal and professional stance/s, as in how *talanoa alofa* can be identified in teachers' practises. This belief parallels to the work of Vogt (2002) who explores teachers' professional identities and ethical practises with the use of the notion of caring within teaching, utilising a selection of approaches such as physical care, commitment, expressing affection and compassion. In addition, Liston (2008) also supports a similar approach to *talanoa alofa* using the concept of attentive love that is struggling for teachers at times, yet it is a sacrifice that we as teachers ought to make so we can see and understand our children and learners more clearly.

Spiritual aspect/s of talanoa alofa

This theme discusses the participants' view on the spiritual aspects of *talanoa alofa*. It examines the spiritual realms that influences *talanoa alofa* from the participants' cultural views as identified in the findings. These spiritual realms as mentioned in the *talatalanoaga* with the participants are inclusive of Christianity and *Samoan* culture. In addition, within the *fa'asamoa* component of the discussions will mention *Samoan* parenting. Furthermore, it explores the relationship between *talanoa alofa* and the spiritual wellbeing of children.

Influence of fa'akerisiano (Christianity) on talanoa alofa

The participants shared that Christianity highly influenced their upbringing and the way they view the world, live their lives, teaching practise such as *talanoa/talanoa alofa*. The Christian values that resembles the *Samoan* cultural values of love, respect, service, forgiving and

reciprocity are the spiritual characteristics of *talanoa alofa* that ought to be reflected through teachers' *talanoa* and practises according to the participants' views. The notion of *tu'u avanoa* (giving of second chances) was mentioned by some participants as a significant characteristic of the phenomenon. In their view, because we consider ourselves as Christians, therefore we understand that the nature of God is love and he is so loving that he gives his children second chances. Thus, we ought to contextualise this loving nature into our practise with children through *talanoa alofa*. In addition, the participant emphasised the significance for them as Christian educators to live a Christ-like life as a validation of their faith in God and this translated into their teaching practise. This perception parallels with Toso (2011) who highlights that Christianity and *fa'asamoa* (*Samoan* culture) aims to cultivate and bring about dispositions of good character and behaviour for a *Samoan* child/person. The belief is also in line with the view of Smallbones (2006) who argues that knowledge is made relevant by the spiritual enlightenment of Christ. In addition, Rio (2009) similarly assert that the inclusion of Christian values in teachers' learning (specifically for those who are in Christian centres/learning environments) will not only bring about a transformation of heart that compliments learning, but also balance between teachers' technical/content knowledge and transformation of teachers' personality and character. Thus, the research believes that Christian values plays a major role in contextualising the phenomenon meaningfully. However, the participants also believed that Christianity was received well by the *Samoan* people because they already had a God/Gods who they served and respected. Betham (2008) validates this belief in her study where she mentioned that, *Samoan* indigenous religion upholds the *tapu* (boundaries) between people and their ancient God by the name of *Atua Tagaloa*, people and the environment and people and one another. Therefore, indigenous religion values contribute to the values of Christianity and principles that guide *Samoan* ways of living.

Talanoa alofa in the fa'asamoa (Samoan culture) & parenting

The participants shared about their upbringing and how they were raised in the homes. There was not much of a difference in the lived experiences of teachers that were born and raised in Samoa and teachers that were born and raised in New Zealand. This is because they were all very much involved in the *Samoan* community, such as church gatherings and more. This is reflected in their career choice/s as *Pasifika* educators and their passion for children to learn and maintain *Samoan* language and culture. *Fa'asamoa* highly influence, shape and inspire the participants' beliefs, knowledges and perceptions of the notion of *talanoa alofa* and spiritual wellbeing. Evidently, the participants' lives are guided by the cultural principles of *tautua* (service), *fa'aaloalo* (respect), and love. This is the essence of the *fa'asamoa* that they live by no matter where they are in the world, which is validated by the work of Toso (2011). The participants also shared about the significance of *talanoa* in nurturing a *Samoan* child from their experiences as daughters of *Samoan* parents and as mothers to their children. The participants shared about the concepts of 'ote (discipline talk) *fa'atonutonu* (direct/redirect), *faufautua* (encourage), *taulogologo* (remind) and *talatalanoa lemu* (gentle talk) that encompasses love. This is with the hopes and aspiration for children to *ola manuia* (live a blessed, meaningful and successful life) for themselves, the *aiga* (family) and the collective. One participant talked about how important it is for *Samoan* parents to continue to practise the above-mentioned notions because she believes this will avoid and protect *Samoan/Pasifika* children or learners from growing up to join gangs and getting in trouble. This is supported by Kamu (1996) and Tui Atua (2005) who describes that a solid foundation for a *Samoan* child's holistic self is built from feeding them with words that passes down knowledge, wisdom and love. Tui Atua (2009) however explains that, parenting is a communal responsibility that even the *matai* (chief) is responsible for raising and scaffolding the lives of the young ones through their leadership. One participant shared that from her experience as a *Samoan*, there is an

obvious difference between a child that was consistently spoken to with love and the child that was left without the *a'oa'iga* (teaching/discipline). This is shown by how they relate to other people.

Talanoa alofa and spiritual wellbeing

The participants shared their understanding in relation to the connection between the concept of *talanoa alofa* and spiritual wellbeing. One of the participants reflected upon her experiences as a *Samoan* raised in a *Samoan* traditional household and shared that even though she experienced the different ways of *talanoa* her parents taught her with, she was mostly responsive to the *talatalanoa lemu* (gentle talk) aspect of *talanoa alofa*. She felt more loved and at peace while listening and because of that, she had a sense of empowerment to willingly change her ways and learn. This justifies our *Samoan* saying “*E leai se gaumata'u na'o le gaualofa*” (What you do with love nurtures and endures - fear does the opposite)” which Tui Atua (2005) explains that the *Samoan* culture does not promote extreme and unwarranted discipline that can break the spirit of the child or cause fear, instead it is through love, with love and from love that a *Samoan* child is nurtured and taught. This belief is supported by Tappolet (2010) who argues that fear as a motivator does not promote wellbeing or allow a child or a person to flourish well in life.

Talanoa alofa and holistic learning

This theme discusses the participants' view on the relationship or the influence of *talanoa alofa* on the holistic learning of the child. I will discuss the importance of *talanoa alofa* in building learning dispositions of a child's heart that are foundational to their holistic learning. I will explore the relationship between *talanoa alofa* and the child's ability to *tausi va* (nurture relationships) with people and their surroundings. Furthermore, this chapter examines from the

view of the participants how the cultural principles of *talanoa alofa* can influence or apply to inter-cultural relationships, especially in a diverse learning environment such as ECE.

Talanoa alofa and learning dispositions of the spirit

The findings showed that the participants believe that the good learning dispositions of the heart can be brought about with the use of *talanoa alofa*, as a way of teaching and learning or nurturing a child. Participants also believe that this is central and foundational to the holistic learning and development of a *Samoan* child. Findings showed that the underpinning cultural and spiritual values of *talanoa alofa*, as informed by the spiritual realms of *fa'akerisiano* and *fa'asamoa*, makes a *Samoan* child's learning dispositions spiritual according to the participants. For example, one participant shared how she felt and responded when her parent's *talatalanoa lemu* (gentle *talanoa*) to her. She felt loved and was therefore at peace, which empowered her and made her willing to listen whilst taking in the message. One participant shared that in her teaching experience, she has come to realise that children respond very well when they are spoken to with love (*talanoa alofa*), they show the excitement to learn, the willingness to listen and the patience to wait. In addition, the children have a sense of belonging and freedom to express themselves and learn without having feeling limited. This is like the work of Gall and Grant (2005) which discovers that there is a strong link between religious/cultural spiritual factors and spiritual dispositions. It is also identified in their study that spiritual dispositions highly influence wellbeing.

However, Tui Atua (2009) similarly believes that having strong spiritual learning dispositions in the *Samoan* culture is not merely about an individual growth but it also highly contributes to having a strong spirit to fight for survival and to stand adversity. The study therefore believes that the spiritual underpinnings of *talanoa alofa* can enrich the spiritual wellbeing of the children by bringing about spiritual learning dispositions such as, *agaga alofa* (loving spirit),

agaga filemu (peaceful/calm spirit), *agaga 'onosa'i* (patience spirit), *agaga fa'aaloalo* (respectful spirit), *agaga finafinau* (determined spirit), *agaga maualalo* (humble spirit), *agaga fesoasoani* (helpful spirit), *agaga sa'ili'ili* (creative spirit), *agaga usiusita'i* (obedient spirit), *agaga manatunatu* (reflective spirit), *agaga fa'amagalo* (forgiving spirit) and *agaga sa'oloto* (free spirit). The study believes that these spiritual learning dispositions are characteristics of a strong foundational spiritual-self and enriched spiritual well-being. This is significant for a child's holistic learning and development and therefore ought to be fostered at a young age. Hence the proverb, *Aoao le tama e tusa ma ona ala a o'o ina matua e le toe te'a ese ai lava* (Teach the child the right way from a young age, for when he is matured he will never part from this meaningful learning) (Tagoilelagi-Leota, 2017).

Talanoa alofa and tausi va (nurturing relationships)

The full expression of *talanoa alofa* as explored through the participants shared knowledge/s, wisdoms, spirits and experiences highlights the significance of the phenomenon in nurturing relationships. The participants shared about the importance in the *Samoan* culture to nurture the heart and the spirit of the child from a very young age. This is supported by Tui Atua (2009), where he explains that the underpinning principles of the process of collective *fa'afailelega* (nurturing), is to establish and to teach a child on how to respect boundaries between him and his parents (elders, another child/person, the matai, the community/village/country and with God). In addition, the participants agree that children's upbringing or character is determined by how they maintain and nurture relationships with other people, the environment and once self. This was supported by Toso (2011), Tui Atua (2005), and McDonald (2004), who assert that in the *Samoan* culture, the spiritual identity of a *Samoan* person or their true self is revealed, shaped and moulded through relationships. In addition, a *Samoan* person is expected to understand the sacredness of the *va* (space) between himself and his parents, siblings, family, community, cosmology, *fanua* (land) and the environment. These relationships are with *tapu*

(boundaries) that are governed by the values of *fa'aaloalo* (respect), *tautua* (service) and *alofa* (love). Anae (2010) and Taulealo (2001) support these beliefs in their studies from a *Samoa* perspective.

According to the participants their bond and relationship with the children can be strengthened using *talanoa alofa* as a teaching pedagogy. Although they *talanoa* with the children throughout the day, there is a difference between *talanoa* and *talanoa alofa*. The children are more drawn to them when the *talanoa* is meaningful because *alofa* is present. The children can sense the genuineness in their talk and therefore they become more open to them and are free (*agaga sa'oloto*/free spirited) to express themselves in their own ways benefiting their learning and holistic wellbeing. Thus, this sense of freedom that is drawn from the bond and trust created by *talanoa alofa* as a pedagogy encourages and promotes the three principles of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (TOW) participation, partnership and protection as emphasised by the MOE (2017). This practise not only helps with the children's self-confidence but as well as their literacy skills (*gagana Samoa/gagana fa'aperetania*). Thus, the research believes that the spirit of *talanoa alofa* as a pedagogy creates meaningful relationships that can enrich the children's learning about their heritage language and cultures in *Aoga Amata/Pasifika* ECE. Furthermore, the spirit of our languages and cultures ought to be passed down and taught to our young ones with love. The participants also describe the physical characteristic of *talanoa alofa* that are inclusive of the tone of voice, body language and the use of appropriate language/s. For them, *talanoa alofa* is deep and more meaningful because it is not only inclusive of the actions, the tone of voice and body language that matters, but the mind, heart and spirit of the teacher that is present. When these pedagogical ideas of *talanoa alofa* are fully expressed and demonstrated in teachers' practise/s, not only positive relationships are maintained and established with the children, but the children will acquire positive relational behaviours and are more likely to role model these good attributes to others and become lifelong learning.

According to the participants, when a *Samoan* child/person possess these good qualities, it signifies they have had a rich upbringing hence our saying “*E iloa oe i lau tu, savali ma lau tautala*” (*The kind of person you are is determined by how you talk, stand and walk*). This notion reflects the spirit of assessment that is collectively done by the “village” that raised the child. The question that is always asked when a *Samoan* child/person’s name is mentioned whether it is for positive or negative reasons is; “O se tama a ai?” (Who’s child?). When this question is asked, it is not only asking for the parents who gave birth to the child, instead it extends to, his/her ancestors, family and the villages they come from. The child therefore from a *Samoan* perspective identified in this study is observed as a “whole”, which is inclusive of their family, village and of those from the past, present and future. This spirit of assessment from a *Samoan* culture is supported by Carr (2004) who argues that family should be an integral part of a child’s assessment. In addition, this aspect of assessment is supported by Tagoilelagi-Leota (2010) who argues that a *Samoan* child is a “living assessment” (p.39) because of their eternal connection to their ancestors and their extended families. Tui Atua (2009) similarly asserts that a *Samoan* person is not an individual but an integral part of the cosmology, land, village and family from the past present and future.

Talanoa alofa and inter-cultural relationships

According to the findings, the pedagogical ideas of *talanoa alofa* can also help bring about positive relationships with children and parents from other cultures. The participants that are working in *Aoga Amata* agree that when *talanoa alofa* is consistently utilised, children communicate positive feedback to their parents, which is significant, especially when it comes to relating to non-*Samoan* parents and families. In addition, this gives non-*Samoan* parents comfort by the knowledge that their children are loved and have a sense of belonging in *Aoga Amata* or *Pasifika* ECE. In addition, the pedagogical ideas and cultural underpinnings of *talanoa alofa* allows *Samoan* educators to use our cultural values and beliefs to relate to other

cultures especially in a diverse country such as New Zealand. Not only that, but it gives them the chance to live their cultural values and beliefs as migrants, whilst being reminded of the essence of being a *Samoan* that will empower them to live a meaningful life through practice and relationships. We preach our values of respect, love and service therefore we ought to bring them to life by living and practising them wherever we are in the world – “*e leotele galuega*” (actions speak louder than words) as one of the participants mentioned. We are a “living assessment” (Tagoilelagi-Leota, 2010, p.39) of our own cultural identities, values and beliefs. We add wonderful flavours of meanings to our living together and as we co-exist with people of other cultures in this country via our relationships. The use of our cultural and indigenous pedagogies such as *talanoa alofa* add meaning/s and sense to our “place” as migrants in *Aotearoa* New Zealand, because it encompasses beauty in our cultural values, beliefs and identities that we bring into this country. This belief is supported by Kēpa and Manu’atu (2008), who argue the decolonisation of pedagogies, to affirm and support *Pasifika* learners’ cultural identities in educational contexts in *Aotearoa* New Zealand. The research adds to this notion by re-emphasising that pedagogical decolonisation can be brought about by enriching our practices such as *talanoa*, from/by/with the spirit of *alofa* (love). Teaching is not merely about techniques, but integrity, heart and spirit, because when all else fails, the heart and spirit prevails as Palmer (1993) asserts.

Factors influencing *talanoa alofa* as a teaching pedagogy

Findings showed that although the participants believed and support the significance of *talanoa alofa* as a pedagogy to enrich the spiritual well-being of children, there are factors that can impact its effective implementation. These factors are inclusive of teachers’ stress levels, teachers’ beliefs, upbringing and lived experiences, as well as their level of cultural content knowledge. These highly influence the utilisation of *talanoa alofa* as a teaching pedagogy.

Impact of teachers stress on talanoa/talanoa alofa, relationships and learning

Findings suggested that the impact of teachers' stress level on their practise and the implementation a meaningful pedagogy such as *talanoa alofa* could also extend to their relationships with children as well as children's positive learning outcomes. The participants shared their experiences as teachers in relation to the influence of stress on their general teaching practises. Although they aspire to put their best practise forward, it is only natural that they sometimes go through stress as that is the way life is. One participant who is also a centre manager shared about how she witnessed educators that were there in person, but not in mind and spirit. This caused a negative impact on the programme implementation, supervision, and their *talanoa* with the children and children's behaviour to learning. The notion of "energy transfer" was used by one of the participants as she explained, that when teachers are stressed or unhappy, it creates a negative energy that can be transferred and felt, by the children and other work colleagues. In addition, it disrupts relationships, creates fear and can become a barrier to children's learning. Zhang and Sapp (2008) support this conception, in their study where they discovered that teachers' stress and burnout affects learners' motivation to learn. In contrast, Bryan et al., (1996), emphasised in their study that positive mood is important in learning contexts to stimulate learners learning and bring about positive learning outcomes.

The questions is how can we help and support *Pasifika* educators to handle and deal with stress (personal and work-related)? How are teachers' wellbeing supported in their working environment? Because evident in the findings of this study and previous research, teachers' wellbeing and stress level/s highly influence the way children learn and children's wellbeing. Life and politics in teaching should not overrule and affect the heart of teachers and the learning of children. Nurturers ought to be nurtured too with respect, understanding, fairness, care, love and compassion. Educational leaders ought to emphasise the meanings that we want to achieve in education, not only with words but most importantly actions. There are good teachers out

there that are about to give in due to work-related stress and personal life related stress. Therefore, consistent pastoral care, transparency, fairness, love and respect are quality leadership skills that will bring about teachers' spiritual and emotional transformation. With that being said, the research reminds us of a *Samoan* saying, "*E afua mai mauga le manuia o se nu'u*" (Blessings and wealth of a village flows from the top of the mountain) (Taouma, 2013), meaning, great leadership can bring about positive outcomes for the collective.

Teachers' beliefs, upbringing and lived experiences

Another influencing factor to the effective implementation of *talanoa alofa* that was revealed in the findings includes teachers' beliefs, upbringing and lived experiences. The participants disclosed that teachers' practise/s, teaching philosophies, interactions and view of children and learning are highly influenced by how they were raised and their life experience. Xu (2012) relatedly discovered that teachers' understanding, and beliefs extremely influence learning and teaching approaches and processes. Some of the participants utilised their personal and professional experiences as examples and proof of this belief. Through their *talanoaga* sessions with the researcher, the participations differentiated the practise of one that had an aggressive upbringing, from one that had a smooth upbringing. However, the *talanoa* with one of the participants gave her a space and time to reflect upon once transformation of heart, mind and spirit about her whole upbringing in a positive way. Furthermore, she emotionally shared her gratefulness to a "cutting edge" (Manu'atu, 2013) *Pasifika* programme that she undertook at AUT for this significant transformation through the new knowledges and new spirit brought to her by this degree. Tike (2018) explores the perceptions of some of the students who undertook the same programme in relation to their journeys before, during and after this programme – Bachelor of *Pasifika* Education (ECT). To further understand and add meaning/s to these findings, the study believes that although stress levels and teachers' personalities, characters and philosophies influence teaching approaches and pedagogies, it is important to support

teachers with spiritual and emotional through programmes that promotes spiritual enlightenment and transformation. This resonates with the words of Krishnamurti (1953) who acknowledged that

Education is not merely a matter of training the mind. Training makes if efficiency, but it does not bring about completeness. A mind that has merely been trained in the continuation of the past, and such a mind can never discover the new. That is why, to find out what is right education, we will have to enquire into the whole significance of living (p.13).

Teachers' cultural content knowledge

Revealed in the findings, the participants emphasised that although they understand the importance of content knowledge in enriching teaching and pedagogical approaches, they needed to be also reminded of their own cultural content knowledge through professional development (PD). One participant shared that because of a *Pasifika* programme that she was part of, she now understands and values her cultural values and beliefs as part of who she is as a migrant and as an educator in Aotearoa New Zealand. More importantly, she can contextualise her cultural values not only to her work as a teacher but as well as raising her children and relating to other people. Furthermore, the participants also believe that no matter what qualification/s one holds, in the teaching profession, one must continue to learn new knowledge, wisdoms and learning to enrich teaching practises and approaches. Therefore, for the full expression to *talanoa alofa* to reach its maximum potential as a teaching pedagogy, teachers ought to be reminded of its cultural underpinnings and its importance in enriching children's holistic learning through professional development (PD). Considering the work by Farquhar and Gibbons (2010), Carr and May (1993), this study similarly supports that effective pedagogical approaches needs on-going professional development that calls for better resource

management. This includes funding that ought to be made available to enhance teachers' professional knowledge, including cultural pedagogical approaches such as *talanoa alofa*. Moreover, our cultural ways of learning and knowing should be acknowledged as an integral part of our young ones learning if we seriously want to maintain and sustain our languages and cultures. Our *Samoan* proverb "*Ia sua le'ava ae toto le 'ata*" as mentioned by McDonald (2004) translates that in order for Samoan people to continue on practising the 'ava/kava ceremony, we ought to continue on planting the 'ata (a small kava seedling/sprout). To put emphasis on this proverb in the context of this study and of *Pasifika* education, we are encouraged to keep planting the seeds of our languages and cultures through love, from love and for the love of our children, our homes.

Chapter 6: Manatu fa'a'iu: Conclusion

Evident in the findings and literature, although *talanoa* is commonly practised around the *Pasifika*, *alofa* (love) deepens its meaning. Its *Samoan* cultural underpinning values that are significantly spiritual and influenced by Christianity and *Samoan* cultural values and beliefs makes *talanoa alofa* a meaningful and appropriate pedagogical approach. *Talanoa alofa* when it is fully expressed and utilised, can enrich the spiritual wellbeing of our children as revealed in the study. The study reminds and encourages us that teaching, and learning is not merely a “job”, it is about love, compassion, relationships, service, respect, collaboration and more. It is about people, and from a *Samoan* view, a person is observed as a whole with spirituality as a core dominion that drives and enlightens his/her journey throughout life. As a person journeys throughout life, one must remember to uphold the values that governs one’s relationship with God, people and the environment. For example, values such as respect, love and service (Anae, 2010; Taulealo, 2001; Toso, 2011).

Let me remind you that currently, our children are exposed to multiple misleading beliefs and examples that can harm their lives, especially the rapid growth of influence from social media. This is not to say that we ought to control or take away their God given freewill because we cannot, and we should not. Let us face it, they will eventually grow and leave to live their lives as adults but let us at least teach and mould their spirits as a collective from a young age, while we can. Society and life can be so unpleasant; therefore, we ought to prepare our children to face adversity by enriching their hearts and spirits through meaningful ways and teaching approaches such as *talanoa alofa*. Because God is love and love endures (Tui Atua, 2005; Manu’atu, 2013). We ought to emphasis and embed in the hearts of our *Pasifika* children the spiritual learning dispositions of *agaga alofa* (loving spirit), *agaga filemu* (peaceful/calm spirit), *agaga ‘onosa’i* (patience spirit), *agaga fa’aaloalo* (respectful spirit), *agaga finafinau* (determined spirit), *agaga maualalo* (humble spirit), *agaga fesoasoani* (helpful spirit), *agaga*

sa'ili'ili (creative spirit), *agaga usiusita'i* (obedient spirit), *agaga manatunatu* (reflective spirit), *agaga fa'amagalo* (forgiving spirit) and *agaga sa'oloto* (free spirit).

However, for *Samoan/Pasifika* educators to nurture the spiritual wellbeing of the young ones, they ought to be nurtured too. Educators ought to be encouraged and supported to be transformative in their practise. In addition, is to be empowered by supporting their content and cultural content knowledge through on-going professional development, pastoral care and mentorship. Moreover, universities and Teacher Education ought to look and consider new possibilities and prospects that will aim to nurture and capture the minds, emotions and spirits of teachers. In addition, is to utilise reasonable and appropriate assessment tools to assess and determine the readiness of educators for learners. The question is – How can we measure love in teaching? The meaning/s revealed in the research highlights that nurturing and enriching teachers' spiritual wellbeing is just as important as nurturing children's spiritual wellbeing. The meaningful words from Palmer (1993) reminds us that authentic spirituality is a vital part of someone who is called to be a teacher and it ought to be nurtured. In addition

...such a spirituality encourages us to welcome diversity and conflict, to tolerate ambiguity, and to embrace paradox. By this understanding the spirituality of education is not about dictating ends. It is about examining and clarifying the inner source of teaching and learning, ridding us of the toxins that poison our hearts and minds (p.11) bodies and soul/s.

Strength of the study

- Being a *Samoan* researcher researching *Samoan* meanings and ways of knowing make this research relatable to the researcher and the participants. Therefore, positive relationships were established, and meaningful, genuine data was collected.

- The topic of interest brought about deep reflections for the participants as well as the researcher about their journeys as *Samoan* women, mothers and educators in relation to the strength that we have in us. *E au le 'ina'ilau a tamaiti.*
- Re-discovering of new knowledge about our own culture and awakened spirits
- The methodology/method of *talanoa* and its philosophical underpinnings made the data collection flexible for all parties involved. In addition, it was cost effective.
- The participants and the researcher gained more insight about spirituality and spiritual well-being from their *Samoan* cultural perspective.

Limitations of the study

- Although the researcher is a *Samoan*, recruiting participants for this study was quite hard because she has always been working in Tongan centres. Perhaps it was trust issues.
- It was difficult to find NZB *Samoan* teachers.
- The researcher aimed to get a male perspective but there was no volunteer despite the invitation.
- Some teachers were able to recall loved ones that passed away or significant past experiences that may have saddened them but were all right at the end of the *talanoaga*.
- The researcher's work and personal life.

Future research possibilities

- Further explore spiritual learning dispositions from other cultural groups perspectives (Niue, Tonga, Cook Islands, Māori and more).
- Examine and explore cultural content knowledge and its implication on Pasifika pedagogical approaches

- How can we provide pastoral care for *Pasifika* teachers in ECE? What is the more culturally responsive pastoral care that can be used?
- Explore *Pasifika* perspectives on authentic spirituality

Concluding Remarks

Contextualising and conceptualising our values, beliefs, cultural philosophical underpinnings and cultural pedagogical approaches in education ought to be carried out with/from/for *alofa* (love). *Alofa* allows us to genuinely *talanoa* and relate to our children and people of other cultures in *Aotearoa* New Zealand. The many layers of *talanoa alofa* can bring about enlightenment not only to the spirits of our children, but our own spirits as teachers, because we live it, we feel it, we breathe it and that is our meaning. Meaningful and lifelong learning occurs when we draw from the hearts and spirits of our parents, families and cultures that are an integral part of our spirits together with the spirit of God. God is love and love endures (Manu'atu, 2013; Palmer, 1998; Tui Atua, 2005).

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Glossary – Uiga o upu

<i>Aiga</i> - family	<i>Fa'asamoa</i> – Samoan way
<i>A'oa'o</i> - teach	<i>Fa'atonu</i> - direct
<i>Agaga</i> - spirit	<i>Fa'akerisano</i> - Christianity
<i>Agaga alofa</i> – loving spirit	<i>Faigalotu</i> – collective prayer
<i>Agaga 'onosa'i</i> – patient spirit	<i>Fatu</i> - heart
<i>Agaga usiusita'i</i> – obedient spirit	<i>Faufautua</i> - advice
<i>Agaga fesoasoani</i> – helpful spirit	<i>Fautuaga fa'amatua</i> – parents' advice
<i>Agaga fiafia</i> – happy spirit	<i>Fagogo</i> – story telling
<i>Agaga filemu</i> – peaceful spirit	<i>Fanau</i> – children / gave birth
<i>Agaga finafinau</i> – willing spirit	<i>Fanua</i> – land / placenta
<i>Agaga maualalo</i> – humble spirit	<i>Fefa'asoa'ai</i> - sharing
<i>Agaga sa'ili'ili</i> – creative spirit or seek as well	<i>Loto</i> - soul
<i>Agaga sa'oloto</i> – free spirit	<i>Matai</i> - chief
<i>Alaga'upu</i> - proverbs	<i>Nu'u / Alalafaga</i> - village
<i>Alofa</i> - love	<i>Soalaupule</i> - collaboration
<i>Alofa fa'amatua</i> – parents' love	<i>Soifua maloloina</i> - wellbeing
<i>Ie toga</i> - finemat	<i>Tautua fa'aleaiga</i> – service to your family
<i>Ola manuia</i> – living in abundance	<i>Tautua fa'amatai</i> – chiefly service
<i>Fa'aaloalo</i> – respect	<i>Tagata 'atoa'atoa</i> – whole person
<i>Fa'afailele</i> – to nurture	<i>Talanoa alofa</i> – talk of/with/from love
<i>Fa'alavelave</i> - obligations	<i>Talatalanoa lemu</i> – gentle talk
<i>Fa'aleleiga</i> - reconciliation	<i>Talatalanoaga</i> - conversation
<i>Fa'amagalo</i> - forgiveness	<i>Tapu</i> – boundaries
<i>Fa'apelepele</i> – to care	

Alagaupu fa'asamoa: Samoan saying

O tama a manu e fafaga i fuga o laau, a'o tama a manu e fafaga i upu ma tala

(Offspring of birds are fed with flowers, but offspring of people are fed with words)

E afua mai mauga le manuia 'o se nu'u

(Blessing and wellbeing of a village flows from the top of the mountain)

O au o matua fanau

(Children are the hearts of their parents)

E leai se gaumata'u na'o le gaualofa

(What you do with love endures – fear does the opposite)

O le ala i le pule o le tautua

(To become a leader, one must serve)

A leai se gagana ona po ai lea o le nuu

(The absence of language brings darkness to a village)

Ia sua le 'ava ae toto le 'ata

(Drink the 'ava/kava but also plant its seedling/s for the future)

Abbreviations

ECE – Early Childhood Education

ECT – Early Childhood Teacher

NZB – New Zealand Born

ZPD – Zone of Proximal Development

MOE – Ministry of Education

TOW – Treaty of Waitangi

UN – United Nations

ERO – Education Review Office

UNCRC – United Nation Conventional Rights of the Child

PECE – Pasifika Early Childhood Education

Appendix A: Ethics Approval

20 July 2018

Tafili Utumapu-McBride
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Tafili

Ethics Application: 18/284 **The full expression of 'Talanoa alofa': A pedagogy to further enrich the spiritual well-being of Pasifika children in Early Childhood Education from a Samoan perspective**

I wish to advise you that a subcommittee of the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) has **approved** your ethics application.

This approval is for three years, expiring 20 July 2021.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>.
2. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form: <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>.
4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
5. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval for access for your research from another institution or organisation then you are responsible for obtaining it. You are reminded that it is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.

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

Yours sincerely,



Kate O'Connor
Executive Manager
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: ss7481@autuni.ac.nz

Participant Information Sheet for Teachers

Date Information Sheet Produced:

12/07/2018

Project Title

The full expression of *'Talanoa alofa'*: A pedagogy to further enrich the spiritual well-being of Pasifika children in Early Childhood Education from a *Samoan* perspective.

An Invitation

Talofa lava,

My name is Merini Mauga- Leiautau and I would like to invite you to participate in my research titled:

The full expression of *'Talanoa alofa'*: A pedagogy to further enrich the spiritual well-being of Pasifika children in Early Childhood Education from a *Samoan* perspective.

What is the purpose of this research?

There are two purposes for this research;

- 1) To help further enrich, transform and bring about change in our practise as educators for ECE children in relation to the way we *talanoa* with the young ones under our care, in order to bring about quality learning outcomes.
- 2) To fulfil the requirements for my Master of Education thesis.

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

You are invited to participate in this research because you are either a

- Qualified Samoan born ECE teacher or a
- Qualified New Zealand born ECE teacher and teach a Samoan centre

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible. If you would like to participate in this research please email me at the contact details below. You will need to sign a consent form.

What will happen in this research?

I will contact you to arrange a suitable date and time to have my *talanoa* session with you. I am happy for you to choose a suitable venue of your choosing, for e.g. like McCafe for a 30 to 1 hour *talanoa* session.

What are the benefits?

- To help further enrich, transform and bring about change in our practise as educators in the way we *talanoa* with the young ones under our care. This is so we can bring about a quality learning outcomes and teaching environment.
- To explore and understand the new knowledge that we can create from our own cultural concepts and be empowered by knowing that we can bring meaning into our work and the world from our own cultural perspectives.
- This would benefit myself as the researcher as I will be using this research to gain my Master of Education qualification and write an academic article and present at a conference.

What are the risks?

There will be no risks. However to protect participants they will be reminded at the beginning of the interview, that if there are any question/s that makes you feel uncomfortable you don't need to answer it and also that the interview can be stopped at any time.

How will my privacy be protected? I will not be using your real name during this research process this is one way your privacy will be protected.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There will be no monetary value involved as you participate in this research however; your time is going to be a factor as there will be one meeting time to have your *talanoa* with the researcher. In appreciation for your time and contribution to my research, you will receive a gift voucher (\$50) at the end of your interview.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You have 5 days to consider this invitation.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Yes, after each talanoa session in two weeks of meeting with you, I will send out a transcript of what we spoke about and I am open for you to contact me if you would like to meet again in regards to the feedback, or receive an email if there is anything that you would like to adjust. Once the thesis is submitted and passed, I will be sending you a summary of the research.

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 or 0273653029. Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, *Kate O'Connor*, ethics@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom 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:

Merini. Mauga-Leiataua

Email – ssw7481@autuni.ac.nz

merinimauga@yahoo.com

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Tafili Utumapu-

McBride (09)

9219999, ext. 7727

tutumapu@aut.ac.nz

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *type the date final ethics approval was granted*, AUTEK Reference number *type the reference number*.

Appendix C: Consent Form

Auckland University of Technology
Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ
T: +64 9 921 9999
www.aut.ac.nz

Consent Form for Teacher (Samoan Translation)

For use when interviews are involved.

Project title: *The full expression of ‘Talanoa alofa’: A pedagogy to further enrich the spiritual well-being of Pasifika children in Early Childhood Education from a Samoan perspective*

Project Supervisor: *Dr Tafili Utumapu-McBride*

Researcher: *Merini Mauga-Leiataua*

- Ua ‘ou faitau ma malamalama ‘I faamatalaga na tu’uina mai mo lenei suesuega*
- Na tu’uina mai le avanoa ou te fesili ai*
- Ua ou malamalama o le’a pu’eina nei talanoaga ma fa’amaumuina i tusitusiga*
- Ua ou malamalama o la’u filifiliga saoloto lava oute auai ai I lenei suesuega ma e mafai foi ona ‘ou alu ese pe’a sui lo’u mafaufau*
- Ua ou malamalama afai ae ou alu ese mai I lenei suesuega, o ia te a’u se filifiliga saoloto e faaogaina ai pea faamatalaga ua tuuina atu mo lenei suesuega pe leai foi. Peita’i afai ae sui lo’u mafaufau ae ua ma’ea le iloiloina o nei fa’amatalaga, o le’a le toe mafai ona fa’aleaogaina*
- Ua ou loto malie ou te auai I lenei suesuega*
- Ou te manao i se kopi o lenei suesuega (tali ifo i le leai po’o le ioe): loe Leai*

Sainia :

Suafa:

Participant’s Contact Details:

.....
.....
.....
.....

Date: **Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on type the date on which the final approval was granted AUTEK Reference number type the AUTEK reference number**

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

Auckland University of Technology
Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ
T: +64 9 921 9999
www.aut.ac.nz

Indicative questions for teacher interviews:

- 1. Can you define talanoa and talanoa alofa? (What is the difference between the two?)**
- 2. When we talanoa with others, we consider a lot of things such as, the context, the status of the people or person we talanoa with and our body language even the way we dress and it is part of our lives as Samoans – How would you relate this practice to your talanoa with the children in your centre?**
- 3. As a Samoan ECE teacher - how might the cultural underpinning values of talanoa alofa allow you to relate to children that are from other cultures?**
- 4. Do you practise talanoa alofa when you interact with children?**
- 5. What do you think talanoa alofa should look like in your practise/talanoa with children?**
- 6. How do children respond to you when you talanoa alofa to/with them?**
- 7. Do you believe that talanoa alofa can enrich the spiritual well-being of our children? (How/Why?)**
- 8. What is your understanding of spiritual well-being from a Samoan view?**
- 9. How as your teacher journey been so far? Is there anything else you can tell me about this?**