





Pacific wayfinding educational leadership through Tautai o le Moana

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ABSTRACT

'Tautai o le Moana'/Wayfinders of the Ocean (ToIM) is a partnership between the New Zealand Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Pasifika Principals Association. ToIM provides a professional learning and development pathway 'by Pasifika principals, for principals of Pasifika' focused on changing education outcomes for Pasifika students who historically have been underserved in the education system. In this article, we highlight school leadership through the metaphor of Pacific wayfinding to demonstrate the importance of Pacific specific leadership for schools serving Pacific learners and families. Tautai data were collected through group talanoa/co-constructed dialogue sessions and individual talanoa sessions. Surfacing themes were connected metaphorically with traditional Pacific wayfinding skills and were enacted through Pacific leadership capabilities that included: adjusting school structures to utilise Pasifika learners' strengths; surfacing and changing tautai and teacher beliefs to grow learning opportunities for Pasifika learners; valuing and validating Pasifika learner knowledges to support Pasifika success; and developing reciprocal partnerships with Pasifika families.

KEYWORDS

Pacific leadership; school principals; wayfinding; professional learning and development (PLD)

Introduction

The 'Tautai o le Moana' (ToIM) project name and conceptualisation was developed by the ToIM Advisory Board comprised of people representing the New Zealand Pacific Principals Association (NZPPA) and the Ministry of Education (MoE). Fa'atili Iosua Esera worked with Rae Si'ilata to write the ToIM vision statement. Drawing on the metaphor of traditional Pacific wayfinding and data from the project, this article describes tautai (principals') practices that have implications within the context of educational leadership for Pasifika learners. Tautai were the wayfinding navigators who sailed their waka/va'a/double-hulled deep-sea canoes across Te Moana Nui a Kiwa/the Pacific Ocean and eventually to Aotearoa. Traditional wayfinders were able to sail through deep-sea oceans and weather events, knowing where they were positioned and where they were sailing to. They, along



with the *kaihautū/eiki vaka/captain*, brought crew members together, drawing on their collective strengths to enable successful voyages:

The ocean voyaging of our Pasifika ancestors, or their *folauga*—their ‘navigational journeying’—is symbolic of Pasifika people’s successful advancement through life... For our Pasifika ancestors to navigate the *folauga* successfully, they had to be well prepared and provisioned; they needed navigators [*tautai/wayfinders*], who could read the signs through the stars, the wind, and the waves, to ensure a successful journey and no loss of life at sea. (Si’ilata, 2014, p. 248)

ToIM is a partnership between MoE and NZPPA. Within ToIM, school principals are referred to as ‘*tautai*’, or as ‘*wayfinders*’ as they support ‘Pasifika success’ within the ‘deep-sea’ of schooling, disrupting the ‘sink or swim’ expectations of the past. ToIM provides a professional learning and development (PLD) pathway ‘by Pasifika principals, for principals of Pasifika’ (ToIM, 2022) focused on changing education outcomes for Pasifika students who have historically been underserved in the education system. The support provided to participating principals by Pacific facilitators (Cook Islands Māori and Samoan), who were themselves school principals, was central to participating principals’ initial commitment to the project. These PLD facilitators had existing relationships with many *tautai*, enabling a ‘connectedness’ in journeying together as a collective. Facilitators fully understood the challenges faced by participating school principals, while also being aware of the need to advocate for Pasifika learners within the ToIM professional learning space. They supported *tautai* in adaptive and insightful ways, often providing guidance on deep professional and relationship issues as trusted ‘insiders’.

As a research collective, we are committed to the enactment of our bicultural *tangata whenua/tangata tiriti* (Indigenous/settler) partnership that is central to valuing Aotearoa New Zealand’s pluralistic society. We acknowledge the familial and historical connections with *tangata whenua* (Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand) as the Indigenous peoples of these *motu/islands* and *whenua/land*, who are also ‘*tangata moana/moana* peoples, or ‘*kakai mei tahi/people from the sea*’ (Hau’ofa, 1994, p. 8). We draw on our collective, diverse, and lived experiences of teaching, research, leadership, and wayfinding to explore the significance of Pacific specific approaches enacted in the ToIM project. Dr. Rae Si’ilata (Ngāti Raukawa, Tūhourangi, Fiji) is the director of Va’atele Education Consulting (Va’atele), senior lecturer at Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi, and led the design of the ToIM research project. Dr. Meg Jacobs (US of Irish, German, and Swiss descent) is lead researcher for Va’atele and a lecturer in the School of Education at the Auckland University of Technology. Martha Aseta (Samoa) is a researcher for Va’atele, and a PhD student at the University of Auckland. Kyla Hansell (Ngā Puhī, Samoa) is project coordinator and PLD facilitator at Va’atele. Sam Tu’itahi (Tonga) is a *tautai* with Te Toki Voyaging Trust and a Community Development Manager at Kāinga Ora.

The metaphor of traditional wayfinding (Spiller, 2016; Spiller et al., 2015) supports our understandings of impactful educational leadership for Pasifika learners that surfaced in the ToIM project. The ToIM leadership, facilitation, and research teams recognise that the systemic privilege extended to Western leadership models is a persistent barrier to achieving a culturally sustaining way forward for Pacific learners (Paris, 2012). In this article, we explored the following question: How are the *Tautai* wayfinding leadership capabilities of “reading signs”, “making adjustments”, “recalibrating”, and “drawing on multiple knowledges” enacted in *Tautai o le Moana*? The following section provides a brief overview of terminology, Aotearoa New Zealand’s Pacific population, and key literature that informs the educational context for ToIM.

Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand

Pacific peoples trace their heritages to distinct Pacific Island nations. In Aotearoa New Zealand, the government umbrella terms Pacific/Pasifika refer to both migrant and New Zealand born Pacific peoples and are used interchangeably in this article. These terms are inclusive of those who identify

with the islands and cultures of Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Rotuma and other Pacific heritages (MoE, 2020b). Although the term 'Pasifika' has been used by the MoE since 2008 to distinguish Pacific peoples living in Aotearoa New Zealand, the use of the term 'Pacific' was enacted through education policy in 2018. These 'overarching' labels, whilst somewhat problematic for individual Pacific nation peoples, also recognise the multiplicity of mixed heritage Pasifika peoples living in Aotearoa New Zealand. Pacific peoples constituted the fourth largest ethnic group in the 2013 census, 7.4% of the total population, behind European, Māori and Asian ethnic groups. In 2018, the Pacific population reached 310,000 with a predicted increase to 650,000 by 2038 (Statistics New Zealand, 2015).

Pacific peoples began migrating from their island homes into Aotearoa New Zealand's post-colonial environment in the 1940s and 50s. A significant proportion of the migrating diaspora came from the Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa, and Tokelau, previously colonised by the British Crown and New Zealand government. The Cook Islands, Niue, and Tokelau are part of the constitutional Realm of New Zealand, and have full rights as New Zealand citizens. All three Pacific nations have more of their people living in Aotearoa New Zealand than in their islands of origin, signifying systemic obligations to protect and revitalise these languages as Indigenous to the Realm of New Zealand.

English-medium education and Pasifika success

Since the 2000s, several official documents have critiqued the existing English-medium education system in relation to equity outcomes (Alton Lee, 2003) and specifically Pasifika learners (Franken et al., 2005). *The Pasifika Education Plan 2013-2017* argued for putting 'Pasifika learners, their parents, families and communities at the centre' (MoE, 2013, p. 3). The Tapasā cultural competency framework (MoE, 2018) drew on these, and other Pacific research publications (see Tapasā bibliography in MoE, 2018, pp. 28-32) to suggest that educational success would be achieved if teachers privileged Pasifika knowledges in learning and teaching. TolM sits within the MoE's (2020a) *Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020-2030* and specifies leadership capabilities for school leaders and researchers working with Pacific ākonga/learners.

Educational leadership

New Zealand educational research studies have informed education policy development on effective teacher and leader practice in schooling for Pasifika learners (see Chu et al., 2013; Si'ilata, 2014; Si'ilata et al., 2012). Taleni et al. (2018) identified key leadership concepts linked to improved outcomes, including culturally responsive leadership, a Pasifika 'heart', and knowledge of Pasifika worldviews. Wolfgramm-Foliaki and Smith's (2020) tertiary project *He Vaka Moana* highlighted the collaborative nature of Māori and Pacific educational initiatives focused on culturally embedded notions of success and transformational system change. TolM is included in the *National Education and Learning Priorities* (MoE, 2020b) under 'Objective 3: Quality Teaching and Leadership', within the section on 'Actions Government is taking': 'Expanding the delivery of Tautai o Le Moana, an educational leadership collaboration which seeks to strengthen the capabilities of those in leadership to improve outcomes and support the wellbeing of Pacific learners/learners' (p. 5). Educational leadership collaboration in TolM is enacted through Pacific methodological and pedagogical practices.

Methodology

Pacific research methodologies were utilised to tell the stories of tautai in Pasifika educational spaces. English-medium research and schooling systems traditionally have not served Indigenous and Pacific learners and their families well. Therefore, any research with Pacific communities within

Aotearoa must include critical examination of existing systems and of research approaches traditionally utilised in these spaces (Smith & Smith, 2019).

Participants

The 2019-2020 ToIM cohort comprised 17 tautai, with 10 from Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland schools and seven from Porirua/Wellington schools. The majority of schools had more than 50% Pasifika students on their rolls. All schools also had significant percentages of Māori students on their rolls. Of the 17 tautai, seven participants self-identified as Pacific (four Samoan and three Cook Islands Māori), six as Māori, and four as Pākēhā/New Zealand European.

The enactment of core Pasifika values outlined in the MoE's Pasifika Education Research Guidelines (Anae et al., 2001) guided the way we positioned tautai as knowledge holders. Talanoa, a widely recognised Pacific research method (Halapua, 2000, 2003; Vaoleti, 2006, 2013), was the primary method used to learn from tautai. Talanoa/co-constructed dialogue involves participants talking about their lived experiences through storytelling. 'Tala' meaning 'to talk', within a 'noa' (or 'free from restriction') relational space allows for safe dialogue that is both unrestrained and culturally appropriate (Síilata, 2017). Vaoleti (2013) describes talanoa as a 'mode of communication that is integral to the way in which many Pacific peoples learn, relate to each other, narrate and tell stories' (p. 193). In this study, talanoa ensured that tautai were in a safe space to allow for free-flowing talk in ways that 'benefit Pacific peoples and their interests' (Vaoleti, 2013, p. 194).

The concept of *vā fealofai* or 'relational space' that connects people, and *Teu Le Va*, the notion of enabling a reciprocal, relational space, was considered carefully with respect to the diverse knowledges of Pasifika tautai and other participants (Airini et al., 2010; Anae, 2010). *Teu Le Va* highlights the need for all involved in the research relationship to 'tidy up the physical, spiritual, cultural, social, psychological and tapu 'spaces' of human relationships in order to improve outcomes for all stakeholders involved' (Airini et al., 2010, p. 2). Mindful of the relational *vā* enacted through ToIM, talanoa sessions encouraged tautai to tell their own lived stories that connected hearts and minds.

Individual and group talanoa sessions were conducted face to face and through online (Zoom) forums. This enabled tautai from both locations to engage in combined online sessions in the wake of COVID lockdowns. Talanoa sessions, used as opportunities for tautai to collaborate, were audio recorded and transcribed.

Data Analysis

10 key concepts prominent in ToIM network meeting talanoa were combined into four overarching themes with two to three sub-themes each, based upon their representation in the data. These overarching themes connect metaphorically with the wayfinding capabilities of 'reading signs', 'making adjustments', 'recalibrating', and 'drawing on multiple knowledges'—framed as actions of effective school leaders of Pacific learners. In the following section, we explore these Pacific leadership capabilities.

Pacific wayfinding and leadership

Recent research has drawn on Pacific wayfinding to theorise notions of leadership (Spiller, 2016; Spiller et al., 2015). Síilata's (2014) doctoral thesis presented the *va'atele*/double-hulled deep-sea canoe as a metaphor for the educational journeying of Pasifika learners, achieving success in both worlds (or hulls) of home and school, envisioned through the *Va'atele Framework's* dimensions and indicators of linguistically and culturally responsive (now sustaining/revitalising) pedagogies (see Paris, 2012; Rau, 2004). ToIM leadership capabilities are essential for enabling the successful

enactment of Va'atele's pedagogical framework. The seventh dimension specific to leadership (the foeli/steering paddle) supports teachers to enact the dimensions of effective practice highlighting the essential role of tautai to ensure a va'atele's successful folauga/journey:

Va'atele were controlled by foeli—gigantic steering paddles in the rear of the vessel. Although all vessels had at least one foeli (steering paddle) some va'atele were so big that they would have two. The principal foeli was called the 'foetauta' and the second foeli was called the 'foetalitali'. These steering paddles were so large, sometimes it took two or three persons to steer them, and they were generally controlled by the tautai (chief navigator). (Samuelu Si'ilata, personal communication, 2020)

The tautai needed to 'wayfind' the va'atele's planned direction and handle the foeli correctly in order to take the va'a where it needed to go. If tautai were not able to perform their role well, all other parts of the va'a, even though working in harmony, would be futile and purposeless. The metaphor is equally apt for learners' successful journeys through schooling: Teacher pedagogies are insufficient on their own to enable learner success. Effective leaders ensure there is systemic support (the foeli) and the employment of effective leader qualities (tautai wayfinding abilities) to ensure the right course is set, and that there are sufficient provisions and supports for those in the va'a or schooling system who are making the journey. The metaphor of the double foeli (le foetauta ma le foetalitali) also recognises the importance of collective leadership and emphasises that one leader working alone will usually be insufficient for the task.

Tautai Sam Tu'itahi, a member of our research team, serves as a Tongan kaumoana/crew member of Te Toki Voyaging Trust, led by Rangitira Hoturoa Barkley-Kerr. Seven generations back, Sam's uncle was the Eiki Vaka for Lomipeau, a renowned vaka of Tonga. Rae engaged in talanoa (co-constructed conversation) with Sam to further explore and theorise Pacific educational leadership as wayfinding. Sam's knowledge of wayfinding guided our identification of qualities that were connected to surfacing themes about Pacific leadership in ToIM: 'reading signs', 'making adjustments', 'recalibrating', and 'drawing on multiple knowledges' (see Figure 1).

Reading signs

Successful wayfinding involves reading signs and responding to changing conditions. Traditional wayfinders read a multitude of signs, some found in the ocean swells, the star path, cloud formations, and migrating birds. Spiller et al. (2015) emphasised that in traditional wayfinding, alertness to important signs is essential, 'Steering is done through sensation as well as sight' (p. 38), highlighting an embodied response to the conditions that extends beyond what is visible. Tu'itahi described a recent voyage in embodied relationship with the environment:

I was starting to wake up and I could feel the way we were rocking, and I started to figure out, okay, the waves are hitting us from this direction. And so, knowing the swells and knowing how they feel, you start to tune in with your environment and with your surroundings – for me it was in relation to the waves. ... So, if it is all clouded over, and I can't see stars, I can't see the sun, at least I can feel the way we are moving across the water and I'll make adjustments according to that, and I will hold a specific line because I can feel the way we're moving across the water. (Talanoa, Sam Tu'itahi, February 23, 2020)

Tu'itahi's description of embodied relationship with the environment connects with the aim of systemic coherence in ToIM. 'Reading signs' encompasses being aware of the more explicit systemic issues facing schools, teachers, and families, as well as aspects of schooling that are less visible and less likely to be addressed in PLD. Tu'itahi describes the 'unseen' in wayfinding:

You'll be in the middle of nowhere and be hit by this swell from the other side—our captain will say, 'Oh, there's another island directly that way.' So it's like a sonar thing, but you don't see it—it's the unseen things. (Talanoa, Sam Tu'itahi, February 23, 2020)



PACIFIC WAYFINDING EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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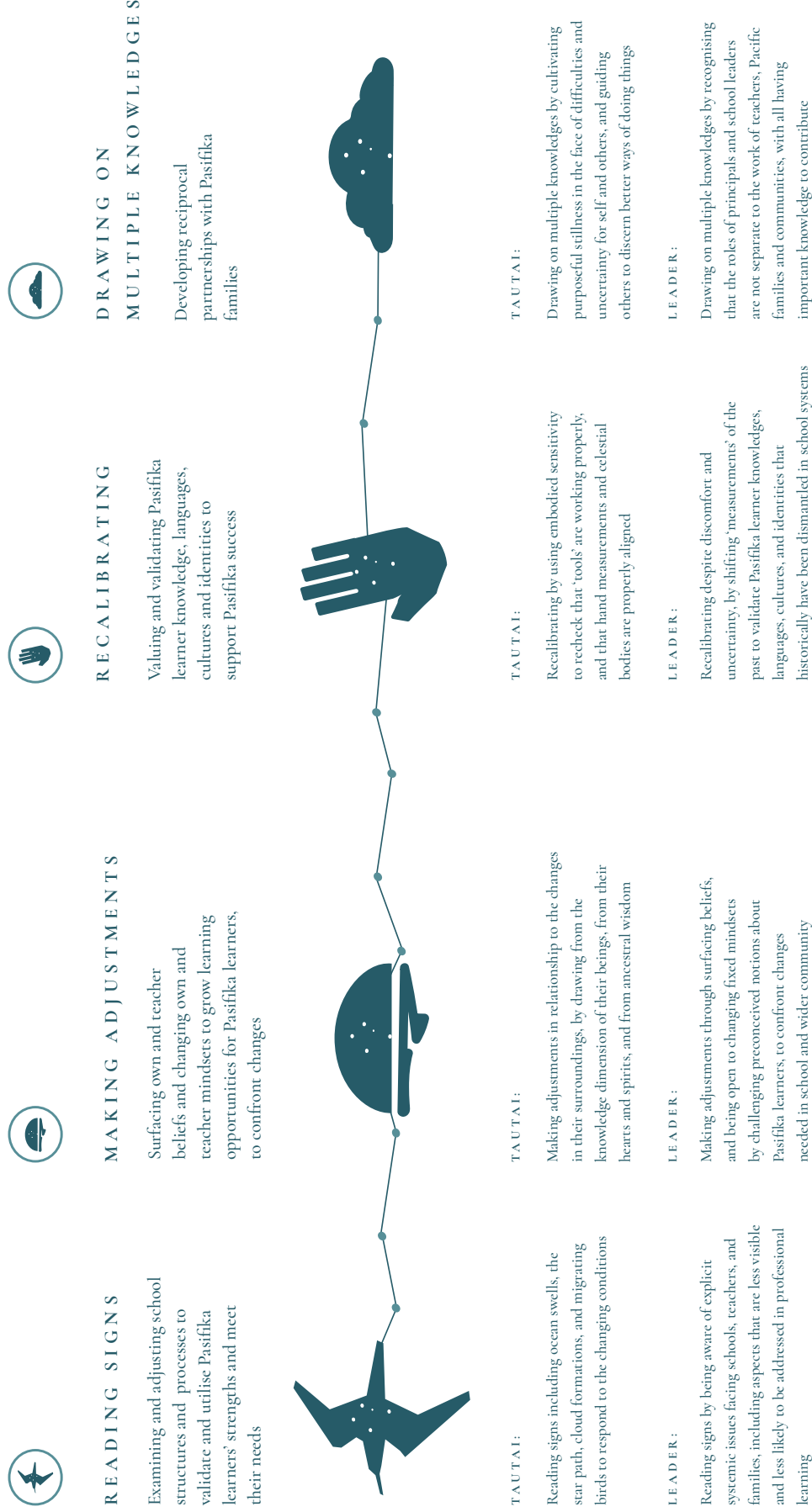


Figure 1.



S'ILATA, JACOBS, ASETA, HANSELL & TUTTAHI (2021)



S'ILATA, JACOBS, ASETA, HANSELL & TUTTAHI (2021)



Just as the wayfinder navigates the unseen, Pacific tautai at times understood less visible aspects of institutional racism as shaped through their own lived experiences. 'Reading signs' involved attention to the seen, and the unseen to enact system change.

Making adjustments

The wayfinder continually adjusts to the signs in relationship to the changes in their surroundings. Tautai draw from the knowledge dimensions of their beings, from their hearts and spirits, and from ancestral wisdom to make adjustments in relationship to the changes in their surroundings. Tu'itahi described what Spiller (2016) might refer to as 'moving from stillness, bringing the island to them through 'be-coming' (p. 31):

Thinking about the metaphors of Maui fishing up land – when you come towards land, it feels like magic—you see something, some darkness way in the horizon forming. The land holds the clouds and when you get closer, the land rises up, just like you're fishing. Thinking in terms of metaphors—Te Matau o Maui, this constellation that as you come further and further south, you're pulling it up as the navigator, and once you get it in the right position you have pulled up the land. (Talanoa, Sam Tu'itahi, February 23, 2020)

Spiller et al. (2015) emphasised how Māori and Pacific Indigenous wayfinders 'move with purposeful stillness and know the world around them as they know themselves' (p. 7). Just as Tu'itahi talked about 'pulling up the land' with embodied sensitivity to the surfacing signs, tautai make adjustments by surfacing beliefs and challenging pre-conceived notions about Pasifika learners in order to enact changes in school contexts and the wider community.

Recalibrating

Wayfinders recalibrate by using their embodied sensitivity to recheck that 'tools' are working properly, and that hand measurements and celestial bodies are properly aligned. They recalibrate by using their heightened sensitivity to all of the signs, drawing from all of their knowledge systems, often transmitted multi-sensorily through their bodies. Tu'itahi stressed the importance of recalibrating to the signs:

The sun moves 22 degrees on the horizon line over a year, so the tautai will know where to expect it to rise on the horizon line and from that will be able to take measurements. Everything is calibrating; your arms, your hands to be able to make measurements really accurately and to be able to tell, 'Okay, I'm expecting this star set to be rising from here'... I wonder if our principals are recalibrating and taking that time to recalibrate their vā or their knowledge sets—noticing where we are steering the waka and in what direction... you need that constant to take those definite calibrations to know that you are on the right path or not. (Talanoa, Sam Tu'itahi, February 23, 2020)

Educational leaders' calibrations of the past may be founded on worldviews, ways of being, and knowledge systems that have not validated or incorporated Pacific models of success. In ToIM 'recalibrating' requires shifting 'measurements' of the past to validate Pasifika learner knowledges, languages, cultures, and identities that historically had been silenced in school systems. Here Tu'itahi distinguishes between 'recalibrating' and 'making adjustments':

So, recalibration for me would be the act of rechecking that your 'tools' are working properly (that your hand measurements and whatever celestial body you're using, is lining up properly). At that point, you can then ensure that you're making the sailing adjustments necessary either to stay on course or to get back on course. (Talanoa, Sam Tu'itahi, February 23, 2020)

'Recalibrating' may cause discomfort, tension, and uncertainty for Pacific and non-Pacific tautai. In the ToIM project, the aim is to create a safe talanoa space for tautai to confront their own schooling histories and lived experiences as ākonga, teachers, and leaders. A safe talanoa space

invites tension and uncertainty as being necessary to recalibrate ways of being in schools, and to make adjustments to draw on Pacific knowledges.

Drawing on multiple knowledges

An essential skill for wayfinding leaders involves cultivating purposeful stillness in the face of difficulties and uncertainty for both themselves and others onboard the waka (Spiller et al. 2015). As the journey becomes difficult, tautai guide other people to 'become more aware of reality and to dynamically discern better ways of doing things' (Spiller, 2016, p. 34). In TolM, a foundation for sustained talanoa is set during a residential fono/meeting named by the leadership team as 'Taula i Fanua' ('Anchoring to Land'). This fono is designed to invite tautai to experience PLD immersed in Pacific ways of being with a particular focus on relationality and positionality within an education system that has historically underserved Pacific learners. The aim of this initial fono is to anchor a collective response for all onboard the waka to bring about meaningful change (Spiller et al., 2015). Tu'itahi described the importance of collective contributions and wellbeing on board the waka:

There is an equally important role, which is an eiki vaka—or the chief of the vaka, or the captain. Because the tautai can do as much pointing and reading as he wants, or she wants, but someone has got to help nourish and nurture and keep everyone on board well. (Talanoa, Sam Tu'itahi, February 23, 2020).

Like the roles of navigator/wayfinder and captain, the TolM project emphasises the work of school leaders as inseparable to the work of teachers and contributions of families and communities to ensure a successful journey. Spiller (2016) described how wayfinding involves awareness of our surroundings, willingness to explore the unknown, and to confront the limitations of our existing knowledge:

Wayfinding requires that we become explorers of our world, seeking to discover and shine light upon that which is not seen. To do this is to sail beyond the compass of our existing knowledge and to traverse uncharted waters in ourselves and the world. (Spiller, 2016, p. 30)

The uncertainty of the conditions requires the expert wayfinder to have courage to draw on multiple knowledges. Tu'itahi described the invisible forces that are part of the relationship between humans and the natural world, and how valuing what the natural world can teach opens the wayfinder up to signs/tohu:

Vā being our waters, our manu puna, our fonua, there's a vā we have to maintain. And that's the magic of when you're in that space and you're needing something, and something pops up and there's that tohu/sign that you needed. (S'ilata et al., 2021, p. 118)

In TolM, privileging Pasifika knowledges in leadership and pedagogy required tautai to understand that they were part of a larger collective that spans generations of lived experience. For tautai to be open to the signs, they needed space to examine beliefs and assumptions. Like the traditional wayfinder, tautai were encouraged to stay open to what they did not know and to what other people and the environment could teach them. In the following section we highlight tautai voice to illustrate how wayfinding capabilities intersected with Pacific leadership.

Reading signs

Theme 1: *Examining and adjusting school structures and processes to validate and utilise Pasifika learners' strengths and meet their needs*, aligns with 'reading signs'. Tautai commented on system changes they wanted to make or were in the process of making that addressed the strengths of Pasifika learners and families and involved a shift in school policy and practice. Tautai critically examined curriculum to ascertain what was actually valued in their schools and whether there was inclusion of Pasifika knowledges. Tautai were willing to confront monocultural educational norms anchored in New Zealand's colonial settler history reflected in school structures and processes:

I think we've got to be a little bit careful that we're not still being a tool of colonialism. That colonialism now says that effective education is this, and now are we pushing this because that's what a colonial education model is? Are we still saying, well, what is effective Pacific education and are we providing the best of both so that people can connect with whatever is valuable for them? (Talanoa, Tautai, 27 May 2020)

Tautai reflected on how they would take action to validate ākongā knowledges:

Our schooling model, a lot of it is based on the dominant culture. I'm not saying I'm going to do away with it, but I'm going to build on it that contextualizes it past that initial model. For example, we give the kids the option. I say, 'If you want to write in Samoan or Tongan, then write, and it's up to me to find someone to translate it.' (Talanoa, Tautai, 18 June 2020)

'Reading signs' was an integral aspect of shifting pedagogical practice. The push for system change required ongoing surfacing of principals' and teachers' preconceived notions concerning the strengths of Pasifika learners.

Making adjustments

Theme 2: *Surfacing tautai and teacher beliefs and changing tautai and teacher mindsets to grow learning opportunities for Pasifika learners*, aligns with 'making adjustments'. Tautai recognised that the preconceived notions that they and teachers held about Pasifika learners and families needed to be confronted to change mindsets. Pasifika tautai critically examined how they had been socialised to value institutional over family knowledge. Tautai understood that valuing whānau/families as knowledge holders was particularly important for bringing forth the strengths of Pasifika ākongā:

For us it was around teachers realising that some whānau held quite a lot of knowledge, skills or expertise in a certain area, and learning about that and seeing how it would impact the mana of the student, and how it can be used as a springboard into deeper learning. Not just for that whānau but for the school community as well. (Talanoa, Tautai, 16 June 2020)

Tautai reflected on how they had not always been able to see the important contributions of families. 'One of the things we've uncovered too is pockets of brilliance in our families that we weren't aware of' (Talanoa, Tautai, 27 May 2020).

Tautai noted that starting from a position of strength was a critical aspect of changing teacher mindsets:

I do have one child here and he keeps crying when the teacher asks him to write, and she is a challenge because her mindset is still around that reading, writing, and maths in a traditional way, so we unpacked it a little bit yesterday and I talked a lot about his confidence, so let's, instead of the deficit, what he can't do, let's look at what he is able to do and start from there. (Talanoa, Tautai, 27 May 2020)

Tautai recognised that to value and validate Pasifika learner knowledge, they had to lead their teachers to take a strengths-based approach.

Recalibrating

Theme 3: *Valuing and validating Pasifika learner knowledge to support Pasifika success*, aligns with 'recalibrating'. Tautai held a shared vision to challenge traditional one-way knowledge-sharing between school and home. Tautai examined notions of Pasifika success that were different to existing practices.

Working alongside cultural knowledge holders was central to validating and using Pacific languages:

Last year, I remember, one of the teachers doing a [maths] lesson in Samoan. So, she had the teacher aide beside her, and they did it mostly in Samoan and it was fantastic, but it was hard. She said I can't do that again; I can't sustain that. But I thought that was really exciting. I remember one child was just beaming from ear to ear because it was his opportunity to show his clever thinking and he wasn't limited to having to use a language that's not his first language. (Talanoa, Tautai, 5 March 2020)

Tautai reflected on what became visible when space was made for the linguistic and cultural resources of Pasifika ākongā:

We had our Samoan speech competition recently and this is the first year we've done that and... it's amazing the support that the parents give their kids when they're doing something like this. This little boy who's been in the country for one year, his English is very limited, even though I couldn't understand a word he said, unfortunately. The way he presented, his confidence, his mannerisms and we just thought: Where did you come from? And that's all about success in your own language; he was just amazing. A boy who can often get into trouble because of language and not really understanding, and in that context, he was stunning. (Talanoa, Tautai, 17 June 2020)

By making space for this learner to utilise gagana Samoa/Samoan language, the lens through which people viewed him changed from deficit to additive. Tautai realised they needed to co-construct notions of success with Pasifika families and include these in the validated knowledge of schooling.

Drawing on multiple knowledges

Theme 4: *Developing reciprocal partnerships with Pasifika families*, aligns with 'drawing on multiple knowledges'. Tautai noted the importance of establishing strong relationships with Pasifika families. They also recognised some families held expectations for achievement aligned with traditional English-medium schooling priorities. Developing reciprocal partnerships involved working to understand and draw on family perspectives:

On reflection, it shows me, by doing this exercise what is lacking in my own personal pedagogical knowledge and strategies that I could be using to promote Pasifika success for Pacific students and their families... perhaps looking at it from the family view by inviting family to comment and to add to our kaiako profile. (Talanoa, Tautai, 5 March 2020)

Tautai reflected on teacher/whānau connections, and the need for system change:

Some of our teachers have a great connection with our whānau and some don't. Why? So, we're delving into our data a little bit more, and also into our assumptions. We're going to do a stocktake and have a conversation with our teachers about what it means to have reciprocal relationships. What does it look like? (Talanoa, Tautai, 16 June 2020)

Tautai acknowledged that much of what they had learnt as leaders was still to be embedded in their school systems and in pedagogy. Like wayfinding, effective Pacific leadership was an ongoing process of 'reading signs', 'making adjustments', 'recalibrating', and 'drawing on multiple knowledges'.

Discussion

The MoE's (2020a) current *Action Plan for Pacific Education (2020-2030)* argues for five key system shifts, with TolM under Key Shift 3: 'Enable every teacher, leader, and educational professional to take coordinated action to become culturally competent with diverse Pacific learners' (p. 7). We argue that cultural competence alone will not bring about meaningful change. Pacific specific leadership capabilities support tautai to actively disrupt institutional racism that diminishes Pacific identities, languages, and cultures in the everyday practices of schooling.

Tautai navigate uncertainty and draw on the wisdom of the collective through a process that is fluid and unfolding. For the Western navigator, ‘the journey begins as a map, wherein the world is rendered as static—islands, currents and depth hold a fixed and immutable position’ (Spiller et al., 2015, p. 48). This contrast provides a lens to argue for Pacific specific approaches to educational leadership. Western navigation, like Western approaches to leadership, takes the most direct route and relies heavily on tools that turn ‘wholeness into linear and sequential fragments, rendered in logical and numerical terms’ (Spiller et al., 2015, p. 48). These Western approaches to leadership have largely failed Pacific peoples. Although Western leadership informed by culturally responsive pedagogies is inclusive, the findings suggest that a Pacific leadership model is paramount to system and curriculum change for Pacific learners.

Tautai were provided space to confront systems that had failed Pacific learners and families, by reimagining school leadership through Pacific wayfinding. Educational leaders’ calibrations of the past were founded on colonial knowledges that did not validate Māori or Pacific models of success, or knowledge systems. ToIM supported tautai to understand that transformational system change is an ongoing and enduring struggle. To enact the ToIM actions, it was important that tautai held relational and cultural capability to lead with sensitivity to the surfacing signs. For tautai, ‘reading the signs’ required a willingness to question the status quo and their role in disrupting it as leaders.

Tautai benefited from professional development in leadership that was underpinned by Pacific cultural practices and research methods. Aspects of Pacific educational leadership as wayfinding can inform directions for future ToIM cohorts. ToIM shows that Pacific wayfinding leadership is a key lever in enacting system change, in partnership with families and communities. Tautai shared their efforts and aspirations to make space for the knowledges of families and communities to be represented in schooling. However, there was still much to consider in how this expertise might be afforded the same validation, especially when some families were focused on traditional measures of success in English-medium schooling. For ‘Pasifika success as Pasifika’ to be realised, critical examination of whose knowledge counts in educational settings needs to be considered in co-constructed curriculum design. Future ToIM cohorts could invite Pacific families and community knowledge holders to inform curriculum and pedagogical priorities in partnership with leaders and teachers. As school leaders critically examine, deconstruct, and transform traditional schooling systems, curricula, and relational practices by privileging Pacific (and ‘other’) valued knowledges, there is potential for deeper notions of ‘social justice’ to be enacted. Wayfinding’s connection to culturally located educational leadership and its prioritisation on criticality and transformational system change thus sharpens the lens on leadership for social justice.

E lauhoe mai na wa’a; i ke ka, i ka hoe; i ka hoe, i ke ka; pae aku i ka ‘aina. (Hawai’i)

Everybody paddle the canoes together; bail and paddle, paddle and bail,
and the shore will be reached.

If everybody pitches in, the work is quickly done. (Pukui, 1983)

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Disclaimer

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